2019 ANNUAL REPORT

the RP group
At our core, the RP Group is an independent non-profit in service of our California Community Colleges and students to help minimize inequities for disadvantaged students and increase measures of success for all students. We do this by working primarily with and for college researchers and planners, educators, and administrators through research and planning expertise and offerings, and professional development services. We also partner with other organizations, foundations, and legislative bodies on initiatives and research projects to help increase effectiveness for our institutions at both local and statewide levels.

LETTER FROM LEADERSHIP

The RP Group is, at our roots and to this day, a membership-based organization representing institutional research, planning, and effectiveness (IRPE) professionals in California. While our historical presence goes back to the 1960s, the organization, in its recognizable form, began in 1992.

There have been significant changes in our organization, too, over the last three to five years, and we acknowledge that while most have been a step forward, some have forced us to reflect and regroup. Some of these changes, too, have been correlated to ripples or undercurrents in the role and structure of the IRPE offices.

Internally, we have been undergoing an examination and redesign of parts of our organization, including strategy, structure, and membership. We have established new mechanisms of feedback on our work, and have designed a new staff role that will focus on our membership needs and strategy. We have had — and continue to have — conversations with the Chancellor’s Office and other statewide organizations in our efforts to support researchers by relaying our field’s needs and concerns and asking for increased representation at the table.

And yet, there is still more work to be done.

Whether it is about improving equity and outcomes for students, providing support and representation for practitioners, or advocating for evidence-based decision-making, we are constantly seeking ways to fulfill our mission to better serve our IRPE community, our colleges and ultimately, our students.

Truly,

Gregory Stoup, Board President, and
Darla Cooper, Executive Director
MISSION, VISION, AND CORE VALUES

Mission
Through professional and leadership development, technical assistance, research, and evaluation services, the RP Group strengthens the ability of California Community Colleges to discover and undertake high-quality research, planning, and assessments that improve evidence-based decision making, institutional effectiveness, and success for all students.

Vision
The RP Group strives to build a community college culture that views planning, evidence-based decision-making, and institutional effectiveness as integral, collaborative strategies that work together to promote student success, increase equitable outcomes, improve college operations, and inform policymakers.

Core Values
**Quality:** Our projects, products, and initiatives are carefully researched, thoroughly vetted, and broadly informed.

**Authenticity:** Our board, staff, consultants, volunteers, and members have direct experience with community colleges and share a deep passion for ensuring the success of our students and institutions.

**Equity:** We are motivated to equip our community colleges to significantly improve achievement among students historically underserved by our institutions and to provide a path to mobility for those most vulnerable in our society.

**Collaboration:** Our engaging, action-oriented, and practitioner-based approach draws on the collective wisdom of our system and empowers our stakeholders and clients to lead their own meaningful inquiry and evidence-based decision-making.
Our Board members are official representatives for our IRPE members and community. They oversee the organization’s fiscal standing and strategic direction as well as help guide research and act as a conduit between practitioners’ needs and the organization’s resource offerings.

The Board of Directors, with staff support, has journeyed through an intensive reflective process over the last two years to help the organization ensure it is serving its mission and communities in the most impactful way, including creating and implementing an in-depth organizational strategic plan.

Executive Board

PRESIDENT
Gregory Stoup, Butte College

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Marty Alvarado, California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office
Carole Goldsmith, Fresno City College, Chief Executive Officer of the California Community Colleges (CEOCCC)
Ashanti Hands, San Diego Mesa College, Chief Student Services Officers Association (CSSO)
John Hetts, California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office
Louise Jaffe, Santa Monica College
Lisa Lawrenson, American River College, California Community Colleges Chief Instructional Officers (CCCCIO)
Virginia May, Sacramento City College, Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC)
The last two years have included a myriad of turning points for the organization in the areas of efficacy, fiscal security, and strategic and organizational progress. In this time frame, the organization has built in minimum, standard budget reserves to protect the colleges and partners it serves, as well as the staff members who are in service to the organization.

