

2011 Survey of Institutional Research Offices in the California Community College System

Abstract

In 2011, the RP Group surveyed institutional research and planning (IRP) staff in both college and district offices as part of an ongoing project to better understand the research capacity and the extent of evidence-based decision making at California community colleges. This survey was similar to a survey that the RP Group conducted in 2009. Eighty staff from both college and district IRP offices responded to the 2011 survey, representing about 60 percent of the 132 colleges and districts in the California community college system. This document provides a summary of the non-census IRP survey 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. Results of an additional survey conducted in the same time period, which documented the scope and staffing of IRP offices, is available in the “The State of Institutional Research: 2011 Institutional Research and Planning Office Census” report (<http://www.rpgroup.org/resources/2011-ir-capacity-study>).

The 2011 IRP survey highlighted the growing importance of accreditation-related activities for IRP offices. IRP office reported that their top priority activities were (1) program review, (2) accreditation, (3) institutional and/or strategic planning, (4) student learning outcomes, and (5) institution and/or department survey design and/or administration. It is notable that student learning outcomes (SLOs) had not been among the top five priorities in 2009. Furthermore, four of the top five priorities now relate to accreditation requirements.

The IRP survey also noted the ongoing gap between conducting research and helping practitioners use data for action. In 2011, as in 2009, IRP offices reported spending more time on “*production*” related activities, such as gathering and collecting data, conducting analyses and writing research reports, and the least amount of time on “*translating evidence into action*” or “*closing and widening the loop*” activities, such as assisting other staff in using data to make decisions and translating those decisions into action. However, IRP professionals were more likely to engage in translating data into action when conducting accreditation-related activities.

For example, for program review and accreditation, respondents reported spending about 43 percent of their time in production activities, on average, and about 24 percent of their time in translating evidence and closing the loop. SLOs showed the highest amount of time on translating evidence and closing the loop (26%)

This report was prepared by the Laurium Evaluation Group, an external evaluator that conducted the survey as part of the RP Group’s Bridging Research Information and Culture (BRIC) Initiative, with RP Group staff Kathy Booth, Priyadarshini Chaplot, and Darla Cooper.

whereas production was the lowest (36%). Yet, for external reporting such as the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) or federal gainful employment reports, respondents spent 62 percent of their time in production and eight percent of their time in translating evidence and closing the loop.

When asked about their professional development needs, IRP staff members are looking for examples of best practices or how-to guides and information on how to link institutional research and planning activities to broader college and district-wide decision making. They would like additional guidance on developing and supporting the student learning outcomes process. Over the past year since the survey, the RP Group has developed a series of resources to respond to these needs, which are outlined in the final section of this report.

Reader's Guide

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

- **Introduction** – explains the background and intent of the study (page 2)
- **Methodology** – describes the methods used in the study (page 3)
- **Considerations** – identifies the limitations of the study (page 4)
- **Survey Findings** – presents the findings from the survey (page 4)
- **Conclusions and Implications** – presents a summary of the key findings along with actions that have been taken or are planned by the RP Group (page 15)

Introduction

One of the RP Group's ongoing projects is to better understand the research capacity of the California community colleges and assess the extent of evidence-based decision making occurring in the system. In order to best capture such information, the RP Group has surveyed institutional research and planning staff in both college and district offices three times since 2006. The 2006 survey captured information about office staffing, office budgets, research priorities, and the types of analysis that staff could perform and were performing. The survey administered in 2009 also gathered data on staffing, budgets, and research priorities, but several new questions were added to gather information on how research offices were using data to influence decision-making and the extent to which they used specific RP Group resources and external data sources and tools. The new elements were added in response to the 2009 Basic Skills Outcomes Capacity study, which identified five research domains that characterize the demands placed 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 data and information to 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 2011, the RP Group again surveyed institutional research and planning (IRP) offices, using two surveys—a census that collected data on office staffing and budgets and a survey that collected information about institutional research office priorities and how they intertwined with the five research domains. Additionally, the survey gathered feedback from office staff on additional resources that the RP Group should provide.

With the information gathered through the survey, the RP Group will be able to:

- Identify key research priorities of California community colleges;
- Understand the type of research, analysis, and planning that IRP staff are performing;
- Describe the skill sets available at California community colleges and identify any gaps;
- Learn how resources and events sponsored by the RP Group have improved the efficiency and effectiveness of IRP staff; and
- Identify other resources and professional development that could be offered to IRP offices.

Methodology

The RP Group modified the IRP survey in 2011—first, the RP Group redesigned questions related to research priorities and IRP skill sets to collect information about how these priorities and skill sets are related to the five research domains. Second, the survey was modified to collect more general information about the use of RP Group resources and questions were added to capture planning activities. The RP Group contracted with Laurium Evaluation Group to assist in the redesign, administer the survey, and write a report summarizing the survey results. The survey was administered online via Survey Monkey. Prior to sending the survey to all college and district IRP offices, seven individuals from the RP Group, college offices, and district offices tested the survey instrument. The test group provided feedback on the instrument that was used to clarify question wording and instructions. The web link to the survey was sent directly to all college and district IRP office staff and posted on the RP Group listserv (see Appendix B for a copy of the complete survey). Two follow-up emails were sent and then individuals who had not completed the survey were contacted by telephone.

