Dear Esteemed Colleagues,

With the growing number of practitioners entering our field and the role of our offices rapidly changing to meet the needs of our colleges, the RP Conference and our RP Award recipients play a vital role in setting the tone for our collective work in the years ahead.

This year marked many firsts for the RP Conference and provided a dynamic environment in which to showcase this year's award winners, which spotlighted innovative projects in each of the four award categories: Excellence on College Research, Excellence in Statewide Research, Excellence in Planning, and Excellence in Dissertation/Thesis.

This year, two projects were selected for the Excellence in College Research award, and one project was selected for each of the three remaining award categories.

The 2017 RP Group Award nominations focused on work completed in the previous academic year and were evaluated based on criteria that included innovation, evidence-based planning and decision-making, collaboration, communication, and meaning/significance.

The RP Awards Committee is composed of volunteers from the field, including past and present RP Board members, and others with extensive experience and expertise in institutional research, planning, and effectiveness.

We extend our most heartfelt thanks to the RP Group Awards Committee Co-Chairs, Rick Fillman and Brian Murphy, all the volunteers who graciously served on the RP Group Awards Committee, and each of the individuals and teams that submitted nominations for the 2017 RP Group Awards.

Each of these projects represents a significant achievement that advances the work of our state's community colleges and ultimately the success of the students across the system. We are delighted to share with you the incredible work from these dedicated professionals and practitioners in this month's issue of *Perspectives*!

Sincerely,

Bri Hays, M.S.
RP Group Board Chair, Professional Development -- Institutional Research & Planning

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Articles

The Evolution of Crisis at CCSF

Megan D. Corry, EdD, EMTP, Paramedic Program Director
City College of San Francisco
2017 RP Award: Excellence in Thesis/Dissertation

When City College of San Francisco nearly lost accreditation in 2013, people scrambled to make sense of the crisis. Accreditation reports identified deficiencies in many areas; however, the primary issues centered on poor financial decision-making and an incomplete implementation of the student learning outcomes process.

In the months following the sanctions, public reports revealed a path of problems that plagued the college over decades. Accreditation reports and operational audits extending back to the 1970s showed repeated and persistent issues, and a tendency to create temporary fixes, only to drift back into crisis again.

California Community Colleges all feel the pressures of dwindling resources and increasing accountability. This case study is a cautionary tale about incrementalism and the consequences of accepting seemingly innocuous deviations as "normal."

This research looks at the history of decision-making at CCSF over the period of time from its first designation as a district in 1970 through the "show cause" sanction in 2012, taking into consideration the economic conditions, regulatory climate, and organizational culture at the time.

Results revealed that a succession of leaders at CCSF persistently normalized deviations from regulation and standards established by the state regulators and accrediting commission.

The theory of normalization of deviance helps explain why decisionmakers were unable to recognize impending sanction and make corrective changes. The conditions, found in prior research in other industries (e.g., Healthcare, aerospace technology), which increase the likelihood that leaders will deviate from safe practices, were also prevalent at CCSF in the years prior to the 2012 sanction and in an earlier sanction in 1988.

For roughly three decades, a perfect storm of legislation, demand for higher accountability and more, propped up an ever-growing and expensive system, which the governing board and chancellors met time and time again. This collectively fostered a *culture of expectation* that these needs would be continually met despite fiscal instability.

These elements created a new normal for CCSF, so that all its constituents understood that life on the fiscal and operational edge was simply "how we do things here."

But the major factor that justified deviations, workarounds, and risky decision-making, was isolation and a sense of exceptional uniqueness that collectively created a self-affirming ideology, that CCSF was exempt from standards and regulations coming from an outside agency.

This prevented the implementation of best practices and evidence-based decisions on finances and student learning outcomes, which resulted in the seeming suddenness and severity of the accreditation sanction in 2012.

