A National Profile of Vice Presidents for Institutional Effectiveness

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Executive Summary

This national study, sponsored by the Association for Higher Education Effectiveness (AHEE), provides a profile of vice presidential leaders in the emerging function of institutional effectiveness (IE) within colleges and universities in the United States. One hundred forty persons with the title of Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness (VPIE) or its equivalent (e.g., VP for Planning and IE) were identified. Contact information was available for 101 of them, and 51 (50%) participated in telephone interviews. Information gained through online searching was combined with interview results to describe the demographic, educational, and career profiles of the participants, their employment settings, their job titles and responsibilities, the institutional circumstances that led to the VPIE position being established, the knowledge and skills critical for performance as a VPIE, how leadership of IE at a vice presidential level is different than at a lower (director, associate vice president) level, participants' ideas about the future of IE and the position of VPIE, and how a professional association such as AHEE can best support them.

The typical participant was female, White, and held a doctoral degree. Members of the population were employed in for-profit (5%), private (38%), and public (57%) institutions. Forty-six percent were employed in community or technical colleges or two-year college systems. Participants were more likely to be employed at smaller and mid-sized institutions. They were employed at institutions in all six regional accreditation regions, but the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools was most highly represented (49%), while the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (3%), the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges (4%), and the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (7%) were least often represented. Participants were most likely to have the job title of Vice President/Vice Chancellor for/of IE (44%) or a similar title that also included typical IE functions (33%); remaining titles reflected additional responsibilities participants also held (e.g., Vice President for Human Resources and IE, Vice President for Student Affairs and IE, 24%). Eighty-two percent of participants were the first person at their institutions to hold vice presidential-level responsibility for IE. Eighty-four percent reported directly to their institution's president or chancellor and ninety-six percent were members of the president's cabinet. Forty-three percent of the total population moved to the VPIE-type position from other roles at the same institution, twenty-one percent came to the position from a different institution, and previous career information was not available for the remaining 36%. Thirty-two percent had an immediately previous position within the typical IE areas, fifteen percent came to the position from a vice presidency in another functional area, and seventeen percent came from a variety of other positions. Participants held a very wide variety of earlier positions.

Most of the participants who were interviewed had oversight responsibility for the institutional research office and were responsible for institutional and programmatic accreditation, assessment of student learning outcomes, academic program/unit review, and had some degree of responsibility for institutional strategic planning support, often in cooperation with the president. Several participants also cited numerous additional responsibilities such as institutional grant projects (all at community colleges), information technology, various state and federal initiatives, and distance/continuing education. Participants cited technical-analytical skills, knowledge of accreditation, knowledge of continuous improvement processes, knowledge of their institution,

knowledge of current issues in higher education, skills in leadership and relationship building, and several personal characteristics/personality traits (e.g., being an analytical thinker and able to process a lot of information effectively; synthesis, integration, big-picture/systems thinking; and being well-organized and thorough) as critical for their success in the VPIE role. Advice to people aspiring to the VPIE position was similar: knowing the institution well; leadership experience; keeping up with current events in higher education; technical-analytical skills; communication, interpersonal, and political skills; and personal characteristics such as the ability to move easily between the "big picture" leadership perspective and the technical level. Participants cited facilitating networking and sharing best practices as the most important role for professional association such as AHEE.

Participants listed direct access to institutional leaders and important discussions, the ability to provide information to leaders at the time when it is most helpful, being better able to affect change, and having others extend more authority to them and be more responsive as the primary benefits of leading IE at a vice presidential level. The VPIE positions of those interviewed were most commonly established as part of a larger campus restructuring, in order to signal a commitment to evidence-based decision making, to be able to accomplish IE functions more effectively and efficiently (particularly accreditation), and as a means to attract, reward, or retain individuals. Few of the participants said the establishment of their positions on campus was met with a negative reaction by persons who felt there are too many administrators. Nearly all of those interviewed said the IE structure and the position of VPIE will be more common in the future, and ever more important as accountability demands continue to increase.

Implications of the study for institutions interested in establishing the VPIE position include confirmation from the participants of the value added by the IE structure and the VPIE position, particularly in terms of improving accreditation and other IE functions. It is also important to recognize that it is crucial for persons in the role to have strong technical-analytical skills, deep institutional knowledge (or the ability to quickly acquire it), leadership skills and experience, and several dispositions or personality characteristics. It is not unusual to bundle a portfolio of the typical IE functions with additional responsibilities. There is no one optimal type of educational or career preparation for the position. Since nearly none of the results varied significantly by institutional category or geographic area, persons whose experience crosses institutional and geographic sector boundaries can be successful.

For persons interested in assuming the role of VPIE, the study suggests that strong technical-analytical knowledge and skills, deep institutional knowledge, leadership skills and experience, and several dispositions or personality characteristics are crucial. Also, transition to the VPIE position across institutional categories and geographic regions seems to be possible. No particular degree or past position is requited or even common for the VPIE position. Because several VPIEs have additional, non-IE responsibilities, bringing additional knowledge and experience from other functional areas would make someone a strong candidate for the position.

The Association for Higher Education Effectiveness

This study was sponsored by the Association for Higher Education Effectiveness (AHEE, see www.ahee.org). AHEE was founded in 2013 with the mission of "support[ing] and develop[ing] leadership that educates, advocates, advises, facilitates, and improves higher education's capacity to use evidence in decisions, policy, planning, and change for the purpose of improving postsecondary education. AHEE's vision statement is as follows:

> Higher education institutions rely on integrated offices led by well-prepared, qualified Cabinet-level professionals who assure evidence-based planning, decision making and improvement as a means of achieving institutions' effectiveness. These professionals are knowledgeable of global problems and solutions regarding higher education effectiveness and are routinely called upon to participate in higher education policy.

The ever-changing landscape of American higher education has caused evidenced-based decision making to become crucial for institutional survival and success. New federal, state, and accreditation requirements seem to be appearing at a greater and greater pace. Ongoing concerns about the value of a college degree, competition from traditional and non-traditional sectors, faculty hiring and tenure, and issues related to funding from all sources require institutions to be more effective and more nimble in using information from a variety of sources in order to practice strategic, proactive leadership.

While institutional research, accreditation, and strategic planning have existed at many campuses for decades and student learning outcomes assessment and academic program or unit review have been in place for 20 to 30 years or more, there is much more to be done, and there is evidence that these functions need to be more useful. Only 26% of a sample of chief academic officers say their institutions are very effective in using data to inform campus decision-making; only 26% say their campuses are very effective in identifying and assessing student learning outcomes; and only 16% say their colleges or universities are very effective in data analysis and organizational analytics (Jaschik & Lederman, 2016). A national study of institutional research carried out by the National Association of System Heads (Gagliardi & Wellman, 2014) concluded

> . . . the picture that emerges from this study is of a field that is at best unevenly positioned to support change. IR offices are running hard and yet many are still falling behind, deluged by demands for data collection and report writing that blot out time and attention for deeper research, analysis and communication. . . . The overall ability of IR offices to use data to look at issues affecting many of the cross-cutting issues of the day—such as the connections between resource use and student success—is nascent at best. (pp. 2-3)

One solution for improving evidence-based decision-making is the establishment of integrated, multi-functional offices or divisions of institutional effectiveness (IE) (Knight, 2015a). Such units intentionally bring together the often-disparate functions such as institutional research, student learning outcomes assessment, strategic planning, accreditation, and academic program or unit review into one administrative structure. Leimer (2012) noted that the *Directory of Higher Education* listed 43 such units in 1995 and 375 in 2010. A search of the same sources in 2015 using the key word "effectiveness" yielded 501 institutions. Establishing such units, whose leaders often have titles such as assistant or associate vice president or assistant or associate provost, follows the tradition of the integrated information technology and enrollment management models that have emerged over the last several years.

