the RP group

the Research & Planning Group
for California Community Colleges

The State of Institutional Research

2011 Institutional Research and Planning Office Census

Introduction

In 2011, the RP Group conducted a survey with institutional research and planning (IRP) offices in the California community college system, with the goal of documenting the staffing profile of offices. Eighty-eight college and 17 district IRP offices—totaling 105 institutions—responded to the survey (78% of the 112 colleges and 22 district offices). This is the third time this study has been conducted; therefore where data are available from both the 2006 and 2009 surveys, a comparison of the overall results is also presented.

Significant shifts were found between 2006 and 2009 in areas such as the breadth of research office responsibilities, seniority reflected in the title of the chief research officer (i.e., "director" became more common and "researcher" less common) and the chief research officer reporting to a higher level of the administration (e.g., more reported to chancellors and fewer to deans). However these aspects of research and planning offices remained relatively stable between 2009 and 2011.

In 2011, the greatest changes appeared to be in resources. Despite the budget crisis, more offices saw their budgets increase compared to 2009 and staffing levels increased in comparison to 2006.

Scope of Research and Planning Offices

What is the exact title of your office?

Office title is used as a proxy for the areas of responsibility of each office. Table 1 presents the results from the 2011 survey, compared with the 2006 and 2009 surveys. Over the past five years, the most common terms found in the titles of IRP offices included "research" and "planning." After these two descriptors, the most common terms found were "institutional effectiveness," "grants/development/advancement," and "assessment/evaluation/student outcomes or success." However, over the last two years, many more offices reported the terms "Research," "Planning" and "Institutional Effectiveness" in their titles, suggesting greater uniformity in department names. Note that the total number of responses to this question is larger than the number of offices surveys, as many departments include multiple terms in their titles.

Table 1. 2011 versus 2009 and 2006 Surveys – Areas of Responsibility by Office Type

	2006		2009		2011	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Research	98	76.0%	83	91.2%	103	51.8%
Planning	41	31.8%	46	50.5%	58	29.1%
Institutional Effectiveness	5	3.9%	9	9.9%	17	8.5%
Grants, Development, Advancement	10	7.8%	6	6.6%	10	5.0%
Assessment, Evaluation, Student Outcomes/Success	5	3.9%	6	6.6%	8	4.0%
Academic Affairs, Ed Services, Instruction	4	3.1%	3	3.3%	0	0.0%
Admissions & Records, Enrollment Management	0	0.0%	3	3.3%	1	0.5%
Information Technology	4	3.1%	1	1.1%	2	1.0%
Total Responses	129		91		199	

How has your operating budget and staffing changed in the last year?

In order to ascertain whether IR offices had experienced any changes to their budget during the state budget crisis, in both the 2009 and 2011 surveys, we asked them to indicate whether their operating budget and staffing had increased, decreased, or remained unchanged.

Of those who responded, about half indicated no change. However, when compared to 2009, more IRP offices increased in both staff size and operating budgets in 2011.

Table 2. 2011 versus 2009 Surveys – Operating Budget Change in the Last Year

	2009		2011	
	n	%	n	%
Decreased	41	48.2%	32	30.5%
Unchanged	35	41.2%	51	48.6%
Increased	9	10.6%	22	21.0%
Total Responses	85		105	

Of the 105 institutional research and planning offices that responded to the survey, about half indicated no change to their budget or staff sizes between 2011 and 2010. **However, when compared to 2009, more IRP offices increased in both staff size and operating budgets in 2011.**

What is the job title of the Chief Research Officer (CRO)?

Director remains the most common title for chief research officers at both college and district offices. Table 14 below presents the results from this question.

Table 3. 2011 versus 2009 and 2006 Surveys – Chief Research Officer Job Title

	2006		2009		2011	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Director (incl. Sr. Dir, Exec. Dir)	50	46.7%	47	56.0%	53	57.6%
Dean (incl. Assoc. Dean)	16	15.0%	23	27.4%	26	28.3%
Coordinator	11	10.3%	5	6.0%	6	6.5%
Analyst	9	8.4%	5	6.0%	1	1.1%
Researcher	5	4.7%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Vice Chancellor (incl. Assoc VC)	4	3.7%	1	1.2%	3	3.3%
Officer	3	2.8%	1	1.2%	0	0.0%
Vice President	3	2.8%	2	2.4%	1	1.1%
Manager	2	1.9%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Specialist	2	1.9%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Chief	1	0.9%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Supervisor	1	0.9%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Professor	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	1.1%
Special Assistant	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	1.1%
Total Responses	107		84		92	

What is the exact title of the person to whom the chief research officer reports?

