



ISSUE 12 • SUMMER 2024

# OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL ANALYTICS

## DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

BY HEATHER MECHLER

Within the OIA team, there is a distinct sense of “nerd positivity.” Most of us have a least one nerdy hobby (or more). Calling someone a nerd is a high compliment, and most of us are perfectly happy to tuck in to a complicated data set or meticulously refine a data visualization away from our everyday distractions. This trait is hardly uncommon among teams of analysts and data scientists across many industries. Highly analytical people are often a bit quieter than average and often preferred math and science classes during our early education. It’s hard to break into the popular crowd with those kinds of tendencies!

With that said, data work is also intensely human work. Being a good “data person” means being willing to ask the right questions, even when they might be difficult questions. (“Is this expensive and high-profile intervention actually working?”) It means engaging with others on a meaningful level and learning from the subject matter experts and practitioners whose work we uplift. It means critiquing every element of your own work to be sure that you’re engaging in effective data storytelling. It also means respecting the people whose lived experiences have created the data you use, ensuring that they are represented fairly and in a way that they recognize. Even the nerdiest among us feels an immense sense of pride when the work that we do helps others to be seen, heard, and valued.

This will be my last Director’s Column for the OIA Newsletter, as I have taken a position at Duke University beginning August 1. I appreciate all of you who have read and engaged with our newsletter over the years, and I wish you all the very best as you continue your data journeys.

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# WHAT'S NEW IN THE UNM DATA COMMUNITY?

## TECH DAYS 2024

BY KEVIN MULCAIRE

Our team has once again demonstrated their expertise and innovation at this year's Tech Days, delivering a series of insightful presentations. **Kevin Mulcaire and Heather Mechler** ignited interest with "Leveraging ChatGPT for R Code," a lightning round presentation that explored the integration of AI technologies with statistical programming to enhance R code efficiency. **Jing Feng** provided a deep dive into data manipulation techniques with her talk on "Converting Data Between Wide and Long Format in R," helping attendees master complex data transformations. **Charla Orozco** demystified data visualization tools in "Data Visualization in Tableau Public: The Free Version of Tableau!" showcasing how powerful visual insights can be created without cost. **Zacharia Kibuta** compared programming efficiencies in "Performance Evaluation of Three Open-Source Programming Languages (R, Julia, and Python)," offering a critical look at the strengths and weaknesses of each. **Monte-Angel Richardson** emphasized strategic planning with "Seeing the Forest Through the Trees: Why Creating an Admissions Pipeline is Essential," stressing the importance of structured recruitment strategies. These presentations not only highlight the diverse talents within our team but also underscore our commitment to advancing industry knowledge and embracing innovative solutions.

## AIR FORUM 2024

BY JING FENG

A few members of the OIA team attended the [2024 Association for Institutional Research \(AIR\) forum](#) in Denver in the end of May. Charla Orozco gave a successful presentation about the relationship between campus living and academic outcomes at UNM, which suggested that students who lived on campus had improved graduation rates and overall GPAs compared to students who never lived on campus. Attendees also attended a number of other interesting sessions at the conference, covering topics such as data literacy, data visualization, machine learning, survey best practices and many more. In particular, the University of Maryland's [Love Data Week](#) was thought to be a very interesting and effective event to promote data literacy, and OIA is excited at the prospect of collaborating with them in the future.

## APPALACHIAN STATE ANALYTICS DAY

BY CHARLA OROZCO

[Appalachian State Analytics Day](#) took place virtually on June 13. OIA was represented by two separate presentations: Incorporating Tableau, R and ChatGPT to Connect UNM Food Pantry Survey Responses to Institutional Data (Kevin Mulcaire and Charla Orozco) and "Shouldn't We Just Do Everything Online?" Visualizing Differential Course Outcomes (Heather Mechler). Both sessions were well attended with over 400 participants! Presentation recordings and materials can be found [here](#).

