IR Activities

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Editors Notes
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"I (b) **Acceptance of Assignments.** The institutional researcher shall not accept assignments requiring competencies he/she does not have and for which he/she cannot effectively rely upon the assistance of colleagues, unless the supervisor has been adequately apprised or unless he/she would acquire the necessary competence prior to doing the research."

(http://www.airweb.org/codeofethics.html)

In applying institutional research to higher education challenges, our profession frequently looks at our responsibilities and roles. It seems that we have had this preoccupation since AIR became a professional association in the 1960s. Peterson (1999) identifies 12 major professional self-analyses extending from 1960 forward in a succession of what he terms an "endless debate over the nature and role of institutional research." Delaney (2001) reviews the findings of eight additional studies since 1976 that describe the challenges and opportunities facing institutional researchers.

While this discussion is more structured since AIR developed content-based tracks for their annual Forum and because AIR's various professional development offerings focus on certain skills and abilities, the topic of "What is Institutional Research?" still sparks a great deal of discussion. If the Code of Ethics is used as the foundation, institutional research can include any pass in which we have a competency, in which we have competent friends, or in which we can "acquire the necessary competency prior to doing the research."

In truth, our profession is defined by the activities frequently performed by professionals who consider themselves institutional researchers. The following is a two-part perspective to describe strategies and activities appropriate for institutional research at any institution.

The first perspective, developed by Steve Chambers, looks at our strategies with the question "Are we doing things the right way?" The second perspective, developed by Mary Louise Gerek, looks at specific activities with the question "Are we doing the right things?"

The first step in doing things the right way is to identify the key issues to be addressed. Traditionally we look to the president for setting priorities for our strategies. Chambers does this by identifying the central themes from a panel of college and university chief executives who shared their concerns and priorities during the 2005 AIR Forum. These themes include the need for effectiveness coupled with the IR skills and abilities in assessing student learning. With these themes as primary goals, in the next step the presidents described the roles they want us to play in making higher education more valuable. The third step came from looking at some guidelines we might consider in the pursuit of these roles.

While these three steps are very valuable in making us a key component of the changing tapestry of higher education, they would stop short of looking at "So What?" It is the check list developed by Gerek that builds on the ability to translate the challenges, roles and strategies into an articulated description of what IR is to do at any institution. The checklist looks at likely activities in 13 major sections ranging from the Institutional Research Office Mission and Structure to Records Management going through functions such as evaluating Student Flow and Completion. It also has specific sections on the issues of institutional effectiveness and assessment of the learning culture and the outcomes of the learning process. She includes a place to further list specific activities and a section to identify issues that come from looking into each functional area. Anyone using the checklist at a specific institution may want to add other major sections for responsibilities that an IR office or IR function might be performing.

It needs to be stressed that Gerek properly points out that no one institution expects IR to do all or perhaps even most of the tasks listed. Most of the tasks on her list are

indicators of a well managed institution. Someone needs to do them. This is true in universities with large IR offices and in colleges with a distributed IR function and little or no IR office. In fact, with some adaptation, this list would be a great start for an institution preparing for an accreditation visit. One may want to add the question "Who does this?" with the understanding that in some cases there may not be an immediate answer. Some rewording would be required but we who have worked with self-studies are committed to the great value of having a solid starting point.

Insights from the Institutional Research Knowledge Base on Understanding Chief Executive Needs
By Stephen Chambers

Institutional Researcher, Know Thy Self

Within academe, institutional researchers are inherently driven by the impulse to categorize and classify the immediate world around them. This is, perhaps, an inescapable destiny for a group with a propensity to harness computing power to conduct research and to reason analytically. Within his categorization of tiers of organizational intelligence, Terenzini (1993) defines these traits as "technical/analytical intelligence."

Exhaustive self-critical reflections are valuable exercises for the institutional research profession. As Volkwein and LaNasa (1999) said, the results provide "information that enhances the profession." The examination of institutional research as a discipline in and of itself is a vehicle for its practitioners to monitor subtle as well as sweeping changes in the practice. The big picture becomes more clearly focused through self-assessments because "understanding institutional research can be seen as part of a more complex understanding of the organizational, management, and performance patterns in postsecondary education" (Peterson, 1999). Peterson, among others, considers the accumulating institutional research knowledge base "helpful as we look to the future." The Institutional Research Activities Inventory by Mary Louise Gerek contained in this *IR Applications* issue is a tool institutional research personnel can use to measure internal assessments, to promote greater understanding of IR functions within institutions, and to reveal areas for operational improvement within the IR office itself.

Institutional research scholarship also benefits the individual institutional researcher. The growing body of IR literature is a resource for practical techniques, and it defines the theoretical and philosophical framework that underlies the profession's practice. For people new to institutional research it is a resource for best practices and suggestions for future research directions. At the same time it assures novices of the vital role they play within the greater higher education enterprise.

Meaningful Interaction with Decision Makers

The institutional researcher as administrative leadership support person is an emerging theme in the literature. When effective in this capacity, institutional researchers contribute substantially to good policy formulation even though they themselves do not hold policy making authority. In their overview of the institutional researcher's role in planning and policy analysis Porter, Fenske and Keller (2001) draw upon two related studies. In the first study, Nagel (1986) states that while the decision maker commissions the analysis to be conducted, a successful end result of that analysis depends upon the analyst's ability to design an acceptable study that can be incorporated into the policy setting process. In the second study, Hanson (1999) discusses basic steps in policy analysis stipulating that "decision makers must identify the purpose and goals of the research;" however, the analyst must seek "interaction and dialog with the primary decision makers." Hanson holds that validation from decision makers is the final step in assuring that the research produced a "desired and workable policy."

According to Terenzini (1993), meaningful interactions with decision makers that lead to successful research end results depend upon the institutional researcher's competency in two specific tiers of organizational intelligence; namely "issues intelligence" and "context intelligence." Terenzini maintains that competency in these two areas demands a clear understanding of the issues and contexts surrounding policy formulation, the in-depth study of higher education in general, and familiarity with the institution itself, including sensitivity to the ways in which the institution is influenced by its geographic locale and by the communities it serves. Achieving competency in "issues" and in "context intelligence" is a more painstaking and time consuming process than that of acquiring "technical/analytical intelligence." However, according to Terenzini, competency in all tiers of organizational intelligence is necessary if institutional researchers are to produce good research, and if they are to obtain validation from their institutional leaders that their research results are valuable and useful.

Most would agree with Porter, Fenske, and Keller (2001) that an institution's CEO is the person who "has authority and influence far beyond that of any other single group" representing the institution. In that sense, the CEO is the ultimate person to validate IR research results. But how can institutional researchers support their CEOs in their mission to improve higher education in general and to improve their own institution's effectiveness in particular?

Dialog with CEO's about IR Effectiveness

To answer this question, the 45th annual AIR Forum hosted a panel of CEOs from a variety of institutions who presented their viewpoints on the role of the IR office in promoting institutional effectiveness. The panel was

comprised of: Ellen Earle Chaffee, President, Valley City State University; Rufus Glasper, Chancellor, Maricopa County Community College District; Albert K. Karnig, President, California State University, San Bernardino; Mary E. Lyons, President, University of San Diego; John B. Romo, President/Superintendent, Santa Barbara City College.

Drawing primarily on experiences from their respective institutions, the panelists concentrated on the following topics: The definition of institutional effectiveness; learning assessment; emerging issues; effectiveness of institutional researchers; CEO effectiveness in matters of public interest; and issues concerning the three A's of demonstrating effectiveness — access, affordability, and accountability.

Defining Effectiveness

The CEOs admitted that the definition of institutional effectiveness is still evolving, but they anticipate a more complete and meaningful working definition to emerge in the near future. Each acknowledged that constituents and the public play a large role in defining "effectiveness" for higher education and in ways that reflect their interests. They conceded that some of those interests could conflict and make it difficult to arrive at a uniform definition of effectiveness for an individual institution let alone for all of higher education. The chief executives emphasized that, in specific localities, institutions must be adroit at picking up on, piecing together, and placing a form around what others believe demonstrates the traits of "effective" deeds and goals.

Panelists noted that today's accreditation agencies emphasize assessment and outcomes measurement efforts as primary considerations for judging academic quality and effectiveness. Given this trend, a definition of institutional effectiveness must incorporate student learning outcome measures and institutional efforts to improve educational programs based on collected assessment information. Ellen Earle Chaffee elaborated that while the student assessment facet of defining institutional effectiveness "is a good first step" and is sufficient "as the drumbeat for now," the next phase in refining the definition of effectiveness must center on evaluation of outcome goals that include social outcomes and social impact. In her opinion, assessment of higher education's contributions in moving youth, adults, communities and the nation ahead is inadequate. By addressing in a quantifiable manner essential societal concerns such as access to college, affordability of college, achievement of broader college participation, and workforce preparation, higher education better positions itself to earn satisfactory resource allocations from the public sector.

Along similar lines, John B. Romo stated that institutions "should be able to show we are effective in the delivery of educational services." He commented that institutional

researchers are in a good position to help frame internal information for external uses. He noted that anecdotal information was once beneficial in portraying college activities. In his estimation these isolated stories told to the community are less convincing than they used to be. Evidence of a college's effectiveness can no longer be framed by a few selected cases of success. "Funding decisions are no longer available through legislation under this banner." Instead, he insisted, public trust is gained from presenting hard evidence that an institution is meeting its commitments on an institution-wide basis.

