

njair

NEW JERSEY
ASSOCIATION *for*
INSTITUTIONAL
RESEARCH

2025 VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

 Thursday, July 24th

 10:00 AM TO 4:30 PM (EDT)

Register now at :

<https://www.air-nj.org/>

ONLY SOME OF OUR AMAZING
SPEAKERS!!



Jon Stoessel

- *Institutional Research Analyst*
- *Princeton University*



Xilin Zhang

- *Associate Director of Institutional Research*
- *New Jersey Institute of Technology*



Kristen Lindsay

- *Director of Institutional Research and Assessment*
- *The University of Findlay*



**Lathish Balaji
Baskaran**

- *Data Scientist*
- *Rowan University*



Shante Walker

- *Institutional Research Analyst*
- *Rowan University*

NJ-AIR BOARD



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- New Jersey Institute of Technology, (4-Year Public)



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Kaitlyn Helmstetter

- **Committee Member, NJ-AIR**
- County College of Morris (2-Year Public)

Chad May

- **Committee Member, NJ-AIR**
- NJ Office of the Secretary of Higher Education [OSHE]

Michael Salvatore

- **Committee Member, NJ-AIR**
- Kean University (4-Year Public)

Nicole Salamatin

- **Committee Member, NJ-AIR**
- Rowan College at Burlington County (2-Year Public)



Mission of NJAIR is

To promote communication and cooperation among higher education researchers in New Jersey.

The goals of NJAIR include:

- promoting professional development (sharing information, information technology, research methods, etc.)
- facilitating information/data sharing
- identifying and analyzing the emerging issues in higher education
- facilitating networking among colleagues

History

NJAIR began with a breakfast gathering of New Jersey institutional researchers attending the NEAIR conference in Baltimore in 1994. The meeting was called to generate interest in forming an association that would bring together institutional researchers from all sectors of higher education in New Jersey. The group decided that the best way to move forward would be to hold a conference on topics of general interest to which institutional researchers from all the colleges and universities in the state would be invited.

Georgian Court College hosted and subsidized the first annual meeting, held in March 1995. The restructuring of higher education in New Jersey, SPRE, and the Student-Right-to-Know Act were the hot topics addressed at the meeting. After lunch, the idea of forming a multi-sector association was presented and approved by the group. The first steering committee was selected from volunteers interested in turning an idea into an organization.

By 1996, the time seemed right to begin to formalize NJAIR. A mission statement was written and the steering committee began to be structured. In 1997, NJAIR became an officially recognized affiliate of AIR. In the fall of 1997, the steering committee moved to incorporate as a nonprofit organization and to collect dues in order to upgrade the kind of services the association could offer. Besides the annual meeting, NJAIR now sponsors a listserv and this website.

In 2021, NJAIR went on hiatus due to the demands of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022, NJAIR revived to continue its work of connecting higher education researchers from across the state to connect, learn from each other, and tackle today's issues in higher education. Join your colleagues from throughout the state at NJAIR's 2025 conference!

Schedule at a Glance

10:00 am - 10:10 am	Opening Remarks	
10:10 am - 10:50 am	NJOSHE Updates	
10:50 am - 11:00 am	Break	
	Breakout Room 1	Breakout Room 2
11:00 am - 12:30 pm	AI	Student success
	Designing an AI-Powered IR Chatbot to Foster Cross-Departmental Collaboration and Data Access	Student Success Champion Collaboration
	AI to compare Survey Submissions from different years to identify trends and changes	Supporting Student Success through Strategic Analytics and AI Tools
	Using AI to Improve Data Accessibility	Leveraging Navigate360 to Close Graduation Gaps: A Data-Informed Approach to Assessment and Student Success at Kean University
12:30 pm - 1:30 pm	Lunch Break and Discussion	
1:30 pm - 2:20 pm	Keynote	
2:20 pm - 2:30 pm	Break	
2:30 pm - 3:30 pm	Tech & Collaboration	Data Governance
	The Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How of IR Collaboration	Chaos to Clarity: Cleaning Up Program Data Through Collaborative Cataloging
	Bringing a project home: "In-sourcing" the Staff Engagement Survey at Princeton	Data Governance at West Chester University: Path and Promise
3:30 pm - 4:00 pm	Discussion and Conference Closing Session	

10:00 am - 10:10 am

WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS



Jeremy Reich

Jeremy Reich

- Assistant Director for Assessment and Accreditation, Off of Institutional Effectiveness
- Acting Chair, NJ-AIR

10:10 am - 10:50 am

NJOSHE UPDATES



Chad L. May

- Director of Research and Analysis
- New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE)

During this session we will present some major updates for the 2025-26 research and reporting period that will impact institutions. We will focus on federal IPEDS survey changes and any associated changes to State level data collections. We will focus on specific state-level data collection activities and preview some upcoming changes and issues for discussion. We will also preview and review some current research activities and deliverables developed by the OSHE research team.

