

In this Issue:

- // Measuring Accountability and Performance at Ryerson U
- // Accountability versus Autonomy
- // CIRPA Member Interview
- // Gearing up for CIRPA 2009 in Banff, Alberta

Speakers, Workshops, and Banff Itself Drawing Large Delegation to Annual Conference

President's Message



**Jeff Donnelly,
CIRPA President**

It's October and we're just getting into a new academic year, and I'm sure you are all as busy as I am. I really do love the fall. Its fun to walk around the campus and see the kids all scrubbed up, new clothes, new books. Everything feels new. And then you realize that you have to stickhandle last year's enrolment, report this years application counts, marketing's knocking at your door for stable enrolment numbers... and suddenly everything seems old!

Speaking of enrolment reporting, this issue of the CIRPA Newsletter tackles accountability with two articles. One is an excerpt of a speech given by Dr. James Downey, President and CEO of The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario. The speech was given to the Conference Board of Canada Quality Network for Universities, and takes both a practical and philosophical look at post secondary accountability in Canada. You will recall that Dr. Downey was a plenary speaker at our 2007 conference in St. John's. The second article was contributed by Ryerson University, a flagship for useable and informed accountability reporting. I hope you read each of these articles with as much interest as I did. Also, be on the lookout for more CIRPA/ACPRI information and our quarterly member profile.

It seems that no matter how hectic the new school year may be, there is always a CIRPA/ACPRI conference to look forward to. The conference committees are looking after the last details and it promises to exceed all of your expectations. The uptake has been great. So many associations are

Continued on page 3

BANFF, ALBERTA

CIRPA 2009 was the place to be in October! Delegates chose from a full schedule, including six pre-conference workshops, three keynote addresses, and 37 seminars. The MountView Barbeque social night was also a big hit.

The President's Reception, Annual General Meeting, and numerous breaks and lunches provided ample opportunity for networking with friends and colleagues.

Watch future newsletters for information on next year's conference, set to be held in Ottawa.

PHOTO OF LAKE MINNEWANKA
BY SHANNON MURPHY

Accountability and Performance Measurement at Ryerson University

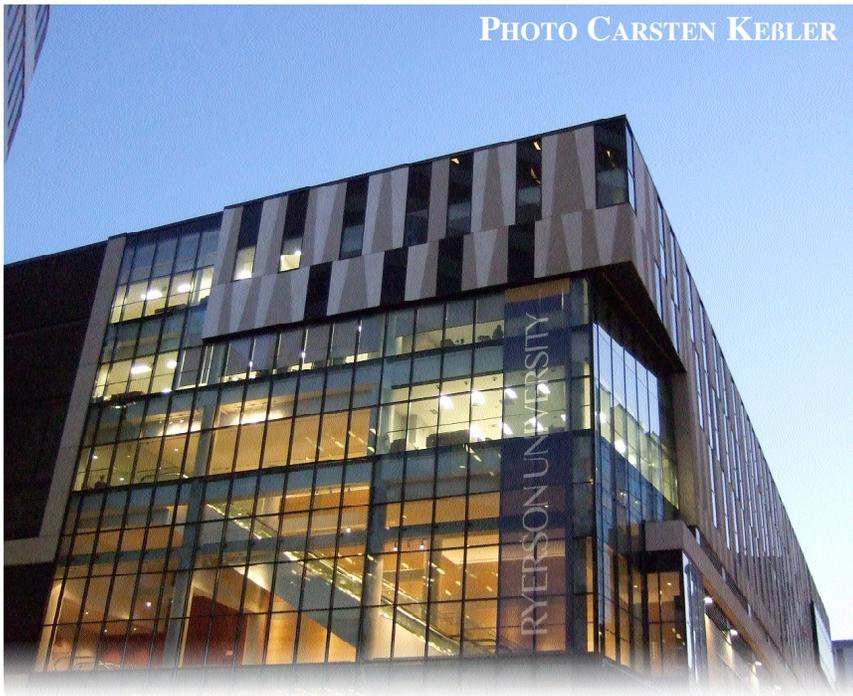


PHOTO CARSTEN KEBLER

Over the past decade, Ryerson University has developed a series of performance measures and dissemination tools to promote improvement and accountability. These measures are geared to specific uses and are incorporated into ongoing institutional processes for governance, academic and resource planning, and academic and budget management. They are provided in a variety of formats that reflect the audience and intended use. In addition, a tool has been created to support academic units across the University to use these measures in their own planning activities.

