





Building and Sustaining Inclusive IRPE Offices

A Guide for Institutional Research, Planning, and Effectiveness Teams

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TheRPGroup
Research, Planning & Professional Development for California Community Colleges
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Introduction

The Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges (The RP Group) developed this guide to assist institutional research, planning, and effectiveness (IRPE) offices with their ongoing efforts to ensure inclusive work environments that are capable of recruiting and retaining diverse, informed, motivated, and talented personnel. This work is more important than ever as IRPE offices in California's community colleges continue to evolve beyond their historical roots as "data vending machines" and into institutional innovation and transformation facilitators. Results from The RP Group's biannual Survey of IRPE Offices in the California Community Colleges (CCC) system highlights exponential growth in several key areas that require additional skill sets beyond data analytics and compliance reporting.



Burgeoning areas of responsibility for IRPE offices in the CCC system require staff with the ability to lead and support functional areas more focused on planning, student equity, organizational development, change leadership, and change management. In Table 1, results from The RP Group's 2023 Survey of IRPE Offices document some of the evolution in IRPE office functions and oversight areas. Analysis of results from The RP Group's first administration of the Survey of IRPE Offices in 2006 reveals significant growth in the roles and responsibilities of offices over the 17 years between 2006 and 2023. For example, in 2006, just 32% of CCC IRPE offices reported that they led college-wide planning, and 8% of offices were involved with grants and resource development, compared to 76% and 15%, respectively, in 2023. Other functional areas such as business intelligence, process analysis, and student equity were extremely uncommon in 2006 and were therefore not included as response options.

Table 1. 2023 Survey of IRPE Offices Response Rates

Functional Area	IRPE Offices *Leading*	IRPE Offices *Supporting*
Business Intelligence & Process Analysis	23%	46%
Grants & Resource Development	15%	79%
College-Wide Planning & Evaluation	76%	23%
Student Equity & Achievement	17%	82%

Successful implementation and outcomes associated with these IRPE office functions require a diverse blend of skill sets, expertise, and context to interpret and understand how students interact with the institution and how the educational community can best support students with the greatest need of support and resources. IRPE offices staffed with personnel who most closely resemble the college's student population are better positioned to understand students' unique needs, perspectives, and talents. Institutional change and innovation are dependent upon valid and reliable student-centered and equity-minded data woven throughout inclusive planning processes. These conditions best position colleges to develop and refine impactful policies and practices that ultimately advance student equity, achievement, and institutional effectiveness.

Reader's Guide

As mentioned in the introduction, this guide is intended to support efforts to recruit and retain diverse, informed, motivated, and talented personnel in CCC IRPE offices. To best achieve these objectives, the guide begins with an examination of why equitable and inclusive hiring and management practices are important from a broader historical and CCC system perspective. We then cover some of the many tangible benefits IRPE offices can expect to receive by dedicating time, energy, and resources to this important work.



Additional focus areas included in this guide are as follows:

- Strategies IRPE offices can employ to **articulate what equity, diversity, and inclusion mean** within the context of daily IRPE office operations.
- How IRPE offices can leverage **inclusive hiring practices** and potentially impact broader institutional human resources policies and practices.
- Key components of an **effective employee retention program** to ensure IRPE offices are able to keep the diverse and talented staff they hire.
- **Leadership frameworks** that define inclusion, antiracism, and cultures of belonging.
- How IRPE offices can concurrently increase their work capacity and the quality of their work while **diversifying future candidate pools** and empowering students with education about IRPE skill sets and career options available to them.
- Methods IRPE offices can employ to ensure the **sustainability of investments** made to diversify their staff and build inclusive office cultures.



Why Is This Work Important?

Inclusive work environments have been a topic of significant research and discussion.



As evidenced in The RP Group's 2021 and 2023 IRPE Demographic Survey results, IRPE offices in the California Community Colleges system do not currently reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of the student population. Investing the time and resources to recruit underrepresented voices can help ensure that more student voices and perspectives are included in the daily discourse and dialogue intended to advance their success in higher education, the workforce, and life.