There were 80 survey responses from college and district offices, representing about 60 percent of the 134 college and district offices. This rate is lower than that 2009 survey when 91—or 68% of the 133 colleges and district offices—responded. There were two responses from the California Community College Chancellor’s Office, however they were excluded from the analysis as had been done in previous years. Survey respondents were asked to report their college and district office affiliation; however, some respondents did not report this information.

As shown in Table 1, most of the survey respondents were from college offices in 2009, comparable to previous years.

Table 1. Comparison of survey respondents by office

	2011		2009		2006	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
College Offices	57	71%	77	85%	47	71%
District offices	6	8%	14	15%	19	29%
Unknown	17	21%	--	--	--	--
Total Respondents	80		91		66	

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. Since not all IRP offices responded to the survey, there may be differences in the characteristics of those that did respond and those that did not. If the groups had different characteristics, such as the size of the IRP team or experience with RP Group resources, the results may be biased in favor of those who responded; as a result, caution should be used when interpreting results from the survey. Appendix A provides more detailed data on the number of respondents to each question.

Survey Findings

Office Research Priorities

When asked about their top five research priorities in the 2010-11 school year, IRP offices cited (1) program review, (2) accreditation, (3) institutional and/or strategic planning, (4) student learning outcomes, and (5) institution and/or department survey design and/or administration. Among the 80 respondents, 70 percent ranked program review and 68 percent ranked accreditation as one of its top five activities, as shown in Table 2. Compared to 2009, the top research priorities in 2011 are similar, with the addition of student learning outcomes in 2011.¹ In 2009, the top five research priorities for college and district offices were (1) accreditation, (2) program review, (3) institutional and/or department surveys, (4) planning, and (5) analytic studies for patterns or trends.

¹ The survey questions in 2009 and 2011 were written slightly different. In 2011, respondents had a list of 14 activities and they had to pick their top five and rank them from 1-5. In 2009, respondents were asked to rate each of the 14 activities as low, medium, or high priority for the office or not a responsibility.

Table 2. Number and percent of respondents that reported activity was one of the office's top five priorities in 2010-11

	Number of respondents that reported activity as one of top 5	Percent of respondents
Program review	56	70%
Accreditation	54	68%
Institutional and/or strategic planning	42	53%
Student learning outcomes	33	41%
Institutional and/or departmental survey design and/or administration	31	39%
Student success studies	30	38%
Data extracts/data warehousing	27	34%
Enrollment management	25	31%
Grants	24	30%
Assessment studies	20	25%
External reporting	17	21%
Student retention/persistence studies	16	20%
Graduation and/or transfer studies	7	9%
Faculty studies	6	8%

Institutional research and planning offices reported that student learning outcomes (SLOs) assessment was one of their top five priorities, a change from 2009 when SLOs were not a top priority. In 2011, four of the top five IRP priority areas were related to accreditation requirements.

Accreditation was the number one priority in 2010-11 for 33 survey respondents and program review was the top priority for the next largest number of respondents (15), as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Number of respondents reporting that research activity was a priority in 2010-11, by priority rank

Research activity	1st Priority	2nd Priority	3rd Priority	4th Priority	5th Priority
Accreditation	33	10	7	2	2
Program review	15	11	16	9	5
Institutional and/or strategic planning	9	17	7	3	6
Enrollment management	4	4	4	6	7
External reporting	4	1	2	5	5
Assessment studies	3	2	3	9	3
Data extracts/data warehousing	3	9	5	3	7
Student learning outcomes	2	4	12	8	7
Institutional and/or departmental survey design and/or administration	2	6	6	7	10
Faculty studies	1	0	0	3	2
Student success studies	1	7	6	9	7
Grants	1	5	4	5	9
Student retention/persistence studies	0	4	2	7	3
Graduation and/or transfer studies	0	0	2	1	4

Research Domains and the Relationship to Office Activities

In 2011, the RP Group sought to gather more detailed information on how the work of IRP offices related to specific research activities and studies. College and district offices were asked to report the percentage of time (from 0-100 percent) spent in each research domain for each activity.² Similar to 2009, IRP offices reported spending more time on production-related activities and the least amount of time on closing and widening the loop activities, as shown in Table 4.

Research and planning offices spend almost 70% of their time producing and disseminating research and only about 10% of their time helping practitioners translate evidence into action.

² These questions were left unanswered by 20 to 29 of the 82 respondents (24 to 35% of respondents) depending on the activity and for some research activities and domains the amount of time did not total 100 percent. If those who did not respond spent their time differently from those who did respond, then the findings may not be representative of the entire group. See Appendix A for more detailed information on response patterns for each survey question.