To foster institutional improvement, Ryerson has implemented 5 major initiatives for performance measurement. Most stress formative rather than summative accountability (i.e., they are geared toward continuous improvement). They include:

1. *Performance Indicators* -- institutional-level time series providing Board of Governors with high-level monitoring of Board's

areas of oversight

2. *Progress Indicators* -- departmental-level time series allowing Senate and general academic community to enable and measure improvement at local unit level

3. *Decision-Support Indicators* -- comparative departmental-level data for senior administrators to evaluate the need for academic change

4. *Core Performance Measures* -- institutional-level indicators for Board to monitor progress in reaching targets related to University's key priorities

5. *Academic Planning and Tracking* -- interactive tool to help departments integrate measurement into their academic planning.

Performance Indicators

Ryerson's Performance Indicators enable the Board of Governors to monitor in a summative manner its areas of oversight and governance: strategic direction of the University, effective management, financial capacity, and University profile. They were

developed with significant input from the Board. These 23 institutional-level indicators are presented graphically as a time series. Examples include applicant-to-registrant ratios, graduation rates, student-faculty ratios, long term debt per FTE student, and total liabilities as a share of total assets.

Progress Indicators

As their title implies, Progress Indicators are a formative tool to enable improvement at departmental, Faculty and institutional levels. Originally set by a committee of Senate, they have been expanded over time to reflect the changing nature of the institution. Thirty-two indicators and 51 related statistics provide information in a tabular format at the departmental level and allow for comparisons across the University and over time in a range of areas including: entering students, enrolment, student success, student experience and services, faculty, research and graduate studies.

In addition to static tables for general audiences, the indicators are available to academic administrators via interactive Beyond 20/20 tables. Due to a lack of reliable data, several indicators originally conceived by the Senate committee were not developed. There is continuing pressure from various units to add indicators.

Decision-Support Indicators

Decision-Support Indicators help senior administrators to evaluate the need for change in three categories: Quality; Responsiveness; and Efficiency, Effectiveness and Affordability. These 19 indicators and their presentation were developed in consultation with Deans and include details about incoming students, student outcomes, measures of faculty workload and financial information.

The indicators are provided in tabular form for a particular year as quartiles, indices and actual values, allowing for a quick understanding of the relative position of each program in comparison with others. Several indices are charted as scatterplots against revenue less expenses to provide a sense of how cost-effective a given program may be.

Core Performance Indicators

With the wide variety of performance measures in use, there is a need to focus the attention

Continued on page 3

Ryerson University

From P. 2

of the Board and senior administrators on a more limited set of key indicators. Twelve Core Performance Indicators consolidate measures from Performance Indicators, Progress Indicators and student surveys (NSSE and GPSS) into an institutional scorecard that addresses each of the University's Academic Plan priorities.

Institutional short-term targets (one- to four-year time periods) are compared to current levels of performance. Progress is reviewed by senior administrators and the Board of Governors during the annual budget process. Long-term directional targets are shown graphically with arrows (vertical for improvement required and horizontal for maintenance of current levels).

Academic Plan Target Setting and Tracking

Ryerson's Academic Plan includes 5 key priorities and 25 enabling strategies to be promoted over a five-year period (2008-2013). Each Faculty and academic department sets its own plan within the framework of the overall University plan. Units are expected to set measurable targets for improvement and track progress annually using performance measures that reflect their goals, objectives and activities.

In the previous academic plan, many departments struggled with defining objectives and setting targets in measurable terms. At the initial stages of the current five-year plan, a framework was developed to support academic units in this activity. An electronic search tool was provided to all departments, allowing them to match 42 department-level Progress Indicators and related statistics and 182 survey items (from NSSE, CUSC and GPSS) to Academic Plan priorities and enabling strategies.

This initiative has boosted target setting and measurement in unit-level academic plans. It also allows the University to identify and evaluate the measures that are used most commonly by Faculties and departments.