Student Success Framework for Long-term Integrated Planning

Daniel Miramontez, Dean of Planning, Research, and IE, Library and Technology
Xi Zhang, Research and Planning Analyst
**Naomi Grisham, Transfer Center Director**
Patricia Hsieh, President
San Diego Miramar College
2017 RP Award: Excellence in Planning

San Diego Miramar College's (SDMC) response to strategic planning is quite unique. Rather than putting efforts into silo processes, the College has successfully integrated the student experience into its planning efforts by developing a planning framework built upon two national and statewide initiatives (Completion by Design and Student Support (Re)defined).

The framework focuses on the student educational experience, targets fostering the "six success factors" for students as outlined in Student Support (Re)defined, and encourages college redesign for continuous quality improvement. Within the framework, student success is addressed in a systemic and integrated manner. For instance, from spring 2014 to fall 2015, SDMC engaged in constructive dialogue about the student experience, which resulted in a comprehensive qualitative data packet used to provide context for research and planning efforts college-wide.
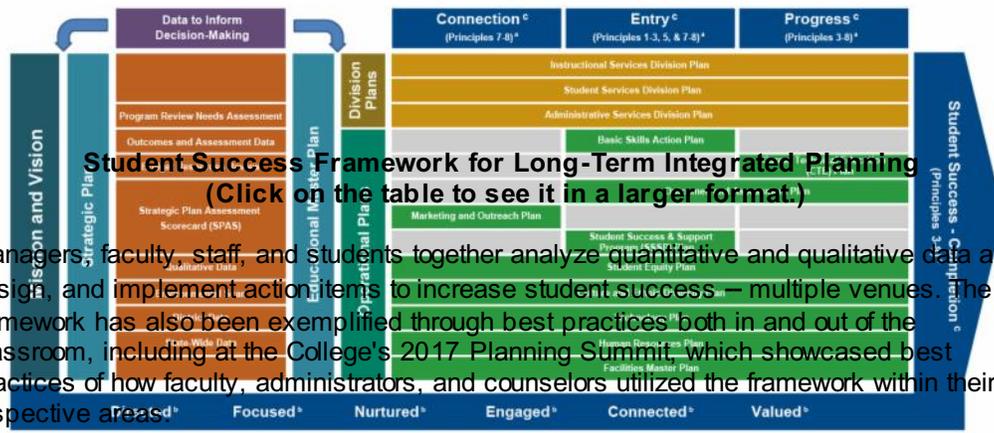
Managers, faculty, staff, and students together analyze quantitative and qualitative data and design, and implement action items to increase student success – multiple venues. The framework has also been exemplified through best practices both in and out of the classroom, including at the College's 2017 Planning Summit, which showcased best practices of how faculty, administrators, and counselors utilized the framework within their respective areas.

Currently, the College has formed an Alignment Taskforce to review, align, and integrate the following:

1) BSI-SSSP-SEP (Per State Mandate)

2) Perkins with Strong Workforce

3) BSI with Basic Skills and Student Outcomes Transformation (BSSOT)

The Student Success Framework for Long-term Integrated Planning is the key to achieve alignment and integration to improve equity, access and success of students for years to come. If a picture is worth a thousand words, here at SDMC, a framework is worth a thousand processes.

View SDMC's interactive website, which allows end-users to view the multiple processes and plans stated within the innovative framework.

A Cost-Effectiveness Study of PCC'S 1st Year Pathway

Sean Malone, Research Analyst
Patty Quinones, PhD, Research Analyst
Crystal Kollross, Executive Director Institutional Research and Planning
Pasadena City College
2017 RP Award: Excellence in College Research

In the roar of educational innovation and initiatives, Pasadena City College (PCC) has become dependent on its programs' abilities to access and institutionalize financial resources. The First Year Pathways ("Pathways") program, which currently serves thousands of freshman students, had shown promising educational outcome results when under the microscope of the UCLA evaluation team, but needed to provide evidence of financial accountability.

Incipient programs often wince at the thought of scrutiny by their Institutional Research office, but Pathways courageously opened their budgetary books for a full study on cost-effectiveness.

