

# FOUR TYPES OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

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# A Look Back

- Beginnings....
- Sid Suslow: A Declaration on Institutional Research, AIR, 1972
  - “The quality of the institutional researcher lies in his ability to discern which methodologies are appropriate to the problem with which he is concerned: adroit application of advanced tools of management science may be grossly inappropriate when applied to certain problems of student behavior, and subtle psychological analysis may lack merit when applied to certain problems of institutional governance.”

# Defining Characteristics of the IR Role

- The Dualities of IR (Volkwein, 1999)
  - The Internal Versus the External
  - Academic Versus Administrative Cultures
  - Institutional Versus Professional Roles
- The Irresolvable Tension of Authentic IR

# The Four Faces of IR and Level of Education Required (Volkwein, 1999, 2008)

	Formative and Internal— for Improvement	Summative and External— for Accountability
Administrative and Institutional	<b>INFORMATION AUTHORITY</b> [low]	<b>SPIN DOCTOR</b> [moderate]
Academic and Professional	<b>POLICY ANALYST</b> [high]	<b>SCHOLAR AND RESEARCHER</b> [very high]

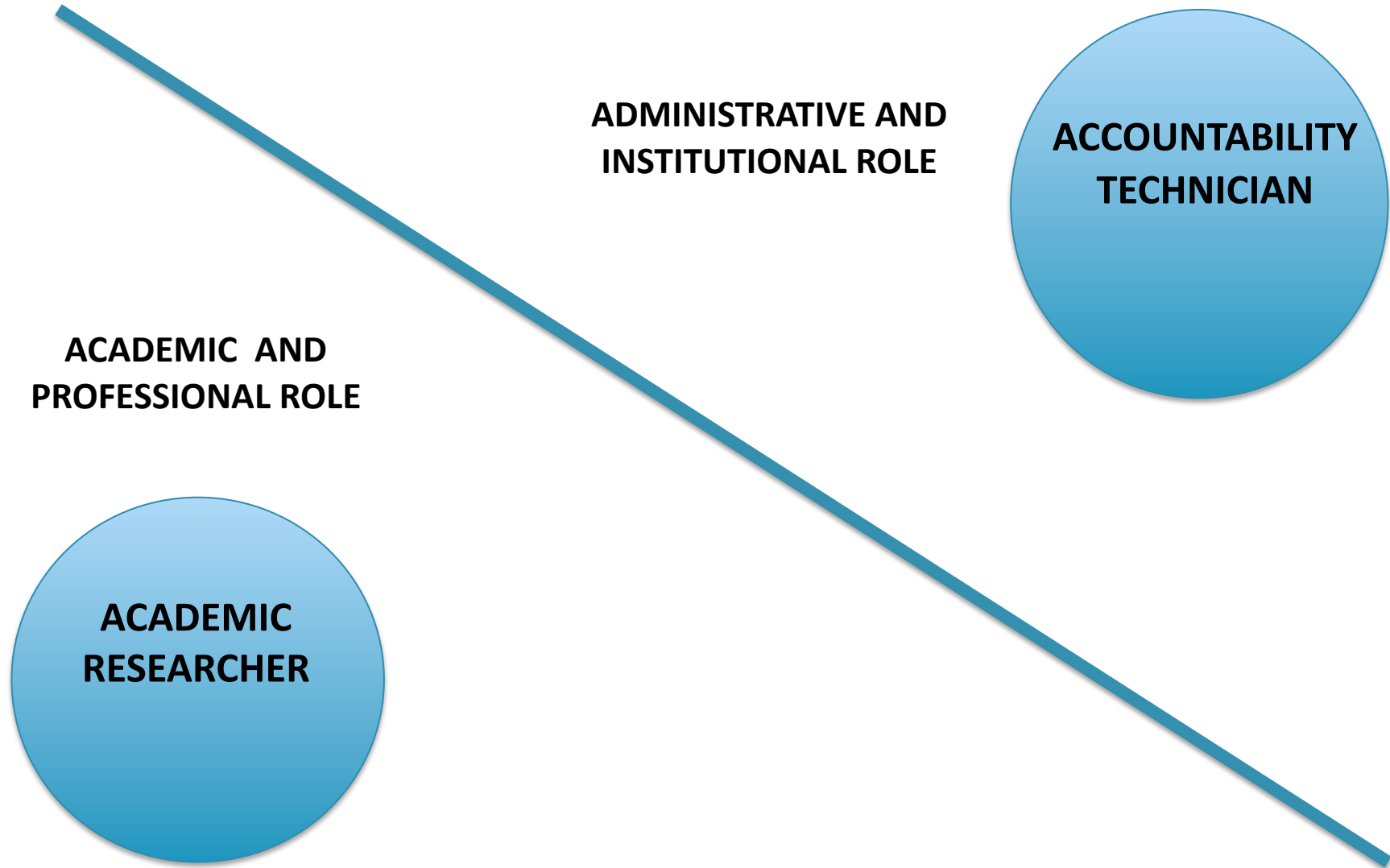
# Assessing Volkwein's Typology

- Formative/Internal/Improvement Versus Summative/External/Accountability too restrictive
- Rethinking the 2X2 model, especially in light of recent developments in the practice of IR