Rufus Glasper provided an example of a successful funding decision in which the institutional research office played a part. In November 2005, the voters of Maricopa County, Arizona approved a near one billion dollar bond for the community college system. Demonstrating system-wide effectiveness to the voting public was a key to its passage. He recalled how "we documented giving back to the community." He credited institutional research for providing pertinent information to help sway the decision. It's about "giving and understanding the community," he said, and "showing your constituents that higher education has a good grasp of the current situation and has in hand a plan worthy of an investment."

Promoting Learning Assessment

The discussion confirmed the link between institutional effectiveness and proper assessment of student learning. It was pointed out to the chief executives that assessment and institutional research practitioners still encounter varying degrees of resistance among some faculty concerning the value of conducting assessment. Yet, student learning and outcomes are most closely associated with the work fulfilled by faculty. The CEOs were asked to comment on how institutional researchers can convey the importance of good assessment practices to faculty without alienating them.

Albert K, Karnig responded by observing, half seriously, that tenured faculty earned "the right to be alienated." He remarked that many senior faculty believe that "we already test" and that "students –not faculty-are responsible for student learning." One of the major ways to address the need for assessment, in his opinion, is to point out that there is a "sea of change" occurring within higher education. He suggested that by drawing attention to some of the major forces of changes, including instruction using multimedia technology in the classroom; availability of earning degrees online; the large numbers of first-generation, immigrant and non-traditional students, it is possible to show senior faculty that assessment plays a vital role in managing change and making it work to the benefit of students within an enterprise that has grown more complex.

Karnig maintained that "it is not up to institutional researchers to communicate the message" that

assessment is a priority. "Those who speak with authority, such as presidents, provosts, and deans," according to Karnig, "must talk to senior faculty about assessment on the basis of principle." His view is that success in this area can be significantly improved by "appointing the kind of student learning czar" who is credible, respected, a faculty member in his or her own right, and who is authorized to put incentives into place. These incentives might include sending faculty to professional development settings, course reductions for faculty who oversee assessment, and additional monetary support for departments that complete assessment plans.

Emerging Issues

The chief executives underscored a prominent dialog currently underway within the United States that addresses the looming societal concerns that Ellen Earle Chaffee mentioned earlier. Rufus Glasper pointed to several higher education summits held with state governors, state education executives, and representatives from kindergarten through grade 16. Reports by the 2002 Governor's Education Symposium sponsored by the James B. Hunt, Jr. Institute for Educational Leadership and Policy and the 2005 National Commission on Accountability in Higher Education serve as examples of broader discussions that are transpiring in higher education.

The chief executives spoke of a bigger and broader policy agenda that is being formulated. According to the panelists, getting youth into college, enabling students to finish programs within a reasonable amount of time, keeping the cost of college in line with family incomes, and expanding the economic and civic benefits of college to a larger segment of society are its paramount concerns. It is clear to these chief executives that the higher education community is not driving this agenda. It is, therefore, imperative in their opinions that academicians listen earnestly to external voices and hear their concerns. Glasper insisted that if higher education does not cooperate in this policy development process, "there will be new pressure at the federal level" to force higher education into compliance.

There is an outcry for higher education to re-examine its priorities and bring them closer to the needs of the American population. Yet, progress towards these ends may prove elusive. Glasper said there is too much talk within the academy that deals only "with resource allocations and choices." He mentioned how he has stressed program reviews within his college system. He offered generous incentives to departments that would "initiate change." The results, in his estimation "were dismal."

IR's Role in Effectiveness

The chief executives provided a number of ideas on

ways in which institutional researchers can assist them in carrying out activities leading to institutional effectiveness. They also relayed hands-on advice concerning ways in which institutional researchers could improve their practice of institutional research.

Mary E. Lyons and John B. Romo recalled how early in their current presidential tenures they acted to advance the prominence of the institutional research office. Lyons said that institutional research was located several layers down in the administrative structure. Today, the institutional research office reports to the president and the IR director is a member of the executive team. Romo's institutional researcher is also a part of his executive team. Romo said that because his institutional researcher "is not pitching an interest" and has the ability to "step back" and look at a situation "objectively," that person is good at approaching problems, and she is "organizationally and culturally" prepared to assist Romo in meeting his needs for information.

Both Lyons and Romo agreed that having institutional research present at executive team meetings is a sound management practice. The institutional researcher is kept in the loop surrounding institutional level concerns and can gear his or her work to better address institutional needs or concerns. With IR present at the executive table decision makers are spared from entering into numerical guessing games concerning institutional data pertinent to their decision-making and planning discussions.

Lyons' advice to institutional researchers is "be ahead of the curve, not behind it." The institutional researcher can accomplish this objective by "putting yourself in position to get attention." She suggested that institutional researchers are well positioned to advance creative ideas and new approaches for the betterment of a campus because they have a perspective of the institution on macro and micro levels. For example, institutional researchers can see patterns in the data at institutional, departmental, and student levels that may not be readily apparent to people whose work focuses on more specific areas of institutional operations.

Lyons stressed that institutional researchers must be proactive in putting their information out for consumption by the campus community. One example she gave was the "Trends in Higher Education" notices that her institutional researcher periodically distributes across campus to summarize national data on current topics in higher education. These notices are valuable because they help keep faculty and staff up-to-date on pertinent higher education matters. Lyons believes that by disseminating information on topics such as access to and affordability of a college education, the institutional researcher increases campus awareness of important issues and simultaneously elevates the profile of the institutional research office on campus.

The chief executives urged institutional researchers to go beyond the traditional pursuits of their offices. Albert K.

Karnig challenged institutional researchers to "break out of the routine," and to be creative and thoughtful in bringing the "stuff outside the box" to the executive's attention "We won't be punitive if we disagree with what is presented," he insisted. Furthermore, the executive's reactions may lead to better results and better information products in the long run.

The panelists agreed that institutional researchers should take responsibility for asking their presidents, "Was I effective?" Glasper and Karnig noted that their briefcases contained several IR reports that they had carried around for days seeking an opportunity to review the documents. They noted that all too often reports that have the potential to be useful and to lead to institutional improvements do not get proper attention because the institutional researcher fails to follow up on them.

Karnig suggested that institutional researchers, "Ask the CEO, what else do IR reports need to be effective and where should certain reports be disseminated?" There exists, he said, a misconception that college presidents are not approachable. "We are accessible," he insisted. Furthermore, "we have personal stories and insights that can improve formal IR reports for consumption." Elaborating on this theme, some of the other executives expressed the idea that good reporting often requires a dialog between CEOs and institutional researchers to identify ways to improve IR office reporting and analyses.

Concerning IR's collaboration with senior administrators, Karnig commented that institutional researchers should not be surprised by the intended uses of data. Too many times institutional researchers do not understand the context for their research. A case in point occurred in the late 1980s when Karnig was an associate vice president for academic affairs at Arizona State University (ASU), and the institutional research office reported to him. After ASU became a member of the PAC 10 athletic conference, he asked the IR office to prepare comparative statistics for the other institutions within the conference. The institutional researcher expressed concerned about the request because many of the other universities were not "peer institutions." Karnig was surprised by this reaction because the information was going to be used to advance the institution. The point, Karnig added, is that institutional data may be employed in various beneficial ways and IR units must have a broad understanding of how and why to apply data. Karnig went on to explain that, in his experience, institutional researchers tend to be competent technically in the areas of data collection, computer use, and statistical analysis, yet they sometimes fail to understand the complexities involved in running a large scale modern academic institution. As a result, they sometimes fail to frame their analysis in the proper context.

Romo urged institutional researchers to take a lesson from his institution, Santa Barbara City College (SBCC) where "we strive to be the best." A tactic his institutional research office uses to make this the "external message" for SBCC, is to "look for evidence to support that statement." It is easy to find examples of notable achievement because "excellence is around us." Showcasing "remarkable achievements" inspires others associated with the institution to "settle for no less than the exceptional." They will see themselves as a member of an extraordinary group of people who work and study together in an extraordinary place. Once this happens, Romo concluded, it is easier to "be the best" in the eyes of the rest of the world.

Some Guidelines and Strategies

Critical self-assessments on the roles of institutional research provide invaluable insights that can assist practitioners in becoming productive and successful. Peterson's "three tiers of organizational intelligence" and Delaney's overview of opportunities and challenges facing institutional researchers describe the profession within the larger framework of contemporary higher education. Their big picture insights offer fundamental wisdom that institutional researchers can draw upon to become more effective in their careers.

Peterson reminds institutional researchers that their ability to influence decision making depends on their technical skills and more importantly on their ability to develop competencies in "issues and context intelligence" that will ultimately produce research end-results that decision makers will validate. Albert K. Karnig's caution that institutional researchers often fall short of understanding the complexities involved in running large scale academic operations, even if they are technically competent, is a wake-up call for institutional researchers to improve their competencies in "issues and context intelligence." By inviting their institutional researcher to attend CEO's leadership meetings, Mary E. Lyons and John B. Romo show the kind of meaningful CEO-to-IR dialog that can develop when an institutional researcher is competent in the three tiers of organizational intelligence described by Terenzini. Rufus Glasper's successful bond election demonstrates how presenting the appropriate hard evidence, gathered by institutional researchers, earns public trust for the institution.

Volkwein reminds institutional researchers that decision makers devote much of their time to external stakeholders who in turn wield considerable influence over internal institutional conditions. He holds that access, affordability and accountability are pressing external issues on the minds of decision makers, and as such, must be priorities for institutional researchers. Ellen Earle Chaffee stressed the fact that institutional evaluation and improvement must be based on social outcomes and on social impact factors.

