



ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT REVIEW

Office of Institutional Research
Fall 2006



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ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT SELF-STUDY SIGNATURE PAGE

ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT:

Institutional Research

YEAR OF REVIEW:

2006

SELF-STUDY COMMITTEE MEMBERS (PRINT NAMES AND SIGN NEXT TO NAMES):

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Noah Gallop, User Consultant, TMCC _____

EXTERNAL REVIEWER

Tracy Viselli, Programmer/Analyst, WNCC

SELF-STUDY COMMITTEE CHAIR(S) (PRINT NAMES):

Elena Bubnova

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS:

The unit's greatest strengths are:

- Highly competent, well trained, and hard working staff
- Comprehensive Institutional Research data warehouse
- Versatile data analysis and statistical tools
- Programming expertise on staff

The current Institutional Research office at TMCC is a strong blend of analytical, technical, programming, and graphic design expertise combined with a thorough knowledge and understanding of institutional research and higher education of Nevada, as well as commitment to TMCC and the success of its students.

It is recommended that the IR staff develops a set of guidelines to assist faculty and staff with the survey process and publish it on the Web.

It is recommended that an Office Manual be developed. This document will incorporate policies, guidelines, and descriptions of all processes related to the office organization, such as budgeting, purchasing, inventory, etc.

There are three recommendations with respect to staffing of the IR unit:

- 1) Create a scale/steps that allows for an upward movement for research analysts (research analyst I, II , III). This would allow for appropriate compensation of analysts depending on knowledge, experience, and expertise.
- 2) Formally establish a position of IR programmer/Data manager, perhaps, by reclassifying one of the existing research analyst positions. This would bring the IR office in accordance with a growing trend in the institutional research field of having high tech experts on staff, thus raising the level of sophistication of data extraction and processes. It will also assist the IR office with conversion to a new student information system.
- 3) Add a full-time professional position to existing staff to help cope with demand for data and information as well broaden scope of research activities performed by the unit. *For more detailed rationale for adding an extra professional full-time position, please see page 33 of this document.*

TO: Whom it may Concern

Re: TMCC IR Administrative Review

It has been my pleasure to serve on IR's self study committee. I feel that I bring a unique perspective to the examination process having both a Customer and a Professional Peer, or perhaps more accurately a "Partners in Data" relationship with the office and its staff.

In my years working with IR in any capacity my observations and experiences have been very consistent and in keeping with the work put forth in the excellent self study document. As I reviewed (or rather scrutinized) the details, I was taken by how accurately the report communicated both how I felt about IR and what I felt the unit needed to succeed further. Even from an outside perspective, the office clearly operates at full capacity. This is not to say that the folks in IR are not at home and amazing in the red zone, it's just exciting to consider the potential and opportunities additional staff could present both IR and the College.

Of particular note is IR's healthy integration into the college community. IR demonstrates an openness and commitment to quality in their endeavors that is highly valued by people in technology circles such as my colleagues and me. The current management and staff members have achieved nothing short of excellence.

Sincerely,



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December 8, 2006

Elena Bubnova, Director of Institutional Research
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Dear Program Review Committee:

It was a pleasure to review Institutional Research's comprehensive self-study, and, as should happen in the case of the external review component of any program review, I learned a great deal about how Institutional Research performs its main functions and how it responds to the continually evolving demands of both the discipline and your institution—knowledge that will inform my own work.

After reviewing the self-study and the accompanying appendices, it is clear that Institutional Research plays an integral role in ensuring TMCC fulfills its **internal** mission and goals, supports those of the institution, and performs all of its tasks with the highest professional standards. It's also clear from the customer responses included in the review and supporting documentation that TMCC's Institutional Research office has "slain the beast" (so to speak) that often plagues Institutional Research—it has been able to help TMCC move from a culture of anecdote to a culture of evidence and operate among its various stakeholders without suspicion.

Below is a summary of opportunities I gleaned from reviewing the self-study.

Internal Performance Indicators: I was glad to read in the self-study that Institutional Research recognized the need for creating more effective measures of their obviously successful operation. However, I might add this to the list of "One Year Goals" in the *Summary of Report and Strategic Directions* section of the review to ensure they are completed.

