Death By a Thousand Cuts: How Can IR Professionals Impact the Demands of the Ranking Survey Landscape

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Introductions

- Brief Introductions
- Raise Your Hands:
  - 2 Year Campus
  - 4 Year Campus
  - Work in IR, Other Campus Unit, Vendor, State Agency
  - 0-2 Years Experience, 3-5, 6-8, 9+ Years
  - Have direct responsibility for responding to rankings/surveys
  - Supervise staff who respond to rankings
  - Have to communicate ranking/survey related issues to leadership

Ground Rules

- This is a shared conversation. I will share some ideas/thoughts but this session will be even more engaging if everyone participates

- This conversation is in no way meant to express the position of TAIR or AIR on this topic. This is merely a gathering of IR professionals dedicated to fairly discussing a very thorny issue.

- Let's attempt to find a way to help this conversation evolve towards measurable and achievable outcomes. Hosting a 45 complaint session should not be our goal.
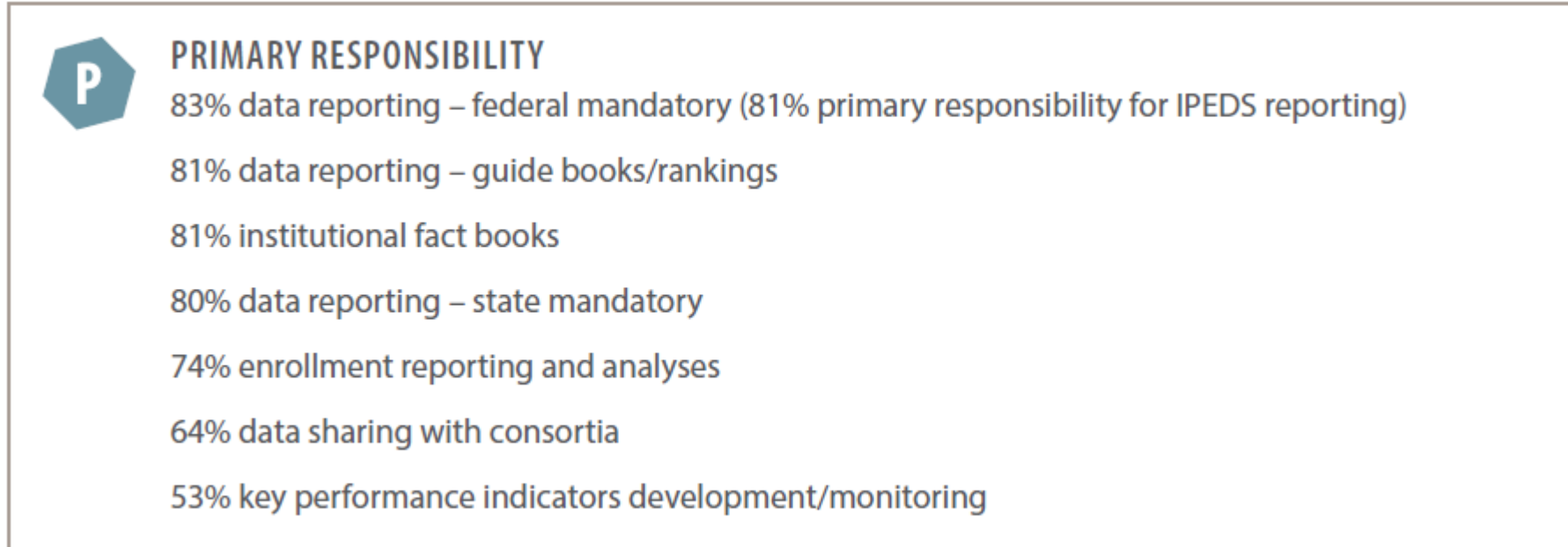
- Any others?

Setting the Stage: Resources

Director and Professional OIR Staff	2-Year Institutions	4-Year Institutions
Less than 1 FTE	1%	1%
1 FTE to fewer than 2 FTE	17%	18%
2 FTE to fewer than 3 FTE	41%	35%
3 FTE to fewer than 5 FTE	28%	26%
5 FTE to fewer than 10 FTE	12%	17%
10 FTE or more	1%	3%

N = 1,261 responses (394 responses from 2-year and 867 responses from 4-year institutions)

- AIR survey of IR offices found that more than half of 4-Year IR operations have 2 FTE to fewer than 3 FTE

- AIR's survey also found most OIRs (68%) manage small budgets of less than $25,000, not including salaries. A few OIRs have larger budgets (16% $25,000–$49,999; 11% $50,000–$99,999), but budgets of $100,000 or more are rare(approximately 9%).

- Ultimately, the reality is that for most shops staffing is tight and resources are constrained.

Setting the Stage: How We Spend Our Time?