The presidents urged IR practitioners to focus on the institution-specific definition of institutional effectiveness, taking into account all constituencies. Societal concerns

such as access, affordability and workforce preparation are paramount among issues that must be addressed. They suggested engaging faculty to examine the changing culture of higher education, including innovations in classroom technology, online degree programs, and increased participation by first-generation, immigrant, and other non-traditional students. They made suggestions for how institutional researchers can improve their usefulness to college and university CEOs. Those suggestions include 1) Maintaining objectivity, 2) "Be ahead of the curve, not behind it," 3) Stay aware of trends at the national, state, local, and institutional levels, 4) Break out of the routine, 5) Understand the context of your institution by collaborating with senior administrators, and 6) Participate in self-assessment practices.

How does the institutional researcher and IR as a profession address the challenges presented to us by the presidents? Responses can be viewed in light of two references that were written by professionals in the field. The first is the article in *Research in Higher Education* by Terenzini referenced above.

The second is a monograph published by the Association for Institutional Research (AIR) in 2004, written by Gerry McLaughlin and Rich Howard titled *People, Processes, and Managing Data, Second Edition*. A key message in this monograph is that in today's world, change is the standard. We must survive in the face of this change, otherwise we become obsolete. Applying this thought to managing people, processes, and data, the authors state that the ultimate measure of success in creating a management information infrastructure is the extent to which data are used in decision making. They state, "A key to organizational challenge is to make better decisions and provide better support for stakeholders (p.8). The role of the institutional researcher is that of information broker. Their work offers guidelines for enhancing that role to develop organizations that incorporate good practices to achieve the stated goal.

1. Maintain objectivity

It is a long-held tenet of the institutional research community that objectivity in our work must be maintained. In the statement *The Nature and Role of Institutional Research – Memo to a College or University* (1970)**,** Joe Saupe says "Specifically, the institutional researcher should be as objective, detached, thorough, and systematic as any other researcher." The Code of Ethics of the Association for Institutional Research (1992, 2001) states that members of the profession should "approach all assignments with an unbiased attitude and strive to gather evidence fairly and accurately" as well as "be particularly sensitive to avoid personal conflicts of interest when performing services." McLaughlin and Howard (2004) assert that the IR office provides a credible, ethical source of information for

managers, remaining sensitive to the gray area between slanting data and supporting institutional decisions (p.62).

2. "Be ahead of the curve, not behind it"

Responding to this recommendation requires skills that would probably fall into the 2nd and 3rd tiers of Terenzini's hierarchy. Certainly knowledge acquired through study and on-the-job training would be involved, but also wisdom about what is important and how that is communicated is necessary. Understanding what is taking place both on- and off-campus related to emerging issues is needed. These might include the implementation of new federal guidelines for human resources reporting or the appointment of a new business dean with entrepreneurial ideas. Anticipate what is happening through reading national, local, institutional, and educational newspapers and journals. Dialog with your campus and local or state colleagues to learn their perspective on what the emerging issues are. McLaughlin and Howard encourage institutional research professionals to get out and meet people; develop a vision of where the institution is going, what needs to be done to get there, and the challenges to be faced. Then develop studies, projects, and task groups to identify the necessary information, time frame, and costs associated with that vision (p.66).

3. Stay aware of trends at the national, state, local, and institutional levels

Using Terenzini's issues intelligence the IR professional can address this presidential challenge by knowing the sources of longitudinal data and being able to present them with the appropriate perspective to the senior administration at their institution. Familiarity with national databases such as the Peer Analysis System is an important skill to have within the institutional research office. Access to historical data for the institution is key to maintaining your thumb on its pulse. McLaughlin and Howard advise keeping a log of institutional data requests that assist in identifying local trends and developing prototype responses.

4. Break out of the routine

Another way to express this challenge is be proactive. Anticipating the needs of the institution implies an understanding of its history and culture and of its constituents, including faculty, students, trustees, and legislators, among others. It also requires wisdom and keen insight to provide information before it is deemed necessary by a senior manager. These are skills that would be present in Terenzini's third tier of contextual intelligence. McLaughlin and Howard observe that one of the functions in which the data broker (the institutional researcher) is involved is information planning in which

he/she helps to anticipate changing information needs. It is their role to spearhead the collection of new data in a rational, systematic way (p. 44).

5. Understand the context of your institution by collaborating with senior administrators

In our role as data brokers, we must understand where others are coming from. Perspectives in an institution are driven by where a person sits, and everyone considers their perspective the accurate one. Institutional researchers have the opportunity to meld these perspectives, but they must listen and understand varying viewpoints. The role of the broker is to participate in the framing of the questions, to integrate and analyze data from various sources to address the questions, and to communicate to managers potential responses to the question for use in decision making. The broker must interpret the data within the context of the institution's business rules, thereby recognizing differences in perspective across the institution (McLaughlin and Howard, p.43).

6. Participate in self-assessment practices

In order to present a credible persona on campus it is important that institutional research offices engage in the very practice that they purport to support. It is important to understand the types of evaluative efforts we should undertake and how to communicate the results of them with the appropriate individuals on campus. This type of undertaking requires all three tiers of Terenzini's hierarchy of abilities. McLaughlin and Howard urge the institutional researcher, or data broker, to develop the skills necessary to provide the data and information necessary to inform credible decision-making processes (p.14). Ensuring that the office is equipped and competent is paramount in achieving the level of excellence needed to impact the organization in which we do our business.

To this end, Appendix I offers an excellent inventory for institutional research offices to begin their reviews. The activities included are important aspects of fulfilling the challenges set before us by the panel of presidents at the 2005 Forum.

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APPENDIX I

Institutional Research Activities Inventory
Mary Louise Gerek

Institutional research is the sum total of all activities directed at describing the full spectrum of functions (educational, administrative, and support) occurring within a college or university. Institutional research activities examine those functions in their broadest definitions, and embrace data collection and analytical strategies in support of decision-making at the institution. (Middaugh, Trusheim, and Bauer, 1994)

The practice of institutional research varies greatly across higher education. The role of an individual office develops from the institution's character and size, the office location within the institutional administrative structure, the staffing of various reporting/research functions, and the balance of external reporting with original research. Activities that are centrally located in the institutional research office on one campus may be distributed throughout several offices on another campus. Regardless of the structure, the range of activities in any IR office is broad, calling for diverse management, technical, and analytical skills. This IR Inventory is developed within the traditional IR office perspective. When the IR function is distributed across the campus, the items apply to the specific office performing that function.

The Institutional Research Activities Inventory is designed to be a tool to evaluate the activities of an IR office and potentially answer the following:

"Are we doing the right stuff?"
"Are we doing what we do well?"
"What else should we be doing?"
"What activities are no longer needed?"

It is very likely that no single IR office does all of the activities contained in the list; nor is this list necessarily exhaustive. However, those activities that are done need to be assessed on their appropriateness for each office, and to shed light on areas that may need strengthening.

The Inventory is divided into 13 major sections. Each section will have a rationale to explain the importance of that area within the practice of institutional research. Specific areas of activities are delineated with an area to check the status of that activity in your office. If through the evaluation process, you decide action is needed on a particular section, the IR office staff can work together to develop an action plan.

General institutional research references are listed at the end of the Inventory. These supply the background information you need to develop action plans for specific activities. Also, the detailed references point to further reading on specific topics. The author hopes you find this tool useful as an assessment of your office.

Note: This inventory was inspired by *AACRAO's Professional Development Guidelines for Registrars: A Self-Audit* (2000). The American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers. The structure of the Inventory is used with permission of AACRAO.

1) Institutional Research Office Mission and Structure
   a) Philosophy and Mission

Rationale: An office mission statement first ties the IR office activities to the institution's mission and goals. IR staff can see a direct link between their activities and the mission of the college/university, so everyone is working toward the same goals. Also, a mission statement serves as the basis for the development of goals and objectives against which progress can be measured.

A philosophy provides an IR office a conceptual model for the analysis of institutional functions. It also requires monitoring ongoing developments in the IR field to keep the philosophy consistent with current theory and practice.

Describe the process used to develop a mission statement and/or philosophy for the institutional research function._____

_____

_____

Questions	Yes	No	Action Needed	N/A
1. Does the IR office have a mission statement?	___	___	___	___
2. Is the mission statement consistent with the institution's mission statement?	___	___	___	___
3. Has the mission statement been reviewed in the last three years to keep it current with any changes in the institution?	___	___	___	___
4. Is the mission statement communicated to employees?	___	___	___	___
5. Is the mission statement communicated to the rest of the College /University ?	___	___	___	___
6. Is the mission statement periodically reviewed and updated as needed?	___	___	___	___
7. Do the employees reflect the philosophy of the mission statement in their work?	___	___	___	___
8. Does the IR office have a conceptual framework for the analysis of institutional functions that is based on current theory and practice in institutional research?	___	___	___	___

   b) Organization

Rationale: The location of the IR office within the organizational structure impacts the role the IR function has within the institution. It is important for the IR staff to understand the development of that role in carrying out its assignments, and interacting with other areas of the college/university.