Scholars and leaders within the IE functions have given thought to the knowledge and skills necessary for success of practitioners. Terenzini (1993, 2013) discussed technical/analytical, issues, and contextual knowledge and skills. The technical/analytical area includes knowledge of institutional information systems, software, research design, survey development and administration, and operating definitions such as full-time-equivalent student. Terenzini's second tier of what he terms organizational intelligence consists of knowledge of higher education management issues such as student success, faculty workload, accreditation, funding, and community engagement. Contextual knowledge and skills involve a deep and rich understanding of one's institution, its culture, history, people, politics, and procedures, and well as

communication, interpersonal, and political acumen. While advertisements for institutional research positions focus almost exclusively on technical-analytical skills (Lillibridge, Jones, & Ross, 2014) and professional organizations in the field largely focus on technical-analytical and issues knowledge and skills (Knight, 2015b), it seems that contextual knowledge and skills and leadership development are needed for staff members in IE, and particularly leaders of IE units, to truly facilitate a culture of evidence-based decision making (Knight, 2014). Leimer (2012) notes:

> For culture to change, someone must turn data into information and institutional knowledge through analysis and interpretation. . . . Developing such a culture takes sustained effort over a long period of time at multiple levels of the organization. But someone needs to take the lead—to advocate for, and maintain focus on, this mode of thinking and practice. (Leimer, 2012, p. 46)

Leimer (2012) also discusses the importance for the IE leader to have "the abilities to build consensus, negotiate, communicate in non-technical language, coordinate people and projects, and lead" (p. 49). Other important characteristics of the IIE leader include

> sensitivity, openmindedness, flexibility, a capacity to listen, enthusiasm, a commitment to learning, a sense of humor, the ability to build others' self-confidence and motivate them, creativity, team-building and problem-solving capacities, a thick skin, a tolerance for ambiguity, . . . patience, [and] . . . the abilities to educate, build trust, and use data to tell a compelling story. (pp. 49-50)

Successful leadership of IE units requires both professional development in the areas noted above as well as opportunities for engagement, visibility, and building relationships and trust (Knight, 2010). Several studies of effectiveness in institutional research have cited the importance of sustained interactions with campus executives, a reporting structure to the president, and direct participation in key discussions at the time they occur, not later and filtered through others (Augustine, 2001; Delaney, 2001; Knight, Moore, and Coperthwaite, 1997). Review of the *Directory of Higher Education* listing of position titles that included the term institutional effectiveness revealed that 76 persons had the title of Vice President for IE or its equivalent. The finding led to an interest in learning more about individuals with this job title. Do they rely heavily upon the types of contextual or leadership knowledge and skills discussed above? Does greater direct access to the president and other campus leaders improve their effectiveness? What are the backgrounds of these persons? Do findings vary by institutional category and geographic region?

The current study is designed to provide a descriptive profile of Vice Presidents for IE (VPIEs), including their demographic characteristics, educational backgrounds, employment history, institutional settings, reasons for establishment of the VPIE position, responsibilities as VPIE, knowledge and skills crucial for success in the position, ideas about the future of IE and the VPIE position, and advice to those seeking the position of VPIIE. The study will result in the first national database about VPIEs, information for institutions establishing such positions, and information for those seeking them.

Method

A search was carried out for the terms "vice president IE" and "vice chancellor IE" within the *Higher Education Directory*, the Association for Institutional Research's member directory, the LinkedIn professional networking application, and in general online searching. This resulted in 140 individuals identified who hold or have held such titles. Demographic and current and past employment information was gathered from these sources. Useable contact information was not available for 38 of these persons and one had died. Among the remaining 101 persons, interviews were completed for 51 participants, 5 participants declined, and 45 did not respond to requests for interviews, resulting in a 50% response rate.

Categorical information was analyzed by computing frequencies. Since none of the demographic or employment information obtained from online sources was found to be inaccurate in the interviews, the full set of available information for all persons in the population (N=140) was used where it existed; information that could only be gained through interviews (n=51) was used otherwise.

A set of interview questions (see the Appendix) was developed for the study. It was shared in advance with participants. Requests for job descriptions were included as part of the interviews; 13 participants shared job descriptions, while several explained that they did not have one. Interview notes were analyzed by reading responses and placing them into categories. Representative quotations were selected that illustrated salient points. Selected findings were disaggregated by institutional category and geographic region. A draft of the study results was shared with the interview participants with a request for validation and additional ideas to enrich the results. Two participants offered feedback, which was incorporated into the final results and discussion.

Results

Profile of the Participants

As shown below in Table 1, the typical participant was female, White, and held a doctoral degree. Information on age was not requested, but based upon some information that was volunteered and employment information, it seems that most were in their fifties, with smaller percentages in their forties and sixties.

Table 1

Demographic and Educational Characteristics of Participants (N=140)

Characteristic	N	%
Sex		
Female	62	44%
Male	42	30%
Unknown	36	26%
Race		
African American	12	9%
Asian American	2	2%
Hispanic/Latino	2	2%
International	1	1%
White/Caucasian	70	50%
Unknown	53	38%
Highest Degree		
Bachelor's	2	2%
Master's	30	21%
Doctorate	65	46%
Juris Doctorate	1	1%
Unknown	42	30%

Participants were employed in for-profit (5%), private (38%), and public (57%) institutions. Forty-six percent were employed in community or technical colleges or two-year college systems. Participants were more likely to be employed at smaller and mid-sized institutions. Thirty-four states plus the District of Columbia were represented among the participants. To summarize the geographic distribution of participants' institutions, the institutions were grouped into regional accreditation regions; the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) region was most highly represented (49% of the participants), while the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC, 3%), the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges (NASC, 4%), and the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC, 7%) regions were least often represented. See Table 2 for details.