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY

83% data reporting – federal mandatory (81% primary responsibility for IPEDS reporting)

81% data reporting – guide books/rankings

81% institutional fact books

80% data reporting – state mandatory

74% enrollment reporting and analyses

64% data sharing with consortia

53% key performance indicators development/monitoring

- AIR survey of institutional research found a major role is spending time responding to survey reporting and rankings

Setting The Stage: How Would We Like To Spend Our Time?

- Early identification of student risk and challenge

- Financial analysis of student success initiatives

- Development and deployment of data-on-demand dashboards for campus community

- Study on time to degree and degree completion that brings in latent trait data, student engagement data, and student finance data to understand patterns

- Work on understanding grade distributions, tenure and promotion processes, faculty equity studies, student/faculty interaction, student grit and it's role in persistence, etc.

- Other ideas?

How Did We End Up Here?

- Fincher (1978) described IR as organizational intelligence
- Saupe (1990) categorized IR as a set of activities supporting institutional planning, policy formation, and decision making.
- Volkein (1999, 2008, 2011) described IR as being place bound within the confines of changes in society and in higher education
- Allen and Kazis (2007) indicated linkages with planning and budgeting leads to culture change and organizational improvement
- Most recently (2014) NILOA focused on the role of institutional research in successfully tracking student learning outcomes for institutional accreditation
- There is a dearth of scholarship from IR on the present state of affairs in the landscape as it relates to future-focused initiatives
- See something missing?

Setting the Stage: The Demands

National Universities
National Liberal Arts Colleges
Regional Universities
Best Online Programs
Best Online Undergraduate Programs
Undergraduate Business Programs
Undergraduate Engineering Programs
Best Colleges for Veterans
Graduate Business Schools
Graduate Education Schools
Graduate Engineering Schools
Graduate Law
Graduate Medicine
Graduate Nursing
Graduate Fine Arts
Graduate Public Affairs
Graduate Library & Info Studies
Graduate Criminology
Graduate Economics
Graduate English
Graduate Political Science
Graduate Psychology & 50+ More

Setting the Stage: What Are We Giving Away?

TIMES HIGHER EDUCATION RELEASE STATEMENT

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Setting the Stage: The Economics

- USNWR College Compass Access $29.95
- USNWR Best Graduate Schools $17.95
- USNWR Guide to Paying for College $6.99
- Princeton Review Best Colleges Book $14.99
- USA Today College Guide $9.99
- College Board Book of Majors $24.45
- Peterson's Master the SAT $24.95
- Peterson's Test Prep (Online) $119.95
- Princeton Review ACT Pre (Self-Paced) $299
- Princeton Review ACT Ultimate Classroom $999+
- Princeton Review Private Tutoring (24 Hrs) $2,760
- Kaplan Review (off of USAToday Rankings) Classroom $799
- Kaplan Review Classroom PLUS $1,199
- Kaplan Private Tutoring (Starting Price) $2,399

What Are You Experiencing?

- What % of your staff time is tied up in responding to these national surveys?

- What strategies do you use to mitigate these costs in staff time?

- What projects can you not get to while you spend your time on these surveys?

- What is your leadership's expectations regarding these surveys? Do they understand the investment of time?

- How could AIR assess this reality on future surveys?

What Can Be Done?

- Could TAIR develop a survey burden data collection tool that allows us to track these investments in time? IPEDS has this currently.

- Should TAIR and AIR engage in lobbying efforts at the State and Federal levels for relief (CASE does this now for Advancement)?

- Could a doctoral student in the State's higher education programs conduct a dissertation on the hidden costs to leadership for these surveys?

- Could AIR and TAIR partner with Enrollment Management to study the impact of rankings on college selection choice?

- Could AIR ad TAIR advocate for a data collection fee for members to participate with a % of the proceeds going back to invest in professional development waivers or grants?

- What else could/should we expect from our professional associations?

Three Local Options To Deal With The Challenge

Options To Consider: Rankings Intake Form

1. What is the proposed ranking?
2. What is the website URL for this ranking/list?
3. Are UNT's aspirational peers adopting this ranking/list?
4. Are UNT's Texas peers adopting this ranking/list?
5. Is the dean/chair familiar with the ranking/website/authoring organization and approves of its potential use?
6. Does the ranking place UNT in a position of strength?
7. Does the ranking provide a competitive edge?
8. Is the ranking organization reputable?
9. Does the ranking organization stand to earn a profit from website visitors?
10. What is the methodology used for this ranking?
    a. Is it sound and transparent
    b. Is the source of the sponsoring organization's data clear?
    c. Is there a timeframe for the data source?
    d. Is the methodology defendable?
    e. Is the total number of programs transparent or reported?
    f. If yes, how many programs are included?
    g. What is the IPEDS count for the number of programs in the nation?

