



**Association for Institutional Research**  
1435 E. Piedmont Drive, Suite 211, Tallahassee, FL 32308  
Phone: 850-385-4155, Fax: 850-385-5180, [www.airweb.org](http://www.airweb.org)

*Executive Director*  
Randy L. Swing

January 31, 2013

Dr. Kenneth Scott  
Director, Cisco Network Academy/SkillsUSA  
H Council Trenholm State Technical College  
PO Box 10048  
Patterson Campus, 3920 Troy Highway  
Montgomery, AL 36116-2612

Dear Ken,

Thank you for submitting your paper, *Community College Survey Data: The Impact of Quantity and Quality on Informed Decision-Making*, to AIR for consideration of the 2012 Charles F. Elton Best Paper Award. AIR received twenty entries for this award. I regret to inform you that your paper was not selected as an award winner.

Your submission was reviewed by three AIR members; their comments are attached. You will note that their feedback is very positive. As a result, you and your co-authors may wish to submit the paper to AIR Professional File, which is a biannual collection of articles that address fundamental aspects of institutional research work. If interested, you can opt to submit the paper as-is, and the Coordinating Editor will consider the feedback provided by the Best Paper reviewers, or you may submit a revised version of the paper. Please note that this is not a commitment that AIR will publish your article; my intent is simply to highlight a potential outlet for work that reviewers believe will be of value for AIR members. If you would like more information about this opportunity, contact Leah Ross at [publications@airweb.org](mailto:publications@airweb.org).

The winners of the 2012 Best Paper Award will be announced in conjunction with the release of the Research in Higher Education Annual Forum Issue in March.

Thank you for allowing AIR to consider your scholarship for the Charles F. Elton Best Paper Award. I look forward to your continued contributions to the field.

Sincerely,

Randy L. Swing, Ph.D.  
Executive Director

---

2012-2013 Board of Directors

*President:*

Julie Carpenter-Hubin, The Ohio State University

*Vice President:*

Sandi Bramblett, Georgia Institute of Technology

*Immediate Past President:*

Jennifer A. Brown, University of Massachusetts Boston

*Members At Large:*

Hansel E. Burley, Texas Tech University

Paul B. Duby (*Board Treasurer*), Northern Michigan University

Mazur K. Einarson, Cornell University

Glenn W. James, Tennessee Technological University

Christine M. Keller, Association of Public and Land-grant Universities

Heather A. Kelly, University of Delaware

C. Ellen Peters, University of Puget Sound

Alice M. Simpkins, Pointe College

Elizabeth C. Stanley (*Board Secretary*), Zayed University (retired)

**Authors:** Ken Scott, Novadean Watson-Stone, Mimi Johnson

**Title:** *Community College Survey Data: The Impact of Quantity and Quality on Informed Decision-Making*

**Reviewer 1 of 3**

Criteria	Score (1-low to 5-high or n/a)	Comments
<b>Framing</b>		
The problem is clearly defined.	4	
The purpose is clearly defined.	4	
The objectives and/or research questions are clearly articulated.	4	
<b>Analysis</b>		
The data sources are clearly identified.	4	
The methodology is clearly described.	4	
The limitations are identified.	1	
<b>Findings/Results</b>		
The results are clearly explained.	4	
The tables and figures supplement the text.	4	
The author distinguishes clearly between what is factual and what may be his/her interpretation of the data.	5	
<b>Structure</b>		
The paper has a logical flow.	5	
The paper is well-written.	5	
The tables and figures are labeled appropriately.	4	
Use of references reflects an understanding of the literature.	5	
<b>Comments for the author(s)</b>		
<b>What are the strengths of the paper?</b>		
Very informative, well written and well designed.		
<b>In what ways could the author improve the paper?</b>		
The author should have provided a readily identifiable section for the limitations of the study.		

