2009 Survey of Institutional Research Offices in the California Community College System
Full Report

Abstract

In 2009, the RP Group conducted a survey and focus groups with institutional research (IR) offices in the California community college system, with the goal of documenting the staffing profile of offices, the types of activities in which IR offices are engaged, and the support that could help researchers become more effective. Ninety college and district IR offices responded to the survey (67.7% of the 111 colleges and 22 district offices) and 32 IR staff participated in focus groups. The findings of the 2009 study were compared to a similar survey conducted in 2006, which documented the size and scope of research offices in all of the California community colleges and districts. This document provides a summary of the study findings and spells out action steps that the RP Group has taken or plans to take in order to respond to the needs of the field.

The study revealed a sector in transition: the scope of work of research offices is increasing despite flat or declining budgets. Three out of four of these offices are led by relatively new directors, whose level of research experience varies widely. Furthermore, the field does not agree on where the emphasis of the IR office should be, with equal numbers believing that their core function is reporting versus believing the emphasis should shift away from reporting to collaborative research.

IR offices are being asked to provide more evidence for a wider range of practitioners, but this is problematic. Practitioners need more support, different types of data, and tailored communications for this information to be useful, but researchers' time is largely spent on performing research and producing reports. As a result, there is little to no time to work with practitioners to understand and integrate research findings into practice.

IR staff members are looking for ways to gather data that are more specific than institution-wide measures, to assure that college and MIS data are consistent, and to seek training that will enable them to be more effective in their collaborations with faculty members, particularly in supporting student learning outcomes.

Over the past year since the survey, the RP Group has developed a series of resources to respond to these needs. However, the study points to the need for more work to define the role and value of research in the colleges, expand who is engaged in this process, and develop stronger support mechanisms for emerging research priorities.

Reader's Guide

The purpose of this document is to share the findings of a survey and series of related focus groups of institutional research offices within the California community college system. The document is organized as follows:

Introduction

In 2006, the RP Group conducted a systematic survey of the institutional research (IR) function within the California community college system. IR offices at the college and district levels were asked about their resources (e.g., staffing, budget), primary responsibilities, priorities and role in making institutional decisions, and overall effectiveness. In addition to the survey, a census was conducted in which each district and college was contacted to document the existence of an IR office, the number of staff in the office, the job title of the chief researcher, and to whom the chief researcher reported in the organization. This census along with the survey served to build a comprehensive picture of research offices statewide. The results from the study were shared with researchers and planners around the state through various presentations at conferences and meetings. It was determined at the time that this study needed to be repeated on a regular basis in order to continuously monitor the state of the institutional research function in California.

In 2009, the census survey was modified and redistributed to capture changes and more current information. The 2009 survey includes most items from the 2006 census survey with a few added elements. These new elements surfaced primarily from the 2009 Basic Skills Outcomes Capacity (BSOC) study that revealed that institutions had access to a large amount of information and data, but were not able to maximize the application of that information into making decisions. Thus, the 2009 census survey prepared items to investigate this issue. In addition to this survey, a series of focus groups were conducted to identify and elaborate on the key challenges and strategies surrounding the institutional research function in colleges.

The BSOC statewide survey revealed that colleges lack clearly articulated processes for establishing research agendas, distributing research results, and integrating the information into practice, particularly with faculty and student services staff. It became clear that research capacity – encompassing both researchers' skill sets and staffing levels– lies at the heart of college's ability to engage in evidence-based decision-making and sustain a culture of evidence. Furthermore, the issue is more complex than simple capacity; it reflects the changing role that information and data now play on college campuses. Through the BSOC project, five domains were identified that characterize the demands on institutional research offices:

1. **Production** - gather and collect data, conduct analyses and write research reports that are both clear and informative.

2. **Dissemination** – have an infrastructure in place for the dissemination of data and information to appropriate stakeholders throughout the college and to the public.

3. **Interpretation** – help administrators, faculty and staff analyze and interpret the data and information and in so doing, assist them in evolving their research and inquiry skills.

4. **Translating Evidence into Action** – assist administrators, faculty and staff in using data and information to drive improvement and planning decisions.

5. **Closing and Widening the Loop** – ensure that decision-making is translated into action and action is widely evaluated and based on data.

In order to facilitate the reformulation of research capacity to include more resources for items 3 through 5 above, the RP Group developed the Bridging Research, Information, and Culture (BRIC) initiative. The BRIC Initiative enables the organization to provide more support to community college professionals (researchers and planners, faculty, staff, administrators) to strengthen the use of evidence in community colleges by:

- Streamlining the efforts of institutional researchers and planners so that they can shift their efforts from the production of data and reports to engaging in conversations with practitioners about the meaning and use of the data and reports
- Developing a suite of resources including a series of inquiry guides, regional professional development opportunities, and online tools
- Providing personalized assistance via the Technical Assistance Program (TAP) to fifteen community colleges around the state.

The 2009 Survey of Institutional Research Offices in the California Community College System sought to identify the needs of researchers and planners and assess how their time is divided among the five research domains. To gather this information, the 2009 survey posed these questions to the college and district offices across the state:

- What is the current capacity of Institutional Research (IR) offices within community colleges across the state to support institutional goals and priorities?
- What are the primarily functions and responsibilities of these offices?
- Which and how are the current resources and services provided by The RP Group used?
- Which tools would be the most effective in supporting the work of these offices?
- How can the RP Group support these functions and responsibilities via leveraging existing and offering new professional development opportunities and tools?

To answer these questions, the 2009 Survey collected information and insights from IR offices on the following:

- How the IR office is positioned within the institution
- Staffing capacity
- Primary responsibilities
- Where the office's activities fall on the Five Domains of Research
- Existing IR resources used
- Existing RP Group services used
- Which new resources would be effective

In addition to the survey, a set of six focus groups via telephone conference calls was conducted between December 2009 and January 2010 with IR professionals statewide. The purpose of these discussions was to better understand common challenges, build a cache of unique/effective approaches, and clarify the elements of an effective cohort tracking tool, which was the most requested tool identified in the survey responses.

Methodology

The 2009 survey was developed by first looking at the 2006 survey instrument and the information collected. New items were added to help the RP Group better understand the needs of the field related to issues such as the difference between research and reporting, the five domains of research, awareness and use of existing tools and services, and preferences for future tools.

The complete survey can be found in Appendix A. The survey was administered online via SurveyMonkey in October 2009. The invitation to participate in the survey was sent to the RP listserv which included a direct link to the survey. Between November 2009 and March 2010, a series of follow-ups were conducted via e-mail and telephone to those research offices that had not responded. We identified 133 potential locations for research offices - 111 colleges and 22 district offices. There were 93 valid responses to the census survey. Of the total responses, one came from a school of continuing education and two came from the California Community College Chancellor's Office. However, at present, neither the institution of continuing education nor the Chancellor's Office were included in the 133 potential locations. Therefore, the effective response rate is 90 out of 133 or 67.7 percent.

It is important to note that since the purpose of the survey is to inform the field about the characteristics and needs of college and district IR offices in the state, we have chosen to exclude the two responses from the Chancellor's Office in order for the data to truly represent only college and district IR offices. The one response from a school of continuing education is included among the college office responses since it operates much like a college within its multi-college district. As a result, the 91 valid responses can be separated as follows: 40 from single-college districts, 37 college responses from multi-college districts, and 14 district responses from multi-college districts. The 2009 survey results are presented in this report to allow for comparisons between college and district IR offices. The total number of college office responses is 77, and the total number of district office responses is 14.

Table 1 below presents the comparison of how the responses to the 2006 and 2009 survey are distributed between college and district IR offices. In 2009, college offices represent a larger majority of respondents than seen in 2006 and in contrast, district offices were more represented in the 2006 survey.

Table 1. Comparison of 2009 and 2006 Surveys – College and District Office Respondents

	2009		2006		Difference
	n	%	n	%	% pts
College Offices	77	84.6%	47	71.2%	13.4%
District Offices	14	15.4%	19	28.8%	-13.4%
All Offices	91		66		

One item in the survey asked respondents to participate in a voluntary focus group to explore the occupational challenges and opportunities. Thirty-two (32) respondents designated either themselves or an individual from their offices to participate in one of the six discussion opportunities over December 2009 and January 2010. Each focus group took place via conference call and lasted about 90 minutes and covered the following questions:

1. Please review the findings from the BSOC study conducted by the RP Group with close attention to the two topics on the colleges' use of evidence and the expanded definition of research capacity.
    a. What are your obstacles or struggles in advancing the research agenda and improving the college's ability to engage in evidence-based decision-making?
    b. What are some successful strategies to advance the research agenda and improving the college's ability to engage in evidence-based decision-making?
2. In the recent IR Census Survey, when asked about which tools or resources would assist researchers and planners in their work, cohort tracking was one of the most popular responses. Which questions about your students would you like answered with a cohort tracking tool?

As each question was posed in the focus group, each participant was given a few minutes to respond and, then, there was a group discussion. The discussions were recorded and transcribed to maintain maximum accuracy. The qualitative data were analyzed by two researchers and thematically categorized.

Considerations

When examining the findings presented from this survey, it is important to keep in mind some of the limitations of this research. First, not all college and district IR offices completed the survey. While we do not have a complete picture of all offices in the state, we believe a 67.7% response rate is more than adequate to be a good representation. In 2006, after the survey was completed, we decided that we wanted to conduct a follow-up census in order to ensure that we had some basic information on the IR capacity at all colleges and districts. This follow-up was conducted via telephone and consisted of questions related to office title and FTE, chief research officer's title and the title of the person to whom CRO reports. In 2009, we determined that it would not be the best use of resources to pursue the others who did not complete the survey. As a result, several comparisons between the 2006 census and the 2009 survey were not possible because one survey included the entire population of IR offices and the other survey included only a portion of the population. A final limitation for the 2009 survey refers to timing, in that the survey was conducted in the fall semester of 2009 and, thus, reflects insights from the previous academic year.