Table 4. Average percent of time that office reported spending in each research domain in 2010-11, by research activity

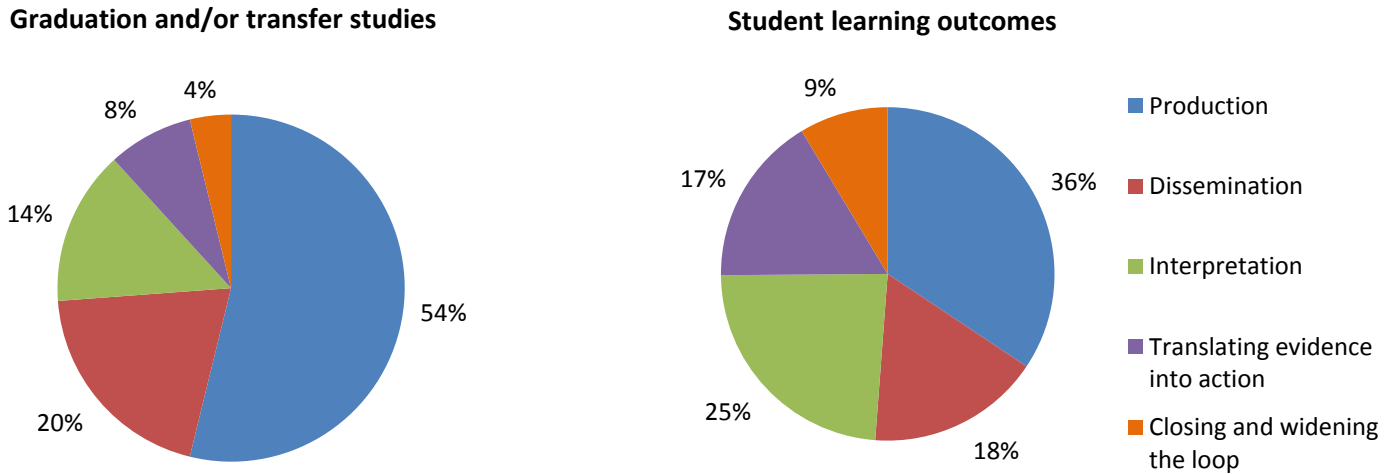
Research activity	Production	Dissemination	Interpretation	Translating evidence into action	Closing and widening the loop
Accreditation	44%	16%	15%	15%	9%
Assessment studies	43%	17%	20%	13%	7%
Enrollment management	52%	16%	14%	11%	8%
External reporting	66%	16%	10%	4%	4%
Grants	67%	10%	10%	7%	7%
Program review	42%	15%	20%	15%	9%
Institutional and/or departmental survey design and/or administration	52%	15%	16%	12%	5%
Faculty studies	54%	15%	16%	12%	3%
Student learning outcomes	36%	18%	25%	17%	9%
Graduation and/or transfer studies	54%	20%	14%	8%	4%
Student retention/ persistence studies	57%	15%	14%	10%	4%
Student success studies	54%	18%	13%	11%	5%

Note: Average percent of time was calculated based only on respondents whose percentage of time spent on the research activity or study added to 100%.

The amount of time spent on each research domain varied by the activity. For example, for accreditation, respondents reported spending on average 44 percent of their time on production activities, and about 24 percent of their time in translating evidence and closing the loop; whereas, for external reporting, respondents spent 62 percent of their time in production and eight percent of their time in translating evidence and closing the loop. Two research activities related to understanding more about student success also highlight the differences in the types of work that IRP offices are performing. As shown in Figure 1, respondents that worked on student learning outcomes spread their time across all five research domains a bit more evenly compared to when they worked on graduation and/or transfer studies where they spent, on average, almost 70 percent of their time on production and dissemination activities.

IRP professionals spend more time helping practitioners understand and act on data in activities such as SLO assessment, program review, assessment studies, and accreditation.

Figure 1. Comparison of average amount time spent in each research domain in 2010-11 for graduation and/or transfer studies and student learning outcomes.



Role of IRP Office and the Research Committee

As part of a continuing effort to understand the skill sets available to the IRP office, whether from its own staff or from others at its institution, the survey asked college and district offices to identify what types of staff were performing certain research tasks at the college or district. Most survey respondents identified that IRP staff were performing the majority of these tasks. As shown in Table 5, the tasks most frequently reported as being performed by other staff were gathering data, facilitating conversations with college administrators or faculty about results, and collaborating with other campus officials to develop actions based on research.

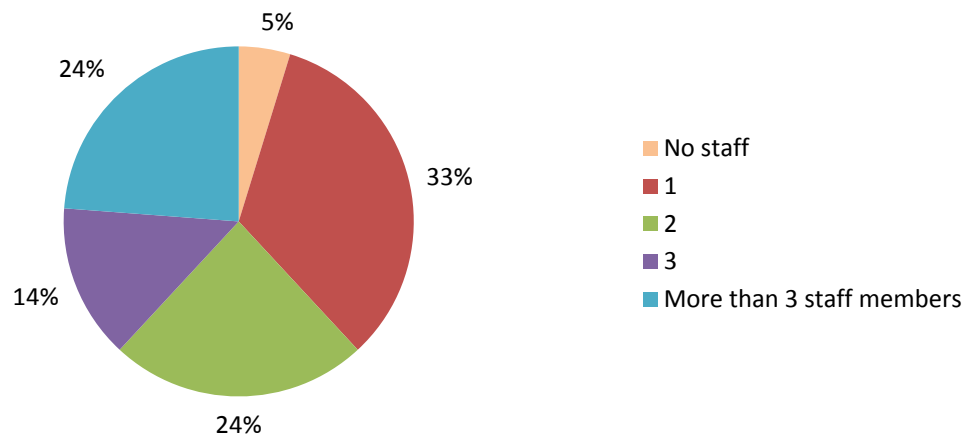
Although researchers and planners are engaged in the full cycle of gathering, disseminating, and interpreting data and supporting action plans, non-researchers are more likely to be engaged in helping translate research into action.

