38TH ANNUAL
TENNAIR CONFERENCE

2025
AUGUST 6 – AUGUST 8

CREATIVITY
ON DISPLAY

THE CHATTANOOGAN HOTEL & CONFERENCE CENTER
CHATTANOOGA, TN

TENNAIR | Tennessee Association for Institutional Research

WELCOME

from the President of TENNAIR

Dear Colleagues,

On behalf of the TENNAIR Program Committee, welcome to Chattanooga for the 2025 TENNAIR Conference! We're excited to gather in this vibrant city, known for its scenic beauty, innovation, and creativity—the perfect setting for this year's conference theme: "Creativity on Display."

This year's program truly embodies our theme, featuring three distinguished speakers: Rob Anderson, President of the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association; Bob Obrohta, Executive Director of the Tennessee College Access & Success Network; and Adam S. Green, Chair of the Tennessee College Access & Success Network Board of Directors. Alongside their insights, the conference offers a rich array of informative workshops, concurrent sessions, and valuable networking opportunities. Each element of the conference is designed to showcase how creativity drives progress in institutional research and effectiveness. Whether it's through new tools, inventive methods, or fresh perspectives, we hope you find inspiration at every turn.

As the landscape of higher education continues to evolve, creativity is not just helpful—it's essential. From navigating shifting enrollment trends to leveraging emerging technologies, IR/IE professionals are uniquely positioned to lead with insight, imagination, and adaptability. This conference is our opportunity to learn from one another, to share ideas openly, and to discover new ways to tackle challenges through innovative solutions.

We are also grateful for the generous support of our sponsors and exhibitors who help make this conference possible. This year's conference is generously supported by Xitracs, Coursedog, University of Memphis Department of Leadership, University of Tennessee Chattanooga Data Analytics Master's program, Tennessee Tech College of Education, and TICUA. Be sure to visit with them, learn about their offerings, and thank them for their ongoing commitment to our community.

Most of all, thank you—our attendees—for being part of this experience. Your continued participation, insights, and contributions are what make TENNAIR a strong, supportive, and forward-thinking organization. A special thanks goes to our concurrent session presenters for sharing your knowledge and sparking meaningful dialogue.

We hope you enjoy the conference and your time in beautiful Chattanooga. There are so many exciting local attractions to explore, including Lookout Mountain, Ruby Falls, and of course the place where all the billboards urge you to visit: Rock City! May you leave this year's TENNAIR gathering feeling energized, inspired, and ready to put your creativity on display in your own work and campus community.

Warm regards,

Bridgette Decent

President, TENNAIR

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FRI AUGUST 8 18

CONFERENCE

FLOOR MAP

- Walker
- Rose
- Kelley
- Amphitheater

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Rob Anderson

President, State Higher Education Executive Officers Association

Dr. Rob Anderson serves as the fourth president of the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) Association. He has led initiatives to improve data collection and analysis methods, enabling policymakers to make evidence-based decisions that positively impact students and institutions, including the development and implementation of a P-20 data system in West Virginia. Dr. Anderson earned a Ph.D. in higher education from the University of Georgia and a bachelor's degree in English literature from The Citadel.

Bob Obrohta

Executive Director, Tennessee College Access & Success Network

Bob Obrohta is an expert in college access and success for first-generation/low-income students. His 35-year career spans being a practitioner for thousands of students directly, as well as designing numerous scholarships and access programs for colleges, organizations, and communities across the country. He earned his master's degree in Higher and Adult Continuing Education from Columbia University, Teachers College (NYC) and his bachelor's degree in political science from the University of St. Francis (IL).

Adam S. Green

Board of Directors Chair, Tennessee College Access & Success Network

Dr. Adam S. Green has served as the chief of staff at East Tennessee State University (ETSU) since 2019. He has nearly 20 years of college access and success experience focused on increasing college attainment rates of low-income, underrepresented, and first generation students. Prior to his role at ETSU, he spent 12 years working for the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission. He earned both his doctoral and master's degrees in educational leadership studies as well as his bachelor's in journalism from West Virginia University.

