

NWU SAAIR Conference Report

My name is Qobo Qwaka, an institutional researcher from the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. I was selected as one of the 2016 SAAIR Scholarship recipients to attend the conference at the NWU.

I would like to begin by thanking SAAIR and the conference organizers for a well-organized and informative workshop and conference. There was good attendance of the conference despite the #Feesmustfall protests that created a lot of uncertainty of operations in the sector. From the discussions and presentations in the conference, it became clear to me that the sector is very privileged to have many dedicated individuals that are passionate about higher education.

In attending the conference, I expected to gain a better understanding of the roles and responsibilities of IR practitioners and to network with colleagues from other institutions especially those that are busy with similar research to mine. I believe that the conference exceeded my expectations because I got to understand more about the field of institutional research and met people in different positions within the IR field.

In the short time that I have been involved with SAAIR I can confidently say that I have developed in many aspects of my career as involvement in SAAIR equips individuals to not only be IR practitioners but also good managers. The workshops conducted together with conference presentations were designed to suite both practitioners and middle management.

The presentations were informative but two presentations were very valuable to me. These were:

- 'Can Big Data really be useful in Higher Education?' by Herman Visser, and
- 'A Knowledge Base System for Student Throughput' by Benjamin Ntshabele and Alta de Waal.

Lastly, I would like to congratulate Juan-Claude Lemmens on being elected as the SAAIR president. I wish him together with his team a successful term of office.