Conclusion

Challenges arising during the implementation of this performance measurement regime include: a) controlling the proliferation of measures; b) encouraging academic leaders to incorporate performance measurement in their planning and operations; c) consolidating measures and focusing on what matters; and d) managing workload implications in the University Planning Office associated with increased use of performance measurement.

The University will continue to evaluate and modify its use of performance measurement as a tool to help focus on improvement.

More information on Ryerson University's performance measures can be found at www.ryerson.ca/about/accountability.

President's Message

From P. 1

reporting decreases in attendance of up to half and yet, at the time of this writing, we have upwards of 160 delegates registered. And it's not just the allure of Banff! Your program committee has recruited terrific plenary speakers and workshop presenters while you the members have also contributed presentations. The result is another outstanding program. See Kathleen's update inside, and don't forget to keep checking the website for updated information.

For all of you who are unable to attend; we'll miss you and please remember to renew your membership through the conference registration site.

This year, you'll see a turn over in the executive of your association. My final term as President concludes this fall. It has been a privilege to serve the Association. As I have said so many times, serving on the executive or on one of the committees is not onerous and is extremely rewarding. I would also like to say again that I have made so many good friends through this association. I have been truly enriched by the experience.

I would like to thank everybody I have worked with over the years; there are so many. But this year in particular has been a difficult year for me personally and I'd like to thank Cameron Tilson for looking after many matters that I was not able to deal with myself. For any who may not be aware, Cameron is your new president, and I assure you that the Association is in good hands.

Besides myself, leaving the executive at the expiration of their terms are Treasurer Ian Calvert and Program Chair Kathleen Bigsby. I would like to thank both of them for their outstanding service. The commitment and dedication of members such as Ian and Kathleen are what make CIRPA/ACPRI so successful.

In the last newsletter, you met CIRPA's new co-editors, Shannon Murphy and Kristen Hamilton. I would like to thank them for volunteering their time to help make this newsletter a reality. Another big thank you to Sharon Shultz, who has dedicated much time to this and past editions. Her contributions are sincerely appreciated. In closing, I encourage everyone to consider contributing an article to future editions.

Enjoy this edition of the Newsletter!

Accountability versus Autonomy

Excerpt from a speech by Dr. James Downey

The following is a portion of the speech given by Dr. James Downey, President and CEO of The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, to the Conference Board of Canada Quality Network for Universities¹.

WHAT WOULD A BETTER ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK LOOK LIKE?

So far I have argued that the accountability challenges we face today are not especially new, and that accountability is the necessary price of maintaining university autonomy. Sounds simple, but alas, to invoke the shade of T. S. Eliot, somewhere between conception and reality falls a shadow. The freight universities are forced to pay to meet their obligations to government often seem exorbitant. If universities accept that they have a responsibility to report to the government on whether public objectives are being achieved, they might reasonably expect a coherent statement of what these goals actually are, and a cost- and time-effective way of reporting on current levels of achievement.

Regrettably, we are not there yet.

It is not likely that T. S. Eliot had Ontario in mind when he wrote: “Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?” but he might have. In Ontario, we have many reporting requirements. But some of them generate data without producing information. In more than a few cases universities are required to report on results without knowing what the government’s goals or expectations are.

For example, universities and colleges are required to report each year on the graduation rates and employment rates for each of their programs. This exercise produces some worthwhile data. But there is no public goal or target for what these rates should be, or whether they should be the same for every university and every program.

To give another example: Universities and colleges – like all public sector bodies – are required to report the name and salary of every employee who earns more than \$100,000 a year. These lists now run to dozens of pages of single-spaced names. While transparency is a

“ it is fair to say that both governments and universities could do better in accounting for how well the higher education system achieves its purposes ”

virtue, it should be said that, in the view of many people in higher education, the primary effect of this disclosure has been to level up the salaries of those who appear underpaid relative to their peers.

The problem is made worse by the reluctance of government to cull established requirements, and so new requirements are sometimes layered on old ones.

Of course, universities have not themselves been blameless. In public statements they have sometimes measured educational quality by calculating funding per student, or by counting the number of students per tenured or tenure-track faculty member. I think

we all know the shortcomings of these measures.