Website Enhancements: TMCC's Institutional Research office has added quite a bit of information to its website in the last year. In particular, the Accreditation & Self-study Data Inventory is a very proactive way to catalog accountability information for internal and external audiences. However, I agree that IR should add survey related policies and procedures to the website. I was also unable to find an outlined procedure for faculty and staff who want to make ad-hoc data requests. As IR continues to balance its success as far as generating more interest in ad-hoc and assessment related data requests and still completing its regular work, managing ad-hoc requests through a documented procedure published online will become more important.

Staff Cross-training: Efforts at cross-training staff should continue. We all have a tendency to specialize as the demands on our offices both vary and increase, however, cross-training ensures that data requests can always be completed, no matter who is available, and improves staff morale by giving everyone a chance to try something new and different from time to time.

Visit us on the World Wide Web at www.wncc.edu/Institutional

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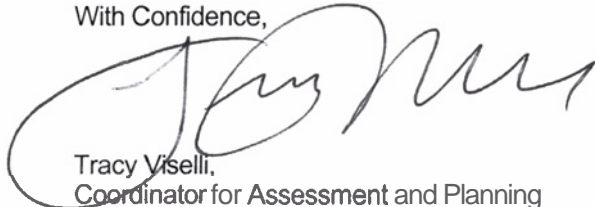
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Staffing Resources: I think all Institutional Research offices struggle with satisfying daily requests for data and analysis, and the real need for conducting more complex research projects. These kinds of projects take much more time and require the marshalling of resources not usually required for completing the **day-to-day** requests; however, they can be very valuable for the institution in the long run. It is clear that as the drive for accountability (program review, assessment, etc.) continues to gain momentum almost exponentially, the workload of Institutional Research will increase accordingly. While **TMCC's** Institutional Research office has managed to handle the struggle of increasing its output while maintaining its high professional standards, the benefits of more meaningful research are being sacrificed at the altar of satisfying requirements dictated by accountability efforts. Institutional Research staff would be able to do much more with more by adding another staff member to help respond to these requirements. This additional staff member would allow the office to delve into more serious academic and institutional assessment and become the kind of proactive operation the institution clearly needs and desires it to be.

The ideas of adding a promotional track to the research analyst position and creating a technical position are both good ways of dealing with the difficulty of recruiting analysts with the right combination of skills and interests. Institutional Research is becoming an increasingly technical field that requires employees with an extremely varied skill set—from programming to database management, and even web development. Add to that the uncertainty over the resources the NSHE information system upgrade and a possible expansion of **IPEDS** reporting may require from Institutional Research staff, and the need for another staff member is obvious.

With Confidence,



Tracy Viselli,
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ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT REVIEW

Office of Institutional Research

I

MISSION AND FUNCTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

1. What is the mission of the unit?

- *Not all units will have yet developed mission statements. Indicate if your unit does not yet have a developed mission statement.*
- *Please state the process by which your mission statement will be developed OR*
- *Develop one as part of this process and indicate how it was developed.*

The mission of the Office of Institutional Research is as follows:

“The Office of Institutional Research is committed to providing data and analyses to support planning, policy development, and decision-making aimed at improving the educational experience of students at TMCC.”

In addition, the office created a list of values that we adhere to in our every day work.

Our Values

- *Quality* – providing accurate and timely information and analysis
- *Confidentiality* – ensuring appropriate treatment of student and staff information
- *Collegiality* – building effective collaborative working relations
- *Excellence* – maintaining efficient office operations by creating a stimulating work environment for professional, highly motivated, and well-trained staff

During the summer of 2005, the office staff worked on a draft of a mission statement, values, and goals. Over the course of the following year, the draft was refined and in the summer of 2006, during the office retreat, the mission statement, values, and goals were adopted in their

final version. All members of the office participated in every stage of the process. There was no formal mission statement in the office prior to 2005.

2. Explain how the unit's mission is consistent with the present mission of the college.

- ***If you do not have a mission statement, indicate how the functions that your unit provides support the mission of the college.***

The current mission of TMCC is as follows:

Truckee Meadows Community College provides access for lifelong learning opportunities to improve the quality of life for our diverse community.