SCHEDULE

AT A GLANCE

WED AUGUST 6:

1:00 – 3:00 PM – Pre-Conference Workshop ____ 10

3:30 – 5:30 PM – Pre-Conference Workshop ____ 10

3:30 – 5:30 PM – Pre-Conference Workshop ____ 11

THURS AUGUST 7:

8:30 – 9:20 AM Opening Session and Keynote ____ 12

9:30 – 10:20 AM Concurrent Sessions (1) ____ 12

10:40 – 11:30 AM Concurrent Sessions (2) ____ 13

11:30 – 12:50 PM Lunch on your own ____ 14

1:00 – 1:50 PM Segmental Meetings ____ 14

2:00 – 2:50 PM Concurrent Sessions (3) ____ 15

3:30 – 4:20 PM Concurrent Sessions (4) ____ 16

5:00 – 6:00 PM Reception (Drinks & Appetizers) ____ 17

Starting at 7:30 PM – Trivia Night ____ 17

FRI AUGUST 8:

8:00 – 8:50 AM Higher Ed Leaders Panel ____ 18

9:00 – 9:50 AM Concurrent Sessions (5) ____ 18

10:20 – 11:10 AM Concurrent Sessions (6) ____ 21

11:30 – 12:20 PM Closing Session and Keynote ____ 22

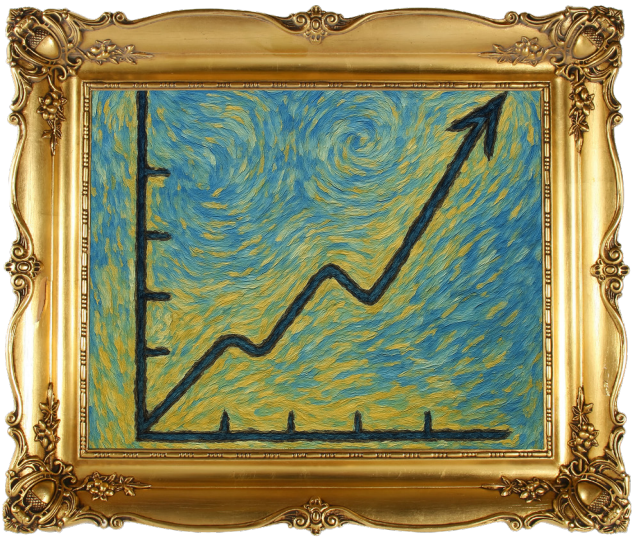
12:30 – 2:00 PM Lunch and Awards/Business Meeting ____ 22

A BRIEF HISTORY

The Tennessee Association for Institutional Research (TENNAIR) was founded in 1988 and was organized to serve professionals in postsecondary education institutions and agencies whose interests include management research, policy analysis, and planning.

Our Vision

TENNAIR's Annual Conference is an opportunity for current and aspiring institutional research professionals, scholars, and students to showcase innovative research and ideas pertaining to the field of institutional research or to Tennessee's current postsecondary context and landscape. Over the past several years, conference attendance has ranged from approximately 80 to 100 attendees representing various institutions and agencies from all regions of the state.



Our Mission

- Foster cooperation among professionals in institutional research in Tennessee
- Disseminate information and ideas about methods, processes, and problems of common interest
- Support the professional development of individuals engaged in institutional research

