



PNAIRP



PNAIRP News

Spring 2010

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Contact Us

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Hello from the PNAIRP President



Hi all,

I am looking forward to a good year for PNAIRP and our members. We are having a beautiful weather day in downtown Portland, home to my new office. Spring is the right time of year to consider planting some seeds that will yield bountiful returns throughout this year and beyond. I have some suggestions for our garden of research and research skills.

The AIR Forum

May 29–June 2, in Chicago Illinois. As of April 8, 40 researchers from Alaska, Yukon, British Columbia, Idaho, Oregon and Washington were already registered. There will be a PNAIRP meeting at the Forum, led by our VP, Dawn Macdonald. If you have not yet attended a Forum, I encourage you to work one into your plans. <http://forum.airweb.org/>

Other AIR Programs

The Association for Institutional Research has other professional development and educational programs, listed on its website: <http://www.airweb.org/?page=813>

PNAIRP Programs

Our premier professional development opportunity is our annual conference. Dawn, assisted by a local arrangements committee in Vancouver, will add this fall's conference to our history of successful conferences. There are two ways for you to help:

(President's Message continued)

1) Plan to attend the conference (dates and details will be supplied later, but think this fall); and

2) Plan to submit a presentation proposal! All of us do work worthy of sharing with our colleagues, whether it is a completed project, a work in progress, or a tool of our trade (call for proposals to follow later).

PNAIRP also has several programs that help fund professional development. These include (from a document updated by Dawn Macdonald last year):

1) AIR Forum Travel Grant - \$500 (One grant awarded per year). The AIR Forum (usually held in May or June) provides a wonderful opportunity to learn from your colleagues from other states and even other nations.

2) Best Paper Award - \$1,000. The person receiving the Best Paper Award at the PNAIRP conference will present the paper at the next AIR Forum.

3) PNAIRP Conference Travel Grants - \$1,500 (Multiple grants awarded per year). The PNAIRP annual conference is the "don't miss" opportunity to share with, and learn from, each other. A total of \$1,500 is available for all PNAIRP travel grants.

4) Other Professional Development Grant - \$500 (Two grants awarded per year). This award is to assist members who wish to participate in other professional development activities related to institutional research and planning. Examples include regional or national training sessions; international events related to IR, AIR (Association for Institutional Research) sponsored training such as the Summer Institute, SCUP (Society for College and University Planning) conferences, etc.

Tonya Benton is the Travel Grant Coordinator this year. Send inquiries to: TBENTON@highline.edu

Thanks for giving us a few minutes of your reading time today!

Ron Smith

PNAIRP President

2010 Conference to Be Held in Vancouver, BC

Because of the budget cuts that post-secondary institutions have been forced to bear this year, the executive committee grew concerned about members' ability to come to the fall conference scheduled to be in British Columbia in 2010. Added to those initial worries was news in March that the city of Vancouver was no longer exempt from Washington state employee out-of-state travel restrictions. As such, the executive committee held a meeting via a conference call to discuss the issue.

Some of the alternatives to maintaining the conference in Vancouver included moving it to Washington (and potentially holding it in Seattle where attendance is usually high) in 2010 and then having Washington skip its turn at holding it in 2012. We also contemplated moving it to Washington but having it along the border with BC (perhaps Blaine or Bellingham). Another topic discussed but deferred for later action was the possibility of increasing the budget for PNAIRP conference travel grants.

To assist in making an informed decision about the conference, Dawn Macdonald administered and reported on a survey to members in February, and Qin Liu did some further analysis of the survey results. In March, Darryl Dieter surveyed Washington state members about their preferences during the state researchers and planners meeting. Additionally, Ben Wolfe, PNAIRP's Secretary, provided detailed data on conference attendance back to 2000. The results of these surveys and historical data did not provide sufficient evidence to alter PNAIRP's traditional site rotation. None of the options resulted in moving a considerable number of people from non-attendee to attendee (intentions reported in the survey). Washington, Oregon and Idaho members may be able to handle any travel restrictions by lodging in Blaine or Bellingham and then driving to Vancouver each morning for sessions. I can tell you that is my plan.

