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ABSTRACT

The role of institutional research in institutions of higher education is important because it represents a set of activities that translate the education and research process into terms that can be understood by those who are in a position to affect the future of the institution. These activities describe the inputs, the processes, and the outputs, and can describe the impact of funding and policy decision. The specific areas discussed include governing structures and philosophy of administration for institutions; the position of institutional research in the organization; a description of the functions of institutional research; and areas covered by institutional research in providing information about students and staff. (JMF)

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ADMINISTRATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION -
THE INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVE

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Administration in Higher Education - The Institutional Perspective

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Proposed Case Study

Divide the participants into three groups. Each group is to assume a different role: federal, state/intermediate, and institutional.

The task will be to describe the Institutional Research role at each level. The following results are expected:

1. An organization chart identifying the Institutional Research activity,
2. A description of responsibilities of the Institutional Research unit,
3. A definition of the levels of information to be collected and analyzed.

I. Introduction

Although institutions of higher education differ from private enterprises in that they are not-for-profit, they require similar management practices. For the essential student-teacher interaction to take place it is not sufficient to provide a physical setting and a list of courses, it is necessary to hire faculty, to pay them, to provide for supplies and support staff, to maintain records of the progress of students, to request for funds, and to provide reports describing how these funds have been expended.

All these processes take place in an environment whose basic objectives are education and research; they are affected by enrollment mix and size, governance structures, sources of funding, and mission considerations. This paper will first describe the environment which affects management processes, and then will describe the role and scope of Institutional Research activities.

II. Organization considerations

A. Governing Structures

In the United States two basic types of institutions of higher education can be identified:

1. Public institutions - these are funded from monies obtained through taxation, and from tuitions collected from students. The individual states provide the largest share of funds (approximately 65%), with students paying from 25% to 33% of instructional costs. The Federal Government provides support for specific areas of national interest such as the Health Programs.
2. Private institutions - the major source for these institutions is tuition income (students pay for all instructional costs), although assistance is provided from public and private sources.

Although the distinction between public and private institutions is quite clear in terms of instruction activities, these two types of institutions are very similar in the research activities. These are funded, generally on a project basis, by the government or by private

enterprises.

Two of the major aspects which make these institutions different, are their governance and the processes by which funds are requested. This paper will be limited to public institutions.

1. Coordinating Boards

Since the states are the major providers of funds, each has established various agencies to analyze and recommend funds for institutions of higher education. Many governors have established their own staffs who advise them on all services provided by the state, but the most common state agency dealing with higher education is the Coordinating Board. In some cases these boards only have jurisdiction over academic programs, but in many cases they are required to make fiscal recommendations. Institutions of higher education supply these boards with information concerning enrollments, programs and finances which is used to make recommendations to the legislature and the governor.

2. Governing Boards

Most institutions of higher education in the United States have established governing boards, in many ways parallel to those established by private enterprises, composed by individuals who are not members of the higher education community, and which provide an independent, although supportive, overview of the activities performed by the institution. In most cases, all major policy decisions must be approved by these boards prior to being implemented and communicated to state agencies.

3. Multi-campus Universities

There are a number of universities that are comprised of several campuses which are placed in different locations. Although each campus may have some degree of independence, it is common for the universities to have central administrative staffs which coordinate the activities of the campuses, provide computing and analytical resources,

and directly interact with state agencies.

It is possible, therefore, for an institution to have to interact in the planning, budgeting, and allocation processes with multi-campus (sometimes called systems) staffs, coordinating board staffs, and legislative and governor's staffs.

B. Philosophy of Administration

One major factor affecting the operations of each institution of higher education is the philosophy of administration reflected by its top management.

1. Centralization versus Decentralization

The debate over whether to centralize or not is as common to higher education as it is in private enterprises. If it is believed that due to economies-of-scales (the larger, the less expensive) certain activities such as computer usage, planning processes, and financial reporting, can be performed at a more efficient basis, centralization may be justified. On the other hand, if it is believed that efficiencies resulting from centralization do not justify the potential loss of responsiveness of services to be provided, decentralization may be considered. In either case, the choice reflects the philosophy of those in top management or in a position to determine the manner in which institutions of higher education should be operated.

2. Coordination versus Control

In higher education there is a delicate balance to be maintained between control functions which insure that plans are implemented and funds are appropriately expended, and coordination functions which provide incentives to achieve stated objectives while allowing some flexibility and encouraging innovative efforts. The trend experienced currently in the United States is toward more control by state agencies; this trend is promoted by concerns over accountability - the assurance that public institutions do what is expected of them. This trend may have a negative impact on the quality of

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instruction and research if it results in the elimination of incentives.