About half of CROs report to the college president (54%) and about another quarter report to a vice president (28%).

Table 4. 2011 versus 2009 and 2006 Surveys – Job Title of Person to Whom Chief Research Officer Reports

	2006		2009		2011	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Chancellor	1	1.5%	5	6.0%	4	4.4%
President	34	52.3%	42	50.0%	49	53.8%
Vice/Asst Chancellor	3	4.6%	8	9.5%	10	11.0%
Associate/Asst Vice Chancellor	4	6.2%	3	3.6%	2	2.2%
Vice President	16	24.6%	19	22.6%	25	27.5%
Dual: President & Vice President	0	0.0%	2	2.4%	0	0.0%
Dean	5	7.7%	4	4.8%	1	1.1%
Director	1	1.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Executive Assistant to President	1	1.5%	1	1.2%	0	0.0%
Total Responses	65		84		91	

Staffing Levels

Looking over the past five years, about a quarter (24%) of IRP offices remain "one-person shops," with another quarter being two-person offices. However, in 2011, there were fewer institutions without IRP offices and more large offices. Nearly four in ten IRP offices (39%) now have three or more full-time equivalents (FTEs).

Table 5. 2011 versus 2006 Surveys – Total Full-time Equivalent (FTE) for IRP Offices

	2006		2011	
	n	%	n	%
None	17	13.2%	6	5.7%
Less than 1 FTE	2	1.6%	2	1.9%
One FTE	27	20.9%	23	21.9%
More than 1, less than 2 FTE	14	10.9%	6	5.7%
Two FTE	25	19.4%	23	21.9%
More than 2, less than 3 FTE	14	10.9%	4	3.8%
Three FTE	0	0.0%	18	17.1%
Between 3 and 4 FTE	15	11.6%	1	1.0%
Four FTE	0	0.0%	9	8.6%
Between 4 and 5 FTE	8	6.2%	3	2.9%
5 or more FTE	7	5.4%	10	9.5%
Total Responses	129		105	

About two-thirds (65%) of IRP offices reported having a research analyst position, with most offices having between one and two FTEs in this role.

Table 6. 2011 versus 2006 Surveys – FTE for Research Analysts

	2006		2011	
	n	%	n	%
None	24	39.3%	35	34.7%
Less than 1 FTE	3	4.8%	5	5.0%
One FTE	22	36.1%	25	24.8%
More than 1, less than 2	0	0.0%	6	5.9%
Two FTE	9	14.8%	19	18.8%
More than 2, less than 3	0	0.0%	7	6.9%
3 or more	3	4.0%	4	4.0%
Total Responses	61		101	

About a third of offices (35%) reported having either a research assistant or clerical support, with 1 FTE being the most common level of support.

Table 7. 2011 versus 2006 Surveys – FTE for Clerical Support or Research Assistants

	2006		2011	
	n	%	n	%
None	40	62.5%	68	68.7%
Less than 1 FTE	9	14.1%	7	7.0%
One FTE	13	20.3%	22	22.2%
1 or more FTE	2	3.2%	2	2.0%
Total Responses	64		99	

Note: Tables 5-7 presents 2011 versus 2006 numbers—because of the structure of the 2009 survey, it was difficult to determine whether offices skipped the question or had no staff in these positions. Therefore these figures have not been included.

Implications

In 2009, it was apparent that the field of institutional research and planning had undergone a large shift, with more researchers taking on a director role and reporting to more senior leadership. In 2011, it appears that the field continued to grow, with many office budgets constant or increasing despite the budget crisis. The field also demonstrated a greater uniformity of office titles, fewer colleges without researchers, and a growing number of multi-person offices. The RP Group will conduct a survey in summer 2012 to determine if this trend holds as the community college system continues to absorb large budget reductions.