Findings

2009 Census Survey

The presentation of the results from the 2009 survey includes a comparison of the responses from college and district IR offices. Where data are available from both the 2006 and 2009 surveys, a comparison of the overall results is also presented. The findings are presented in the order in which the questions were asked on the survey. The survey was divided into five sections:

- Office Information
- Chief Research Officer
- Office Priorities and the Role of Research
- Professional Development Uses and Needs
- Tools and Reports

Office Information

What is the exact title of your office?

Office title is used as a proxy for the areas of responsibility of each office. Table 2 presents the results from the 2009 survey. The most common terms found in the titles of IR offices included "Research" and "Planning," both of which are more common among college offices than district offices. After these two descriptors, the most common terms found were "Institutional Effectiveness," "Grants/Development/Advancement," and "Assessment/Evaluation/Student Outcomes or Success."

Table 2. 2009 Survey – Areas of Responsibility by Office Type

	College Offices		District Offices		All Offices	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Research	70	90.9%	13	92.9%	83	91.2%
Planning	41	53.2%	5	35.7%	46	50.5%
Institutional Effectiveness	8	10.4%	1	7.1%	9	9.9%
Grants, Development, Advancement	6	7.8%	0	0.0%	6	6.6%
Assessment, Evaluation, Student Outcomes/Success	5	6.5%	1	7.1%	6	6.6%
Academic Affairs, Ed Services, Instruction	3	3.9%	0	0.0%	3	3.3%
Admissions & Records, Enrollment Mgmt	1	1.3%	2	14.3%	3	3.3%
Information Technology	1	1.3%	0	0.0%	1	1.1%
Total Responses	77		14		91	

Table 3 presents the comparison of the 2009 and 2006 surveys related to areas of responsibility. Interestingly, the proportion of offices with "research" in the title increased by 15 percent, though there were fewer colleges that reported. Additional increases were seen in planning, institutional effectiveness, admissions and records/enrollment management, and

assessment/evaluation/student outcomes or success. It is possible that this result is an indication of the broader responsibilities being taken on by IR offices in the state.

Table 3. Comparison of 2009 and 2006 Surveys – Areas of Responsibility

	2009		2006		Difference
	n	%	n	%	% pts
Research	83	91.2%	98	76.0%	15.2%
Planning	46	50.5%	41	31.8%	18.7%
Institutional Effectiveness	9	9.9%	5	3.9%	6.0%
Grants, Development, Advancement	6	6.6%	10	7.8%	-1.2%
Assessment, Evaluation, Student Outcomes/Success	6	6.6%	5	3.9%	2.7%
Academic Affairs, Ed Services, Instruction	3	3.3%	4	3.1%	0.2%
Admissions & Records, Enrollment Management	3	3.3%	0	0.0%	3.3%
Information Technology	1	1.1%	4	3.1%	-2.0%
Total Responses/Sites	91		129		

What is the current full-time equivalent (FTE) per position type at your college or district office?

A little more than a third (36%) of both college and district IR offices responding to this question are what is commonly known as the "one-person shop." However, these data show that at least among survey respondents, almost two thirds have offices with more than one person. The staffing capacity of college and district offices is presented below in Table 4.

Table 4. 2009 Survey – Office Full-time Equivalent (FTE) by Office Type

	College Offices		District Offices		All Offices	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
One FTE	26	35.6%	5	35.7%	31	35.6%
More than 1, less than 2	6	8.2%	1	7.1%	7	8.0%
Two FTE	8	11.0%	2	14.3%	10	11.5%
More than 2, less than 3	5	6.8%	1	7.1%	6	6.9%
More than 3, less than 4	16	21.9%	2	14.3%	18	20.7%
More than 4, less than 5	6	8.2%	1	7.1%	7	8.0%
5 or more	6	8.2%	2	14.3%	8	9.2%
Total Responses	73		14		87	

It is important to note that we did not receive surveys from 39 colleges and 8 districts, and four respondents to the survey did not answer this question, making it difficult to determine what research capacity exists at those sites. Additionally, this particular item has its limitations for comparison between 2006 and 2009 because of the difference in how the data were collected in each year. In 2006, we were able to identify the FTE at 129 out of a possible 130 locations. In 2009, we only have the FTE for those colleges and districts that responded to the survey, since no follow-up telephone surveys was conducted.

What is the IR Office FTE by College Size?

College size for the purposes of the comparisons presented here is based on Fall 2009 student headcount. Table 5 below presents the categories used and the counts and percentages in each category for all colleges, single college districts, and colleges in multi-college districts. The largest proportion of responding colleges falls into the large size category, and not surprisingly, almost all of the districts have more than 20,000 students.

Table 5. 2009 Survey – College/District Size by Office Type

	College Offices		District Offices		All Offices	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Small (Less than 5,000)	5	6.5%	0	0.0%	5	5.5%
Small to Medium (5,000 - 9,999)	15	19.5%	1	7.1%	16	17.6%
Medium (10,000 - 14,999)	17	22.1%	0	0.0%	17	18.7%
Medium to Large (15,000 - 19,999)	14	18.2%	0	0.0%	14	15.4%
Large (20,000 or more)	26	33.8%	13	92.9%	39	42.9%
Total Respondents	77		14		91	

Table 6 presents a comparison with the same information collected in 2006. Large colleges/districts are represented at a much higher rate in the 2009 survey than in the 2006 survey.

Table 6. Comparison of 2009 and 2006 Surveys – College/District Size

	2009		2006		Difference
	n	%	n	%	% pts
Small (Less than 5,000)	5	5.5%	13	11.9%	-6.4%
Medium to Large (15,000 - 19,999)	14	15.4%	15	13.8%	1.6%
Small to Medium (5,000 - 9,999)	16	17.6%	28	25.7%	-8.1%
Medium (10,000 - 14,999)	17	18.7%	31	28.4%	-9.8%
Large (20,000 or more)	39	42.9%	22	20.2%	22.7%
Total Respondents	91		109		

When we examine office FTE by college/district size, the trend is not unexpected where office FTE increases with college size, where larger colleges have larger IR offices. The differences in FTE among small, small to medium, and medium colleges is fairly negligible. There is a clear break between medium and medium to large colleges, however, the difference between medium to large and large colleges is notable with IR offices at large colleges having almost 1.5 FTE more than medium to large colleges. What is interesting is the IR offices at large colleges have larger staffs than the offices at the district level. Table 7 below presents these data.

Table 7. 2009 Survey – Average IR Office FTE by College/District Size and Office Type

	College Offices	District Offices	All Offices
Small (Less than 5,000)	1.23	--	1.23
Small to Medium (5,000 - 9,999)	1.47	2.30	1.52
Medium (10,000 - 14,999)	1.34	--	1.34
Medium to Large (15,000 - 19,999)	2.11	--	2.11
Large (20,000 or more)	3.56	2.65	3.26
All Respondents	2.25	2.62	2.30

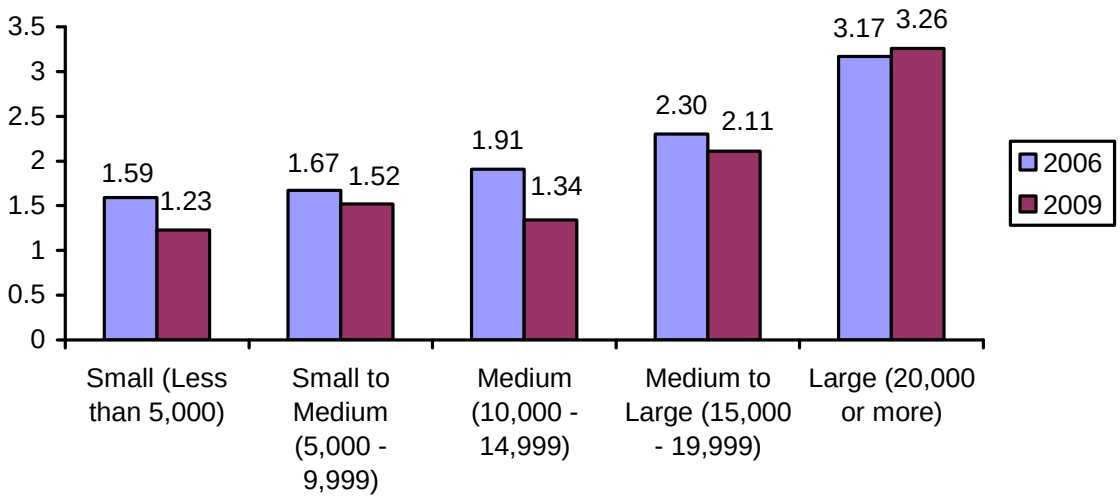
Table 8 below presents a comparison of the average FTE in IR offices between 2006 and 2009. What is of note is that the size of offices at small, small to medium, medium, and medium to large colleges decreased in the three-year period, with only minimal gains seen at large colleges. However, due to differing proportions of colleges between the 2006 and 2009 surveys, the overall average for all offices shows an increase. This apparent increase is artificial and is primarily a function of the greater proportion of large colleges in the 2009 survey, which is influencing the overall average.

Table 8. Comparison of 2009 and 2006 Surveys – Average IR Office FTE by College Size

	2009	2006	Difference
Small (Less than 5,000)	1.23	1.59	-0.36
Small to Medium (5,000 - 9,999)	1.52	1.67	-0.15
Medium (10,000 - 14,999)	1.34	1.91	-0.57
Medium to Large (15,000 - 19,999)	2.11	2.30	-0.19
Large (20,000 or more)	3.26	3.17	0.09
All Respondents	2.30	2.13	0.17

Figure 1 illustrates both the relationship between college size and office FTE and the changes that have occurred between 2006 and 2009, both described above.

Figure 1. Comparison of 2009 and 2006 Surveys – Average IR Office FTE by College Size



What is the FTE of support staff such as research analysts and clerical staff?

The majority of IR offices that reported having a research analyst position have one full-time research analyst. College offices are more likely to have two or more analysts than district offices. It is important to note the response rate to this question. Out of 77 college offices, only 41 responded to the question, and only 9 of the 14 district offices responded. Fifty-three percent of responding college offices, 64% of responding district offices, and 55% of all responding IR offices have at least one research analyst position. Unfortunately, due to the way the question was asked on the survey, it cannot be assumed that all of the offices that did not respond to this question have no research analysts, but it is likely that at least a good portion of these non-responders do not. Table 9 below presents these data.