TMCC creates a supportive, intellectually and culturally dynamic environment by offering the following:

- ***General education programs***
- ***Transfer degree programs***
- ***Developmental education programs***
- ***Occupational/technical degrees and programs***
- ***Customized job training***
- ***Continuing education and recreational programs***
- ***Student and academic support services***

The college anticipates and responds to educational needs of individuals to achieve their goals, aspirations, and dreams.

The mission of the Institutional Research office is directly related to the mission of TMCC in that the office performs a wide range of functions and analyses that enable the college to offer a multitude of educational opportunities to a diverse community. The scope, type, and focus of various educational programs and services offered by the college is often fueled and determined by the data and research that the IR office provides.

96% of respondents to the IR Customer Survey agree that “the purpose of this unit/office is consistent with the mission of the College.”

It is part of the IR mission to provide data and analyses to support planning. This is consistent with the college's mission of anticipating and responding to the educational needs of individuals. Institutional Research conducts needs assessments, surveys, environmental scanning, and other analyses that

provide the decision makers at TMCC with the necessary data and information when implementing new programs or expanding existing ones.

The mission statement of the Institutional Research office indicates that all research activities performed by the unit are “aimed at improving the educational experience of students at TMCC.” This is consistent with the TMCC mission which gives paramount importance to educational needs, goals, aspirations, and dreams of the students.

Relevance of the IR mission to the mission of the college is supported by 96% of staff and faculty responding to the IR Customer Satisfaction Survey. (*Appendix 1, IR Customer Satisfaction Survey, Question 2*)

3. How is the mission communicated to unit staff and constituents?

- *Include in this discussion how the mission statement was developed (if previously not done)*

The IR mission statement is published on the office's web page (<http://www.tmcc.edu/ir/>) and in the annual edition of the *FactBook* (*Appendix 2*). A copy of the mission statement, values, and goals is also posted in the individual offices of each staff member. However, the best communication of the mission is through the daily service that the IR office provides to the campus community and the commitment of every staff member to conduct research in an accurate, efficient, and sophisticated fashion. In addition, the mission is communicated through the annual electronic newsletter published by IR.

The development process of the mission statement is described earlier in this document. (*See response to question 1 of this section.*)

4. What are the functional responsibilities of the unit, and to whom does the unit report?

The Institutional Research office reports to the President of TMCC and is responsible for performing the following four major functions:

- 1) **Institutional Research:** Perform traditional institutional research and data analysis of institutional characteristics, demographics of faculty, staff, students, and community. Produce annual data publications, such as the TMCC *FactBook*, *Performance Indicators*, *Fact Sheets*.
- 2) **Accountability Reporting:** Coordinate and complete appropriate reports for federal, state, and local agencies, in order to comply with mandated reporting requirements.
- 3) **Survey Research:** Conduct major college-wide surveys and on-demand surveys to gather information that is not contained within the institutional or external databases.
- 4) **Special Projects:** Assist the President of the institution with projects requiring the use of institutional research data and information.

Each function of the office including selected annual tasks associated with the function, explanation of services, and examples of products are described in detail in section III, question 1 of this document (*Refer to page 23.*)

II

GOALS AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

1. What are the unit's goals?

There are three levels of goals that guide the Institutional Research office. The goals at all levels are interconnected and build on one another:

- **Strategic office goals**
- **Annual office goals**
- **Individual staff goals**

The overall work of the Institutional Research office is governed by a set of major or **strategic office goals** that shape the direction of the unit. The **strategic office goals** are:

- To provide the highest quality data and analytical services.
- To anticipate the information needs of the institution.
- To engage in research that is innovative, meaningful and relevant to the mission of the college.

Each year the office sets **annual office goals** that are task and activity-oriented and typically, result in a report, initiative, or other tangible product or accomplishment. Listed below are the **annual office goals** adopted for the 2006-07 academic year:

- Continue providing accurate and efficient data support to decision-makers and all members of the campus community alike.
- Ensure accurate and timely completion of all external reports.
- Conduct unit's self-study.
- Develop a consistent and accurate data exchange mechanism with the Human Resources office.