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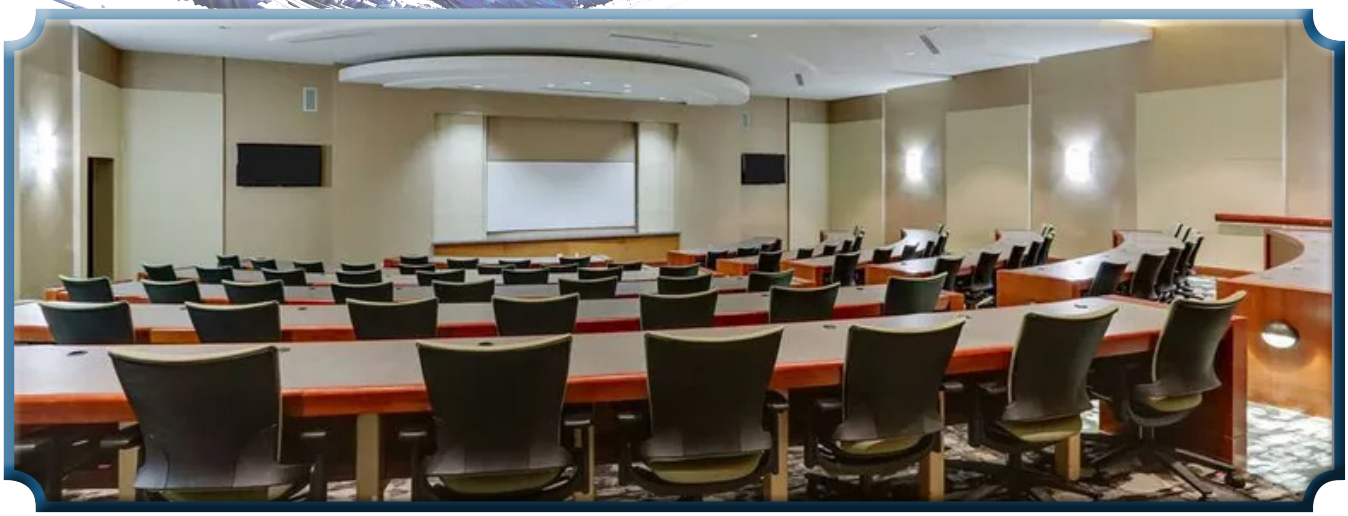
Data Analytics

WEDNESDAY 8/6
CONFERENCE



MAIN LOBBY
11:00 AM-5:00 PM

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

AMPHITHEATER
1:00 PM-3:00 PM

PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOP
AI for Institutional Research Analysts: Practical Applications & Considerations
William Fulford, University of Tennessee-Knoxville

This workshop explores the practical use of AI tools in the work of institutional research analysts, with a focus on real-world applications. It begins with a foundational overview of how AI works — including its predictive nature, limitations like hallucinations and bias, and issues to be aware of. The core of the session highlights multiple use cases tailored to IR work, including data summarization, coding (SQL and Excel), document extraction, and report automation.

Attendees will gain insights into best practices for using AI effectively without compromising accuracy or compliance. The presentation sets the stage for the hands-on portion of the workshop, where participants will work with these tools and see how they can be integrated into common IR workflows.

AMPHITHEATER
3:30 PM-5:30 PM

PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOP
Creating Professional Videos for Training & Improving Data Literacy
Lauren Elkins, University of Tennessee-Martin

Using publicly available software, the presenter will demonstrate how to create videos that can be used for many IR-related purposes, including dashboard tutorials and new employee training. Videos can be effective tools for promoting data literacy, as well as a means of increasing office productivity by addressing frequently asked questions.

The workshop will cover the basics of how to layer audio & video tracks, make edits, equalize volume levels, etc. Participants will get a chance to apply these skills through hands-on practice on their own computers.

WEDNESDAY 8/6

CONFERENCE

ROSE ROOM

3:30 PM-5:30 PM

PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOP

Visualizing StudentTracker℠ Detail Report Data with Power BI

John Grubb, Northeast State Community College

This workshop is a hands-on experience working with your own institutional data. Using an actual Clearinghouse detail report for their institution, complete with a unique student identifier, attendees will learn how to transform the raw data into a visual product that provides key information. As an extension to this exercise, participants may opt to join various student characteristics, such as program or demographic data, to their Clearinghouse report for enhanced analysis. Please note that a laptop preloaded with PowerBI will be needed for this workshop.

THURSDAY 8/7
CONFERENCE

WALKER ROOM
8:30 AM-8:40 AM

OPENING REMARKS

Dr. Bridgette Decent, President, TENNAIR

WALKER ROOM
8:40 AM-9:20 AM

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Beware of Falling Rocks:
Navigating The Uncertainties of Higher Education

Dr. Rob Anderson, President, SHEEO

SESSION(1)

KELLEY ROOM
9:30 AM-10:20 AM

CONCURRENT SESSION

Are We There Yet? Creativity and Collaboration on Our Data Governance Journey

Caroline Mann, William Fulford, & Dale TeGantvoort
University of Tennessee-Knoxville

This session will provide an update on the implementation process and highlight the creative strategies behind launching a campus-wide data governance initiative at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Attendees will learn how a grassroots approach has fostered collaboration and built momentum throughout all levels of the institution – from data users to administrators. The presentation will share lessons learned, early wins, and how creativity and community have driven progress on our campus.