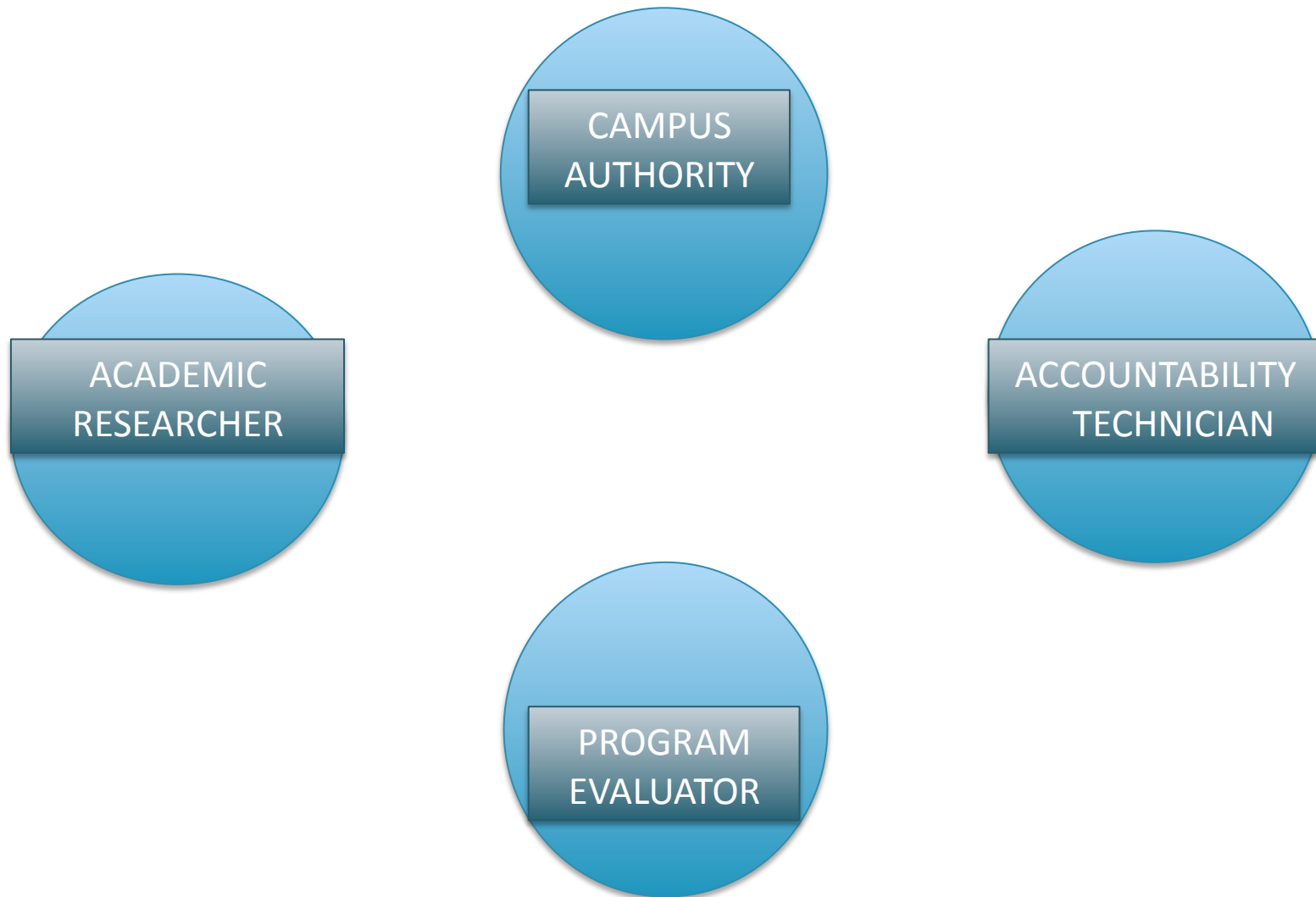
# The Transformations of IR

- Technological transformation and resultant proliferation of institutional and survey data
  - Knowledge Manager as Fifth Face of IR
- Accountability, reporting requirements, and the widespread display of institutional data
- Emergence of Student Affairs and student-focused IR activity
- Growth of methodologically sophisticated academic research, especially on students

# The Opposite Poles of IR



# Four Types of Institutional Researcher





# Approaches of the Four Types

## AUTHORITY

Authoritative resource, interpretation of data and its interconnections, discovery, debunking, reactive spin in defense of institution

## TECHNICIAN

Visual display of data, precision, “error-free”, consistency, no statistical controls; proactive spin in public representation

## RESEARCHER

Testing of hypothesis, academic research design, rigorous statistical controls, no spin, i.e., research ethics

## EVALUATOR

Unbiased evaluation of outcomes, effects, rigorous statistical controls, no spin in presentation of results

# Orientations to Enrollment Management (Kalsbeek, 2006, 2007)

## MARKET-CENTERED

Concerned with broad, conceptual goals and purposes (markets, position, brand) of the institution

## ADMINISTRATIVE

Concerned with practical efficiencies and effectiveness of processes

## ACADEMIC

Concerned with enhancement of learning and advancement of knowledge