Meanwhile, we know almost nothing about important areas of activity. For example, we know little about how much students have learned during their university years, or how resources have been deployed to educate them. As institutions we have invested very little in conducting research on the heart of what we do – teaching and learning. We examine all other fields of knowledge, but we ignore teaching and learning almost completely. Derek Bok, president emeritus of Harvard University, has written that:

[M]ost professors teach in the ways they traditionally have, confident that the ways that have worked well enough in the past will continue to serve in the future. Though trained in research themselves, they continue to ignore the accumulating body of experimental work suggesting that forms of learning that engage students actively in the learning

process do significantly better than conventional methods in achieving goals, such as critical thinking and problems-solving, that faculties everywhere hold dear. [Derek C. Bok, *Our Underachieving Colleges : A Candid Look at how Much Students Learn and why They Should be Learning More*, Princeton University Press, 2006, 312.]

So I think it is fair to say that both governments and universities could do better in accounting for how well the higher education system achieves its purposes.

To its great credit, the present

Continued on page 5

Accountability versus Autonomy

From P. 4

Ontario government has attempted to bring some coherence to accountability by establishing multi-year agreements with each institution. The government recognizes that these agreements are a work in progress and has invited the Higher Education Quality Council to assist in making them more useful.

Our work on these issues is still underway. But let me share with you how the Council sees them at present.

In the Council's view, while the Ontario higher education system reports a great deal of data, what is missing is an accountability framework. In this context, a "framework" can be defined as a way of organizing information so that we can draw useful conclusions from it. A framework would allow us to see how the many quality-related processes now in place relate to one another.

The framework should focus on educational outputs rather than on the internal processes of the universities and colleges. This is the level of analysis where the government has the greatest expertise and the greatest potential impact.

The first element of an accountability framework should set out the government's goals for the postsecondary sector, as well as appropriate performance measures and sector-wide targets for each goal.

The second element should be to identify performance measures for each university or college, with targets that are specific to that institution's mission. The targets should be multi-year, and they should be negotiated between the government and the institution.

Third, the framework should contain an after-the-fact assessment of whether performance targets were met. The reporting should be quantitative, but should also include a qualitative assessment of whether appropriate progress was made. There is little merit in assessing institutions solely on the basis of small changes in quantitative measures.

Fourth and finally, the accountability framework should support purposeful action by both institutions and governments to achieve goals and targets. That is, the framework must be clear on where responsibility lies for initiating next steps as required, and must set out the process to be followed. There must be a clear and predictable link between performance and funding or regulations. Importantly, the framework must contain binding commitments by the government as well as by institutions.

One benefit of this approach is that it provides a basis for recognizing the differences among institutions. Institutions that enrol borderline students and make them into good stu-

dents deserve at least as much recognition as institutions that enrol top students and make them into stars.

Compared with the status quo, the accountability framework I have described would ask more probing questions about what universities do and how well they do it.

I doubt that it would reduce the time spent reporting on what universities do – but it would put that time to better use.

The framework would provide the basis for a better dialogue with governments, and with the public at large, about what may reasonably be expected of universities and what resources the public is prepared to provide to have these expectations met.

As a Council, we have much work to do to make this framework a reality. But I offer it as a potential way of moving forward from a situation that has caused frustration for universities and governments alike.

A HIGHER ACCOUNTABILITY

My remarks in this speech have been mostly utilitarian. But I should like to leave you with a somewhat more elevated view of accountability. The Glion Declaration is a statement by a group of American university presidents and European rectors that describes their aspirations for universities in the 21st century. Here in small part is how it goes:

In a society of shifting goals and uncertain values, the university must stand for something more than accurate data and reliable information: more even than useful knowledge and dependable standards. The university is the custodian not only of knowledge, but also of the values on which that knowledge depends; not only of professional skills, but of the ethical obligations that underlie those professional skills; not only of scholarly inquiry, disciplined learning, and broad understanding, but of the means that make inquiry, learning, and understanding possible.

