



## **Rancho Santiago Community College District District Services Administrative Unit Review**

Research Department

**2013-2015**

### **I. Department Mission Statement: (Please provide a mission statement for your unit.)**

The Research Department's mission is to make data accessible to staff at the District and its colleges and to the community and to be responsive to a variety of research needs as they arise and be proactive in forecasting future educational needs in the local college community.

### **II. Functions and services: (Please provide the basic functions and services for your unit.)**

The Research Department conducts and coordinates institutional research for the District and its colleges. An annual research agenda is developed based primarily on needs of college and district faculty and staff, as well as state and federal mandates. Generally, the RSCCD Research Department:

- conducts and maintains the following research regularly: institutional effectiveness assessment, community and K-12 enrollment demographics, student learning outcomes (SLO), students outcomes analyses (including retention, persistence, graduation, and transfer statistics), matriculation evaluation, Basic Skills Initiative, assessment practices validation, student demographics, enrollment trends, and surveys of current and former students.
- coordinates some district and college reporting requirements, such as Student-Right-to-Know, and the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).
- reviews and manages requests for approval to conduct research using RSCCD students and/or staff as subjects. Such requests are submitted via a Research Protocol, whether employed by RSCCD (in cases where the proposed research falls outside the requestors area of expertise) or not.
- assists departments in their portfolio development by compiling data and conducting surveys.
- assists colleges and District Operations in accreditation self-studies.
- assists in planning activities, including master plan, technology plan, educational plans, and Board of Trustees planning meetings.

### **III. Customers and recipients of services: (Who are the customers/recipients of your services?)**

- RSCCD faculty, staff, administration, Board of Trustees, and students
- Community organizations, other community colleges, and independent researchers outside the system
- Government agencies (state and federal)

**IV. Staffing: (Please summarize the status of your staffing since the last planning cycle and concerns.)**

The Research Department continues to operate (since July 2009) with a staff reduced by two full-time Research Analyst positions. Our workforce is comprised of three full-time positions: one Director of Research, one Research Coordinator, and one Research Specialist (see attached organization chart).

The absence of two staff positions--along with the specialized skills the position of Research Analyst carries with it--impacts the quantity of work that can be produced. At present, the function of the Department is confined largely to State and Federally-mandated reporting, program review support for all college/district programs/departments, and the conduct, compilation, and publication of annual research reports and routine studies. Opportunities for innovative research design and study has been severely inhibited. We continue to manage the high volume of requests, but the quality of analysis to assist requestors is not to the standard that we would like to maintain.

We have also taken on the coordination of the planning function at the District level and assist in the many activities/documents required to plan, including the implementation of the new administrative planning portfolio and evaluation process.

**V. Budgets: (Please summarize the status of your department budget and concerns)**

Funding for salaries/benefits has not been restored to its pre-July 2009 levels when the Research Department lost two full-time positions to a District-wide reduction in force. The loss of those staff positions has very much impacted our ability to serve our customers fully and efficiently. Only the director position and 40% of the coordinator is funded through general funds and the remaining from categorical funds (which have diminished greatly with each passing year).

The Research Department has approximately \$1,000 for 2013-14 to fund supplies, mileage/parking expenses, conference, contracted repair services, and printing expenses. While this very limited funding has been adequate in the past, Research may experience difficulties in the coming months/years due to out-dated technology. Two desk-top printers are old and have limited capacity and the networked printer housed locally in the Research Department is not functioning fully and cannot be repaired. We are billed, per use, for other options available to us (Publications and Networked Xerox housed in Educational Services Division Office) and we have very limited funding available to us for those charges (\$195 allocated for the year).

In the past, we've been subsidized to a small extent by grant funding we can use as needed; however, those type of monies are also rare in this economy.

**VI. Department Assessment: (Please provide internal assessment of your department (by all unit staff) and external assessment (from data provided by the District Services Satisfaction Survey, as well as other sources that your department would like to use). What recommendations would you like to bring to the District's attention?)**

**Internal Assessment:**

Staffing has been reduced since Summer 2009 to a director, a specialist, and a coordinator. Conversely, expectations have grown significantly to support more grant-funded projects, new State- and Federal-mandated accountability, the need for greater emphasis on classroom-based research, and a greater responsibility to coordinate and support district wide planning efforts. To avoid working employees out of class, project completion time lines have suffered. We currently spend a great deal of time downloading data from IT-prepared reports and formatting it for end-users so that it is in publication-ready form. This is a clerical task that could be performed at the end-user's site. Given the workload in our office, we may no longer have the staff time to provide that clerical function. Finally, the addition of the Asst. Dean of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment and a research specialist position at SCC did not reduce the workload for our department. Their focus is on classroom assessment and college-wide planning issues. We continue to provide the research, data and accountability needs to the college. The work of the two offices are not duplicative and we complement each other.

**External Assessment:**

Findings in the District Services Satisfaction Survey (December 2013) were generally very favorable. The Research Department was rated highly on attitude, knowledge, and product. There was some consensus among respondents, however, that the 2009 reduction in force has resulted in slower turn-around times and caused project priorities to be reactive rather than proactive in nature. And, lastly, respondents from the Colleges advocate college-centered researchers, especially to support classroom-based research. We concur with their assessment due to the importance that learning in the classroom be assessed on a regular basis to ensure good strategies are being implemented to assist our students and faculty. Changes in the classroom impact the overall college outcomes data upon which the public primarily reviews and critiques our performance.

**Recommendations:**

It is crucial to assess the research function from a broad perspective to identify the vision of the District and its colleges with regards to the use of local research and, then, how best to deliver those support services to its customers (centrally as a District function, locally at the colleges, or a hybrid of both). It is almost certain that additional funding will be necessary as current manpower cannot meet the needs of the ever-expanding demand, as local, State and Federal mandates will continue to escalate to satisfy public consumption for accountability of their tax dollars.

**VII. Work Plan: (As a result of the assessment process, what initiatives does your department want to address in 2013-2015? Please identify which RSCCD goal(s) and strategic plan objective(s) it addresses. What resources do you need to achieve these goals, and how will you know you have achieved it?)**

<b>Service Initiative</b> Goals your department would like to address (include RSCCD goal(s) # and strategic plan objective(s) # being addressed)	<b>Unit Outcome</b> (The client) will (intended outcome) as a result of (function or action)	<b>Criteria for Success</b> How will you know you've achieved your goal?	<b>Resource Needs</b> What resources (personnel, technology, fiscal) do you need to achieve your goal?	<b>Results</b> After two years, how well did you achieve your goal(s)?
Heighten awareness of available research to staff at District and its colleges	Staff/faculty will have better knowledge of where to find research products (whether locally-produced or links to other agencies)	Fewer survey comments indicating respondent is "unaware of Research Department services and reports"  Fewer redundant requests (requests for data that is already available on the RSCCD website)	Devote staff time to inform users of the availability of data currently provided and reach out to those who may have additional research needs	
Formulate a wide-perspective plan that identifies the vision for research activities in the District and how best to deliver that product.	Faculty/staff will have better access to research support	Ability for RSCCD researchers to address a wider variety of research needs; research products beyond routine updates of flat data	Broad input from various college/district groups on "wish lists" for ideal delivery of research services  It is expected, long-term, that additional funding and office space and resources will be needed to breath life into the plan	

**Rancho Santiago Community College District**  
**EDUCATIONAL SERVICES**  
**RESEARCH**