## STUDENT-FOCUSED

Concerned for the experiences of individual students or groups of students

# Alternative Modes of Inquiry (Mitroff & Kilmann, 1978)

## **CONCEPTUAL THEORIST**

### **[INTUITIVE/THINKING]**

Multiple possibilities and paradigms; relationships of many variables; challenges assumptions; uncertainty; values **interestingness**

## **ANALYTIC SCIENTIST**

### **[SENSING/THINKING]**

Driven toward certainty; equates knowledge with precision, **accuracy**, and reliability; single, self-consistent paradigms

## **CONCEPTUAL HUMANIST**

### **[INTUITIVE/FEELING]**

Inquiry to benefit humanity as whole; problems defined by researcher's own values; **aesthetics** of theory

## **PARTICULAR HUMANIST**

### **[SENSING/FEELING]**

Personalizes knowledge; inquiry to benefit individuals; not interested in theories; case studies; **action-oriented**

# Education and Training

	ACADEMIC RESEARCHER	CAMPUS AUTHORITY	ACCOUNTABILITY TECHNICIAN	PROGRAM EVALUATOR
EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENT	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>MODERATE</b>	<b>HIGH</b>
ISSUES INTELLIGENCE	<b>LOW</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>LOW</b>
CONTEXTUAL INTELLIGENCE	<b>LOW</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>MODERATE</b>	<b>LOW</b>
USE OF FORMAL STATISTICS	<b>YES</b>	<b>NOT USUALLY</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>YES</b>