In addition, each staff member develops his or her own annual goals that may address more specific components that support and complement annual goals for the office or serve as

important steps in achieving overall goals. Each staff member will also have goals that are relevant to their personal professional development. Below are samples of **individual staff goals**:

- To assist in completing a self-study of the Institutional Research office. This will include an initial phase of organizing master repositories of IR electronic and paper files and completing an operating procedure manual for the office.
- To take the lead on the design and implementation of at least one major IR-directed ad-hoc project (not requested by external constituencies).
- To present (or co-present) best practices from our office (e.g. Data warehousing, streamlining processes with SPSS, etc.) at either a national or regional conference.
- Conduct at least one live presentation to TMCC Faculty and Staff on a topic relevant to the college and the IR Office.
- Redesign the Graduate Follow-up Survey and work to increase the response rate.
- Participate in one committee that advances the level of service provided by the college.

2. Explain how the units' goals are consistent with the present strategic goals of the college.

The goals, functions, and daily activities of the Institutional Research office strongly support the college's strategic initiatives.

Please note, only selected, mostly reoccurring projects are highlighted as evidence used to illustrate the relevance of IR activities to the strategic initiatives of the college.

Academic Excellence

To foster an institutional culture that values, demands, and supports excellence in teaching and learning.

The first goal of the IR office is to provide the highest quality data and analytical services. Just as faculty may strive for excellence in teaching, our office strives for excellence in every report, research, and analytical document that we produce. Excellence in the work of IR is defined not only in terms of data quality and timely delivery, but research also includes finding meaningful information and identifying relevant data that enable faculty, staff, and students to improve the teaching and learning processes. The majority of research conducted by office staff is student success style research. This type of research may involve analyzing student demographics and/or academic characteristics as they correlate to student success in individual courses and the college overall.

For example, the IR office annually tracks the success and attributes of students participating in Quest, a program designed to enhance college success of new, degree-seeking students. This information helps staff and faculty improve the program. This type of research also helps students to have a better quality learning experience by informing them about activities and behaviors that can make them successful at TMCC. Similar research is conducted for students receiving a Millennium Scholarship. (*Appendix 3, Quest Analysis; Appendix 4, Millennium report*)

One of the IR office goals is to anticipate the information needs of the institution. Institutional Research prepares and publishes an annual document, *Performance Indicators*, that presents a set of indicators which assess institutional effectiveness in a variety of areas, such as Access and Equity, Employment, Preparation and Placement, Instructional Effectiveness, Resources Effectiveness, Program Review, Vocational Training, etc. The IR office collects a wide range of data elements that provide internal and external comparison for assessing TMCC's effectiveness in these areas. The data published in this document may also indicate that there is an area where the college needs a lot of improvement or further research and evaluation might be needed. (*Appendix 5*)

"IR is, I believe, finally integrated into the culture of the college. The majority of the faculty see IR as an asset, not a threat—which is huge. The support the office provides is invaluable."

-- Customer Satisfaction Survey

The office is continuously engaged in researching the data that allows faculty and staff to zero in on the most prominent characteristics that make students successful at TMCC. (*Appendix 6*)

There are many other examples of research and reporting, conducted by the Institutional Research office, that directly contribute to assisting the campus community in reaching the goal of academic excellence. For example, IR is responsible for completing eight federally mandated reports that are submitted to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Systems (IPEDS) each year: Institutional Characteristics, Fall Staff, Salaries, Employee Assignments, Fall Enrollment, Completions, Financial Aid, and Graduation Rate Survey. (*Appendix 7*) All of this research informs academic leaders as well as faculty and staff on various indicators of the state of learning and teaching experience taking place at TMCC.

Diversity

To foster an academic community that welcomes the opportunity to experience, examine and learn from diverse physical, cultural and ideological backgrounds while nurturing mutual respect.

The Institutional Research office regularly provides data and research to a variety of programs and individuals who are involved with writing grants aimed at recruiting and/or supporting diverse student populations at TMCC. The office is also frequently called upon by those entities to review the completed grant proposals and verify the data utilized in those proposals.