Table 9. 2009 Survey – FTE for Research Analysts by Office Type

	College Offices		District Offices		All Offices	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
0.75	1	2.4%	0	0.0%	1	2.0%
0.90	1	2.4%	0	0.0%	1	2.0%
1.00	20	48.8%	6	66.7%	26	52.0%
1.40	1	2.4%	0	0.0%	1	2.0%
1.50	1	2.4%	0	0.0%	1	2.0%
2.00	13	31.7%	2	22.2%	15	30.0%
2.20	1	2.4%	0	0.0%	1	2.0%
3.00	3	7.3%	0	0.0%	3	6.0%
7.00	0	0.0%	1	11.1%	1	2.0%
Total Responses	41		9		50	

The majority of IR offices that reported having clerical support, indicated one full-time position for clerical support, but is it important to note that only 25% of responding college offices, 43% of responding district offices, and 27% of all responding IR offices reported having clerical support. The response rate to this question is also of importance. Out of 77 college offices, only 19 responded to the question, and only 6 of the 14 district offices responded. Unfortunately, due to the way the question was asked on the survey, it cannot be concluded that all of the offices that did not respond to this question have no clerical support, but it is probably a safe assumption that a majority of these non-responding offices do not have clerical support. Table 10 presents the results from this question.

Table 10. 2009 Survey – FTE for Clerical Support by Office Type

	College Offices		District Offices		All Offices	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
0.20	0	0.0%	1	16.7%	1	4.0%
0.25	1	5.3%	0	0.0%	1	4.0%
0.50	4	21.1%	1	16.7%	5	20.0%
0.75	1	5.3%	0	0.0%	1	4.0%
1.00	13	68.4%	4	66.7%	17	68.0%
Total Responses	19		6		25	

A comparison of these data with those from the 2006 survey is not possible because the question was asked differently in the two surveys. In 2006, we specifically asked respondents to indicate whether they had zero FTE in these positions in their office. As mentioned above, in the 2009 survey, we are not sure if a non-response to this question indicates that an office has zero FTE or if the respondent simply skipped the question.

How has your operating budget and staffing changed in the last year?

In order to ascertain whether IR offices had experienced any changes to their budget during the due to the recent state budget crisis, we asked them to indicate whether their operating budget and staffing had increased, decreased, or remained unchanged.

Of those who responded, a comparable number of college offices either indicated no change or a decrease in the operating budget. More than half of the district offices indicated a decrease in the operating budget while one third indicated no change. Table 11 presents this information below.

Table 11. 2009 Survey – Operating Budget Change in the Last Year by Office Type

	College Offices		District Offices		All Offices	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Decreased	34	46.6%	7	58.3%	41	48.2%
Unchanged	31	42.5%	4	33.3%	35	41.2%
Increased	8	11.0%	1	8.3%	9	10.6%
Total Responses	73		12		85	

The majority of staffing budgets remained unchanged both at the college and at the district levels. It is important to note that one-fifth of the college offices reported a decrease in staffing budgets. It can also be noted that a confounding variable in the response rate to these two questions might be that a college that may have reduced its staffing to a low or nonexistent level may not have been able to complete this survey and report on its status. Table 12 presents the data from this question below.

Table 12. 2009 Survey – Staffing Budget Change in the Last Year by Office Type

	College Offices		District Offices		All Offices	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Decreased	15	21.1%	3	21.4%	18	21.2%
Unchanged	42	59.2%	11	78.6%	53	62.4%
Increased	14	19.7%	0	0.0%	14	16.5%
Total Responses	71		14		85	

What would help increase the effectiveness of research and planning at your college/district?

The majority of respondents mentioned that some type of staffing would increase their effectiveness, with the most desired position being a research analyst. The second most common response was related to the 'culture' of their institution towards research and planning. The remaining most common responses included the need for better data access, quality or tools; increased budgets for non-staffing items such as travel and software; and professional development or training for IR staff in their offices, as well as for colleagues. Table 13 below summarizes the responses to this question.

Table 13. 2009 Survey – What Would Increase Effectiveness of Research and Planning

	All Offices	
	n	%
Staffing	49	62.8%
Culture	20	25.6%
Better data access/quality/tools	13	16.7%
Budget for non-staffing items	9	11.5%
Professional development	8	10.3%
Total Responses	78	

Chief Research Officer

The next section of the survey focused on obtaining more detailed information about each IR office's chief research officer (CRO).

What is your job title?

Director remains the most common title for chief research officers at both college and district offices. Table 14 below presents the results from this question.

Table 14. 2009 Survey – Chief Research Officer Job Title by Office Type

	College Offices		District Offices		All Offices	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Vice Chancellor	0	0.0%	1	7.7%	1	1.2%
Vice President	1	1.4%	1	7.7%	2	2.4%
Dean	23	32.4%	0	0.0%	23	27.4%
Director	37	52.1%	10	76.9%	47	56.0%
Coordinator	5	7.0%	0	0.0%	5	6.0%
Officer	1	1.4%	0	0.0%	1	1.2%
Analyst	4	5.6%	1	7.7%	5	6.0%
Total Responses	71		13		84	

When comparing the results from 2006 and 2009, there appears to be a shift to more director and dean positions in 2009 and fewer positions with somewhat unique titles than were seen in 2006. Table 15 below presents the data from this comparison.

Table 15. Comparison of 2009 and 2006 Surveys – Chief Research Officer Job Title

	2009		2006		Difference
	n	%	n	%	% pts
Director (incl. Sr. Dir, Exec. Dir)	47	56.0%	50	46.7%	9.2%
Dean (incl. Assoc. Dean)	23	27.4%	16	15.0%	12.4%
Coordinator	5	6.0%	11	10.3%	-4.3%
Analyst	5	6.0%	9	8.4%	-2.5%
Researcher	0	0.0%	5	4.7%	-4.7%
Vice Chancellor (incl. Assoc VC)	1	1.2%	4	3.7%	-2.5%
Officer	1	1.2%	3	2.8%	-1.6%
Vice President	2	2.4%	3	2.8%	-0.4%
Manager	0	0.0%	2	1.9%	-1.9%
Specialist	0	0.0%	2	1.9%	-1.9%
Chief	0	0.0%	1	0.9%	-0.9%
Supervisor	0	0.0%	1	0.9%	-0.9%
Total Responses	84		107		

What is the FTE for this person?

The vast majority of CROs at both college and district offices are 1.0 FTE positions. However, there are five college and district offices where the CRO is a less than full-time position. It is interesting to note that there are five colleges that report 2.0 FTE for their chief research officer. In looking at these five colleges, each one has two administrative positions in research and in most cases it is a dean and a director. Table 16 below presents the relevant data.

Table 16. 2009 Survey – FTE for Chief Research Officer by Office Type

	College Offices		District Offices		All Offices	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
0.25	1	1.4%	0	0.0%	1	1.2%
0.50	1	1.4%	1	7.7%	2	2.4%
0.70	0	0.0%	1	7.7%	1	1.2%
0.75	1	1.4%	0	0.0%	1	1.2%
1.00	61	87.1%	11	84.6%	72	86.7%
1.10	1	1.4%	0	0.0%	1	1.2%
2.00	5	7.1%	0	0.0%	5	6.0%
Total Responses	70		13		83	

What is this person's highest degree?

Interestingly, the majority of CROs at college offices hold a doctoral degree, whereas the majority of CROs at district offices hold a master's degree. Table 17 below presents these data.

Table 17. 2009 Survey – Educational Level of Chief Research Officer by Office Type

	College Offices		District Offices		All Offices	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Doctoral degree	38	55.1%	6	46.2%	44	53.7%
Master's degree	30	43.5%	7	53.8%	37	45.1%
Bachelor's degree	1	1.4%	0	0.0%	1	1.2%
Total Responses	69		13		82	

In which discipline is this degree?

The most common discipline for CROs' degree is Education followed by Psychology and Sociology/Social Work. Table 18 summarizes the data below.

Table 18. 2009 Survey – Discipline of Highest Degree Held by Chief Research Officer

	n	%
Education	29	36.7%
Psychology	14	17.7%
Sociology/Social Work	9	11.4%
Business/Economics	6	7.6%
Other Social Sciences	6	7.6%
Political Science	5	6.3%
Research/Statistics	5	6.3%
Other	5	6.3%
Total Responses	79	

How many years has this person been doing institutional research and planning?

The highest proportion of CROs at both college and district offices have been in IR between one and five years. However, these data show that there is a wide range of experience across the state. Table 19 below presents these data.

Table 19. 2009 Survey – Chief Research Officers' Years of Research and Planning Experience by Office Type

	College Offices		District Offices		All Offices	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Less than a year	5	7.1%	0	0.0%	5	6.0%
1 - 5 years	21	30.0%	4	30.8%	25	30.1%
6 - 10 years	11	15.7%	2	15.4%	13	15.7%
11 - 15 years	13	18.6%	3	23.1%	16	19.3%
16 - 20 years	15	21.4%	3	23.1%	18	21.7%
More than 20 years	5	7.1%	1	7.7%	6	7.2%
Total Responses	70		13		83	

How many years has this person been in this position?

Among respondents, the majority of CROs have been in their current position for five years or less. It is interesting to note that there were no CROs who had been in their current position for 16 years or more at district offices. Table 20 presents this information below.

Table 20. 2009 Survey – Chief Research Officers' Years in Current Position by Office Type

	College Offices		District Offices		All Offices	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Less than a year	12	17.1%	2	15.4%	14	16.9%
1 - 5 years	38	54.3%	8	61.5%	46	55.4%
6 - 10 years	12	17.1%	1	7.7%	13	15.7%
11 - 15 years	4	5.7%	2	15.4%	6	7.2%
16 - 20 years	3	4.3%	0	0.0%	3	3.6%
More than 20 years	1	1.4%	0	0.0%	1	1.2%
Total Responses	70		13		83	

What is the exact title of the person to whom the lead researcher reports?

