

NCAIR 2024 Annual Conference
Institutional Innovation

**What I've Learned: Reflections
on 16 Years as an IR Director**

Beverly King, PhD
East Carolina University



Career Trajectory

1996

- PhD, Developmental Psychology
- Purdue University

1997

- First tenure-track position, Assistant to Associate & earned Tenure
- South Dakota State University

2003

- Second faculty position, again earned Tenure
- University of North Carolina at Pembroke

2007

- Administrative Fellowship in Provost office at UNCP
- Unexpectedly took over as AVC for Institutional Effectiveness

2014

- Began at East Carolina University as Director of Institutional Research
- Will leave upon retirement in 2024

Communication

- Higher ed has always had, and probably will always have, a communication issue.
 - Responsiveness is a virtue much to be desired.
 - Don't be hesitant to toot your own horn (or those of your staff).
 - All voices matter.
 - Express your opinion softly & humbly (delicate offense vs. adamant defense).
 - Always be ready to agree to disagree.
 - You will never be able to explain to your family what you do for a living.
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Cognition

- Your time is not your own.
- It takes time to build a knowledge base.
- You don't have to know it all.
- You will sometimes serve as the voice of reason and the “conscience” of your campus.
- (Almost) everyone works hard.
- There are multiple definitions for everything, and the numbers associated with those definitions may be correct even if they don't match.
- The answer to almost every question is “it depends.”
- At the end of the day, it is just a job. A great job, a rewarding job, but a job, nonetheless.

Continuity

- Turn-over is a fact of life.
 - Never underestimate the importance of cross-training.
 - For every IR task/project, assign primary and secondary responsibility.
 - Document, document, document....not only tasks but also projects.
 - Recreating the wheel is how leadership rolls.
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Competencies

- What they say is true: Hire good people and get out of their way. The staff member who must have constant supervision is a drain on the entire team.
- You will be a project manager, whether you want to be or not.
- You can't teach motivation or critical thinking.
- The devil may not be in the details, but your sanity is....OCD-like traits are required. At the same time, perfection can be the enemy of the good.
- Never send out anything without at least two pair of eyes reviewing.
- You learn something new every day. (IR is a great career for someone with a low boredom threshold.)

Collaboration & Coworkers

- Breaking down siloes will make your life easier.
 - Make sure IR has a seat (or two) at the Data Governance table.
 - IR is a close relative of IT, more so now than ever.
 - You serve many masters (especially if part of a state system).
 - Most people don't know how to make a "good" data request.
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Coordination

- Team building can be challenging (with IR introverts).
 - You may have to push (i.e., encourage) team members to do “social” activities, e.g., conference presentations.
 - Every IR team is greater than the sum of its parts.
 - Micromanagement kills.
 - No two IR offices are alike in function, structure, or responsibilities.
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Now let's hear
from you.

**Reflecting on
your own IR
career, what
professional or
personal
lessons have
you learned?**



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Annual Conference!**

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conference evaluation form. You'll also get
an e-mail following the conference with a
link to the form, which will be available
until 4/30.**

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committee know your thoughts about this
year's conference and where you would
like to meet next year.**