Table 2

Institutional Characteristics of Participants (N=140)

Characteristic	N	%
Institutional Type		
For-Profit	7	5%
Small Private	15	11%
Private Graduate/Professional Only	8	6%
Small Private Religiously-affiliated	17	12%
Small Private Religiously-Affiliated Graduate/Professional Only	2	1%
Small Private HBCU	4	3%
Mid-Sized Private	4	3%
Mid-Sized Private Religiously-Affiliated	2	1%
Large Private	1	1%
Small Public	2	1%
Mid-Sized Public	9	6%
Mid-Sized Public HBCU	1	1%
Large Public	4	3%
Two-Year Public	56	40%
Two-Year Public System	8	6%
Accreditation Region		
Higher Learning Commission	34	24%
Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools	19	14%
New England Association of Schools and Colleges	4	3%
Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges	5	4%
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools	68	49%
Western Association of Schools and Colleges	10	7%

Participants were most likely to have the job title of Vice President/Vice Chancellor for/of IE (44%) or a similar title that also included typical IE functions (e.g., Executive Vice President for Planning and IE, Vice President for Evidence and Inquiry, Vice President of Accreditation and IE, 33%). Remaining titles reflected additional responsibilities participants also held (e.g., Vice President for Academics and IE, VPIE and General Counsel, Vice President for Human Resources and IE, Vice President for Student Affairs and IE, 24%). The full set of job titles is shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Job Titles of Participants (N=140)

Title	N	%
Vice President/Chancellor for/of Institutional Effectiveness	61	44%
IE-Related Responsibilities Only		
District VP for Organizational and System Effectiveness	1	<1%
Executive VP for Planning and IE	1	<1%
Executive VP of IR and Strategic Initiatives	1	<1%
Executive VP of Research and IE	1	<1%
Interim VP for Strategic Planning and IE	1	<1%
Senior VP for Strategic Planning and Opers. Eff.	1	<1%
Senior VP of Accreditation and IE	1	<1%
Senior VPIE	2	1%
Vice President for Decision Support	1	<1%
Vice President for Effectiveness and Accountability	1	<1%
Vice President for Evidence and Inquiry	1	<1%
Vice President for IE/Strategic Planning	1	<1%
Vice President for Inst. Planning, Research, and Assessment	1	<1%
Vice President for Institutional Planning and Decision Support	1	<1%
Vice President for Institutional Planning and Effectiveness	1	<1%
Vice President for Institutional Research and Effectiveness	1	<a%
Vice President for Mission and IE	1	<1%
Vice President for Planning and Effectiveness	1	<1%
Vice President for Planning and IE	1	<1%
Vice President for Planning, Assessment, and IE	1	<1%
Vice President for Research and IE	1	<1%
Vice President of Accreditation and IE	1	<1%
Vice President of IE and Assessment	1	<1%
Vice President of IE and Research	1	<1%
Vice President of IE and Student Success Initiatives	1	<1%
Vice President of Planning and IE	1	<1%
Vice President of Planning, Inst. Research and Accreditation	1	<1%
Vice President of Research & IE	1	<1%
Vice President of Research, Planning, and Info. Tech.	1	<1%
Vice President of Strategic Planning and Effectiveness	1	<1%
Vice President, Academic Planning and Effectiveness	1	<1%
Vice President, IE, Planning, and Research	1	<1%
Vice President, Institutional Planning and Effectiveness	1	<1%
Vice President, Organizational Growth, Development, and Eff.	1	<1%

Table 3 (Continued)

Job Titles of Participants (N=140)

Title	N	%
Vice President, Planning/IE	2	2%
Vice President, Research, Effectiveness, and Inst. Research	1	<1%
VPIE and Accreditation Compliance	1	<1%
VPIE and Accreditation	1	<1%
VPIE and Planning	1	<1%
VPIE, Research, Planning, and Assessment	1	<1%
VPIE/Planning	2	1%
VPIE/Strategic Planning	1	<1%
Vice President, Planning/IE	2	2%
Vice President, Research, Effectiveness, and Inst. Research	1	<1%
VPIE and Accreditation Compliance	1	<1%
VPIE and Accreditation	1	<1%
VPIE and Planning	1	<1%
VPIE, Research, Planning, and Assessment	1	<1%
VPIE/Planning	2	1%
VPIE/Strategic Planning	1	<1%
Vice President, Planning/IE	2	2%
Vice President, Research, Effectiveness, and Inst. Research	1	<1%
VPIE and Accreditation Compliance	1	<1%
VPIE and Accreditation	1	<1%
VPIE and Planning	1	<1%
VPIE, Research, Planning, and Assessment	1	<1%
VPIE/Planning	2	1%
VPIE/Strategic Planning	1	<1%

Other Non-IE-Related Responsibilities

Chief of Staff and VP for Planning and IE	1	<1%
Vice Chancellor of Educational Services and IE	1	<1%
Vice President for Effectiveness and General Counsel	1	<1%
Vice President for Human Resources and Organizational Eff.	1	<1%
Vice President for Academics and IE	1	<1%
Vice President for Academic Affairs and IE and Planning	1	<1%
Vice President for External Affairs and IE	1	<1%
Vice President for Human Resources and IE/Assessment	2	1%
Vice President for Human Resources, Planning and IE	1	<1%
Vice President for Technology and IE	1	<1%
VPIE and International Programs	1	<1%
VPIE and Student Services	1	<1%

Table 3 (Continued)

Job Titles of Participants (N=140)

Title	N	%
Vice President, Instruction and IE	1	<1%
Vice President of Human Resources and IE	1	<1%
Vice President of IE and Student Success Initiatives	1	<1%
Vice President of Research, Planning, and IE	1	<1%
Vice President, Student Affairs/IE	1	<1%
Vice President, Students/IE	1	<1%
Vice President, Human Resources, IE, and Info. Tech.	1	<1%
Vice President, Human Resources and IE	1	<1%
Vice President, IE and Academic Services	1	<1%
Vice President, Administration, IE, and Innovation	1	<1%
VPIE and Enrollment Management	3	2%
VPIE and Marketing	1	<1%
VPIE and Risk Management	1	<1%
VPIE and Student Success	1	<1%
VPIE/Student Affairs	1	<1%
VPIE/College Relations	2	<1%
VPIE/Director of Doctoral Studies	1	<1%

Eighty-two percent of participants were the first person at their institutions to hold vice presidential-level responsibility for IE. Eighty-four percent reported directly to their institution's president or chancellor, with the remainder reporting to the provost/chief academic officer (10%), an executive president/chief operating officer (4%), or had dual reporting with the president and provost (2%). Ninety-six percent of participants are/were members of the president's cabinet. See Table 4 for additional information.

Table 4

Employment Information for Participants (N=51)

Characteristic	N	%
First VPIE at Institution		
Yes	42	82%
No	9	18%
Supervisor's Title		
Executive Vice President, Chief Operating Officer	2	4%
President	43	84%
Provost, Chief Academic Officer	5	10%
President/Provost joint reporting	1	2%
Member of the President's Cabinet		
Yes	49	96%
No, but Member of Provost's Cabinet	1	2%
No	1	2%

Forty-three percent of the total population moved to the VPIE-type position from other roles at the same institution, twenty-one percent came to the position from a different institution, and previous career information was not available for the remaining 36%.

Participants' immediately previous job titles are shown in Table 5. Thirty-two percent had a previous position within the typical IE areas (e.g., Director of IE, Director of Institutional Research, Associate Provost for IE), including four participants who came to the positions highlighted in this study from a previous VPIE position at another institution. Fifteen percent of the participants came to the position from a vice presidency in another functional area (e.g., Vice President for Academic Affairs, Vice President for Academic Services, Vice President for Human Resources). Seventeen percent came from a variety of other positions.

Participants held a very wide variety of earlier positions before the position immediately prior to VPIE; earlier job titles, typically including multiple titles for each participant, are listed in Table 6.

