

# So You Want to Be an “Institutional” Researcher?

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## Outline

- Background: History, Functions, Roles
- Examples of Projects
- Approaches to Advocacy: Normative versus Positive
- Feedback on a research agenda

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## My Background

- Education: MA Economics, PhD Ed Policy
- Bureau of Labor Statistics
- Graduate Assistantships
  - NYS School Boards Association
  - SUNY Central Office of Chancellor
  - NYS Budget Office-Policy Analysis Section
- UM College Park
- UC Office of President
- De Anza College

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## The Role of Information in Decisions-making

- How does an organization or government know what works?
- How many resources should be directed to that activity?
- Access to information is often “Asymmetric” – who has an incentive to develop information resources?
  - those with a strong preference one way or the other.

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## The Role of Information in Decisions-making

- Information is needed to make a case for change
- Research techniques such as forecasting can demonstrate the impact of proposed changes
- Data is needed for accountability to show expenditures resulted in change

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## What is IR?

- Typically associated with Colleges (most nonprofit) but also associations and K-12 organizations
- “Institutional Research can be distinguished from research on postsecondary education which has as its purpose the advancement of knowledge about and practice in postsecondary education generally. The subject of institutional research is the individual college, university, or system. While institutional research can involve data and analyses which contribute to wider knowledge about how colleges and individuals function, this type of result generally is not sought for its own sake.” Joe Saupe ‘The Functions of Institutional Research’, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, 1990.

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## What is IR?

- Expansion in the 1970's and 1980's in response to governmental requests for data
- Now seen as important for supporting institutional initiatives
- AIR background articles:
  - <http://www.airweb.org/?page=84>
  - <http://www.airweb.org/?page=85>

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## IR Functions

- Standard reporting
- Ad hoc Analyses (enrollment)
- Program assessments
- Policy advise
- Planning Support

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## Skills for IR

- Research Interests
- Confidentiality
- Listening
- Synthesizing data
- Able to articulate purpose of the study
- Understanding assumptions as used in social sciences research

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## Current Projects

- EnablMath / Noel Levitz
- LinC / SSPRIE - Article
- Financial Aid
- Strategic Planning

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## Approaches to Advocacy

- In Economics:
  - Normative Analysis – what should be done
  - Positive Analysis – what is
- Impartial provider of data
- Advocate for a particular position – only highlight data supporting your position
  
- Is there a difference – we all have our own biases?

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## De Anza College Example 1

- **BFAP Outreach Expenditures to support increased financial aid participation**
  - After raising tuition rates, beginning in 2003 the State of California began offering community colleges money for financial aid outreach (BFAP SFAA). The assumption is that many students are not informed about financial aid opportunities and therefore it is in the state's interest to fund efforts to inform potential and current students.
- How can we demonstrate whether this has been effective?
- Why is it important for the Institution and State to Know?

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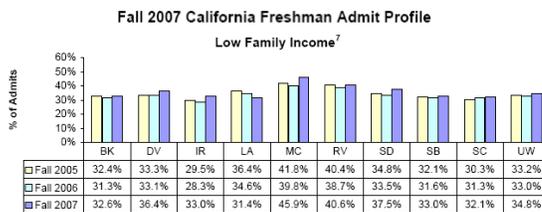
## De Anza College Example 2

- Financial aid participation by ethnicity
- There is some evidence that financial aid participation varies by ethnic group beyond that which we would expect given the incomes of students at a college. This is difficult to verify because we do not have data on the incomes of all students. If we assume that students from the same zip code, regardless of ethnic group, should have about the same percentage of students that would be eligible for BOG, what are some other explanations for differences in participation rates?
- What data can we use to develop explanations?
- What are the implications for the results?

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## Example 3 Student Income

- Only 41 percent of low-income students entering a four-year college managed to graduate within five years, the Department of Education found in a study last year, but 66 percent of high-income students did. That gap had grown over recent. Source: Class Matters - Social Class and Education in the United States of America - The New York Times



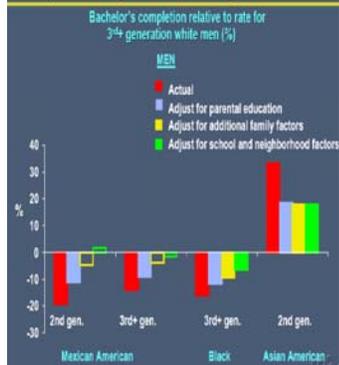
<sup>7</sup>Applicants reporting family income at or below the 30th percentile based on the March supplement of the Current Population Survey (CPS) for Californians aged 30-65, or \$40,000 or less in Fall 2005, \$40,000 or less in Fall 2006 and \$43,000 or less in Fall 2007.

- What would be your Research Agenda?

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## Example 3a Student Income

### Mexican American College Gap Can Be Explained By Lower Family Resources



Source: Deborah Reed, Public Policy Institute of California, Presented at CAIR, Fall 2005

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## Questions

Examples of presentations can be found at:

<http://www.research.fhda.edu/researchreports/researchreports.php>

or by emailing Andrew LaManque at:  
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