In addition to the benefits minoritized students could receive from researchers with similar backgrounds leading planning and assessments intended to advance their success on campus, here are some of the **benefits IRPE offices can expect** to receive from investing the time and energy to ensure diversity in their workspaces:

- ***Enhanced Innovation and Creativity:*** Diversity of perspectives and backgrounds fosters a broader range of ideas and solutions, leading to increased innovation and creativity within the organization (Cox & Blake, 1991).
- ***Improved Problem-Solving:*** Diverse teams bring varied experiences and insights to problem-solving, leading to more comprehensive and effective solutions (Mannix & Neale, 2005).
- ***Increased Productivity:*** Inclusive environments promote a greater sense of belonging and psychological safety, which in turn boosts employee morale and productivity (Ely & Thomas, 2001).
- ***Expanded Talent Pool:*** Inclusive workplaces attract a wider range of talent, enabling organizations to tap into a more diverse pool of qualified individuals (Herring, 2009).

- ***Better Decision-Making:*** Inclusive teams are more likely to consider a broader array of viewpoints when making decisions, leading to more well-rounded and informed choices (Phillips et al., 2008).
- ***Enhanced Employee Engagement:*** Employees feel valued and respected in inclusive environments, leading to higher levels of engagement, productivity, work quality, and a sense of belonging (Vance, 2006).
- ***Reduced Turnover:*** Inclusive workplaces are associated with lower turnover rates, as employees are more likely to stay in an environment in which they feel valued and supported (Maurer & Qureshi, 2021).
- ***Skill Development:*** Interacting with colleagues from diverse backgrounds enhances interpersonal and communication skills, fostering personal and professional growth (Gardenswartz & Rowe, 2003).
- ***Cultural Competency:*** Exposure to diverse perspectives helps employees enhance their ability to understand and navigate different backgrounds and viewpoints, which is becoming more important in our interconnected world (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2001).



Commitment to EDI

IRPE offices interested in making explicit and tangible steps to bring equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) to the forefront of their work can begin by crafting and expressing what these values mean within three important contexts:

1. What does EDI mean within the context of day-to-day IRPE office operations?
2. How do IRPE offices effectively communicate EDI values to the broader institutional community?
3. How can IRPE offices lead equity-minded and student-focused change across their college or district?

Some IRPE offices develop mission, vision, and/or value statements that are hosted on their college/district website to communicate these principles to the broader educational community. The RP Group has developed an EDI Self-Assessment Tool, which was designed to assess and evaluate the degree by which The RP Group's conceptual framework for advancing equity is embodied across an institution or in an individual office at the institution.

Our framework is based on four core components: (1) Equity-Minded, (2) Cultural Humility, (3) Distributed Leadership, and (4) Evidence-Based. This assessment tool includes key guiding questions to help teams self-assess a program, office, department, process, practice, or policy in a way that:

- Encourages thoughtful reflection and dialogue about how programs, processes, practices, and policies reflect the constructs in each of the core components;
- Establishes a baseline understanding and standing of how equitable its efforts are; and
- Identifies actions, resources, and opportunities for improvement.



Inclusive Hiring Practices



Building a diverse and inclusive IRPE office team is the cornerstone for empowering student-focused and equity-minded institutional change. Inclusive hiring practices not only ensure researchers and planners reflect the diversity of educational communities they serve but also foster a culture of belonging, innovation, and collaboration. This section explores strategies and actionable steps for designing equitable hiring processes, mitigating bias, and creating pathways for historically underrepresented professionals to thrive in IRPE roles. By prioritizing intentional recruitment, transparent selection criteria, and equity-focused onboarding, IRPE offices can strengthen their capacity to lead transformational change. Below are some prompts and concepts to help support this work.

Incorporating EDI in Hiring

How is EDI incorporated into your hiring processes?

- Ensure IRPE **job postings reach the broadest and most diverse audience** possible by targeting diverse listservs, social media, and local communities to best ensure depth, breadth, and context among your candidate pool.
- Ensure **diverse representation within the hiring committee** by including members who represent different races/ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, ages, disabilities/abilities, nationalities, languages, and cultural backgrounds.
- When conducting employment interviews with a focus on equity, diversity, inclusion, and antiracism in the workplace, it is essential to ask questions that help **assess a candidate's understanding of and commitment** to these principles.

- Here are **some interview questions** that can help you gauge candidates' perspectives and experiences in these areas:
  - How do you define equity, diversity, and inclusion, and why do you think they are important in the workplace?
  - What steps have you taken to educate yourself about antiracism, and how have you applied this knowledge in your professional life?
  - How do you ensure that your interactions with colleagues are respectful and inclusive, considering their diverse backgrounds and perspectives?
  - What strategies do you use to create an environment in which all employees feel heard, respected, and valued for their unique contributions?
  - How do you go about building relationships with individuals from different backgrounds to create a more inclusive and cohesive work environment?
  - Tell us about a time when you had to address unconscious bias within yourself or others, and how you managed the situation.