Table 5

Immediate Past Positions of Participants (N=140)

Position

IE-Related

Assistant Provost for IE
Associate Provost for IE (4)
Associate to the President for IE and Strategic Initiatives
Associate Vice President, IE, Research, and Grants
Associate Vice President for Assessment and IR (2)
Associate Vice President for IE (3)
Associate Vice President for IE, Planning and Assessment
Associate Vice President for Planning and Research
Dean of IR and Assessment
Dean of Planning and IE
Director of Assessment, Accreditation, and Planning
Director of IE (4)
Director of IE and Assessment (2)
Director of IE and Special Assistant to the President
Director of IE, Research, and Assessment
Director of IR (2)
Director of IR and Planning (2)
Director of IR, Planning, and Assessment
Director of Monitoring
Director of Research
Director of Research and Assessment
Director, Assessment, Effectiveness, and IR
Executive Director, IE
Executive Director, IR, Assessment, and Planning
Interim Vice President for Strategic Planning and IE
Senior Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness
Senior Director, IE and Planning
Senior Officer for IE
Special Assistant to the President for Planning and Accreditation
Vice President for Planning and Alliances
Vice President for Planning, Policy, and Budget
VPIE at another institution (4)

Table 5 (Continued)

Immediate Past Positions of Participants (N=140)

Position

Not IE-Related

Assistant Dean for Student Support Services
Assistant to the Chancellor
Associate Dean
Associate Provost
Associate Vice President and University Budget Director
Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs
Chief of Staff (2)
Consultant (2)
Corporate Vice President of Education
Dean
Dean and Academic Vice President
Dean for Enrollment Policy and Planning
Dean of Administrative Services
Dean of Students
Director of College and Community Relations
Director of Education
Director of Student Enrollment
Executive Director, Human Resources
Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs
Executive Vice President for Academics
faculty member (2)
health care administrator (outside of academe) (2)
Interim Chief Academic Officer
Interim Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs
Manager of Client Services and Chief Information Officer
President
Regional Executive Director
Senior Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs
Vice Chancellor for Adult Education
Vice President
Vice President and Chief Information Officer
Vice President for Academic Affairs (5)
Vice President for Academic and Enrollment Services
Vice President for Academic Services (2)
Vice President for Campus Life and Information Services
Vice President for HR
Vice President for Student Affairs

Table 6

Earlier Positions of Participants (N=140, multiple positions per participant)

Position
Academic Dean
Academic Lab Coordinator
adjunct faculty member
Assistant Dean for Academic Programs and Student Affairs
Assistant Director for Academic Achievement programs
Assistant Director of Housing
Assistant to the President
Assistant Vice Chancellor of Enterprise Systems and Services
Associate Dean for Assessment
Associate Dean for IE
Associate Director of Institutional Research
Associate Provost
Associate Provost for Enrollment Management
Associate Registrar
Associate Vice President for Assessment
Assistant Coordinator of Testing and Assessment
Assistant Dean for Economic Development
Assistant Director, Academic Achievement Programs
Assistant Director, Assessment and Policy Studies
Assistant Director of IR
Associate Vice President
Associate Vice President, Academic Affairs
Associate Vice President for Academic and Enrollment Services
Associate Vice President for Career Programs
Associate Vice President for Human Resources
Associate Vice President for IE
Associate Vice President for Strategic Alliances
Associate Vice President for Workforce and Vocational Development
Associate Vice President of Corporate and Community Relations
Budget Analyst
Coach
Coordinator for Institutional Research
Coordinator for Survey Research
Coordinator of Testing and Evaluation
Counselor
County Administrator (external to academe)
Data Analyst
Dean for Economic Development
Dean of Admissions, Records, and Research

Table 6 (Continued)

Earlier Positions of Participants (N=140, multiple positions per participant)

Position

Dean of Corporate Education
Dean of Education
Dean of Instructional Services
Dean of Psychology and Education
Dean of Students
Dean of Technology, Math, and Physical Science
Dean of the Graduate School of Theology
Department Chair (3)
Director of Curriculum
Director, Institutional Research
Director for Technology Management
Director of a cultural and conference center
Director of Academic Programs Research
Director of Assessment
Director of Assessment and Institutional Research
Director of Assessment, Evaluation, and GED Testing
Director of Budget, Planning, and Institutional Research
Director of Campus Services
Director of Computer Services and Institutional Research
Director of Continuing Education
Director of Corporate Services
Director of Educational Opportunity Center
Director of Extension Site
Director of Fiscal Policy
Director of IE (20)
Director of Institutional Research (6)
Director of Nursing Research
Director of Off-Campus Programs
Director of Online Instruction
Director of Planning and Analysis
Director of Student Development
Director of Student Support Services
Director of the Doctor of Ministry Program
Director, Educational Opportunity Center
Division Chair (2)
Department Chair
educational advisor and faculty member
Executive Assistant to President for IE
Executive Assistant to the President

Table 6 (Continued)

Earlier Positions of Participants (N=140, multiple positions per participant)

Position
Executive Dean of Academic Affairs
Executive Director of IE
Executive Vice President
faculty member (15)
financial analyst at several organizations outside of academe
health care administrator (outside of academe)
high school administrator
high school teacher
Interim Chief Information Officer
Interim Vice President for Educational Services
Job Assistance Center Supervisor (outside of academe)
Manager of Operations for a cultural and conference center
Online Facilitator
Planning Analyst
Program Chair (2)
Program Director
Program Specialist
Programmer-Analyst
Provost
Research Assistant (3)
Research Associate (3)
Residence Hall Director
Senior Academic Advisor
Senior Instructional Designer
Senior Research Analyst
Specialist, Fiscal Services
Student Activities Director
University Dean for Planning and Institutional Development
various information technology positions outside of academe
various university HR positions
Vice Chancellor for IE
Vice President for Enrollment Management
Vice President for Human Resources
Vice President for Information Technology
Vice President of Academic and Student affairs
Vice President of Faculty
Vice President of Student Services
Vice Provost
Vice Provost of IE

<u>Responsibilities as VPIE</u>

The majority of the participants had oversight responsibility for the traditional IE functions. All but one supervised the institutional research office. All but two had some degree of responsibility for institutional strategic planning support, often in cooperation with the president. Several described themselves as shepherds of the planning process. Most noted responsibility for maintaining planning metrics and contributing toward institutional annual reports. Two-thirds of the participants also had responsibility of institutional and program accreditation, and a bit more than one-third specifically stated they were their institutions' accreditation liaison officers. Two-thirds of the participants had responsibility for leading assessment of student learning outcomes, including oversight of assessment staff and providing consulting services concerning assessment within their institutions. The assessment process described by several participants also included elements of academic and administrative unit review (one-third mentioned responsibility for program/unit review separate from assessment). Other participants said they supported assessment and/or program review, but that the leadership of these activities rested within academic affairs. Seven of the participants said they provided leadership to continuous improvement processes, and others implied similar responsibility. Four participants oversaw business intelligence units separate from institutional research. Three cited responsibility for state performance measures, and others also implied such responsibility. One participant also had oversight for an office of strategy and analysis separate from the others previously noted.