III. Role of Institutional Research

A. Position in the Organization

Institutional research activities, such as planning, analysis, and allocation of resources, take place at several levels ranging from the institution of higher education to the governmental agency level. At the Federal level, the efforts may emphasize the impact of higher education on the national economic development; at the state or intermediate level, issues of coordination among institutions of higher education and relation to other public services may be emphasized; at the institutional level, efforts will be directed toward meeting external demands to justify the needs of the institution, as well as being involved in the internal planning processes which identify objectives and define the steps required to achieve them.

Although institutional research activities may take place in different units of an institution, their effectiveness in affecting policies is dependent on their location in the organization. Since the basic mission of an institution of higher education is academic, most institutional research units are placed under the Academic Officer. These units act in a staff role to the top management of the institution as well as to the Deans of Colleges. Since the efforts of institutional research units can affect all facets of an institution, it is of great importance that formal interaction be established with:

1. the financial organization - this unit is the source of all financial information, such as, payroll, expenditures, and income data.
2. the organization(s) responsible for the operations of the university - this unit(s) is involved in plant operation and maintenance, security, personnel, etc.
3. the Student Services organization - this unit can provide information on student employment and financial aid to students.
4. the academic organization(s) - information on admissions, research contracts, promotion and tenure policies can be obtained from this unit(s).

The strength of the office responsible for institutional research activities lies in the ability to access all relevant information and in having sufficient staff, both in quality and quantity, to analyze the information and to document it so that it can be useful to top management.

B. Functional Description

Three basic functions take place in an institutional research unit:

1. Descriptive - before planning for the future it is necessary to describe what the institution has been and is doing. Much can be learned from past experiences since growth, although always welcomed, does not always lead to careful planning.
2. Normative - the environment affecting institutions of higher education, political and economic, forces many changes in plans. The only way to maintain a sense of direction is to define, independent of immediate pressures, what the institution should be doing; this will require the establishment of an academic plan and the determination of the resource implications of such a plan.
3. Analytical - the identification of needs, whether on normative terms, or as a reaction to current pressures, requires that analysis be performed which defines the problem area, investigates alternative solutions, and provides recommendations.

C. Areas of Effort

Institutional Research activities will revolve around five sets of information:

1. Student Information
 - a. Enrollment history
 - b. Enrollment projections
 - c. Profile of students attending the institution
 - i. high school record
 - ii. family income
 - iii. academic progress
 - iv. attrition/success rates
 - v. grade patterns
 - vi. job placement of graduates

2. Staff Information

- a. Activity analysis - Faculty load
- b. Salary analysis
- c. Promotion/Tenure/Retirement flow
- d. Compensation/Fringe benefits

3. Facilities Information

- a. Inventory of space
- b. Utilization of space
- c. Scheduling of space
- d. Maintenance, renewal and replacement

4. Program Information

- a. Program costs of instruction
- b. Academic support units - libraries, etc.
- c. Induced Load Matrix - describes the courses students attend independent of the discipline in which they are enrolled.

5. Financial Information

- a. resource requirement models
- b. income and expenditure trends
- c. budget preparation - external and internal

IV. The Planning Cycle

The activities performed by Institutional Research units do not take place in a vacuum; they are part of the planning process of the institution. Three major steps can be identified in the planning cycle:

A. Development of the Scope and Mission of the Institution

It is necessary that the institution identify, describe, and obtain general consensus on its educational and research objectives. These objectives must be described in sufficient detail to provide the agencies which coordinate and provide sources of funds with a clear understanding of the future of the institution.

B. Development of a Technical Plan

A specific implementation plan must be prepared which describes

not only the resource implications of the Scope and Mission, but also describes the impact on student enrollments, staff, physical facilities, and program development. The Technical Plan can be defined as the long-range planning document of the institution (5-10 years into the future).

C. Budget Request and Allocation

Many institutional research activities are involved in the acquisition of funds for the institution. The following general steps take place.

1. Short-term needs are identified and justified; these needs must be consistent with the Scope and Mission and the Technical Plan.
2. Needs are translated into resource requirements.
3. Appropriate documentation is prepared to provide the budget request to Governing Boards, Coordinating Boards, Legislative staffs, and Governor's staffs.
4. Once funds have been provided to the institution, they are allocated to all units consistent with the Scope and Mission and the Technical Plan.
5. Monitoring of expenditures is performed to insure that allocation decisions are implemented.

V. Conclusion

The role of Institutional Research in institutions of higher education is of extreme importance because it represents a set of activities which translate the education and research process into terms which can be understood by those who are in a position to affect the future of the institution. These activities describe the inputs, the processes, and the outputs, and although they cannot provide good indices of quality, they can describe the impact of funding and policy decisions.