Table 5. Number of respondents reporting whether key tasks are performed by IR staff, other staff at campus, consultant, faculty inquiry group, or research committee in 2010-11, by task

Skill sets	IR staff	Other staff at campus	Consultant	Faculty inquiry group	Research committee	N/A	No response
Understand research request and develop a plan for conducting research	64	14	0	6	10	0	15
Identify data needed to conduct research	63	19	2	12	10	0	15
Gather data from databases	59	26	2	3	0	0	18
Analyze data using descriptive statistics	61	9	4	6	1	0	17
Analyze data using inferential statistics	61	5	1	3	1	1	17
Prepare written reports	61	19	4	5	2	1	17
Present findings from reports orally	62	23	2	9	2	0	18
Facilitate conversations with college administrators or faculty about results	63	29	3	12	8	0	17
Collaborate with other campus officials to develop actions based on research	57	38	1	10	10	1	17

Twenty-four offices, or about 35 percent of all survey respondents, reported that their college or district had a research committee in 2010-11. Among those respondents, all but one agreed that the research committee was able to effectively meet its goals and objectives. All but one of the offices reported having at least one IRP staff member serve on the research committee. As shown in Figure 2, about a third of respondents with a research committee had just one IRP staff member on the committee and a quarter had two IRP staff members. Of the 24 respondents with a research committee, 16 or 66% reported that an IRP staff member was the lead or chair of the committee.

Figure 2. Percent of survey respondents with a research committee, by number of IRP staff on committee



When the role that IRP staff is playing on research committees is examined, the majority of IRP staff are serving in a leadership role (67%). Table 6 below shows all the responses to this question.

Table 6. Role of IRP Staff on Research Committee

IRP Roles on Committee	Number of respondents	Percent of respondents that selected role
Lead or chair	16	67%
Co-chair	2	8%
Member	10	42%
Not applicable	1	4%

Note: Respondents who reported having a research committee could select more than one role. Percentage is calculated based on the 24 offices that reported having a research committee.

Survey respondents reported a range of activities for which research committees were regularly engaging and responsible for managing. Some commonly reported purposes were:

- Establish a research agenda
- Review and prioritize research requests
- Monitor the progress of the research agenda
- Ensure the availability and quality of data used for research

Several respondents also noted the role that the research committee had in creating a culture of evidence and inquiry on campus and in the district.

The purpose of the Research Committee is to promote and facilitate a culture of evidence and inquiry in which accurate data and information is generated and developed into useful information for institutional assessment, planning, and to improve student learning and institutional effectiveness.

- IRP Survey Respondent

Institutional Planning

Survey respondents also provided information on how regularly their offices performed various components of planning. More than two-thirds of respondents (69%) reported that they participated in a group assigned to develop, coordinate, and implement plans at the college. The smallest number of respondents, 43 in total or 54%, developed plans that contained a primary plan and various secondary plans that were linked to it.

Table 7. Number and percentage of respondents selecting planning component as one that they regularly performed

Planning Component	Number of respondents	Percent of respondents
Comprehensive college-wide planning (e.g., every five years) with regular action planning by various units of the college (e.g., every year).	52	65%
Developed plans that contain a primary plan (e.g., Education Master Plan) and various other secondary plans that are linked to it (e.g., unit level plans, Technology Plan, Human Resources Plan).	43	54%
Linked the plan’s goals, initiatives and outcomes with budget planning and decision-making through decision processes, procedures and protocols.	47	59%
Participated in a designated group, committee or office assigned to overseeing development, coordination and implementation of all plans at the college.	55	69%
Ongoing and systematic assessment of key performance indicators contained in the plan.	51	64%
Utilized a planning process that is inclusive and provides multiple opportunities for all constituency groups to participate and provide input.	49	61%
Evaluated the effectiveness of the planning process.	45	56%

Note: Respondents could select more than one planning component and therefore percentages do not total 100. Percentages were calculated based on the 80 total survey respondents.

More than two-thirds of IRP offices are engaged in planning. The most common planning role was participating in the group that oversees the development, coordination, and implementation of all plans at the college or district.

RP Group Electronic Tools or Resources

Eighty-nine percent of respondents used RP Group electronic tools and resources, such as inquiry guides, webinars, the *Perspectives* newsletter or online resources, in the 2010-11 academic year. As shown in Table 8, about 27 percent of respondents used the resources for more than 15 hours during the year.

