President's Corner

Laura Boyles

Happy New Year,

I hope you each have had a great start to the New Year. The NCAIR conference is in just a few short weeks. The Planning Committee has put together a great conference. If you haven't already, make your reservations now for springtime in the mountains.

Thank you to the many individuals who have submitted proposals. This conference has even more sessions and workshops on the program than the last conference. If you are presenting a paper, please submit your paper for the "Best Paper" award. The award recipient will receive $400 to apply toward expenses for presenting your paper at either the 2006 SAIR conference in Arlington, VA or the 2007 AIR conference.

As my tenure as president ends, there are many people to thank for making this year a success. These include the executive committee, the planning committees for both the conference and the Summer Drive-In, former NCAIR presidents, and many other NCAIR members who contributed their time. I hope to speak to each of you at the conference and personally extend my appreciation. It has been a privilege to serve as the President of NCAIR.

With Thanks,
Laura

2006 NCAIR CONFERENCE

March 22-24, 2006
Broyhill Inn and Conference Center, Boone
"Reaching the Summit of Institutional Excellence"

From the Program Chair

Kendrick Tatum

Dear Colleagues,

The 2006 NCAIR Annual Conference is fast approaching and I invite everyone to register now for what is shaping up to be a terrific conference at the Broyhill Inn and Conference Center in Boone, North Carolina. The cost of attending the conference is $100 and should be submitted with your completed form no later than February 25. You can register one of two ways: online at https://secure.airweb3.org/ncair/ or via mail to Wayne Stone at the address at the bottom of the registration form.

If you have not already done so, please make your hotel reservations soon. The cut-off for making reservations at the great conference rate is February 20. Hotel rates are $57.25 for state employees or $76.00 for everyone else.

You can see from the preliminary program, available on the NCAIR website (www.ncair.net) that our NCAIR colleagues and supporters have submitted excellent proposals. We will also be offering two pre-conference workshops on Wednesday, March 21. Please note that the workshops are not concurrent so it's possible to sign up for both if you are interested. Space is limited so please register early. Registration for workshops is free and is included on the general conference registration form.

On Wednesday evening, following the keynote address, we will break from the tradition of a heavy hors d'oeuvres reception and have an Early Spring-theme "Cookout" complete with burgers and barbeque chicken. Of course, there will be a vegetarian option available as well.

For those who are unable to attend the conference this year, we will miss you. Your continued support of NCAIR is appreciated and we hope you will submit an election ballot and complete the form to renew your membership.

I look forward to seeing you in Boone!

Kendrick

Attention Presenters: Best Paper Award Competition

As in the past, NCAIR will award $400 to a deserving scholarly paper from a North Carolina school. The $400 award is given in support of presenting the awarded paper at either the upcoming SAIR or AIR conference. Guidelines for judging papers are: relevance of topic, knowledge of topic, coverage of topic, clarity, and overall quality. In addition, each judge also submits a categorical rating based upon whether the paper is deserving of the Best Paper
Award when compared to the other papers. Please keep in mind that scholarly papers typically contain, but are not limited to, the following components:

1. An abstract
2. Introduction / Literature Review
3. Purpose
4. Analysis
5. Discussion

Papers should be dropped off at the registration table by 4:00 pm on Thursday. Please take the time to enter your paper in this prestigious and coveted contest.

Newcomers and Mentoring

Pat Abell

NCAIR has a mentoring process for newcomers and for old-timers who feel the need for some support. This process matches a mentor with a mentee from a like institution, such as university institutional research veteran with a university institutional research newcomer, or community college with community college. If you would like to be part of this process, as either a mentor or a mentee, please contact one of the NCAIR board members. There will be an informational session as part of the newcomers' session at the spring conference that will also afford the opportunity for some matchmaking.

Nominating Committee Report

Robert Springer, Nominating Committee Chair

Here are the candidates for office for NCAIR 2006-2007

For Program Chair/President Elect: Michael Hadley
- Education: B.S. in Political Science and MBA from East Carolina University
- Experience: IR at Methodist College since 2000, currently holds position of Assistant Dean for Institutional Research and Effectiveness. Previous IR experience Coastal Carolina University (1997-2000) and Francis Marion University (1994-1997).
- Professional Affiliations: NCAIR, SAIR, NCICU, SCAIR (1995-2000), and SCHEA (1995-1999).

