UC Merced
Office of Institutional Planning & Analysis
Spring 2011

History and Organization of Office

The founding Director of the Office of Institutional Planning & Analysis (IPA) was hired in July 2005, shortly before the campus opened its doors to the pioneering class of 838 new freshmen and transfers. These undergraduates plus 24 new graduate students joined the 13 continuing graduate students who had come to UC Merced with their faculty mentors (the founding faculty) from other campuses. In the first year, two staff members were added to the office: a Manager of Research Information Systems and a Principal Research Analyst. In early 2007, another Analyst was added to the team and, in September 2009, a full-time contractual Data Administrator was hired to help design and implement several data marts. In recognition of IPA's role supporting assessment, SACA (Senate-Administration Council on Assessment) recommended, and the Budget Committee approved, another Principal Research Analyst position for IPA as well as a Programmer/Systems Analyst to help advance our Data Warehousing efforts. These two positions will be filled in Spring 2011.

IPA reports to the Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost and works closely with other planning units (Capital and Budget), as well as with Information Technology (IT), the Center for Research on Teaching Excellence (CRTE), Academic Senate, Deans' Offices, Admissions, Registrar's Office, Financial Aid, Academic Personnel, the Graduate Studies Division, and many of the co-curricular units within Student Affairs.

IPA Mission

UC Merced IPA provides ongoing support for campus planning and decision-making to help advance the educational mission and effectiveness of the institution.
Office functions include:

- Supporting campus strategic planning and facilitating decision-making in areas of enrollment management, resource allocation, campus performance/benchmarking and the setting of campus goals and objectives.
- Serving as the primary source for official campus statistics.
- Integrating campus and external data sources.
- Developing and maintaining reporting systems and processes to ensure data integrity, accuracy, and consistency, as well as appropriate and ethical use of campus data.
- Complying with Federal, State, Regional Accreditation (WASC) and UC System reporting requirements.
- Playing a leadership role in institutional assessment efforts.
- Enhancing institutional effectiveness by making information and analyses widely available to the campus community.
- Coordinating internal and external surveys of UC Merced students, alumni, faculty and staff.

Data Infrastructure

The IPA Director and IT Manager of the Student Information Systems (SIS) worked together to develop a SIS census snapshot process and successfully deployed the process in time for the first census (September 26, 2005). Over the first three and a half years, IPA expanded the data snapshots to include end-of-term student data and developed November and May personnel snapshots. An IPA data warehouse was designed, implemented, and populated with data from these snapshots. The warehouse (DW1) is updated every census and end of term (with student data) and every November and May (with personnel data). DW1 serves as the basis for all of IPA's official reporting. It also serves as a foundation for the campus-wide data warehouse (DW), championed by the Provost and being planned and developed by IPA and IT, in partnership. The DW Team includes IPA staff as well as three IT staff (only one of whom is dedicated full-time to the project). In February 2008, after a thorough RFP process, with input from constituents across campus, the hardware and business intelligence software were purchased, officially launching the DW initiative. In Summer 2010, IPA successfully launched the first prototype of a decision support module, an Admissions dimensional model.

IPA launched its website in Summer 2007. The web site grows almost daily as new data tables are added. The site is home to official student and faculty/staff data, as well as the UC Merced Profile (aka College Portrait) and Accountability Profile. In order to get feedback from the campus on the usefulness of the website and IPA's other venues for communicating information, full-time faculty and staff were surveyed. The results of this short survey are posted on the website.

Survey Infrastructure

In order to support a growing program of campus surveys, as well as ad hoc surveys conducted by individual units, IPA purchased an enterprise license of SNAP which allows IPA to design and deliver online surveys. IPA also assists other units in the design and delivery of their surveys. The centralization of survey software also helps in the coordination of campus surveys, reducing the chances of over-surveying some populations. To reinforce the infrastructure, the Provost charged IPA with the task of establishing a campus-wide Survey Coordinating Committee (SCC). Since its first meeting in Fall 2008, this committee has been developing guidelines for surveying UC Merced constituents. A website was launched and is being enhanced to help campus survey researchers through the process, including information about IRB protocols, how to get approval to obtain contact information or other demographic data, schedule for potentially competing surveys, tips for getting better response rates and creating better questions, etc.

