

The Welcomer

Collegiate Information and Visitor Services Association

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CIVSA's 16th Annual Conference!

94 people gathered at Boston University for this year's annual conference. With 15 concurrent sessions, 16 roundtables, and one dynamic keynote speaker, this year's conference had an amazing variety of educational experiences. Of course, there was also fun to be had, with tours of Harvard, MIT, and Fenway Park among the options. If you were unable to attend, be sure to visit <http://civsa.org/conference/> for presentations/handouts and conference photos!

Many thanks go out to all who worked so hard to make this year's conference a reality, especially Georgia Balafas, Rebecca Gloe, Amy Hook, Meg Malmberg, Becky Nemeth, and Sarah Walz. Thank you!

Mark your calendars now for next year's conference: **June 2-6, 2010 in Lexington, Kentucky.** It's not too early to start thinking of a session you can present or a research topic to propose. We hope to see you there!



Group shot at the Castle, on Boston University's campus



*News and Information from the
Collegiate Information and
Visitor Services Association*

Research and Assessment: Assessment in Practice

by Denise Wellman, Ph.D.

As we all know, not all programs and services “work” as we expected them to “work.” Likewise, some programs appear to work great but when asked what goals were achieved, we don’t have specific information to validate what we think happened. Assessment can be extremely helpful in exploring and then explaining the outcomes of a program or service, so we know specifically what “worked” and what goals were (or were not) achieved. The process of raising questions and then conducting assessment can encourage lively and healthy debate within an organization and the results can then be extremely useful to inform future practice.

In an effort to stimulate a discussion on research and assessment in the area of campus information and visitor services (and hopefully encourage future research proposals), the CIVSA Research & Assessment Committee asks you to consider the following situations:

Case 1: You have identified a few problems within your student work force. They are not showing up for work on time, often not showing up at all, and you are experiencing problems with attrition and professionalism. Therefore, you want to know more about what sustains motivation and what facilitates perceptions of satisfaction among your student workers. Specifically, you want to understand more about what aspects of their work environment facilitate satisfaction and motivation.

Case 2: Imagine that you want to increase your students’ understanding of the risks associated with running programs out of your office. You conduct an assessment to explore your students’ understanding of any risks involved with the programs and services offered by your office and gauge their understanding of how to respond to an emergency situation.

Case 3: Your office is interested in increasing student, faculty, and staff utilization of the many services offered by the Campus Information Center. You design a marketing and communications campaign to “get the word out” about the many programs and services offered. You decide to run a feature story in

the student newspaper, utilize the web and a social networking site to publicize specific programs and services and also design posters to place on easels in what you believe to be high traffic locations.

Each case represents a potential assessment project, and possibly represents a concern within your own office. Ponder the following questions, trying to utilize some of the assessment terms provided in the Glossary (see next page). Please know that this list is not intended to represent the only questions that need to be asked as one undertakes an assessment project, just a few questions to get your thinking started. Also know that the Research & Assessment Committee is only a phone call or email away and stands ready to help guide your research. Any member who embraces the challenge of crafting thoughtful answers to these questions is eligible to be entered in a drawing for an exciting prize that will help stimulate future research!! Please send submissions to Denise Wellman at denisen@mailbox.sc.edu.

- 1 – Who would you need to involve in each assessment project? From whom will we get the information that we need? Who will be in your sample?
- 2 – What questions might we want to ask? What is the focus of the study, i.e., specifically what questions would help you know whether or not your students (or other constituents) learned what you wanted them to learn?
- 3 – What methods would best answer the questions (survey, interviews, focus groups, etc)?
- 4 – Who on your campus would be interested in the results? Who should see the results (even if they don’t know they need it)?
- 5 – How might you use the information to inform future practice?

continued on next page

Brief Glossary of Assessment Terms

Affective Outcome: Outcomes involving feelings more than understanding; likes, pleasures, ideals, dislikes, annoyances, values.

Concept: An abstract, general notion — a heading that characterizes a set of behaviors and beliefs.

Instrumentation: Methods of gathering data, i.e. surveys (online or on paper), interviews, focus groups, a combination of various methods (mixed method).

Mean: One of several ways of representing a group with a single, typical score. It is figured by adding up all the individual scores in a group and dividing them by the number of people in the group. Can be affected by extremely low or high scores.

