

# MAIR Winter 2019 Newsletter



## MAIR Conference 2019: How Good is Your Data Storytelling?

Once upon a time, data was hard to access and very few people understood how to interpret it. During these 'dark years,' decisions were made based on people's opinions or the loudest voice in the crowd. People would turn to historians or sages to tell them about the decisions made in the past to inform them of the decision that should be made. These storytellers were people who would change paradigms with words.

Today, the words are still powerful. Whether words are used through satire, biographies, or fiction, good storytellers intrigue us, grab our interest, and call us to respond. In recent history, access to data has exploded and everyone wants to know what data supports the words presented to them. Being data-informed and having 'facts' to back your story is frequently expected. Often words are not enough alone, but tables of numbers are boring.

So, how good is your data storytelling?

Combined properly, data paired with words makes a powerful story that is relevant, builds a sense of urgency, and calls viewers to action. Institutional researchers are frequently expected to be gripping authors and graphic design artists who can artfully portray messages 'hidden' in numbers or graphs. There are many actionable steps our institutions should be taking based on the information that passes through the IR office. But do the other administrators or faculty see those steps and agree with them as well? Does anything happen with the reports produced from IR?

After reading Phillips and Horowitz's book on "Creating a Data-Informed Culture in Community Colleges" last year, I have been convinced I needed to work on my data storytelling. I've bought several books, scoured the web, joined a data visualization academy, and in the journey, I've seen lots of examples of bad data presentations... especially when looking through my own files. Brent Dykes wrote an article for Forbes in 2016 called, "Data Storytelling: The Essential Data Science Skill Everyone Needs." The article highlights the power to change a situation when data is coupled with visuals, and narrative because viewers can explain the data, engage the information, and be enlightened as to the change that needs to happen. Without all three pieces, data is confusing. Early in my IR career, I feared translating the results from the data to users because of the potential biases that I would add in presenting the information. Now, I'm learning people do not take the time to analyze the data and/or do not have the skills to analyze the data and need someone to provide the visuals and narratives that help lead them to understanding the information.

This year's MAIR conference is going to focus on both IR and IE areas with a theme of making your data stories intriguing, relevant, actionable, urgent, and USED for a wonderful data story with a "happily ever after." I hope you will join us and share your data stories.

Carley Dear, MAIR President



## President's Report: Looking Back on MAIR 2018

MAIR 2018 was a fun time of networking and growing the Institutional Research and Effectiveness field for professionals in Mississippi. We shared our research practices through poster presentations for the first time this year along with our traditional speaker presentations.

Highlights of the conference included co-hosting AIR IPEDS workshops, panel presentations, and the largest group of vendors who helped support our conference and added depth to our conference options with three tracks available during most session times. This year's conference had several newcomers to IR/IE and lots of first-time MAIR participants. We love having new faces in our group!

Thank you to the presenters who shared their expertise and experience with us. A special thanks to the Executive Planning Team: Eric Atchison, Shemeka McClung, Laura Damm, Mitzi Norris, Emily Dabney, and Margaret Dixon who helped coordinate the event in Tupelo, MS.



## Past President's Message: Upcoming Officers' Elections

As Past President of the Association, it is my responsibility to oversee the nominations and elections process leading up to and during the 2019 annual meeting. In a few weeks, we will announce the nominations process through the MAIR listserv. Please take a few minutes to think about who you would like to have serve this wonderful association in the following capacities:

*Vice President / Program Chair - A representative from a 2-year college or board, this is a 3-year term transitioning to President in Year 2 and Past-President in Year 3.*

*Secretary - A representative from a 4-year college or board, this is a 1-year term*

*Member-at-Large (2-year) - 1-year term*

*Member-at-Large (4-year) - 1-year term*

If you have any questions about serving as an officer for MAIR, please do not hesitate to reach out to the current or past representatives within these roles. A list of current and previous officers can be found [here](#). I have found this service to our profession to be very fulfilling and beneficial to the 60+ members of MAIR. I hope you will consider running for office and nominate your colleagues.

