
Editorial

This issue of the *Journal of Institutional Research* focuses on various aspects of a tertiary student lifecycle. From assessing university entry systems, the interactions between learners and teachers during study, and graduate outcomes, there is much to consider in all of these areas – particularly in the context of the 2014 Australian Budget.

Mir, Fan, Daly & Boland focus on the different secondary education assessment systems across Australia. For some, often-tortuous examinations at the end of secondary education are the gateway to university; for others, continuous assessment practices form the basis of the all-powerful ATAR, the single score that dictates entry into the course of choice. Mir et al discuss the merits of both systems, focusing on the success at university performance after entry by either assessment practice. Although this study by Mir et al focuses on students from a particular discipline, it provides an excellent foundation for future research in the area.

As Mir et al experienced, accessing data to make meaningful associations between secondary and tertiary student performance can be problematic. The next article by Rees showcases the power that cross government and cross institutional data integration can provide to institutional researchers, as per Statistics New Zealand's Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI) program. By examining data brought together by the IDI, Massey University was able to profile the graduate outcomes, economic impact and the migration patterns of its graduates in a way that was not possible previously. Rees' final paragraph foreshadows a streamlined data collection future.

A student-centred approach to the first year tertiary learning and teaching environment impacts on the way that the lecturers develop and deliver their subject matter. However as discussed by Jacobs and Jacobs, the ways and means to adjust the delivery have not been well documented in the literature. Jacobs and Jacobs determined that many sub roles exist within the bounds of being a first year lecturer, and that to engage students successfully requires a considerable shift in the way that lecturers of first year students need to be developed and supported. This study also demonstrated a fascinating impact of the role of lecturer gender on this, and the importance of taking this into account during professional development and training for lecturers.

As university ranking season approaches for 2014, a timely article by Carroll discusses the contentious possibility of highly-ranked universities producing graduates that are more highly-paid than non-ranked universities. This fascinating and scientific approach to this research questions reveals a small but measurable result, but that is in turn requires further research to establish the cause or causes of this.

With the announcement of the changes to student funding in the 2014 Australian Federal Government Budget, the article on load planning by Seidel will assist many institutions grapple with the changes ahead. Using and then implementing a disaggregated estimation approach to student load planning, Seidel was able to demonstrate considerably higher accuracy in the load planning models developed, which in turn will have significant positive impact on budgeting and financing for the institution.

Finally, thank you as always to our contributors, editors and reviewers whose input is invaluable in ensuring the continuing quality and excellence of the *Journal of Institutional Research*.

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Academic Editor