Institutional research compiled various statistics in support of a grant to increase disadvantaged and ethnic minority enrollment in the college's nursing program (*Appendix 8*).

The office provides continuous support to campus grant-funded programs that work with veterans, low income, and first generation students. (*Appendix 9, Veterans Upward Bound Program; Appendix 10, EOC grant data*)

The office works very closely with other programs on campus serving minority student populations. The IR office conducts annual research and data analysis for the academic ESL program on campus. We assist the ESL faculty to not only track the ESL students (*Appendix 11*), but also to conduct major assessment studies aimed at identifying the main skills and competencies needed for various ESL courses in order for students to successfully complete those courses (*Appendix 12*).

Working closely with faculty in English and math on further understanding students' performance in developmental courses is another example of IR's contribution to the college's

efforts to foster an academic community that welcomes the opportunity to experience, examine, and learn from diverse populations. (*Appendix 13*)

The IR office provides data support to the TMCC Disability Resource Center assembling statistics on the student population served by that office. *See Appendix 14 for example of reports completed for Disability Resource Center.*

The office is also responsible for compiling many external reports that aid with understanding the size and characteristics of many diverse groups of students served by TMCC. Availability of such data and information helps the college assess the effectiveness of programs designed to support special student populations. An example of such research would be the Perkins Performance Indicators report submitted to the Department of Education annually. As part of this activity, IR analyzes students who are enrolled in vocational programs at TMCC and who represent underserved student populations. This research is focused on identifying these students and tracking their success in vocational and general education areas and their overall persistence to graduation at TMCC. This type of research is vital to TMCC's ability to receive Perkins funding in support of vocational education, which is an important part of the college's mission. *See Appendix 15 for the example of Perkins Performance Indicators Report.*

Facilities

To provide effective and efficient development and use of facilities that are aesthetically pleasing, safe, environmentally friendly and enhances the learning experience.

The goals of the Institutional Research office to provide the highest quality data and analytical services and to anticipate the college's information needs contribute to TMCC's efforts to provide effective and efficient use of facilities. One of the main venues for IR's contribution on this issue is the complex research regarding the effectiveness of instructional space utilization at TMCC. The IR staff works closely with the Facilities department on campus to analyze the amount of instruction taking place at the college in relation to the physical space available.

IR not only compiles this type of data, but it also takes a proactive role at disseminating results. We also work with appropriate constituencies on campus to identify solutions for existing space challenges. It is the philosophy of our office to not only take great care in treating the data accurately, but to also call the attention of the users to any major trends which emerge from the data. IR repeatedly called such trends to the attention of various individuals involved with scheduling to ensure more effective utilization of instructional space. This resulted in further analysis of rooms that appeared to be underutilized. (*Appendix 16*)

In addition, our unit provides assistance with generating data that allows one to assess the effectiveness of current space utilization and possible recommended changes. For example, in February 2006, IR assisted the Student Services division with assessing student flow and intra-office functionality for the purposes of designing a "One-Stop" student services center. (*Appendix 17*)

Our office also responds to ad-hoc data requests regarding issues such as parking or instructional activity and student demographics by site. For instance, the research conducted by the IR office helped inform the Facilities and TMCC Police departments about the availability and utilization rates of parking on campus in general, as well as by specific day of the week and time of day. (*Appendix 18*)

The office also works with faculty and staff to assist them with analyzing information with respect to student perception of TMCC's facilities. The most recent example of such research is a survey that IR conducted in conjunction with the Public Information Office. During Fall 2005 a concern rose over the clarity of signage at the newly opened Redfield center and the display of location information in the class schedule. Our office worked with the PIO office and the faculty teaching at Redfield to devise and administer surveys to students enrolling in classes at Redfield. (*Appendix 19*) As a result of this and other activities, PIO modified the format of the class location information in the schedule and new signs were placed at the Redfield campus to improve identification of TMCC facilities.

The Institutional Research office also provides support to the President of TMCC in generating the Capital Improvement Project (CIP) request during every legislative session. At the request of the President, the office assembles basic space utilization statistics, projected enrollments in new proposed facilities and other information.

