

4 ways to

Strengthen the Student-Researcher Partnership

INSIGHTS FROM STUDENT LEADERS

Meaningful and impactful research in community colleges hinges on strong collaboration between Institutional Research, Planning, and Effectiveness (IRPE) professionals and students. When asked, the Student Senate for California Community Colleges (SSCCC) shared the following tips for IRPE professionals to cultivate these vital partnerships:

1 Engage Directly with Student Government

- **Introduce yourself annually** at student government meetings to build a consistent presence.
- **Offer data coaching** to empower student leaders with the analytical skills and context that will help them be more informed.
- **Present relevant research** findings at their meetings to inform their work.
- **Invite student government reps** to research discussions at regional or institutional meetings.
- **Solicit their advice** on how to increase student participation in research efforts, especially among part-time and online learners.

3 Implement Student-Centered Practices

- **Respect students' time** by offering incentives for participation and/or consolidating surveys to avoid fatigue.
- **Communicate survey timelines** in advance to give students ample lead time.
- **Regularly include focus groups** to gather rich insights directly from student experiences.

2 Integrate Research into Classroom Experiences

- **Share relevant research findings** in classes with a research focus.
- **Advise students on class projects** where they conduct their own research.
- **Collaborate with students** on joint research projects within specific classes.
- **Consider making survey participation mandatory** in research or statistics classes to provide students with research experience and have them analyze the survey instrument and/or results.

4 Clarify Student Data Usage

- **Specify** and define in student-friendly language whether research activities are anonymous or confidential.
- **Disclose** any hidden identifiers in survey instruments (e.g., required logins).
- **Share upfront** how survey and focus group data will be used, by whom, and for what purpose.
- **Close the loop** by sharing research results with students, detailing how the findings will be used to improve student experiences and success.