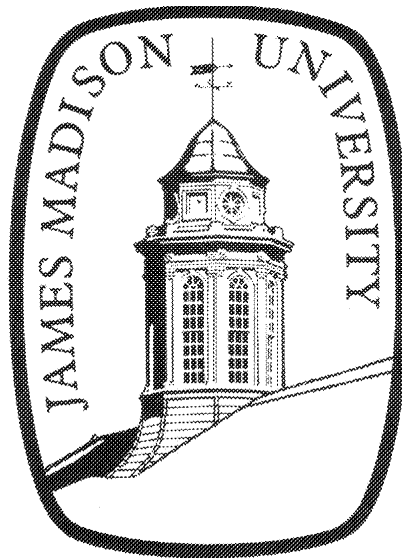


# **James Madison University**

## **Report of the Institutional Research Evaluation and Goal-Setting Meeting**



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# **Institutional Research Evaluation and Goal-Setting Meeting**

## **Introduction**

The Office of Institutional Research has been undergoing an evaluation of its services during the 1993-94 year. The purpose of this evaluation has been to assess the overall performance of the office and determine how it might improve its services to the University community. As part of this evaluation, a goal-setting session was conducted on March 1, 1994 by Dr. Gerald McLaughlin, Director of Institutional Research at Virginia Tech. The purpose of this paper is to summarize the results of the goal-setting meeting.

## **Methodology**

Dr. McLaughlin, one of the most respected institutional researchers in America and a management consultant, facilitated the session. The session was attended by 15 individuals representing most of the divisions of the University. The session followed a very structured format designed to determine the following: issues facing JMU; the major customers OIR supports; the desires of these customers for information; the primary desired goals for OIR; and the major barriers to OIR accomplishing its objectives. After the goals were determined, the participants were directed to select the two most critical goals. The last portion of the session was devoted to developing executive proposals to address the two most critical goals.

The section to follow summarizes the results of the goal-setting session.

## **Results**

### **Issues Facing JMU**

The participants were asked to list the primary issues facing JMU. The following were listed.

- Faculty Accountability
- Allocation of Resources (Space/Financial)
- Increased Flexibility in Instruction
- Career Development
- Integration of Technology

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- Student Major Shifts
  - Increased Support of Higher Education Innovation
  - Occupational Flexibility
  - Responsiveness to Society
  - Increased Flexibility & Rewards

## **CUSTOMERS**

The following were listed as the major customers for information collected by OIR.

- Legislature
- Public
- Media
- SCHEV/NCES
- Employers
- Advisory Board/BOV
- Students
- Faculty
- Administration
- Academic Government

## **CUSTOMER WANTS**

The participants were asked to list the major needs they have for information. The following are the areas in which they have significant needs for information.

- Salary \$ (Part-time), Teaching Loads
- Faculty Productivity
- Resource Use, Including Financial
- Effectiveness
- Efficiency
- Student Quality/Quantity
- Information about JMU's Peers
- Trends/Projections
- Attention to Instruction
- Curricula Diversity

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## **GOALS**

The participants were divided into small groups and instructed to list the two most important goals for Institutional Research. Each group then shared these two goals. After all redundant goals were eliminated, the following goals were listed. Each participant was then asked to assign points to the goals he or she felt were the most important. The following shows how the goals were prioritized.

- 11 points Consistent Student Data on All Students. This indicates an interest in obtaining consistent demographic data about all undergraduate and graduate students across the University.
- 10 points Faculty Activity. We have been collecting information on faculty activity for many years. There appears to be a need to work with the deans and department heads to clarify the definitions so that we can accurately report this information consistently on all faculty.
- 9 points Staff. There is concern that there is insufficient staff in OIR to provide services to its clients.
- 5 points Timely Information. There are many competing demands for information from OIR. There is a need to prioritize these needs so that the most important information can get to those who need it in a timely manner.
- 6 points Latest Technology. This office must handle a wide variety and amount of information. The information which must be handled by OIR is increasing tremendously. This goal reflects the need for OIR to gather and report information using the most advanced technology possible.
- 3 points Agreed upon Definitions. There are definitions of information which relate to important areas of interest like faculty productivity and students. There is a need to ensure that all who use this information understand the definitions in the various databases on campus and in OIR.

## **BARRIERS TO SUCCESS**

Each participant was asked to list five barriers to the success of OIR in achieving its goals. These barriers were organized by the participants into several groups. These groups are listed below along with the specific barriers which were listed. After the barriers were grouped, we judged whether each group of barriers was impacted by other groups or impacts other groups. This was accomplished by drawing lines from one group to the other. See visual rendering of these lines which indicate the direction of the impact. (Appendix B)

The groups which are most impacted by the other groups (Time, Access to Data, and Decision Making) indicate the major bottlenecks. The solution to these problems are the most visible in the short term. The groups which impact the other areas the most (Resources, Time, Access to Data, and Decision Making) indicate the major source problems. The solution to these problems require long-range strategies, but the results are often the most meaningful.

