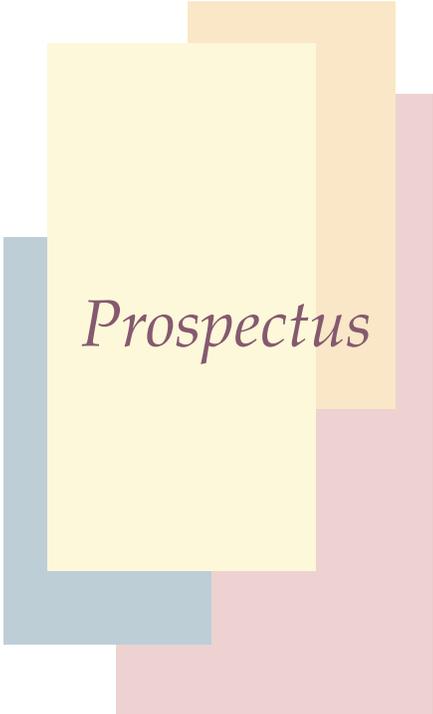




*The Research
and Planning*



Prospectus

*for California
Community Colleges*

To help community college practitioners gain perspective on the myriad of events and initiatives impacting California Community Colleges (CCC) and higher education in general, the RP Board has developed this prospectus identifying the major drivers affecting the CCC and their likely impacts on research and planning professionals. Rather than viewing the prospectus as the definitive word on the road ahead, the RP Board sees this as the starting point for vigorous discussion of our future. We invite this discussion, especially among our membership, but we also encourage other stakeholders in California Community Colleges to add their views to this prospectus.

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Context

*Key Developments
in the
Last Ten Years*

During the past decade, the research and planning functions within the California Community Colleges increased significantly. We have identified six reasons for this increase in the research and planning function among colleges:

- ◆ The establishment of state-funded matriculation programs requiring test validation and disproportionate impact studies on student success.
- ◆ The increasing concern for student equity given the changing demographics of the state and the need to monitor and analyze college practices focused on underserved populations.
- ◆ The Partnership for Excellence program and the concomitant requirements for accountability and reporting on student success.
- ◆ The continuing concern from legislative and policy groups on the status of the community college transfer function.
- ◆ Accreditation standards focusing on college capacity to address institutional effectiveness measures.
- ◆ New federal requirements for accountability in workforce education and training programs.



New Context

*for the
Foreseeable Future*

While many of the factors listed above will continue to define our work, the research and planning professional's role will likely undergo substantial change in the coming years.

In addition to mastering the expanding array of tools and techniques needed to gather, analyze, report, and manage data and knowledge, researchers and planners will increasingly be called upon to be collaborative partners with faculty, staff, administration, the System Office, K-12, California State University and University of California systems, and the Legislature to address new and evolving imperatives.

It is important to remember that this increasing demand for research and planning comes at a time when resources are sparse.

We believe the six imperatives on the following pages will play a key role in this change.

Analysis

Student learning outcomes are a regular part of accreditation standards throughout the country. The California Community College system is one of the last systems to address this component, which became part of the ACCJC accreditation standards as of June 2002. The assessment and analysis of student learning outcomes offer a great potential for collaboration among faculty and research/planning professionals to initiate exciting new changes in teaching and learning activities.

Implications

Research and planning professionals will need to:

- ◆ Work closely and collaboratively with faculty to identify course and program learning objectives and corresponding measures of learning.
- ◆ Foster a closer working relationship with student services to enrich the entire student learning experience through research and program planning.
- ◆ Identify and implement effective tools of assessing learning outcomes, train practitioners to use new assessment tools to collect, analyze and interpret data, and disseminate information through conferences and professional development activities.
- ◆ Develop new organizational structures in collaboration with administrators and faculty to accommodate the additional responsibilities of research and planning professionals.
- ◆ Address learning outcomes and student preparedness across different segments of higher education through consortia and other forms of inter-segmental collaboration.

Imperative 1

New accreditation standards require colleges to establish additional processes to identify and assess student learning outcomes.

Analysis

Because of increased demands for accountability from both federal and state agencies, faculty and administration rely on researchers and planners for a variety of data and information-intensive responsibilities. The Vocational Technical Education Act (VTEA) and other federal occupational programs will continue to increase the scope and depth of accountability reporting. Boundaries separating vocational and academic courses will continue to blur and, consequently, researchers and faculty from a variety of disciplines need to collaborate with business partners to respond to accountability demands of the legislature and the business community. Data from these endeavors need to be communicated to the local community, the System Office and outside agencies.

Implications

Imperative 2

Increased public and legislative demands for accountability reporting require more collaboration among faculty, staff, administrators, and research and planning professionals.

Research and planning professionals will need to:

- ◆ Provide expertise to design and automate reporting tasks.
- ◆ Collaborate with occupational faculty and administrators to monitor and analyze core performance measures for vocational education programs.
- ◆ Study ways to fill in the gap or eliminate the weakness in accountability reporting between K-12 and community college education, particularly in the areas of learning outcomes, ESL levels, and competencies in numeracy and literacy.
- ◆ Work with the California Partnership for Achieving Student Success (Cal-PASS) initiative to make data sharing a statewide reality and facilitate the ensuing conversations with faculty to use the data to promote student success.

