

Development of a Qualitative Research Team: Expanding the IR Function Through the Inclusion of Library Professionals

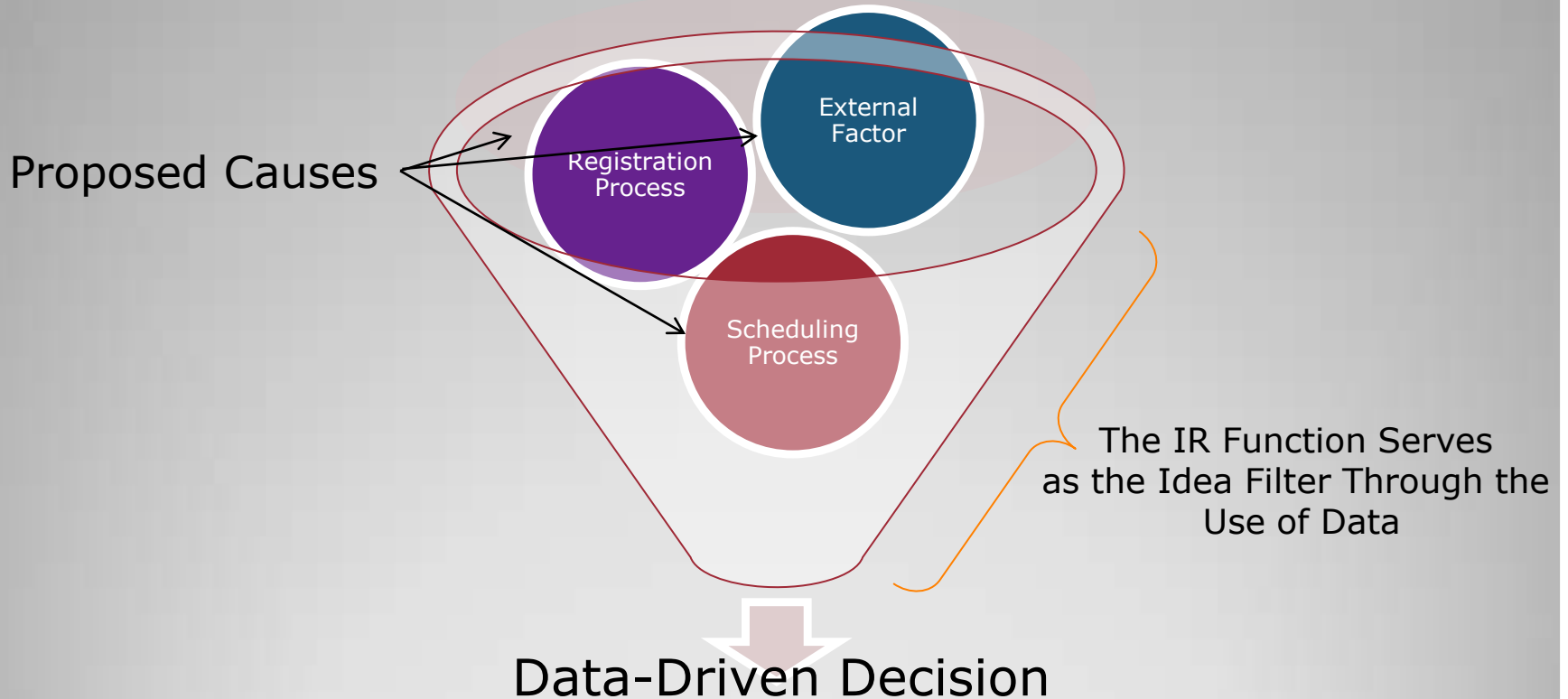
TAIR 2014 Conference
Session F, Thursday, Feb. 20, 2014
1:00-1:45 p.m.
Elm Room, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Addison, Texas

"Research is to see what everybody else has seen,
and to think what nobody else has thought."

Albert Szent-Gyorgy (1893-1986)

McLennan
COMMUNITY
COLLEGE

Executive Team Concern: Drop in Enrollment



**Role of Institutional Research on
the Executive Team**

| Quantitative | Qualitative |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Enrollment Trends | Current practices in academic advising |
| Course Complete Rates | Different approaches to student housing |
| Retention Rates | Review of anonymous reporting systems |
| Satisfaction Survey Results | Steps necessary to establish an Institutional Review Board |
| Predictors of Student Performance | Review of withdrawal policies among community colleges |
| Student Engagement Results | Review of faculty salary schedules |
| Standardized Assessment Data (CAAP) | Review of reasons community colleges change their names |

Responsible
Division



Institutional Research

????