For Member-at-Large 2-Year Colleges: Lee Proctor
- Education: M.A. Ed Psychology and Counselor Ed, Tennessee Technological University
- Experience: Director of Research and Institutional Effectiveness at Piedmont Community College since 1999
- Professional Affiliations: NCAIR, CCPRO, AACRO

For Member-at-Large Public Institutions: Heather Langdon
- Education: M.A. in Higher Education Administration; B.A. in English Secondary Education from Appalachian State University
- Experience: IR at Appalachian State University since 1992, currently holds the position of Senior Research Associate
- Professional Affiliations: NCAIR, SAIR

For Secretary: Adam Shick
- Education: Master's degree in Mathematics from Wake Forest. Bachelor's degree in Marine Engineering Systems from the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy
- Experience: Assistant Director of Institutional Research at Wake Forest University since 2001.
- Professional Affiliations: NCAIR, SAIR, AIR.

Regional Happenings

John M. Davis, Ph.D.

On behalf of the Virginia Assessment Group, I am very pleased to introduce our March 17 Spring Workshop in Richmond, with two exciting topics: "Using Student Engagement Outcomes to Facilitate Improvements in Educational Practice" and "Developing a Departmental Assessment Plan to Measure Student Learning".

Our presenter is the nationally respected Dr. Bob Smallwood, associate provost for Undergraduate Education and Assessment at the University of North Florida. He has presented more than 20 workshops on the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) at SACS, AAHE, and AIR and was instrumental in developing the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE). He has been a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) and Institutional Effectiveness Evaluator for a number of SACS on-site visiting teams.

Bob is an engaging speaker and the day he has planned blends updates on NSSE lessons (morning) with steps for coming to consensus on a departmental assessment plan (afternoon). The day will be a casual opportunity to learn and work. Institutional teams are welcome.

Virginia Commonwealth University, our host site this year, will be on spring break, so access and parking will be easy. The early registration deadline is March 1. A full schedule and registration materials are on the new VAG web site: www.virginiaassessment.org

Registration fees may seem a bit complicated this spring because of the changeover to membership dues instituted at the fall conference.

Here is an easy guide:

- If you attended the fall conference in Virginia Beach, you simply pay the member rate.

- If you did not attend the fall conference, we suggest that you opt for paying the $20 member dues and registering at the member rate. This combination is less expensive than registering as a non-member.

- If you do not want to become a member, you just pay the non-member fee.

- Note that a new membership year will begin with the fall conference registration period.

That's the overview. We hope you will join us at VCU on St. Patrick's Day.

From Our Corporate Partners

Inquisite

When It Comes to Employee Relationship Management, It's The "Why" That Matters – Learn How to Leverage Online Surveys for Greater ERM

In today's highly competitive marketplace, business owners are continuously forced to act quickly in order to attract, retain, and maximize employee productivity. While much attention has been placed on selection and installation of employee relationship management (ERM) systems in order to bolster their employee retention efforts, an equally important question has gone unanswered. Why? Why has an employee chosen to stay with you, or equally as important, why did another choose to leave?

Although ERM solutions are adept at delivering valuable quantitative data that helps an organization characterize employee satisfaction/brand perception to new, prospective employees and answer questions such as who, what, when, where, and how much, these solutions are incapable of providing insight into the 'why' of the relationship. Without understanding 'why' an employee values his/her association with a company, it is virtually impossible to know what keeps them loyal, and what needs to be done to garner greater employee satisfaction from them. After all, a company's true core competency must be finding, attracting, and retaining the most qualified people if they want to remain effective. As a result, organizations are turning to online surveys as a cost effective and immediate way to ensure that the data on 'why' an employee chooses to remain with your organization and why employees feel a certain way about specific topics is both current and up to date.

For example, from a financial standpoint –it is far more expensive to go out and find new employees than it is to keep the ones you already have. This is particularly true for some industries, where it is not uncommon to spend $15,000 to hire an employee. Worse, losing that same employee can eventually cost that same organization as much as $50,000 which demonstrates the severe and adverse effect that a high turnover rate could have a company's bottom line. Web surveys can play a pivotal role for Human Resource (HR) executives who strive to capture actionable information from every employee that can be translated into key actionable business initiatives, processes improvements, and ultimately answer the elusive question of 'why'.