- ◆ Identify effective strategies promoting student success.
- ◆ Identify procedures to increase the validity and quality of data used for accountability reporting.
- ◆ Encourage the use of the information from accountability reports to establish baselines and benchmarks.
- ◆ Continue to build institutional effectiveness reporting systems that include all key college services (instruction, student services, fiscal services, human resources, research and planning) and statewide agencies.

Analysis

Technology has an immense impact upon the delivery of educational services, but there is no working consensus among faculty on the importance of the new technologies on student progress and success. Researchers and planners will continue to address the impact of technology upon the college staff and services, and the students.

Implications

Research and planning professionals will need to:

- ◆ Promote the use of careful planning in the integration of technology in educational services.
- ◆ Continue to examine whether there are any significant differences in student success between technology-mediated and face-to-face instruction.
- ◆ Encourage the use of proven research techniques to measure technology-mediated learning.
- ◆ Analyze the readiness of college organizations to offer technology-mediated instruction.
- ◆ Identify the competencies that students should have to use technology-mediated instruction.
- ◆ Provide technical assistance to faculty facing more responsibilities in the delivery of technology-mediated instruction.
- ◆ Conduct cost effectiveness analyses for acquiring equipment through purchase or lease agreements.



Imperative 3
Growth
of technology-mediated
educational services
requires new approaches
to assessing
course and program
effectiveness.

Analysis

The continued growth of new immigrant populations and the widening economic gap among social groups require that colleges continue to allocate appropriate resources to address underserved student needs. A renewed emphasis on developmental education and English as a Second Language to ensure success requires additional research and planning activities within colleges.

Implications

Research and planning professionals will need to:

- ◆ Identify changing populations and their educational and workforce needs through environmental scans, periodic surveys, and focus groups.
- ◆ Identify effective programs that serve the needs of underserved populations and encourage adaptation of programs and services to fit the needs of students at each college.
- ◆ Collaborate with colleges' recruitment, outreach, and marketing departments to ensure that all segments within the college's service area have access to the college.
- ◆ Benchmark progress for underrepresented groups on key success indicators.
- ◆ Plan for a comprehensive learning environment that accounts for a wide range of learning styles, student preparedness, educational interests, and needs.

Imperative 4

The continued growth of social and educational divisions within the state's population requires additional focus to address the needs of the underserved.

Analysis

Researchers and planners are interpreters and facilitators, rather than gatekeepers of information. Sophisticated technology tools and knowledge management strategies help to drive this new role for researchers and planners. However, to ensure the continuation of accurate and reliable information and data, researchers and planners need to continue to advocate for good scientific research principles and practice rigorous and innovative approaches to analyzing and reporting research and findings.

Implications

Research and planning professionals will need to:

- ◆ Develop rich and easy-to-use web sites containing current studies, reports, presentations, and databases for community college practitioners.
- ◆ Focus on principles and practices of knowledge management and multiple systems of inquiry to enhance the role and function of college planners and researchers.
- ◆ Identify emerging issues affecting the colleges, students and staff, and employ new tools to analyze these issues.
- ◆ Promote consistent and comprehensive training and professional development programs and courses for researchers and planners.
- ◆ Provide training on how to use the varied sources of data available to decision makers.
- ◆ Foster the creation of a “culture of evidence” within the college environment.
- ◆ Expand the network of practitioners using the information, research and strategies from research and planning professionals.

Imperative 5
Continued growth of the field of knowledge management, along with the introduction of more sophisticated information technology tools, opens doors to new research and planning strategies and activities as well as improvement of an institution's effectiveness.

Analysis

State budget surpluses have turned to unprecedented deficits requiring the colleges to once again adapt to conditions of resource scarcity as they did in the early 1990s. The level of state funding for the colleges continues to be modest at best. Student demand for higher education opportunities is increasing due to growing enrollment from Tidal Wave II and a need for increased career and technical training and retraining. Colleges need to address these demands for more services within a constrained resource environment.

Imperative 6

Changes in the state's budget require ongoing monitoring and analyses to ensure community colleges' capacity to maintain their educational mission.

Implications

Research and planning professionals will need to:

- ◆ Monitor economic trends on a continuing basis.
- ◆ Provide analyses of the productivity of college services for college leaders.
- ◆ Collaborate with college grant-proposal writers to support efforts to seek alternative funding.
- ◆ Work with college leaders on enrollment management initiatives.
- ◆ Identify the costs associated with desired outcomes and alternative ways to achieve them.

The idea for this prospectus was conceived at the Cornerstone Session at the 2001 RP Annual Conference during which close to 80 attendees brainstormed suggestions and ideas for the initial draft. The 2004-2005 RP Board reviewed the initial document and made appropriate changes.

*The electronic version of this prospectus is available on the RP Group web site
www.rpgroup.org*

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