

2025 AIRUM Annual Conference Presentation Descriptions

Wednesday, November 5 - Friday, November 7, 2025
DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Bloomington - Minneapolis South.

[Wednesday, November 5, 2025](#)

[Thursday, November 6, 2025](#)

[Friday, November 7, 2025](#)

Wednesday, November 5, 2025

Workshop 1 - Sponsor Workshop by Explorance

Title: Explore How Explorance MLY Can Make Redaction Easier With Course Evaluation Data

Presenter: Explorance

Description: Get to know MLY (mi-lee), an AI powered qualitative feedback tool that simplifies the redaction process, making it tremendously faster and easier to work with course evaluation data. In this workshop, you'll explore smarter ways to understand insights and turn feedback into action. Plus, we'll cover some best practices for using alerts to create a safe feedback environment. This session is open to everyone! No prior knowledge of Explorance solutions necessary.

BONUS if you bring a friend! Attend with a colleague, and you'll both receive a special gift.

Workshop 2

Title: Introduction to SQL

Presenter: Jim Sorenson is the Director of Institutional Research for the University of Mary in Bismarck, ND. Jim has varied experiences from military aviation to specialized IT infrastructure to data analytics. Jim graduated from American Military University in 2016 with a B.S. in Environmental Science, obtained a M.S. in Data Analytics from Colorado State University in 2024 and is now pursuing a Doctorate in Business Administration with a proposed dissertation topic of the "Beneficial Use of Data within Higher Education."

Description: Learn the basics of structured query language (SQL – pronounced See-quell) through a workshop that will include the basics of query syntax and formatting and the extraction of accurate data that can be used for reporting and analytics. The second hour will dive into advanced SQL commands that can be employed to improve data extraction and service the needs of your customer, or yourself. Come prepared with DBeaver installed on your laptop if you want first-hand experience with the discussion. (<https://dbeaver.io/>) We'll connect to a cloud SQL environment that's based on Postgres SQL and we'll highlight the differences between P/LSQL, T-SQL, and PSQ.

1. Title: Sharing Data to Improve Retention Interventions

Presenter: Amy McGovern, UW-Stout

Description: Institutional Effectiveness (IE) teams are often in reactive mode—responding to one-off data requests tailored to specific needs. What if we flipped the script? This session explores a proactive approach: intentionally sharing data with targeted stakeholders to improve data literacy, support institutional goals, and drive student success. Grounded in the Wisdom Hierarchy framework, we'll walk through how our team at the University of Wisconsin–Stout identified key data points, shaped messages around them, and delivered information in ways that prompted engagement and action. We'll share examples from recent retention efforts that led to achieving our highest first-year retention rate in 20 years. This will be an interactive session—bring your questions and your own data challenges. Together, we'll explore ways to turn data into insight, insight into action, and action into improvement.

2. Title: Does the Early Applicant get the A? Application Timing and First Year Outcomes

Presenter: Fernando Furquim, Minneapolis Community & Technical College

Description: The college application and onboarding process can be time-consuming and complex. As an open access institution, Minneapolis College maintains flexible policies that allow students to apply and enroll late into the semester. I present some analysis of how the timing of application and enrollment relates to students' onboarding (e.g., orientation completion, FAFSA filing, course registration) and first year outcomes (e.g., course success, one-term and one-year persistence). At first glance, there appears to be a strong negative relationship between timing of applications/course enrollment and student success. However, I find that this relationship is largely explained by the characteristics of late applicants and limited availability of courses for late enrollees. However, I find that students applying and/or enrolling just prior to or just after the start of the term (1 week on either side of the term start) do experience meaningfully worse outcomes - around 20 percentage points lower course success and 8 percentage points lower persistence rates. We will close by discussing the implication of these findings for admission practices and policies that balance access and setting up students for success.

