

Unicamp's visit MIT_HARVARD_UMASS related to Institutional Research

Marisa Beppu began by detailing the findings of the Unicamp delegation visit to MIT, Harvard and UMass to profile and discover about the way in which each university arranges and measures its performance, with specific attention paid to the organisational structures, reputation and satisfaction related to studies that they undertake.

MIT, which has a very heavily centralised team of eight people working for all institutional data, reporting to rankings and to assessment bodies and especially to evaluation committees. Evaluation committees run biannually for every department in the university. The committees are composed of an *external board of evaluators that the university appoints from society, trustees and international peers*. These assessments are tailored according to the needs of the committee, and the IR team must then create the relevant indicators to fit this.

The IR department also runs huge numbers of surveys of staff, students and alumni asking them for feedback and opinions on the university's functioning and support structures, even down to asking staff how well supported they feel by departmental heads. These surveys are carried out as part of the *university's own commitment to be the best it can be*, and not in response to any specific external evaluation.

MIT's stated approach to use of indicators in university governance is *data supported decision making* – as opposed to data driven decision making. This means that the numbers are not slavishly adhered to in place of common sense, experience and specialist judgment. MIT treats qualitative and quantitative data as equally important to fostering a supportive and productive environment.

Harvard has a much more decentralised system of institutional research, as the university itself is characterised by a much higher level of autonomy in its individual schools. There are two main IR offices, *one is for the collection and consolidation of data, while the other is for the conducting of institutional surveys*. The collection and consolidation department has three main criteria or philosophies for data – it must be automatized as much as possible to reduce the reporting load on staff, it must be credible and conform to what is observed and finally it must be future-proofed – it must be constantly revised and updated to ensure that it conforms to the university's reality.

Of the surveys office, *there is a specific focus on mental health and support, especially given the high-profile suicide and depression rates in elite universities*. The other IR office of note, as a benchmarking to be studied is the one in the School of Science and Art, which is specifically focused on teaching, with the specific aim of forming new leaders. The office runs *around six surveys a week, something that students and staff regard as routine*. They also run intensive alumni surveys for how they are doing, they report this as difficult, with only around 50% response rates.

Finally, at MIT's suggestion, the delegation went to visit U-Mass, which is a state university with a strong local impact and a focus on graduate outcomes. U-Mass therefore has less focus on institutional prestige and more on the use of local employment data.

The findings of the trip, and their potential use for the São Paulo state universities will be submitted as a paper for the second collected work on rethinking the University.

Complementary sources

MIT "More than datum, data". <http://ir.mit.edu/>

Harvard <https://oir.harvard.edu/>