Institutional Research Council
555 West 57th Street, 1240 Conference Room (12th floor)
10am — Noon

IRC Minutes

Friday, October 25th, 2013

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- Welcome to Michael Shields, the new Enrollment Management Specialist at CUNY OIRA. He replaces Sarah Truelsch, who is now Senior Policy Analyst. Please direct enrollment management questions to both. (email: Michael.shields@cuny.edu).
- Additions and subtractions to the Student Experience Survey:
    - Thanks to those who have responded so far.
    - Before accepting any suggestions, Colin and Gil Jae would like to see your justification/rationale for keeping, adding, or removing items. If you sent a suggestion without a rationale, please provide one as a follow up. If you would like to make a suggestion, please do so soon with a rationale.
    - The content of the questionnaire will be finalized after Nov.1.
    - The College of Staten Island and Brooklyn College have agreed to do a pilot. This will take place on or shortly after Nov. 8.
    - OIRA is considering online implementation, as some questionnaire items may be specifically for transfer students; this may be easier to account for in an online survey.

AGENDA ITEMS:

1. A Presentation by Chris Efthimiou on Developmental Evaluation.
    - The presentation gave a description of the difference between formative (aimed at finding areas for improvement) and summative (assessing the merit) evaluation. Developmental evaluation is a different approach, designed to respond to complex environments and especially appropriate for new programs. Chris's presentation focused on this last approach.
    - It's worth noting that the evaluator in the developmental approach is part of the innovation team, not an independent outsider. Skills as a team player are important in this case. Reporting is much more informal than in summative or formative evaluations.
    - The developmental approach also works well when you are trying to break out a stagnant program and start new, questioning everything. Evaluation is often assessing how appropriate an action or activity is. This can be cyclical.
    - Queensborough example: An early alert program in which the faculty announced that they would be turning in early alerts for students who didn't bring their assignment in on time, which led students to turn in their assignments, with no

flags raised. The number of flags raised is less of a measure than they thought it would be.

- Evaluation approaches involve more talking to people, more focus group-type methodology, and less number crunching.
- References: Jane E. Davidson (2005) Evaluation Methodology Basics and Michael Q. Patton (2011) Developmental Evaluation.
- Chris presented a helpful power point, which is expected to be available on the Wiki.

2. IR Council Project Looking at What Works to Improve Retention.
    - Building on last month's discussion of how CUNY colleges are working to improve retention: what specific actions should the Council take?
    - There was support for the idea of a setting aside time at each meeting for attendees to share with the Council things that have been tried and tested at their own colleges. This would take the form of 15-30 minute discussions (not necessarily presentations).
    - There is interest in returning to the idea (suggested previously in Spring 2013) of creating documentation for basic procedures in CUNYfirst, including retention analysis, program affiliation, and variables related to admissions and performance. A subcommittee will be formed.
    - To get admissions data for Spring 2014 in the 805, which are available now, you (or your IT people) must request this data. It is not automatically come with each phase.
3. A Presentation by Michael Ayers on Forecasting Retention Rates.
    - A basic one-term model for forecasting fall-to-fall one-year retention of first time, full time, baccalaureate degree-seeking freshmen was provided.
    - The plan was to find coefficients for the model based on the prior cohort's attributes and association with retention; and then apply the model to predict retention for the following year's cohort.
    - The model incorporated some variables from RAPM, but added variables related to program affiliation and first-semester performance.
    - All regression-based models outperformed the naïve model (the prior year's figure), three-year averages, and weighted three-year averages (1:2:3) in predicting actual Fall 2011 retention. So, it was justifiable to make the effort to run the model.
    - A full model (including all independent variables) was included, as well as several component models: using demographic variables only; using educational (admissions and enrollment) variables that would be known at the time of initial cohort enrollment; using program affiliations (SEEK, Macaulay, ESL, etc.); and using variables known at the start of the second term.
    - A model including only the best-performing variables was also included, and was nearly as effective as the full model.
    - Observations:
        i. Demographic predictors (race, gender, age) were not very useful, even when taken alone.

   ii. High school attributes (public, private, foreign) were important predictors. They may be more important still if more specific HS qualities (vocational, magnet, strong vs. poor performing) can be included.
   iii. A simple regression model with variables known as of September of the first term explains about 3% of the variance in retention; when variables known as of the following Spring are included, about 30% of the variance in retention is explained.
- Limitations:
   i. Logistic regression should be used
   ii. Pooled data (covering 3 years) should be used to determine model coefficients
   iii. Skills testing and financial variables should be included. A course or term withdrawal dummy variable may be useful. Careful attention should be given to how earned credits are being counted.

Next IR Council Meeting: November 22, 2013