



INDIANA UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Department of Educational Leadership
and Policy Studies

May 11, 2020

Dear AIR Colleagues:

I was delighted to learn that the peers and colleagues I respect most had nominated me for the Suslow award and that I was selected by AIR to receive the award this year. It is the most meaningful award I have ever received. Like most normal children, I did not aspire to a career in institutional research when I was a child, although close: my dream career from about ages 8 to 12 was to be a baseball statistician. I guess I had the right general line of work but wrong industry. Given that background, I will attempt in this letter to provide empirical evidence to support my assertions

Receiving this award is especially meaningful to me because it reflects all the wonderful mentors, colleagues, students, and other collaborators that I have had a chance to work with since I started in this field nearly 40 years ago. From my first IR position as a graduate research assistant in the UMass-Amherst Student Affairs Research and Evaluation Office (SAREO), through my work at IR offices at UMass, George Mason University, IUPUI and the IU System, my success was closely linked to the people I was mentored by, I worked with and that I now have the opportunity to mentor.

It is somewhat cliché to refer to “standing on shoulders of giants” when recognized by an honor like this, but nothing better describes how I feel. I am especially honored to be the fifth member of the Indiana University Higher Education and Student Affairs faculty to receive the Suslow award, with George Kuh, Trudy Banta, Don Hossler and Gary Pike previous awardees. Talk about Giants! My research (perusing the list of past winners) reveals that our program is in the lead. (Go Hoosiers!). We can also take at least partial credit for two additional awardees: Rob Toutkoushian, who spent 7 years on the faculty, and Yvonna Lincoln who received her doctorate from our program.

Working across the campuses of Indiana University for the past 28 years has provided me the support and encouragement to be both a working IR practitioner and an active scholar. I would be remiss, of course, if I did not mention the incredible support and thriving working environment I enjoyed for 13 years at IUPUI, working under Trudy Banta’s path breaking leadership and with such wonderful mentors as Bill Plater, Scott Evenbeck, Nancy Chism, and Bob Bringle to name just a few. And that’s the problem; once I start naming people, I regret leaving out others who have shaped me and my career.

When Charlie Nelms took me under his wings to lead the IU system IR function in 2005, I again was given the opportunity to work with an incredible mentor and great staff colleagues. Joining the HESA faculty in 2009, and becoming part of the IU Center for Postsecondary Research was the ultimate capstone experience for my career, which I am still enjoying. I am incredibly privileged now to work within one of the largest and productive collection of higher education researchers in the world!

Thanks largely to Ed Delaney, I was introduced to AIR and given so many wonderful opportunities to contribute and serve. But perhaps my greatest appreciation goes to the staff and students that I have had the opportunity to work, collaborate and play with. This is also the source of my greatest accomplishment. As of today, I have published articles, book chapters and edited volumes with 75 different co-authors, including 28 students. Thank you all!

I have been very fortunate to work with great colleagues within supportive institutions since I entered the field in 1981. As I finish my 40th year as an institutional research practitioner and now professor, I count my blessings and, even more importantly, try my best to give back to the people, institutions, and associations that have given so much to me. To paraphrase the Windbreaker's classic, God Bless the VSA (written by Ty Cruce)

*If tomorrow all the things were gone, I'd worked for all my life,
And I had to start again, and lead this IR life.
I'd thank my lucky stars, to be workin' here today.
'Cause the work is so rewarding, and they can't take that away*

Thank you again for this recognition. I intend to redouble my efforts at collaborating with as many colleagues as possible in the years to come.

Most appreciately yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Victor M. H. Borden". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "V" and "B".

Victor M. H. Borden