The majority of CROs in college offices report to the college president, and the majority of CROs in district offices report to a vice or assistant chancellor. The next most common reporting line among college CROs is to a vice president, but among district CROs it is the district chancellor. Table 21 below presents the results from this question.

Table 21. 2009 Survey – Job Title of Person to Whom Chief Research Officer Reports by Office Type

	College Offices		District Offices		All Offices	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Chancellor	2	2.8%	3	23.1%	5	6.0%
President	41	57.7%	1	7.7%	42	50.0%
Vice/Asst Chancellor	1	1.4%	7	53.8%	8	9.5%
Associate/Asst Vice Chancellor	1	1.4%	2	15.4%	3	3.6%
Vice President	19	26.8%	0	0.0%	19	22.6%
Dual: President & VP	2	2.8%	0	0.0%	2	2.4%
Dean	4	5.6%	0	0.0%	4	4.8%
Executive Assistant to President	1	1.4%	0	0.0%	1	1.2%
Total Responses	71		13		84	

In both the 2006 and 2009 surveys, the majority of CROs report to the college president, which is a function of the larger number of college offices in the state and responding to the survey. What is interesting is that even though a larger proportion of the district offices were represented in the 2006 survey, the number of CROs reporting to a chancellor increased. This finding may be an indication of a shift at district offices where more CROs are reporting to the chancellor. Table 22 presents this comparison below.

Table 22. Comparison of 2009 and 2006 Surveys – Job Title of Person to Whom Chief Research Officer Reports

	2009		2006		Difference
	n	%	n	%	% pts
Chancellor	5	6.0%	1	1.5%	4.4%
President	42	50.0%	34	52.3%	-2.3%
Vice/Asst Chancellor	8	9.5%	3	4.6%	4.9%
Associate/Asst Vice Chancellor	3	3.6%	4	6.2%	-2.6%
Vice President	19	22.6%	16	24.6%	-2.0%
Dual: President & Vice President	2	2.4%	0	0.0%	2.4%
Dean	4	4.8%	5	7.7%	-2.9%
Director	0	0.0%	1	1.5%	-1.5%
Executive Assistant to President	1	1.2%	1	1.5%	-0.3%
Total Responses	84		65		

Office Priorities and the Role of Research

This section of the survey sought to collect information that would help illustrate the priorities of IR offices, how most offices spend their time, how IR professionals view the current role of research, what the role of research should be, and what the difference is between research and reporting at their institutions.

What were the office priorities for the IR office during the 2008-09 academic year?

Respondents were presented with a fairly extensive list of job responsibilities and asked to indicate the priority of each item in their office during the last year on the following four-point scale:

- High Priority (3)
- Medium Priority (2)
- Low Priority (1)
- Not a responsibility of this office (0)

Overall and for college offices, the top five priorities were accreditation, program review, institutional and/or department surveys, planning, and analytic studies for patterns or trends. For districts, the top five priorities were data extracts, data warehousing, accreditation, analytic studies for patterns and trends, and external reporting (e.g., MIS, IPEDS). Table 23 below presents the results from this question ranked in descending order by the mean response for all offices.

Table 23. 2009 Survey – Office Priorities by Office Type Ranked in Descending Order for All Offices

	College Offices (n=77)	District Offices (n=14)	All Offices (n = 91)
Accreditation	2.77	2.23	2.69
Program review	2.77	1.85	2.63
Institutional and/or departmental surveys	2.44	2.08	2.39
Planning (e.g., strategic planning)	2.41	1.92	2.33
Analytic studies for patterns or trends	2.33	2.15	2.30
Data extracts/data warehousing	2.09	2.54	2.16
Student learning outcomes	2.29	1.46	2.16
Student retention studies	2.16	2.08	2.15
Faculty data requests	2.13	1.77	2.07
Enrollment management	1.90	2.08	1.93
Graduation and/or transfer studies	1.91	1.92	1.92
Assessment studies (e.g., placement test validation)	1.99	1.08	1.84
Grants (e.g., developing grant proposals, providing data for application, conducting evaluations)	1.78	1.85	1.79
External reporting (e.g., MIS, IPEDS)	1.59	2.15	1.67
Faculty studies (e.g., evaluations, workload, staffing)	1.30	1.54	1.34
Market research/community needs assessment	1.20	1.33	1.22
Attendance accounting (i.e., 320 report)	0.76	1.46	0.87
Financial studies (e.g., cost/benefit analysis, budget analysis, financial projections)	0.77	1.31	0.86
Job placement studies	0.87	0.62	0.83
Information technology (e.g., hardware/software installation and maintenance, user support, programming)	0.46	1.46	0.61

How much time do you spend in each domain of the five that collectively define the role of a researcher?

As described earlier in the Introduction, through the BSOC study, five domains were identified that characterize the demands on institutional research offices:

1. **Production** - gather and collect data, conduct analyses and write research reports that are both clear and informative.
2. **Dissemination** – have an infrastructure in place for the dissemination of data and information to appropriate stakeholders throughout the college and to the public.
3. **Interpretation** – help administrators, faculty and staff analyze and interpret the data and information and in so doing, assist them in evolving their research and inquiry skills.
4. **Translating Evidence into Action** – assist administrators, faculty and staff in using data and information to drive improvement and planning decisions.
5. **Closing and Widening the Loop** – ensure that decision-making is translated into action and action is widely evaluated and based on data.

Respondents were asked to indicate the time they spent on each of these domains according to the following four-point scale:

- Significant amount of time (3)
- Moderate amount of time (2)
- Little time (1)
- No time (0)

Research offices spend the most time on data production and the least amount of time on closing the loop, with moderate amounts of time going to dissemination, interpretation, and translating. Table 24 below presents the mean responses by office type.

Table 24. Time Spent on Five Domains of Research by Office Type

	College Offices	District Offices	All Offices
Production	2.79	2.54	2.75
Dissemination	2.10	2.00	2.08
Interpretation	2.21	2.23	2.22
Translating	1.90	1.46	1.83
Closing the Loop	1.63	1.15	1.55

What is the difference between research and reporting at your institution? How do you see the role of research at the institution? What do you believe it should be? How does its current role at your institution differ from what you believe it should be?

Respondents were asked to reply to the above questions in one open-ended response. The comments are very interesting and enlightening to read; out of 55 total respondents to the question, 14 indicated the need to shift some of the time and resources currently spent on reporting to focus on research instead. Another 13 respondents accepted that IR is essentially reporting, without suggesting it could or should change. Happily, a dozen respondents stated that their offices do both research and reporting and find the combination changing. Eight respondents state that reporting is done outside of the IR office, most often by a district office or the Information Technology department. The remaining comments talk about frustrations within the college culture and how they are specifically making changes in their own offices to do less reporting and more research.

Professional Development

This section of the survey focused on ascertaining how respondents are using the professional development resources currently available from the RP Group, how they assess the value of these resources, and their preferences for resources that could be developed.

Have you attended the regional research group in your area?

Over 75 percent of the college and district offices have attended a regional research group. Table 25 below presents the results.

Table 25. 2009 Survey – Attendance at Regional Research Group by Office Type

	College Offices		District Offices		All Offices	
	n	%	n	%		%
Yes	52	75.4%	11	84.6%	63	76.8%
No	17	24.6%	2	15.4%	19	23.2%
Total Responses	69		13		82	

If you haven't attended in a while or have never attended, please share what could be done to make the regional research groups more useful for you.

Next, we asked respondents why they have not attended and what would possibly be done to make the regional research groups more useful to them. The primary reasons given for not attending include coordination problems (e.g., schedule, timing), lack of funding for travel, lack of useful information sharing and interactive topics, not being able to get away due to a heavy workload, and having to travel too far because colleges in the region are great distances apart.

Would you be able to attend multi-hour in-person trainings that cost $100?

In order to ascertain what kind of training activities they would be most receptive to, we asked this question about a specific format we were considering. Almost half of respondents indicated that they may be able to, with about 35 percent indicating a firm "Yes" and only 16 percent indicating a firm "No." Table 26 below presents these data.

Table 26. 2009 Survey – Ability to Attend Multi-hour In-person Trainings by Office Type

	College Offices		District Offices		All Offices	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	22	32.4%	6	46.2%	28	34.6%
Maybe	33	48.5%	7	53.8%	40	49.4%
No	13	19.1%	0	0.0%	13	16.0%
Total Responses	68		13		81	

If so, which topics would be of most interest to you?

For those respondents to the above question about the in-person training, we also asked them to share which topics would be most likely to attract them to the training. Out of 37 respondents, the most common (14) suggestion was for training that would cover some type of data tool. Specific examples include: data warehousing, data mining, reporting software for program review, Argos, Cognos, SPSS, SQL, and GIS. The second most common request (10) was for training that focused on SLOs, assessment, evaluation, and working with faculty. Finally, there were two topic areas that were the third most common response, with five respondents each. The first was communication and changing college culture, and the second was planning, strategic planning, institutional effectiveness, and enrollment management. The remaining suggested topics included statistics, best practices, hot topics, and accreditation.

Which web-based resources would you be interested in using?

Overall, the top three preferred web-based resources are:

1. Downloadable reference documents
2. Live webinars (60-90 minutes)
3. Recorded streaming sessions (60-90 minutes, from previous webinars or conferences)

Other resources mentioned include a website with threaded discussion boards and document sharing, an RP directory listing all the IR professionals throughout the state, and websites dedicated to matriculation and accreditation. Table 27 below presents all the results from this question.

Table 27. 2009 Survey – Preferred Web-based Resources by Office Type

	College Offices		District Offices		All Offices	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Downloadable reference documents	62	100.0%	11	100.0%	73	100.0%
Webinars	59	95.2%	11	100.0%	70	95.9%
Recorded streaming sessions	47	75.8%	8	72.7%	55	75.3%
Online community	42	67.7%	5	45.5%	47	64.4%
RP directory	41	66.1%	6	54.5%	47	64.4%
Webcasts	36	58.1%	7	63.6%	43	58.9%
RP hotline	33	53.2%	7	63.6%	40	54.8%
Podcasts	23	37.1%	5	45.5%	28	38.4%
Total Respondents	62		11		73	

How often do you read RP's newsletter, Perspectives?