Finance and Institutional Effectiveness

To achieve college goals through responsible human and fiscal resource development and management.

This particular college initiative is one that all institutional research goals are closely aligned with. Our staff provides almost daily information and data support to various decision makers who are responsible for human and fiscal management of the college. The following discussion will highlight several examples of contributions the IR office has made to promote the finance and institutional effectiveness initiatives on campus.

Institutional research staff members were actively involved in designing a proposal to create the Administrative Unit Review, a process similar to the Academic Program Review, which IR has been actively involved in for many years. This process is designed to allow administrative units an opportunity to go through a careful self-study for the purposes of improvement. Now that the process is implemented, the IR office supports this important college activity by assisting administrative units with conducting employee and customer satisfaction surveys. IR also facilitates all-campus feedback and compiles analysis of survey data for the units. (Please note, the survey data generated for the IR office's Administrative Unit Review was compiled by a third party, a social sciences faculty member, and not by its own staff members).

To promote responsible fiscal management practices at the institution, IR staff regularly provide data to the President's Cabinet regarding total credit hours taught by the part-time faculty. This is highly complex data analysis that is aimed at providing the decision makers with the data necessary to plan the part-time budget allocation. This analysis is complex because TMCC currently lacks a single source of information that contains an accurate record of faculty workload, course assignments, and historic part-time expenses by academic area. Thus, this type of analysis results in a highly labor intensive project for the IR office that requires detailed research and reconciliation of many data sources. (*Appendix 20*)

The IR office is responsible for conducting faculty workload research. Tracking and analyzing this information is critical to many academic and administrative processes. It allows the institution to monitor the extent to which it relies on adjunct

"I have nothing but respect for this unit and the individuals who work within it. They have changed the culture on this campus from one of anecdotal information and personal agenda driven decision making to one that insists upon evidence and data."

-Customer Satisfaction Survey

faculty for instruction, to track full-time faculty workload, and to monitor part-time budget expenses. All of these activities, when done properly, are critical to the human and fiscal health of the institution. The Board of Regents and the legislature also require the report of this information. In addition, collecting faculty workload information enables the campus community to celebrate the diversity and richness of faculty involvement in the community and their many scholastic contributions. IR provided a lot of information for a presentation on workload given to the faculty senate that highlights the fact that the unit does not limit its work to tracking and compiling the data. (*Appendix 21*) Institutional Research continuously strives to disseminate and deliver information to the many campus constituencies, making the work of institutional effectiveness an all-campus process.

The Institutional Research office is responsible for annual calculations of department chairs' release time. The office staff compiles and analyzes data on the number of full-time and part-time faculty and staff, total teaching credit hour assignment, and budgetary expenses for each department in order to produce calculations of individual department chairs' release time in accordance with the terms defined by NFA contract. The IR office forwards its calculations to the office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Projecting enrollment for the college is a highly important task for which the IR office is responsible as it impacts all areas of the college. The office is responsible for maintaining 10-year enrollment projections for TMCC. (*Appendix 22*) This analysis is critical to the college's ability to run various operations effectively. When conducting long-term enrollment projections, IR takes into consideration tangible factors such as historic enrollment growth, as well as non-tangible factors such as changes in university admissions standards and elimination of state funding for remedial instruction. The non-tangible factors may or may not have an impact on TMCC's enrollment levels.

Although IR produces 10-year enrollment projections for the college, the level of TMCC funding is not determined by these numbers. Our funding is based on a "three year weighted averages" methodology, which can potentially drive FTE targets to unreasonably high levels. To help better plan for the appropriate fiscal response in the event budgeted FTE levels are not met, IR regularly provides the campus academic and administrative leaders with internal enrollment projections. The long-term enrollment projections have typically been much more accurate and have allowed for more effective management of resources. In addition, IR provides annual projections and adjustments (based on semesterly actual enrollments) that allow estimation of possible shortfall and enable the institutional leaders to plan appropriately in advance.