Small numbers of participants also cited numerous additional responsibilities. Twelve persons, all in community colleges, had responsibility for institutional grant projects from sponsors such as the Lumina Foundation. Four cited involvement in various state and federal initiatives and others implied having this responsibility. Four noted providing support for development of new academic programs. Three maintained institutional policy/document repositories. Three led faculty and staff professional development efforts. Two maintained the campus intranet. Participants also cited responsibility for a variety of other functional areas on campus including information technology (seven persons), distance and/or continuing education (four), marketing and community relations (three), the library (two), the registrar's office (two), and adult programs, an art museum, articulation agreements, the budget office, career services, community relations, economic development, first-year programs, human resources, institutional compliance, learning technology, marketing and public relations, organizational development, reputation management, risk management, safety and security, the office of student success, and the teaching and learning center (one person each). Other participants additionally served in the roles of academic dean, chief of staff to the president, chief operating officer for one campus of his institution, vice president for enrollment management, vice president for human resources, and vice president for student affairs. One participant also noted assisting with institutional advancement efforts.

How The Experience of Being a Vice President Is Different Than Leading IE Efforts at a Lower Level

The approximately three-fourths of those participants who had past experience with leadership of IE at some earlier part of their careers (e.g., Director of IE, Associate Vice President for IE) were asked how their experiences were different as leaders at the vice presidential level. Several individuals gave multiple responses. Thirteen people discussed being part of the cabinet, part of critical discussions without the filter of a supervisor, having a fuller understanding of issues and better ability to provide information to leaders at the time that it is most helpful. Some ideas offered by participants included:

> I can't do this through someone else.

> whatever is going on I am in the middle of

> you get to weigh in on issues as they are being discussed . . . get to help shape approaches

> at a lower level you don't get the whole background . . . to provide timely information you need to know what they are discussing at the time

> more opportunity to have a seat at the adult table

> having more insight into the big picture

Another thirteen said that the experience of being a vice president is not that different because the participant was already a vice president (four people) or otherwise reported to the president and was a member of cabinet (nine people).

Another response was that the difference in the role of vice president was in being a leader, affecting change, and persuading people to do things (eleven participants). Ten stated that, as vice presidents, people are more responsive and extend them more authority. Eight participants felt being a vice president was not really any different, but they may be perceived by others on campus as different. Some example responses include:

> if the discussion is not ongoing at the Cabinet level, it is easy to concentrate on what is urgent rather than what is important

> staff members do not have the same authority in the mind of the faculty as faculty administrators do . . . being a VP makes it easier to affect change and take ownership of a process and be able to make recommendation and have them taken more seriously . . . it is a whole different level of influence

Two persons said the vice presidential role focuses more on strategy, while a director role deals more with tactics:

the shift of focus from day to day execution to being a facilitator . . . helping others make connections, network, remove obstacles, being a collaborator, helping people to move things forward

totally shifts how we use data

You need to not just respond to what is asked, but think ahead.

Two offered that being a vice president provides greater access to important people and groups such as the board of trustees:

When you are not a VP you just don't have as great an access to everyone and as much freedom to move forward on best practices

the title provides greater exposure such as Board of Trustees

much more out in the institutional community

Political considerations being much more important at the vice presidential level was a response offered by two participants. One participant each responded that being a vice president means less hands-on involvement in IE activities and that a vice president is more able to provide honest, objective, unbiased information:

Not reporting o the president always means there is a filter through the perspectives of other areas such as academic affairs or business affairs. . . It is difficult for the person needing to be brutally honest to share bad news with a leader of one of the functional areas; this makes it unbiased.

Circumstances that Led to the Position Being Offered at the Vice Presidential Level

When asked to recount the circumstances that led to their positions being at a vice presidential level, all participants noted that the president or chancellor was responsible for this decision. Twenty-one participants explained that this organizational change was part of a larger restructuring effort, often with others being elevated to the vice presidential level as well. The idea of restructuring was often related to an interest in elevating the visibility of IE and integrating its component functions. Closely related was the response that the institution wanted to signal its commitment to evidence-based decision making, which was cited by twenty participants.

Another reason, offered by twenty participants, was the need to be able to accomplish IE functions (planning, assessment, institutional research, and program review were noted specifically) more effectively/efficiently. In addition, nineteen persons pointed to accreditation issues as a reason that their positions were upgraded; the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Higher Learning Commission, and Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools accreditation agencies were all mentioned, with the Southern Association of Colleges and

Schools (SACS) noted most frequently; two participants said establishing a VPIE position was a SACS recommendation.

Additional reasons, often cited along with restructuring and accreditation issues, included the need to attract, reward, or retain the individual in the VPIE role (noted by 10). Two participants said they reported previously to the chief academic officer who was elevated to the presidency, and they "moved up" together. Two persons also stated that there was a trend in the state system to move the person in the IE leadership role to a vice presidency.

The 82% of participants who were the first at their institutions to be a VPIE were asked if their appointment was met with a negative reaction by persons who felt there are too many administrators on campus. Fourteen people said there was not this reaction or they were not aware of it. Ten responded that reaction was muted because this change was part of a larger administrative restructuring. Nine stated there was not much of a reaction because the person was already at the campus and known. Nine participants explained that the president provided the rationale that this change would strengthen accreditation efforts. Six said the president provided a rationale for the vice presidency, but did not provide details about that rationale. Another six indicated that there was a negative reaction, but no rationale for the decision was provided by the president. Two replied that the president provided the rationale that this change would provide a visible commitment toward the goal of strengthening evidence-based decision making (one participant provided the president's written statement on this point). One person each noted the president provided the rationale that this change would strengthen strategic planning and the president provided the rationale that the board of trustees wanted to emphasize accountability. One participant offered this response:

> No, there had not been complaints about proliferation of administration, but I was sensitive to the issue from previous places, so I made it a point to be of considerable service to the VPs on each campus, faculty and student affairs personnel. We worked hard to reduce burden and provide increasingly meaningful and useful data, and to support the student success efforts in meaningful ways. I made sure we were not "back office" people but were involved in things that were of service. An example is the redesign and articulation of an effective program review process.

Knowledge and Skills Critical for Performance as a VPIE

Thirty-two participants cited technical-analytic skills in institutional research and assessment (e.g., database querying, statistical analysis, research design, survey construction and administration) as critical for success in the VPIE role. Somewhat related is knowledge of accreditation issues and practices (noted by 13 participants) (e.g., "the person needs to be wedded to and in bed with the HLC"), knowledge of planning and continuous improvement processes (7 people), good writing skills (5), knowledge of institutional budgeting (1), and knowledge of organizational theory (1).

A second category of responses included knowledge of one's institution, its history, culture, practices, policies, politics, and people (offered by 31 participants), knowledge of current higher education issues/environmental scanning (listed by 25), knowledge of federal and state policies

and initiatives (3), and understanding how accountability is appropriately implemented in higher education (2). A related idea was the importance of having previous experience in higher education, which was offered by two participants. Being in agreement with the institutional leadership was noted by two people.

A third set of responses concerned leadership and relationship building. Twenty-seven participants discussed the need for well-developed leadership skills, and three specifically discussed the need for a high level of emotional intelligence. Relatedly, having strong interpersonal, political, and verbal skills was offered by 18 participants, and building relationships and persuading people over whom you have no direct authority to do what you need them to do was cited by seventeen. Mentoring and developing staff members who report to them and developing team-building skills were skills discussed by seven persons. Being a good facilitator or a good project manager was cited by three. Some example responses in this category included:

> be ever-present but hardly ever at the forefront

> it is necessary to have a very strong leader in this role; what you do impacts the institution

> the person has to have a certain leadership acumen . . . can't be a bull in a china shop

> finding different ways to get people along

> Nobody reports to me and I'm always asking people to do tasks that don't seem as important as the many other things on their very big plates. So I feel I have to be a servant leader and help them help me.