Survey Research Program

During these first few years, IPA also started a survey research program (in some cases in partnership with other units on campus). The New Undergraduate Student Survey was launched in Fall 2005 and has continued each fall since then. In conjunction with the VC Student Affairs, IPA managed the campus' participation in NSSE (the National Survey of Student Engagement) in Spring 2006. The second NSSE survey was administered in Spring 2007. NSSE

was administered again in spring (2009) beginning an alternate year cycle, and also is being administered in Spring 2011. In the "off years," UC Merced participates in UCUES (the University of California Undergraduate Experience Survey), which is managed jointly by the UC Office of the President (UCOP) and the Center for Studies in Higher Education at UC Berkeley. UC Merced participated in UCUES in Spring 2006, 2008, and 2010.

In August 2008, just prior to the beginning of the semester, UC Merced participated for the first time in the BCSSE (Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement), serving as a companion to the Spring 2009 NSSE and enabling us to link pre-college attitudes and expectations to actual college experiences after one semester. Similarly, we administered BCSSE again in Summer 2010 anticipating the NSSE administration in Spring 2011. Other surveys also have emerged in a short time: annual administrations of the Graduate Student Survey, Alumni Survey, and Graduating Senior Survey.

IPA also has supported a number of faculty short-surveys at the request of the Academic Senate and individual academic programs. These surveys have proved to be good ways to solicit input from faculty regarding important campus or program issues, such as the strategic academic plan, furlough options, and program assessment structures. Also in conjunction with the Academic Senate, IPA works with academic programs to administer the required faculty and student surveys for their ***Program Reviews***.

Planning

UC Merced now has five years of history to inform enrollment and budget planning. Although each of the first four years has unique features, there clearly are some trends that help the campus predict near-term and learn from its short history. Our undergraduate students, for instance, come from all corners of California -- over a third from the Central Valley, almost a third each from the San Francisco Bay Area and Southern California. Applications have increased; melt rates (percentage of students who submitted statements of intent to register (SIRs) but did not enroll) have remained fairly steady (about 20%). IPA has incorporated relevant parameters into a long-range enrollment projection model (LREP). This model helps us monitor trends in the applicant pools, admit rates and yields, retention and graduation rates, residency status, and degree/class levels. It also helps us to plan for housing, the state-supported capital program, as well as inform our budget and faculty/staff hiring strategy. IPA, the Budget Office, and Capital Planning Office meet at least monthly to coordinate efforts and determine data needs to support our planning models and inform decision-making. The LREP, faculty workload reports, classroom/lab utilization projections, and other analyses conducted by IPA also support the Schools' strategic plans and efforts by CAPRA (the Academic Senate's Council on Academic Planning and Resource Allocation) to evaluate resource allocations.

Research and Assessment

One of IPA's most important roles is to respond to institutional questions (perform data analyses to answer questions) and provide leadership in ***institutional assessment*** as well as support for ***program review***/assessment and course assessment. IPA analysts and CRTE staff members are paired with each FAO (faculty assessment organizer) to help them in their

program assessment plans. IPA analysts also support the directors of ***co-curricular*** programs in their assessment plans.

Examples of IPA institutional analyses include various surveys that probe the reasons why prospective students choose UC Merced or decide to go elsewhere, students' satisfaction with aspects of the campus when they enroll, the extent of student engagement in various areas of campus life, plans students have after degree-completion, and where non-returning students transfer to and why they leave. We also use the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) to find out what happens to students when they leave UC Merced. IPA supports Admissions and Financial Aid by helping to analyze data that inform recruitment and financial aid strategies and participates in the College Board Validity Study to obtain preliminary information to identify "at risk" students. A broader study is in development.