Collectively, over half of the college and district offices read every issue and approximately 10% of these offices never read any issue. Table 28 below contains the results from this question.

Table 28. 2009 Survey – Frequency of Reading RP's Newsletter, *Perspectives* by Office Type

	College Offices		District Offices		All Offices	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Every issue	34	50.7%	8	61.5%	42	52.5%
Some issues	26	38.8%	4	30.8%	30	37.5%
Never read it	7	10.4%	1	7.7%	8	10.0%
Total Responses	67		13		80	

How would you prefer to receive information on important developments in the IR field and statewide issues?

Table 29 below shows that college and district offices collectively preferred the following as the top three modes of communication:

- Posts to the RP listserv
- Short e-newsletters targeted to specific audiences
- Posts on the RP website

Table 29. 2009 Survey – Preferred Method to Receive Information from RP Group by Office Type

	College Offices		District Offices		All Offices	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Posts to the RP listserv	55	100.0%	11	100.0%	66	100.0%
Short e-newsletters targeted	34	61.8%	7	63.6%	41	62.1%
Posts on the RP website	33	60.0%	6	54.5%	39	59.1%
Regional research groups	27	49.1%	7	63.6%	34	51.5%
Long articles in Perspectives	23	41.8%	4	36.4%	27	40.9%
Posts to an online community	16	29.1%	2	18.2%	18	27.3%
Total Respondents	55		11		66	

What do you do with the Journal of Applied Research in Community Colleges (JARCC)?

Collectively, about 52% read the journal and 20% share it with others. What is interesting is that proportionally, district offices read and share JARCC at a higher rate than college offices. Table 30 below summarizes the responses to this question.

Table 30. 2009 Survey – Use of JARCC by Office Type

	College Offices		District Offices		All Offices	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Read the JARCC you receive	38	49.4%	9	64.3%	47	51.6%
Share JARCC w/ others	13	16.9%	5	35.7%	18	19.8%
Total Respondents	77		14		91	

Respondents were also asked to comment on the number of colleagues with whom they share the JARCC, and responses ranged from a few (1 to 6) to wider audiences (40 or more) depending on the topic.

How often do you access the following segments of the RP Group website?

Respondents were presented with the following list of segments of the RP Group website and asked to indicate the frequency with which they access each segment (never, occasionally, or frequently).

- Information on conferences and other events
- Conference recordings and PowerPoints
- RP CSS research studies
- RP awards
- Regional research group websites
- SLO Coordinator website
- RP resources (e.g., tips, tools, terms and links)
- Job postings
- Information on the RP Group organization

The three segments with the highest proportion of frequently responses were:

- RP resources (tips, tools, terms and links) – 21%
- Information on conferences and other events – 18%
- RP CSS research studies – 9%

The three segments with the highest proportion of occasionally responses were:

- RP CSS research studies – 77%
- Information on conferences and other events – 76%
- Conference recordings and PowerPoints – 72%

These results indicate that the most widely used segments on the website are the information on conferences and other events and the RP CSS research studies.

The three segments with the highest proportion of never responses, and are thus the least used were:

- RP awards – 59%
- Regional research group websites – 58%
- Job postings – 56%

When these results are examined for college and district offices, district offices report higher levels of usage on all the items except RP resources (e.g., tips, tools, terms and links).

Tools/Reports

This section of the survey asked a series of questions about the tools and reports respondents are currently using and what additional tools and reports would prove useful in their work.

Which CCC resources have you used in the past year?

The top three Chancellor's Office resources used by both college and district offices are– Accountability Reporting for Community Colleges (ARCC), the Data Mart, and the Data Element Dictionary (MIS definitions). Table 31 presents all the data from this question sorted in descending order by responses from all offices.

Table 31. 2009 Survey – Use of CCC Resources by Office Type Sorted in Descending Order by All Offices

	College Offices		District Offices		All Offices	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
ARCC - Accountability Reporting	66	100.0%	13	100.0%	79	100.0%
Data Mart	64	97.0%	13	100.0%	77	97.5%
Data Element Dictionary (MIS definitions)	58	87.9%	13	100.0%	71	89.9%
Data on Demand	54	81.8%	11	84.6%	65	82.3%
Reports and abstracts	47	71.2%	13	100.0%	60	75.9%
Perkins/VTEA Core Indicators	36	54.5%	8	61.5%	44	55.7%
Matriculation (assessment, approved tests)	37	56.1%	5	38.5%	42	53.2%
Categorical and Student Programs/Services	35	53.0%	5	38.5%	40	50.6%
Academic Affairs (approved programs)	26	39.4%	4	30.8%	30	38.0%
Centers of Excellence	27	40.9%	3	23.1%	30	38.0%
CCC GIS collaborative (district maps)	21	31.8%	6	46.2%	27	34.2%
CTE/Economic workforce development	22	33.3%	4	30.8%	26	32.9%
Fiscal Services and FTFO	13	19.7%	5	38.5%	18	22.8%
Total Respondents	66		13		79	

Which K-12 resources have you used in the past year?

The most used K-12 resource was the California Department of Education (CDE) online tools (Data Quest, Ed Data, Longitudinal Data). The California Directory of Schools (CDS) seems to be used by a higher proportion of districts. Table 32 below presents the results from this question.

Table 32. 2009 Survey – Use of K-12 Resources by Office Type Sorted in Descending Order by All Offices

	College Offices		District Offices		All Offices	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
CDE (Data Quest, Ed Data, Longitudinal Data)	54	100.0%	10	100.0%	64	100.0%
CBEDS (HS enrollment & demographics)	28	51.9%	6	60.0%	34	53.1%
CDS (CA Directory of Schools)	7	13.0%	4	40.0%	11	17.2%
Total Respondents	54		10		64	

Which inter-segmental resources have you used in the past year?

The top three inter-segmental resources used collectively by colleges and districts were:

- Accrediting Commission's (ACCJC) website and resources
- CPEC's online tools (transfer pathways, quick data, custom reports)
- Basic Skills Initiative's website and resources,

Table 33 below shows the complete response to this question.

Table 33. 2009 Survey – Use of Inter-segmental Resources by Office Type Sorted in Descending Order by All Offices

	College Offices		District Offices		All Offices	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
ACCJC Accrediting Commission website & resources	58	100.0%	9	75.0%	67	95.7%
CPEC - transfer pathways, quick data, custom reports	54	93.1%	12	100.0%	66	94.3%
Basic Skills Initiative website & resources	50	86.2%	8	66.7%	58	82.9%
NCES/IPEDS peer institutions, data cutting tools	47	81.0%	10	83.3%	57	81.4%
Cal-PASS (Professional Learning Councils, Smart Tool)	41	70.7%	11	91.7%	52	74.3%
California Ed Code, Title 5 CCR	41	70.7%	8	66.7%	49	70.0%
SLO & assessment websites, tools, blogs	40	69.0%	4	33.3%	44	62.9%
CSU Analytic Studies	31	53.4%	8	66.7%	39	55.7%
NSC National Student Clearinghouse enrollment search	29	50.0%	10	83.3%	39	55.7%
ERIC/HERI and other literature review resources	28	48.3%	3	25.0%	31	44.3%
CCSSE - Community College Survey of Student Engagement	25	43.1%	4	33.3%	29	41.4%
UC Statfinder	21	36.2%	4	33.3%	25	35.7%
Total Respondents	58		12		70	

Which other/external resources have you used in the past?

Other popular resources included the US Census population and demographic data, California Labor Market Information, and the California Department of Finance (DOF) state and county population. Table 34 below presents the complete results for this question.

Table 34. 2009 Survey – Use of Other/External Resources by Office Type Sorted in Descending Order by All Offices

	College Offices		District Offices		All Offices	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
US Census population and demographic data	57	100.0%	12	100.0%	69	100.0%
CA LMI Labor Market occupation outlook, unemployment	46	80.7%	11	91.7%	57	82.6%
CA DOF Dept of Finance state & county population	46	80.7%	10	83.3%	56	81.2%
BLS Bureau of Labor Statistics	36	63.2%	8	66.7%	44	63.8%
Federal grants (DOE, NSF, Title III, Title V)	32	56.1%	8	66.7%	40	58.0%
EMSI Economic Modeling Specialists	22	38.6%	8	66.7%	30	43.5%
Total Respondents	57		12		69	

Which professional resources have you used in the past?

The top three professional resources used collectively by both college and district offices were:

- RP Group's listserv, website, tools, publications, and workshops
- Association for Institutional Research (AIR)
- RP Group's Center for Student Success (CSS)

Proportionally speaking, more district offices seem to read the JARCC than college offices. Table 35 below presents the full results for this question.

Table 35. 2009 Survey – Use of Professional Resources by Office Type Sorted in Descending Order by All Offices

	College Offices		District Offices		All Offices	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
RP Group listserv, website, tools, publications, workshops	60	100.0%	12	100.0%	72	100.0%
AIR Association for Institutional Research	41	68.3%	10	83.3%	51	70.8%
CSS Center for Student Success	36	60.0%	4	33.3%	40	55.6%
CAIR CA Association for Institutional Research	22	36.7%	10	83.3%	32	44.4%
JARCC Journal for Applied Research in Community Colleges	24	40.0%	7	58.3%	31	43.1%
ASCCC Academic Senate for the CCC	24	40.0%	4	33.3%	28	38.9%
NCCCRP National Council of CC Research & Planning	14	23.3%	6	50.0%	20	27.8%
AERA American Educational Researchers Association	16	26.7%	0	0.0%	16	22.2%
Total Respondents	60		12		72	

Which reports, services, or tools would support you/your college?

The top three reports, services, or tools requested were:

- Tool to enable student cohort tracking
- Models of learning assessment
- Tool to check MIS data with college data

Table 36 below presents all the data from this question.