# Role and Approach to Data

	<b>ACADEMIC RESEARCHER</b>	<b>CAMPUS AUTHORITY</b>	<b>ACCOUNTABILITY TECHNICIAN</b>	<b>PROGRAM EVALUATOR</b>
<b>WHO YOU ARE</b>	<b>AUTHOR</b>	<b>AUTHORITY</b>	<b>ANONYMOUS</b>	<b>EXPERT</b>
<b>REFERENCE GROUP</b>	<b>ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE</b>	<b>INSTITUTION</b>	<b>ADMIN- ISTRATION</b>	<b>APPLIED ACADEMIC</b>
<b>APPROACH TO DATA</b>	<b>MULTIVARIATE CONTROLS</b>	<b>NEW CONNECTIONS</b>	<b>DISPLAYS, METRICS</b>	<b>MEASURING EFFECTS</b>
<b>PURPOSE</b>	<b>NEW KNOWLEDGE</b>	<b>INSTITUTIONAL AWARENESS</b>	<b>ACCOUNT- ABILITY</b>	<b>EVIDENCE</b>

# USES OF CAMPUS AUTHORITY

INTERNAL	EXTERNAL
<p>SUMMATIVE - Generating innovative reports and analysis, often in support of accountability</p> <p>FORMATIVE – Exploring new relationships; new understanding in support of intersubjectivity</p>	<p>SUMMATIVE - Fierce defense of institution in face of misrepresentation or attack; “go to” resource for statistical and other information</p>

# USE OF PROGRAM EVALUATION

INTERNAL	EXTERNAL
SUMMATIVE - Evaluation of existing campus programs and practices	SUMMATIVE - Evaluation for external agencies
FORMATIVE – Foundation for campus assessment activities (Bers, 2008)	FORMATIVE – Consultation for grants and proposals

# Relationships Among the Four Types

- Pluralistic, multiples roles, activities
- Negative influence
- Positive influence, strengthens



# Good Academic Research: What is it Good For?

- The better the research, the less useful?
- The tyranny of multivariate analysis
- Bringing the institution back in

# Accountability and Its Discontents

- Accountability center stage: Good and bad news for IR
- Dilemma of no controls versus over-control
- Highly visible accountability data does not necessarily mean greater institutional self-understanding (or even accountability)
- Making accountability more (ac)countable

