Sources of Institutional Data
The Office of Information Technology (IT) creates reporting tools that use live data and allow users to self-generate reports in SAP and myOleMiss. Institutional Research, Effectiveness, & Planning (IREP) creates reports from data that is frozen at different points of time which are available via the IREP website, using the pivot tables to generate reports you need, or through ad hoc requests. The reports generated by IT are more operational in nature, whereas the reports generated by IREP are often to satisfy an externally mandated reporting requirement with very specific guidelines.

Why are the results different for reports from the different sources?
Although IREP and IT both generate reports from data residing in SAP, these reports generally cannot be directly be compared nor supplement each other because they serve different purposes. There are a number of reasons that reports may not match. These include:

- *Differences in live vs. frozen/saved data:*
  Reports generated from SAP use live data with many frequently changing fields. Reports from live data are difficult to replicate and the university has specific census dates for some data, IREP reports are generated from frozen data tables that are saved at regular intervals. It is unlikely that reports generated from live SAP data will exactly match those generated from frozen data or those generated from live SAP data later (e.g., students changing majors results in different numbers of majors over a short period of time).

- *Differences in definitions:*
  IREP and IT use specific definitions for different purposes. For example, only first time first year students are included for many reports from IREP, while first year students in SAP include all those classified as freshmen.

- *Differences in reporting decisions:*
  Often decisions about how something is classified are made based on the purpose of the report and these decisions may differ for different reports (e.g., students enrolled in two programs of study may be counted in both programs in some reports but not others).

- *Differences in degree data are vetted:*
  As with any human data entry, there are some errors and missing values in SAP. IREP and IT work with those that enter data to identify and correct the data in the static tables as well as those in SAP. Although any data set may have errors, the frozen tables are more likely to have been vetted.

What kind of report should I use?
Reports from SAP are most useful when one wants the most up-to-the-minute version to make decisions, wants evolving data quickly, and can use unvetted data. These reports are meant for operational purposes and should be internal to the University

Reports from frozen data are appropriate when one wants data that can be replicated (or audited) or involves comparisons over time. Most reports for communications with external agencies should come from IREP data and are available on the IREP website, plus the IREP team can develop additional reports.

What should I do when I need to combine reports from different sources?
We recommend contacting IREP and/or IT to develop a solution for your data needs. We look forward to working with and assisting you in the future.