Another major example of IR's contribution to promoting responsible human and fiscal resource development and management at TMCC would be the work done by the unit to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the class schedule. For the last few years, the IR office has taken a very active position in identifying and promoting the best practices of effective scheduling. An effective schedule is one that carefully balances the academic mission of the college with student interests and resources available. To that end, IR has been analyzing and compiling data on high demand courses, high FTE-generating courses, course cancellation rates, number of sections offered versus number of sections full, unsuccessful course and section enrollment attempts, student-to-faculty ratios by course, and many other data elements. This information has been routinely distributed to academic deans and recently more department chairs have been requesting the reports. Our office is not in a position to enforce the use of these data in the scheduling decision making process, but it is within the unit's ability to promote this information. (*Appendix 23*)

Strategic Partnerships

To expand current and to forge new, mutually beneficial partnerships, ensuring the vitality and relevance of our curriculum and programs, distinguishing TMCC as an integral and influential member of the community.

TMCC is a member of the P-16 Education Collaborative that brings together higher education institutions, school districts, businesses, and community groups to work collaboratively on improving the educational experience of students throughout the system. The Education Collaborative has a research arm called Data Profile. For the last 8 years, the TMCC IR office has been an important player in this group, formulating the research questions, conducting analyses, and working collaboratively with the Washoe County School District. The first annual report published by this group was designed by the TMCC IR office. The unit has also been continuously contributing data and research that tracks WCSD high school graduates, their subsequent success in college and identifies attributes that make students successful. (*Appendix 24*)

“Institutional Research has been a great and tireless resource to us as we’ve gone through our own accreditation. They are professional, efficient, helpful and very honest in their questions and advice and then in the data that they have provided.
-TMCC High School”

-All Campus Feedback

The IR office provides regular support to the President of the college, assisting with gathering information for presentations, meetings, and other initiatives which promote TMCC, inform the community, or which aid forming new partnerships. The office is called upon to provide information or gather additional facts for presentations given to community members, prospective donors, the Foundation Board, and other groups. (*Appendix 25*)

Technology

To develop a technology infrastructure to provide faculty, staff and students with the best practices of the industry.

The goals of the IR unit and many of its daily tasks and responsibilities are closely tied to this college initiative. Creation and maintenance of the IR data warehouse, automating data collection for reports such as Faculty Workload, and on-line administration of many surveys are but a few examples of how our office incorporates technology to streamline operations and to provide a sophisticated level of service to our constituencies.

From 2001 to 2004, Institutional Research was responsible for administration of the ACCUPLACER placement test. The office took the initiative to revive the testing and placement practices at TMCC. We worked very closely with the department chairs and faculty from English and math to review and validate the existing cut scores and adjust them wherever it was appropriate. In 2001, all prerequisites listed in the catalog and the schedule were reviewed and updated. The office staff worked with faculty and deans from various disciplines to examine prerequisites and to ensure that the information about them was communicated consistently and clearly.

IR championed the initiative to redefine the way ACCUPLACER tests were administered. We felt it was important to take advantage of the computer adaptive mode of the instrument, and in conjunction with faculty, we devised the appropriate system. For example, in the past, the entire sequence of math tests was given to students regardless of their performance on beginning sections they completed. The revised system allows students who perform well on the algebra

portion of the test to go directly into the college level math portion of the test, bypassing the arithmetic questions. This provides for more precise assessment and placement and saves institutional costs as well as students' time.

At the request of the English faculty, IR introduced a new testing format that allowed for ESL and writing assessment on-line. After conducting a pilot project, the new testing components were added and are now being utilized college-wide. *See Appendix 12 for a copy of one of the ESL pilot projects conducted by IR.*

The IR office is committed to employing technology in every aspect of our operations. In 2004, we purchased a new optical scanner and software that allowed the office to streamline the survey creation process, as well as to improve the data compilation capabilities of the office. This new technology has greatly improved our ability to provide survey results in a shorter period of time.

Welcoming and Supportive Environment

To enhance and foster a welcoming intellectual, cultural and physical environment that is open, supportive and sensitive.