In addition to helping to assess a candidate's attitudes, experiences, and behaviors regarding equity, diversity, inclusion, and antiracism in the workplace, these questions also **signal to candidates the value you place on these principles** and what is expected of those who join the team. Promoting these values requires ongoing commitment and action, so look for candidates who demonstrate genuine understanding and a willingness to take proactive steps in fostering an inclusive and respectful work environment.

Considerations for Minimum Qualifications

Has your office and/or human resources department reviewed the minimum qualifications for hiring research positions to determine if four-year degrees are absolutely required to successfully complete research analyses?

- Might those with an **associate degree** be able to successfully complete the assigned duties?

- Opportunities to **employ recent community college graduates** can help students stay in their community, earn livable wages, and potentially incur less postsecondary education debt.
- When analyzing an applicant's educational background, human resources staff and selection committees should **examine potential biases favoring candidates with STEM degrees** due to learning outcomes in those fields often being more closely associated with quantitative research methods.
- While quantitative research methods are critical in daily IRPE office operations, **qualitative research methods** are arguably just as important.
- Academic training in **fields such as anthropology, social sciences, history, and philosophy** also cultivates critical skills that are vital for IRPE roles, such as qualitative data analysis, systems thinking, ethical decision-making, and understanding social and cultural contexts.
- Candidates with **backgrounds in non-STEM disciplines** often bring a unique lens to problem-solving, especially in areas that demand an understanding of human behavior, institutional dynamics, and societal structures.

Navigating Barriers

If you have encountered institutional barriers that hinder equitable and inclusive hiring processes, has your office documented and shared this information with relevant college/district leadership?

- Recognize any policies, practices, or cultural norms that may unintentionally limit equitable and inclusive hiring.
- Maintain a record of instances in which hiring processes resulted in limited diversity, exclusionary practices, or unnecessary restrictions on candidate qualifications.
- Share findings with college and district leadership to advocate for policy revisions that support more inclusive hiring.
- Recommend specific actions, such as revising minimum qualifications, diversifying hiring committees, or expanding recruitment strategies.
- Track changes in hiring practices and their impact on the diversity and inclusivity of new hires to monitor progress and improvement.

Employee Retention



Employee retention remains paramount for IRPE offices that rely upon a unique blend of technical and contextual skill sets to provide campus and district stakeholders with valid, reliable, and insightful planning and decision support. The College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (2022) found that more than half of employees are likely to be looking for other employment within one year. Increased pay was by far the most common reason cited, with more than three-quarters of respondents to the 2022 Employee Retention Survey indicating compensation as the key driver.

Since college/district compensation rates are largely beyond the control of IRPE offices, it becomes increasingly important for managers and executives to focus on other factors to help boost employee satisfaction and retention. Here are some focus **areas that can best position IRPE offices to keep the employees they have:**

- ***Inclusive and Supportive Culture:*** Foster a workplace culture that values diversity and promotes transparent communication. Create an environment in which employees feel heard, respected, and valued. Build feedback loops for staff to share their opinions about how the office prioritizes research and planning projects and their experience working in the office.
- ***Share Knowledge and Information:*** Allocate time and space for the office to share helpful resources and discuss practice, with a particular focus on ensuring the newest members of the office are adequately informed and supported.
- ***Professional Development:*** Encourage and fund employees to enhance their skills and knowledge through workshops, conferences, and training programs to help them develop their technical skills, leadership capacities, and EDI learning outcomes.
- ***Recognition and Rewards:*** Recognize and reward employees for their achievements and contributions. Implementing an employee recognition program can foster a positive work culture and boost morale. However, it is also important to avoid programs that consistently single out certain individuals for recognition while ignoring others, which can lead to strife among employees.

- ***Flexible Work Arrangements:*** Promote work-life balance by offering flexible work schedules, including hybrid and remote work options to help reduce burnout and stress among staff.
- ***Regular Feedback and Performance Reviews:*** Conduct regular performance reviews and provide constructive feedback to employees to help them understand their strengths and areas for improvement, ultimately leading to increased engagement. Do not save praise or criticism for the annual performance review; weave this formative feedback for employees throughout the year.
- ***Collaborative and Collegial Environment:*** Encourage collaboration and teamwork among staff members. Facilitate cross-functional projects and initiatives to build a sense of camaraderie and shared purpose.
- ***Mentoring and Coaching:*** Encourage employees to participate in mentoring and coaching programs to support their professional and personal growth, which can help employees create a strong support network within the institution.



