



This essay is one of several sent in recognition of the Institute of Higher Education's 50th anniversary and conference held on Monday, March 30, 2015 culminating a year of celebratory events.

The conference brought together alumni, faculty, students, staff and friends to celebrate the past successes of the Institute and chart a path for the future.

*The IHE was founded in 1964 by Georgia higher education officials and policymakers to address the academic and operational challenges facing colleges and universities across the state and region.*

*Today, more than 50 years later, the Institute is nationally and internationally recognized for its enduring commitment to offering advanced education and training, research and professional services for college and university leaders.*

## “... THE ROAD LEADS BACK TO YOU.”

### Reflections on Four Years at the Institute of Higher Education

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Because I have so many good memories of my years at the University of Georgia's Institute of Higher Education, I was delighted when Jim Hearn gave me the opportunity to provide some reflections on the Institute as part of its yearlong, 50th Anniversary Celebration. There is so much to celebrate. Throughout its first half-century, the IHE faculty, students and staff have been steady and important contributors to the emergence and development of higher education as a field of study and to the refinement of institutional research philosophy and practice. In subtle and not-so-subtle ways, IHE has shaped the operations and thinking of colleges and universities throughout the U.S. and around the world.

On a more personal note, I owe a great deal to the Institute and all those connected with it, past and present. In reflecting on IHE's impact and on my years there (1986-1990), a line from "Georgia on My Mind" provides a soft background: In so many ways, both on the national scene and for me personally, "the road leads back to you."

On the national scene, through his intellectual and personal leadership, creativity and energy, Dr. Cameron Fincher (IHE director from 1969-1999), guided the Institute's considerable influence on the emergence of higher education as a field of study and on the development and practice of institutional research as a vital administrative function. Cameron contributed actively to the founding of both the Association for Institutional Research (AIR) and the Southern Association for Institutional Research (SAIR). His name and those of other IHE faculty and students are prominent among those whom AIR and SAIR have honored with their awards for research and scholarship, outstanding service to those associations and to the profession, and their distinguished careers. IHE faculty members and alumni continue to be prominent in the professional networks of higher education administration, academic preparation programs, public policy analysis, institutional research, and state and federal higher education agencies.

Closer to home, my IHE years mark the beginning of a period of professional and intellectual development and maturation that persisted throughout my career. The opportunity to join the IHE faculty came at a critical point in my professional life. In 1985, Ernie Pascarella and I had begun to think seriously about updating Feldman and Newcomb's *The Impact of College on Students* (Jossey-Bass, 1969). We were planning a comprehensive review of the research on college effects on students published in the 20 years that followed Feldman and Newcomb. My workload as director of institutional research and assistant to the president for planning at the SUNY-Albany, however, would have precluded undertaking that project, which was to culminate five

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He has received research awards from the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE), the American College Personnel Association (ACPA), the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), and the student affairs associations of the states of New York and Pennsylvania.

Terenzini is only the fifth Association for Institutional Research (AIR) member in the association's 50-year history to have won all three of AIR's major awards: Sydney Suslow Award (1987), the Outstanding Service Award (1994), and the John E. Stecklein Distinguished Membership Award (2012).

Terenzini was named the first recipient of the Sphere of Influence Award, given jointly by ACPA and NASPA—an award to be given only once each decade.

He is the author and co-author of numerous publications including the two-volume *How College Affects Students* (with Ernest T. Pascarella, Jossey-Bass, 1991 and 2005), an award-winning synthesis of 30 years of research on the impacts of the college experience on students.

years later in the publication of *How College Affects Students* (Jossey-Bass, 1991). The timing of Dr. Fincher's invitation to consider a faculty position at UGA was perfect, and what followed profoundly changed my professional life.

The next four years provided opportunities to pursue my research, to learn about higher education in Georgia and a land-grant university, and to work with the wonderful faculty and staff members, students of the Institute, and from around the University. All were interested and supportive of what I was doing, stimulating, and unfailingly polite, enjoyable people. Hard work, but also a lot of fun, characterized those years. It was the perfect academic job, and I am grateful to Mary Sue Love, my staff assistant, and to Mary Snyder, Susan Sheffield and Joyce Placek, who supported the Institute in general, but also rescued me whenever I needed rescuing.

IHE also provided what seemed to be a steady stream of interesting students eager to learn. The students in my classes, and particularly those who were my graduate assistants, were intellectually curious, challenging and always fun to be around. I still warmly recall my surprise and amusement when, early in my time at UGA, I presented a paper at an ASHE meeting in Baltimore. When I finished, from the back of the room (where the UGA students sat together) came a stirring (but polite) "Woof! Woof! Woof!" Thinking about it still draws a chuckle. But it also reminds me of UGA students' eagerness to learn, their willingness to work hard, and their camaraderie and ability to do all those things and have fun together at the same time.

IHE also nurtured two articles of which I am particularly proud. Both articles (one on assessment<sup>1</sup>, the other on IR<sup>2</sup>) have been cited or reprinted more times than probably any others I have written. For the latter piece, I owe a deep debt to Dr. Larry Jones, then UGA's associate director of institutional research and a close friend from the time we first met. Weekly Friday lunches with Larry were occasions for stimulating discussions about higher education and IR. "On the Nature of Institutional Research" began—literally—on a lunchtime napkin in the UGA Faculty and Staff Center.

My years at IHE comprised a relatively small proportion of my professional lifetime, but they were among the most significant years. With pride and deep gratitude, I wish IHE and all connected with it a wonderful anniversary year and continued productivity and influence in the next 50 years. As the man said, it all "leads back to you." Woof! Woof! Woof!

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<sup>1</sup> Terenzini, P. T. (1989). Assessment with open eyes: Pitfalls in studying student outcomes. *Journal of Higher Education*, 60, 644-664.

<sup>2</sup> Terenzini, P. T. (1993). On the nature of institutional research and the knowledge and skills it requires. *Research in Higher Education*, 34, 1-10.