AMPHITHEATER
9:30 AM-10:20 AM

CONCURRENT SESSION

Welcome to IR! An Introduction to the Field, Its Past, and Its Future

Jacob Kamer, Tennessee Higher Education Commission
Denise Gardner, University of Tennessee-Knoxville
Matt Rehbein, Lipscomb University
Melissa Hunter, Tennessee Board of Regents

In this session, four experts will engage in a panel discussion on the evolution of IR. Aimed primarily at newcomers to the TENNAIR Conference and to early-career professionals, this concurrent session will delve into IR's essential roles, responsibilities, effective practices, and future directions. The panelists, representing different sectors of Tennessee higher education institutions and levels of IR, will share insight into how IR has changed, what the field's future directions and needs are, and how IR professionals can prepare for an increasingly data-driven enterprise. Participants will receive a packet of resources highlighting opportunities for continued development.

THURSDAY 8/7

CONFERENCE

ROSE ROOM

9:30 AM-10:20 AM

CONCURRENT SESSION

Automating Survey Reporting with R and Quarto

Brian Joy, Belmont University

Streamline your survey reporting with R and Quarto—free, open-source tools that enable the creation of publication-ready PDF reports. This session demonstrates how to automate the generation of tailored reports, such as one for each college within a university, using a single, reproducible workflow. A simple example will be shown live, and attendees will receive a reusable code template via GitHub. Participants will learn how to scale reporting tasks, reduce manual effort, and improve consistency. By consolidating data analysis, visualization, and document formatting into one cohesive toolset, IR can avoid the inefficiencies of switching between multiple platforms.

10:20 AM-10:40 AM

SHORT BREAK

Sponsored by Coursedog & UTC College of Business

SESSION(2)

KELLEY ROOM

10:40 AM-11:30 AM

CONCURRENT SESSION

Effective by Design: Powering Insight and Efficiency Through Institutional Effectiveness

Brian Hester & Nick Humensky

The University of Tennessee System Administration

Discover how the Institutional Effectiveness team with The UT System Admin is transforming data work in higher education. In this session, we will take a quick journey through our team's evolution and highlight real-world tools we have developed for our campus partners. From time-saving automations to impactful data visualizations and models, see how our services are helping clients work smarter—not harder. Learn what's possible when IR meets innovation.

AMPHITHEATER

10:40 AM-11:30 AM

CONCURRENT SESSION

From Classroom to Career: Connecting Education Data to Labor Market Outcomes

Jonathon Attridge & Chantel Rice

Office of Evidence and Impact, State of TN

Joseph Barton & Jasmine Zhang

Tennessee Higher Education Commission

This session will feature insights from our latest Education to Employment (E2E) Dashboard, which presents labor market outcomes over time for the high school and postsecondary graduates from the 2018-2022 graduating cohorts. We'll also highlight findings from the 2025 Academic Supply for Occupational Demand Report, which identifies occupations that are in-demand across the state and show how they align with degrees, certificates, and career and technical education programs. Attendees will (1) learn how to use these interactive tools to support decision-making across education and workforce planning and (2) provide feedback on how to enhance and tailor the currently available tools to the institution level.

THURSDAY 8/7
CONFERENCE

ROSE ROOM
10:40 AM-11:30 AM

CONCURRENT SESSION

Dream Big with Data: Turning Everyday Info into Actionable Insights to Improve Campus Services

Margot Spain, Vanderbilt University

While higher education institutions often focus on student and financial data for compliance and rankings, this session highlights how Vanderbilt University expanded its lens to include operational data—specifically from dining and printing services—to uncover key insights and drive strategic improvements. Learn how leveraging existing campus systems and collaborating across departments can turn everyday data into powerful tools for saving costs, improving services, and promoting smarter business practices—regardless of your tech infrastructure.

