Panel Session

Strengths:
- Provides an introduction of the topic supported by appropriate literature
- Clearly defines the goal or purpose of the panel session
- Identifies the panel participants and how each member will contribute to meeting goal of the session

Reframing Institutional Research to Support Initiatives to Improve Academic Success

Edward P. St. John, University of Michigan; Glenda Droogsma Musoba, Florida International University; Pauline Reynolds, University of Redlands; Nathan Daun-Barnett, SUNY College at Buffalo; Amy S. Fisher, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor

Abstract: The NDIR volume reframing persistence research to support academic success develops a new approach to using student record data systems to support efforts to reduce inequalities in educational access and persistence. This approach involves using institutional data systems to construct cohort databases, using the data to identify critical challenges, and organizing teams to use action inquiry to develop new approaches to outreach, admissions, and retention. Panelists will discuss their experiences with research informing organizational change in Indiana and Michigan, as well as suggest tactics for IR professionals seeking to engage in systematic change initiatives of their campuses.

This approach to institutional research utilizes an inquiry process and campus teams across departmental and responsibility lines to facilitate change. The panelists will focus on understandings reached from experiences using student record systems to promote student success. We constructed longitudinal student cohort data files using institutional records to identify critical issues on college and university campuses. We collaborated with campus teams of administrators and faculty in efforts to reform programs to improve support services and academic programs to improve student success. Initiatives and critical challenges included campus identified student persistence issues and program effectiveness, often focusing on improved selection and retention of underrepresented students. The panel will introduce and illustrate how this action inquiry approach to institutional research was effective in promoting institutional change as well as discuss some of the lessons learned for collaboration between IR and campus administrators. These experiences of collaboration between institutional research and campus administrators and faculty provided new understandings between campus offices and engaged administrators in new ways in institutional research. The New Directions for Institutional Research volume Reframing persistence research to support academic success introduced this approach to using student record data systems to support efforts to reduce inequalities in educational access and persistence. Panel Chair: Edward P.
St. John, Professor of Higher Education at the University of Michigan, will introduce the action inquiry model (St. John, 2009), along with the applications of the method in the Indiana Project of Academic Success (IPAS), a multi-campus reform effort, and the new Michigan Capacity Building Project. His overview of methods will set the stage for specific presentations on using research to inform change. He will introduce the other speakers and facilitate discussion with the audience. Glenda D. Musoba, Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership at Florida International University, will discuss lessons learned as Associate Director of IPAS, when she coordinated a statewide study of student academic progress and assisted public and private campuses with evaluation studies using the state database (comprised of longitudinal student records from high school and postsecondary enrollment). She has recently written about strategies for using student record data in campus level evaluation studies (Musoba, 2006). Pauline Reynolds, Assistant Professor at the University of Redlands, was a graduate assistant with IPAS. As a campus liaison, her focus was helping campus teams use the action inquiry process. She facilitated the work of a community college team addressing student retention and students’ lack of college-going knowledge through an improved orientation and she worked closely with a private university team addressing retention for students without a declared program of study. Her study of the IPAS facilitation and collaboration process (Reynolds & Hossler, in press) focuses on the process aspect of change, illuminating the critical importance of building understanding and trust in the change process between researchers and administrators. Nate Daun-Barnett, Assistant Professor at SUNY Buffalo, collaborated on a formative evaluation of IPAS conducting interviews with campus administrators and IR professionals, and he is currently assisting with the development of plans for a statewide database in the State of Michigan. Nate will discuss understandings reached from the evaluation of IPAS and reflection strategies to adapting changes models across state boundaries. Amy S. Fisher, Graduate Assistant at the University of Michigan, also collaborated on the formative evaluation of IPAS and is providing leadership in the development of an institutional database and inquiry projects at the University of Michigan. She will focus on institutional strategies and tactics for developing student record data systems and using action inquiry to support teams of reforms in a large university.