



PNAIRP



# PNAIRP News

April 2008

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## Hello from the PNAIRP President



Hello to all,

I am looking forward to an exciting year for us in the Pacific Northwest. I begin my term as President of PNAIRP with the hope that many of you will take advantage of the opportunity to attend the AIR Annual Forum being held in our own backyard, Seattle. The AIR forum is a great place to discover new ways of thinking, a place to increase your knowledge of higher education issues, to learn about new technology, to increase your

technical skill levels and to meet new colleagues from all around North America. The Forum theme, "Adapting to Meet New Challenges," recognizes that as the population changes, budgets change, and calls for accountability increase, the institutional researcher will be vital in providing the information needed to meet these challenges. Our affiliated group meeting at the forum is scheduled on Monday from 7:30-8:20 AM in Room #607 on Level Six of the convention center, so even though it is early (does that say 7:30?!), I hope to see you at this informal meeting where we will discuss plans for our fall conference, share any PNAIRP news and make dinner plans for Monday evening.

This past fall we had a very successful conference in Victoria BC which was highlighted by very well received break-out sessions (referencing the conference evaluations and personal views), for which our talented PNAIRP members are to thank. So thanks to all of you who were willing to share your knowledge, expertise and ideas for the benefit of the membership, it truly made this past year's conference stand out. For those of you who could not make the trip to Victoria, I hope to see you in Tacoma this fall.

I would like to thank the out going board members for their willingness to serve on the board. Juliette Stoering from Portland State, Ron Smith from Portland Community College and Dorys Crespín-Mueller from Thompson Rivers University, thank you for your time and sharing your skills.

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## Hello ... continued from page 1

As a member of PNAIRP I have benefited greatly in terms of the skills and the knowledge that I have acquired from interactions with my peers in the association. These interactions range from attending workshops, listening to presentations, reading the messages on the list-serve, utilizing PNAIRP grants for professional development and even just talking to colleagues during social times. The benefits of these interactions, in my professional life, have helped me to become more efficient in analyzing information both in how to think about a question and how to get the most out of the tools I use to answer those questions. Also, being made aware of the work and knowledge that has already been created gives me the ability to spend time building walls rather than laying foundation. (Sorry about the construction analogy ... I could have gone with sports). So, as President of PNAIRP, I encourage our membership to get involved, attend the conferences, present a paper, apply for grants to help with your professional development activities, and use the list-serve (if you have questions I am sure that at least one of us has an answer or at least a helpful suggestion). I look forward to seeing and hearing from you in this next year.

### David Burgess

PNAIRP President

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## Conference Planning for 2008

For those who like to plan ahead, start thinking "Tacoma WA, October 2008" – specifically, the Hotel Murano from Oct 15-17.

The conference theme is "**Technology: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly**" so ponder those technological marvels and nightmares that have had an impact on the way we work, and consider presenting a paper. As David points out in his message in this issue, there are travel grants available to help you with professional development and conference travel, so don't let money stop you from attending. Presentation and showcase proposals should be submitted by June 30.

For more information on the hotel, including some fabulous room photos, visit <http://www.hotelmuranotacoma.com/>. While you're online you can also scoot over to <http://www.soundtransit.org/x7262.xml> and find out how to reach Tacoma from the Sea-Tac airport on Express Bus 590.

See you there!

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## 2007 Conference Reflections

The 2007 Conference was held at the lovely Laurel Point Inn in Victoria, British Columbia. The conference theme was **"Cruising Through Higher Education: Facilitating Student Transitions from Prospect to Alumnus."** Keynote speaker Dr. Raymond P. Perry gave us an excellent address on "The Transformation of the Academy and the Retention of College Students."



The 2007 Conference was generously supported by the University of Victoria, our Conference 2007 Major Sponsor. Thanks U Vic!

Be sure to visit the PNAIRP website at <http://www.pnairp.org/> for some nifty conference photos.

The conference was well-appreciated by those who attended, as shown by the evaluation results summarized next in this issue. Then PNAIRP member Eric Grulke of the University of Idaho gives us a personal account of the benefits of attending the conference. Thanks Eric!