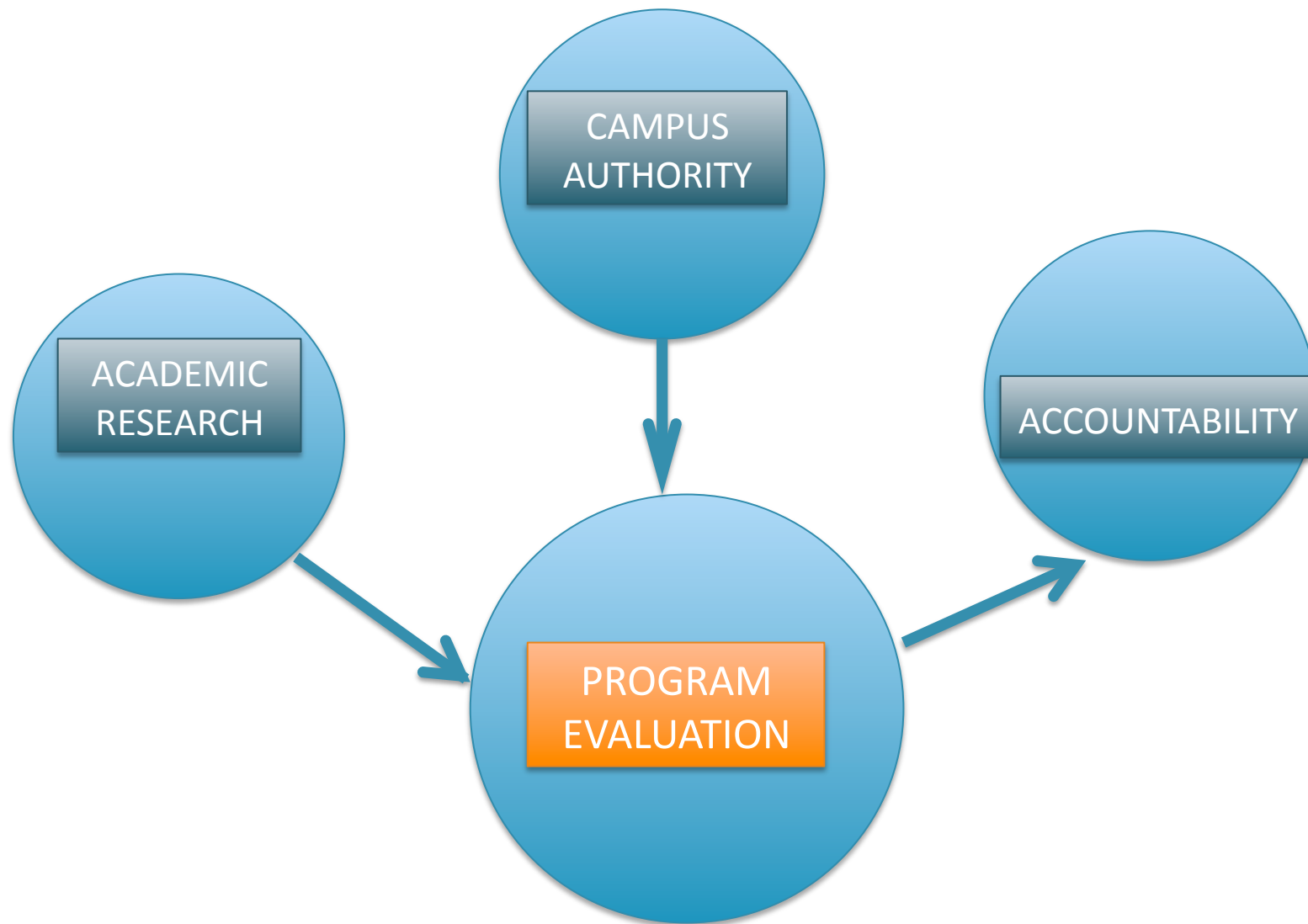
# Campus Authority as Authentic IR

- Now that's interesting!
- Institutional intelligence and memory
- Autonomy and trust
- From authority to author: Creating new knowledge
- The enormous potential of qualitative institutional research