> if you are going to survive at the Cabinet level, you need incredible political savvy

> being able to describe a vision for IE that is comprehensive and inspiring to the institution . . . if we can't describe the promised land, we've got no business being at the VP level

> the job is a whole lot more about people than it is about numbers at this level

> people skills are critical . . . faculty have to trust that IE is a facilitator and supporter of what they do

> helping people understand what they really need

> anticipating consequences before they occur . . . always thinking beyond the moment, anticipating the unintended . . . can't be clueless about what you are going to say or do

The final group of responses can be categorized as necessary personal characteristics and personality traits. These included being an analytical thinker and able to process a lot of

information effectively (8 participants); synthesis, integration, big-picture/systems thinking (7); being well-organized and thorough (6); being inquisitive, asking why we do things the way that we do (4); having the ability to use information to tell a compelling story (3); translating easily between leadership and technical issues (3); patience and perseverance (2); objectivity (2); being calm under pressure (1); and exercising good judgment (1). Examples include:

> you have to be able to interpret data and relay information quickly and not in 20-page reports

> being able to take information and break it down and communicate it in the appropriate language to the group you are dealing with . . . recognizing the perspectives of different audiences

> knowing how to present information so people will use it

> sense-making skills

> you cannot take no for an answer . . . you have to be able to continue to convince despite pushback

> being able to go from the 30,000 foot level to the weeds

> you need to be comfortable sharing opinions, but not arguing

> you have to come across with 100% integrity at all times

> establish a comfort level with being truthful

Advice to Someone Aspiring to the Position of VPIE

Another way of framing requisite knowledge and skills for the position was to ask participants what advice they would give someone seeking such a position. Answers generally paralleled those about the skills that participants draw upon. The most common response was to know one's institution very well, which was offered by 19 people.

Eleven participants discussed the importance of gaining leadership experience by whatever means available: formal training, experiences in one's current job, etc. Perhaps related to this is the response of obtaining as much professional development as possible (noted by one participant). Nine people commented upon the importance of keeping up with current events in higher education; relatedly, five stressed the importance of being active in professional organizations.

Nine participants gave the advice of understanding the technical-analytical aspects of institutional research (e.g., databases, institutional data systems, statistics); one discussed understanding the flow of data through the institution; another nine specifically mentioned gaining knowledge of accreditation; and five said prospective vice presidents for IE should learn

as much as possible about all of the related functions (institutional research, accreditation, assessment, accreditation, program review, etc.). Four persons commented upon the importance of understanding higher education financial issues and resource management. One participant noted the importance of strong project management skills.

Another category of advice related to interpersonal skills and relationship building. Four participants talked about the importance of developing strong verbal and written communication skills, listening, and presentation skills ("you have to be a good observer and a good listener"). Another four noted the importance of understanding the faculty perspective. The need to build relationships internal top the institution was discussed by four participants, and the need to build networks outside of the institution by three.

A final set of responses concerned educational preparation and personal characteristics. Seven participants discussed the importance of having a doctorate. Two commented upon developing the ability to move easily between the "big picture" leadership perspective and the technical level. Other advice included avoiding assumptions and asking questions (2 participants, becoming comfortable with ambiguity (2), needing to be comfortable with change (1), and having a thick skin (1).

<u>Views on the Future of IE and the Position of VPIE</u>

In response to a question about the future status across the Nation of the field of IE and the position of VPIE, nearly all of the participants said the IE structure and the position of VPIE will be more common. Twenty-three participants suggested that the VPIE position will become more and more important as accountability demands from accreditors, the federal government, state performance funding, parents etc. continue to increase. Some of the responses included:

> we will see more of [the IE model] in response to a higher level of accountability . . .

> higher education is coming to a state of reckoning like banks and the media . . . we need to re-think some of our model . . . when you go through this type of transformation you need to be focused on the outcome you are trying to achieve

> this role is more and more important in the institution

> there will be more and more emphasis on performance, planning, alignment to mission . . . this whole area will only continue to grow

> there is a good future for people who want this position

> IE is absolutely critical to a strong institution

> I see it growing as our functions become more and more critical to institutional success

> IE is coming into its own as an area in higher education

educating people to take advantage of the information will continue to be a high-level function

being able to contextualize data for policymakers is becoming more and more important IE is becoming more institutionalized

Eleven persons also added that the IE leader needs to report to the president, be part of cabinet, and be part of critical leadership discussions in order to be effective in dealing with these trends. Similarly, four participants felt that the IE leadership position needs to be at a vice presidential level to be able to lead continuous improvement, planning, integration of evidence, resources, and strategy; and three offered that IE needs to be its own division and not part of another in order to be objective. Numerous comments illustrate these points:

it is very important that the person be at a VP level and be at the table in the senior leadership group or cabinet; it is very important that faculty and staff members see that person as critical

that person needs to report directly to the president . . . reporting to VPAA is not an effective model

it doesn't serve the president well when you do not have someone responsible for pulling this together without it being integrated and at a VP level

need to work out issues by having a seat at the table

having a VP-level position implies influencing the priorities of the institution

I wouldn't do this if [the job] wasn't at a VP level.

We need to balance understanding data with understanding decision makers . . . if you can link these together you will go far

I am not sure it is possible anymore for an institution not to make IE a prominent part of one or more person's portfolios.

without a seat at the table IE is not taken seriously

[The IE leadership being at] the VP level is still relatively rare . . . people are still not really aware of how IE can help transform institutions . . . people are too busy putting out fires to be reflective . . . they won't take time to examine processes if not a crisis

it is very awkward when the appropriate title is not provided

having someone responsible for this kind of perspective housed within one of the divisions is almost a conflict of interest

as institutions are driven towards performance funding it is increasingly important to have someone at the VP level looking at the data and making sure the institutions are improving

a VP has a perspective of the entire institution and also has the ear and voice of the president and knows what is going on; I don't think you can do this job if you do not have a more intimate knowledge of what the senior leadership is thinking

it is really hard to get the continuous improvement concept inserted into institutional processes if the leader of IE is not a VP

Nine participants noted that whether the position is at a vice presidential level and how IE is structured depends greatly on the president and governing board.

It depends on the president. Presidents have more power than most people realize; they have power to set strategic direction and pick senior team. Their individual values and expectations determine who they want to have at the table and who advises them.

Three additional people suggested that whether or not the leadership of IE is at a vice presidential level or not depends upon institutional size and complexity, suggesting that the vice presidency is probably more likely in larger institutions; three others offered that the vice presidential-level position is probably more common in community colleges. One participant opined that the position may be in jeopardy in lean financial times. Another said the vice presidency will grow slowly due to concerns over expenses and higher education's generally slow pace of change.

Commenting more specifically on effective characteristics of IE and its leader, three participants stated that classic institutional research is no longer sufficient, that IE needs to be much more comprehensive; one volunteered that IE needs to work to infuse concepts of effectiveness and improvement throughout the institution; and another suggested IE needs to be able to provide easier and more meaningful access to information for decision makers. Focusing on the role of the leader, one said that the position of VPIE is an educative role, and another felt that whether the IE leader is or should be a vice president depends on the leadership skills of the person.