11:30 AM-1:00 PM

LUNCH ON YOUR OWN

SEGMENTAL MEETINGS

1:00 PM-1:50 PM

TENNESSEE BOARD OF REGENTS - AMPHITHEATER

Chris Tingle, Tennessee Board of Regents

UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE SYSTEM - WALKER

Rion McDonald, University of Tennessee-Martin

LOCALLY-GOVERNED INSTITUTIONS - ROSE

Joseph Chappell, East Tennessee State University

PRIVATE & INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS - KELLEY

Amy Heckman, Tennessee Independent Colleges & Universities Assoc.

THURSDAY 8/7

CONFERENCE

SESSION(3)

KELLEY ROOM
2:00 PM-2:50 PM

CONCURRENT SESSION

Collaborative Data Insights: Boosting Institutional Effectiveness through Visualization and Communication

Nick Humensky, University of Tennessee System Administration
Cindy Williamson, University of Tennessee-Chattanooga

Unlock the power of collaboration and technology in this dynamic session designed for higher education professionals! Discover how cross-campus partnerships can drive institutional effectiveness and transform how assessment data is shared and understood. We'll explore innovative uses of business intelligence tools that simplify complex information, empowering users at every level to make data-informed decisions with confidence. If you're looking to enhance your campus's impact through smarter data practices and stronger collaboration, this is the session you don't want to miss!

AMPHITHEATER
2:00 PM-2:50 PM

CONCURRENT SESSION

Harnessing Analytics to Drive Student-Centric Operations

Ben Chester, Coursedog

Traditionally, academic processes such as scheduling, curriculum management, the catalog, and assessment have lived in isolation, making it difficult to access valuable data. Today, new solutions bring these disparate processes and associated data together. Discover how unified data in academic operations can unlock fresh insights and analytics that drive student retention and strengthen the financial stability of your institution. Learning Outcomes: discover how analytics can forecast student demand and determine the ideal number of course sections, explore strategies for integrating academic operations to gain access to new data, understand the impact of streamlined academic operations on student success and satisfaction.

ROSE ROOM
2:00 PM-2:50 PM

CONCURRENT SESSION

Tracking General Education Assessment Artifacts in Moodle - Reporting in PowerBI

Chris Hansen & Benjamin Rouse
Southern Adventist University

Assessing General Education outcomes through specific assignments in an LMS (e.g. Moodle) reduces extra reporting load on professors and allows for automated data collection and aggregation. We will report on the key components of our process, as well as challenges faced in the multi-year effort to develop and implement automated assessment tracking. Collaboration with faculty and the expertise of our student employees have both been vital to the success of our data collection and reporting. The first version of a PowerBI report for use by both academic departments and administration will be demonstrated.

THURSDAY 8/7
CONFERENCE

2:50 PM-3:20 PM

SHORT BREAK
Sponsored by Xitracs & TTU College of Education

SESSION(4)

KELLEY ROOM
3:30 PM-4:20 PM

CONCURRENT SESSION
An Innovative Approach to Credit Hour Calculation: Ensuring Compliance and Transparency

Richard Bradley, Lincoln Memorial University

In the evolving landscape of higher education, accurately calculating credit hours is necessary for compliance with federal and SACSCOC requirements. This presentation introduces a novel course credit hour calculator designed to estimate the credit hours of a given course based on instructional time and assignments. By leveraging this calculator, institutions can provide clear estimates of the time required for course completion, tailored to the "average student." This method simplifies compliance and enhances transparency for faculty. The presentation will explore the development and implementation of the calculator, its impact on institutional practices, and the benefits of adopting this innovative approach.

AMPHITHEATER
3:30 PM-4:20 PM

CONCURRENT SESSION
Reconnecting with Adult Learner Data

Joseph Barton & Hope Murphy

Tennessee Higher Education Commission

The Tennessee Reconnect Grant is the primary state-level financial aid program for adult learners looking to engage or re-engage in Tennessee higher education. In addition to the grant program, THEC's Outreach and Access Bureau provides advice to adult learners who are traversing the path to higher education through the Navigator program. This session will present the THEC Research and Strategy division's effort to utilize existing data assets to report on the Tennessee Reconnect Grant, as well as the division's ongoing partnership with the Reconnect Navigator team to expand insights in the future. In addition to a sneak peak of the upcoming expansion of the annual Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship Report, attendees will hear about lessons learned in blending real-time customer relationship management data with traditional student information system data.