3. Title: Blueprints for BI: Building Power BI Standards from the Ground Up

Presenters: Jori Nkwenti, Century College
Erin Osborn, Century College

Description: In the academic year 2024-2025, Century College completed an initiative of Power BI (PBI) standardization. First conceptions occurred years prior, separately originating out of Institutional Effectiveness (IE) and Information Technology (IT) teams. This effort was initiated by a sub-committee under Data Governance, and began as a response to the growing use of PBI on our campus and the desire for consistency across reports. Including cross-departmental contributions from Century's Marketing, IT, Registrar, and IE staff, the goal was to develop a shared standard for dashboards, focusing on visual consistency, accessibility (meeting WCAG 2.1 Level AA standards in compliance with ADA 2026), and ease of replication.

With the increased usage of dynamic reporting driving data-informed decision-making across our institutions, presenters will leave the audience with the knowledge and tools to create and implement their own accessible PBI standards on their campus. Tangible examples include our Power BI theme and dashboard template, standardization checklist, and an example for a co-creation space for collaborative improvements. Presenters will discuss the process that led to Century's standardization, from early collaboration with campus stakeholders to the roll-out of new dashboards. This presentation highlights the importance of interdepartmental collaboration, automation, dynamic reporting, and continuous improvement.

5. Title: From Feedback to Strategy: Enhancing Non-Academic Department Reviews with AI-Driven Survey Design and Analysis

Presenter: *Heather Rondeau, Alexandria Technical & Community College*

Description: Non-academic departments—such as student services, IT, and facilities—play a vital role in institutional success, yet they are often overlooked in formal assessment processes. This session highlights how Alexandria Technical & Community College is using AI tools to design and analyze surveys that support the strategic review of these essential units.

Attendees will learn how AI-assisted tools were used to refine survey questions for clarity, inclusivity, and alignment with institutional priorities. The session will explore strategies for analyzing survey data across diverse service areas, identifying trends, and translating results into actionable insights. Emphasis will be placed on how findings are communicated to stakeholders and used to inform decision-making, resource allocation, and continuous improvement.

Whether you're launching a new review process or enhancing existing assessment practices, this session will provide practical tools and examples to strengthen your approach to non-academic departmental evaluation.

Learning Outcomes:

- Use AI tools to enhance the clarity and inclusivity of survey questions.
- Analyze survey data to identify trends and inform strategic planning.
- Align survey design and reporting with institutional effectiveness goals.
- Communicate findings in ways that support decision-making and resource allocation.

6.Title: Dashboard Roundtable: Challenges, Solutions, and Best Practices

Presenters: *Jordan Orzoff, South Central College*
Sally Gerlach, South Central College
Mustafa Tageldin, South Central College
Beth Danbury, South Central College

Description: The staff of South Central College's Strategic Enrollment & Institutional Effectiveness Office will lead a roundtable discussion with prompts to engage participants in discussing the successes and challenges of implementing and evolving a dashboard strategy in higher education. We bring experience in developing dashboards across institutions ranging from a community college to a flagship university, using both the most mainstream tools (PowerBI, Tableau) as well as homegrown and jury-rigged cheaper alternatives. We'll talk about how to differentiate dashboards from reporting services, how to

identify the college community's needs for a dashboard, the importance of having a common visual language across dashboards, the challenge of deciding what we mean when we use terms like enrollment, retention, etc. and other topics and questions as driven by the group's interests.

7. Title: Program Reviews with Explorance Blue: Gathering a Full Picture of Your Programs

Presenter: *Dan Glover, Enterprise Application Administrator, University of Minnesota*

Description: Pulling together information for a truly comprehensive program review can be a challenge. We will discuss and demonstrate how Explorance Blue can be leveraged to gather information and feedback from all program stakeholders to give a comprehensive look at any program. Consideration will also be given as to how the platform can be leveraged so that reviews need not be built individually in full as each occurs, reducing ongoing staff workload. Merging the feedback from the different stakeholders and being able to cross-tabulate such a feedback using AI tools like Explorance MLY gives the needed insight and recommendations to improve your programs.