Table 8. Number and percent of survey respondents that reported using RP Group electronic tools or resources during academic year, by amount of time

	Number of respondents	Percent of respondents
More than 15 hours	18	27%
5-15 hours	29	44%
Fewer than 5 hours during school year	12	18%
Not at all	7	11%
TOTAL	66	100%

Note: 14 respondents did not answer the question.

Three-quarters of the survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the RP Group's tools and resources improved their knowledge about data sources for research; while, about one-third agreed or strongly agreed that after using the resources they learned how to develop action plans based on research, as shown in Table 9.

Table 9. College and district offices' responses on impact of RP Group resources on their work

After using the tools or resources provided by the RP Group:	Strongly agree or agree		Somewhat agree		Somewhat disagree		Strongly disagree or disagree		Total responses
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
I improved my knowledge of appropriate data sources for my research.	44	77%	8	14%	3	5%	2	4%	57
I learned strategies for collaborating on research projects with staff and faculty on my campus.	26	47%	21	38%	4	7%	4	7%	55
I was able to effectively facilitate conversations about data and research findings with staff and faculty on my campus.	32	57%	17	30%	3	5%	4	7%	56
I learned how to develop action plans based on my research.	16	33%	17	35%	9	18%	7	14%	49

Note: There were a number of respondents that did not answer each question. See Appendix B for more detail on missing responses.

A few survey respondents also provided some suggestions on how to improve the RP Group's online offerings, such as providing more training in a web-based format or as a mobile application. As one survey respondent noted:

Offer more on-line content for professional development as many IRPs are chronically underfunded and understaffed--both of which limit participation for in-person meetings. Given the continuing difficult fiscal environment, many colleges have imposed a moratorium on all but "mission critical" travel.

Other suggestions included a system-wide survey of data warehousing activities, organizing offerings by targeted audience, and improving the search function and contact lists on the RP website.

Suggestions for Additional Professional Resources

Some college and district offices also provided feedback on specific professional resources that they would like the RP Group to provide for research, planning, and assessment. Across all three areas, most suggestions focused on providing more examples of best practices or how-to guides and information on how to link institutional research and planning activities to broader college and district-wide decision making.

Research-related resources

College and district offices most commonly asked for more resources on quantitative and qualitative methods, more examples of best practices and how-to guides, training on how to use already established tools and data sources, and more tailored professional development sessions. Some specific examples in each category are listed below in Table 10.

IRP professionals are seeking more examples of best practices or how-to guides and information on how to link institutional research and planning activities to broader college- and district-wide decision making.

Table 10. IRP staff suggestions for additional research-related resources

Suggestion	Specific examples
Quantitative methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share methodology/syntax for commonly conducted projects, such as tracking students from one level to the next • Development of tools/skills to streamline reporting • Statistics refresher (e.g., correlation, regression techniques, appropriate statistical test) • Information on cohort-tracking • More information on education research and methods • Research templates • SPSS shells for a variety of projects commonly performed across colleges
Best practices/ How-to resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add more "how-to" resources like Chaffey's labor market analysis • Models/approaches for sharing data to support action • Examples of student success research that are applicable to the CCCs
Learning how to use data tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical support for database management tools (e.g., Hyperion) • Better use/integration of technology (e.g., SPSS, dashboards, key performance indicators, benchmarking) • Co-sponsored activities/resources between RP Group and the FCCC/GIS Collaborative would be helpful (e.g., GIS methods; role of IRP in redistricting) • Tools for understanding MIS data elements, how to better use them, and reconciling MIS data with local data
More tailored professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training for learners at various stages of their research careers • Provide contacts or mentors for those new to the California Community College system • Outreach to clusters of schools addressing similar concerns

Planning-Related Professional Resources

College and district offices primarily reported that they would like more information on how to link planning with research, decision-making, budgets, and resource allocation and how to effectively communicate about the planning process to key stakeholders. Many respondents also asked for additional examples of best practices or how-to guides from the RP Group and provided the following examples of areas that could be addressed:

- Developing succinct and clear reports that people will want to read and also meet guidelines
- Integrating planning activities and information sharing
- Exemplary models of program review and planning
- Examples of annual research and planning calendars
- Effective planning models
- How best to meet accreditation requirements, particularly how new WASC accreditation standards' emphasis on data and technology will impact IRPs and the college overall

- Suggestions for "standardized" planning language that will make it simpler to compare across institutions
- Working with board members
- Strategies to get more people involved with planning

Assessment-Related Professional Resources

Several survey respondents reported that they would like more resources on course assessments and tools for sharing results and examples and tools for placement test validation. Survey respondents also provided several specific suggestions on additional resources that they would like related to assessing student learning outcomes, such as:

- Sessions on approaches for assessing institutional- and program-level SLOs
- SLO assessment across different modalities and at the course level to the institutional level, as it relates to matriculation (both credit and non-credit) and specifically related to orientation
- Effective models for managing the quality of SLO assessment and closing the loop
- Recommendations/examples on how the research office can support the SLO processes
- Examples of institutional or general education learning outcomes assessment reports
- Examples of program-level SLOs that IRP offices have helped develop and implement through at least one complete assessment cycle
- Assistance on sustaining the momentum with SLO assessment activities
- Subject- or area-specific student learning outcomes assessments

Conclusions and Implications

IRP offices have continued to focus on key research activities for their campus—accreditation, program review, survey design and administration, and planning—however, the survey responses in 2011 reflect the growing importance of student learning outcomes at California community colleges. Forty-one percent of IRP survey respondents said that it was one of the top five research priorities at their institution. This trend, combined with the ongoing priorities of program review, planning, and preparing accreditation reports, point to the key role of IRP offices in responding to accreditation requirements.