Median: The point on a scale that divides a group into two equal subgroups. Another way to represent a group's scores with a single, typical score. The median is not affected by low or high scores as is the mean.

Outcome: An operationally defined goal, usually a culminating activity, product, or performance that can be measured.

Qualitative Research: A field of inquiry that crosses disciplines and subject matters. This approach to assessment investigates the *why* and *how* of behavior, not just *what*, *where*, *when*. This approach is particularly the case for understanding how and why certain outcomes were achieved (not just what was achieved) but also answering important questions about relevance, unintended effects and impact of, for instance, a specific training programs such as: Were expectations for the training reasonable? Did the program operate as expected? Were key players able to carry out their responsibilities? Were there any unintended effects of the program? This methodology involves the analysis of words, pictures, and objects, as well as observed behaviors and may use direct quotes from people about their experiences, beliefs, attitudes, and thoughts.

Quantitative Research: This field of inquiry is most often utilized in the natural and social sciences, as well as education. It involves the systematic and

scientific investigation of a phenomenon (objects, events, and/or observations) that can be measured and expressed in numerical terms. The aim of this approach is to determine the relationship between one thing (an independent variable) and another (a dependent or outcome variable) in a population such as: To what extent did a specific training program affect staff perceptions of motivation? What percentage of participants expressed an enhanced level of knowledge as a result of the training program? Therefore, this methodological approach involves the analysis of numerical data to develop and refine theories and hypotheses.

Reliability: The measure of consistency for an assessment instrument. The instrument should yield similar results over time with similar populations in similar circumstances.

Sampling: A way to obtain information about a large group by examining a smaller, randomly chosen selection (the sample) of group members. If the sampling is conducted correctly, the results will be representative of the group as a whole. Sampling may also refer to the choice of smaller tasks or processes that will be valid for making inferences about the subjects in a larger domain.

Validity: The assessment tool/method accurately reflects what it was designed to measure.

Valuable resources for research & assessment in higher education

Bloom, B. S. (Ed.) (1984). *Taxonomy of educational objectives: The classification of educational goals*. New York: Longmans.

Keeling, R. P., Wall, A. F., Underhile, R., Dungey, G. J. (2008). *Assessment reconsidered: Institutional effectiveness for student success*. New York: ICSSIA.

Upcraft, M. L. & Schuh, J. H. (2001). *Assessment practice in student affairs: An application manual*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Denise Wellman
University of South Carolina

CIVSA Best Practices: Walking for Knowledge, PR, Student Development (and for Health)

How well do you really know your campus? You know your office and programs. You know your area, where you go everyday, and the route to and from your car, but do you know the campus the way a visitor or new student does? If you are new to the campus, if you have been there for many years, if you are years away from your own undergraduate roaming, the answer is probably no, not so well. I want to suggest here that there is value to you, your students, and your visitors in your knowing the campus more intimately, i.e. through your feet.

I'm a walker. I love to walk, and it is my chosen form of exercise. The physical and psychological values of walking are well known, but it is not my purpose to sell you on walking as exercise. I'm not an expert on exercise, but I am an expert on walking on my campus. I have several one hour routes around campus, and I try to walk one of them every day. I walk right after work, in the evening, or, frequently, very late at night. Through walking I have broadened my appreciation and knowledge of my campus.

My usual paths include much of the campus tour route. While I walk I notice sidewalk conditions, construction issues, and anything else that might affect the tour. I also think about improvements we might make to the tour. Occasionally, I cut through buildings I haven't been in lately. I find it useful to refresh my memory of building layout and uses.

Not infrequently, someone stops me to ask directions or about an activity on campus. They often seem surprised that I know the answer to their question and are thankful for the assistance. Usually the person asking the question is not a prospective student or family member. Nor is it someone who has been to the visitor center. Rather, it is a student who doesn't know where a particular building is or a visitor for a particular event. Being able to help the person has PR value for the university and, admittedly, makes me feel good.

As I walk I feel closer to the students. I see more of their activities and interactions, and I feel I understand them a little better. That helps me, both directly and indirectly, to help students. I have had many conversations with students I know out on the sidewalks. For the vast majority of the students whom I do not know, I think there is value in an exchanged smile and hello.

Walking can also be a positive step in developing community and appreciation of diversity. Sometimes our campus can seem empty or very homogeneous in terms of age or other factors. I don't want to overstate this point, but perhaps it will help if we don't always leave campus right after work.