10:50 am - 11:00 am

BREAK

11:00 am - 11:30 am

DESIGNING AN AI-POWERED IR CHATBOT TO FOSTER CROSS-DEPARTMENTAL COLLABORATION AND DATA ACCESS



Xilin Zhang

- Associate Director of Institutional Research
- New Jersey Institute of Technology

Dong Dinh and Eugene Deess

- New Jersey Institute of Technology

Institutional Research (IR) offices are often the central hub for data requests, reports, and analysis—but collaboration with other departments can be delayed by fragmented data access, inconsistent terminology, or reliance on manual workflows. This presentation introduces the conceptual design of an AI-powered IR Chatbot built to unify data access and streamline collaboration across campus units. Designed as a smart assistant, the chatbot can respond to natural language queries, provide real-time access to key institutional metrics, and guide users to relevant data sources or documentation. By incorporating institution-specific business logic, access permissions, and frequently used reporting definitions, the chatbot enhances both efficiency and transparency. The session will discuss technical design considerations, data governance implications, and how this tool can reinforce a culture of collaboration between IR, academic departments, student affairs, and senior leadership. Attendees will leave with a framework to begin designing similar solutions tailored to their own institutional needs.

11:30 am - 12:00 pm

USING AI TO COMPARE SURVEY SUBMISSIONS FROM DIFFERENT YEARS TO IDENTIFY TRENDS AND CHANGES



Lathish Balaji Baskaran

- Data Scientist
- Rowan University

Every year, Institutional Research teams submit hundreds of external surveys and ensuring consistency from one year to the next is critical. At Rowan University, we found that comparing past and current submissions (especially in PDF format) was taking up a lot of time and often required tedious, manual review.

To help with this, we built a web-based tool that uses AI and allows side-by-side comparisons of PDF reports from previous and current years. It highlights differences in data, wording, making it easier to spot when numbers have dropped unexpectedly, jumped to unusually high values, or are completely missing and also gives a percentage difference between the previous year to the current year. This helps us quickly catch potential reporting errors, track meaningful trends, and flag anything that looks off before submissions go out.

The tool was developed using Python and Django web framework, we leveraged Azure's Open AI for the AI models and also Llama for document extraction. It's designed to be easy for any team member to use. Just select the survey and upload the files, and the system will show you where the differences are without any extra steps.

12:00 pm - 12:30 pm

USING AI TO IMPROVE DATA ACCESSIBILITY



Samyukta Alapati

- Associate Director
- Rowan University



Bharathwaj Vijayakumar

- Assistant Vice President, OIRA
- Rowan University

At Rowan University, we know that getting timely answers from institutional data can be challenging, especially when those answers are buried in reports or require technical skills to retrieve. That's why we've started developing a set of AI-powered tools to make it easier for faculty, staff, and administrators to get the information they need, when they need it.

One of our key projects is a conversational AI tool that allows users to ask everyday questions like "How many students are enrolled in Nursing this term?" or "Which majors are growing the fastest?" and get real-time answers without needing to write a single line of code or run a complex report. The goal is to put data directly into the hands of the people who use it for advising, planning, and making decisions. Behind the scenes, this tool uses Python, ThoughtSpot, and web technologies. But on the front end, it's about simplicity and usability, removing technical barriers so users can focus on taking action, not figuring out how to run a query applying various filters on dashboards.

Attendees will leave with practical strategies and tools they can apply in their own offices to improve data accessibility and increase efficiency.

11:00 am - 11:30 am

STUDENT SUCCESS CHAMPION COLLABORATION**Kristen Lindsay**

- Director of Institutional Research and Assessment
- The University of Findlay

Bridging student and academic affairs, our collaborative project at The University of Findlay incorporates two items that impact change aligned with UF's strategic plan: Invite, Engage and Inspire students. First, we endeavored to better understand student retention through building a more authentic picture of the undergraduate experience. Focusing on first-year students, we investigated what keeps them engaged. We determined our "sticky" factor (what does UF offer that makes students want to stay and strive toward graduation). Second, a formidable challenge our students face is academic preparedness for success in the classroom. While participating in the UF Preparedness Summit, visiting dozens of meetings and listening to many frustrations, we challenged our colleagues' tendency to bemoan the students we wish we had and challenge them to embrace the students we do have. Incorporating the outcomes of our "stickiness" investigation and our preparedness campaign, our project shaped campus-wide retention initiatives.