Support from Professional Associations

Participants were asked how the Association for Higher Education Effectiveness (AHEE), which sponsored the study, can best support their work. The majority of those interviewed were not aware of AHEE prior to the study. Nineteen persons commented upon the importance of the Association as a vehicle for networking with others in similar roles and getting ideas and fresh perspectives ("sometimes you seem like a prophet in our own land until you see what others are doing"). In the same vein, six suggested AHEE share case studies of successful IE work and highlight best practices, perhaps by institutional sector. Assistance with explaining what IE is and its value on campus was suggested by three participants. Providing help with identifying and dealing with future developments in higher education was an idea offered by two people. One of those interviewed suggested sharing publications, and another discussed having face-to-face

meetings in conjunction with national meetings (e.g., the Association for Institutional Research, the Society for College and University Planning, accreditation conferences). On a more pragmatic level, six participants felt AAHE can help vice presidents for IE who do not have a deep level of experience with each of the component functions to gain knowledge in each area. Providing leadership development opportunities contextualized to IE was highlighted by four. Additional suggestions, each made by one person, included developing and sharing a formal body of knowledge concerning IE and offering credentialing for its practitioners, sharing job listings relevant to IE, benchmarking salaries for vice presidents for IE, sharing sample IE tasks and job descriptions, and supporting career development in the field.

Additional Findings

Participants were asked to contribute any additional responses they felt would benefit the study. Five persons repeated thoughts on the importance of the IE leader being at the vice presidential level. Another five discussed the importance of relationship building, particularly with other vice presidents. Four participants opined this study should be very helpful. Four other thoughts included: it would be useful to help VPIE's (particularly new ones) develop supervision skills, lots of changes are happening and it is important to be flexible, VPIEs need assistance with working with vendors who offer various technology "solutions", and perhaps AHEE should work with state coordinating boards and presidential groups to explain what IE is and how it benefits institutions. Additional responses, each contributed by one participant each, were that the structure of integrating the VPIE and president's chief of staff positions is useful, another aspect of IE is improving effective functioning of the institution's leadership team, AHEE needs to assist with career development, an area where assistance is needed is dealing with faculty resistance to change, AHEE might be helpful by sharing good practices and effective tools, AHEE should reach out to and partner with the National Alliance of Community and Technical Colleges, and "being VPIE is a great job!"

Disaggregation of Results by Institutional Type and Accreditation Region

Differences in results of the study were also investigated as they varied by institutional category and accreditation region. None of the background variables (sex, race, highest degree, supervisor, being a member of cabinet, being the first person at the institution to lead IE efforts at the vice presidential level, and whether the participant assumed the VPIE role after working in another capacity at the same institution or if he or she moved from another institution) showed significant differences with two exceptions: differences in highest degree by accreditation region (participants in the HLC region were more likely to hold a doctorate and those from the SACS region were more likely to hold a bachelor's degree) and differences in previous institution by institutional category (participants from four-year public institutions were most likely to have held another position at the same institution, while those at for-profit institutions were most likely to come to the VPIE position from a position at a different institution).

Differences in position responsibilities and reasons why the VPIE position was established were also investigated by institutional category and accreditation region. No significant differences were found.

Discussion

The study provided the first national profile of VPIEs. In terms of backgrounds, notable findings include VPIEs being likely to have a graduate (and particularly a doctoral) degree, nearly ½ being in community colleges and relatively few being in four-year public institutions, being overrepresented at institutions in the SACS accreditation region and underrepresented at institutions in the NASC, NEASC, and WASC regions, several participants having titles that indicated responsibilities beyond the traditional IE areas (e.g., Vice President for Human Resources and IE, VPIE and Enrollment Management), 82% being the first persons at their institutions to have responsibilities for the IE area at a vice presidential level, 84% reporting directly to their institutions' president and 96% serving as members of the president's cabinet, participants being twice as likely to move to the VPIE position from another role at the same institution than to move from another institution, only 1/3 of participants having previous IE-area responsibility at a level lower than vice president (e.g., Director of IR or IE, Associate Vice President for IE), 15% coming to the VPIE role from another vice presidency, and participants having a very wide array of earlier titles.

The majority of the participants had oversight responsibility for the traditional IE functions, with nearly all having oversight responsibility for institutional research as well as some degree of responsibility for strategic planning. About 2/3 had responsibility for assessment and/or program review, and about 2/3 had responsibility for accreditation (institutional and programmatic). A few participants had additional responsibility for some other IE-related responsibilities such as institutional grant projects, federal and state initiatives, and support for development of new academic programs. Some others had numerous other, non-IE-related responsibilities, such as information technology, distance/continuing education, and community relations.

Four categories of responses were noted in response to a query about the knowledge and skills critical for performance as a VPIE: technical-analytical skills, including knowledge of accreditation and planning as well as good writing skills; the institutional and higher education management knowledge that was described by Terenzini (1993, 2013) as issues and contextual intelligence, leadership and relationship-building skills, including interpersonal and political skills; and several personality traits such as analytical thinking, synthesis/systems thinking, being well-organized and thorough, and being inquisitive.

Participants' advice to prospective VPIEs included knowing the institution very well; gaining leadership experience: keeping current with national higher education issues: being active in professional organizations; having an understanding of the technical aspects of institutional research, accreditation issues, and other aspects of the IE functions; having or developing strong interpersonal and relationship-building skills; having a doctorate; and having various personal characteristics such as avoiding assumptions and asking questions and needing to be comfortable with change.

Participants explained that their positions came about as part of larger campus restructuring efforts, from a desire to integrate the IE functions and signal their importance, in order to accomplish the IE functions effectively, particularly to improve accreditation efforts (the role of SACS was cited numerous times), and to attract, recognize, reward, or retain the individual in the

VPIE role. Most of those interviewed did not report a strong negative reaction by persons who felt there are too many administrators on campus. Relating the findings that most participants did not share a job description (or perhaps did not have one), most were the first person at their institution to have vice presidential-level responsibility for IE, and that many participants indicated their role was created to integrate IE functions and signal their importance, one interpretation of the findings may be that some of the VPIE roles evolved organically/informally from lower-level roles.

VPIEs who participated in the study said that leading IE at the vice presidential level provided the advantages of allowing them to have a fuller, more immediate understanding of critical leadership issues and to be able to communicate with campus leaders more effectively, being extended more authority and benefitting from greater responsiveness to their requests, and being much more immersed in campus politics. Nearly all participants felt the integrated IE model and the position of VPIE will become more common on campuses in the future as demands for accountability continue to increase. Many of those interviewed recommended that AHEE and other professional organizations concentrate upon providing a space for networking and sharing best practices in IE.

Several additional, cross-cutting findings were brought to light in the study. Many VPIEs have additional responsibilities outside of the traditional IE functions and only 1/3 had previous experience in IE at a lower level. These responsibilities and prior career paths were not related to institutional category or geographic differences. This result may relate to VPIEs' previous positions at the same institution. These findings highlight the need for VPIEs to understand all of the areas in their portfolio of responsibilities and to understand the experiences and perspectives of staff members reporting to them. While IE offices/divisions are typically small, their reach extends across the entire institution which reinforces the need for broad and deep institutional knowledge and interpersonal skills.