The Mississippi Association for Institutional Research (MAIR) is composed of institutional research professionals at Mississippi's 2-year and 4-year postsecondary institutions.

*Dedicated to advancing the field of institutional research in the State of Mississippi and beyond, the organization seeks to serve, and foster cooperation among, professionals from postsecondary institutions and agencies whose interests include management, research, policy analysis, and planning.*

### MAIR 2019 Conference

If you or anyone you know is interested in presenting, please contact Mitzi Norris. More information about the conference will be released via the MAIR listserv and website.

**Mitzi Norris**  
MAIR Vice President and  
Program Chair  
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601-815-5194



# This Year's Unsung Hero: Dr. Jamil Ibrahim, UMMC

This year's MAIR Unsung Hero Award is presented to Dr. Jamil Ibrahim. Dr. Ibrahim has a Ed.D in Research and Statistics from the University of Southern Mississippi. He is an Associate Professor/Scientist IV for UMMC.

Dr. Ibrahim has worked in Institutional Research for over 29 years. Some of his initial responsibilities in IR including setting up computers and teaching people basic computer skills. He has seen many huge changes in the field. At the beginning of his career, the IR office helped with functions typically assigned to Information Technology departments. Dr. Ibrahim helped train people on how to use computers. He also developed and programmed a test scanning, grading, and statistical analysis application that has been by UMC for more than 20 years. He has built customized evaluation systems for various units on and off-campus.

He has collaborated—and still is collaborating—on large-scale, national research projects, Mississippi based projects, and projects with the schools on campus. He designed and implemented the evaluation model for a five year special project of national significance to support the development of an HIV clinical care network in MS. This multi-clinic project which used early “distance education” voice and computer technology to engage the sites. The project impacted patient care and as Dr. Mosca from the Department of Health said: “The project was the basis for a continuum of care network with several federally qualified health centers that persists today”.

When asked how IR has impacted his institution or higher education as a whole, Dr. Ibrahim notes IR's role in shaping higher education policies at the college, state, and federal levels. Additionally, IR contributes to building a culture of “data informed decision making” on campus. He has seen the IR transforming data effectively into information that supported decision making, planning at the institutional level, school level, program level, and departmental levels.

Looking to the future, Dr. Ibrahim sees the IR profession continuing to grow and adapt to changing needs and conditions. He thinks the growth of educational research in higher education has the potential for IR to play more than just the traditional role of supporting decision making, but also it has the potential to play a leading role in the future needs of higher education.

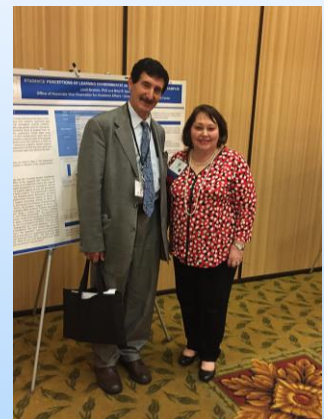
Some of his advice to IR professionals is that they “should redefine who their consumers are. IR will continue to provide data and information to senior leaders as priority, but other stakeholders.” Asked what IR staff should do to stay current in their field, he responded:

“I encourage IR professional to read publications that can help them enhance their knowledge and skills such as new Directions of Institutional Research, the Journal of Research in Higher Education, MAIR Newsletter and the monthly Newsletter called Electronic AIR that keeps you current of new techniques, and opportunities in IR field. They should take a course in basic statistics and survey design. I think such knowledge in research and assessment and the implementation of research design is needed to function and grow in the field. They need to attend workshops on outcomes assessment, program review, effectiveness, and accreditation. They should get an adjunct faculty position if they can. Stay connected with your local peers like in MAIR.

IR professional should be aware of the institutional culture and context by collaborating with senior administrators. Build a good relationship with the support units on campus especially information system.