THURSDAY 8/7

CONFERENCE

ROSE ROOM

3:30 PM-4:20 PM

CONCURRENT SESSION

Developing an Annual Pathway Review Model for Pellissippi State

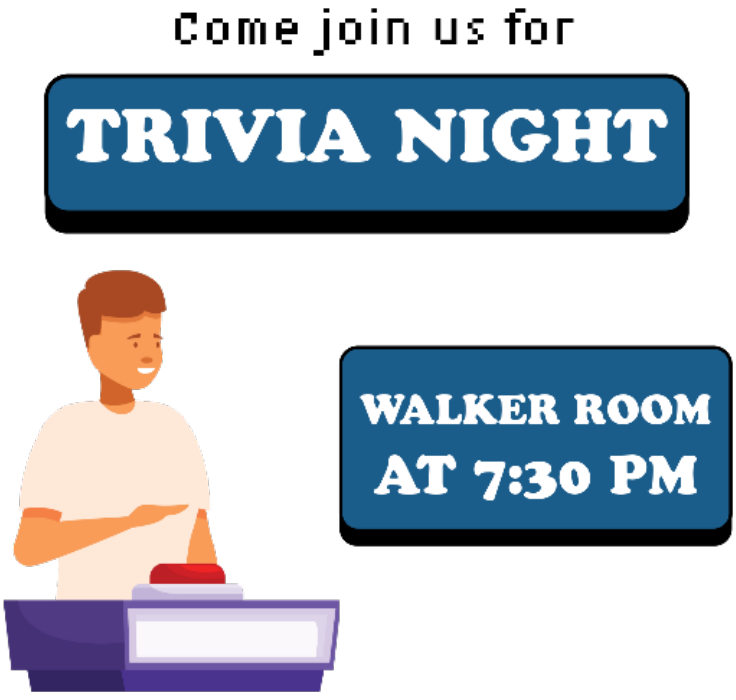
Austin Lawson, Marisol Benitez Ramirez & Oakley Atterson
Pellissippi State Community College

As a part of Pellissippi State's 2025-2030 Strategic Plan, the College will implement a guided pathways model called Pellissippi Pathways. To measure the effectiveness of implementing these pathways, and particularly to scale successes and minimize barriers, we have developed an Annual Pathway Evaluation Model that uses different metrics in broad categories from different points of a student's career, notably including after graduation, to produce a score for each pathway in each category as well as a final score that is a weighted sum of category scores. In short, these categories are enrollment, progression, completion, and post-completion. While an official rollout plan for model implementation has not yet been settled, we will present the model development process, including stakeholder input at all levels, data collection, metric normalization, weighting concepts, and other considerations.

WALKER ROOM

5:00 PM-6:00 PM

RECEPTION



FRIDAY 8/8 CONFERENCE

WALKER ROOM

8:00 AM-8:50 AM

HIGHER ED LEADERS PANEL

Dr. Cameron Conn, President
Tennessee Independent Colleges & Universities Assoc.

Dr. Russ Deaton, Executive Vice Chancellor for Policy and Strategy
Tennessee Board of Regents

Amanda Klafehn, Chief Strategy Officer
Tennessee Higher Education Commission

Dr. Matt Matthews, Associate Vice-President for Academic Affairs
University of Tennessee System

Host: Jacob Kamer, Tennessee Higher Education Commission

Four leaders from different postsecondary organizations will provide updates on the major initiatives being undertaken by their respective groups, highlight innovative work that is being done at the state or school level, and discuss how they see Tennessee higher education changing in the future, especially as it relates to research and data needs.

SESSION(5)

KELLEY ROOM

9:00 AM-9:50 AM

CONCURRENT SESSION

Experiences in Transition to Microsoft Products

Jim Lenio, University of Tennessee-Knoxville
Judith Nyabando, University of Tennessee Health Science Center

The UT System has selected Microsoft as its enterprise technology provider, prompting a system-wide transition across campuses. While united by this directive, each institution's IR office faces unique challenges based on differing starting points, platforms, and existing infrastructures. This presentation will highlight the transition strategies adopted by the IR offices from two UT System institutions (UT Knoxville and UT Health Science Center), offering insight into their planning, implementation, and early outcomes, especially as it pertains to data management and reporting. The session will also provide an overview of the rationale behind the shift, key features of the Microsoft ecosystem, and lessons learned along the way. Attendees who have navigated or are planning similar transitions are encouraged to contribute to the discussion.