And that, colleagues, is the ideal, the spirit, and the cause to which we are ultimately accountable, and to which all other accountabilities are subordinate. If, as we go about the hard business of trimming budgets and accounting for expenditures, we can occasionally catch a glimpse of that, we will be all right.

[reprinted with the permission of Dr. James Downey].

The full speech can be found at:

http://www.heqco.ca/en-CA/Stay_Informed/Speeches%20and%20Presentations/Documents/Accountability%20versus%20Autonomy.pdf

Member Interview: Dr. Heather Friesen

The following is a transcript of a virtual interview conducted with Dr. Heather Friesen, Director of Institutional Research and Planning at College of the North Atlantic in Qatar.

employs over 600 Canadian faculty and staff. It is an incredible experience to be living in a completely new environment but with the familiarity of working and living with Canadians. Culture shock has



DR. HEATHER FRIESEN

Q: How long have you been in IR? How did you first get started?

A: I have been in IR for almost 17 years, starting a few months after completing a BA at UBC. I was temping at The University College of the Cariboo and looking for full time work, and happened to see a posting for the Institutional Research department – I didn't know what the department was about but since one of the requirements was a Sociology degree I thought it was worth investigating. So, like most people, I found IR primarily by stumbling into it inadvertently.

Q: What is your educational background?

A: I have a BA (Sociology) from UBC, an MBA from Heriot-Watt University in Scotland and an Ed.D. from Simon Fraser University.

Q: Tell us a little about your current institution.

A: The College of the North Atlantic in Qatar (CNA-Q) is a relatively new institution – it was opened in September 2002 through an agreement between the State of Qatar and College of the North Atlantic in Newfoundland. It is one of Qatar's largest post-secondary institutions with over 2,300 students, and

been virtually nil.

Q: What made you decide to move to the Middle East?

A: This is a great question – and one we've been asked many times! We have treated this opportunity as a three-year adventure. Qatar is a very safe (virtually no crime) and progressive country, and citizens have most of the same rights and freedoms as do Canadians. What is interesting is that expats comprise over 70% of the country's 1.5m population, so the Qataris are vastly outnumbered by those of us from other countries. Therefore, we are able to experience a myriad of different cultures. Another benefit of living in Qatar is the opportunity for travel - the Qatar airport has direct flights daily to over 100 countries. The final decision was made when I was researching the city on YouTube, and saw a Dairy Queen sign. I knew then that it would be a very enjoyable three years.

Q: How are things in IR different there? How are they the same?

A: There are virtually no differences between IR in Canada and in Qatar. The workload in Qatar includes accountability reporting to government, key performance indicators, student outcomes surveys, enrolment management-related

reporting such as persistence and applicant conversion analyses, as well as IR fundamentals such as headcount, FTE, stable enrolment and demographic reporting.

Q: What will you and your colleagues gain from attending CIRPA in October?

A: CIRPA is such an important conference to attend, and quantifying the benefits achieved by attending it is a challenge. Networking and sharing of best practices among colleagues is always a key benefit, though specifically in Banff I am looking forward to the many sessions on planning and accountability paired with SCUP's Planning Institute, and the fantastic slate of keynote presentations. We are also looking to implement a data warehouse solution over the 12-18 months so we will be looking to glean insight into this undertaking.

Q: You have a real reputation at your former institution for keeping the workplace fun. How does that translate to Qatar?

A: I've been incredibly fortunate to work with excellent teams in both my former and current institution. Both are staffed with bright, vibrant and forward-thinking individuals that make the office both rewarding and fun. By nature, people drawn to the IR field are generally motivated by the process of discovery and with increasing emphasis on evidence-based decision making, higher education provides a wide spectrum of investigative arenas. By providing staff the latitude to explore and develop projects that are personally meaningful and exciting, employee engagement is enhanced and ultimately the institution benefits enormously.

Q: If you could give three pieces of advice to someone new to IR, what would they be?