You should stay current with technology and have a working knowledge of at least one statistical application such as SAS, SPSS, Excel. The most desired qualifications are interpersonal skills, use of database software and statistical applications, Web surveys application, and great communication and interpersonal skills. They should be actively involved in local, regional, and national IR organizations such as Association for Institutional Research (AIR), Southern Association for Institutional Research (SAIR), and Mississippi Association for Institutional Research (MAIR).”

His immense knowledge, humble presence, and desire for life-long learning resonates with his colleagues. He notes that he goes into every meeting to learn something from the people in the room, even when he is the presenter or facilitator sharing information. Dr. Ibrahim is MAIR's 2019 Unsung Hero for his long-time contribution to MAIR and to the profession as whole. Congratulations, Dr. Jamil Ibrahim and thank you for your support of MAIR!



## MAIR Officers 2018-19

**President:** Carley Dear  
**Past President:** Eric Atchison  
**Vice President:** Mitzi Norris  
**Treasurer:** Kelli Hefner  
**Secretary:** Tim Dedeaux  
**Member at Large:** Ken Thompson  
**Member at Large:** Stacey Parkes  
**Webmaster:** Eric Atchison



### Kelli Hefner, Treasurer's Report

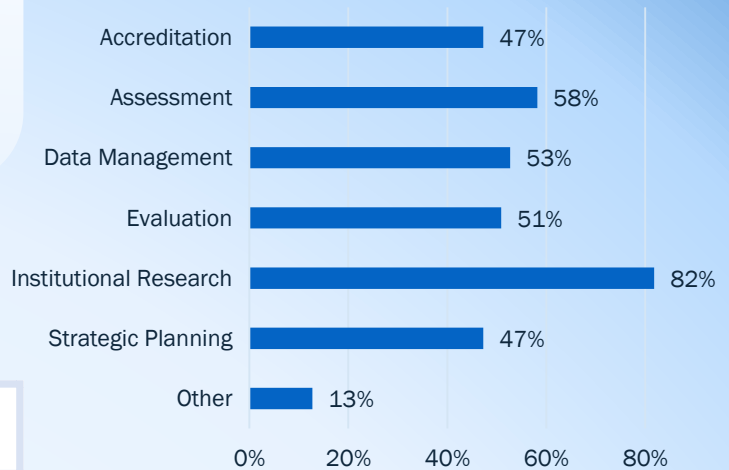
Balance as of 10/10/2018:  
\$17,320.00



MAIR 2018 featured a new presentation opportunity: poster sessions.

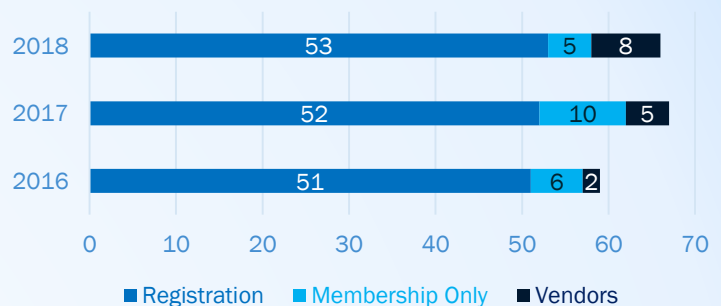
## MAIR by the Numbers

MAIR Members Work in Many Areas,  
Primarily Institutional Research and  
Assessment



MAIR welcomed 12 new members  
in 2018, more than in any other  
year on record!