After estimating the average cost of educating a PCC freshman student for the length of the 3.5 year study, the 2013-14 Pathways cost was determined to be $1.4 million, or an additional $1,675 per student in Pathways.

With nearly an 11 percent difference in cost between Pathways students and traditional, non-Pathways students, the program needed to show the outcome of their goals to be worthy of the increased cost to the institution. Refer to the data table below.

2013-14 Cohort	Traditional	Pathways
Matched Cohort Size	833	833
Cost per Student	$15,574	$17,250

Completion Rate	20%	32%
Cost per Completion	$76,311	$53,615

Defining "completion" as having earned a degree, certificate, or transfer-ready status, the study revealed a twelve-point difference in completion rates after 3.5 years. Dividing the cost by our quantifiable outcome, the average cost-per-completion for Pathways came out to nearly $23,000 less than the traditional freshman track.

With each iteration of the study, we introduced more robust analysis techniques (e.g. using propensity score matching and using local budget to cost a traditional student rather than using a state average) to increase the accuracy of our results, and have continued to reach the same conclusion: *PCC Pathways is the more cost-effective method for completing students*.

Although no program is static and Pathways will continue to be evaluated as it continues to evolve, this cost analysis has added an extra layer of information that better informs our decision-making and helps us maximize the limited financial resources available in the community college system.

California Community Colleges Career & Technical Education Employment Outcomes Survey (aka the "CTE Outcomes Survey")

KC Greaney, Director of Institutional Research
Lara Abel, Research Technician
Research Analysts:
Michael Pham, Grzegorz Drukala, Jeanne Fadelli, and Blair Lamb
Santa Rosa Junior College Office of Institutional Research
2017 RP Award: Excellence in Regional/Statewide Research

The CTE Outcomes Survey started as a grassroots effort when, in 2011, Cabrillo College (and a few others statewide) had the research capacity to conduct their own employment outcomes surveys for Career & Technical Education (CTE) students who had taken classes and moved on.

The word spread, particularly among other CTE Deans at other community colleges, and with it, so did "survey envy." In that same year, the idea was hatched to "pool resources" and scale-up the survey to administer it statewide... and the rest is history.

When the statewide survey was first administered in 2012, fifteen colleges participated and our partners included the RP Group, the Chancellor's Office, CCCAOE, and Santa Rosa Junior College. More colleges signed on each year thereafter and in 2016, *all 113 California Community Colleges participated*. This was possible due to the generosity of the Workforce & Economic Development Division of the Chancellor's Office, which is using CTE Data Unlocked Initiative funding to underwrite the cost of the survey.

The survey was designed to, among other things, answer these questions:

- Regardless of whether they completed a degree or certificate, do our CTE students who move on find employment?
- Is that employment in their field of study?
- Do they see a wage increase?

The answer to all three questions is "yes," to varying degrees.

Survey results were initially intended to inform local program improvement, and to provide outcomes data for statewide accountability purposes. The survey still serves those purposes, but the results are also now being reported in the CTE LaunchBoard, being used for other reporting requirements (ACCJC Annual Report - Job Placement Rates, Gainful Employment, and California State Approving Agency for Veterans Education (CSAAVE), as well as being used for regional data market analysis by Centers for Excellence.

More information, including the 2016 survey results, is available on the project website and on the California Community College's CTE LaunchBoard.

Tracking "Lasers" and "Seekers" in a Laser-like Way

By Carolyn Arnold, Ph.D.
Coordinator, Office of Institutional Research
Chabot College
2017 RP Award: Excellence in College Research

In Institutional Research and beyond, many effective and even compelling standardized tools and indicators help us show progress and completion rates, but, as we also know, many of those indicators are usually not close enough to the specific groups of students we work with to allow us to see the impact of our efforts to improve these outcomes.

Propelled by Chabot College and inspired, in part, by Peter Bahr's segmentation study, we set out to discover a way to follow student cohorts through college in a meaningful way, and to determine whether or not the number of students completing their educational goals was increasing on our campus.