Table 36. 2009 Survey – Desired Reports, Services, and Tools by Office Type Sorted in Descending Order by All Offices

	College Offices		District Offices		All Offices	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Tool to enable student cohort tracking	56	98.2%	9	75.0%	65	94.2%
Models of learning assessment	57	100.0%	5	41.7%	62	89.9%
Tool to check MIS data with college data	50	87.7%	11	91.7%	61	88.4%
Summarize accred & assessment info	48	84.2%	8	66.7%	56	81.2%
Workshops & conferences	47	82.5%	9	75.0%	56	81.2%
Reports on high school freshmen, CCC transfers	47	82.5%	9	75.0%	56	81.2%
Regional economic & labor market reports	45	78.9%	10	83.3%	55	79.7%
Models of strategic planning	46	80.7%	9	75.0%	55	79.7%
Tool to check IPEDS data with college data	44	77.2%	9	75.0%	53	76.8%
Tool to use GIS mapping with college data	40	70.2%	12	100.0%	52	75.4%
Online web-based content	44	77.2%	6	50.0%	50	72.5%
Shared scripts for data using SPSS, SAS	43	75.4%	3	25.0%	46	66.7%
Online tutorials on FAQ within IR	38	66.7%	7	58.3%	45	65.2%
Vocational program review regional reports	36	63.2%	7	58.3%	43	62.3%
Operational definitions with SLO glossary	37	64.9%	6	50.0%	43	62.3%
Summarize state & national research	33	57.9%	7	58.3%	40	58.0%
Total Respondents	57		12		69	

In addition, respondents were asked to indicate which of the reports, services or tools they suggested would have the biggest impact in their office and why. Cohort tracking was the most frequent response to this question. Other common responses include a tool that would compare/verify MIS data with college data, help with SLO assessment, accreditation, and enable sharing of information, resources, and reports across colleges.

Focus Groups

The presentation of the results from the focus groups includes an identification of the main themes that arose from the group's responses to each of three questions. See Appendix B for tables providing details from the qualitative data.

What are your obstacles or struggles in advancing the research agenda and improving the college's ability to engage in evidence-based decision-making?

Participants were asked to share the challenges they faced in advancing the research agenda and improving the college's ability to engage in evidence-based decision making. The following obstacles were extracted from participants' feedback.

- Historically devalued perception of the research function
- Institutional priorities do not include research
- Practitioners' resistance to change
- Lack of awareness about research purpose, scope, and value
- Variety in practitioner abilities
- Lack of perceived relevance of data
- Disconnect between those who input and those who use data
- Limited resources

What are some successful strategies to advance the research agenda and improving the college's ability to engage in evidence-based decision-making?

Participants were asked to share successful strategies they have used to advance the research agenda and improve the college's ability to engage in evidence-based decision making. Participants used this opportunity to identify unique and effective strategies used in their offices and also offered strategies to address challenges identified in the first question. The following responses were extracted from the participants' feedback:

- Building effective communication strategies
- Empowering practitioners to own the research process
- Leveraging technological tools
- Building opportunities for dialogue
- Building transparency
- Being inclusive
- Managing time
- Leveraging resources
- Maintaining a strong buy-in from leadership

In the recent IR Census Survey, when asked about which tools or resources would assist researchers and planners in their work, cohort tracking was one of the most popular responses. Which questions about your students would you like answered with a cohort tracking tool?

This question addressed an item in the IR Census Survey that had asked which tools or resources would assist researchers and planners in their work. Cohort tracking was the most popular response and participants were asked which questions about their students they would like answered with a cohort tracking tool. Participants identified the following considerations for such a tool: how it would interface with MIS and non-MIS systems, how to keep it flexible, keeping in mind that some colleges are self-sufficient and not require such a tool, and how to approach issues of inter-college data sharing. Peripheral questions included how to define a program or identify a cohort, how to work with practitioners on these definitions and identifications, how to explain the difference between various sources of data.

Conclusions and Implications

This section presents a summary of the key findings from the survey along with the implications of these findings for the research function in the state and actions that have been taken or are planned by the RP Group.

Summary of Findings

The majority of the respondents were from large colleges, with a headcount of more than 20,000 students in Fall 2009. A little more than a third (36%) of both college and district IR offices responding to the survey are what is commonly known as the "one-person shop," with slightly less than two thirds of these offices having more than one person. Overall, most IR offices responding to the survey have one full-time research analyst and colleges are more likely than districts to have two analysts. In contrast, most responding IR offices did not report having clerical support. In January 2011, the RP Group will launch a separate capacity survey and follow up phone calls to secure participation and responses from each college and district in order to build a comprehensive, accurate, and timely snapshot of office staffing.

Respondents from colleges reported that a majority of the offices had either no change or a decrease in their operating budgets while most districts indicated a decrease in the operating budget. The majority of staffing budgets remained unchanged both at the college and district levels, however, it is important to note that there were many non-responses to the survey and a part of the reason could be that the position is vacant at the college. Generally, office sizes decreased. In order to increase their offices' effectiveness, respondents mentioned that more staffing, better data access, bigger budgets, and more professional development were necessary.

Most Chief Research Officers (CROs) at colleges and districts were 1.0 FTE positions with a few less than that. A majority of the college CROs report directly to the College President while the district CROs report directly to a Vice or Assistant Chancellor. It is interesting that most college CROs have doctoral degrees, while most district CROs have master's degrees. Most CROs hold degrees in Education followed by Psychology and Sociology/Social Work and have been in their positions for 1-5 years.

The top three priorities for college offices were accreditation, program review, and institutional and/or department surveys. For district offices, the top three priorities were data extracts, data warehousing, and accreditation. Research offices spend the most time on data production and the least amount of time on closing the loop, with moderate amounts of time going to dissemination, interpretation, and translating.

When asked whether the emphasis at their institution was on a collaborative cycle of research or on reporting, and whether this focus should change, the top three responses were:

- An indication that there was a need to shift some of the time and resources currently spent on reporting to research
- A belief that their offices were already balancing research and reporting activities
- An assertion that IR is essentially reporting and saw no need for change

In terms of professional development, over 75 percent of the college and district offices have attended a regional research group. A majority of respondents indicated a definite or likely possibility of attending a one-day session on a particular topic and offered a variety of topics of interest. The most common suggestion was for training that would cover some type of data tool followed by a training that focused on SLOs, assessment, evaluation, and working with faculty.

Overall, the top three preferred web-based resources were downloadable reference documents, live webinars, and recorded streaming sessions.

Over half of the college and district offices read every issue of the RP Group's e-newsletter, *Perspectives,* and approximately 10% of the offices have never read any issue. Half of respondents read the Journal of Applied Research in the Community Colleges (JARCC) and 20% share it with others. Proportionally speaking, more district offices seem to read the JARCC than college offices.

The top three desired modes of communication include posts to the RP listserv, short e-newsletters targeted to specific audiences, and posts on the RP website. Additionally, the most used segments on the RP website are the information on conferences and other events and the RP CSS research studies. It is interesting to note that district offices report higher levels of usage on all the areas of the RP website except RP resources (e.g., tips, tools, terms and links).

The top three Chancellor's Office resources used by both college and district offices are– Accountability Reporting for Community Colleges (ARCC), the Data Mart, and the Data Element Dictionary (MIS definitions). The most used K-12 resource was the California Department of Education (CDE) online tools (Data Quest, Ed Data, Longitudinal Data), however, the California Directory of Schools (CDS) seems to be used by a higher proportion of districts.

The top three inter-segmental resources used collectively by colleges and districts were the Accrediting Commission's (ACCJC) website and resources, CPEC's online tools, and the Basic Skills Initiative's website and resources. Other popular external resources included the US Census population and demographic data, California Labor Market Information, and the California Department of Finance (DOF) state and county population.

The top three requested reports, services, or tools were a tool to enable student cohort tracking, models of learning assessment, and a tool to check MIS data with college data. Many respondents indicated that a cohort tracking tool would have the biggest impact on their office.

The series of focus groups added an additional layer of information about the challenges faced and strategies employed in advancing the research agenda at institutions. The challenges participants identified included:

- a historically devalued perception of the research function
- institutional priorities excluding research
- practitioners' resistance to change
- a lack of awareness about research purpose, scope, and value
- a variety in practitioner abilities
- a lack of perceived relevance of data

- a disconnect between those who input and those who use data
- limited resources

Successful strategies identified by focus group participants included:

- building effective communication strategies
- empowering practitioners to own the research process
- leveraging technological tools
- building opportunities for dialogue
- building transparency
- being inclusive
- managing time
- leveraging resources
- maintaining a strong buy-in from leadership

Implications and Actions

The information and perspectives collected via the survey and focus groups has provided additional considerations to RP Group's planning efforts. Since the study was conducted, the RP Group has been extracting and using the findings to address the needs identified by respondents and align these needs with its strategic plan. The study laid out many facets of the condition of IR offices including needs, preferences, and actual behavior. The study made it clear that there are many challenges facing IR offices ranging from increased responsibilities, decreased resources, and balancing research production and reporting with collaborative analysis and application. Conversely, there are many opportunities that include leveraging and making more visible existing resources, tailoring future professional development opportunities to various audiences, and building tools that respondents indicated as integral to alleviating their workloads and enabling them to engage in closing the loop on research.

As a result of responses from the survey and focus groups, the RP Group has engaged in the following activities during 2010:

1. Moved from a static to dynamic website with a more robust resources repository, tag-based organization of the resources, and discussion forums to enable knowledge-sharing and build an online community

2. Increased the amount of downloadable reference documents by:
   - developing a series of nine inquiry guides that outline guiding principles, offer various models, have pre-developed discussion questions, and a provide series of resources surrounding critical institutional processes such as learning outcomes assessment, program review, the translation of data into action, and institutional effectiveness
   - collecting hundreds of resources and placing them on the website
   - enabling registered members of the RP website to upload resource materials thereby broadening the ownership of the resources to the field
   - beginning the development of 20 online mini-workshops addressing specific data issues such as "integrating data into institutional processes" and "telling your story with data," which can be used to lead campus-based discussions (these will be released in Spring 2011)

3. Offered regional workshops, developed sessions for the Student Success Conference, uploaded resources, and hosted a suit of annual awards with the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges to document effective SLO implementation

4. Partnered with Cal-PASS to offer professional development opportunities around existing tools. For example, in November –December 2010, RP provided a series of statewide workshops and a webinar on Cal-PASS's SMART Tool, which allows for cohort tracking.