Honestly, the greatest value of walking campus for me is not work related. Being out and about on campus does help me in the ways I mention above, but the real value is seeing and appreciating the beauty and spirit of campus. Watching deer or muskrat doesn't help me do my job. Seeing the lights of a building shining through fog across a quad doesn't increase tour numbers, but it does help me to value where I am. In fact, maybe I'll go for a walk right now.

Chris Porterfield
Northern Illinois University



The Northern Illinois University campus in the fall

Betty's Summer Briefing...

We have just wrapped up a great conference in Boston and owe the Conference Committee a big thank you for their hard work and an outstanding job. I would be remiss not to also thank the wonderful session presenters who contributed to the outstanding educational program put together by Program Chair Meg Malmberg (University of Connecticut). All of these folks devoted long hours preparing for the conference and deserve one more round of thanks!

Congratulations are in order for our new Executive Board members, President Elect Julian Olivas (Texas Tech University) and Treasurer Heather McFarland (Anne Arundel Community College). Collectively they have many years of experience working on CIVSA committees and with the Executive Board and are welcome additions to the leadership team. We also welcome three new Regional Directors to the Board: Region One - Lea Hanson (Colorado State University); Region Two - Jennifer McLendon (University of North Texas); and Region Three - Amber Campbell (University of Kentucky).

Our *'Every Member Get a Member'* contest is underway and the winner will receive free registration for the 2010 conference. The complete rules can be found on the CIVSA website at www.civsa.org. When you visit the homepage you will see that our Director of Communications Jen McGowan has added some cool buttons to the bottom of the page that make it easy to navigate to a few key places on our website. She also added a link to our Facebook group and we hope you will join if you haven't yet. We have 83 members and would like to see it grow.

Speaking of Facebook, a video made by our next Conference Host Stephen Barnett (University of Kentucky) to announce the 2010 conference is uploaded on the Facebook group page. He did a great job and watching it definitely gets me excited about visiting Lexington, Kentucky for the 17th annual conference. [Take a look](#) if you haven't seen it yet (you must be logged in to Facebook to view the video).

I look forward to the year ahead and feel very fortunate to serve as President of an association comprised of such talented professionals. I would love to hear from you if you have any thoughts that will help us increase the benefits of membership for current members or spread the word about CIVSA to potential new members.

Betty

*Betty Spengler, CIVSA President
University of Maryland*

Want to Get Involved with CIVSA?

CIVSA currently has 8 committees and all would be excited for new members to join. The committees are:

- Archives Committee
- Conference Committee
- Hospitality Committee
- Marketing Committee
- Nominating Committee
- Programming Committee
- Research & Assessment Committee
- Standards Committee

To read more about each of the committees, or to express an interest in joining one (or more!), visit the CIVSA Members-Only website: http://civsa.org/members_only/ We're also interested in your ideas about other committees that could be formed or other ways you'd like to be involved. Let us know today!

Welcome New Members!

Candace Brownlee
Heartland Community College

Kelsey Culver
The Ohio State University

Michael Davis
Drexel University

Josh Ellison
Texas A&M University

Maria Emory
Sewanee: The University of the South

Estela Feagin
Texas A&M University

Rebecca Fortier
Illinois Institute of Technology

Lindsay Geib
University of Louisville

Sheila Gray
Texas Tech University

Joshua Hancock
Texas Woman's University

Nina Hoppes
The Ohio State University

Jessica Johnson
Missouri Baptist University

Cassie Kimbrough
University of Texas at Arlington

Verna Marlow
Anne Arundel Community College

Regina Matos
Arizona State University

Niki Mendrinis
Temple University

Karen Moser
Arizona State University

Jennifer Nelson
James Madison University

Nicole Olson
The Ohio State University

Leslie Paulson
Drexel University

Melissa Pizzo
Arizona State University

Laura Sandness
University of Minnesota - Twin Cities

Amy Stringwell
Heartland Community College

Tessa Wallace
University of Colorado at Boulder

Jessica Wright
Bluffton University



The Welcomer is a quarterly publication of the Collegiate Information and Visitor Services Association. Please send comments, suggestions, or photos to:

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CIVSA Member Profile

Heather McFarland, Anne Arundel Community College

In the recent CIVSA communication survey, several members suggested a “get-to-know-other-members” or “get-to-know-the-Board” feature for the newsletter. This is the fourth column in the series; look for more profiles of other members in future issues.