Reviewer 2 of 3

Criteria	Score (1-low to 5-high or n/a)	Comments
<b>Framing</b>		
The problem is clearly defined.	5	Very clear throughout the paper and paper stayed focused on the problem.
The purpose is clearly defined.	3	Wording needs help - first sentence of abstract and in second paragraph. In latter not clear what is meant by 'options'.
The objectives and/or research questions are clearly articulated.	5	Clearly written and displayed at appropriate times
<b>Analysis</b>		
The data sources are clearly identified.	3	Not clear how responders chosen, does not appear to be a random sample as mentioned, but a sample of convenience from a population defined by server/member lists. How did population learn about the survey? What was the response rate?
The methodology is clearly described.	3	Does not include any information on statistical methods; does not tell reader that multiple answers allowed on some survey questions; confusing what subgroups are compared in Tables 2, 4 and 5. Wording in paper very poor in regards to describing who was compared to who.
The limitations are identified.	3.5	Does mention use of neutral choice, but would like to know why they included that option and why they did not clarify what it meant; did mention small n for IR. Would like to have know what kind of staff answered survey (what their job duties were)
<b>Findings/Results</b>		
The results are clearly explained.	2	Does not describe the results in Tables 2, 4 or 5. Not sure how they picked what "impact" variables to mention in IR group results section. Seem to veer away from their own results sometimes and talk about what they think are the issues.
The tables and figures supplement the text.	4	Just wish they would discuss all of them, otherwise why provide them? I liked how they provided comments from the responders.
The author distinguishes clearly between what is factual and what may be his/her interpretation of the data.	4	Good for the most part. Last paragraph of paper should be deleted or carefully rewritten. The authors do a great job of summarizing their findings up to this

		paragraph but then they go back to this one idea that is true, but not what their own paper is proving. I think this also reflects the problem with the lack of written results provided in this paper. It is like the authors are more interested in discussing how important the need for quality surveys with high response rates rather than discussing what gets in the way of getting high quality responses.
<b>Structure</b>		
The paper has a logical flow.	5	Yes, very easy to follow.
The paper is well-written.	4	Some places the wording is confusing and the verb tense not consistent; in places incorrect word is used (for example 'groups' for 'comparisons' and 'correlation' for 'clarification'; treat data as singular and other times as plural
The tables and figures are labeled appropriately.	4	Would be clearer and easier to remember if rounded the percents to whole numbers
Use of references reflects an understanding of the literature.	5	Review of past literature is helpful and supportive of the purpose of their paper.
<b>Comments for the author(s)</b>		
<b>What are the strengths of the paper?</b> Great topic, lots of results clearly presented		
<b>In what ways could the author improve the paper?</b> Wording poor/confusing in several places. Need more of a discussion of results. Very little is said about results in Tables 2, 4 and 5, nothing in regards to comparisons tested. Provide the surveys or make it clear that all of the questions asked are as presented in Tables 2, 4 and 5.		

**Reviewer 3 of 3**

Criteria	Score (1-low to 5-high or n/a)	Comments
<b>Framing</b>		
The problem is clearly defined.	5	
The purpose is clearly defined.	4	didn't show up until page 11 - too late in the paper
The objectives and/or research questions are clearly articulated.	4	showed up on page 12 - too late
<b>Analysis</b>		
The data sources are clearly identified.	5	
The methodology is clearly described.	2	Author did not provide adequate reasoning for statistical tests used to measure the four research questions. These are not common methods nor do they make intuitive sense to answer the questions.



The limitations are identified.	1	
<b>Findings/Results</b>		
The results are clearly explained.	2	Author did not provide clear answers to each question using the data results. Felt like I still didn't know the answers after reading the results section.
The tables and figures supplement the text.	3	Data from tables provide too much information that is not referenced or explained in the text. For example, table 2 references differences in gender by item but results are never given by gender. Also, none of the discussion talks about these gender differences.
The author distinguishes clearly between what is factual and what may be his/her interpretation of the data.	n/a	
<b>Structure</b>		
The paper has a logical flow.	5	
The paper is well-written.	5	
The tables and figures are labeled appropriately.	5	
Use of references reflects an understanding of the literature.	5	
<b>Comments for the author(s)</b>		
<b>What are the strengths of the paper?</b>		
Generally well-written		
<b>In what ways could the author improve the paper?</b>		
It is a very good paper on a topic for community colleges. I know that I would have been much more interested if the researchers would have asked these questions of students and their perceptions of surveys.		