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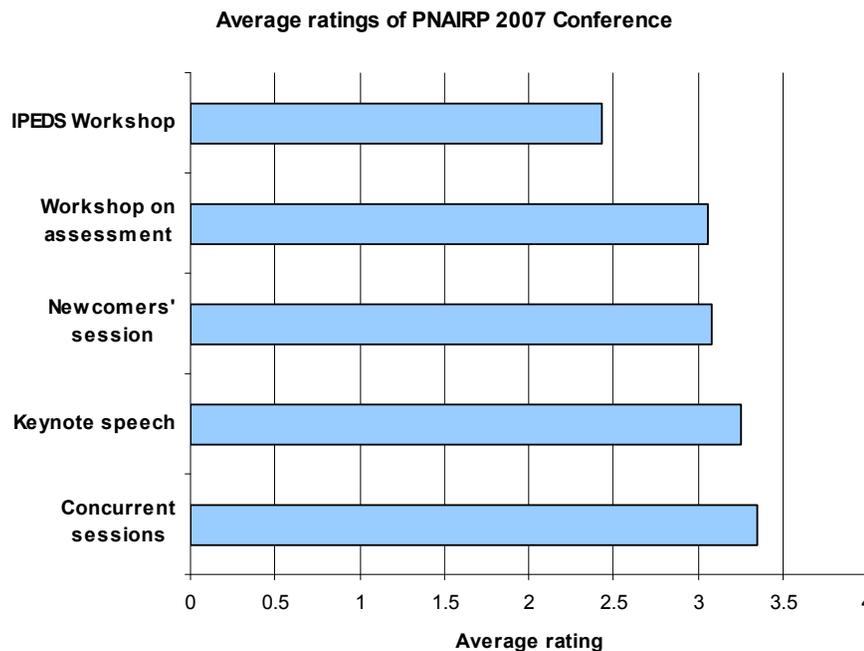
## Evaluation of the 2007 Conference

Every year, the Executive Board invites conference attendees to participate in an on-line evaluation of the conference shortly after their return. After the 2007 conference, 58 PNAIRPers completed the evaluation form. Over a third (41%) had attended five or more conferences; 25% reported that the 2007 conference was their first. Not quite half of the attendees (45%) represented two-year institutions. The rest of the attendees were from four-year institutions (34%) or other institutions (22%), including system and governmental agencies and research organizations.

Overall satisfaction with the conference was high. On a four-point scale (1 = *Poor* to 4 = *Excellent*), 47% gave an excellent rating and 46% gave a good rating. None rated the conference as poor. The overall quality of the concurrent sessions received the most favorable rating ( $M = 3.35$ ), followed closely by the keynote speech ( $M = 3.25$ ). The session for newcomers and the workshop on assessment received a good ratings ( $M = 3.08$  and  $M = 3.06$  respectively). The mean rating for the IPEDS workshop was 2.43.

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## Evaluation continued



Conference attendees also had an opportunity to comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the conference and make suggestions for future conferences. Many attendees stated that the variety and excellence of the concurrent sessions were the main strengths of the conference. PNAIRPers noted that another strength of the conference was the opportunity to network with colleagues and share ideas. In addition, many respondents remarked that PNAIRP is a welcoming and collegial group, making it easy to get to know one another and build professional relationships.

Most attendees' comments about the weaknesses of the conference focused on the layout of the facilities and meeting rooms. Conference attendees found the meeting rooms too small and the seats arranged uncomfortably close together. Another way in which conference attendees felt conference planning could improve was to provide more complete on-line program information farther in advance of the conference dates to encourage higher rates of attendance.

Conference attendees' suggestions for future conference included many diverse ideas; however, hands-on sessions covering using technology effectively and efficiently was a recurring theme. Some also suggested bringing back showcases.

The Executive Board appreciates those PNAIRPers who took the time to provide complete the evaluation form and provide their feedback on the conference. The information gleaned from the evaluation is a valuable tool that will assist the Executive Board in making next year's conference an even greater success.

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## PNAIRP 2007 Conference Notes

I was asked to write a short synopsis of what I gained from this year's PNAIRP conference, how it benefited me as an Institutional Research professional and to share anything that I learned which may be of interest to PNAIRP members.

The conference itself was so well organized and implemented that going from session to session was very easy—the organizers have every right to be proud of themselves and the job they did. Victoria, B.C. was a beautiful place to hold the PNAIRP Conference. Everything was so accessible and within walking distance from the hotel who hosted our conference—it was obvious that the organizers of the conference put a lot of thought into the location and the selection of the speakers. The Keynote Speaker, Dr. Raymond Perry, did an excellent job in setting the tone for the conference in a positive manner and provided a framework which increased the value of the individual sessions.

As someone new to the field of Institutional Research, it was nice to listen to the challenges and successes encountered by my colleagues who are new to the field as well. I appreciated the breadth of experience that was present during the conference, and those who were so generous with their time in answering questions about topics of concern to Institutional Researchers.