IRP offices have also continued to engage primarily in collecting and disseminating data with less of their time devoted to working with faculty, staff, and administrators to understand what the data mean, develop actions in response to the data, and evaluate actions that are being implemented. Although other community college professionals are helping to fulfill that role at their institutions, several IRP staff suggested that they would like more assistance in learning how to collaborate with other offices at their institution and share data and information. The RP Group sought to help research and planning offices expand their capacity for helping translate data into action over the past year. For example:

- The 2011 Summer Institute included a day that was devoted to communicating research results and linking research to action (<http://www.rpgroup.org/content/resources>).

- During Summer 2012, the RP Group will be introducing a series of resources that support community colleges in engaging practitioners with evidence, including short video clips on key concepts and inquiry guides that include research study frameworks or research results with suggested discussion questions.
- As research and planning office capacity is a likely factor in the allocation of time, the RP Group has launched a working group that will document how to use freely available data tools to respond to common data requests and develop a user community to support researcher and planning staff to use these tools.

Many of the suggestions for additional resources that the RP Group could provide were related to student learning outcomes. Over the past year, the RP Group has developed a number of resources in these areas, including:

- Posting an SLO Toolkit with research designs, curriculum maps, reporting forms, assessment reports, and annual reports (<http://www.rpgroup.org/projects/learning-outcomes-assessment-toolkit>)
- Profiling effective practices of Promising Outcomes Work and Exemplary Research (POWER) Award winners (<http://www.rpgroup.org/content/2011-power-awards>)
- Creating a regular feature on SLO assessment in the *Perspectives* e-newsletter (<http://www.rpgroup.org/resources/perspectives>)
- Creating a set of modularized training tools that IRP professionals can use to work with various constituencies (available in July 2012)

Additional SLO resources will be developed during 2012-13 by a second working group that is comprised of both RP Group board and community college members, beginning with a dedicated strand at the Student Success Conference (<http://www.rpgroup.org/events/2012-student-success-conference>).

In addition to SLO-related tools, there was interest among IRP staff in having more resources to learn how to link planning with research, decision-making, budgets, and resource allocation and how to effectively communicate about the planning process to key stakeholders. To address planning needs, the RP Group has:

- Posted planning guides that had previously only been available for purchase (<http://www.rpgroup.org/resources/rp-group-planning-guides-0>)
- Presented a series of workshops on planning topics at the 2011 Summer Institute and the 2012 RP Conference (<http://www.rpgroup.org/content/resources>)
- Shared planning tools in the *Perspectives* e-newsletter (<http://www.rpgroup.org/resources/perspectives>)

In order to ensure that additional resources are targeted to the appropriate planning components and audiences, the RP Group has launched a third working group that which will develop a suite of planning tools during the 2012-13 academic year.

In June 2012, the RP Group will again document the budgeting and staffing level of the colleges and the priorities and needs of IRP offices through a statewide census survey. Through this

ongoing effort, the organization hopes to document the evolving role of institutional research and planning offices and determine how best to support the needs of the field.

Appendix A: 2011 Survey Questions and Response Patterns

There were 80 respondents to the RP Group's survey of institutional research and planning (IRP) offices representing about 60 percent of the 132 colleges and districts in the California Community College system.

Comparison of survey respondents in 2011 by office location

IRP Office Location	Number	Percent
College Offices	57	71%
District offices	6	8%
Unknown	17	21%
Total	80	

Note: There were two responses from the California Community College Chancellor's Office that are not included here.

During the 2010-2011 school year, what were the top five priorities for your office?

Number of priorities ranked	Number of respondents	Percent of all respondents
Five	72	90%
Four	6	8%
Three	1	1%
Two	0	0%
One	1	1%
Missing	0	0%
Total	80	100

For each of the activities or studies listed in the first column, please report the percentage of time that your office spent in each of the five research domains listed (#1 - #5). If your office did not spend any time on an activity, please select "Did not work on this activity."

Activity or research study	Worked on activity				"Did not work on activity"		Missing response		Total
	Time added to 100%		Time was greater or less than 100%						
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	
Accreditation	44	55%	13	16%	3	4%	20	25%	80
Assessment studies	32	40%	6	8%	13	16%	29	36%	80
Enrollment management	39	49%	6	8%	9	11%	26	33%	80
External reporting	43	54%	5	6%	5	6%	27	34%	80
Grants	40	50%	6	8%	9	11%	25	31%	80
Program review	45	56%	10	13%	2	3%	23	29%	80
Institutional and/or departmental survey design and/or administration	44	55%	6	8%	4	5%	26	33%	80
Faculty studies	18	23%	5	6%	29	36%	28	35%	80
Student learning outcomes	38	48%	6	8%	9	11%	27	34%	80
Graduation and/or transfer studies	34	43%	6	8%	11	14%	29	36%	80
Student retention/ persistence studies	37	46%	9	11%	6	8%	28	35%	80
Student success studies	42	53%	8	10%	2	3%	28	35%	80

The RP Group has identified key skill sets that IRP offices need to conduct research and have a collaborative dialogue on student success. Please tell us which staff at your campus or district office is performing any of the following tasks for your office. You may select more than one choice in each row.