The organization has also streamlined many processes, strengthened key partnerships, and launched *RP Impact & Insights*, a semi-annual publication meant to provide thought leadership to members as well as demonstrate the organization’s overall impact.

In its capacity as a membership-based organization, the RP Group represented 82% of California Community College and District members during 2018-2019.

Over the last two years, the RP Group has also carefully developed and begun implementing a new IRPE Professional Development Program designed to cohesively and more effectively address the specific needs of IRPE practitioners and demonstrate our commitment to this community and the mission to support evidence-based culture and planning. The new program includes feedback, listening mechanisms, aligned resources, the formation of a new dedicated staff position, and increased support staffing capacity.

In addition, this year the research team implemented a satisfaction survey to its clients in order to gain insight into ways to improve service.

92% of all clients who completed the satisfaction survey reported they were satisfied with the RP Group’s fee-based services.
The RP Group elevates student voices and outcomes to support equity through research, presentations, and facilitated workshops. Over the past year, our work has centered on supporting the system with AB 705 implementation efforts; Guided Pathways; and improving transfer success.

MULTIPLE MEASURES ASSESSMENT PROJECT

The *Multiple Measures Assessment Project* (MMAP) is a collaborative team comprised of RP Group and EdResults Partnership researchers. The project launched in 2014 with a mission to improve community college placement outcomes for students.

By spring 2018, more than 78% of colleges implemented changes to their placement processes using high school transcript information. These changes were influenced by the research completed by the RP Group’s MMAP team. Currently, this team has focused its efforts on how best to implement the legislature-enacted AB 705 including documenting *early college adopters and data*.

STUDENT SUPPORT (RE)DEFINED

In 2012, the RP Group launched *Student Support (Re)defined*. One of the most well-known outcomes of the project was the “*Six Success Factors*” — directed, focused, nurtured, engaged, connected, and valued — elements identified by students as critical for their success. The project and its findings were a culmination and intersection of student data and narratives that are still being applied in new ways across our colleges to this day, in part due to the many opportunities to share the work across the country including the 99 presentations and workshops delivered, to date.

This past year, we presented to nine colleges on the various intersections of Guided Pathways and Student Support (Re)defined, helping colleges think about their GP redesign efforts through the lens of “what students say they need to succeed,” a concept that emerged from the study.

At Modesto Junior College, the Six Success Factors have helped to reshape the college’s institutional focus and have served as a “beacon” in the college’s equity, planning, and student outreach efforts.

*Image credit: Modesto Junior College*
GUIDED PATHWAYS AND EQUITY

Since 2015, we have conducted 132 focus group sessions, elevating the experiences for 920 students statewide to support colleges’ equity and Guided Pathways redesign efforts.

THROUGH THE GATE TRANSFER STUDY

The RP Group’s Through the Gate Transfer Study (launched in 2016) hones our understanding of the factors that impact the journey and decision-making of a “high-leverage” group of community college students — those who have completed all or most of the requirements for transfer. This research offers colleges a new perspective on how to map the transfer journey based on a myriad of inputs including college data and insight directly from students about the barriers to, and facilitators of, their transfer progress.

To date, we have been sharing this research with practitioners via conferences and college convenings.

COLLECTING STUDENT VOICES WEBINAR

The RP Group partnered with the Association for Institutional Research (AIR) on a “Collecting Student Voices” webinar in the spring of 2019. This webinar featured practical examples and basic steps and methods for collecting student voices at an institution.
Increasing Institutional Effectiveness Through Supporting Evidence, Shared Learning, and Leadership Development

The RP Group increases institutional effectiveness through a myriad of programs, events, offerings, and platforms, including its Leading from the Middle academies, annual conferences, bi-annual Summer Institute, RP listserv communication platform, and by participating in and helping promote Regional Research Group meetings throughout the state.

