LETTERS FROM LEADERSHIP
GREGORY STOUP, BOARD PRESIDENT, AND DARLA COOPER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, THE RP GROUP
The times they are a changin’.

For Institutional Research, Planning, and Effectiveness (IRPE) professionals in California there probably has not been a period of more rapid change than what has been experienced in the last 24 months. Some quick... continued on p. 2

FOCUS GROUPS: MOVING THE NEEDLE IN PLANNING, PARTNERSHIPS, AND STUDENT PARTICIPATION
OLIVIA LOY
In 2017, Yuba College engaged the RP Group to conduct a series of 13 focus groups designed to learn more about students’ experience at the different stages of the Loss/Momentum Framework, with particular... continued on p. 2

STUDENT SUPPORT (RE)DEFINED CORNER
DR. DARLA M. COOPER
As Executive Director, it is my privilege and responsibility to move the RP Group forward in increasing efficacy for colleges, supporting our data stewards, and improving the success of our students. Many know that I began my career in higher education as a... continued on p. 3

PLACEMENT IS IN PLAY!
Multiple Measures Assessment Project (MMAP) (read more on p. 4)

OUR WORK IN THE WORLD
Reports | Tools | Articles (read more on p. 4)

STAY CONNECTED
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...shorthand accounting reveals: a new community college funding formula, a requirement to align local planning to a statewide Vision for Success, a revamped student equity and achievement initiative (SEA-P), fundamental developmental education reform (AB 705), and implementation of a Guided Pathways framework. IRPE professionals are at the intersection of these developments and many are struggling to keep pace with all the requirements and support their implementation.

There are two themes underlying these recent developments: (1) entering into a new relationship between community colleges and the state chancellor’s office, one that stresses implementation of system goals over bringing local innovations to scale; and (2) a statewide strategy that seems to be placing a higher priority on planning and implementation skills over basic research and innovation.

We applaud and support the intent of state initiatives and see the potential in these policies to improve outcomes for all community college students, but also see a need for more conversations between state and local educators to help ensure that the integrity of college planning efforts is not being undermined.

Perhaps the biggest challenges for us right now as college educators are to make sure we don’t lose sight of where we are trying to go, or lose our spirit, both undeniable necessities if we are to lift up students and reduce equity gaps.

In the last few months, we have heard many in our IRPE field ask: “Where is the RP Group in all of this?”

The RP Group is, at our roots and to this day, a membership-based organization representing IR 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 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 relating 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. We are holding ourselves accountable. So, we ask you: how can we help serve you and your students better?

Would you take three minutes to respond to this open-ended question, here?

Truly,
Greg and Darla

FOCUS GROUPS: MOVING THE NEEDLE IN PLANNING, PARTNERSHIPS, AND STUDENT PARTICIPATION continued

...attention being paid to students from groups identified as experiencing disproportionate impact at the college. Since completing the study, Yuba has used the findings in various ways.

“What’s the Big Idea? What do you learn when you listen to students?”

Students ask educators this question at the 2018 Strengthening Student Success Conference and get inspiring, as well as some unexpected, answers.
For instance, in January 2019, the RP Group and WestEd collaborated on a presentation for Yuba staff, faculty, and administration using the results of the focus groups and the college’s student success data to help illustrate the need for their Guided Pathways work. “This went a long way,” said Jeremy Brown, Dean of Student Success and Institutional Effectiveness/Accreditation Liaison Officer at Yuba College, “in engaging more faculty in the process and highlighting the need to work together to address the challenges our students face.”

Students have also been incorporated into follow-up Guided Pathways-related conversations. The result? “Many students shared great insights about possible program groupings for new meta-majors and two students are now official members of the GP taskforce,” said Brown.

Recently, the focus group results also laid the foundation for a business process analysis of the Yuba College student experience — from application to graduation. This analysis has helped inform other process mapping and identify possible improvements.

“We have relied on the focus group findings report as a foundational document and frequently reference it in our discussions about how we evaluate our efforts and why we prioritize one project over another,” said Brown.

For more information contact Jeremy Brown at jbrown2@yccd.edu.

The Power of Middle Leadership: A Call to Action

Did you know that Leading from the Middle has helped cultivate powerful middle leadership mindsets for faculty, staff, and administrators from 64 percent of California’s Community Colleges?

Learn why we need to develop and support our middle leaders, now.

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to start a similar dialogue at their own campus or organization.

Based on our experience thus far in using these factors to discuss what helps us be successful as professionals, I would urge you to revisit these success factors through that lens to help guide discussions in your own work groups about what helps you succeed both individually and collectively as a team in your efforts to support students.

OUR WORK IN THE WORLD

Explore the places the RP Group has been cited, quoted, or published, below.

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 policy makers and leaders. Read the report, here.

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. Learn about the tool, here.

MMAP’s findings and recommendations to provide students with additional support are mentioned in a 2018 EdSource article, California Community Colleges Urged to Plan Now for Fewer Students in Remedial Courses.

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.

PLACEMENT IS IN PLAY!

Whether you call it “map” or “m-map,” the chances are high (especially if you’re a CCC researcher) you have heard of the Multiple Measures Assessment Project (MMAP), a collaborative team of RP Group and Ed Results Partnership researchers. When the project launched in 2014 (following the Student Transcript Enhanced Project or STEPS) with 12 pilot colleges, the group’s mission was clear: improve placement. One year later, findings pointed clearly to the notion that grades (high school transcripts) were a better predictor of college success than tests. By spring 2018, over 90 colleges had changed their practices and the significance of MMAP’s work can be seen in the major shift where transcripts are now used as the primary placement tool.