Web-based surveys continue to take on a strategic and instrumental role in the employee life-cycle process regardless of industry as it enables an organization to gain valuable feedback, and hear the "voice" of the employee. While traditional research methodologies have provided this "voice," a new dimension in efficiency is achievable by simply integrating web survey technology into the existing HR information systems infrastructure. While technology simplifies this process, it does not guarantee success nor does it create a corporate-wide "feedback culture."

Best Practices for Online Surveys—A Five Step Process
Creating a survey whose results provide an organization with quality and accurate information to make sound business decisions, is more difficult than most people realize. Typical questions an organization faces when embarking on a survey tend to fall into five areas, with each step being critical to the success of the project:

1. Determine the Business Process
The survey designer is faced with many important questions that need to be addressed about the content and design of the survey and require consensus from all members of the team prior to execution. So, before embarking on the survey design, users need to determine the business objectives and answer questions such as:

- What is the purpose of the survey?

- What am I trying to measure?
- How many questions should I write?
- What type of rating scale should I use?
- How do I know that my survey worked?
- Will the data be actionable?

These questions are important to the design of any type of survey, whether it be an employee attitude survey, a customer satisfaction survey, a product evaluation survey or a program evaluation survey. Determining who the key stakeholders are if a similar survey has ever been conducted before and how the results will be used are questions that should be asked well in advance of the survey design as they will be key to determining the business purpose.

2. Design the Survey

The most important part of the five step process is designing the survey. Good survey design ensures that you are able to get the results your organization needs. Some of the steps, although simple, are often overlooked which results in significant reductions to response rates. To be successful, users should:

- <u>Begin with a title and a preamble</u> – explain the overall aim of the survey; whether it is part of the survey invitation or at the beginning of the survey itself.
- <u>Balance white space</u> **-** balance the use of *white space* between both questions and sections greatly improves readability, without unduly increasing the apparent size of the survey.
- <u>Prepare instructions</u> – provide general instructions to the respondents at the beginning of each section and clearly define specific instructions associated with the different question types to aid in the correct completion of that question.
- <u>Use filter questions</u> – provide the ability for your respondents to be able to bypass questions (or whole sections) that are not relevant to them.
- <u>Allow "don't know" and "not applicable" selections</u> – if a respondent is unsure about whether to answer a question, or which answer is the most appropriate, they should be provided with a "let-out" selection, such as "Don't Know" or "Not Applicable". When a large number of respondents choose such options, it is time to examine whether the question is badly worded, or in the wrong place in the questionnaire.
- <u>KISS</u> – Keep It Short & Simple. Enough said about that.
- <u>Check readability</u> – the reading difficulty level of the instructions and questions should be kept at the eighth grade level or lower, without being condescending.

Another factor in designing the survey is to determine a rating scale. Scales are critical to the success of your research. Well designed scales are easy to understand and accurately represent the respondent's true attitude, preference or opinion. However, two or three point scales are traditionally not distinct enough to rate the importance of various attributes. For instance, scales with 4 - 8 points provide far more insight into the subtle distinctions and value of an attribute. Clear and well thought out rating scales, as well as clearly defined instructions are key to minimizing rating errors.

3. Select the Sample

A sufficient sample size is an important requirement for a successful survey. If the sample size is too small, erroneous conclusions are possible. For example, a researcher may make a conclusion that no differences between employees or departments exist when in fact they do exist but were undetectable from the insufficient sample size.

4. Implement the Survey

Response rate is the single most important indicator of how much confidence can be placed in the results of a survey. A low response rate can be devastating to the reliability of a study; therefore, testing your survey is essential. What may seem obvious to the survey author may be completely unclear to the typical receiver. Or worse, a difficult question will be misunderstood or skipped and a difficult to understand survey is most certainly destined to be thrown away.

So how does one go about increasing these rates? One of the most powerful tools for increasing response rates is to use follow-ups or reminders. Traditionally, between 10 and 60 percent of those who are sent questionnaires respond without follow-up reminders. However, these rates are too low to yield confident results, so the need to follow up with targets is imperative to the success of the survey.

Online surveys are gaining in popularity because they decrease some of the more costly elements such as consulting fees and data entry costs. They also provide a way to eliminate interviewer bias, often associated with in-person surveys or interviews.