VPIE positions were established for a variety of reasons, often for several reasons at the same institution, and often part of larger restructuring efforts, but the need to accomplish planning, assessment, institutional research, program review, and particularly institutional accreditation more effectively and efficiently was often critical. Surprisingly few participants reported that the establishment of their position was met with negative reactions by persons who felt there are too many administrators on campus. Although the importance of accreditation as a driving force in establishment of the position was not surprising, the primacy of accreditation in many of the roles was noted particularly strongly; this was especially the case for SACS institutions, which explicitly include IE as a component of accreditation.

Having a deep knowledge of one's institution, technical-analytical knowledge and skills, well-developed leadership and interpersonal skills, and a variety of personal characteristics and personality traits were all offered as very important for success in the VPIE role. These findings echo the conclusions of Knight (2010, 2014), Leimer (2012) and Terenzini (1993, 2013). There is no one career path or type of educational preparation that is common for this position, but this set of knowledge, skills, and dispositions is crucial; someone who does not possess them or can quickly develop them will not be successful.

As suggested by Augustine (2001), Delaney (2001), Knight (2010), and Knight, Moore, and Coperthwaite (1997), VPIEs cited numerous advantages to leading IE efforts at the vice presidential level, including not having to filter important information through others, promoting objectivity, and garnering greater respect and responsiveness among campus colleagues. Nearly all participants felt the IE structure and the position of VPIE will become more common and more prominent as demands over accountability continue to increase.

It is interesting to speculate on the strong presence of VPIEs at community colleges and SACS institutions. Perhaps this is related to the numerous initiatives at community colleges such as Achieving the Dream, Complete College America, and Completion by Design, and the prominence of institutional effectiveness as a component of accreditation by SACS.

It is important to acknowledge two limitations of the study, one related to sampling and the other to the nature of an interview study. By no means did the identification of persons who hold or have held the position of VPIE likely include everyone in the Nation. Also, although there were no significant differences in known background variables between persons for whom the researchers had contact information and those for whom they did not as well as between those who agreed to participate in interviews and those who refused or did not respond, the results would have been different to some extent if more or different persons responded. Secondly, while the interviews posed the same questions for all participants, some persons chose to be more expansive in their responses, many questions elicited multiple answers, and some results were implied but not explicitly stated (for example, only a few participants volunteered that they provide leadership to continuous improvement processes and state performance measures, but it is very likely that others actually had these responsibilities as well). It is not clear that another method of identifying participants existed, and the richness of qualitative responses hopefully mitigated the limitations inherent in interviews.

A follow-up study, perhaps including a survey as well as interviews, should be conducted every few years with VPIEs. Now that a database of the population has been created the researchers will endeavor to keep it updated. Perhaps the existence of baseline information from this study will encourage greater participation in future research.

The findings hold several implications for institutions interested in establishing the VPIE position. These results and those of a parallel study of president's views of IE (Bartolini, Knight, Carrigan, Fujieda, LaFleur, and Lyddon, in progress) demonstrate the value added by the IE structure and the VPIE position, particularly in terms of improving accreditation and other IE functions. There was surprisingly little indication when VPIE positions were established of negative reactions by persons on campus who felt there are too many administrators on campus. Having technical-analytical knowledge and skills, deep institutional knowledge (or being able to rapidly acquire it), leadership skills and experience, and several dispositions or personality characteristics are crucial for the success of the VPIE. Appointing someone to the position who has substantial deficits in any of these areas will not lead to a good outcome. It is not unusual to bundle a portfolio of the traditional IE functions with additional responsibilities. There is no one optimal type of educational or career preparation for the position. Since nearly none of the results varied significantly by institutional category or geographic area, persons whose experience crosses institutional and geographic sector boundaries can be successful. Because many VPIEs

came to the position from various past roles at the same institution, it is important that campuses are intentional in preparing for the employment and support of "second generation" VPIEs as those currently in the position begin to retire or move on to other positions.

Persons aspiring to a VPIE position can also gain much guidance from this study. Comprehensive technical-analytical knowledge and skills, deep institutional knowledge, leadership skills and experience, and several dispositions or personality characteristics (e.g., being an analytical thinker and able to process a lot of information effectively; synthesis, integration, and big-picture/systems thinking; being well-organized and thorough; being inquisitive; having the ability to use information to tell a compelling story; and translating easily between leadership and technical issues) are critical for being successful I the position. It is possible to transition to a VPIE position across institutional type and geographic sectors, but it is crucial to work rapidly to gain knowledge of the institution's culture, people, history, and procedures. No particular degree or past position is requited or even common for the VPIE position (although the benefit of having a doctorate was noted), as long as a candidate can successfully demonstrate the knowledge skills, and dispositions discussed. Candidates for these positions should not be surprised if the leadership of IE functions is bundled with some additional responsibilities; being able to demonstrate experience in additional areas (for example, enrollment management, human resources, or student affairs), is a plus.

Although professional associations such as AHEE support constituents at a variety of career levels and with numerous specific responsibilities, VPIEs who participated in this study find the most important role for such associations to be providing venues for networking, sharing good practices, and providing help with identifying and dealing with future developments in higher education, such as structured listserv discussions, and face-to-face gatherings held in conjunction with national, regional, and state related organizations (e.g., institutional research, assessment, or accreditation conferences). The Association should also note that few participants were aware of AHEE's existence and consider ways to extend its reach to and serve this audience.

IE is a relatively new area within higher education and the position of VPIE is new at some campuses and does not (yet) exist at others. This study provides baseline information about the backgrounds and perspectives of VPIEs. It will be important to repeat and perhaps expand this study periodically as the field and the position both become more common and continue to adapt to the changing landscape of higher education.

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Appendix: Interview Questions

1. I would like to confirm some of the background information I learned about you from other sources [if appropriate; review and confirm/change background information]

2. Were you the first person at your institution to have the title of VPIE (or its equivalent)?

3. What is/was your reporting relationship as VPIE? Do/did you serve as a member of the president's cabinet (or similar group)?

4. Please briefly describe your responsibilities as VPIE. Do you have a written job description that you would be willing to share?

5. If you have served previously as a Director or Assistant/Associate Vice President, etc. in institutional effectiveness, how is/was the experience of being a vice president different? For example, is/was your ability to influence decision making different?

6. Can you tell me about the institutional circumstances that led to this position being at the vice presidential level? Was this the decision of the president? Was there something special about the organizational structure of the institution? Were there some external circumstances that led to the position being established?

7. There are complaints at many institutions about the proliferation of administrators. Was this the case at your institution when your position was established? Did the president provide a rationale for the importance of establishing the position?

8. What types of knowledge and skills are/were critical for your performance as the VPIE (or its equivalent): technical-analytical skills, knowledge of higher education management issues, knowledge of the institution and its people and history, leadership skills?

9. Where do you see the future of the institutional effectiveness concept and the position of VPIE?

10. What advice do you have for others who aspire to a VPIE position?

11. The Association for Higher Education Effectiveness (see www.ahee.org) was founded to provide support, professional development for professionals who lead and work in offices that intentionally integrate multiple functions (strategic planning, institutional research, assessment, accreditation, program review) to promote and support evidence-based planning and improvement. Do you have any suggestions for services that AHEE should provide?

12. What other information would you like to share on this topic?