Describe location of the institutional research office within the College's/ University's organizational structure.
_____
_____
_____

			Action	
Questions	Yes	No	Needed	N/A
1. Does the mission statement reflect the location of the IR office in the institutional structure?	___	___	___	___
2. Are the roles of the IR office consistent with the location of the office in the institutional structure?	___	___	___	___
3. Are there sufficient relationships built outside the immediate organizational bounds for the office to be effective?	___	___	___	___
4. Does the IR staff have smooth working relationships with other administrative units?	___	___	___	___
5. Does the IR staff have smooth working relationships with academic units?	___	___	___	___

c) Planning and Budgeting

Rationale: Planning within the IR office provides a structure to its workload. This plan can be simple and straightforward, or more complex with ties to institutional strategic plans. The critical factor is to have the planning process tied to budget requests and tied to an assessment to ensure the appropriate support for the activities required.

Describe the IR planning and budget process.
_____
_____
_____

			Action	
Questions	Yes	No	Needed	N/A
1. Does the IR office have a planning process for its activities?	___	___	___	___
2. Does the IR office have a budget process to support its activities?	___	___	___	___
3. Does the IR office regularly assess its activities?	___	___	___	___
4. Are the results of the assessment built into the planning and budgeting process?	___	___	___	___

d) Personnel

Rationale: Having the appropriate balance of personnel and skills is critical to an IR office's ability to support the institution's needs.

Describe the IR office management staff._____
_____
_____

Describe the IR office research/analytical/technical staff._____
_____
_____

Describe the IR office support staff._____
_____
_____
_____

			Action	
Questions	Yes	No	Needed	N/A
1. Do the qualifications of the staff meet the requirements of the activities of the IR office?	___	___	___	___
2. Do the skills of the staff meet the requirements of the activities of the IR office?	___	___	___	___
3. Is the staffing level of the IR office reviewed regularly?	___	___	___	___
4. Is the staffing level of the IR office sufficient to meet the demands made on the office?	___	___	___	___
5. Are there clear job descriptions for each staff member against which they are evaluated ?	___	___	___	___
6. Are the job descriptions reviewed periodically for task content and skill level requirements?	___	___	___	___
7. Is there a professional development plan in place for IR personnel?	___	___	___	___
8. Is there travel money in the budget to support professional development?	___	___	___	___

Section Notes: Any other issues that came out of discussions regarding IR office mission and structure.

2) Support Institutional Planning and Policy Analysis

Rationale: Many IR offices participate in the institution planning process. Policy analysis plays a role in planning and assessment at both the institutional and the system levels. Activities can include comparative analyses, environmental scanning and the use of national databases available on the Web.

Describe the IR office's role in planning and policy analysis at your institution:_____
_____
_____

a) Comparative Analyses

Rationale: Many issues facing a college/university require internal information be put into an external context. The selection of a comparison group and its appropriateness for the task is an important, and potentially, very political process in producing useful and relevant comparisons. Institutional research personnel should know how to build a comparison group and obtain relevant data for analyses supporting planning and decision-making.

Describe the process(es) used to select comparison groups. _____
_____
_____

	Questions	Yes	No	Action Needed	N/A
1.	Does the IR office use comparative analysis?	___	___	_____	___
2.	Does the IR office have institutional comparison group(s) established?	___	___	_____	___
3.	Were campus stakeholders involved in the development of the list(s)?	___	___	_____	___
4.	Are comparative data used routinely in institutional planning?	___	___	_____	___
5	Does the institution know its Carnegie categories and their interpretation?	___	___	_____	___

Answer the following questions about various types of comparison groups: (For a description of various groups see Teeter, D.J. and Brinkman ,P.T. (2003). Peer Institutions. In *The Primer for Institutional Research*, W.E. Knight, Ed., Tallahassee, FL: Association for Institutional Research.)

	Does the IR office have:	Peer	Competitive	Aspirational	Jurisdictional	Other
1.	An established list					
2.	Routine reporting strategy					
3.	Periodic reporting strategy					
4.	Data sources:					
	IPEDS					
	Other NCES					
	NSF					
	State data					
	System data					
	Consortium data					
	CDS Exchange					
	US News data					
	Other_____					
5.	Action needed					

b) Projections

Rationale: IR staff may be asked to model existing data into the future for various reasons. These projection models can vary in size and sophistication by institution, project and skills of the analyst.

Describe the role of IR staff in producing projections for the institution._____
_____
_____

	Questions	Yes	No	Action Needed	N/A
1.	Has the IR office developed a projection model?	___	___	_____	___
2.	Does the IR office maintain a projection model developed by another office?	___	___	_____	___
3.	Are adequate supporting data available?	___	___	_____	___
4.	Are the supporting data generated by IR?	___	___	_____	___

c) Environmental Scanning

Rationale: Changes in the higher education regulatory and economic environment are occurring at a rapidly increasing rate. Decision-makers require information about these changes to understand impacts to the institution and plan response strategies. Environmental scanning keeps an eye on the horizon of change, providing information for the planning process.

Describe the strategy for environmental scanning.
_____
_____
_____

	Questions	Yes	No	Action Needed	N/A
1.	Does the IR office have a plan for environmental scanning?	___	___	_____	___
2.	Does the IR staff keep current on the issues in higher education through reading periodical publications?	___	___	_____	___
3.	Does the IR staff subscribe to appropriate electronic lists/sources for sharing information?	___	___	_____	___
4.	Does the IR staff have the time available to spend tracking external issues?	___	___	_____	___
5.	Does the IR staff have the resources to perform appropriate research on the impact of external changes on the institution?	___	___	_____	___
6.	Is there a plan for the distribution of environmental scanning information to institutional decision-makers?	___	___	_____	___

List the relevant publications/subscriptions/ memberships held by the IR office or the college/university library. _____
_____
_____

List other sources of external information, electronic or otherwise, that informs the staff to external issues:
_____
_____
_____

Section Notes: Any other issues that came out of discussions regarding support of planning and analysis.

3) Support Institutional Resource Management

Rationale: Depending on the reporting structure within the institution, an IR office may or may not have a role in the planning and allocation of resources for the institution. Resources are defined here as financial, physical and human resources.

a) Finance and Budgeting – Financial Resources

Rationale: Financial resources include revenue and expense, budget and financial analyses. These issues may be studied/reported from an institutional focus or a departmental/programmatic focus.

Describe IR's role in the budget process._____
_____
_____
_____

Questions	Yes	No	Action Needed	N/A
1. Does the IR office perform financial analysis at the institutional level?	___	___	___	___
2. Does the IR office perform financial analysis at the departmental/programmatic level?	___	___	___	___
3. Does the institution have a set of key performance indicators?	___	___	___	___
4. Does the IR office have a process to periodically report on performance indicators?	___	___	___	___
5. Does the IR office have access to the appropriate information to perform financial analysis?	___	___	___	___
6. Does the IR office supply information to those who are doing the financial analysis?	___	___	___	___
7. Does the IR staff review the definitions of information provided periodically with the financial analysts?	___	___	___	___
8. Does the IR staff receive copies of the final analyses to insure the information supplied is being used in appropriate ways?	___	___	___	___

b) Facility Utilization – Physical Resources

Rationale: Many IR office become involved in space planning and allocation which has the potential of significant impact on academic program planning and administrative operations. Institutional research brings a broad, institutional view to the discussions surrounding space allocation, as well as methodologies to study impacts of change.

Describe the role IR has in evaluating facility utilization:
_____
_____
_____

i) Classroom Utilization

Classrooms can include space used for any academic/ educational purpose, including standard classrooms, labs, computer labs, clinical labs, theaters, studios, etc.

Questions	Yes	No	Action Needed	N/A
1. Does the institution have clear definitions of classrooms/educational space?	___	___	___	___
2. Does the IR office have a systematic way of evaluating classroom utilization?	___	___	___	___
3. Has the IR office identified a institutional standard for classroom utilization?	___	___	___	___
4. Are utilization data used in institutional space/facilities planning?	___	___	___	___
5. Are utilization data used in departmental/ programmatic planning?	___	___	___	___

ii) Administrative Space Utilization

Administrative space is defined as staff offices, administrative office space, academic departmental space, storage space, public spaces.

Questions	Yes	No	Action Needed	N/A
1. Does the IR office have a systematic way of evaluating administrative space needs?	___	___	___	___
2. Has the IR office identified an institutional standard for administrative space utilization?	___	___	___	___
3. Are utilization data used in institutional space/facilities planning?	___	___	___	___
4. Are utilization data used in departmental/ operational planning?	___	___	___	___

c) Institutional Staffing Issues – Human Resources

Rationale: Institutional Research offices will have varying direct or indirect roles in staffing issues or reporting. This may be limited to the completion of the human resources surveys such as IPEDS, CUPA-HR, and AAUP, to complete staffing analyses.

Describe the role IR has in analyzing or reporting on institutional staffing issues._____
_____
_____

Questions	Yes	No	Action Needed	N/A
1. Is the IR office involved with evaluation of institutional staffing levels?	___	___	___	___
2. Does the IR office have access to appropriate information to perform staffing analyses?	___	___	___	___
3. Does the IR office have sources for comparative salary analyses?	___	___	___	___
4. Does the IR office participate in the analysis of job descriptions?	___	___	___	___
5. Does the IR office participate in benefits analysis?	___	___	___	___
6. Does the IR office work closely with other administrative offices in the execution of personnel activities?	___	___	___	___

Section Notes: Any other issues that came out of discussions regarding support of resource management. (IPEDS personnel reporting is addressed under the external reporting section. Issues may be noted here if relevant.)

4) Data Management

Rationale: An institutional research office accesses data from the institution's transactional systems to support the reporting activity. These data can be maintained locally or networked, in a simple relational database or a data warehouse, depending on the structure of the office and the complexity of the data.