Group I (Consistency of Data Definitions) (Impacted by other groups - 3; Impact other groups - 3)

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- Agreed upon definitions of data points.
  - Different definitions.
  - Not knowing what to measure and when.
  - Incorrect interpretation of data.
  - Data collected in different forms across campus.
  - Lack of understanding of what needs are.
  - Lack of agreed upon definitions in key area of data collection.
  - Consistency of definitions.
  - Lack of adequate comprehensive measures (eg. faculty productivity).

Group II (Technology) (Impacted by other groups - 3; Impact other groups - 4)

- Unsophisticated computer programs.
- Lack of technological support.
- Equipment and programs to maintain, transfer, analyze data (limited budgets).
- Software/hardware that will support distributed decision making.
- Lack of comprehensive software package.
- Lack of adequate data collection tools.
- Lack of flexible data management tools (SAS, etc.) which can access a variety of data bases.
- Use of other modeling techniques to supplement descriptive statistics.
- Lack of equipment.

Group III (Staffing) (Impacted by other groups - 5; Impact other groups - 4)

- Inadequate staffing in OIR.
- Staff in OIR to provide common data base and support needed to various decision making bodies.
- Lack of staff.
- Lack of funding for increased staff.
- Lack of staff.
- Additional staff.
- Inadequate staffing.
- Not enough staff to get everything done.

Group IV (Resources) (Impacted by other groups - 2; Impact other groups - 5)

- Resource restraints.
- Limited resources.
- Financial resources.
- Amount of training necessary to have others assist in analysis.

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Group V (Time) (Impacted by other groups - 6; Impact other groups - 5)

- Time limitations.
- Turn around time from obtaining data to time it can be analyzed or lag time issue.
- Many requests at one time-can't get out information as fast as it is needed.
- Unexpected requests.
- Must wait for Census Date to have statistics to work with.
- Teaching responsibilities in spring 15-20 hours/week this spring.
- External mandates taking excessive amounts of time.
- SCHEV requirements-vastly increased.
- Time.
- Too many different responsibilities.

Group VI (Access to Data) (Impacted by other groups - 6; Impact other groups - 5)

- Issue of access to data.
- Access (ready) to SCHEV's unit report data.
- Knowledge of dean, department head level staff - how to access and analyze data.
- Confidentiality.
- "Mystery"-noting that not all data is easily accessible to all.

Group VII (Decision Making) (Impacted by other groups - 6; Impact other groups - 5)

- Centralized, corporate mentality (obscure, diversity).
- Not happy with outcome.
- Reluctance to work for reallocation of resources.
- Uniformity of evaluation and reward(s) across colleges.
- Shifting demands-by students for faculty expertise.
- Changing people's ways of thinking-letting go of the past.

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## EXECUTIVE PROPOSALS

The participants were divided into two groups. Based on the high priority goals and the barriers to success, each group was asked to make one executive proposal which, if implemented, would significantly improve the services provided by OIR. The following two goals were judged by the participants as critical to improving the services provided by OIR. The specific means to accomplish each goal will be negotiated with management in the next several months.

- (1) GOAL: Redistribute Responsibilities.  
PROBLEM: Insufficient Resources to Consistently Provide Services.  
IMPACT  
    IF FIXED: Provide better and more useful data.  
    IF NOT FIXED: Provide less and less data.  
MEASURES OF SUCCESS: Provide additional data/analyses that relate to issues of students/faculty.
  
- (2) GOAL: Decentralized Access to Data.  
PROBLEM: Decision makers (Deans, Directors, Department Heads, etc.) should have ready access to data commensurate with level of decisions to be made.  
IMPACT  
    IF FIXED: Data informed decisions. Proactive decisions not reactive decisions.  
    IF NOT FIXED: Status Quo, dissatisfied faculty, staff, consumers.  
MEASURES OF SUCCESS: Decreased length of time between the request/problem and outcome. Decreased requests for data clarification and special reports/similar reports.

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## Appendix A

### Unsorted List of Barriers

- More staff.
- Creating a comprehensive data base containing information on academic program productivity and costs.
- Work with academic departments on creative way of determining productivity of faculty.
- Provide awareness of what's available.
- To be able to supply customers with needed information in a timely manner.
- Increase information output-time.
- Provide consistent set of student data (available by programs to cover all students not just majors).
- Allocation of resources on the basis of accurate, current data.
  - Common data base.
  - Agreed upon definitions of data points.
- Provide longitudinal data on programs.
  - Faculty "effort" units.
  - Enrollment in courses.
  - Full-time vs. part-time faculty coverage of courses.
- Faculty accountability.
- Validation of faculty accountability forms (example-faculty don't work 130 hours/week).
- Access to data by faculty/staff (there are other people who can use these for planning purposes).
- Lack of clear expectations for IR Office by constituents.
- Development of other data bases across campus.
- Learn to measure and represent faculty work loads more realistically.
- Determine better measures of faculty productivity.
- Track enrollment patterns more specifically.
- Determine better strategies to share IR data with departments/colleges so they can do some of their own analyses.
- To provide uniform concerning shifts in student interest (majors) so that trends may be reflected for curriculum planning.
- Provide timely resources utilization data.
- To provide up-to-date information regarding faculty load, space allocation, etc. so that factual information is given to public sources and on-campus sources.
- Provide measures of faculty productivity other than faculty-to-student ratios.