8. Title: Doing Your Job Amid Maximum Uncertainty

Presenters: *Jon Enriquez, St. Cloud Technical & Community College*
Meredith Fergus, University of Minnesota - Twin Cities
Nancy Floyd, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities

Description: Since AIRUM's 2024 conference adjourned, higher education has experienced a wealth of change on many fronts. Chief among these is its relationship with the federal government. The current presidential administration has initiated changes to regulatory practices, funding operations, and budgetary forecasts on a host of issues including institutional accreditation, financial aid, student immigration, student support services, scholarly research, libraries, civil rights, tax policy, and educational statistics. In addition, other federal actions have severely affected a number of healthcare, community-service, and international aid programs that provided support for current students, recent graduates, and community partners. These federal actions, in turn, can potentially affect state and local relationships with higher education as well.

Given the unprecedented uncertainty of the current moment, how should members do the work that they have historically done and that their institutions require them to do? This session will review some of these changes and predict others, and offer practical guidance on how researchers and planners should do their work.

9. New member/First time AIRUM Conference Attendee Session

10. Title: Transform Your Data, Inspire Your HLC Site Visit Team: Storytelling for Accreditation Excellence

Presenter: *Beth Ellie, Mid-State Technical College*

Description: Effectively communicating data to accreditation peer review teams can transform the accreditation experience, making data meaningful and memorable. In this session, attendees will explore practical storytelling techniques tailored specifically to addressing Higher Learning Commission (HLC) accreditation criteria. Drawing from real-world experiences, the presenter will demonstrate how

institutional research professionals can strategically use storytelling to bridge the gap between complex data sets and the clear, concise narratives peer review teams seek.

Participants will gain insights into structuring their accreditation presentations to highlight institutional successes clearly tied to HLC criteria, such as teaching quality, assessment processes, student outcomes, institutional planning, and resource allocation. Through examples from actual accreditation site visits, attendees will see firsthand how effective storytelling can not only simplify complex information but also powerfully demonstrate institutional effectiveness and continuous improvement. Additionally, attendees will discover how storytelling can foster institutional pride, enhancing engagement and motivation among those participating in accreditation sessions.

This session is designed for institutional researchers, data analysts, and accreditation coordinators seeking to enhance their skills in data presentation and storytelling. Participants will leave with actionable strategies and best practices to confidently use data storytelling in their own accreditation processes, ultimately fostering stronger engagement with peer review teams, inspiring session participants, and improving institutional outcomes.

11. Title: Program Review Metrics: Data-Driven, But Who's Navigating? IR Holds The Map

Presenter: *Tracy King, University of Wisconsin River Falls*

Description: This presentation will provide a brief overview of IR's role in the academic program review process, recent budgetary exercises and leadership directives that prompted a request for reimagined reporting, and then a detailed walkthrough of the four-month process of working with the Program Audit and Review Committee to develop a comprehensive data dashboard that innovatively combines data from separate data sources (finance, student information, and human resources systems). The Academic Department Budget Tool & Program Review Metrics Dashboard provides academic departments with an in-depth understanding of how tuition revenue from their course and program enrollments relates to the instructional costs of staffing their departments. Through the process of transforming detail-level data into aggregate measures for Department Expenses, Tuition Revenue, and Instructor FTE, the Committee identified various metrics to gauge the financial and enrollment health of the departments, and developed an evaluation form that is being implemented in Fall 2025 and will be reviewed with all departments on an annual basis. This process and dashboard has also served as a proof of concept and use case for the IR department to transition campus reporting to Tableau Server.

12. Title: Plot Twist: Faculty Love This Dashboard! Instructor-Specific Data Thoughtfully Designed to Improve Student Outcomes

Presenter: *Kira Guetschow, Western Technical College*

Description: What if faculty actually liked their data tools? With this goal in mind, Western Technical College's Institutional Research team set out to create a faculty dashboard that delivers not just good data, but a great user experience. The final product is a Power BI dashboard that:

- Highlights patterns in student outcomes to help identify opportunities for targeted support;
- Utilizes Row-Level Security (RLS) to give instructors direct access to section-level data for their own students;
- Enables filtering, sorting, and comparison across various student demographics and course attributes;

- Integrates data literacy principles directly into the interface to guide users towards meaningful, equitable, and actionable insights;
- Applies best practices in visual design, accessibility, and data visualization;
- Was shaped by faculty feedback during each step of the development process.

