STUDENT ACTIVISTS & IR: AN EQUITY-MINDED COLLABORATION

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NEAIR: November 17, 2021
OVERVIEW

• Why we are sharing our story
• IR and student aims before our collaboration
• How we worked together and our experiences
• Our collective outcomes
• What we learned
GOAL: Remediate racialized reporting practices that contribute to inequitable student experiences

• How can we identify and remediate data reporting issues that may contribute to the inequities that students experience?

• When considering students as decision makers, what are the implications for the data we share and how we share it?

• How can collaborating with students help institutional researchers become equity-minded “Best Practitioners?”
IR WORK: BEFORE COLLABORATION

- Building out analytics platform – Flagship Analytics
- Building out dashboards
- Fall data and website updates
- Student inequities and outcomes data analyses
Responding to police brutality and racial inequities

Proposing policy and procedure changes to address campus inequities

Identifying and analyzing data to “validate” lived campus inequities

Not finding differentiated race/ethnicity groups in all public data

Multiple collaborations proposed including Data Subcommittee
CONCERNS BEFORE COLLABORATION

STUDENTS
• Cyclic nature of committees
• Will we have to do all the work ourselves?
• Transparency of working process
• What is the timeline?

IR
• When sharing our limitations, concerns, prior efforts, will students think we are gaslighting them?
• How will the probable timeline be perceived?
• Potential for input on new website and public dashboards?
WORKING TOGETHER (1)

WHO

• IR staff
• Provost Office, Office of Equity & Inclusion staff
• Undergraduate and graduate student racial action group representatives

HOW

• Remote meetings, 2-3 times/semester
• Sessions framed around:
  • Racial equity and justice
  • Balancing reporting transparency and privacy
WORKING TOGETHER (2)

SESSION 1

• Listening session: Students share needs and experiences
• IR shares some basic data in response to student questions
• Start conversations about balancing accessibility, transparency, privacy

SESSIONS 2 & 3 (iterative process)

• Mock-up of first dashboards to address key student questions
• IR asks questions about meeting needs, describes privacy issues
• Students provide feedback on utility and usability
SESSION 4
• Finalizing needs
• Sharing current versions of dashboards
• Discussing narratives needed for people coming to website for data

SESSION 5
• Share one full set of UG dashboards
• Share partial sets of GR, Faculty, Staff dashboards
• Discuss ongoing identity reporting work beyond race/ethnicity
• Discuss sharing work and results with campus
REFLECTIONS AFTER COLLABORATION

IR
• Understood pain, sense of urgency from students
• Availability of data isn’t the same as data usability
• Found alignment in our collective efforts
• Improved public reporting based on student questions/observations

STUDENTS
• Publicly available data versus in analytics platform
• Saw the possibility of a fruitful collaboration with administration
• Experienced measurable outcomes, incremental benchmarks
STUDENT-RELATED OUTCOMES

• Felt heard and got the experience needed – not just for the data group, but for campus
• Seeing care and commitment to undoing racialized practices
• Inviting students to participate in collaboration brings not only “the student voice” but also student support
Data Overview and Dashboards

Public Dashboards

The dashboards provide basic metrics about our undergraduate and graduate students as well as our faculty and staff, and are accessed by clicking on the icons below.

In addition to providing information at the university and school/college levels, the dashboards show demographic information that is used for federal reporting (e.g., sex, IPEDS race/ethnicity groups).

To balance information transparency with individual privacy, we do not report information that is based on very few individuals, defined in each dashboard.
## Domestic Reported Undergraduate Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20,501</td>
<td>20,104</td>
<td>22,067</td>
<td>23,483</td>
<td>23,598</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## International Undergraduate Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,456</td>
<td>1,686</td>
<td>1,796</td>
<td>1,569</td>
<td>1,087</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Race/Ethnicity | Domestic Undergraduates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Fall 2019</th>
<th>Fall 2020</th>
<th>Fall 2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>69.9%</td>
<td>61.1%</td>
<td>67.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or more races</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### World Regions | International Undergraduates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Fall 2019</th>
<th>Fall 2020</th>
<th>Fall 2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia &amp; New Zealand</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Asia</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Asia</td>
<td>42.8%</td>
<td>49.7%</td>
<td>37.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeastern Asia</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Asia</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Asia</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America and the Caribbean</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern America</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
About Our Data