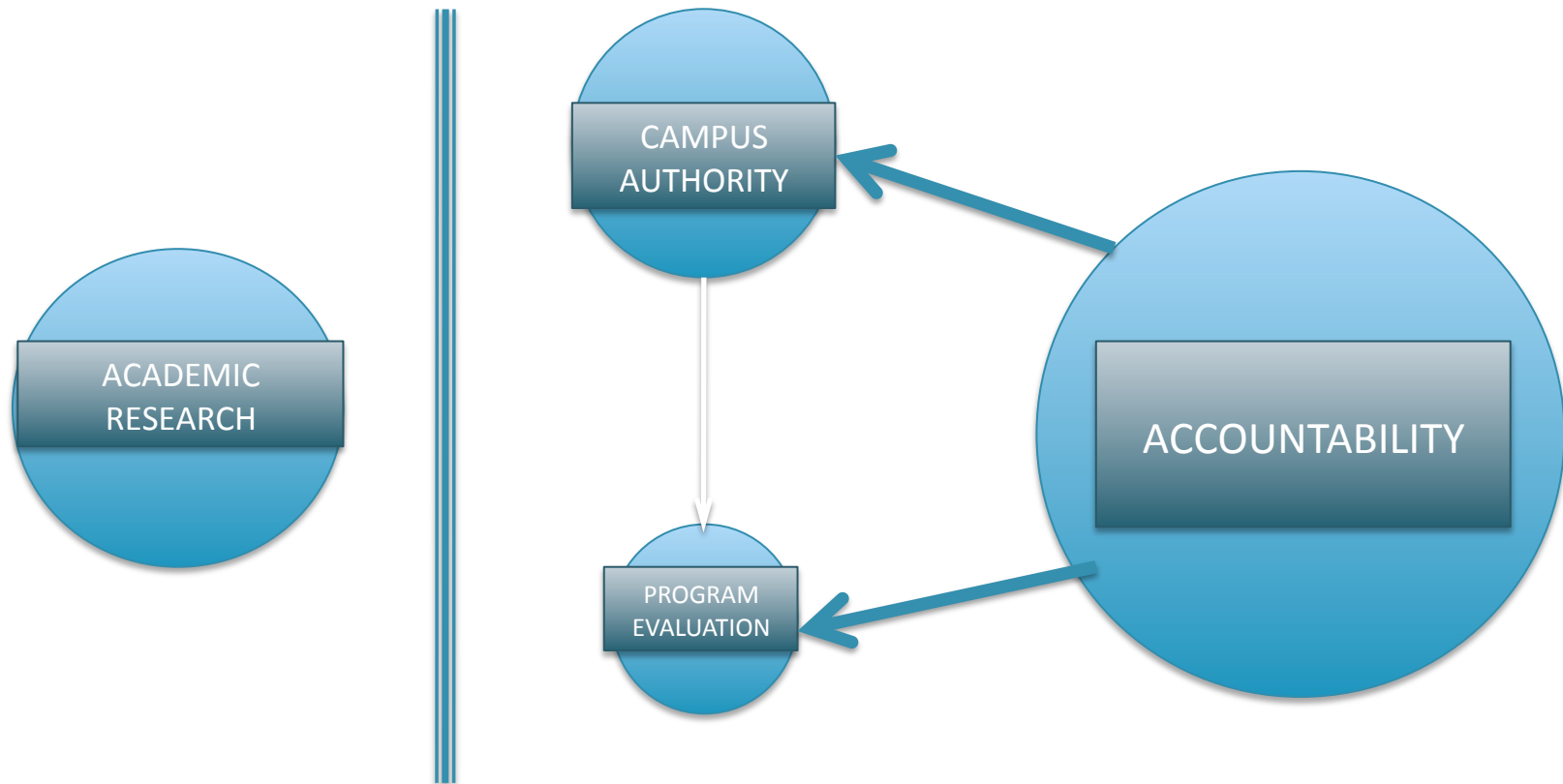
# The Neglect of Program Evaluation

- The challenging of looking inward
- Being tough-minded in an SF environment
- Getting serious about program evaluation