- ***Team Building:*** Create opportunities for employees to get to know each other beyond their job duties to encourage relationship building, which can serve as a key foundation for increased productivity and positive office morale.
- ***Community Engagement:*** Encourage employees to engage with the broader academic and local communities outside the IRPE office. Involvement in college and community initiatives can help foster a greater sense of purpose and pride in their work.
- ***Leadership Opportunities:*** Support employees' participation in college committees, employee groups, and other avenues at the colleges to serve in capacities outside their regular job duties.
- ***Continuing Education:*** Encourage and support employees who want to earn additional degrees to pursue their educational goals by working with them to adjust their workload and schedule to allow for completing their program.

Cultivating a strategic long-term approach focused on staff retention can be boiled down to establishing and sustaining a culture of belonging in which employees feel heard, valued, and connected to the mission of their work, the office, and the institution. Belonging is a key predictor of staff engagement, productivity, and organizational success (Agarwal, 2019). Baumeister and Leary (1995) define belonging as:

> *…the feeling of security and support when there is a sense of acceptance, inclusion, and identity for a member of a certain group or place, as the basic fundamental drive to form and maintain lasting, positive, and significant relationships with others* (p. 500).

Here are some steps and strategies IRPE offices can employ to **build foundations capable of supporting cultures of belonging:**

- Define or update the office's mission, vision, values, and/or purpose.
- Outline and communicate how the IRPE office functions, and the specific support the office provides across the institution to create shared understanding and identify potential opportunities for efficiency and effectiveness.
- Organize new hire onboarding meetings where everyone in the office has an opportunity to share tips for success, lessons learned, and the compelling "whys" behind individuals' decisions to work in IRPE and the CCC system.
- Hold regular discussions among office staff about what everyone is working on, workloads, how everyone works best, and how the group can best work together.



Diversifying the IRPE Pipeline and Empowering Students

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2021), the research, planning, and effectiveness profession remains a high-growth, high-wage occupation. California community colleges have millions of students in search of jobs that could afford them livable wages, generous benefits, and opportunities to serve their local community. Very few, if any, students intentionally pursue a postsecondary degree to become an IRPE professional unless they are exposed to this niche career path somewhere along their educational journey.

Data collected from The RP Group's 2023 IRPE Community Demographic Survey indicate that IRPE offices, as presently constructed, do not fully reflect the racial/ethnic diversity of the CCC system's student body. IRPE offices tend to be overrepresented by White (41%) and Asian (21%) personnel, compared to 24% and 16% among students, respectively. Since IRPE offices are increasingly being charged with providing student-focused, equity-minded data collection, analyses, and planning support, it seems appropriate, if not necessary, to ensure IRPE offices include voices from underrepresented groups such as Hispanic/Latine student populations.



Fortunately, many IRPE office leads are taking proactive steps to employ students as research and planning assistants in their offices. These experiences help increase students' awareness about career options available to them, building their skill sets in data analytics and college planning processes, and in many cases, concurrently providing a vital source of income while potentially boosting student retention at the college. Here are a few examples of **strategies IRPE offices can leverage to positively impact students' academic and career goals:**

- ***Federal Work Study:*** A need-based form of financial aid that provides flexible, part-time employment opportunities to help students cover their educational expenses while gaining valuable work experience.

- ***Independent Study or Internship Course Credit:*** Many academic programs include an independent study or internship course that students can include in their academic plans. IRPE offices could partner with faculty in aligned academic departments to ensure that students are aware of the career options available to them in the IRPE field, how IRPE job skills connect with student learning outcomes, and that students can accumulate college credit and hands-on work experience at the same time.
- ***Learning-Aligned Employment Program (LAEP):*** Colleges/districts, the California Student Aid Commission, and employers partnered to provide paid internships in students' fields of study. IRPE offices can partner with academic departments such as psychology, mathematics, computer science, and sociology to provide students with hands-on experience building statistical models, developing programming code, analyzing data, and interviewing their peers to inform equity-minded institutional change.

Here are some additional activities IRPE offices can employ to **help increase students' awareness of IRPE career options:**

- Host a table at a **college career fair or welcome event** to share more about:
  - What the college IRPE office does on a day-to-day basis;
  - Why student participation in institutional surveys and focus groups is critical; and
  - What types of careers exist in the IRPE field and how the college's academic programs might best prepare students to enter this burgeoning career path.
- Ensure that the **college's career center** has the context required to educate students about career opportunities available to them in the fields of research, evaluation, planning, data analytics, data science, institutional effectiveness, and decision-support.
- Give **classroom presentations** to share information about the IRPE field in courses such as statistics, research methods, and introduction to psychology.
- Offer job shadowing opportunities to students enrolled in social sciences and statistics courses.