**Looking ahead:** Please save the date for **UNM HSC's Tableau Days** on October 23 and 24. The event will be hybrid (online Wednesday, in-person and online Thursday). More information to follow.



# FEATURED BRANCH CAMPUS: UNM GALLUP

BY MONTE-ANGEL RICHARDSON



UNM Gallup is one of four branch campuses of UNM. It is a 2-year institution, providing over 25 degrees and certificate programs to get students ready for the workforce. Founded in 1968, The University of New Mexico-Gallup sits on the traditional homelands of the Pueblo of Zuni Nation and Navajo Nation. UNM Gallup is uniquely and deeply rooted in New Mexico, situated in a historic city over a mile above sea level. With affordable tuition, financial aid, and a selection of hybrid classes available for summer/fall, UNM Gallup provides learning opportunities as both a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) and Tribal College (TCU). Over 90% of UNM Gallup students identify as indigenous and/or tribal affiliated, positioning the campus uniquely to serve the needs of student populations that are historically underrepresented in university settings.

UNM Gallup has a number of pathways for non-traditional students to get the education they desire. The Community Education and Workforce Development program at UNM-Gallup provides career development and personal enrichment opportunities for community members to gain the skills and knowledge for their individual goals. The New Mexico Certified DWI School has been created to help reduce the traffic impact of alcohol and other drug impaired crashes in the state. In addition, it provides students with the opportunity to learn about the dangers and consequences of alcohol and high-risk behavior. Additionally, the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at UNM Gallup Branch provides management and technical assistance to start-up and existing small businesses throughout McKinley County.

## OIA ACCOMPLISHMENTS

BY YURY BOSIN

**Zacharia Kibuta** has recently completed Calculus II as one of the prerequisites to be admitted into the PhD Program in Statistics here at UNM.

**Heather Mechler** has been selected as an IPEDS educator at the Association for Institutional Research for the 2024-25 cohort. You can learn more about IPEDS educators' role at [Become an IPEDS Educator](#).

**Kevin Mulcaire**, newest staff member, who joined the OIA team in September of last year, was promoted from Data manager to Institutional Researcher position in April 2024.

**Charla Orozco** presented at two national conferences recently, the Association of Institutional Researchers (AIR) Forum and the Appalachian State Analytics Day. In her AIR Forum presentation, she spoke about the impact of living on campus on student success. In the upcoming months, you may see more of Charla as she assumes the position of Interim Director of the Office of Institutional Analytics.

**Monte-Angel Richardson** continues working on her doctoral research in social work and public health at the University of Toronto. The purpose of this research is to address the lack of attention given to the perceptions of Latine(a/o/x) people in regard to current gun violence policies and practices, including the potential structural barriers faced when it comes to preventing gun violence within the community. This study is open to all adult residents of the South Valley who identify as Latine or Hispanic. The first portion of this study consists of a 5-10 minute survey. Compensation in the form of an e-gift card of \$10 is provided to everyone who completes the survey. [Survey link found here.](#)

# FAREWELL TO HEATHER MECHLER

BY MONTE-ANGEL RICHARDSON

It is with bittersweet sadness that we are bidding farewell to our fearless leader, UNM OIA Director Dr. Heather Mechler. For over ten years, Heather has served UNM with her passion for “taking a jumble of data, tidying it, and then using it to tell a story of something new, surprising, and compelling.” Thriving at the intersection of science and human experience, Heather has brought a unique and needed perspective to UNM, harnessing her ability to tell stories with data through visualization and presentations while also serving as a data liaison for several departments. As a supervisor, we will surely miss Heather’s caring and personable nature, along with her efforts to bring our department together for fun activities including trivia, potlucks, and game nights. Heather demonstrated a true understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion, always finding ways to capitalize on the skills of our team to involve us in projects that interested us and benefitted the university. While we are sad to see her go, we are excited for what she will accomplish as Associate Vice Provost and Director of Institutional Analytics at Duke University. Go get 'em, Heather!