Perhaps the most significant takeaway of this study was learning that there were marked differences between some groups we identified and tracked, and that our findings informed Chabot to redirect efforts to better help impacted groups.

Due to the wide chasm of variables and definitions encompassing educational goals and success, new student cohorts were segmented by the following factors: educational goal, assessment level in English, and whether or not they were attending college full-time or part-time.

As a result, 10 groups actually emerged: six with degree/transfer goals, and four other groups who are named as follows: "Lasers" for FT degree-seeking students; "Seekers" for PT degree-seeking student; "Explorers" for undecided students; and "Skills-builders" from Bahr's study.
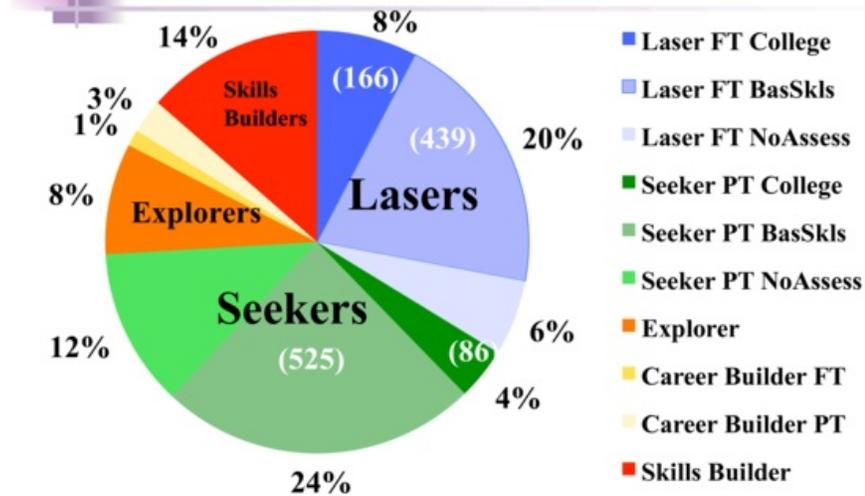
Ed Goal	Units	English Assessment	Student Ed Goal Group
Transfer or Degree (GE)	FT	College	Laser (FT) College
		Basic Skills	Laser (FT) Basic Skills
		Not Assessed	Laser (FT) Not Assessed
	PT	College	Seeker (FT) College
		Basic Skills	Seeker (FT) Basic Skills
		Not Assessed	Seeker (FT) Not Assessed
Undecided	6+		Explorer
Certificate or Job training	FT		Career-builder FT
	PT (6-11)		Career-builder PT
Cert/Job/Und/Pers Devel	<6		Skills-builder

Definition/Breakdown of Different Groups

Surprisingly, these groups each had distinct demographics, and when examined based on certain milestones along on the way to degree or transfer, their differences were even more striking -- the groups had completely different progress trajectories, and ended up in very different places.

The study revealed that the "Laser Basic Skills" group was lagging behind the "Laser College" group on every milestone. In response, Chabot began focusing major initiatives such as its First Year Experience program and its HSI grant proposal program on this group, and as a result, both programs have contributed to improvements in each and every one of these cohorts' progress.

Chabot Fall 2013 New Students
Percentage in each Educational Goal Group

Legend
■ Laser FT College
■ Laser FT BasSkls
■ Laser FT NoAssess
■ Seeker PT College
■ Seeker PT BasSkls
■ Seeker PT NoAssess
■ Explorer
■ Career Builder FT
■ Career Builder PT
■ Skills Builder

Pie chart values: 14% Skills Builders, 8% (166) Lasers, 20% (439), 6%, 4%, 24% (525) Seekers, 12%, 8% Explorers, 1%, 3%, (86)

Group Distribution at Chabot College

There have been other benefits to the campus, as well, including developing a common language across the college for talking about student characteristics and progress -- whether describing specific student groups named in the study, programs or determining the need for more basic skills or transfer courses.

This also has allowed for an increase in evidence-based decision-making for students who are making progress, those who are not, and for those benefiting from programmatic efforts.