EDI Learning & Sustainability



Since we never reach a pinnacle or end goal with our personal development in the equity, diversity, and inclusion space, it is important for IRPE offices to play the long game when it comes to EDI sustainability. These concepts are deeply rooted in societal structures, personal experiences, and continual changes in our understanding of social dynamics. The complexity and depth of the personal and professional development required to place EDI praxis at the forefront of our day-to-day engagements warrant a significant investment of time and emotional energy. This work should not be someone's overload assignment or personal responsibility. Each of us has EDI learning and knowledge gaps, so it might make sense to incorporate EDI development in annual employee goal-setting and evaluation processes.

IRPE office leadership will likely need to work creatively and adaptively with the rest of the campus community to ensure personnel have ongoing access to identified conferences, workshops, literature, and trainings. If general funds are not readily available to cover potential professional development expenses, office leadership could consider categorical funding from college programs and plans that include goals and objectives focused on professional development and/or equity, diversity, and inclusion. Categorical funding sources within the context of California Community Colleges include the Student Equity & Achievement Program (SEAP), Basic Needs, Adult Education, and Zero Textbook Cost (ZTC). Federal funding sources available at your institution might include the National Science Foundation, Upward Bound, Talent Search, and Titles III and V grants.

There is a host of exceptional low- and no-cost EDI trainings, literature, and transformative activities individuals and groups can harness to advance understanding and application of EDI principles. Here is a list of **EDI topics and key search terms** that IRPE professionals might consider exploring to support personal and professional development:

- ***Historical Context:*** Understanding the history of marginalized groups' experiences provides insight into current inequalities and systemic issues.

- ***Systemic Racism:*** Learning how to assess and address systemic racism by uncovering its historical roots. With greater understanding and discussion about how systemic racism manifests and perpetuates in society, we can better strategize and develop effective methods to dismantle racially oppressive practices.
- ***Unconscious Bias:*** Understanding how unconscious biases shape our perceptions and decisions can help people recognize and mitigate these biases to help individuals and organizations make more equitable choices.
- ***Cultural Competence:*** Learning about different cultures, customs, and traditions fosters mutual respect through collective understanding. Cultural competence training can help individuals interact effectively with diverse groups.
- ***Microaggressions:*** Educating individuals about microaggressions—subtle, often unintentional acts that marginalize others—can help prevent unintentional harm and create a more inclusive work environment.
- ***Intersectionality:*** Exploring the concept of intersectionality, which recognizes the interconnected nature of social identities, helps individuals understand how different forms of discrimination can overlap and compound.
- ***Inclusive Language:*** Learning to use language that respects and acknowledges different identities and experiences is essential for creating an inclusive atmosphere.
- ***Co-Conspirators:*** Teaching individuals how to be effective allies for marginalized groups and use their privilege and positionality to advocate for equity, diversity, and inclusion is important for creating a supportive work environment.
- ***Managing Difficult Conversations:*** Developing skills to navigate difficult conversations about privilege, discrimination, and biases can help create a work environment in which potential conflicts can be addressed constructively.

IRPE offices that are able to articulate changing societal norms, acknowledge systemic inequalities, digest the intersectionality of identities, challenge comfort zones, and share global perspectives can more effectively aid their institutions in establishing a climate and culture capable of advancing equity-minded and student-centered change.



Career Advancement

Opportunities for career growth and advancement are critical for individual professional fulfillment and long-term strength in the statewide IRPE community. For some professionals, career advancement might be focused on climbing the ladder from analyst to manager to executive, while others may prefer to focus exclusively on creating impact through their existing institutional role.



Given the limited number of IRPE positions available at each institution, it is important to recognize that there will always be some number of staff interested in advancing to managerial and executive roles, which will likely require leaving their current institution. Then there's a group interested in advancing up the chain of command but who cannot or do not want to relocate.

To ensure staff receive the career advancement support they desire, IRPE managers and executives should consider opportunities for staff to participate in formal or informal mentorships and exposure.

Strategies to support career advancement could include the following:

- Encouraging IRPE staff to nominate themselves for board of directors vacancies with membership or professional organizations (e.g., The RP Group, California Association for Institutional Research [CAIR]).
- Serving in college/district leadership roles (e.g., planning committees, classified senate).
- Participating in statewide workgroups or committees organized by the CCC Chancellor's Office or The RP Group.
- Nominating capable IRPE office staff for interim management positions at the college including those that may be outside of IRPE.