Options to Consider: Formalize a Review Process

Ranking Gets Visibility in Community

- Could come from press
- Could come from Cabinet
- Could come from Dean
- Could come from Board of Regents
- Could be found on peer institution

Ranking Sent to Dean/VP to Gauge Relevance In Field

- Dean should evaluate utility
- Dean should evaluate how others in field use the ranking
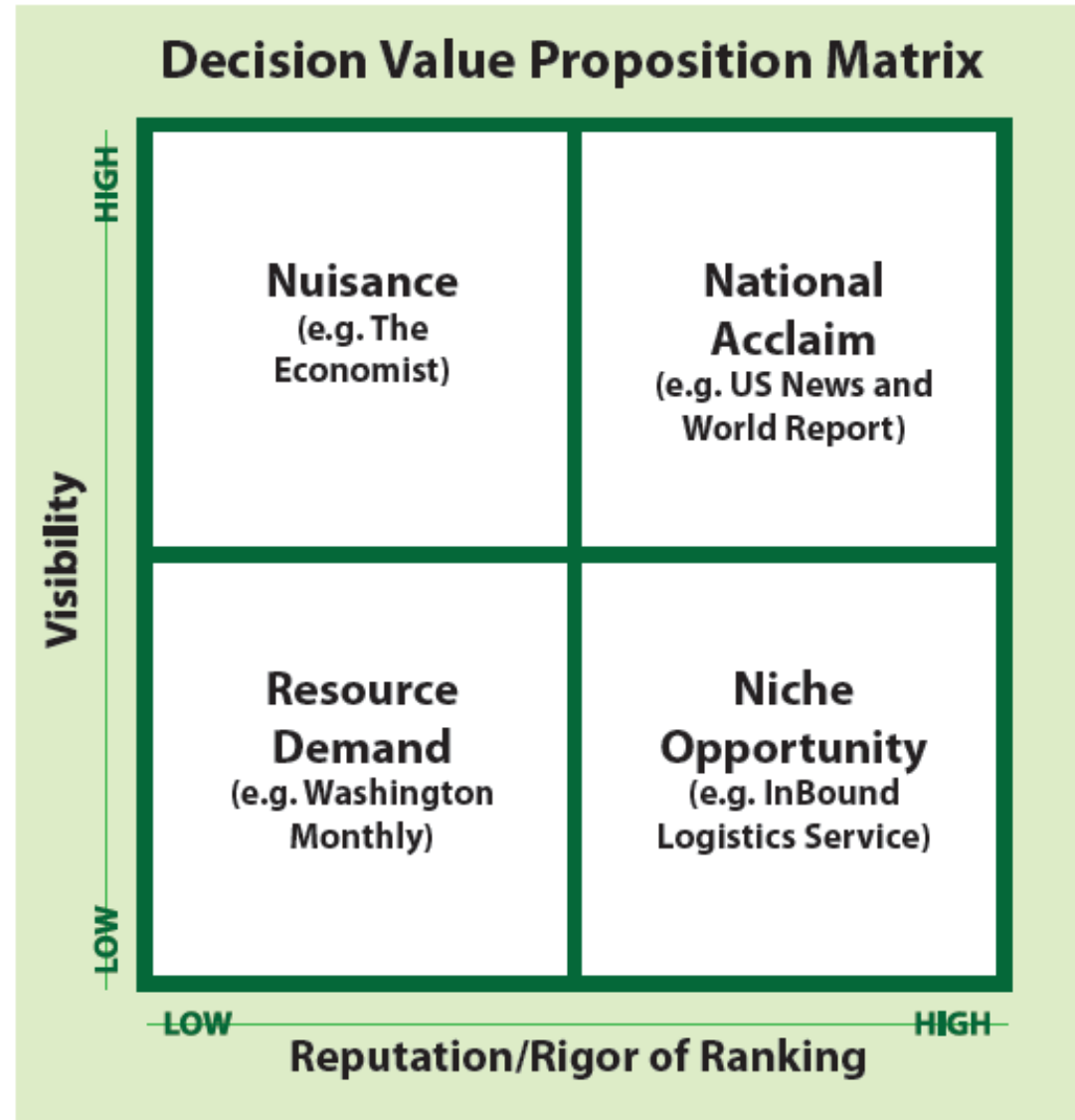- Dean should visit peer campuses to see if the ranking is publicized

Ranking Sent to IR to conduct a Methodology Review

- IR investigates Methodology and Presents Sources and Facts
- IR searches website for methodology
- IR tries to isolate data source (IPEDS, self-report, 3rd party)

Ranking Review Notes Sent to Provost/VP for Use/Non-Use

Options To Consider: Use a Ranking Matrix

- Share with leadership
- Adopt common language
- Expect usage

Decision Value Proposition Matrix

	Visibility HIGH	Visibility HIGH
	Nuisance (e.g. The Economist)	**National Acclaim** (e.g. US News and World Report)
	Resource Demand (e.g. Washington Monthly)	**Niche Opportunity** (e.g. InBound Logistics Service)

Visibility: HIGH / LOW

Reputation/Rigor of Ranking: LOW — HIGH

Your Ideas and Next Steps

- What are some of the reasons why this practice has endured so long?

- Please share some specific ideas and approaches your IR office or College/University are doing to help with this issue?

- What future workshops/sessions should we investigate to help with this situation?

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