Research and Planning Services: A Coordinated Model

The Need
In order to provide efficiencies and streamline research functions, the coordinated services model was introduced. This document highlights the major services offered through the model. Though the model's primary focus is on research services, the facilitation of the planning function is also integrated into this plan from a Districtwide perspective.

According to a recent survey conducted by the Research and Planning Group of California, the three top priority activities for college research offices over the past year were accreditation, program review, and institutional and/or department surveys. District offices reported their three top priorities were data extracts, data warehousing, and accreditation. Our District is no different. With the continued and expanding accountability called upon community colleges by the State and Federal government, a streamlined approach to meeting our research and planning needs will result in efficiencies by eliminating duplication of efforts and developing a team of experts.

The Services
Research services include meeting the data needs for regular, ongoing reports such as program review, basic skills, ARCC, and SLOs, in additional to producing small, selected ad hoc reports for academic departments and programs; initiating in-depth, longitudinal studies of departments and units; conducting surveys; and providing a variety of other data for accreditation, strategic plans, and grant initiatives.

Planning services include the development of a master list and calendar of college and District plans with ongoing review of milestones and assessment of the college and District's progress in meeting the planning targets.

The Staffing
District Office: The Research Services team will consist of four Research Analysts, lead by a Senior Dean of Research and Planning, all located at the District Office. The Vice Chancellor of Education and Technology will oversee all services and communicate on the team's progress with the Chancellor's Cabinet.

College: Each college will designate a .5 FTE, housed at the college, to manage the college planning functions and work in collaboration with members of the coordinated research and planning services team to ensure that all college planning needs are met.

The Process
Regular Ongoing Reports: The initial phase of the coordinated services model will require a thorough review of all data and reports produced on a regular basis; the most common and time intensive being the program review process. Upon completion of the inventory, a standard set of reports with associated timelines will be developed to meet all regular reporting needs. This will be done in conjunction with the development of the master planning calendar.

Ad Hoc Reports: An online research request form will be developed for all ad hoc requests and placed on the Research and Planning Teamsite of the InSite Portal. The form will require requestors to identify their proposal, timeline, how the information will be used, which college/district goal it will contribute

towards, and other relevant information. All requests must be reviewed and approved by the requestor's manager and the planning representative at the college from which the request is initiated. Upon receipt of the approved request, an initial conversation will be set up with the requestor, Research Analyst, Sr. Dean, and others as needed to ensure a shared understanding of the research proposal and scope. The Research Analyst will then develop a research project plan and timeline which will be shared with the requestor. The completed project will be placed on the InSite Portal in a public or private area as needed. A final meeting to review the findings will take place between the requestor, the Sr. Dean, and the analyst to ensure appropriate communications and hand-off.

Two times per semester, the Sr. Dean will hold Research Forums followed by drop in hours at each college. The forums will be information sessions whereby progress on major projects and initiatives will be shared. The drop in sessions will provide an opportunity for individuals to share, discuss, and possibly formulate research projects that are of value to the institution.

The Districtwide Research and Planning Council will be reinstated to include the college planners, three faculty members (one per college), two classified members, and up to two student representatives. This strategically focused council will meet three times per year to discuss and evaluate the structure of the research process, and set a high level planning agenda. A tactical committee consisting of the college planners and Districtwide Research staff will meet more regularly for tactical purposes.

The Goals
The goals for the service are to:
- build practitioner ownership of evidence by engaging them in designing research and empowering them to review their own data;
- shift the level of analysis to the requestor or the program level to make data more relevant ;
- tailor reports to the specific concerns of sub-groups within the college;
- provide opportunities for practitioners to explore the data so that they are more engaged in new college and Districtwide initiatives;
- increase the number of people engaging in defining and analyzing data;
- distribute results using short, tailored, non-technical language;
- make data more accessible through websites;
- spend more time in data discussions with practitioners; and
- make the research prioritization process more transparent.

The Assessment
Upon agreement to move forward with this model, a survey will be disseminated to the colleges and District Office to assess current satisfaction with Research and Planning services provided and to obtain information on services desired. This data will be used as the benchmark for current service levels. The model will go into effect on July 1, 2011. In May 2012, the same survey will be disseminated to the same or similar audience to gauge satisfaction with the coordinated services model. Data from the survey will be used to determine continued viability of the services.