- Fostering opportunities for personal and professional learning by challenging staff to tackle tasks or responsibilities that might be beyond their current skill sets or expertise.
- Participating in and facilitating Regional Research Group meetings to increase the visibility of IRPE office staff and the important projects they are leading.
- Encouraging staff to supplement their work at the college through opportunities outside the college that can expand their areas of expertise and experience (e.g., graduate courses, consulting, blogging, coaching).



There are many career advancement profiles, and ever-evolving life circumstances tend to have significant impacts on our short-, medium-, and long-term career aspirations. It is important that supervisors provide guidance to and support their staff for the betterment of our offices, our campuses, and the broader statewide IRPE community.



Conclusion



Building and sustaining inclusive IRPE offices is both a strategic imperative and a moral responsibility for California's community colleges. As the role of IRPE offices continues to evolve beyond data analysis into institutional transformation and student equity leadership, the need for diverse, well-supported, and equity-minded teams becomes ever more pressing.

This guide has outlined actionable strategies for fostering inclusive hiring practices, retaining talented professionals, and creating pathways for underrepresented groups to enter and thrive in the IRPE field. It has emphasized that institutional change is not achieved through isolated efforts but rather through a sustained commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion principles. By embedding these principles into daily operations, decision-making, and long-term planning, IRPE offices can strengthen their impact on student success and institutional effectiveness.



True progress toward EDI requires ongoing reflection, collaboration, and adaptation. It calls for intentionality in recruitment, proactive efforts in retention, and the cultivation of leadership pathways that empower professionals at all levels. Moreover, IRPE offices must remain engaged in continuous learning, leveraging resources, professional development opportunities, and partnerships to advance their work.

The RP Group has developed a host of resources to support you with this work, which can be found on the EDI section our website. Here is a list of some of the resources and frameworks we have available at present:

- EDI Commitment — Defines what EDI means to The RP Group and outlines our commitments to the IRPE community and CCC students.

- Land and Labor Acknowledgments — How The RP Group acknowledges California's Indigenous peoples and exploited workers, and resources to help others acknowledge these communities with respect and civility.
- Conceptual Framework for Advancing Equity — Grounded by four pillars built upon Equity-Minded, Cultural Humility, Evidence-Based, and Distributive Leadership praxis.
- EDI Self-Assessment Tool — A tool to assess and evaluate the degree by which an organization's or institution's programs, practices, processes, and policies align with The RP Group's Framework for Advancing Equity.
- Living EDI Glossary — A glossary of commonly used EDI terms with applied definitions specifically within the IRPE context.
- Inclusive Language Guide — Provides information and a common set of guidelines to help practitioners at California community colleges make conscious decisions about the terminology they use and avoid causing harm through biased, offensive, or discriminatory language.
- EDI Library — A digital library of EDI resources, visual assets, and handouts.
- IRPE Demographic Survey — Provides demographic comparisons across The RP Group, IRPE community, and the students we serve.

By taking deliberate steps to build inclusive cultures within IRPE offices, we not only enhance the effectiveness of institutional research and planning but also contribute to a more just and equitable higher education system. Fostering inclusive IRPE offices is not merely an aspiration—it is a necessity for ensuring that California community colleges fulfill their mission to serve all students equitably and effectively.

As IRPE professionals, we have the opportunity and responsibility to be agents of meaningful change. The strategies and insights in this guide serve as a foundation for that work, but it is up to each office and institution to take action, measure progress, and remain steadfast in the pursuit of equity and inclusion. Together, we can build a stronger, more inclusive IRPE community that truly reflects and supports the diverse students we serve.



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About The RP Group

The Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges (The RP Group) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan team made up of a dedicated Board of Directors and staff, working together with a shared and resolute goal: to increase the success of California community colleges and beyond.

Our Mission

The RP Group is a leader that supports equitable outcomes for minoritized and marginalized students through race-conscious, equity-minded research, planning, and professional development. We uplift student voices and empower researchers and planners to improve institutional effectiveness by dismantling systemic barriers and injustices.

Our Vision

The RP Group envisions itself to be a change agent at local, state, and national levels that addresses longstanding injustices to ensure that students' demographics do not predict their postsecondary success.

Our Values

- Championing Equity and Antiracism
- Centering Student Voice
- Leading Transformational Change
- Working Collaboratively and Building Community
- Demonstrating Integrity and Quality

Visit www.rpgroup.org for more information.

