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Data-Informed Program Planning for Academic Chairs and Directors

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1) Presenter Information

Dr. Laurie A. Henry

Dr. Henry is Dean of the Seidel School of Education at Salisbury University (SU) in Maryland. Prior to SU, she served as the Associate Dean of Clinical Preparation & Partnerships and Interim Department Chair in Curriculum & Instruction for the College of Education at the University of Kentucky. Dr. Henry is a member of AACTE's Clinical Practice Commission and has served in many leadership roles with national organizations. Dr. Henry earned her PhD in Educational Psychology from the University of Connecticut with a focus in Cognition and Instruction.

Dr. Richard Wilkens

Dr. Wilkens is the Associate Provost for Academic Affairs at Salisbury University (SU) in Maryland. He was previously Provost at a small private liberal arts college in New York, where he also served for many years as Chair of Biology. At SU, one of his main projects is to work with Chairs and other campus leaders to incorporate more data informed decision making into normal operations. Currently, Salisbury University is using an analytics dashboard developed by EAB called Academic Performance Solutions; however, the data compiled by this dashboard can typically be drawn from standard student information systems.

2) Title: Data-Informed Program Planning for Academic Chairs and Directors

3) Abstract: Presenters and participants will engage in conversations related to data-informed decision making for academic departments and programs. Emerging strategies and best practices in data analysis will be employed to address critical questions related to cost efficiency, enrollment trends, and faculty load at the program level.

4) Key words: data informed decision making, program planning, cost efficiency, enrollment trends, faculty load

5) Presentation Theme: Operating the Department

6) Target Audience: academic chairs and program directors

7) Disciplines: Higher Education Administration; all disciplines

8) Presentation Type: interactive workshop (105 minutes)

9) Presentation Objectives: Participants will further develop their ability to:

- a. Identify characteristics of datasets related to decision making for program planning.
- b. Analyze the relationship between enrollment analyses, departmental responses and subsequent cost efficiencies.
- c. Evaluate how analyses of enrollment and student performance can influence decisions about curricular strategies and modifications that lead to greater credit efficiency.

10) Description of the session (300-500 words)

In an environment of declining postsecondary enrollments, it is critical to evaluate programmatic initiatives and operations with effective data analytic tools. The National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (2018) reported a steady decrease in university and college enrollments since 2010, reaching nearly 10 percent overall with an average annual decline of about 1.3 percent. Growth in enrollments of new international students has also declined for the first time in ten years (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2018). Provosts and Deans are challenging academic department chairs and program directors now more than ever to analyze the cost and credit efficiency of programs by conducting a Cost Efficiency Analysis (CEA). This is especially true for academic programs that are highly clinical in nature (e.g. health sciences, educator preparation, psychology, etc.).

Over the last two decades, there has been renewed attention on the field of knowledge discovery in databases (KDD) amidst an environment of rapid growth in data collection and data accumulation (Fayyad, Piatetsky-Shapiro, & Smyth, 1996). Data mining, data analytics, and data dashboards create an environment in which academic chairs and other leaders across the academy can establish the effective use of data-informed decision-making as an institutional norm. As more and more institutions of higher education look for data solutions through enterprise systems, the role of department chairs and program directors is shifting to include an increased focus on data use for program planning. Analyses of the relationship between program costs and enrollment trends can help with decision-making regarding the sustainability of programs and to help respond to pressing programmatic needs. “Delivery of quality education in a budget-constrained environment requires that academic and financial decision-makers understand the activities, costs and margins associated with teaching at the course level” (Massey, 2016, p. 1).

For this interactive workshop, participants will engage in real-world application of data analytics at the department and program level. To frame and contextualize this discussion, the presenters will share insights about current enrollment trends in postsecondary education and critical questions related to knowledge discovery in databases. Together, the presenters and participants will engage in modeling activities to address critical questions related to cost efficiency, enrollment trends, and faculty load at the program level. Specifically, the presenters will cover case studies in using data to assess the expediency of collapsing sections, analyzing DWF rates with attendant strategies and eliminating bottleneck courses to promote increased cost and credit efficiencies. The session will end with an opportunity for round-table conversations related to data informed program planning.

References

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