Types of Data Needs

- Administrative Staff of executive team member making the data request
- IR Department
- Qualitative Research Team Consisting of Library Science Professionals

Who Should Handle Non Quantitative Data Requests

- Formally trained in the following:
 - Locating information
 - Evaluating the credibility of information
 - Objectivity
 - Interviewing
 - Interpreting and operationalizing information requests
 - Report writing
 - Extensive knowledge of available information resources
 - Conducting effective literature reviews

Advantages of Using Library Science Professionals



- Timely Access to Objective Information

- Expanded IR team/capability

- Reduction in number of decisions made on limited data

- Increase in number of non quantitative data requests

- Increase in the number of challenges to initial assertions

Impact of QRT on Executive Team Decision Making

Meeting Qualitative Information Needs with a Team Approach

The Need

- IR offices respond to requests for internal and external quantitative data, but administrators also seek qualitative data.

The Team

- Library and Information Specialists
- QRT Coordinator

QRT Team

Sharon Kenan,
Librarian/Professor—
Library Services &
English

David Irvin, Senior
Reference &
Technical Specialist—
Library Services

Tom Proctor,
QRT Coordinator
(Receives,
Evaluates, and
Assigns
Research
Requests)

**Felipe
McQuatters,**
Library Reference &
Technology
Specialist—Library
Services

Gail Woodward,
Librarian/Associate
Professor—Library
Services

Emphasis in Qualitative Research

- **Objectives**

- explores, discovers, and constructs

- **Research**

- understands and interprets social interactions
- is subjective
- studies the whole, not individual variables

- **Methodology**

- selects smaller, non-random groups
- consists of open-ended questions in interviews and focus groups; participant observations; field notes; document identification and analysis; and reflections.
- identifies patterns, features, and themes

- **Final Report**

- focuses on particular findings that are not generalizable
- includes a narrative with contextual description and direct quotations from research participants

Research Approach

- **Framing submitted research questions**—using the reference interview (getting to the question behind the question)
- **Non-biased information searching**—gathering information in a neutral manner
- **Evaluating sources**—checking the credibility of source materials

Quantitative Review of QRT Work

QRT Reports, 2012-13

- 24 reports
- 4 researchers
- Average time to complete each research report, 3 weeks
- Average report length, 10 pages
- Requests come from: President, Vice Presidents, and Deans

QRT Reports, 2013-14

- 6 reports (to date)
- 5 researchers
- Average time to complete research report, 3 weeks
- Average report length, 9 pages
- Requests come from: President, Vice Presidents, and Deans

QRT Organizational Structure

Incoming Research Requests

- Incoming QRT research requests are submitted to QRT Coordinator via email, phone, in person
- Requests are evaluated
 - Clarify question—close any loose ends
 - Is this a qualitative research question?

Assignment of Research Requests

- Given expertise and availability of team members—assign question to team member with a specific deadline and research expectations
- Final research product is delivered to requestor with a copy to team coordinator for QRT files

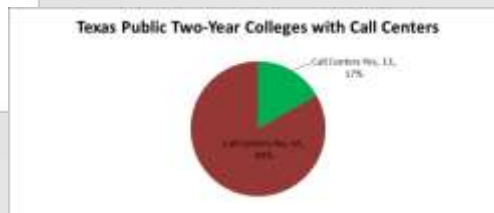
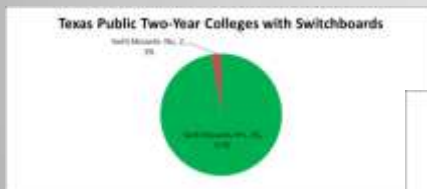


Examples of QRT Research # 1

(Tom)

Current practices at Texas community colleges for switchboards/call centers?
(7 page report)

- **Research**—78 Texas community colleges reviewed
- **Findings**—97% have switchboards and 17% have call centers
- **Outcome**—report used in administrative decision process on best approach in handling incoming phone calls on campus



Why do community colleges change their name? (5 page report)

- **Research**—40 community colleges reviewed
- **Findings**—
Three reasons:
 1. Offering 4-year degrees (60%)
 2. To reflect expanded mission (28%)
 3. To remove negative impression of name suggesting a lesser status (12%)
- **Outcome**—report used in administrative decision making process on rebranding college name



Examples of QRT Research # 2

(David)

Drop/withdrawal policies at Texas Community Colleges (28 page report).

