

The Counseling Center Directors' Annual Data Bank
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Origin: In the early 1950's a small number of college and university counseling center directors started meeting annually to exchange ideas, problems and possible solutions.

It was about 1963 when some of the directors shared with each other their frustrations. One of those was the frequent surveys that many directors received with requests to fill them out for the requester's benefit. Fellow directors found little time for complying, but also had some discomfort at not complying. The heated group discussion led to the suggestion that we directors might create our own annual survey. Should we do this we would request relevant questions from all directors. The results of such surveys would be distributed to all center directors.

The procedure that evolved from the above discussion included: (a) in each yearly survey request some items from the previous year's item content would be included, and (b) a subgroup of directors were asked to critique yearly the draft of the next year's survey and suggest other items.

Purpose:

1. To compile counseling center directors' answers to the questions, to summarize the findings, and to share the results with all participating directors.
2. To encourage directors to study the results and compare their center answers with those of other centers, particularly those centers viewed as comparable peers.
3. To encourage directors to make such comparisons to perhaps justify improvements in their own centers.

Typical Data Bank Subject Matter:

- Institution size
- Professional staff (doctoral plus non doctoral) + functions performed
- Number of clients last year + types of problems presented
- Ethnic minority staff members
- Teaching load of staff
- Other professional service activities
- Salary data (by degree and years of service)
- Staff +/-or Intern vacancies anticipated next year
- Staff publications and presentations
- Center's total annual budget
- Student suicides last year
- Client characteristics/concerns
- Staff memberships (APA, AUCCCD, IACS, etc.)
- Staff +/-or Intern vacancies anticipated next year
- Testing programs conducted by Center
- Percent of baccalaureate graduates previously served by counseling staff

Use of combinations of such items as many of the above and each counseling center can compare and contrast its characteristics and productivity. As or more importantly, each center can measure itself in comparison with other counseling centers. These comparisons provide a justification for additional staff, more increments in salary, equipment and modifications or a counseling center's physical facilities.

Common Problems with Annual Surveys:

1. Late returns of some centers' surveys delay analysis of findings and returning such evidence to the respondents.

2. Many directors frequently leave some items unanswered.
3. Free response questions are frequently left unanswered.
4. Center directors who participate in another survey only. There are differences in such surveys and experienced directors have recommended participation in more than one survey.

Counseling Center Usage of Data Bank Information:

As might be expected different centers have found different kinds of data of most relevance to their understanding and/or improvement of their organizations. The distribution of uses by large and small institutions is presented below.

<u>Type of Usage</u>	<u>Large</u> <u>%</u>	<u>Small</u> <u>%</u>
a. Budget requests/justifications	<u>78</u>	<u>60</u>
b. Informing campus group of your Center's relative position	<u>71</u>	<u>63</u>
c. Development of new programs/practices	<u>64</u>	<u>60</u>
d. Program evaluation studies	<u>29</u>	<u>21</u>
e. Facilities planning	<u>22</u>	<u>16</u>
f. Descriptive research studies	<u>18</u>	<u>10</u>
g. Recruitment of staff including intern	<u>17</u>	<u>13</u>
h. Orientation/training of prospective and new staff and trainees	<u>17</u>	<u>14</u>

Centers also submitted 19 other uses.

Creation of an Annual Data Bank Survey (A chronology of events)

By May or June from the last year's submissions we compile the suggestions for new items. After study of these, the most unique and of current interest are drafted for the next Data Bank. A compilation of these items is then circulated for critique to the Administrative Group at the University of Maryland Counseling Center and to six other fellow counseling center directors within the state. In order to acquire annual data allowing directors to compare their center's staffing and productivity in the last 5-10 years of operation, we frequently add several survey items.

This pool of items are then reproduced along with a covering letter encouraging directors to complete all items and particularly the several free response items.

We then acquire an address roster of current AUCCCD directors from the association treasurer. In addition, there are a number of directors who have not been members of the Association of College Counseling Center Directors, but have been included at their request.

During August the Survey cover letter is signed, all letters are addressed and the Survey, answer sheet, introductory letter, supplementary sheets to assist the directors, and a return envelope are ready for mailing.

In early September the Surveys are mailed with their reply date in mid October. Two follow up reminder letters are sent, the first before the reply date and the second about one month later.

As the completed Surveys are received, we first date and proof the Survey answer sheets. Then the latter are processed in batches and proofread for any corrections.

By January or February we have coded the returns and mailed a printout of all the data to each participating director.

By March or April we mail out the Analysis by Enrollment, meaning the surveys are divided in half by enrollment and then each item is portrayed in the following degrees (Highest, 75%tile, Median, 25%tile, Lowest) with an indication of the number of surveys answering each item vs. omitting some. For the free response questions, these answers are reported verbatim on separate sheets and enclosed with the director's Analysis by Enrollment.

In June we end by soliciting a number of centers having reported some innovative/novel programs/practices inviting 10 to 12 of them to make presentations at the next year's ACPA convention. We also encourage calls regarding any questions that occur to any directors.

Financial Support: Since our Data Bank was established the association of directors allotted \$15 (later \$20) yearly for partial support. The University of Maryland contributed the remaining support. (Our expenses included allotted time of the Director's assistant plus time of the Director or former Director, plus data processing equipment and operators, and student assistants). Multiple mailings were made yearly, tabulation of each counseling center's data item by item, and production of the annual Coded Printout for all participating centers. This is followed annually by the Analysis By Enrollment which includes calculations for the large and small participating institutions of their responses to each item. This feedback to the participating directors enables them to compare and contrast their counseling center's characteristics and performance with centers comparable to their own. These relative findings are important to most centers and to their administrations.

Evolution: Since about 1964 the American College Personnel Association (then APGA) accepted our submission of a program of selected prospective presenters who had submitted one or more novel/innovative programs in their most recent Data Bank Survey. With the exception of one or two years, the Convention program committee has always approved of our program submissions. Few if any other convention programs have had as long a duration. Audience yearly anonymous evaluations of the program have been consistently positive.

The number of counseling centers, their directors, their sizes and the scope of their campus functions have gradually increased over the years. One of the largest annual increases occurred when the association of directors removed the requirement of a minimum of three FTE professional staff in order for a center to qualify for membership in the association.

Dissemination of Annual DATA Bank Survey Results:

1. Printout of all counseling centers' responses to each item. For this form the horizontal rows list code numbers for all participating counseling centers. Each of the vertical columns present all center's responses to that item.
2. Analysis by Enrollment: This form of dissemination divides in half the surveys by size of enrollment (large 10,000 or more, and small less than 10,000). For each item the distribution of responses presents the Highest, the 75%tile, the Median, the 25%tile and the lowest value. This format enables each counseling center to compare itself with other centers.
3. Presentations of "Innovative or Novel" Functions Performed by Counseling Centers: The source of the material refers to practices that clearly involve Center staff functions which go beyond the usual individual or group counseling or testing practices and the training and supervision of graduate students in doing likewise. These entries are the main source of presentations for the annual Innovations in College Counseling programs at the American College Personnel Association Conventions (ACPA). In recent years our practice is to select more than 12 of such practices and invite the corresponding center directors or a staff member to make a brief presentation of their innovation. The first 12 favorable replies constitute the program. Usually 80-120 colleagues attend these national presentations. They receive a roster of the names, titles, and addresses of the presenters for further contact if desired.

*Dr. Magoon has administered the Data Bank Survey since its initiation in 1963-64. During that time he has served as the University of Maryland Counseling Center Director and Professor and in the last 12 years as Director Emeritus and Professor Emeritus primarily working on the Data Bank.