This session offers an in-depth look into the dashboard's development and rollout, highlighting the thoughtful approach used to align the tool to faculty needs and student success. Attendees will gain insights into dashboard design and faculty engagement strategies, and hear about real-life use cases directly from the instructors who use it.

13. Title: Measuring Impact: Meaningful Assessment for Co-Curricular Programs

Presenters: *Patrick Barlow, UW-La Crosse*
Grace Engen, UW-La Crosse

Description: This presentation provides an overview of co-curricular assessment that you can share with Student Life professionals and others leading co-curricular programs at your institution. We begin by emphasizing the need for assessment: without it, we lack evidence of student learning and cannot demonstrate the value or impact of our initiatives. Despite its importance, assessment is often overlooked due to time constraints, unclear responsibilities, difficulty in translating practices developed for curricular use, or lack of expertise.

The session explores how to teach leaders of co-curricular programs to define clear goals and learning outcomes, and how to strengthen assessment efforts by leveraging existing data, conducting new research, and building effective data visualizations. It introduces the assessment cycle and highlights the importance of “closing the loop” to ensure results lead to meaningful improvements.

We will also cover how to use data to tell compelling stories—by knowing your audience, humanizing the data, building a narrative, and preparing for questions. The presentation concludes with examples of effective (and ineffective) data visualizations to communicate findings. Through this session, attendees will be better equipped to advocate for, implement, and utilize co-curricular assessment to enhance student experiences and demonstrate the impact of their work.

14. Title: CP: A Predictive Model of Student Success

Presenter: *Michael Donnelly, UW-River Falls*

Description: When assessing the effectiveness of any given program, intervention, or service at our institution, how can we account for the fact that students differ at the outset, prior to any such intervention, in terms of their individual likelihoods to complete their studies and obtain a degree? Our work represents an attempt to control for pre-determined likelihood of success, by allowing us to factor in individual differences in academic preparedness. We created a student success predictive model using historical data at our institution, by using those data to train a probability model, such that we can plug in measures of individual academic preparedness (e.g. HS GPA, ACT-COMP, etc) and calculate any given student's probability of retention or completion for several time intervals. By grouping many such students together due to their inclusion or exclusion from a treatment group, we can derive the probability of success for the groups as a whole—treatment and control--and then recast effectiveness of an intervention in terms of the degree to which a subgroup exceeds or lags the model-predicted

success, and also in terms of the degree to which they differ from their peers with similar probabilities of predicted success.

15. Dashboard Showcase

A. Title: Academic Department Budget Tool & Program Review Metrics

Presenter: *Tracy King, University of Wisconsin River Falls*

Description: This dashboard innovatively combines data from separate data sources (finance, student information, and human resources systems) to provide academic departments with an in-depth understanding of how tuition revenue from their course and program enrollments relates to the instructional costs of staffing their departments. From this information, the Program Audit and Review Committee identified various metrics to gauge the financial and enrollment health of the departments, to be reviewed on an annual basis.

For the showcase, we will step through the detail-level data that feeds into the aggregate measures (Expenses, Tuition Revenue, Instructor FTE), and how these aggregate measures are used for the Program Review metrics.

B. Title: Building a Dashboard to Support Effective Relationships with the State Legislature

Presenter: *Garrett Soper, UW-La Crosse*

Description: For campus leadership, positive relationships with state and national legislators and an ability to communicate effectively about the impact the university has in the state have never been more important. This showcase will explore a Tableau dashboard that UW-La Crosse's IR team made for the chancellor's office that aids in this effort. The dashboard shows the percent of UWL's Wisconsin resident students who come from each state legislative district using a map of the districts and a filterable table. In addition, the dashboard provides information on each legislator, including their district, phone, email, alma mater, and the year the legislator was elected. This session will explain how the dashboard works and the processes behind acquiring the data that feeds the dashboard. The data comes from various sources, including institutional records, official state legislative state maps downloaded as SHP files, latitude and longitude points downloaded from an online tool, and data scraped from the state legislative website and Wikipedia using Python. Finally, this session will cover limitations of and future directions for the dashboard, including challenges with obtaining accurate data when scraping, mapping addresses to legislative districts using latitude and longitude, and potential solutions for these challenges.

