Module 1: Data Literacy: What’s That About?

Data literacy is the ability to read, write, and communicate data in context, including an understanding of data sources and constructs, analytical methods and techniques applied, and the ability to describe the use case, application, and resulting value.

Faculty and staff at UNG have access to a variety of data resources on campus, including Banner reports, dashboards, and custom reporting. Depending on what you are looking for, these reports can be short and straightforward or they can be significantly more complex. Access to data is only one part of using data to support decision-making. The other piece is whether you can make sense of that data and use it to tell a story. This ability is often referred to as data literacy.

In a nutshell, data literacy addresses how you interpret the data and turn that information into action. It encompasses several skills, so the next few newsletters will include a review of basic components of data literacy:

- Asking the right questions;
- Identifying relevant information needs;
- Understanding the role of ‘big data’;
- Presenting your data to others; and,
- Using data to ‘tell a story’.

Basic data literacy doesn't require anyone to be a statistician or a professional researcher, so these posts will focus on using data for program improvement. If you have questions about how the IE office can help you address the data needs of your program or department, please let me know.

---

Meet the Staff: Linda Rowland

Director of Institutional Research

Tell us about your background:

I’m originally from Colorado, but I finished high school in Echols County in South Georgia. I earned a B.S. in Applied Mathematics at Valdosta State University and immediately began working there as an Institutional Research Analyst. After a decade of working in IR, I earned my M.Ed. in Educational Leadership at VSU and the next year became the Director of Institutional Research at NCDSU, now UNG.

What brought you to IR:

Right after graduating with my bachelor’s, I saw the ad for an IR Analyst and it sounded like the perfect first job. It definitely was and I have enjoyed working in IR for over 20 years.

What’s the most fun thing about working in this field?

The most fun thing about being in IR is that, while we do have routine tasks, every day includes the possibility to do new and different analytical projects – and I get to work with a great team of people!

What’s the hardest thing about working in this field?

I think the hardest thing about working in IR is telling people no. There are times, for various reasons, when we can’t help someone and that can be frustrating for us and them.

One thing you’ve learned from working at UNG:

One thing I’ve learned from working at UNG is how important community is. I love working somewhere that is so people-focused.