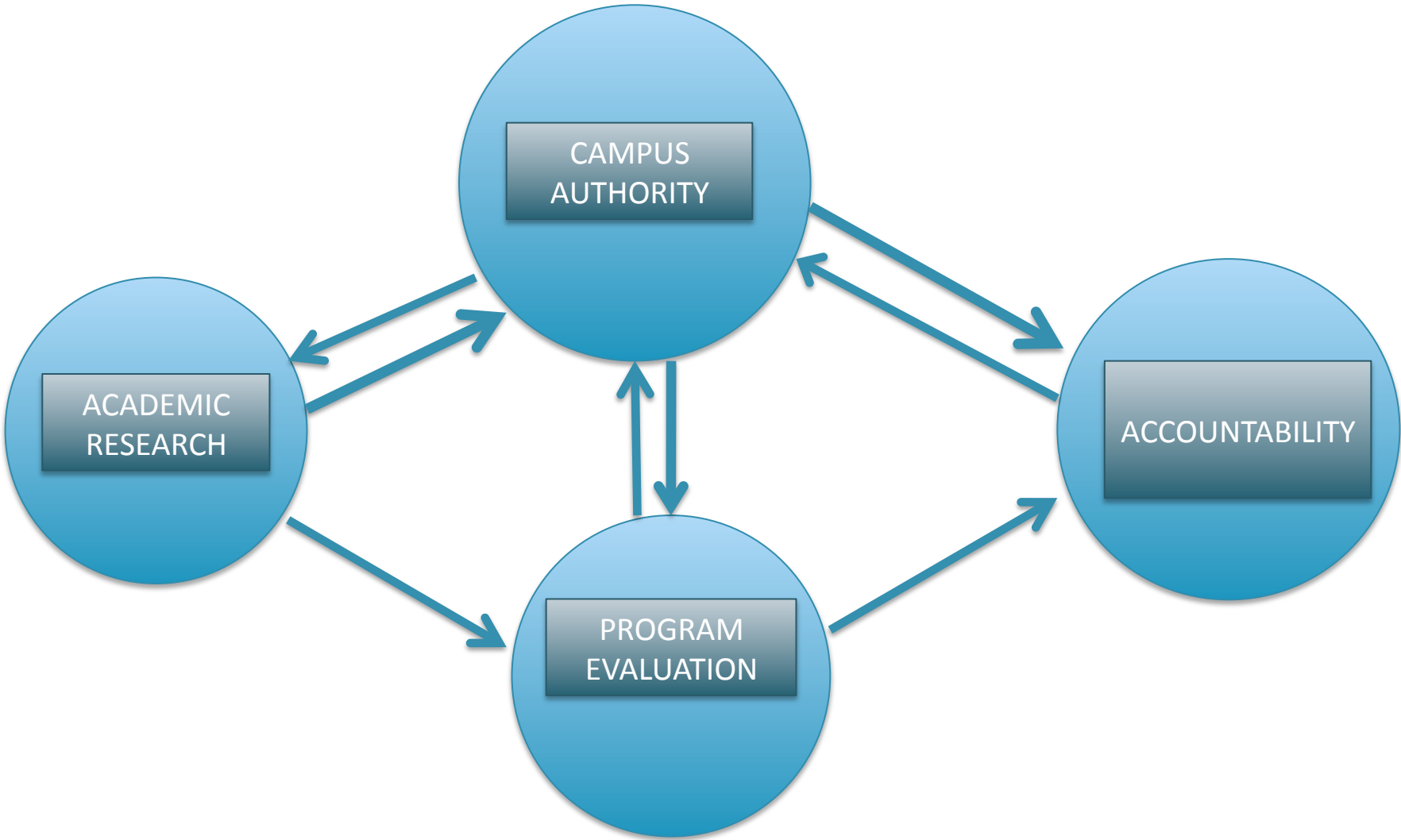
# SUPPORT FOR PROGRAM EVALUATION



# UNBALANCED INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH



# HEALTHY INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH



# Sid Suslow once more:

- “There must be within the institutional research role a **sufficient degree of independence** which permits it to fully examine and criticize the institution, including its purposes and values. ... Its uniqueness rests in the combination of its role as a **positive critic** concerned with the enhancement and advancement of higher education and its role as a researcher, quantifier, and assessor of quantitative and qualitative information about the institution.... An active institutional research role also requires the sustenance of an efficacious symmetry between activities prescribed by its service to the institution and opportunities for exploration in areas responsive to its own insights and interests. Creativity is an active process which **requires a degree of autonomy that must be real and sufficient**.... Without this fundamental ingredient, the composition of the institutional research role lacks potency.”



# CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

- Best of times, worst of times?
- Authentic institutional research and the learning community
- Comments, Questions, Suggestions (please!)

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