11:30 am - 12:00 pm

SUPPORTING STUDENT SUCCESS THROUGH STRATEGIC ANALYTICS AND AI TOOLS**Neva Lozada**

- Vice President for Administration
- Kean University

Hong Gao and Nima Sherpa

- Kean University

Kean University is dedicated to enhancing student success by improving retention and graduation rates. The Division of Strategic Analytics and Data Illumination (SADI) partners with the Student Success Center and Academic Advising to identify key factors influencing student outcomes. After three years of collaborative efforts, the first-semester retention rate for the Fall 2024 cohort reached a historic high, and the first-year retention rate for the Fall 2023 cohort increased by five percentage points compared to three years prior. This presentation will highlight how SADI delivers meaningful insights through data visualization and strategic analytics to inform student support initiatives. In addition, we will share findings from a recent study on student major changes, which incorporates the use of an AI tool (ChatGPT) to analyze patterns and inform decision-making.

12:00 pm - 12:30 pm

LEVERAGING NAVIGATE360 TO CLOSE GRADUATION GAPS: A DATA-INFORMED APPROACH TO ASSESSMENT AND STUDENT SUCCESS AT KEAN UNIVERSITY**Gillian Scott**

- Director of Student Data Systems
- Kean University

Colleges and universities continue to face the challenge of closing persistent graduation gaps among our students, while simultaneously streamlining assessment practices and ensuring institutional effectiveness. At Kean University, we recognized the opportunity to address these challenges through our strategic, university-wide implementation of Navigate360.

This session examines how Kean University utilizes Navigate360 as more than just a student support and engagement platform—it serves as a comprehensive data ecosystem that enables ongoing assessment, fosters cross-departmental collaboration, and promotes student-centered outcomes. Navigate360 is fully integrated into key areas across the university, including accessibility services, professional advising, and learning support.

We will share how our teams use system-generated engagement and usage data to track student progress, guide interventions, and measure impact across student success initiatives. Attendees will leave with practical strategies for integrating similar functions of Navigate360 at their institution to help streamline business processes and enhance student support.

This session is ideal for institutional researchers, assessment professionals, and student success leaders seeking to make better use of existing platforms to inform data-driven strategies and promote outcomes that align with departmental and institutional goals.

12:30 pm - 1:30 pm

LUNCH BREAK

1:30 pm - 2:20 pm

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS:
KEY ISSUES AND LEARNINGS FROM THE NEW JERSEY STATE-WIDE DATA SYSTEM**



**Stephanie Walsh,
Ph.D.**

- *Director of NJSDS*
- *Rutgers University*

The New Jersey Statewide Data System (NJSDS) is the State of New Jersey's centralized longitudinal platform for administrative data. NJSDS connects people to data to improve policy outcomes by providing access to information in support of research and evaluation.
<https://njsds.nj.gov/>

2:20 pm - 2:30 pm

BREAK

2:30 pm - 3:00 pm

THE WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, WHY, AND HOW OF IR COLLABORATION

Amy Kusmiesz

- *Institutional Research Analyst*
- *Rowan University*

Institutional Research (IR) offices face growing demands from recurring surveys, profiles, and ad-hoc reporting. This session will highlight how our IR team at Rowan University uses collaborative workflows, tools, and technologies to meet these challenges effectively. We'll walk through the "Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How" of collaboration—who we work with, what tools we use (like Google Drive and shared documents), where collaboration happens, when it fits into our workflow, why it matters for accuracy and timeliness, and how we foster a collaborative culture. Attendees will leave with practical strategies and tools they can apply in their own offices to improve collaboration, ensure data integrity, and increase efficiency.

3:00 pm - 3:30 pm

BRINGING A PROJECT HOME: "IN-SOURCING" THE STAFF ENGAGEMENT SURVEY AT PRINCETON



Jon Stoessel

- *Institutional Research Analyst*
- *Princeton University*

Resources (human and monetary) are at a premium. Bandwidth is at a premium. But, so is the local knowledge necessary to shepherd a long-term assessment project from pre-planning through facilitating insights. In Fall 2019, the decision was made to bring a Staff Engagement Survey project in-house, transferring the main core of tasks from an outside vendor to the Office of Institutional Research. In partnership with team members in Human Resources, we have executed two projects (2021 and 2024) from questionnaire development through data communications with mostly positive results. Namely, the production of 30+ cabinet / department level reports and supporting resources in addition to evidence that the data are useful and used. But why couch positive results with mostly? What wrench (or wrenches...lots of wrenches) could be thrown in over the course of 16 months from the first planning meeting through the communication / sharing of data?

3:30 pm - 4:00 pm

MAIN CONFERENCE ROOM

Discussion and Closing Session

2:30 pm - 3:00 pm

CHAOS TO CLARITY: CLEANING UP PROGRAM DATA THROUGH COLLABORATIVE CATALOGING**Shante Walker**

- *Institutional Research Analyst*
- *Rowan University*

Inconsistent and outdated data, whether in academic program listings or Institutional Research surveys, can obstruct effective decision-making, strategic planning, and external reporting. At Rowan University, the Office of Institutional Research and Analytics (OIRA) is tackling this challenge head-on through a collaborative data cataloging initiative using Informatica's Cloud Data Governance and Catalog (CDGC).