C. Title: St. Olaf's Key Performance Indicators Dashboard

Presenters: *Kelsey Thompson, St. Olaf College*

Lauren Feiler, St. Olaf College

Description: St. Olaf recently developed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the institution. We have created a KPIs dashboard using Tableau to serve as a central location for the KPI metrics, which involve collecting data from many areas across the institution. The KPIs dashboard allows for a clean and user-friendly way to display multiple "layers" of data for each KPI, along with definitions for each of the KPI metrics. Our Board of Regents and college leadership will use this dashboard to monitor our KPIs and guide their decision-making. While the KPIs and dashboard are still somewhat "under construction," we anticipate that the dashboard will be fully functional by the time of the AIRUM conference!

16. Title: Impact of Campus Engagement on Persistence to Second Term

Presenter: *Brenda Murray, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse*

Description: This presentation on the Six Week Engagement Program at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse will share findings from an analysis of engagement and persistence of first-year and transfer students from three fall cohorts. After controlling for other characteristics, results show that engagement increases the probability of persistence, and the most impactful form of engagement differs between first-year and transfer students. The presentation will provide an overview of the Six Week Engagement Program and details on the results of this analysis.

17. Title: Direct Admissions – Overcoming the Gauntlet of College Admissions

Presenters: *Sally Constantine, Minnesota Office of Higher Education*
Aaron Salasek, Minnesota Office of Higher Education

Description: Direct Admissions programs are quickly becoming a popular policy method for simplifying the college admissions process for high school seniors. In this presentation, members of the Minnesota Office of Higher Education's Direct Admissions team will present updates on the program in Minnesota. The team will also provide a broad overview of national direct admissions programs, as well as a synopsis of the state's program design, philosophical underpinnings, and findings on successes. Additionally, the presentation will focus on the policy's impact on equitable college access, considering interagency collaboration, financial aid, and the benefits to the public good. With most MN high schools likely to participate in the Direct Admissions program within the next three to four years, the team at OHE will also share simplifications to the process for both participating high schools and their students. Finally, the team will share preliminary findings on the impact of Direct Admission on FAFSA filing, college enrollment, and persistence rates for participating high schools and their students as compared to non-participating schools.

18. Title: Closing the Loop with Micro-Surveys: A Panel Discussion

Presenters: *Russell Dahlke, Minnesota State System*
Kira Guetschow, Western Technical College
Travis Ricks, Bemidji State University
Trina Smith, Luther Seminary

Description: Traditional large, infrequent surveys often yield slow, hard-to-act-on results. To generate more timely and actionable data, Bemidji State University, Western Technical College and the Wisconsin Technical College System, and Luther Seminary have each developed routine micro-survey initiatives on themed topics that provide rapid, actionable data with a student-centered focus.

This panel brings together four practitioners from these institutions to compare and contrast their approaches, discuss lessons learned, and highlight insights from more than a dozen conference presentations in the past four years, including AIRUM, AIR, EAIR, and others. Topics include survey design, dissemination, campus partnerships, and most essential: closing the loop to ensure that survey results translate into visible institutional action.

This will be an interactive dialogue with attendees about implementing and customizing micro-surveys to strengthen institutional effectiveness and drive continuous improvement. Participants will leave with practical strategies, lessons learned, and hopefully inspiration to adapt this agile, high-impact assessment tool on their own campus. While it will be focused on recurring micro-surveys, it's intended that the dialogue will be beneficial to any institutional survey. We aim for a structured conversation that invites spontaneous questions and idea-sharing, so that participants help shape the discussion in real time.

19. Title: Building the Plane While Flying It: Data Strategy Lessons from a Rapid Initiative Rollout

Presenters: *Mandy Henkel, Southwest Wisconsin Technical College*
Tyler Platz, Southwest Wisconsin Technical College

Description: Our institution launched a high-profile student success program as part of an Aspen initiative that led to national recognition. The goal was to fit each student with a highly customized Student Success Plan to aid in strategizing the academic, financial, and career planning aspects of their education. However, the effort began without a data collection strategy or involvement from institutional research. This presentation shares the story of how institutional research and assessment teams were brought in after implementation to make meaning of data not designed for reporting, analysis, or evaluation. We will explore how we are retroactively integrating data systems and beginning early-stage impact research.