The work of an institutional research office may also be greatly enhanced by direct access to the transactional system. Sometimes, the IR office is not granted direct access. In these instances, the IR personnel must work closely with the information technology personnel and those in the functional areas to obtain appropriate and timely data.

Regardless of their source, understanding the data

elements and how they are used requires knowledge of the college's operations and close working relationships with the operational offices in the college.

a) Data Acquisition and Storage

Rationale: Access to data requires knowledge of how information is gathered and stored on the source system, stable acquisition processes including verification of data elements, and preparation of the data for reporting.

Describe how IR obtains institutional data for analysis and reporting. _____
_____
_____

Questions	Yes	No	Action Needed	N/A
1. Does the IR office have access to the data it requires to perform its functions?	___	___	___	___
2. Does the institution have a data warehouse?	___	___	___	___
3. Does the IR office have access to the institutional data warehouse/archived data?	___	___	___	___
4. Does the IR office maintain its own data warehouse/archived data?	___	___	___	___
5. Does the IR office have direct access to the transactional system?	___	___	___	___
6. If there is no direct access, are the data transfer procedures timely and accurate?	___	___	___	___
7. Is the IR database set up for easy retrieval of information?	___	___	___	___
8. Is the IR database set up for automation of routine reports?	___	___	___	___
9. Is there a data dictionary of the data elements in the IR database?	___	___	___	___
10. Is there documentation of the process for adding data to the database?	___	___	___	___
11. Is there documentation of the rationale for the structure of the database?	___	___	___	___
12. Is there a system for routine backup of the data?	___	___	___	___
13. Is there an edit process for verification of incoming data?	___	___	___	___
14. Does the verification process include the appropriate operational offices?	___	___	___	___
15. Is the IR office in the communication loop for any changes in coding or data usage in the transactional database?	___	___	___	___
16. Does the IR office have a good working relationship with Information Systems/Technology personnel for addressing problems with the data or the processing?	___	___	___	___
17. Is there a process in place to assess IR's data acquisition processes?	___	___	___	___
18. Is there a process in place to assess IR's data storage and its security/ease of use?	___	___	___	___

b) Routine and Ad Hoc Reporting

Rationale: IR offices establish methods of providing information to various constituencies across their campus. Generalizability (application to users beyond initial initiator of the request) and reproducibility (produce consistent, comparable reports over time) are key features of an effective reporting system and is dependent upon the reliability and consistent structure of data storage.

Describe the IR standard reporting strategy. _____
_____
_____
_____

Describe the IR ad hoc reporting process. _____
_____
_____

Questions	Yes	No	Action Needed	N/A
1. Is the IR database set up for automation of routine reports?	___	___	___	___
2. Are there standard naming conventions used for data storage?	___	___	___	___
3. Are requests evaluated for their utility beyond the immediate request?	___	___	___	___
4. Are requests that can be used for broader distribution developed into routine reporting processes?	___	___	___	___
5. Can reports be reproduced across terms/years?	___	___	___	___
6. Is there a clear process for distribution of reports?	___	___	___	___
7. Are routine reporting strategies clearly documented?	___	___	___	___
8. Are reports available on an intranet?	___	___	___	___
9. Are reports available on the Web?	___	___	___	___
10. Does the IR office maintain its own Web page consistent with institutional policy?	___	___	___	___
11. Is there an established, published process for requesting ad hoc reports?	___	___	___	___
12. Does the IR database support easy ad hoc reporting?	___	___	___	___
13. Is the ad hoc reporting process documented?	___	___	___	___
14. Is there a system/process in place for tracking the status of ad hoc requests?	___	___	___	___
15. Are delays in delivering ad hoc reports communicated to the requestor?	___	___	___	___
16. Is there a storage/retrieval process for ad hoc reports so they may be available when requested again?	___	___	___	___
17. Is there a process in place to assess IR's reporting functions?	___	___	___	___

Section Notes: Any other issues that came out of discussions regarding support of data management.

5) Support of Institutional Accountability

Rationale: Institutional researchers can be involved in institutional accountability at various levels from institutional accreditation and specific program accreditation, to regulatory reporting, both federal and state, and external surveys.

a) Accreditation

Rationale: Preparation for accreditation visits can take years of campus-wide effort. Institutional research offices minimally supply data to a self-study process, and some offices even lead the self-study efforts. Familiarity with the accreditation requirements and processes are crucial in effective accreditation support.

Describe the role of IR in institutional accreditation.
_____
_____
_____

i) Institutional
List the associations/agencies that accredit the institution. _____
_____
_____

Questions	Yes	No	Action Needed	N/A
1. Does the IR office actively engage in the accreditation self-study process(es)?	____	____	_____	____
2. Are there clearly defined lines of responsibility for the maintenance of documents required for institutional accreditation?	____	____	_____	____
3. Is the IR office responsible for maintenance of documents required for institutional accreditation(s)?	____	____	_____	____
4. Does the IR office complete the accreditation annual survey(s) (for example, a regional association's Annual Institutional Profile)?	____	____	_____	____
5. Is the IR office familiar with the institutional accreditation requirements?	____	____	_____	____
6. Is IR's role in institutional accreditation(s) clearly defined?	____	____	_____	____
7. Is the IR office staffed appropriately to provide the defined support?	____	____	_____	____
8. Are the lines of authority and responsibility clearly defined for the leadership of the accreditation process?	____	____	_____	____

List the activities that IR performs on a continuing basis to support the accreditation process(es):_____
_____
_____

Questions	Yes	No	Action Needed	N/A
1. Does the IR office have a process in place to periodically evaluate ongoing accreditation support activities for usefulness?	____	____	_____	____
2. Does the IR office have a process in place to periodically evaluate ongoing accreditation support activities for relevance to accreditation standards?	____	____	_____	____
3. Are the academic deans/directors/department chairs requested to periodically evaluate the materials provided by IR for ongoing assessment and self-study?	____	____	_____	____
4. Are administrators requested to periodically evaluate the materials provided by IR for ongoing assessment and self study?	____	____	_____	____

ii) By Discipline
Rationale: Many institutions have academic programs/departments that are accredited by national professional organizations. Institutional research offices have varying roles in preparation for these accreditation processes. Also, the data required by the programs/departments will be very specific to that discipline, being outside of the "routine" reporting processes established.

Describe IR's role in program/departmental accreditation.
_____
_____
_____

List the disciplines and the accrediting bodies that accredit programs at your institution:_____
_____
_____
_____

Questions	Yes	No	Action Needed	N/A
1. Does the IR office know all agencies/organizations that accredit programs at the institution?	____	____	_____	____
2. Does the IR office provide specialized support to specific programs to aid in accreditation reporting?	____	____	_____	____
3. Does the IR office have a strategy for providing information to all programs that can be used for the accreditation process?	____	____	_____	____
4. Does the IR office have a process to evaluate the usefulness of the information provided to disciplines for accreditation purposes?	____	____	_____	____

b) External Reporting
Rationale: External reporting drives the central activities of many IR offices. Institutional research staff may serve as "keyholder" for the federal and state reporting, and may be the primary contact for external survey reporting. If not directly responsible, IR offices may provide some level of information to the process. Much of the data IR offices collect is used to respond to external reporting.

Describe IR's responsibility regarding external reporting for the institution._____
_____
_____

i) Federal
IPEDS Report Series
Who serves as the "keyholder" and has locking responsibility for the completion of IPEDS reports?
_____

Does the IR office:	Complete	Assist in Completion	Confirm Completion	No Responsibility	Other Office/s involved in response
1. Institutional Characteristics					
2. Completions					
3. Human Resources					
4. Fall Enrollment					
5. Finance					
6. Student Financial Aid					
7. Graduation Rate Survey					
8. Other_____					

Questions (complete an individual response for every IPEDS report completed by IR)

	Yes	No	Action Needed	N/A
1. Does the IPEDS reporting come directly from a frozen standardized census file?	___	___	___	___
2. Does the IPEDS reporting come from the IR database?	___	___	___	___
3. Does the IPEDS reporting come from the data warehouse?	___	___	___	___
4. Are the IPEDS reports automated?	___	___	___	___
5. Are the IPEDS reports reproducible if something happens to the primary data?	___	___	___	___
6. Are historical copies maintained by the IR office?	___	___	___	___
7. Is the IPEDS reporting process documented for each report?	___	___	___	___

ii) State
State Report Series
Who is the primary contact person for state reporting?

_____

List each state report and complete the grid.

Does the IR office:	Complete	Assist in Completion	Confirm Completion	No Responsibility	Other office/s involved in response
Report Name:					
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5. Add as many rows as appropriate.					

