

**2018
2019**

Annual Report

Positioning AIR for the Future

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Colleagues,

We are pleased to present the 2018–2019 annual report of the Association for Institutional Research (AIR).

The association has accomplished a great deal since our annual meeting at the 2018 Forum in Orlando. Much of this work has focused on preparing AIR for a successful future in a rapidly changing higher education environment. Highlights include a new ends policy, a new look at ethics, new technology, new partnerships, new outreach, new tools, and new educational opportunities.

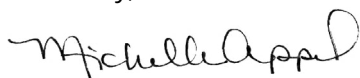
As we look at the future of data, analytics, and information in higher education, we can see either an abundance of opportunities (innovative tools, access to more and different types of data, increased demand for meaningful analysis to support decisions) or an abundance of threats (less-informed consumers of data, broader access to data and tools, more questions than time or answers). We choose to see opportunities and have worked to position the association to take advantage of them and continue to grow and thrive.

We are energized by our new mission and vision statement—they are focused on promoting the value of institutional research while also welcoming others who are interested in learning more about and contributing to the practices and scholarship of data-informed decisions. Our proposed Statement of Ethical Principles strives to exemplify the standards to which all who use data in higher education should aspire. You will note a wealth of activities and training offered to increase the knowledge, skills, and awareness of our members and the community. Undergirding our plans are strategic investments in AIR’s technical infrastructure and human capital.

The association has benefitted from more than 50 years of wise and prudent stewardship. From a fledgling group run by a few volunteers, AIR has grown to a multi-million dollar enterprise with more than 25 paid staff members and hundreds of volunteers. Our association is well positioned for our next chapter, with the strong reputation we have built over the past half century, the training and professional development we deliver, and the considerable knowledge and expertise of our members and staff.

We invite you to learn more about the association’s vision and mission and the accomplishments that have positioned us to achieve them.

Sincerely,



Michelle S. Appel
President



Christine M. Keller
Executive Director & CEO

AIR BY THE NUMBERS

50+

Years of Leadership

25+

Executive Staff

500+

Volunteers

3,500+

Members

2,000

Attendees at Forum



New Mission & Vision

After several years of work, the association changed its mission statement and related objectives in August 2018. The mission and objectives are contained in our governing policies as our ends policy, and reflect why AIR exists, who we serve, and what value we provide. It is the standard against which we measure the success of the operations of AIR.

Additionally, we have adopted a forward-looking vision statement to guide our strategic planning efforts. It is an aspirational goal that reflects what we value and what we hope to achieve through the fulfillment of the association's mission.

Our work in these areas has been guided by information we gathered from members and the broader field through listening sessions, surveys, educational events, research, partnerships, and informal conversations.

Mission

AIR is a global association that empowers higher education professionals at all levels to utilize data, analytics, information, and evidence to make decisions and take actions that benefit students and institutions and improve higher education.

Mission Objectives

AIR will educate institutional researchers, higher education leaders and professionals, and organizations on the value of institutional research.

AIR will educate and support higher education professionals in:

- Contextualizing data across campus and throughout higher education
- Learning methods and tools of the institutional research profession
- Evaluating the effectiveness of institutions
- Conducting research and scholarship

AIR will provide opportunities for the development of professional and interpersonal skills.

AIR will promote the development of professional networks.

Vision

AIR will be a global leader in the ethical use of data for better decisions.

NOTEWORTHY

The mission and objectives are inclusive of not just those individuals with the title “Institutional Researcher,” but all higher education professionals. The objectives emphasize education and professional development, promoting the value of institutional research, and developing professional networks. These objectives ground the association’s work for the future with a focus on strengthening the profession and the use of data and analytics to improve higher education for the benefit of students and institutions.



Code of Ethics & Professional Practice

In response to member requests and conversations at the 2018 Forum, the Board embarked upon an examination of the current Code of Ethics and Professional Practice. Of particular interest was how the Code addressed emerging topics like data analytics, big data, and vendor relationships.

As we examined the current Code, it became clear that both ethics and best practices had been blended into a single document. While this may be helpful for members needing a prescriptive document to which they can refer, the overarching ethical values and principles could get lost in the details. Further, the document, which requires Board approval, was not adaptable in a timely fashion to address new trends.