A: 1. Have fun. Though from the outside looking in it may seem that the field of IR is fully encumbered by number

Continued on page 7

CIRPA Executive

President (Term 2007-2008)

Jeff Donnelly, Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT)
jeffd@nait.ca

Vice-President (Term 2007-2009)

Cameron Tilson, Concordia University
ctilson@alcor.concordia.ca

Treasurer (Term 2007-2009)

Ian Calvert, Carleton University
ian_calvert@carleton.ca

Secretary (Term 2008-2010)

Kate McGovern, University of Regina
kate.mcgovern@uregina.ca

2009 Conference Chairs, Banff, AB

Kathleen Bigsby, Kwantlen Polytechnic University
kathleen.bigsby@kwantlen.ca

Peter Seto, Mount Royal College
pseto@mtroyal.ca

Members at Large

Denis Marchand, Université du Québec (Term 2007-09)
denis.marchand@uquebec.ca

Peter Seto, Mount Royal College (Term 2007-09)
pseto@mtroyal.ca

Anna Burke, Nova Scotia Community College (Term 2008-2010)
anna.burke@nsc.ca

Elizabeth Lane, Dalhousie University (Term 2006-08)
elizabeth.lane@dal.ca

Nominations Committee

Robert Schultz, Chair, University of Saskatchewan (Term 2007-09)
robert.schultz@usask.ca

Sue Drapeau, Nova Scotia Community College (Term 2007-09)
suzanne.drapeau@nsc.ca

Herb O'Heron, AUCC (Term 2007-09)
hoheron@aucc.ca

Kathleen Bigsby, Kwantlen University College (Term 2006-08)
kathleen.bigsby@kwantlen.ca

Henry Decock, Seneca College (Term 2006-08)
henry.decock@senecac.on.ca

Data Advisory Committee Co-Chairs

Herb O'Heron, AUCC
hoheron@aucc.ca

Peter Seto, Mount Royal College
pseto@mtroyal.ca

Communications Chair

Elizabeth Lane, Dalhousie University (Term 2008-10)
elizabeth.lane@dal.ca

Newsletter Co-editors

Sharon Shultz, Keyano College
Sharon.Shultz@keyano.ca

Shannon Murphy, Ambrose University College, Calgary
SMurphy@ambrose.edu

Kristen Hamilton, Thompson Rivers University, Kamloops
KHamilton@tru.ca

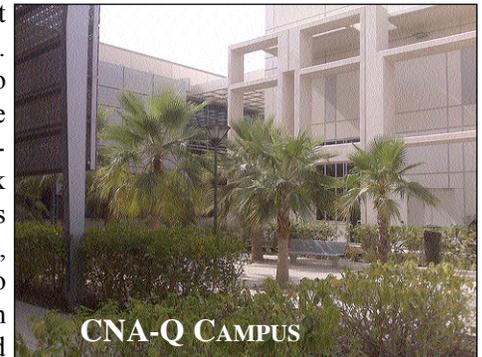
Interview with Dr. Heather Friesen

From P. 6

crunching and quantitative measures, in reality there is an infinite amount of depth to the field. The contributions that IR offices can make to the institutional setting is limited only by imagination, and if offices can be successful in automating and streamlining routine functions, more time can be dedicated to exciting endeavours such as research projects into student success, strategic planning, institutional partnerships, and an endless list of other initiatives. A unique benefit to this field is the ability to incorporate into daily work topics that one is passionate about, permitting us to truly have fun while we work and to view our roles in IR as 'careers' rather than 'jobs'.

2. Ask questions. One of the most difficult parts of my fledgling years in IR was my fear of asking questions. I was afraid that I would be exposed as the only person who didn't know what a factor analysis was or that people at conferences didn't have time to waste on young people who didn't know anything yet. This perception couldn't have been further from the truth, since the IR community is highly welcoming and supportive and diverse enough that there is no "right" combination of skills and experience – we all possess different strengths and abilities. Some have advanced degrees in statistics, while others would blanch if asked to explain what a standard deviation indicates. Some are highly technical while others are just starting to get comfortable with the fax machine. Therefore, newcomers should never feel intimidated about asking questions as we are all simultaneously experts and novices in varying areas.

3. Never stop learning. The opportunities to grow and expand are endless in our field. Regardless of our backgrounds, we can always learn more from each other. New technology, new research, new theories and best practices are constantly being introduced and we all have opportunities to pursue what we find interesting so that we are always adding to our bag of tricks.



CNA-Q CAMPUS