Questions (For every major external report done by IR complete the following set of questions)

	Yes	No	Action Needed	N/A
1. Does the state reporting come directly from the student transactional system?	___	___	___	___
2. Does the state reporting come from the IR database?	___	___	___	___
3. Does the state reporting come from the data warehouse?	___	___	___	___
4. Are the state reports automated?	___	___	___	___
5. Are the state reports reproducible if something happens to the primary data?	___	___	___	___
6. Are historical copies maintained by the IR office?	___	___	___	___
7. Is the reporting process documented for each report?	___	___	___	___

iii) Other
(1) Common Data Set

Questions	Yes	No	Action Needed	N/A
1. Is the IR office responsible for completion of the Common Data Set?	___	___	___	___
2. Is Admissions involved in completion?	___	___	___	___
3. Is Financial Aid involved in completion?	___	___	___	___
4. Is Student Affairs involved in completion?	___	___	___	___
5. Is Academic Affairs involved in completion?	___	___	___	___
6. Is Finance involved in completion?	___	___	___	___
7. Is the Common Data Set kept in an electronic format?	___	___	___	___
8. Is the Common Data Set posted on the institutional Web site?	___	___	___	___
9. Is the Common Data Set shared with other institutions?	___	___	___	___
10. Is the process for completion of the Common Data Set documented?	___	___	___	___
11. Is there a process for evaluating the completion process?	___	___	___	___

(2) External Surveys

Does the IR office:	Complete	Assist in Completion	Confirm Completion	No Responsibility	Other Office/s involved in response
1. Regional Accreditation Institutional Profile					
2. US News Main Statistical Survey					
3. US News Financial Aid Survey					
4. US News Finance Survey					
5. CUPA Survey					
6. AAUP Survey					
7. Guidebook surveys (List)					
Baron's					
Peterson's					
College Board					
ACT					
Other					
8. Other surveys:					

Section Notes: Any other issues that came out of discussions regarding support of institutional accountability.

6) Support of Institutional Effectiveness/Assessment
Rationale: Assessment is a required activity in higher education. Institutional research offices have varying roles in academic or administrative assessment, from addressing student learning outcomes to survey research of students, faculty, staff, alumni and employers.

a) Academic Assessment
Rationale: Required by external accreditations, a process to assess and review academic programs is a significant part of higher education. The role of institutional

research can range from administering assessment instruments to providing information from the research database to department chairs/program directors.

Describe IR's role in academic assessment._____
_____
_____
_____

Questions	Yes	No	Action Needed	N/A
1. Does the IR office provide information to academic departments/programs for assessment/review?	____	____	_____	____
2. Is the infomation standardized across all reporting units?	____	____	_____	____
3. Is the information customized for each reporting unit?	____	____	_____	____
4. Is the information tied to the institutional assessment questions?	____	____	_____	____
5. Is the information distributed on a standard schedule?	____	____	_____	____
6. Is there documentation of the reports distributed with the information?	____	____	_____	____
7. Is the information supplemented with ad hoc data?	____	____	_____	____
8. Does the IR office administer assessment tools/surveys?	____	____	_____	____
9. Does the IR office have responsibility for selecting assessment tools/surveys?	____	____	_____	____
10. Does the IR office have a process in place to evaluate the effectiveness of any assessment tools/surveys?	____	____	_____	____

List the tools/surveys administered for academic assessment including administration cycle: _____
_____
_____
_____

ii) Student Learning and Outcomes Assessment

Questions	Yes	No	Action Needed	N/A
1. Does the IR office participate in the measurement of student learning outcomes?	____	____	_____	____
2. Does the IR office collect data from those who measure student learning outcomes?	____	____	_____	____
3. Are student learning outcomes measured by each department/program?	____	____	_____	____
4. Are student learning outcomes measured for the institution?	____	____	_____	____
5. Are student learning outcomes measured for the general education/core curriculum?	____	____	_____	____
6. Does the IR office administer learning outcomes tools/surveys?	____	____	_____	____
7. Does the IR office participate in the distribution of the results of the learning outcomes tools/surveys?	____	____	_____	____
8. Is there documentation for the distribution of the results of the learning outcomes tools/surveys?	____	____	_____	____
9. Does the IR office have a process to evaluate the effectiveness of any learning outcomes tools/surveys?	____	____	_____	____

List the tools/surveys administered for learning outcomes including administration cycle: _____
_____
_____
_____

iii) Student Engagement

Questions	Yes	No	Action Needed	N/A
1. Does the IR office participate in measurement of student engagement?	____	____	_____	____
2. Does the institution administer Community College/National Survey of Student Engagement to assess engagement?	____	____	_____	____
3. Does the institution administer Faculty Survey of Student Engagement?	____	____	_____	____
4. Does the IR office participate in the administration of the engagement measurement tools/surveys?	____	____	_____	____
5. Does the IR office have access to the results from the engagement tools/surveys?	____	____	_____	____
6. Does the IR office participate in the distribution of the results from the engagement tools/surveys?	____	____	_____	____
7. Is there documentation for the distribution of the results of the engagement tools/surveys?	____	____	_____	____

List the tools/surveys administered for student engagement including the administration cycle: _____
_____
_____
_____

b) Administrative Assessment

Rationale: Administrative units can also benefit from assessment, and may be required to have an assessment plan as part of the accreditation standards. Much administrative assessment will require primarily internal information. However, institutional information can inform evaluation of various functions. Also IR personnel may have expertise in assessment practices that may assist offices in developing realistic assessment strategies.

Describe IR's role in administrative assessment.
_____
_____
_____

Questions	Yes	No	Action Needed	N/A
1. Is there an institutional program of administrative assessment?	____	____	_____	____
2. Is the IR office involved in the support of administrative assessment?	____	____	_____	____
3. Does the IR office provide routine data to support administrative assessment?	____	____	_____	____
4. Is the IR office involved in the measurement of student satisfaction?	____	____	_____	____
5. Is the IR office involved in the measurement of staff satisfaction?	____	____	_____	____

List the tools used in the measurement of student satisfaction including the administration cycle: _____

_____
_____
_____

c) Quality Improvement

Rationale: Some higher education institutions embraced the practices of assessment from a quality improvement perspective. It may take the form of historical models like Continuous Quality Improvement, Total Quality Management, or the Baldrige Criteria. In any form, it forces the institution to close the loop, to use the findings from assessment to inform change.

Describe the institutional quality improvement cycle.

_____
_____
_____

Questions	Yes	No	Action Needed	N/A
1. Is there an institutional commitment for quality improvement?	___	___	___	___
2. Is the IR staff familiar with quality improvement procedures/practices?	___	___	___	___
3. Does the IR office participate in the administration of the institutional quality program?	___	___	___	___
4. Does the IR office provide routine data to support the institutional quality program?	___	___	___	___
5. Does the IR office provide ad hoc data to support the institutional quality program?	___	___	___	___

Section Notes: Any other issues that came out of discussions regarding support of institutional effectiveness/assessment.

7) Support of Faculty Issues

Rationale: Issues surrounding faculty are of interest to both faculty and administration. Institutional Research offices can find themselves working on cost and productivity, salary, workload, governance, and faculty evaluations. Many of these issues are political in nature and require care in the handling and distribution of information.

Describe the relationship IR has with faculty leadership.

_____
_____
_____

a) Support of Describing Faculty Activity

Questions	Yes	No	Action Needed	N/A
1. Is the IR office involved in faculty issues?	___	___	___	___
2. Has the institution defined key indicators for measuring faculty activity/workload?	___	___	___	___
3. Does the IR office prepare faculty instructional activity/teaching workload information?	___	___	___	___
4. Does the IR office prepare faculty out-of-classroom activity/workload information?	___	___	___	___
5. Does the IR office prepare faculty salary analyses?	___	___	___	___
6. Does the IR office complete the national faculty salary surveys?	___	___	___	___
7. Does the IR office have access to the information necessary to complete the surveys?	___	___	___	___
8. Does the institution participate in the National Study of Instructional Cost and Productivity (Delaware/Kansas Study)?	___	___	___	___
9. Does the IR office prepare the response to the Delaware/Kansas Study?	___	___	___	___
10. Does the IR office have access to the information necessary to complete the survey?	___	___	___	___
11. Does the IR office participate in the process of faculty evaluations?	___	___	___	___
12. Are procedures in place to maintain confidentiality of all evaluation records?	___	___	___	___
13. Are there written procedures for the evaluation process?	___	___	___	___
14. Does the IR office administer a faculty/staff survey?	___	___	___	___
15. Does the IR office analyze the data from a faculty/staff survey?	___	___	___	___
16. Does the IR office make the results of the survey available to the campus community?	___	___	___	___

List the faculty survey/s administered on your campus:

_____
_____
_____

b) Support of Faculty Committees

Questions	Yes	No	Action Needed	N/A
1. Does the IR office support faculty committees?	___	___	___	___

List the faculty committees supported by Institutional Research:_____

_____
_____

Questions (For each major committee supported)	Yes	No	Action Needed	N/A
1. Are the relationships between IR and faculty committees clearly defined?	___	___	___	___
2. Are the responsibilities of the IR staff on faculty committees clearly defined?	___	___	___	___
3. Does the IR staff have access to the faculty leadership for resolution of roles and responsibilities?	___	___	___	___

Section Notes: Any other issues that came out of discussions regarding support of faculty issues.

8) Support of Student Recruitment

Rationale: Enrollment management starts with the recruitment of prospective students and ends with graduation. These functions may be joined together administratively in the institution, or be divided by function into separate offices or divisions. This section of the inventory is dedicated to student recruitment and enrollment.

a) Recruitment

Rationale: Analysis of the results of the recruiting efforts over time can assist in developing more targeted recruitment activities.

Describe the strategy for recruitment reporting. _____
_____
_____
_____

Questions	Yes	No	Action Needed	N/A
1. Does the IR office support undergraduate recruitment reporting?	___	___	___	___
2. Does the IR office work with the Undergraduate Admissions Office to develop recruitment reporting?	___	___	___	___
3. Does the IR office prepare benchmark reports for undergraduate recruitment reporting?	___	___	___	___
4. Does the IR office support graduate recruitment reporting (where appropriate)?	___	___	___	___
5. Does the IR office work with the graduate admissions office (or graduate schools) to develop recruitment reporting (where appropriate)?	___	___	___	___
6. Does the IR office prepare benchmark reports for graduate recruitment reporting (where appropriate)?	___	___	___	___
7. Is there a distribution plan for the recruitment information?	___	___	___	___
8. Is there a plan for evaluating the effectiveness of IR's support of recruitment?	___	___	___	___

b) Enrollment

Rationale: Enrolled students are the direct outcome of the recruitment process. Enrollment and its projection can be the interface between institutional research and the budget planning process.