5. Analyze and Report the Results

The analyses of the survey responses should address two concerns, (1) the validity of the survey questions and (2) the substantive business issues that were the purpose of the survey. The validity of the questions can be assessed by examining the number of respondents who chose each response option. No single option should have more than 85% of the responses and none less than 5%. The business issues can be assessed by examining responses to individual questions and groups of questions on a single theme that are treated as separate measures. The inclusion of key demographics such as job titles, department, time with company, etc. provides valuable opportunities for insightful subgroup analyses.

Reap the Benefits of Asking Why

While ERM systems can get an organization 90% of the way towards reaching its employee relationship management objectives, the systems do not answer the key question of 'why.' By taking the time to ask yourself the reason you need an online survey and by following the five simple steps mentioned above, you will be well on your way to answering the most crucial question of any ERM initiative - 'why' stay with you and 'why' they choose to be loyal.

About the Authors:

- **Dr. Paul Squires** is President of Applied Skills & Knowledge (AS&K), a management consulting and outsourcing company. Dr. Squires is an industrial psychologist with twenty years of experience with training development, assessment development and validation, computer-based training and project management. Paul can be reached at 973.631.1607 or via email at Paul_Squires@AppliedSkills.com

- **Arturo Coto** is Chief Executive Office at Inquisite, an Austin, Texas-based provider of online survey technology. Arturo can be reached at 512.225.6800 or via email at acoto@inquisite.com.

NORTH CAROLINA ASSOCIATION FOR INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH ELECTION OF 2006-2007 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

ARTICLE VII, Section 2 of the By-Laws states "The Nominating Committee shall cause its slate of proposed officers and members-at-large (with any annotations deemed to be desirable) to be sent to each active member not later than thirty (30) days prior to each Annual Conference. Active members, having indicated their choices and/or written in their nominees, shall return their ballots to the Committee by the date specified on the ballot. Upon conclusion of the process, the Committee's ballots shall be deposited with the Association's secretary."

Please vote for each of the following nominated by the Committee or write in the name of your nominee in the space provided.

For Program Chair/Pres elect:	Vote X
Michael Hadley, Methodist College	
For Secretary:	
Adam Shick, Wake Forest University	
For Member at Large – 2-Year Colleges:	
Lee Proctor, Piedmont Community College	
For Member at Large – Public Institutions:	
Heather Langdon, Appalachian State University	

Please deposit this ballot at the registration desk during the Annual Conference by March 23, 2006 or mail to the chair of the Nominating Committee by no later than March 15, 2006:
Robert Springer, Nominating committee chair
Elon University
2309 Campus Box
Elon, NC 27244-2010
Additional ballots will be available at the conference.

NCAIR 2006 REGISTRATION FORM

The NCAIR 2006 conference will be held at the Broyhill Inn and Conference Center in Boone, NC, March 22-24, 2006.

Name:	Badge Name:
Title:	Institution:
Address:	City, State, Zip
Telephone:	Email:
Vegetarian? Yes No	

Is this your first conference (Y or N)?	

Fees	Postmarked By February 25	Postmarked After February 25	Amount Due
NCAIR Registration Fee	$100	$110	
TOTAL DUE			

	IPEDS March 21 9:30 -12:00	SAS March 21 1:00-3:30
Check the workshop(s) you would like to attend.		
Will you use the (no-charge) shuttle for workshop?	Y or N	Y or N

I would be willing to serve as a facilitator.	Y or N

Checks are payable to NCAIR (Tax ID 561-56-2055). Send Conference registration to Wayne Stone, Office of Institutional Research, UNC- Charlotte, Colvard 1028, Charlotte, NC 28223

NCAIR 2006 Membership Renewal

NCAIR membership is automatically renewed for conference attendees. For those members unable to attend the conference this year, we are providing a separate form to renew your membership. We will miss you at the conference.

Name:	Institution:
Title:	Address:
Telephone:	City, State, Zip:
Fax:	Email:

Fees	Renewal Fee	Amount Due
NCAIR Membership Renewal Fee	$15	
TOTAL DUE		

Checks are payable to NCAIR (Tax ID 561-56-2055). Send Membership Renewal to Wayne Stone, Office of Institutional Research, UNC- Charlotte, Colvard 1028, Charlotte, NC 28223