By working closely with the Registrar, Rowan Online, University Scheduling, and Information Resources & Technology (IRT), OIRA is building a comprehensive metadata repository to document business definitions, track data lineage, and clarify stewardship for both academic program data and IR survey elements. This approach ensures transparency, consistency, and alignment across stakeholders and systems.

This session will highlight three high-impact initiatives:

* **The Accurate Active Program List:** A cleanup effort to document, define, and validate academic program offerings through cross-departmental collaboration.

* **Reorganizing Online Programs:** An initiative with Rowan Online to reflect evolving modalities and classification logic, ensuring internal systems match external survey submissions and web communications.

* **Survey Metadata Cataloging:** A new effort to catalog all institutional research surveys, such as IPEDS, Common Data Set, and U.S. News, by mapping each question to its underlying data elements, clarifying definitions, lineage, and use across multiple reporting contexts.

Attendees will see how collaborative data stewardship, consistent terminology, and intelligent metadata management tools can untangle complexity, improve internal coordination, and enhance the institution's external visibility and reporting accuracy.

3:00 pm - 3:30 pm

DATA GOVERNANCE AT WEST CHESTER UNIVERSITY: PATH AND PROMISE**Edward Fingland**

- *Systems Architect*
- *West Chester University of Pennsylvania*

Join us as we share how our institution's transition to a new Student Information System (SIS) served as the catalyst for launching a comprehensive data governance initiative. This session will explore the drivers behind the effort, including the challenges we faced and the organizational need for improved data stewardship and standards. We'll walk through our progress in drafting a data governance policy, defining roles and responsibilities across campus, and creating a shared data glossary.

In addition to our deliverables, we'll share practical strategies for building cross-functional engagement, overcoming resistance, and maintaining momentum. Attendees will leave with a roadmap of lessons learned, organizational insights, and actionable tips for launching or strengthening their own data governance efforts.

Amanda Thomas and Rommel Guadalupe

- *West Chester University of Pennsylvania*

3:30 pm - 4:00 pm

MAIN CONFERENCE ROOM

Discussion and Closing Session

NEW JERSEY INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

American Institute of Medical Sciences and Education
Assumption College for Sisters
Atlantic Cape Community College
Bais Medrash Mayan Hatorah
Bais Medrash Toras Chesed
Bais Medrash Zichron Meir
Bergen Community College
Berkeley College
Best Care College
Bet Midrash Ohel Torah
Beth Medrash Govoha
Brookdale Community College
Caldwell University
Camden County College
Centenary University
Chamberlain University
County College of Morris
CTOR Academy
DeVry University
Drew University
Eastern International College - Jersey City Campus
*Eastern School of Acupuncture and
Traditional Medicine (ESATM)*
Eastwick College
Essex County College
Fairleigh Dickinson University
Felician University
Georgian Court University
Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine
Hudson County Community College
Jersey College
Kean University
Keser Torah-Mayan Hatalmud
Manara College
Mercer County Community College
Middlesex College
Monmouth University
Montclair State University
Mosdos Yaakov V'Yisroel
New Brunswick Theological Seminary
New Jersey Center for Teaching and Learning
New Jersey City University
New Jersey Institute of Technology
Ocean County College
Passaic County Community College
Pentecost Biblical Seminary
Pillar College
Princeton Theological Seminary
Princeton University
Rabbi Jacob Joseph School
Rabbinical College of America
Rabbinical Seminary M'kor Chaim
Ramapo College of New Jersey
Raritan Valley Community College
Rider University
*Rowan College at Burlington County -
Mt. Laurel Campus*
Rowan College of South Jersey
Rowan University
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
Saint Elizabeth University
Saint Peter's University
Salem Community College
Seminary Bnos Chaim
Seton Hall University
St. Sophia Ukrainian Orthodox Theological Seminary
Stevens Institute of Technology
Stockton University
Strayer University
Sussex County Community College
Talmudical Academy
The College of New Jersey
Thomas Edison State University
UCNJ Union College of Union County, NJ
Warren County Community College
William Paterson University of New Jersey
Yeshiva Bais Aharon
Yeshiva Gedola Tiferes Yaakov Yitzchok
Yeshiva Gedola Tiferes Yerachmiel
Yeshiva Gedola Zichron Leyma
Yeshiva Gedolah Keren Hatorah
Yeshiva Gedolah of Cliffwood
Yeshiva Gedolah Shaarei Shmuel
Yeshiva Gedolah Tiferes Boruch
Yeshiva Ohr Simcha of Englewood
Yeshiva Ohr Zechariah
Yeshiva Toras Chaim
Yeshiva Yesodei Hatorah
Yeshivas Be'er Yitzchok
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