The Board shared its working draft of the Statement of Ethical Principles at the Denver Forum in May. At that time, feedback and suggestions were incorporated into the [final draft](#) for comment. The Board plans to adopt the final Statement in early fall so the AIR Executive Office can begin the work of developing training and additional materials that support and promote the new Statement. You may submit additional comments and feedback at air@airweb.org by August 15.

Statement of Ethical Principles

We affirm the following overarching principles regarding the use of higher education data to facilitate insights and improve decision making. These principles guide us as we promote the use of data, analytics, information, and evidence to benefit students and improve higher education.

We act with integrity:

We recognize the real world **consequences** of our work. The decisions that are informed by the information we collect, analyze, and report will have impacts on people and situations.

We acknowledge that the individuals who provide us with data have **rights**, and we protect their information from misuse or use that could cause them harm.

We protect **privacy** and maintain **confidentiality** when collecting, analyzing, and disseminating information.

We act as **responsible data stewards**. We secure the data and information to which we have access, following generally accepted guidelines for physical and electronic security.

We provide **accurate and contextualized** information to stakeholders. We do not knowingly or intentionally mislead the consumers of our information.

We deliver information and analyses **appropriate** to the questions being asked, to the quality of the data available, and to the context in which the questions are asked.

We draw on and contribute to relevant and emerging **scholarship** and educate ourselves on emergent trends. We utilize those methods and techniques for which we have, or can obtain, appropriate knowledge and capabilities.

We seek to be **fair and transparent**, providing objectivity and impartiality.

We **avoid conflicts of interest**, particularly with third parties and vendors. We act with the best interests of our institutions and stakeholders in mind.

We strive to make our work **accessible** to those within our institutions who need information to make decisions.

We share **knowledge** of the Institutional Research field and its application so that we may facilitate insights and promote common understanding.

Projects & Initiatives

To accomplish AIR's mission to empower higher education professionals to use data, analytics, and information to make decisions and take actions that benefit students and institutions, we focused efforts in four operational areas.



1 | EDUCATION & TRAINING

Provide educational opportunities to meet the current and future training and professional development needs of the community.



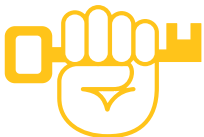
2 | KNOWLEDGE CENTER

Serve as a center of knowledge and innovation for the creation and exchange of research, practice, and tools.



3 | COMMUNITY & NETWORKS

Create and engage a community of professionals and organizations to learn, connect, and collaborate.



4 | ADVOCACY & POLICY

Advocate for the resources, expertise, and infrastructure necessary for the effective use of evidence in higher education.

Key accomplishments within the four operational focus areas are highlighted on the following pages. While not encompassing all AIR's operations or activities—many of which are foundational and important—these 2018–2019 accomplishments showcase initiatives and actions that position AIR for future success, while continuing to provide immediate value to members and the broader higher education community.

1 | Education & Training

AIR develops and delivers a vast array of education and professional development opportunities for the higher education community with the goal of enhancing decision making in support of improved institutional effectiveness and student success. We take an inclusive approach to our education and training products and services so that the entire higher education data community, including and beyond IR and IE, considers AIR as a resource for acquiring the knowledge and skills related to their roles. Offerings include online and in-person programming that ranges from one hour (e.g., webinars) to multi-day activities (e.g., courses).

Highlights from 2018–2019 include the development of a suite of webinars that provide training on specific how-to topics (e.g., Combining National Data Sets for Institutional Use, Do's and Don'ts of Survey Research, Student Voices), present initiatives and projects that expand the field (e.g., Building a Data-Informed Decision Culture: The Primer I Wish I Had, Strengthening Data Culture Through Creation of a Data Fellows Program), and serve career development at both personal and office levels (e.g., Leadership and Career Development in IR, Publishing in Journals, How Does My IR Office Compare?).

AIR also launched the redesigned NCES Data Institute: Using Federal Datasets to Support Research on Postsecondary Education (Institute), formerly the National Data Institute, which provides an intensive introduction to NCES (National Center for Education Statistics) datasets and research methodologies. Early career professionals participated in the Institute, which included a six-week online course, a group research project, and a three-day convening at the Department of Education offices in Washington, D.C. In addition, the Art and Science of Data Visualization: A Data Bootcamp premiered at the 2019 Forum. This day-and-a-half experience explored practical, strategic, and theoretical approaches to data visualization in higher education and allowed participants to customize their experiences based on their interests.

DATA VISUALIZATION BOOTCAMP

“I really appreciated the speakers who concentrated on theory and not just how to build a dashboard.”