Job Title: Campus Information Supervisor

How long have you been in the information/visitor services world?

I began working in the Information Services world 7 years ago as an hourly employee at the Information Center. After a year, I then began working in the Student Information Services department which is the call center for the campus. Two years ago a supervising position became available at the Information Center. I got the position and am loving being back where I first began my journey at AACC!

When did you join CIVSA?

I joined about 5 years ago. My supervisor at the time, Betty Spengler, raved about what a great organization CIVSA is and I was so excited to join and receive helpful tips and feedback from other colleges.

How many CIVSA conferences

have you attended? 3 - American University, University of Notre Dame, and Cal Poly Pomona.

What are your major job responsibilities? I recruit, select, train, and supervise hourly and work-study employees to serve as Campus Information Assistants. I also manage the Just Ask program which is a new student information program that takes place the first week of each academic semester and includes preparing, assembling, and distributing informational packets and ensuring the set up and staffing of Just Ask locations around the campus.

What is a typical day like at your job? I normally spend the morning at the Information Center and the afternoon catching up with my e-mails, special projects, respond to campus tour requests, and work on scheduling.



Heather on the beach during the 2008 annual conference

What is your best piece of advice for other CIVSA members (about student training, customer service, unique traditions, your website, or anything!)? I've found in my 2 years as a supervisor that motivation and recognition are the key to happy workers.

What is the most fun thing that your office does?

We have semi-annual retreats that are themed and lots of fun. Normally the retreats last half a day and we go somewhere off-campus. Our last retreat we went to Dave and Busters and got to eat lunch and play arcade games all day. We also have team building activities and we each create our own games for the entire office to play.

What is your favorite part of working in visitor/information services? What I enjoy most is getting to know my employees, coaching them during their time at AACC, and guiding them in their future endeavors.

How many items are on your current to-do list?

Too many to count!

Membership Renewal

Have you renewed your CIVSA membership for one more year? If not, don't forget that your yearly membership ended on **June 30**. To continue to receive your fabulous CIVSA benefits including access to the CIVSA website, the listserv, and first notification about the annual CIVSA conference, you must renew your membership immediately.

There are several types of membership available:

Professional Membership (one person) - \$90/year

Institutional Membership (up to three people from the same institution) - \$200/year; plus \$40 for each additional member

Emeritus Membership (members who are officially retired from their institution) - \$40/year

You can visit the CIVSA website to read more details about the various types of membership.

To renew your membership, go to <http://civsa.org/membership/application.php> and fill in all the required fields. You can pay for membership by check or credit card. If you choose credit card, you will be automatically redirected to PayPal (you do not need a PayPal account to pay). If you pay by check, mail your check and the printed membership application to CIVSA Headquarters:

P.O. Box 971
Clemmons, NC 27012
phone: 336 499-6207
fax: 336 499-3319
e-mail: civsaHQ@civsa.org

Contact Headquarters with any questions about the current status of your membership.

Our Federal ID number for use when processing your payment is **13-384-4646**.

Research Proposals

The CIVSA Research & Assessment Committee is pleased to publicize the Research Grant Proposal Deadlines for 2009-10.

Any member in good standing is eligible to submit a research proposal according to the following schedule:

Proposal Deadline.....Nov. 6, 2009

Research Candidates Notified.....Nov. 20, 2009

Should a proposal be accepted, the principal researcher must be willing to:

1 – Present the research project at the 2010 Conference.

The research project does not necessarily need to be completed prior to the conference; however, a significant portion of the project must be underway and presented in a way that is meaningful to the organization. Presenting at the conference implies that the principal researcher will meet all program submission deadlines as established by the 2010 Conference Committee and conference registration deadlines as established by the Executive Board.

2 – Present final results of the research project in the Summer or Fall 2010 edition of the *Welcomer*.

The principal researcher must meet all submission deadlines as established by the newsletter editor.

The number of Research Grants is established each year by the CIVSA Executive Board. The principal researcher of the accepted grant proposal(s) will be eligible to be reimbursed for their conference registration once all requirements have been met.

If you should need assistance in preparing a Research Grant Proposal or have any questions, please contact any member of the [CIVSA Research & Assessment Committee](#).

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Have a question for the Board?
E-mail us at exec@civsa.org