Skill Sets	Selected one of staff listed		Missing response		Total
	N	Percent	N	Percent	
Understand research request and develop a plan for conducting research	65	81%	15	19%	80
Identify data needed to conduct research	65	81%	15	19%	80
Gather data from database	62	78%	18	23%	80
Analyze data using descriptive statistics	63	79%	17	21%	80
Analyze data using inferential statistics	63	79%	17	21%	80
Prepare written report	63	79%	17	21%	80
Present findings from reports oral	62	78%	18	23%	80
Facilitate conversations with college administrators or faculty about results	63	79%	17	21%	80
Collaborate with other campus officials to develop actions based on research	63	79%	17	21%	80

Research committees are becoming more common at community colleges. The RP Group would like to learn more about the IRP office and campus research committees. Does your campus have a research committee?

Response	Number of respondents	Percent of respondents
Yes	24	30%
No	45	56%
Missing	11	14%
Total	80	100%

What is the purpose of your college's research committee?

Response	Number of respondents	Percent of respondents
Answered open-ended question	19	79%
Did not answer	5	21%
Total	24	100%

Please rate your agreement with the following statement: Our campus' research committee has been able to effectively meet its goals and objectives.

Response	Number of respondents	Percent of respondents
Strongly Agree	5	21%
Agree	10	42%
Somewhat Agree	5	21%
Somewhat Disagree	1	4%
Disagree	0	0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
No basis to Judge	0	0%
Missing	3	13%
Total	24	100%

How many IRP staff members serve on the research committee?

Response	Number of respondents	Percent of respondents
None	1	4%
One	7	29%
Two	5	21%
Three	3	13%
More than Three	5	21%
Missing	3	13%
Total	24	100%

Please select the roles served by IRP staff on the committee.

Role	Number of respondents	Percent of respondents
Lead or Chair	16	50%
Co-chair	2	6%
Member	10	31%
Not applicable	1	3%
Missing	3	9%
Total	32	100%

Note: Respondents could select more than one role, thus the total number of responses is greater than the number of respondents that reported having a research committee.

The RP Group would also like to learn about your institution's planning efforts. Which of the following components of institutional planning has your office regularly performed?

Response	Number of respondents	Percent of respondents
Selected one of the components	65	81%
Missing	15	19%
Total	80	100%

How frequently have you used RP Group's electronic tools or resources such as inquiry guides, webinars, Perspectives newsletter or online resources?

Response	Number of respondents	Percent of respondents
Fewer than 5 hours during school year	12	15%
5-15 hours	29	36%
More than 15 hours	18	23%
Not at all	7	9%
Missing	14	18%
Total	80	100%

Please tell us the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

After using the tools or resources provided by the RP Group:	Answered question		Missing response		Total respondents
	N	Percent	N	Percent	
I improved my knowledge of appropriate data sources for my research.	63	79%	17	21%	80
I learned strategies for collaborating on research projects with staff and faculty on my campus.	62	78%	18	23%	80
I was able to effectively facilitate conversations about data and research findings with staff and faculty on my campus.	63	79%	17	21%	80
I learned how to develop action plans based on my research.	62	78%	18	23%	80

The survey also had a set of open-ended questions for respondents to provide more detailed feedback. The following tables show the number that answered each question.

Survey question	Number that answered question	Total survey respondents	Percent of all respondents
Q12. Do you have any suggestions for how to improve the RP Group's online offerings?	14	80	17%

Survey question	Number that answered question	Total survey respondents	Percent of all respondents
Please tell us which specific professional development resources you would like the RP Group to provide in each of the following areas:			
Q.13 Research	21	80	26%
Q.14 Planning	23	80	29%
Q.15 Assessment	23	80	29%

Appendix B: Survey

See next page.

RP Group IRP Survey--Final

Introduction

The purpose of the survey is to provide information to the RP Group on research practices within institutional research and planning (IRP) offices at California community colleges. The survey is being sent to the IRP office at all community colleges and district offices.

With the information gathered through the survey, the RP Group will be able to:

- Identify key research priorities of California community colleges;
- Understand the type of research and analysis that IRP staff are performing;
- Describe the skill sets available at California community colleges and identify any gaps;
- Learn how resources and events sponsored by the RP Group have improved the efficiency and effectiveness of IRP staff.
- Identify other resources or professional development that IRP offices that could be offered to IRP offices.

The survey should take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Please submit your completed survey by June 1, 2011. If you have any questions please contact Priya Chaplot at pchaplot@rpgroup.org

RP Group IRP Survey--Final

Research Priorities and Activities of the IR Office

* 1. During the 2010-2011 school year, what were the top five priorities for your office?