LEADING FROM THE MIDDLE

Leading from the Middle (LFM) is a structured, year-long leadership development program focused on developing and equipping middle leaders with skills and strategies to advance lasting reform efforts at their respective colleges through a project and problem-based learning model.

60% of California Community Colleges Participated in LFM between 2013-2019

23% of California Community Colleges Participated in LFM in 2019

I have been able to think more critically about institutional change and the role of data in creating this change and the impact on different departments, faculty, staff, students, and admin[istrators] in the process. For example, when trying to implement a project, one of the first steps I take is looking for the evidence and data to frame the project. I never did this in the past.

— Leading from the Middle participant

I think the biggest takeaway for me in regards to leadership is that leadership takes on many different forms and that it doesn’t necessarily come from the top. Leaders can step forward and step back allowing others to take on leadership.

— Leading from the Middle participant

607 Participants (instructional/counseling faculty and mid-level administrators/staff) completed the LFM Academies from 2013-2019
Increasing Institutional Effectiveness Through Supporting Evidence, Shared Learning, and Leadership Development

RP CONFERENCE

The annual RP Conference is the largest gathering of CCC IRPE professionals in the system and is a place for the community to exchange approaches, learn about the latest developments, and connect with one another.

265 Attendees

95% of 2019 RP Conference participants surveyed indicated increased understanding of critical issues shaping community colleges as a result of attending the conference.

STRENGTHENING STUDENT SUCCESS CONFERENCE

The annual Strengthening Student Success Conference provides a unique opportunity for a wide cross-section of CCC professionals to connect with and engage each other around institutional effectiveness, student learning, and equitable outcomes strategies.

2019

63% of Colleges Represented

2017 2018

20% Increase

79% of Colleges Represented

Attendees

2018

957

2017 2018

767
IN-PERSON COLLABORATION

We support and facilitate many opportunities for in-person collaboration, including our conferences and also through supporting and advocating for Regional Research Groups — regional meetings organized independently throughout the state that are focused on the latest issues and developments.

ONLINE COLLABORATION

Our RP Listserv is an email-based platform that facilitates knowledge-sharing among CCC researchers and others around issues, methodologies, tools, effective practices, research, and more.

“[The] RP Group does an outstanding job at organizing relevant content and bringing together people who are willing to work together, to collaborate, to share. The opportunity to work on a group project was the most engaging and rewarding, but it wouldn’t have been so without all the valuable content provided in the carefully curated sessions.”

— 2018 Summer Institute Participant

SUMMER INSTITUTE

The RP Group hosts its Summer Institute, a multi-day professional learning event for IRPE professionals, biannually. This intimate learning opportunity contains two separate tracks each with interactive breakout sessions, panel presentations, and hands-on experiences for newcomers and seasoned veterans in our California Community Colleges.
The RP Group and its team members have been cited in academic papers and featured in news publications and in peer-reviewed journals, some of which are included here. Our goal is to grow this sphere in quality and quantity over the next year, in order to maximize the benefit of our findings in our mission to increase student success.

EDSOURCE

EdSource news writes about MMAP’s student support findings and recommendations in the article, “California Community Colleges Urged to Plan Now for Fewer Students in Remedial Courses.”

THE CAMPAIGN FOR COLLEGE OPPORTUNITY

The RP Group is cited in the 2019 report, “State of Higher Education for Black Californians,” by The Campaign for College Opportunity. In addition to providing insights and data, the report also lists recommendations for policymakers and leaders.

EDUCATIONAL RESULTS PARTNERSHIP AND THE ASPEN INSTITUTE

In their article, “A Data Collaboration to Recognize Institutional Success in Education,” Educational Results Partnership and The Aspen Institute write about the Aspen Student Success Dashboard, a collaborative effort including work by the RP Group, in a recent blog post.

SAGE JOURNALS

MMAP’s article “Improving Placement Accuracy in California’s Community Colleges Using Multiple Measures of High School Achievement” was published this year in the Community College Review journal.