5. Used the needs identified in the survey and focus groups to structure a new conference specifically for researchers. This conference is now an annual event.

6. Restructured *Perspectives*, the RP e-newsletter, to focus more on highlighting effective tools and studies in four areas: statewide issues, research, planning, and assessment, as well as increasing its frequency to a monthly publication

7. Reinstated the RP Directory, which is now available on the RP website

8. Built a communications plan that enables findings from a study or other announcements to be effectively communicated to a variety of target audiences (see, for example, the brief on RP's study of transfer in Engineering)

In addition to these activities, there are additional actions that the RP Group can undertake based on the findings:

- Reexamining current modes of communication and consider building short webcasts around major topics of interest
- Researching the ability to build tools to address needs such as cohort tracking and verifying MIS data
- Restructuring portions of the website (e.g., discussion forums) to provide additional spaces for individuals to share opportunities, challenges, and strategies for common concerns
- Reviewing the process of conducting the IR office survey and focus group and developing a system to periodically collect census information from the field
- Developing additional resources and supporting the work of regional research groups
- Considering novel resources such as webcasts where experts present on certain topics of interest

Over the course of 2010, the RP Group's efforts were focused on building resources that responded to the needs of the field. Our next steps will be to work with the field to ensure they know about the tools and to help integrate these tools into the work of institutional research offices.

Key to this process will be discussions among researchers about the role they play within their institutions and ways to balance the expanding demands on research offices. The RP Group has developed a discussion guide about the evolving role of research and the realities of research capacity in the colleges to help further these conversations among researchers and at community colleges.

In January 2011, the RP Group will again document the budgeting and staffing level of the colleges through a statewide survey. In May 2011, an additional survey will gather information about the efficacy of the RP Group's new resources and the focus of work in research offices around the state.

The RP Group will also further its advocacy role, working with other constituency groups such as faculty and administrators, to discuss the implications of the evolving role of research and to strengthen both practitioners' ability to engage with data and their support for collaborative,

action-oriented research. Through vehicles like the regional research groups, listservs, annual research conference, and our website, we will seek to provide a means for researchers to articulate their common concerns and recommendations for the California community college system.

Appendix A: 2009 Survey

the RP group

the Research & Planning Group
for California Community Colleges

2009 IRP CENSUS SURVEY

1: SURVEY INTRODUCTION

The RP Group helps to support the role of research in organizational decision making and policy analysis in order to improve student outcomes at California community colleges. Periodically, we survey the field to get a better understanding of how institutional research and planning (IRP) is positioned within institutions, the capacity of IRP offices to conduct research, and the responsibilities typically assigned to them. This year, we are also gathering information about how existing IRP resources are used and what types of new resources would be helpful. The results will be used by the RP Group to determine ways to expand our services and resources to better support your efforts in research, planning, and assessment.

The survey takes approximately 30-45 minutes to complete. We suggest that your office take a quick look at and reflect on the questions before completing the survey. Your responses will remain confidential. All results will be aggregated to document trends and create a statewide snapshot. The final summary will be posted on the RP Group website later this fall.

Please submit one survey for each college/district office by Friday, October 30, 2009. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Priya Chaplot, Project Coordinator, at pchaplot@rpgroup.org. Thank you for your participation!

2: OFFICE INFORMATION

1. Is your office located at a college or at a district office?

___ College

___ District

2. What is the name of your college or district? _____

3. What is the exact title of your office? _____

4. If the office is located in a multi-college district, please indicate the locations of IR offices in the district. If located at a single college district, you can skip this question.

___ Office only at the district, none at the colleges

___ Offices located at the district and each of the colleges

___ Offices located at the district and some of the colleges

___ Offices located at all the colleges, but not at the district

___ Offices located at some of the colleges, but not at the district

5. What is the current FTE per position type at your college or district office?

Research analyst FTE _____

Clerical FTE _____

Information Technology FTE _____

Student assistant FTE _____

Consultants FTE _____

Other FTE _____

Other FTE description _____

6. Please list all the positions in the IRP office by title.

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

7. How has your operating budget and staffing changed in the last year?

Operating budget	Increased	Unchanged	Decreased
Staff	Increased	Unchanged	Decreased

8. What would help increase the effectiveness of research and planning at your college/district?

_____

_____

3: CHIEF RESEARCH OFFICER

Please provide the following information for the chief research officer for this office (i.e., director, dean, VP):

1. Name _____

2. Exact Job Title _____

3. Contact Information _____

Email Address _____

Phone Number _____

4. What is the FTE for this person? _____

5. What is this person's highest degree?

___ Bachelor's degree

___ Master's degree

___ Doctoral degree

6. In which discipline is this degree? _____

7. How many years has this person being doing institutional research and planning?

___ Less than a year

___ 1 - 5 years

___ 6 - 10 years

___ 11 - 15 years

___ 16 - 20 years

___ More than 20 years

8. How many years has this person been in this position?

___ Less than a year

___ 1 - 5 years

___ 6 - 10 years

___ 11 - 15 years

___ 16 - 20 years

___ More than 20 years

9. What is the exact TITLE of the person to whom the lead researcher reports?

_____

4: OFFICE PRIORITIES AND THE ROLE OF RESEARCH

1. Please indicate the extent to which each of the following areas were a priority for the IRP office during 2008-2009.

Not a responsibility of this office/Low Priority/Medium Priority/High Priority

___ Accreditation

___ Analytic studies for patterns or trends

___ Assessment studies (e.g., placement test validation)

___ Attendance accounting (i.e., 320 report)

___ External reporting (e.g., MIS, IPEDS)

___ Data extracts/data warehousing

___ Enrollment management

___ Faculty data requests

___ Faculty studies (e.g., evaluations, workload, staffing)

___ Financial studies (e.g., cost/benefit analysis, budget analysis, financial projections)

___ Graduation and/or transfer studies

___ Grants (e.g., developing grant proposals, providing data for application, conducting evaluations)

___ Information technology (e.g., hardware/software installation and maintenance, user support, programming)

___ Institutional and/or departmental surveys

___ Job placement studies

___ Market research/community needs assessment

___ Planning (e.g., strategic planning)

___ Program review

___ Student learning outcomes

___ Student retention studies

2. In a recent RP Group research study, the role of the researcher was divided into five domains. How much time do you spend in each of these domains?

No Time at All/Little Time/Moderate Amount of Time/Significant Amount of Time

___ PRODUCTION - gather and collect data, conduct analyses, and write research reports that are both clear and informative.

___ DISSEMINATION – have an infrastructure in place for the dissemination of data and information to appropriate stakeholders throughout the college and to the public.

___ INTERPRETATION– help administrators, faculty, and staff analyze and interpret the data and information and in so doing, assist them in evolving their research and inquiry skills.

___ TRANSLATING EVIDENCE INTO ACTION – assist administrators, faculty, and staff in using data and information to drive improvement and planning decisions.

___ CLOSING AND WIDENING THE LOOP – ensure that decision making is translated into action and action is widely evaluated and based on data.

3. Perhaps you've heard there are discussions across the state about "research" versus "reporting."

IR Offices are often responsible for producing factbooks, online reports, and other information dissemination. Other duties include enrollment management studies, data integrity, placement testing, preparing reports for state and federal mandates, and accreditation. Some offices engage in applied research, environmental scans, student and faculty surveys, and supporting basic skills and student learning assessments. In addition, many research offices overlap or share responsibilities with ITS, MIS, Planning, Assessment, Matriculation, and Grants.

We are interested in your thoughts on these questions:

What is the difference between research and reporting at your institution?
How do you see the role of research at the institution? What do you believe it should be?
How does its current role at your institution differ from what you believe it should be?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

5. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT USES AND NEEDS

1. Have you or your staff attended the regional research group in your area? Yes/No

If you haven't attended in a while or have never attended, please share what could be done to make the regional research groups more useful for you.

_____

_____

_____

2. Would you be able to attend multi-hour in-person trainings that cost $100? Yes/Maybe/No

If so, what topics would be of most interest to you?

_____

_____

3. Please indicate which of the following web-based resources you would be interested in using.

___ Webinars (60-90 minutes, offered lived)

___ Recorded streaming sessions (60-90 minutes, from previous webinars or conferences)

___ Webcasts (5 minute sessions featuring PowerPoint slides and a voice over)

___ Podcasts (15-30 minute segments)

___ Downloadable reference documents

___ Online community (website with threaded discussion boards and document sharing)

___ RP hotline (ask questions anonymously via a web form, responses posted to the website)

___ RP directory (listing of individuals who affiliate themselves with RP, including contact information)

___ Other (please specify) _____

4. RP's newsletter, Perspectives, is distributed six times per year. How often do you read it?

___ Every issue

___ Some issues

___ Never read it

5. RP will be sending updates on important developments in the IRP field and statewide issues as part of a new grant. How would you prefer to receive this information? Please check all that apply.

___ Posts to the RP listserv

___ Posts on the RP website

___ Posts to an online community

___ Short e-newsletters targeted to specific audiences

___ Long articles in Perspectives

___ Regional research groups

___ Other (please specify) _____

6. RP members receive the Journal of Applied Research in Community Colleges (JARCC). Do you:

___ Read the JARCC that you receive from RP

___ Share it with others at your institution

If so, how many people do you share the JARCC with? _____

7. Please indicate the frequency with which you access the following segments of the RP Group website.

Never/Occasionally/Frequently

___ Information on conferences and other events

___ Conference recordings and PowerPoints

___ RP/CSS research studies

___ RP Awards

___ Regional Research Group websites

___ Student Learning Outcome Coordinator website

___ RP resources (definitions, tips & tools, web links)

___ Job postings

___ Information on the RP Group organization

___ Other (please specify) _____

6: TOOLS/REPORTS

We would like to know what tools and reports you are currently using in your work and what would be most helpful for RP to develop as potential reports and resources for the field. Please select all that apply.