In any event, the point of explaining all of this is to let you know that the Executive Committee was aware of travel restrictions and reduced budgets that may reduce attendance at the conference and we sought alternatives that might mitigate this. We know that attendance at the PNAIRP conference is important for many members and that is why we considered alternatives. Member feedback, however, did not support changing the conference location.

Darryl Dieter

PNAIRP Past President

Call for 2010 Conference Proposals

The Pacific Northwest Association for Institutional Research and Planning Executive Committee is busy planning the 2010 Conference to be held in British Columbia. This will be our 31st annual conference and will most likely take place at the end of September or beginning of October (dates to be determined soon).

The PNAIRP Conference Committee is pleased to invite you to submit presentation proposals for the 2010 Conference. We welcome conference proposals on any aspect of IR and planning professional practice, but especially encourage proposals that address the theme of 'Institutional Research as a Social Science'.

Proposals for pre-conference workshops are also invited under the general title, Tools of the Trade. Please share your knowledge on theoretical models/frameworks relating to higher education, relevant technological software (e.g., MS Excel, MS Access, SPSS, SAS, reporting software such as Tableau etc.), and/or statistical reporting techniques, or other areas of your practice. The Tools of the Trade sessions run for 90 minutes.

Proposals will be evaluated by at least two reviewers, using a blind-review process. The criteria used to evaluate the research proposals will include interest to practitioners, professional articulation of the research problem, and the appropriateness of the topic to the theme of the conference.

Please forward this call for proposals to any colleagues who may be interested in presenting at our 2010 conference.

PNAIRP 2010 Proposal submission guideline is available at our website: <http://www.pnairp.org/conferences/index.asp>



PNAIRP Executive Committee at the 2009 Conference

SCUP Conference – Opportunity for Team Development

The Oregon College of Oriental Medicine (OCOM) in Portland, OR, is a non-profit graduate school offering Masters' and Doctoral degrees in Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine. Since its inception 26 years ago, OCOM has been considered a leader in its field in the United States. As the Planning, Operations, & Assessment Officer, I have led the strategic and operational planning efforts at OCOM for the last several years and am now also charged with developing the nascent institutional research and assessment program for the college.

OCOM took advantage of the fact that the national conference for the Society for College and University Planning (SCUP) conference was held in Portland this year. I arranged for my team, which includes the Director of Information Systems and Technology, the Director of Human Resources, and the Director of Facilities, to attend the conference and to participate in the Planning Institute Step I pre-conference training program.

Our team's participation in the pre-conference training provided a wonderful opportunity for individual team members to better understand what is meant by integrated planning and to assess how well OCOM is doing in its planning efforts in relation to other institutions. Our participation at the conference itself enabled us to attend more conference workshops/programs than we could have covered individually. We met in advance to decide which programs to attend, and then met to debrief each day. Once we returned to campus, we provided a verbal report to our mid-level managers' meeting regarding the benefits and "take away" that we each received from attending the conference.

The general conclusion reached by each of us individually is that OCOM, despite its small size, is on right on track with its integrated planning processes. Topics addressed in workshops that proved very valuable for our team are listed below along with the implication for OCOM:

- Sustainable Facilities and Practices – helped inform our current sustainability practices and will support our campus relocation project

- Information Systems – helped us assure that our focus on web-based technology is moving the college in the right direction for quality education
- Integrated Planning and Accreditation – helped the team better understand the importance of strategic, operational, and annual work plans, and the need to effectively track planning, budgeting and accreditation standards in an effective way

We all agreed that one of the highlights of the conference was the closing plenary speaker, Michael Wesch, Asst. Professor of Cultural Anthropology, Kansas State University. Prof. Wesch's remarks, entitled *Mediated Culture and the Future of the University*," focused on the implications of the ubiquitous use of "media" in our culture and its implications for effectively educating students now and in the future. Although the video of the actual address at SCUP is not on their website, they will send a DVD copy if requested using their contact email: info@scup.org. I have obtained a copy that we will share with our staff and faculty via our intranet websites.