Through sharing our experience reacting to rapid change, participants will be able to reflect on common challenges IR professionals face when inheriting data strategies (or lack thereof). Tools and strategies for retrofitting data collections will be explored to highlight the central role IR professionals often play in bringing disparate information together. Lastly, through an interactive question and answer period, participants will have the opportunity to discuss how they advocate for data planning and strategy in their institutional contexts.

20. Title: Using Predictive Analytics in FTIC Retention - 2 years later

Presenter: *Jim Sorenson, University of Mary*

Description: Using existing skills and abilities, the University of Mary dove head-first into a shallow pool to develop a new method of identifying students that posed a retention risk within the First Time In College Freshman population. The model started out using statistics and morphed into predictive analytics as soon as knowledge became available. The project led to a thesis project and culminated in a fully developed and automated retention model. The model uses data acquired from the student information system with additional data from the financial aid system and was prepared for machine learning. Exploring different algorithms and doing statistical analysis on the data led the University to utilizing a random forest model containing 50+ attributes that are pared down during each model run using feature selection.

With the ability to identify at-risk students, the University can ensure those students receive the necessary resources to make them successful in their higher education journey and has led to an increased FTIC retention rate 2 years in a row. While the model itself isn't increasing the retention rate, the university's use of the data is providing the direct result.

21. **Title:** Part Researcher, Part Programmer: A Beginner's Journey in Task Automation

Presenter: *Steve Rogness, Minnesota Office of Higher Education*

Description: Institutional Researchers often must be part researcher, part programmer. We find use cases for learning various forms of computer coding, whether in the more research/analysis-oriented programs like statistical analysis and data visualization packages, or in more programmer-oriented software using languages like SQL, R, Python, etc. This often involves quickly learning how to accomplish tasks that would be simple for a knowledgeable computer programmer but can feel complicated to learn when we have long to-do lists. If you're like me, you have the nagging feeling that if you knew more programming, your job would be easier. In this session I'll share three examples of routine tasks that I must perform in my work, and how I've learned to automate those tasks. This includes: 1) an easy way to accomplish "parameterized reporting" using SPSS, Mail Merge, and Merge Tools, 2) coding in Visual Basic to perform a complicated but common task in Excel using macros, and 3) data suppression using Dynamic SQL. I'll use these examples to talk about the larger theme here, which is how to draw on available resources such as AI chatbots other online resources to learn the possibilities across multiple types of programs and coding languages.

22. **Title:** Predicting Our Future: An Enrollment Projections Journey

Presenter: *Tracy King, University of Wisconsin River Falls*

Description: The story of how a small IR office is climbing the analytic maturity mountain, making the leap from static, lagging, reactive enrollment reporting and non-existent projections, to real(ish)-time monitoring dashboards and trend-informed Fall scenario projections, and aspirations and initial steps towards predictive modelling.

In the face of declining enrollments (and consequently tuition revenue), looming demographic cliffs, post-pandemic uncertainties and societal challenges, and the increasing demands and expectations from campus leadership, the university system office, and accreditation requirements, the need for understanding and improving our enrollment picture (from admissions to retention to graduation) has come into sharp focus.

We will discuss our past and present challenges and successes, and our hopes for improving our future enrollment projections work, especially regarding direct admissions yields, changing demographics of the region, incoming student success predictors, and the impact of student belonging on retention and graduation rates.

23. **Title:** Organizing Data Requests for Optimized Student Privacy and Institutional Strategy

Presenter: *Nancy Floyd, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities*

Description: In institutional research we are asked all the time for data, but we don't really have common professional guidelines for how to respond to these requests. We all know FERPA, HIPAA and the Minnesota Data Practices Act, but there are many situations and requests that fall into gray areas between these regulatory pieces, and the decisions we make as researchers can go far to either expose or protect students' information without their consent. This session will introduce key concepts that

researchers should discuss and come to common agreement with their leadership, and will provide a framework for determining how best to handle data requests.