UAIR provides a comprehensive variety of campus metrics and statistics through several platforms. We also develop and maintain:

Public Dashboards and Data

We provide dashboards on basic student, faculty, and staff information for all campus users and the public. The data in the public dashboards is complemented by factsheets and data tables, the Common Data Set (CDS), and institutional resources.

Flagship Analytics

This is UMass Amherst’s analytics platform to augment decision making at the university. The platform includes validated and/or official data extracts/models used for analysis, data integration, and Tableau data dashboards.

Any faculty or staff member can access a core set of dashboards via analytics.umass.edu and using their NetID and login (off-campus use requires VPN).

With FERPA certification and additional training, faculty and staff can access an extensive suite of dashboards that includes information such as student enrollment and success metrics, basic faculty and staff data, and research and grant information.

Adding new data sources and developing new dashboards is an essential and ongoing activity for the UAIR team. We also develop custom dashboards or provide datasets and analyses in response to information and analysis requests.

Data access follows the UMass data security and privacy policies and uses the data steward model.

Amherst Data Pond

In collaboration with our IT colleagues, we support the Amherst Data Pond which is a Tableau site for local dashboard sandboxing, system development and maturation, and locally-collected/unofficial data sharing within the university.
About Demographics and Diversity

Demographics and Diversity

Demographics are an imprecise proxy for the rich identities of our students, faculty, and staff. Further, UAIR must balance the desire for transparency in reporting with the need to protect individual privacy. Within these constraints, UAIR is working towards equity-minded data visualization and analysis in several ways:

1. While imperfect, we disaggregate data for reporting by currently-available demographic information to share the unique experiences of our students, faculty, and staff and illuminate inequities experienced by marginalized groups.
2. We work with campus partners who collect demographic data, as advocates of richer and more nuanced data and as users of the demographic data in our internal reports, dashboards, and analyses.
3. We encourage decision makers to use qualitative data to complement quantitative data when understanding, changing, and developing policies and procedures.
4. We collaborate with staff and students on the development of public dashboards, with an eye towards data transparency, privacy, demographic data concerns, and dashboard usability.
5. We are active members of professional groups and organizations that work towards equity-minded data presentation and analyses in the field of institutional research and in higher education.

Our public dashboards currently make use of three sets of demographics. These include sex and race/ethnicity groups for domestic residents as used in federal reporting, and United Nations country groups for international groups. Additional datasets and demographics will be added as public dashboard development continues.

Small numbers and personal identification risk

When the number of individuals in a given group is small, personal identification in reporting is a risk. UAIR currently addresses this issue in two ways:

- Potentially identifiable information is suppressed, and/or
- Multiple smaller groups are aggregated into a single larger group

Neither of these approaches are ideal and risk the erasure of unique experiences. Given the potential harm, we limit use of these techniques in our reporting to when there is risk of personal identification. What constitutes a "small number" differs by the analyst, so the number used is defined in each dashboard or report.

At the same time, we are partnering with key campus offices.
FROM MEETINGS TO COLLABORATIONS

• Find the questions underlying proposed solutions. What problems are trying to be solved?
• If you finding yourself saying "we tried that before" consider what isn't being accomplished such that the solution is being raised again. What did you learn before?
• What is a reasonable timeframe for accomplishing something meaningful for both groups? Break down the problem/goal into component parts that can be addressed.
• Scale up what works. And consider where successful approaches can be modified to address other issues.
Doing deep work towards systemic change is hard and takes time.

People might respond by saying they don’t have time or it isn’t a good time.

It is true, there is never a “good time” to do big, hard work, but we believe it is always a bad time to do nothing.
QUESTIONS?

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