Describe the strategy for enrollment reporting. _____
_____
_____
_____

Questions	Yes	No	Action Needed	N/A
1. Is there a reporting strategy for enrollment reporting each term?	___	___	___	___
2. Is the enrollment reported at the same point in time each term?	___	___	___	___
3. Are there benchmark times and a census file established for judging performance against previous years (milestones)?	___	___	___	___
4. Are the enrollment reports tied to the budget?	___	___	___	___
5. Are the reported enrollments reconciled with the Registrar or the Bursar?	___	___	___	___
6. Is there a clear distribution process for all enrollment reports?	___	___	___	___
7. Are the reports distributed in a timely manner?	___	___	___	___
8. Is there a plan to evaluate the enrollment reporting process?	___	___	___	___

Section Notes: Any other issues that came out of discussions regarding support of recruitment.

9) Support of Student Flow

Rationale: The next stage of Enrollment Management pertains to the various paths students use to navigate the institution. On this path, the student interacts with faculty and the curriculum and staff providing student services.

a) Introduction to College Culture

Rationale: The first year on campus for the undergraduate student is considered critical in the development of a successful student. Many publications have addressed issues surrounding the first year experience of students. Institutional Research offices can be involved formally or informally in the evaluation of first-year programs.

Describe the strategy for reporting on student transition and progress. _____
_____
_____

Questions	Yes	No	Action Needed	N/A
1. Does the IR office assist in the assessment of programs that introduce new undergraduate students to the institution?	___	___	___	___
2. Does the institution have a uniquely identified undergraduate first-year program?	___	___	___	___
3. Does the IR office participate in the assessment of the first-year program?	___	___	___	___
4. Are all assessment projects approved by the Institutional Review Board?	___	___	___	___
5. Does the IR office assist in the assessment of programs that introduce new graduate students to the institution?	___	___	___	___

b) Student Learning

Rationale: Student learning may be part of the assessment standards. Student learning was addressed in the assessment section, but also has a role in student flow and the experience of student life.

i) Academic Programming – Curriculum

Describe the role of IR in the assessment of student learning in general/core education. _____

_____

_____

Questions	Yes	No	Action Needed	N/A
1. Does the IR office support the faculty's assessment of the general education/core curriculum?	___	___	___	___
2. Is there a process in place to evaluate the usefulness of the information provided?	___	___	___	___
3. Does the IR office support the faculty's assessment of departmental curricula?	___	___	___	___
4. Is the role of the IR office in curriculum evaluation clearly defined?	___	___	___	___
5. Is there a process in place to evaluate the effectiveness of the evaluation procedures?	___	___	___	___

ii) Student Life

Describe IR's role in the assessment of student learning in student life._____

_____

_____

Questions	Yes	No	Action Needed	N/A
1. Does the IR office support student development / student affairs activities?	___	___	___	___
2. Is the role of the IR office in student activities reporting clearly defined?	___	___	___	___
3. Does the IR office assist in assessment of campus climate?	___	___	___	___
4. Does the IR office assist with the assessment of student satisfaction?	___	___	___	___
5. Does the IR office assist with the development of persistence profiles?	___	___	___	___
6. Does the IR office assist with the development of student profiles who leave?	___	___	___	___

c) Attrition/Retention/Completion

Rationale: Attrition studies (retention) are a focus of institutional concern and an activity of many institutional research offices. Completion for some cohorts is one of the IPEDS reports

Describe the strategy for attrition/retention/completion reporting. _____

_____

_____

Questions	Yes	No	Action Needed	N/A
1. Does the IR office participate in committees addressing attrition /graduation?	___	___	___	___
2. Is the role of the IR office in attrition /graduation work clearly defined?	___	___	___	___
3. Is there a process for collecting departure information from students leaving the institution prior to completion?	___	___	___	___
4. Does the IR office have access to the departure information?	___	___	___	___
5. Is a reporting process in place to share information with the appropriate offices?	___	___	___	___
6. Is the IR office part of a data exchange for retention/graduation data?	___	___	___	___
7. Does the IR office do studies on retention/graduation	___	___	___	___
8. Does the IR office have a documented process for distributing attrition reports?	___	___	___	___
9. Is there a plan for evaluating the attrition reporting process?	___	___	___	___

Section Notes: Any other issues that came out of discussions regarding support of student flow.

10) Support of Beyond Completion

Rationale: Another outcome measure for institutional effectiveness is alumni success. Information can be collected from alumni at various points for different uses. Employer surveys can also be useful in evaluating specific programs as well as over preparation of the students.

Describe the strategy for collecting data and reporting on outcomes beyond completion. _____

_____

_____

Questions	Yes	No	Action Needed	N/A
1. Does the IR office have a process for obtaining information from graduates from or completed programs at the institution?	___	___	___	___
2. Does the IR office participate in the administration of a student exit survey?	___	___	___	___
3. Does the IR office prepare routine reports on the results of exit surveys?	___	___	___	___
4. Does the IR office participate in the administration of alumni surveys?	___	___	___	___
5. Does the IR office prepare routine reports on the results of alumni surveys?	___	___	___	___
6. Does the IR office participate in the administration of employer surveys?	___	___	___	___
7. Are the data from alumni /employer surveys distributed to individual academic departments?	___	___	___	___
8. Are summary data from the alumni/employer survey distributed institution wide?	___	___	___	___
9. Are alumni data shared with the alumni office?	___	___	___	___
10. Is employment summary information for specific programs available to prospective students?	___	___	___	___
11. Is there a plan in place for evaluation of the processes of obtaining alumni data?	___	___	___	___

Section Notes: Any other issues that came out of discussions regarding support of completion and beyond.

11) Support of Higher Education Collaboration and Policy Issues

Rationale: Sections 11 and 12 are an outgrowth of the statement in the Association for Institutional Research Code of Ethics, Section V a i: "The institutional researcher shall seek opportunities to contribute to and participate in research on issues directly related to the craft and in other professional activities, and shall encourage and support other colleagues in such endeavors."

Part of being an effective IR professional is to understand available data, its uses and implications to institutional and broader policy issues, to collaborate in developing resources for the institution and the profession, and participate in professional organizations.

a) Information Intelligence

Rationale: IR professionals should develop an understanding of the available national and state data, and understand its use in policy development.

Describe the IR office use of national and state data. _____ _____ _____

i) Data Sources
(1) National

Questions	Yes	No	Action Needed	N/A
1. Is the IR staff familiar with the available federal higher education databases?	____	____	_____	____
2. Is the IR staff experienced in extracting information from the federal databases through tools like the Peer Analysis System and the Executive Peer Tool?	____	____	_____	____
3. Does the IR staff have the opportunity for training in the use of the federal databases and surveys?	____	____	_____	____

(2) Regional

Questions	Yes	No	Action Needed	N/A
1. Is the IR staff familiar with the available state higher education databases?	____	____	_____	____
2. Does the institution participate in a regional data sharing consortium?	____	____	_____	____
3. Does the IR staff have a role in the data sharing consortium?	____	____	_____	____

b) Participation in Professional Organizations

Rationale: Many IR offices have one to two staff members. Larger offices may be organized by function which narrows the staff member's exposure to broader issues. Membership in professional organizations allows information sharing and finding peers willing to assist with issues or strategies for finding solutions. Relationships with other institutions or IR professionals may be informal or structured into formal data-sharing arrangements.

Describe the role(s) IR staff have (had) in professional organizations. _____ _____ _____

i) National

Questions	Yes	No	Action Needed	N/A
1. Does the IR office maintain an institutional membership in the Association for Institutional Research?	____	____	_____	____
2. Does the IR staff each maintain individual membership in the Association for Institutional Research?	____	____	_____	____
3. Does the IR staff actively participate in the Association for Institutional Research?	____	____	_____	____
4. Does the IR staff maintain memberships in other national professional organizations?	____	____	_____	____

List the national professional organizations in which the IR staff holds memberships: _____ _____ _____

ii) Regional Professional Organizations/Consortia

Questions	Yes	No	Action Needed	N/A
1. Does the IR office maintain an institutional membership in the regional affiliate of the Association for Institutional Research?	____	____	_____	____
2. Do IR staff members maintain individual membership in the regional affiliate of the Association for Institutional Research?	____	____	_____	____
3. Do IR staff members actively participate in the regional affiliate of the Association for Institutional Research?	____	____	_____	____
4. Do IR staff members maintain memberships in local professional organizations?	____	____	_____	____
5. Is the institution a member of a data sharing or regional consortium?	____	____	_____	____
6. Does the IR office provide information to the consortium?	____	____	_____	____
7. Is the IR office involved in analysis of the information received from the consortium?	____	____	_____	____

List the regional and local professional organizations in which the IR staff hold memberships. _____ _____ _____

Section Notes: Any other issues that came out of discussions regarding support of higher education collaboration and policy.

12) Practice of Institutional Research

Rationale: Theoretical, ethical and legal issues impact the practice of institutional research. An IR professional

should know how to find information about these issues and have a working knowledge about the impact on managing IR information.

a) Knowledge Base
Rationale: An IR professional should have reliable resources for basic information about the profession, its practice and access to new information as it is published.