1. Which CCC resources have you used in the past year?

___ Academic Affairs (approved programs)

___ARCC - Accountability Reporting (web page, reports)

___ Categorical and Student Programs/Services

___ CCC GIS collaborative (district maps)

___ Centers of Excellence

___ CTE/Economic workforce development

___ Data Element Dictionary (MIS definitions)

___ Data Mart

___ Data on Demand

___ Fiscal Services/FTFO

___ Matriculation (assessment, approved tests)

___ Perkins/VTEA Core Indicators

___ Reports and abstracts

2. Which K-12 resources have you used in the past year?

___ CDE - California Department of Education (Data Quest, Ed Data, Resource Guide, Longitudinal Data)

___ CDS - California Directory of Schools

___ CBEDS - California Basic Education Data System (Enrollment and Demographics for HS Students, HS Performance)

3. Which Inter-segmental resources have you used in the past year?

___ ACCJC - Accrediting Commission Website & Resources

___ Basic Skills Initiative Website, Resources

___ California Ed Code, Title 5 CCR

___ Cal-PASS (Professional Learning Councils, Smart Tool)

___ CCSSE - Community College Survey of Student Engagement

___ CPEC - California Postsecondary Education Comission (Transfer Pathways, Custom Reports, Quick Data)

___ CSU Analytic Studies

___ ERIC/HERI and Other Resources for Literature Review

___ NCES/IPEDS (Peer Institutions, Data Cutting Tools)

___ NSC - National Student Clearhinghouse (Enrollment Search Services)

___ SLO & Assessment Websites, Tools, Blogs

___ UC Statfinder

4. Which other/external resources have you used in the past year?

___ BLS - Bureau of Labor Statistics

___ CA DOF - Department of Finance (state & county population, demographics, projections)

___ CA LMI - Labor Market Information (occupation outlook; unemployment & wage data; area profiles)

___ EMSI - Economic Modeling Specialists

___ Federal Grants (DOE, NSF, Title III, Title V)

___ US Census - national, state and zip code level data on population current estimates and projections.

5. Which professional resources have you used in the past year?

___ AERA - American Educational Researchers Association

___ AIR - Association for Institutional Research

___ ASCCC - Academic Senate for the California Community Colleges

___ CAIR - California Association for Institutional Research

___ CSS - Center for Student Success

___ JARCC - Journal for Applied Research in the Community Colleges

___ NCCCRP - National Council of Community College Research and Planning

___ RP Group listserv, website, tools, publications, workshops

6. Which of the following types of reports, services, or tools would support you/your college?

___ A tool to enable student cohort tracking

___ A tool to check MIS data with college data

___ A tool to check IPEDS data/reports with college data

___ A tool to use GIS and mapping with college data

___ Summarize and synthesize state/national research findings

___ Summarize accreditation and assessment information

___ Provide workshops & conferences related to research, planning & assessment

___ Provide online or web based content (links, blogs, webinars, CCC Confer)

___ Customized reports on regional economic conditions & labor markets

___ Models and exemplars of student learning assessment

___ Shared scripts for SPSS or SAS for common tasks, import data

___ Online tutorials, presentations on frequently asked questions within IR

___ Models and exemplars of strategic planning

___ A report for vocational program review by region/top code

___ Expand/update operational definitions, SLO glossary

___ Reports on high school freshmen or CCC transfer students

7. After responding to the above items, what reports, tools, or services would make the biggest impact in your office and why? Note: these may or may not currently exist.

_____

_____

_____

7: SURVEY CONCLUSION

1. Would someone in your office be open to participating in a one-on-one interview or focus group via the telephone on issues related to research capacity and the role of IRP? The interview or focus group would be no more than an hour and would occur between October 19 and November 13. Yes/No

2. Please provide the name and contact information for the person volunteering.

Name _____

Email address _____

Phone number _____

Thank you again for your time in completing this survey and helping RP improve in its efforts to document the state of research, assessment, and planning in the California community college system. Summary results will be shared via the RP website, conferences, and regional research meetings in spring 2010.

Appendix B: Focus Group Qualitative Data

Challenges in Advancing the Research Agenda

Challenge	Evidence	Effect	Recommendation
Historically Devalued Perception of Research	Researchers as data collectors and data providers	Research not high on the priority list, bumped out of meeting agendas, not provided necessary resources	
	Research not involved or valued in faculty-centered decisions	Research involved as an afterthought or not at all	
	Unaware of research's capabilities	Pigeonholes research's tasks into those related to compliance, data production	
Institutional Priorities Do Not Include Research	Busy with budget, compliance, focus on institutional outcomes	Little interest/value to individuals/departments, discredits the process - why are we doing SLOs - to prove or improve?	Bring it to the classroom/program level but help practitioners understand its place in the institutional landscape
Practitioners' Resistance to Change	Do what they have always been doing, see new initiatives as busy work	Apprehensive about getting involved	Let practitioners explore
Lack of Awareness About Research Purpose, Scope, and Value	Don't know what is available	Default to what they think (e.g. satisfaction surveys), unaware of other assessment tools or resources, unaware of help available to understand the data out there and how to use it	
	Don't know research's capabilities	Default to traditional perception of research as data collectors and providers	

Challenge	Evidence	Effect	Recommendation
Variety in Practitioner Abilities	Difficulty in framing research questions	Lots of back and forth in understanding the aim of the study, deal with the definitions of terms, the utility of the data is compromised by the amount of time it takes to move forward	
	Difficulty in understanding the data or how to use them; no relevance to them	Danger in over-interpreting or under-interpreting the data; don't understand context or definitions; long, static reports are a drag; don't see it as a cyclical process; difficulty with quantitative data – math phobia; sometimes wait until the last minute to ask for data; research spends more time reframing the data to make it accessible and understandable; constant retraining as people don't use what they learn	Facilitate but let them own it; streamlined definitions, effective communication strategies, ways to build perceived relevance of data, effective information dissemination; share data in small groups, research briefs
Lack of Perceived Relevance of Data	Disregard it, "doesn't apply to me" syndrome, "not my students," challenge it; accept data/findings that support their gut, question what goes against it		Tailor information, data, and findings to particular audiences to increase interest and relevance
Disconnect Between Data Inputers and Data Users	Questions about the data collected, access to good data is questionable		Involve the end users in the design process, agree upon or clarify definitions

Challenge	Evidence	Effect	Recommendation
Limited Resources	Limited staff, sometimes overwhelming amount of requests as people learn about data, priorities - compliance, accreditation, mandated requirements, economies of scale,	Attend a lot of meetings, cuts into work time, not enough time to go out and meet individually or in small groups with users, work with those who approach you, not as broad of an audience as desired	People need to be empowered to collect their own data and do their own analysis
	Technological shortcomings	System limitations, issues with data extraction, may not have access to good/all data, may not have a data warehouse	
	Practitioners bogged down with many responsibilities, difficult when additional initiatives are introduced	Less value, do what is necessary, too busy to read much	

Successful Strategies in Advancing the Research Agenda

Theme	Strategy	Examples
Building Effective Communication Strategies	Customized communications	A variety of formats tailored to different audiences, solid visuals, ask the users to contribute to newsletters, have a regular system of communicating with the campus, piece-meal release of information, quick sound bites, using e-mails more strategically, framing language for data/findings to minimize misinterpretation
Empowering Practitioners to Own the Research Process	IR Advisory Group	Can advise on a range of activities from specific projects to institutional research agendas
	Engage in grassroots efforts and enlist the help of successful users	Work with a small group of faculty members, leverage department chairs and administrators, tap power users, coordinate great teacher seminars
	Help practitioners work with data sets	Help practitioners take ownership of the study, do outreach or manage the data collection, help prepare documents
Leveraging Technological Tools	Improve web presence	Make the website problem-based, organized, and accessible and present how to navigate through the website during meetings, strategic use of the Fact Book to answer frequently asked questions
	Build templates	Build easy to use and easy to understand templates for various efforts (e.g. student learning outcomes, planning, program review)
Building Opportunities for Dialogue	Increased face-to-face meetings	Clarify research requests and definitions, use to share data and findings and allow for dialogue
	Identify venues for dialogue	Create inquiry groups, have walk-arounds where data/literature is shared and discussed

Theme	Strategy	Examples
Building Transparency	Be Visible	Get on meeting agendas, meet with departments (beware: it can be very time-consuming, may receive an overwhelming number of data requests)
Being Inclusive	Consider all perspectives	Include classified professionals
Managing time	Resource Request Form	Make office to-do list visible, prioritize projects
Leveraging Resources	Discuss with regional research groups	Seek feedback from other researchers and planners
Maintaining a Strong Buy-In from Leadership		

Considerations for Developing Cohort Tracking Tools

Type of Student	What to Track	Partnerships
Any Cohort	Ability to customize a cohort, break it down by instructor (and a comparison back to the aggregate), success, persistence (fall and spring), time to completion, award, transfer, core indicators, if they ever attended an orientation, if they received counseling or financial aid, student event, assessment level, CTE, matriculation variables, grants (Title III, TRIO), athletes, special projects (First Year Experience), Honors students, tipping points, course-taking patterns, taking particular courses, at what point are students lost, identify gatekeeper courses, performance in high school (11th, 12th grades)	Cal-PASS, CCCCO
Basic Skills Students	Track from Basic Skills courses to transfer level	Cal-PASS, CCCCO
CTE	Employment, earnings, employer satisfaction	EDD, CCCCO
Subsequent Four-Year Institutions	# credits completed at each institution, cumulative GPA, if an award was earned, subject area of degree, largest concentration of units earned in 4-year schools	National Student Clearinghouse
Subsequent Two-Year Institutions	# credits completed at each institution, cumulative GPA, if an award was earned, subject area of degree, largest concentration of units earned in 4-year schools	Cal-PASS, CCCCO
Non Credit Students	Retention and success (including definitions)	Cal-PASS, CCCCO