WEBINARS

“The PowerBI webinar had well organized, meaningful content that was exactly as described. The presenters did an excellent job demonstrating step-by-step procedures to build a data model.”

NCES DATA INSTITUTE

“I absolutely loved the group research project! I feel empowered to do my own research using NCES's data now.”

2 | Knowledge Center

To support and expand data-informed decision making within higher education, the association contributes to the production, collection, and dissemination of innovative research, practice, and tools.

Highlights from 2018–2019 include the launch of the second edition of the National Survey of IR Offices. It expands on the original baseline survey from 2015–2016 and includes access to a benchmarking tool with the option to purchase premium benchmarking. The survey is framed around four areas of inquiry: office structure, office staffing, financial resources, and users/clients. A national report will be released in fall 2019.



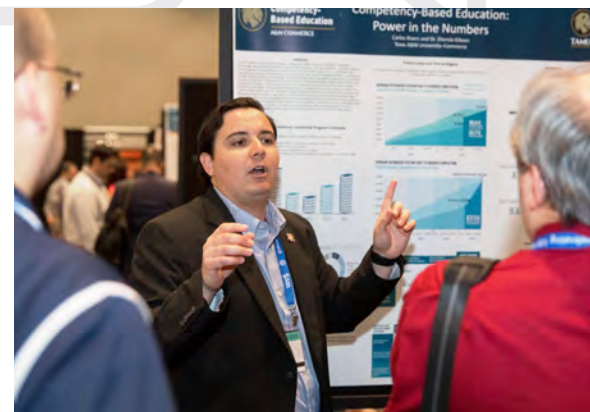
In addition, a new rubric was developed to guide institution-level assessment of the data function. This work is the result of AIR's long-standing partnership with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Institutional Transformation Assessment project. The content AIR provided for that project is owned by AIR and will be used as the foundation for expanded work in this arena.

3| Community & Networks

AIR supports the higher education community through participation in a wide range of conversations and collaborations at the regional, national, and global levels. In addition to partnerships with other organizations to advance data-informed decision making in support of student success, AIR facilitates collaboration across higher education functional areas.

Highlights from 2018–2019 include the second annual Enterprise Summit: Analytics, jointly planned and hosted by AIR, Educause, and the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO). The summit brought together 350 leaders and professionals from IR, IT, and business offices to enhance collaboration to address institutional challenges and opportunities. The three organizations will release a joint statement on the value of analytics in fall 2019 with a goal of spurring the expanded use of analytics in decision making by senior leaders.

AIR and Educause formed an Advisory Group on IT/IR Collaboration (AGIIC) comprised of members from each association. AGIIC’s charge is to jointly develop short- and long-term methods to enhance cooperation and highlight examples of effective cross-business unit efforts.





4 | Advocacy & Policy

AIR advocates for policies, regulations, and legislation to support data availability, infrastructure, transparency, and accountability. The association also lends the perspective of data professionals in policy discussions.

In 2018–2019, the AIR Data Policy Advisory Group provided input and feedback for U.S. Department of Education Technical Review Panels, Gainful Employment Disclosure changes, and proposed changes to IPEDS reporting requirements. AIR partnered with the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) to press for changes to guidance from the U.S. Department of Education regarding the availability of student financial aid data within institutions for program evaluation, reporting, and research.

AIR and the Institute of Higher Education Policy (IHEP) will co-host an interactive policy summit in August 2019 for institutional teams that use data to promote student success and affect policy change. This is the third time that AIR and IHEP have collaborated to bring together federal and state policymakers with institutional data professionals to share knowledge and expertise for the creation of improved policies.

Strategy & Innovation

Strategic investments in AIR's technical infrastructure and human capital position us to remain dynamic in our work and responsive to the field in an evolving higher education environment.

Membership Structure

The implementation of the new AMS provides AIR the flexibility to examine our membership structure and consider changes to increase the value of membership. This year, the Board worked with AIR staff to develop a proposal in which AIR membership will renew annually from the date of purchase rather than at the start date of a set membership period. The change will allow members to access a full 12 months of member benefits, regardless of when they join. Implementation of this new process required a change in the AIR Bylaws, which was approved by a vote of members at the 2019 Annual Business Meeting on May 29. The implementation of the annual renewal model began in June 2019.