- **Research**— Researchers reviewed policies at 53 Texas community colleges
- **Findings**— 64% of colleges grade withdrawals with the W code exclusively; 32% use the W code and other codes; 4% grade withdrawals exclusively with other codes. More findings -- 91% provide an “in person” option for initiating a student withdrawal; 36% provide an “in writing” option for initiating a student withdrawal; 2% provide a “telephone” option for initiating a student withdrawal; 19% provide a “fax” option for initiating a student withdrawal; 25% provide an “online portal” option for initiating a student withdrawal
- **Outcome**— Report was passed to administrative committee for further review.

Academic goals and perceptions of MCC’s University Center, among graduating high-school seniors and first-year community college students.

- **Research**— Researchers held three focus groups in the spring and summer 2013. We spoke with 7 high school students and 6 MCC students.
- **Findings**— Students indicated that certain features of a university experience would compel them to stay at MCC for 4 years; that different class schedules were needed; that certain amenities were necessary for creating a livable campus, and more.
- **Outcome**— Reports from the student focus groups were compiled into a master Emerging Markets document presented to the college board.

Examples of QRT Research # 3

(Gail)

Information on one out-of-state college: demographics, nearby colleges, degrees, and articulation agreements (9 page report)

- **Research**—case study of one college
- **Findings**—
 - FTE 30,000-32,000
 - Average student age of 24 years
 - 22 colleges within a 25 mile radius
 - The college recently changed from a community college to a four-year college
 - 2 Bachelor's degrees offered
 - Many articulation agreements in place
- **Outcome**—report used in administrative decision making process about degrees offered and articulation agreements

Sample of Texas colleges identified as using a particular software to conduct student evaluations of faculty (6 page report)

- **Research**—12 colleges interviewed
- **Findings**—
 - Only one college used the software for student evaluations.
 - Five colleges used it for other purposes such as surveys
 - Most responses were very positive about the software's features, usability, and customer service, with one or two specific exceptions.
- **Outcome**—report used in administrative decision making process about using this software for student evaluations of faculty

Examples of QRT Research # 4

(Sharon)

Intellectual property (IP) policies (103 page report)

- **Research**—The researcher analyzed IP policies at 8 U.S. institutions using American Association of University Professors (AAUP) “suggested components” and 6 Texas institutions using Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) “suggested components” to determine how institutions are currently addressing IP on their campuses and what an “ideal” IP policy might include.
- **Findings**—
 - AAUP suggests including 5 key components in IP policies
5 of the 8 U.S. institutions (63%) included all of AAUP’s suggested components
 - THECB suggests including 6 key components in IP policies
4 of the 6 Texas institutions (67%) included all of THECB’s suggested components
 - Components that overlap:
AAUP and THECB—ownership (who owns) and fund distribution/royalty participation
 - Components that are unique:
AAUP—IP defined, who may use IP, and issue/dispute resolution
THECB—disclosure, licensing guidelines, ownership/licensing responsibilities, and equity/management participation
- **Outcome**—report used in administrative decision making process regarding the college’s intellectual property policy

QRT Lessons Learned & Improvements Made

Lessons learned:

- ❖ Importance of **defining question and expectations** of the requestor at the outset
- ❖ Importance of **setting realistic timeframes** for conducting research and completing final report
- ❖ Importance of making sure **all questions are initiated and tracked by QRT coordinator**
- ❖ Importance of **giving all team members the option to refuse an assignment when workload is heavy**

Improvements made:

- ❖ **Better communication** among QRT via email, phone, and in person
- ❖ **Willingness to turn down research requests** that are duplicative of work already done or cannot be accomplished with current staffing
- ❖ **Setting more realistic completion dates** for research and compilation of final reports

QRT and your College/University

A Qualitative Research Team may be just what your college/university needs!

- ✓ Answer those nagging qualitative research questions from your executive leadership team
- ✓ Guide key decisions on campus to ensure best practices and success
- ✓ Capitalize on the research knowledge and expertise of your librarians

**As a general rule,
the most
successful man
in life is the man
who has the best
information.**

Benjamin Disraeli