

THE STATUS OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH: For Women But Not For-Profits?

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ABSTRACT

College and university administrators have been under increased pressured to explain how campus operations support student enrollment and the cost of higher education. Administrators have consequently been moving toward a data-informed decision process and have begun working in partnership with institutional research for decision support.

The purpose of this paper was to examine the literature to determine the status of IR in higher education. This examination is important to higher education for meeting the increased pressure and demands for accountability from those it serves. The escalating amount of data and the capability for comparing data is unparalleled.

Consequently the role of institutional research has been evolving since its inception as a distinct function in higher education for over 50 years and varies from institution to institution globally. However, the fundamental role of gathering, examining, and distributing data for planning, policy formulation, and decision support has remained consistent. Research has revealed two distinct findings about the evolution of IR professionals in the United States. First, women professionals in IR have grown from 25% to 62% (a 148% growth) in 30 years and second, only two percent of the IR professionals are from for-profit institutions.

Keywords: Institutional research, characteristics of institutional research, history of institutional research, the role of institutional research.