Technology Infrastructure

With aging technology that limited AIR's ability to grow and to meet members' needs, including access to training and information, a new association management system (AMS) was selected in 2018, with initial implementation in spring 2019. The association [website](#) was also upgraded and redesigned to improve usability and to reflect accessibility standards and mobile responsive designs. While both projects are in the initial stages of implementation, the new systems have already provided improved and expanded features for members and greater visibility for the association. Future enhancements include the introduction of online communities, a more seamless user experience, and the option for members to refine their communication preferences.



Governance Structure

The Board spent considerable time in 2018–2019 examining its governance structure, including engaging past presidents and Board members in conversation to think through board structures and member involvement in a policy governance environment. The Board took several actions in response to their wise counsel:

- For new boards to engage in policy governance more productively and earlier in their tenure, the Board has added a face-to-face meeting, developed a mentoring system, and engaged a consultant to work regularly with the Board in training and advising on policy governance.
- In order to maintain some continuity, the Board will provide a self-evaluation and accomplishments document (ultimately three years' worth) to each incoming vice president for review in the first quarter of each Board year.
- In order to cultivate new policy governance leadership, the Board sponsored two panels during the 2019 Forum, one on leadership and another to demystify policy governance and inspire new leaders.

Elected Leadership

The Nominations and Elections Committee (NEC) implemented new Board policies that detail important characteristics, mindsets, and aptitudes of candidates. The requirements were developed to align with the policy governance approach, to

clearly articulate expectations of Board and NEC members, and to highlight the importance of diversity in the nominations process.

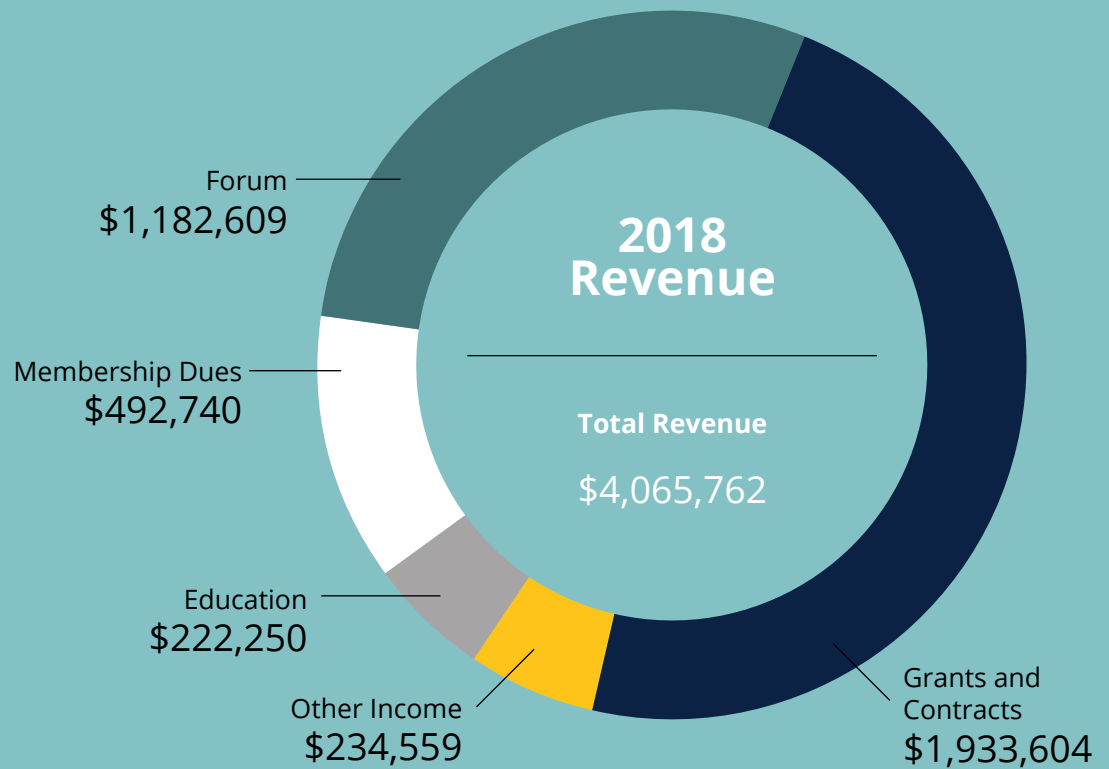
The NEC put together a strong slate of candidates and the following individuals were elected:

- **Vice President:** Heather Kelly
- **Board Members at Large:** Michele Hansen, Mary Lelik, and David Troutman
- **Nominations and Elections Committee:** Karen Froslid Jones, Kristin McKinley, and Mike Urmeneta

The NEC paid specific attention to the diversity of the slate to provide candidates that would yield a Board with a variety of perspectives and experiences. In order to balance out the composition of the eight continuing Board members, the slate included representation from public four-year, public two-year, and private institutions from eight different states across the country. The slate was 75 percent male to balance out the remaining two males on the Board, and 13 percent non-white. Of the four elected, all are from four-year publics (including one at a system office), three are female, and all are white. With a small number of nominees willing to run, it is challenging to develop a slate that will guarantee a diverse Board. While the NEC has attended to diversity, there is still room for improvement.

The association is grateful to the individuals who run for elected leadership positions, all of whom contribute to strong ballots that reflect the talents and passions of our profession.

Financial Report



While the AIR Board as a whole is responsible for overseeing the financial health of the organization, specific leadership responsibilities were delegated to the Board Treasurer, Sara Gravitt, for 2018–2019. The Treasurer provides leadership for the independent annual audit, which reviews the Financial Statements and findings from an independent audit firm concerning the financial state of the association. The Treasurer is also responsible for presenting an annual report of AIR’s financial condition at the annual Forum, managing Board travel, and researching comparable CEO compensation every three years. The Treasurer ensures that the Board has sufficient information to make sound financial policies. Three of the CEO Monitoring Reports reviewed and discussed by the Board deal specifically with the association’s finances — (1) financial planning, (2) financial condition and activities, and

(3) asset protection — and evaluate how the CEO handles the executive limitations set by the Board. The governance policies and executive limitations related to the association’s finances provide a level of protection, set boundaries, and serve as a warning mechanism, if needed.

The firm of Thomas Howell Ferguson P.A., Certified Public Accountants of Tallahassee, Florida, audited the December 31, 2018 Financial Statements of the association. The auditors issued a clean audit report that indicated that the audit disclosed no instances of significant deficiencies and/or material weaknesses in the association’s internal controls. Further, the auditors noted the organization is in a very healthy financial position. The December 31, 2018 audit was discussed and accepted by the Board on May 22, 2019.



Key findings on the current financial health of the association:

- 1| Unmodified opinion issued on the Financial Statements with no reportable instances of significant deficiencies or material weaknesses in internal control and no material instances of noncompliance.
- 2| Unmodified opinion issued on the Major Federal Award Programs with no reportable significant deficiencies or material weaknesses in internal control over major federal programs and no findings required to be reported.
- 3| Current total net assets are \$4,092,056. In 2018, expenses exceeded revenues resulting in a net loss of \$275,671. The loss was planned as a mechanism to invest a portion of the reserves to increase AIR's expertise, infrastructure, and capacity to deliver services for the benefit of members and the higher education community.

See the [AIR website](#) for audited financial statements.

AIR Leadership

2018–2019 Board Members



**President,
Michelle S. Appel**
University of Maryland-
College Park



**Vice President,
Martin B. Fortner**
Northeast Lakeview
College



**Past President,
Ellen Peters**
University of Puget
Sound



**Secretary,
Shari Ellertson**
Boise State University



**Treasurer,
Sara Gravitt**
Wake Forest University



**Parliamentarian,
Paige Borden**
University of Central
Florida



Christine Ross
Hampden-Sydney
College



Timothy Chow
Rose-Hulman Institute
of Technology



Michael Tamada
Reed College



Soon Merz Flynn
Austin Community
College District



Wendy Kallina
Agnes Scott College



Eric Yang
George Washington
University

2018–2019 Nominations & Elections Committee Members



**Chair,
Ellen Peters**
University of Puget
Sound



Russell Cannon
Bill & Melinda Gates
Foundation



Peggye Cohen
George Washington
University



Dawn Kenney
Central New Mexico
Community College



Adrea Hernandez
Higher Education
Data Sharing
Consortium (HEDS)



Victor Borden
Indiana University
Bloomington



Henry Y. Zheng
Ohio State University

Executive Team



Christine M. Keller
Executive Director
& CEO



Jason R. Lewis
Deputy Director
& CFO



Leah Ewing Ross
Senior Director,
Research & Initiatives



Robinson Neidhardt
Strategy Director,
Technology