As part of IPA's role in tracking retention and graduation rates (disaggregated in many ways, including gender, ethnicity, first-generation college status, income status determined by Pell grant receipt, major program, various preparation indicators), we also have begun to assess (or help to assess) the impact of programs targeting retention: Summer Bridge, freshman seminars, first-year course (USTU 010), learning communities, Success Workshops, peer mentoring. These assessment efforts will expand and be refined as we stabilize the methodologies and data gathering techniques. Where possible, we compare student characteristics and success to other UC campuses and national data. We also have looked at courses that students are most likely to repeat (sometimes more than once) to try to understand the reasons and shed light on possible changes that might be made to reduce the course-repeat behaviors. These data will be shared soon with the Undergraduate Council and campus advisors. At the request of the Undergraduate Council, IPA had also conducted two studies: 1) the comparison of the success rates of students admitted by exception (A by E) to regularly admitted students and 2) the comparison of course grades of transfer students to those of native UC Merced students taking the same courses.

IPA worked with the Career Center and Alumni Affairs to develop surveys that give us feedback about post-graduation plans for graduating seniors as well as actual outcomes experienced by alumni (employment, graduate education, etc.). IPA also will try to obtain data on GRE, MCAT, and other relevant test scores to compare UC Merced graduates to others nationwide. One of IPA's roles will be to ensure the consistency and quality of assessments so that efforts can be rolled up coherently to the institutional level.

As the campus further develops its strategic plan, IPA will help track important ***benchmarking data*** that will monitor our progress toward our goals and objectives. Data gathered in the UC Accountability reporting efforts led to preliminary comparisons with other UC campuses [CFR 4.5 Exhibit 487] as well as other "young" research universities [CFR 4.5 Exhibit 488]. IPA, the Chancellor's Cabinet, and the Academic Senate will be instrumental in the process of reviewing and determining comparison groups for various purposes. Especially because UC Merced is new, the campus needs benchmark data to monitor its progress toward reaching critical milestones, such as being awarded the Carnegie Commission classification that matches our mission.

Customers and Communication Methods

IPA's customers represent a very broad constituency, including the general public, other State agencies and institutions of higher education, federal agencies and grant-funding units, faculty (especially those looking for data for grant proposals), campus administrators, campus committees (Academic Senate, Staff Assembly, Student Government, etc.), students, parents and prospective students, reporters, State legislators and other officials. A communications strategy still is being developed. In addition to IPA's website and participation in various committees (Planning Group meetings, direct support of FAOs and Student Affairs directors, regular presentations to UGC and CAPRA), we plan to try other strategies. Working through the new University Assessment Council, we will regularize campus communications regarding various assessment efforts and their results. For IPA, this may take the form of research "briefs" posted on our website. Routine reporting to support campus constituents will be incorporated in the Data Warehousing initiative via an enterprise license for "consumer-level" reports.

IPA Staff

Director

Nancy L. Ochsner

- 31 years in institutional research, including 6 years at UC Merced
- ABD, Policy Sciences (Evaluation track), UMBC (1995)
- MA, Education (Statistics & Evaluation track), UC Riverside (1975)
- BA, Psychology, DePauw University (1972)

Principal Analyst

Michael Roona

- 7 years in institutional research, including 4 years at UC Merced
- 20 years social science research experience
- California Association of Institutional Research (CAIR); Secretary 2009-10; Treasurer 2010-11
- MA, American Politics, Syracuse University (1995)
- MS, Policy Analysis, San Jose State University (1992)
- BA, Mathematics, San Jose State University (1989)

Principal Analyst

Gary Lowe

- 7 years in institutional research, including 4 years at UC Merced
- Ed.D, Educational Leadership, CSU Fresno (2010)
- MBA, CSU Stanislaus (2004)

- BA, Social Sciences, CSU Stanislaus (1990)

Systems Manager/Programmer IV **Chris Speckens**

- 5 years institutional research at UC Merced
- 13 years IT experience, including 5 years at UC Merced
- MBA, CSU Stanislaus (1998)
- BS, Business Administration (Computer Information Systems and Management concentrations), CSU Stanislaus (1996)

Data Administrator/Programmer IV **Christi Bengard**

- 9 years in institutional research/planning & budget at UCSC/UCD; 2 years at UC Merced
- 26 years IT experience
- MS, Management Information Systems, San Francisco University (2002)
- BA, Psychology, UC Davis (1973)