Describe the use of professional publications as to how these inform IR staff activities. _____
_____
_____

Questions	Yes	No	Action Needed	N/A
1. Does the IR office have copies of the *Resources for Institutional Research* book series published by AIR?	___	___	___	___
2. Does the IR office subscribe to *New Directions for Institutional Research*?	___	___	___	___
3. Does the IR office subscribe to *Research in Higher Education*?	___	___	___	___
4. Does the IR office subscribe to *The Review of Higher Education*?	___	___	___	___
5. Did the IR staff participate in a professional development activity in the last year?	___	___	___	___
6. Is there money in the budget for purchase of books or other resources to support the IR office activities?	___	___	___	___
7. If money is available, is it spent every year?	___	___	___	___
8 Is "continued professional development" part of the IR staff annual performance review?	___	___	___	___

b) Theory
Rationale: Understanding the history and theoretical basis for institutional research provides a context in which an IR office can practice within the institution.

Describe the IR staff training available in research theory and methodology. _____
_____
_____

Questions	Yes	No	Action Needed	N/A
1. Is the IR staff knowledgeable of the theoretical development of institutional research?	___	___	___	___
2. Does the IR staff make use of the written and Web-based materials available in institutional research to inform their activities?	___	___	___	___
3. Does the IR staff have access to appropriate research design courses available at the institution for audit or credit?	___	___	___	___
4. Are research projects grounded in sound research methodologies?	___	___	___	___
5. Are literature reviews performed when addressing research issues?	___	___	___	___
6. Does the IR office have a relationship with faculty in social science management, education or other disciplines who can serve as consultants on research methodology?	___	___	___	___

c) Ethics
Rationale: Institutional research professionals manage and distribute information confidential to the institution and to individuals. This responsibility requires a firm grounding in ethical practices and clear communications about the protection of confidential information.

Describe the way the IR offices addresses ethical issues. _____
_____
_____

Questions	Yes	No	Action Needed	N/A
1. Does the IR office have a written code of ethics?	___	___	___	___
2. Does the IR office follow the AIR Code of Ethics?	___	___	___	___
3. Do members of the IR office serve on the Institutional Review Board (where appropriate)?	___	___	___	___
4. Does the IR office follow the Institutional Review Board processes/FERPA rules when using student information?	___	___	___	___
5. Does the IR office follow the Institutional Review Board processes/FERPA rules in doing research involving human subjects?	___	___	___	___

d) Legal Issues
Rationale: Several legislative requirements define how some information can be distributed. IR professionals should be familiar with these requirements and with the ongoing developments within the regulatory arena.

Describe the IR office policies regarding privacy issues.
_____
_____
_____

Questions	Yes	No	Action Needed	N/A
1. Is the IR staff trained annually on student privacy issues?	___	___	___	___
2. Is the IR staff knowledgeable of FERPA regulations and sign a log to that effect?	___	___	___	___
3. Does the IR office have written procedures for handling confidential student information?	___	___	___	___
4. Does the IR staff know the requirements of the Student- Right- To- Know regulations?	___	___	___	___
5. Does the IR staff collect Student Right-To- Know information?	___	___	___	___
6. Does the IR staff distribute Student Right-To- Know information?	___	___	___	___
7. Does the IR staff track the development of legislative regulations that impact the performance of the IR function?	___	___	___	___

e) Ongoing Research Issues
Rationale: Institutional research office and staff require the tools and training to perform their jobs.

Describe the plan for IR staff skill development. _____
_____
_____

i) Skills Set
(1) Techniques

Questions	Yes	No	Action Needed	N/A
1. Does the IR staff have the necessary skills for designing and implementing a sound research project?	___	___	___	___
2. Does the IR staff have the necessary skills for good survey development and design?	___	___	___	___
3. Is IR staff training available for research design and methodology?	___	___	___	___
4. Is IR staff training available for survey development and design?	___	___	___	___
5. Does the IR staff have the necessary skills for analysis of survey data?	___	___	___	___
6. Is IR staff training available for statistical analysis of survey data?	___	___	___	___
7. Does the IR staff have the skill level to effectively maintain the necessary data to support IR functions?	___	___	___	___
8. Are there ongoing IR staff training opportunities for data management and retrieval techniques?	___	___	___	___
9. Does the IR staff have the skills to effectively maintain an IR Web site?	___	___	___	___
10. Are there ongoing IR staff training opportunities for Web site design and management?	___	___	___	___
11. Does the institution provide the appropriate level of technical support to assist the IR staff in maintaining its functionality?	___	___	___	___
12. Does the IR staff have the skills to effectively conduct planning, management, and/or financial analysis?	___	___	___	___
13. Are there ongoing IR staff training opportunities for planning, management and/or financial analyses?	___	___	___	___
14. For other key areas for the IR office–level of skill and sufficiency of training?	___	___	___	___

(2) Technology/Tools

Questions	Yes	No	Action Needed	N/A
1. Does the IR office have the necessary hardware to support its functions?	___	___	___	___
2. Does the IR office have the necessary software to support its functions?	___	___	___	___
3. Is the IR staff sufficiently skilled in the standard software to perform routine IR functions?	___	___	___	___
4. Is the IR staff sufficiently skilled in the specialized software to perform advanced IR functions?	___	___	___	___
5. Does the IR staff have the skills necessary to find relevant information on the Internet?	___	___	___	___

(a)Software Inventory

List the software packages the IR office uses:

Transactional system:	
Database software:	
Spreadsheet software:	
Word processor:	
Statistical software:	
Presentation software:	
Email software:	
Scheduling software:	
Web development software:	
Web reporting software:	
Financial modeling software:	
Any other software:	
Function	Package

ii) Communication

Questions	Yes	No	Action Needed	N/A
1. Is the IR staff sufficiently skilled in word processing?	___	___	___	___
2. Does the IR staff have effective writing skills?	___	___	___	___
3. Does the IR staff have appropriate skills in report design?	___	___	___	___
4. Does the IR staff have access to training in report design?	___	___	___	___
5. Does the IR staff communicate effectively with all levels of institutional staff?	___	___	___	___
6. Does the IR staff communicate effectively with faculty?	___	___	___	___
7. Does the IR staff communicate effectively with students?	___	___	___	___

Section Notes: Any other issues that came out of discussions regarding institutional research support.

13) Records Management

"Records management is a process in which the IR professional can identify what information has the highest value to the office and institution, where it should be kept and how long it should be retained. The intent of an official records management program is to establish consistent record retention guidelines in compliance with state laws and requirements of external agencies. A successful records management program also provides: legal protection; help the office or institution preserve the pertinent information; and facilitate finding the information the institution needs." (Luna and Pearson, p. 150)

a) Types of Records

Rationale: Different types of records have varying legal lifetimes, dependent on state and federal laws. Classifying the types of records the IR office maintains will inform the records retention plan.

Describe the documents/records the IR office is responsible for maintaining. _____
_____
_____

Does the IR office categorize records into the following categories?

	Category	Identify records in this series?	Know legally mandated retention period?	Have a retention schedule?	List method of filing– Subject? Date?	Any other office involved in maintenance of these records
1.	Data Requests					
2.	Surveys					
3.	Projects					
4.	Governing Agencies					
5.	Institutional					
6.	Institutional Research					
7.	Reference					

b) Records Retention Plan

Rationale: Culling records is important from both a physical storage as well as a legal perspective. If an office keeps records beyond their legal life, they take up space which can be used for something else, and these could be subpoenaed in a court action. The institution becomes libel for maintaining those records.

Describe the procedures for reviewing and discarding outdated records. _____
_____
_____

	Questions	Yes	No	Action Needed	N/A
1.	Has the IR office categorized all documents/records?	___	___	___	___
2.	Does the IR staff know the classification system?	___	___	___	___
3.	Does the IR staff know where documents/records are stored?	___	___	___	___
4.	Is there an IR office record retention?	___	___	___	___
5.	Does the IR director know the legally mandated retention period for all IR documents (generally state specific)?	___	___	___	___
6.	Are the legal mandates incorporated into the record retention plan?	___	___	___	___
7.	Are the IR staff aware of the records retention plan?	___	___	___	___
8.	Does the IR office have a training plan in place for new staff regarding records classification and retention?	___	___	___	___

c) Vital Records and Disaster Recovery Plan

Rationale: Disasters happen. Equipment can be damaged or stolen; records burned or flooded. A backup and recovery plan is vital for minimizing the loss of documents and information.

	Questions	Yes	No	Action Needed	N/A
1.	Has the IR office identified vital records?	___	___	___	___
2.	Does the IR staff know what records are vital?	___	___	___	___
3.	Does the IR staff know where/how vital documents/records are stored?	___	___	___	___
4.	Is there a disaster recovery plan in place?	___	___	___	___
5.	Are the IR staff aware of the disaster recovery plan?	___	___	___	___
6.	Is the disaster recovery plan written?	___	___	___	___
7.	Is a copy of the disaster recovery plan kept off site?	___	___	___	___
8.	Does the IR office have a training plan in place for new staff regarding disaster recovery plans?	___	___	___	___
9.	Is there a schedule for making backups of all electronic files?	___	___	___	___
10.	Are backups stored off site?	___	___	___	___
11.	Are electronic backups tested routinely for recoverability?	___	___	___	___

Section Notes: Any other issues that came out of discussions regarding support of document management.

Thank you and congratulations for looking into many of the tasks and activities various IR professionals may be called to do.

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