AMPHITHEATER
9:00 AM-9:50 AM

CONCURRENT SESSION

Unmasking Enrollment Choice: Limited Access to In-Person Course Options

Derrick Dupuis, Nashville State Community College

In the post-pandemic era, student demand for in-person learning remains strong, yet our analysis of registration events reveals a significant constraint. By meticulously tracking course enrollment against capacity at the precise moment of registration, we discovered that students often have fewer options than course-grained analyses reveal. Our findings highlight the critical need for institutions to re-evaluate their in-person capacity and strategically align course delivery with student preferences to enhance access and satisfaction. This presentation will delve into the methodology behind this discovery and explore the implications for enrollment management and student success in the evolving higher education landscape.

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FRIDAY 8/8
CONFERENCE

ROSE ROOM
9:00 AM-9:50 AM

CONCURRENT SESSION

Unlocking College Scorecard Data with R: Custom Comparisons and Earnings Insights

Brian Joy, Belmont University

Tap into the power of the U.S. Department of Education's College Scorecard using R and the 'rscorecard' package—free, open-source tools designed for flexible, data-driven analysis. This session will guide institutional researchers through accessing and working with Scorecard data to support benchmarking and strategic planning. Learn how to create custom peer comparison groups, explore institution-level earnings outcomes, and analyze program-level earnings by field of study. A hands-on example will demonstrate how to extract and interpret key metrics, empowering participants to incorporate Scorecard data into their own research and reporting efforts with greater precision and ease.

9:50 AM-10:20 AM

SHORT BREAK

Sponsored by TICUA & UoM Department of Leadership

FRIDAY 8/8

CONFERENCE

SESSION(6)

KELLEY ROOM
10:20 AM-11:10 AM

CONCURRENT SESSION

Contexualizing the Demographic Cliff

Richard Miller, Tusculum University

See how a small, faith-based institution is using various data sources to contextualize the forecasted demographic/enrollment cliff and map out a strategy to bolster attendance and fulfill its core mission. An important part of this session will be a discussion of the economic concept of price elasticity and how it affects the demand for higher education in Tusculum's region, which in turn shapes the school's strategic options.

AMPHITHEATER
10:20 AM-11:10 AM

CONCURRENT SESSION

From Insight to Impact: Building Institutional Effectiveness Through Data Practitioner Training

Erica Hughes, Southwest Tennessee Community College
Joshua Nave, Tennessee Higher Education Commission

This presentation explores the innovative Data Practitioner Program at Southwest Tennessee Community College, which empowers faculty and staff to become data-informed decisionmakers. By integrating technologies such as PowerBI, Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) dashboards, Brightspace (D2L), and Bridge learning modules, the program builds practical data literacy and fosters a collaborative network of data champions. Participants engage in applied learning through interactive dashboards, case-based analysis, and structured peer discussion forums within the LMS.

ROSE ROOM
10:20 AM-11:10 AM

CONCURRENT SESSION

Program Sustainability Model: Evaluating Health of Academic Programs

Sherry Marlow Ormsby, University of Tennessee-Chattanooga

How do institutions know how to allocate new or continuation resources to academic programs? This convoluted question is becoming much more relevant in a resource competitive environment. Building on the viability index research conducted by Luna, Kenrick, and Johnson, UTC expanded their model to include additional metrics to measure the health of undergraduate academic programs. UTC's program sustainability model takes into account enrollment health as well as instructional productivity and efficiency. This session will discuss measures considered for enhanced program sustainability factors, important considerations, and utilization by leadership.

FRIDAY 8/8
CONFERENCE

WALKER ROOM
11:30 AM-12:20 PM

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

From the Start: The Important Role of Institutional Research in Program Design

Bob Obrohta, Executive Director, TCASN

Dr. Adam Green, Chair of the Board, TCASN

WALKER ROOM
12:30 PM-2:00 PM

LUNCH & AWARDS/ BUSINESS MEETING

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