2018 Saw More Conference Attendees and  
Vendors, fewer Non-Attendee Memberships



## MAIR Member Institutions

Alcorn State University  
 Delta State University  
 Hinds Comm. College  
 Jackson State University  
 Millsaps College  
 MS State University  
 Northeast MS Community College  
 Rust College  
 Tougaloo College

Coahoma Comm. College  
 East Central Comm. College  
 Holmes Comm. College  
 MS Comm. College Board  
 MS College  
 MS University for Women  
 Northwest MS Comm. College  
 Southern Arkansas University  
 University of MS Medical Center  
 University of Southern MS

Copiah-Lincoln Comm. College  
 East MS Comm. College  
 Itawamba Comm. College  
 Meridian Comm. College  
 MS Institutions of Higher Learning  
 MS Valley State University  
 Pearl River Comm. College  
 Southwest Baptist University  
 University of MS

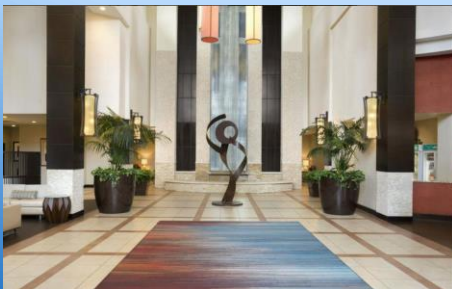
# 2019 Conference Update

We are excited to announce that the 2019 Annual MAIR meeting will be March 28 & 29 at the Embassy Suites in Ridgeland (just outside Jackson). The spacious conference area will be reserved for our group. The space includes three meeting rooms (get those proposals ready!!) and vendor spaces. The modern sleep rooms provide ample work space and come with a complimentary cooked-to-order breakfast and daily reception.



AIR/ IPEDS will provide *Best Practices for Reporting and Using IPEDS Data to Improve Office Efficiencies* workshops Wednesday. MAIR will provide two pre-conference workshops on Thursday morning. Ken Thompson (Millsaps) will present *Statistics for IR* and Carolyn Wiley (NWMCC) and Shemeka McClung (JSU) will present the *Newcomers* workshop. Our MAIR conference will begin at 1 on Thursday and conclude after lunch on Friday. We will have a reception/poster session on Thursday evening.

Please begin thinking what information you can share with your colleagues whether it is a poster session or presentation. Or maybe you have a great idea for a topic or you know someone who has information to share with the group. We always need session presenters. Start thinking about what you have to share or what you need – either one will help up design the conference to meet your needs. We welcome all ideas to provide a great, informative conference for our members. Please let us hear from you! Send your ideas to Mitzi Norris ([mnorris@umc.edu](mailto:mnorris@umc.edu)) and don't forget to SAVE THE DATE!



## IR/IE News & Notes

**DSU:** Emily Dabney is now Registrar & Director of Institutional Research. Chrisa Mansell is now Assistant Director of Institutional Research. Kara Goldman has been hired as Research Analyst.

**ICC:** Elizabeth Edwards will present “A Strategic Approach to Implementing 4.2.g Board Self-Evaluation” on 12/9/2018 (1:30PM - 2:30PM) at the upcoming [SAGSCOC Annual Meeting](#).

**Hinds:** Gloria McCray-Watson has been hired as Coordinator of Institutional Effectiveness. Carley Dear has successfully defended her dissertation, “The Effects of Financial Aid Disbursements on Course Completion Rate” and will graduate with an Ed.D. in December from DSU.

**IHL:** Eric Atchison contributed a chapter titled “Determining Appropriate Data Sources” in [Cultivating a Data Culture in Higher Education](#) (2018), was selected to serve on the inaugural [AIR Data Policy Advisory Group](#), and completed the Delta Regional Authority’s [Delta Leadership Institute Executive Academy](#).

**MUW:** Jennifer Moore has been elected to serve on the 2018-19 [SAIR Nominations & Elections Committee](#).

**NEMCC:** Angie Mason has retired and Amber Nelms has been hired as Director of Institutional Effectiveness.

**UM:** Camille Toles has been hired as Administrative Coordinator I.

**UMMC:** Jamil Ibrahim and Mitzi Norris presented "Students' Ratings of the Learning Environment in Higher Education" at the [SAIR Annual Conference](#). Mitzi Norris also presented “Leadership Team Building by Personalities” at the [Unshakable Pursuit](#) Women’s Conference.