Data services at Western Carolina University

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Western Carolina University at-a-glance

- 7,000 undergraduate students
- 2,000 graduate students
  - Degrees in social sciences, health care, business, and humanities. One doctoral program in education.
Data services position mandate

- It’s a new position—I am the first
- Data services position was one of three new positions envisioned by former library director (now university CIO)
  - GIS/geography
  - Metadata
- Entrepreneurial—a lot is up to me
Current data users

- Social sciences
- Business
- Health care
  - Social sciences and health care are into evidence-based research in a big way
  - But there’s a big difference between data needs of WCU and large research universities
Needs assessment

- Planning a faculty survey to be administered fall 2009
- Initially one was planned in the first year, but a similar survey (focused on university support and technology, not my position) was sent out by another faculty member
What I focused on in Year-One

- Learned and relearned data/statistics ropes
  - Audited sociology data analysis course
  - Attended social sciences research venues
- Schmoozed with faculty to learn their take on data
Year-One continued

- Completed projects that I thought would be useful—and not big $$$
  - Made sure our statistical print resources were up-to-date; created a “statistical neighborhood”
  - Researched free online data resources, and had helpful sites cataloged
Year-Two plans

- Will offer data statistical and data literacy workshops in fall 2008
  - Target audience is undergraduates
  - Tied into statistical games political candidates play
  - Ask faculty to give extra credit points for attendance
Year-Two plans, continued

- Audit graduate research course in political science
- Continue to seek out faculty research discussions
- Develop statistical web pages consisting of freely available sources for WCU alumni in Social Work and Public Administration
Current technology at WCU

- SPSS and SAS
  - There appear to be 2 camps among the faculty. There was a war brewing—some wanted us to only use SAS—but things have calmed down
- Atlas-ti
- Data software and tools are IT supported