I had the opportunity to attend many interesting seminars that were very relevant to the work I perform at the University of Idaho. The seminars covered a wide range of topics from data interpretation, standards and practices within the profession, empirical research performed on data generated, new techniques in evaluating learning outcomes, using basic software tools to generate usable reports for decision makers, and a plethora of other useful information that I was able to take back to my workplace. Initially, I had hoped to summarize each of the seminars that I attended, but after reviewing my notes and the handouts—that would simply be an impossible task with a five-hundred word limit! There was so much offered and so many opportunities to network with others throughout the duration (and after) the conference.

I would strongly encourage all Institutional Researchers to attend and present their experiences and findings at future conferences for both the opportunity of learning and teaching others that which you've gained during your tenure working in the field of Institutional Research. I was also so impressed at the body of knowledge that was provided from individuals who might not hold the official title of "Institutional Researcher", but worked in other capacities and for different governmental agencies.

In conclusion, I found the 2007 PNAIRP Conference to be an excellent medium to gain new insights in my profession, to network and interact with others in the field and to share that which I've learned during my career as an Institutional Researcher.

**Eric Grulke**

Analyst, Institutional Research and Assessment

University of Idaho

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## PNAIRP 2007 Presentation Snapshot

First and foremost, I want to take this opportunity to extend my gratitude to the PNAIRP executive committee for awarding me their travel grant to attend and present at the PNAIRP 2007 Conference – Cruising through Higher Education: Facilitating Student Transitions from Prospect to Alumnus. For this month’s newsletter I was asked to describe my presentation, how the PNAIRP conference benefited me, and what I gained from the experience that other members might find of interest.

At PNAIRP 2007, I co-presented “Campus Snapshot: Assessing the Campus Environment through a Student Lens” with my colleague Donna G. Alary. This qualitative study represents perceptions of students regarding campus environment and campus life at University College of the Fraser Valley (UCFV). Participants were asked to photograph and document their impressions of UCFV, including images that represent their institution. Analysis of the participants’ photographs and journals revealed five interrelated themes: student support services, student space, venues for self-expression, the physical environment of the campus, and its physical growth. The results of this study were presented to policymakers as recommendations toward the planning and development of the institution’s academic and physical milieu.

PNAIRP 2007 offered several venues to meet with other IR colleagues, dialogue on the changes occurring in British Columbia’s post-secondary system, and share some of the current challenges analysts and directors face. The session for IR newcomers was valuable to me in identifying and addressing these challenges. The space provided an open forum for insightful discussions that assessed IR from several different vantage points. It provided a setting in which to share a collective wealth of experience concerning the ethical issues in reporting data. One of my conference highlights was also attending Joanne Heslop’s presentation “Using the Power of Pivot Tables for Student Retention Reporting”. Joanne’s paper contributed to how our IR department will consider providing accessible and flexible data to our academic and administrative communities.

Unlike AIR, PNAIRP’s conference and membership provide a unique and intimate environment in which to tackle serious educational issues and policies effecting Canada and the US. It is an opportunity to take an active and collaborative role by synthesizing and comparing our research to gain insight into our students, our institutions, and our countries.

**Jacqueline P. Ashby, M.Ed.**

Institutional Research Analyst II

University College of the Fraser Valley

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## New to IR: Meet a Member

Gillian Northwood is a Data Analyst at North Island College on Vancouver Island, British Columbia. She's new to Institutional Research, and she answered a few of our questions over the phone.

### **Tell us how you came to Institutional Research.**

It was kind of by luck! I was already working at North Island College in the Student Records department, and a job came up in Institutional Research. I knew had some of the skills, so I decided to apply.

I actually had a chance to talk to my new boss informally before I applied, and he explained to me what Institutional Research was all about!

I've been working in Institutional Research for nine months, since May.

### **What do you like most about Institutional Research?**

I like the research part, and I like surveying. I'm producing a survey on student engagement, which will be a first for North Island College. I also like the attention to detail, and the variety.

### **What do you like least about Institutional Research?**

The lack of control over what and how the data is entered into the student records database. We can only produce reports on the actual data and it is not always perfectly entered or readily available.

### **From the perspective of a relatively new face in IR, what role do organizations like PNAIRP play in your professional life?**

They really help you make connections. I had a chance to put names to faces at the conference, and met people who could help me with my work. Our department is really small, so it is really good to have more people to discuss things with.

The conferences also allow you to learn. I went to many of the presentations, especially those on surveys, and learned a lot of useful things.

### **Any advice you'd give to other new faces in Institutional Research?**

Be ready for tight deadlines and some pressure. When people want information, they often want it now!

### **Overall, are you enjoying Institutional Research?**

Yes, I really like it. I had done research in the past. To find a job in this field, even though I didn't know Institutional Research existed, was great! I had previously liked researching and doing this kind of work, paying attention to detail and being kind of particular about things. It's a good field to be in. There are a lot of job openings, and it seems like a really up and coming field.