I wish to gratefully acknowledge the travel grant I received from PNAIRP that helped defray my expenses in attending the SCUP conference. That assistance helped enable others of my team to attend which has resulted in an increased level of understanding and teamwork related to planning and institutional research at OCOM.

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For those attending the AIR Forum in Chicago, please mark on your calendars to meet up with PNAIRP colleagues **Tuesday, June 1st from 5:45p.m.-6:30 p.m. in the Columbus A room**. For more information, please contact Dawn Macdonald at dmacdonald@yukoncollege.yk.ca

For more information about the Forum, please visit the AIR website at <http://forum.airweb.org/>.

2009 Conference Highlights from a California Community College Researcher

As a researcher who has worked in California community colleges (CCC) for four years, I was interested in attending the PNAIRP (Pacific Northwest Association of Institutional Research and Planning) conference to learn how others in institutional research (IR) accomplish their work.

PNW vs. CCC. PNAIRP covers four states and two Canadian provinces (British Columbia (BC) and Yukon), with three of these states (Oregon, Washington, and Alaska) and the provinces sending researchers. In contrast, the CCC system covers only one state but has over 100 community colleges. PNAIRP must work with more diverse state and federal regulations for their Pacific Northwest (PNW) researchers than does CAIR (California Association of Institutional Research) or the RP Group (Research and Planning Group, the professional association for researchers in California community colleges) because the CCC functions as a unit in relation to state and federal entities, and we rarely look externally for innovative ways to accomplish our research work.

I learned most about the similarities and differences between PNAIRP colleges and universities compared to CCCs at the receptions. There, I learned about how the state agencies and accreditation standards differ between the two areas. The different accreditation commissions have both instituted new standards but the new standards have different consequences. In California, the new standards have an intense focus on student learning outcomes (SLOs) and evaluating our programs and institutions. The researchers from PNAIRP colleges and university seemed unconcerned about SLOs, with a Canadian researcher stating that institutional assessment in this SLO manner was unrelated to how higher education in Canada functions. In contrast, The PNW accrediting commission is starting a new *process* of accreditation in which a report or evidence is required every year.

I also noticed differences between the *people* who were researchers in these two areas; my perception of CCC researchers is that the group is more ethnically diverse, and the PNW researchers seemed to be more enthusiastic and relaxed. Granted, my "sample" size of one PNAIRP conference and multiple CCC conferences over four years is not equal. However, also saw similarities between the two types of researchers; it seemed that few of us were specifically trained to work in IR, that we

(2009 Conference ... continued)

just “fell” into it. Additionally, both organizations have members who have been doing research and evaluation in higher education for 20 or more years.

Sessions. I attended sessions covering information on:

- Assessing higher-order skills such as critical thinking and analysis and evaluation,
- A model of evaluation that can be applied at the course-level all the way through institution-level,
- The fiscal feasibility of offering a study skills course for free (e.g., through increased funding via higher retention rates and FTES in later terms),
- Factors affecting transfer (and degree attainment) as perceived by faculty and staff of community colleges and a university, and
- The types of students who may be missed in the National Student Loan Clearinghouse database.

For more information on these topics, feel free to email me for the contact information of the presenters, or find them on the schedule here: <http://www.pnairp.org/conferences/>.

Best Paper Committee. I was able to participate in the Best Paper Committee, led by David Burgess from Portland State University (PSU). I agreed to rate most of the sessions that I attended on six criteria (three relating to presentation skills and materials, and three related to content and research quality). During the discussion and final decisions after all sessions, I crystallized what kinds of attributes a good research paper and presentation possess, one worthy of sending to the national Association of Institutional Researchers conference. Serving on this committee also allowed me to view the sessions from a different perspective, not just “Can I use this at my college?”

Overall, I learned a lot about PNAIRP, its members, and IR in the PNW. PSU was a beautiful campus with vibrant, earthy students. I look forward to sharing what I have learned with my department, campus, the CCCs, and PNAIRP.

Michelle Oja
Cypress College
Cypress, CA