Using the columns labeled 1 to 5, rank those five activities from 1 (highest priority) to 5 (lowest priority).

	1st Priority	2nd Priority	3rd Priority	4th Priority	5th Priority
1. Accreditation	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
2. Assessment studies	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
3. Data extracts/data warehousing	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
4. Enrollment management	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
5. External reporting	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
6. Grants	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
7. Institutional and/or departmental survey design and/or administration	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
8. Institutional and/or strategic planning	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
9. Program review	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
10. Student learning outcomes	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
11. Faculty studies	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
12. Graduation and/or transfer studies	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
13. Student retention/persistence studies	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
14. Student success studies	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn

Other (please specify priority number)

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Research Domains

2. For each of the activities or studies listed in the first column, please report the percentage of time that your office spent in each of the five research domains listed (#1 - #5).

The TOTAL percentage of time for each row should add to 100.

If your office did not spend any time on an activity, please select "Did not work on this activity."

	#1: Collected & analyzed data, & wrote reports	#2: Disseminated information to campus stakeholders & public	#3: Assisted campus staff & faculty in interpreting information	#4: Assisted campus staff & faculty in using information to make improvements & planning decisions	#5: Ensured that decision making was translated into action & evaluated such actions	Did not work on this activity
1. Accreditation	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>
2. Assessment studies	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>
3. Enrollment management	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>
4. External reporting	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>
5. Grants	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>
6. Program review	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>
7. Institutional and/or departmental survey design and/or administration	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>
8. Faculty studies	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>
9. Student learning outcomes	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>
10. Graduation and/or transfer studies	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>
11. Student retention/persistence studies	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>
12. Student success studies	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>

RP Group IRP Survey--Final

Role of IRP and Research Committee on Campus

3. The RP Group has identified key skill sets that IRP offices need to conduct research and have a collaborative dialogue on student success. Please tell us which staff at your campus or district office is performing any of the following tasks for your office.

You may select more than one choice in each row.

	IR staff	Other staff at campus	Consultant	Faculty inquiry group	Research committee	Does Not Apply
1. Understand research request and develop a plan for conducting research	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Identify data needed to conduct research	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Gather data from databases	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Analyze data using descriptive statistics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Analyze data using inferential statistics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Prepare written reports	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Present findings from reports orally	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Facilitate conversations with college administrators or faculty about results	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Collaborate with other campus officials to develop actions based on research	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

*** 4. Research committees are becoming more common at community colleges. The RP Group would like to learn more about the IRP office and campus research committees.**

Does your campus have a research committee?

Yes

No

Research Committee

5. What is the purpose of your college's research committee?

6. Please rate your agreement with the following statement:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No basis to judge
Our campus' research committee has been able to effectively meet its goals and objectives.	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn

7. How many IRP staff members serve on the research committee?

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- More than 3

8. Please select the roles served by IRP staff on the committee.

- Lead or Chair
- Co-chair
- Member
- Not applicable

Institutional Planning

9. The RP Group would also like to learn about your institution's planning efforts. Which of the following components of institutional planning has your office regularly performed?

(check all that apply)

- Comprehensive college-wide planning (e.g., every five years) with regular action planning by various units of the college (e.g., every year).
- Developed plans that contain a primary plan (e.g., Education Master Plan) and various other secondary plans that are linked to it (e.g., unit level plans, Technology Plan, Human Resources Plan).
- Linked the plan's goals, initiatives and outcomes with budget planning and decision-making through decision processes, procedures and protocols.
- Participated in a designated group, committee or office assigned to overseeing development, coordination and implementation of all plans at the college.
- Ongoing and systematic assessment of key performance indicators contained in the plan.
- Utilized a planning process that is inclusive and provides multiple opportunities for all constituency groups to participate and provide input.
- Evaluated the effectiveness of the planning process.

Other (please specify)

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RP Group Electronic Tools or Resources

10. How frequently have you used RP Group's electronic tools or resources such as inquiry guides, webinars, Perspectives newsletter or online resources?

Fewer than 5 hours during school year

5-15 hours

More than 15 hours

Not at all

11. Please tell us the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

After using the tools or resources provided by the RP Group:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
I improved my knowledge of appropriate data sources for my research.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I learned strategies for collaborating on research projects with staff and faculty on my campus.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was able to effectively facilitate conversations about data and research findings with staff and faculty on my campus.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I learned how to develop action plans based on my research.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

12. Do you have any suggestions for how to improve the RP Group's online offerings?

RP Group IRP Survey--Final

13. For questions 13-15, please tell us which specific professional development resources you would like the RP Group to provide in each of the following areas:

Research:

	5
	6

14. Planning:

	5
	6

15. Assessment:

	5
	6

RP Group IRP Survey--Final

Demographics

In the event that we should have some follow-up questions please provide us your name and contact information.

Your information will remain confidential and your responses will only be used in an aggregate form with responses from other IRP offices. By providing this information, you will enable us to look at regional needs. Thank you for providing this information

16. Name:

17. College:

18. Phone number:

19. Email: