

Institutional Research Roles and Responsibilities in the FITW RCT

The Carolina Works First in the World kickoff was a great event that drew out a lot of enthusiasm and questions. Especially surrounding those people involved in Institutional Research, there seemed to be some lack of clarity about what your roles will be and how you will be involved in this project. This document is an attempt to address some of these points.

To begin with, here are some basics about the study. The concept of improving student retention and completion via success coaching has become widely popular, but there is little published evidence that it is successful at large scale. This is the driving factor for involving ten colleges and the goal of enrolling over 20,000 students in the study. If we can show a similar improvement to the Bettinger and Baker (2011) study with this many students, and in a community college system, **we can be pointed to** as proof that success coaching works. However, for this study to carry weight in the global community it must be executed as a random controlled trial (RCT) with fidelity. By implementing a RCT we gain many advantages: it is the strongest form of evidence, we do not need to worry about factors that affect population bias, and having concurrent treatment and control groups creates a baseline measure that is truly independent of outside factors. Yet it also has some burdens: the treatment condition and the control condition must be maintained inflexibly and spillover is a real worry. We hope that by understanding the advantages and disadvantages of this study you will be able to help with its successful execution.

For your roll in this study, we want to utilize some of the skills that you have already developed as institutional researchers.

1. In the break-out sessions on the first day of the conference there was a lot of excitement in the IR room. We know that you are driven to want answers to questions and we would like you to bring that excitement to your core team.
2. You have experience explaining complicated ideas. During the conference we heard a lot of confusion surrounding the necessity and requirements of the random controlled trial. You are in a position where people on campus expect you to have answers and you can assure them with strong and simple explanations. Aviso will release report data to you first, so that you know what the core teams will see and be in a position to be able to explain it.
3. You have an understanding of the downfalls of unreliable data. The RCT will only be reliable if everyone executes it faithfully. Please stress to your core team that it is important to not make exceptions and that any spillover must be documented. This role is somewhat analogous to quality control.
4. You know your data best. During the initial stages of the implementation of Aviso, they will have some questions about where and how some of your data is stored. Please help them promptly in conjunction with your IT department.

There was also some anxiety about IR's responsibility with data for this study. The evaluation team will be handling all of the data collection and reporting for this study. DVP-PRAXIS LTD is collaborating with Aviso Coaching LLC to collect de-identified student-level data directly through the Aviso platform. They will not be expecting regular reporting from institutional research and will not be providing access to their study-specific data set until the grant period has concluded.