The Institutional Research office believes that making accurate and concise information available to all campus constituencies is the strongest contribution our office makes to ensure that all members of the campus community feel like a part of the institution. Annual publication of the *FactBook*, semesterly *Fact Sheets*, and responding to all ad hoc requests immediately are examples of IR's commitment to ensuring that TMCC is a welcoming and supportive organization.

Until last year, Institutional Research participated in orientations for new faculty and staff, informing them about services and resources available through our office. Last fall, our staff helped the Office of Professional Development to revamp the "New Employees" presentation used in the new format of the new employee orientation.

Annual surveys of TMCC graduates and 6-month Graduate Follow-up Surveys conducted by IR are other examples of conducting research that generates information which can ultimately help improve the campus environment. *See Appendix 26 for most recent copies of Graduate and Graduate Follow-up surveys.*

Every three years, IR assists in the administration of the Campus Climate Surveys. The IR office participated in the development and design of the instrument, as well as dissemination of the results. However, the actual administration and tabulation of results was conducted by a third party. The most recent campus climate survey (<http://www.tmcc.edu/ir/Survey/>) was conducted in 2004. In the spring 2007, a third all-campus climate survey will be conducted. A major survey such as this provides a unique opportunity for all campus constituencies to offer their feedback, concerns, and suggestions on a variety of different issues: communication, attitudes and practices, governance and leadership, employment conditions, and expectations.

During spring 2005, IR conducted the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) and the Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (CCFSSE) (<http://www.tmcc.edu/ir/ccsse/>). One of the primary purposes of these surveys was to determine the extent of engagement by students, and faculty's perceptions of student engagement, which has a strong correlation to overall student success. These surveys allow

institutions to incorporate the data and comments from survey respondents into their initiatives aimed at strengthening the environment of student support, success, and academic achievement.

There appears to be a strong belief that IR helps the college achieve its overall goals. Ninety three percent of faculty and staff responding to the IR Customer Satisfaction Survey agreed with this statement. (*Appendix 1, IR Customer Satisfaction Survey, Question 14*)

3. What is the unit's method of developing goals and communicating them to unit staff and constituents?

As described at the beginning of the response to question 1 in this section, there are three levels of goals in Institutional Research: **strategic office goals, annual office goals, and individual staff goals.** (*For examples of these goal statements see page 5 of this document.*) A slightly different method of development is used for each goal level.

The most important **strategic office goals** were developed during an all-staff retreat in summer of 2005 and were then finalized during an all-staff retreat in the summer of 2006. Initially, the staff identified areas and issues that were deemed critical to the work of our office and then statements were crafted around those ideas. This type of goal is macro in nature and guides the work of the unit long-term.

Annual office goals are set each year. Typically, these goals result from individual goals set by staff members and represent a more global objective. The annual goals are typically drafted by the director of Institutional Research and are presented for discussion at an IR staff meeting. The President may recommend that a certain goal be placed on the IR agenda for the year. When this occurs it is usually driven by issues or questions facing the President's Cabinet, faculty senate, or other college governance structures.

As part of the staff self-evaluation processes, each member of the staff identifies **individual staff goals** that they want to accomplish in the upcoming year. All staff members are encouraged to ensure the relevance of their individual goals to the overall strategic goals of the unit and the College. However, the staff members are encouraged to pursue individual professional interests in setting their goals as well. A staff member may set an individual goal of authoring a presentation on one of the projects they have completed or a goal of researching a higher education topic of interest. Individual goals are typically smaller in scope, but are important building blocks that shape the annual goals of the entire office. For instance, an individual member may set out to develop a process for matching student records against the National Clearinghouse, which will drive a more global objective for the office of creating a transfer research data warehouse.

All goals are discussed during all-staff retreats, regular staff meetings, and individual meetings with the director of IR. The strategic goals are published on the IR web page. Individual and annual office goals are recorded in self-evaluation documents maintained by the staff members. (*For examples of these goal statements see page 5 of this document.*)

Based on the IR Employee Satisfaction Survey, 67% of the staff feel strongly that they have an opportunity to participate in the goal setting process of the unit and 33% responded 'neutral' to this question. (*Appendix 27, IR Employee Satisfaction Survey, Question 5.* When the results of the

survey were discussed during a subsequent staff meeting, an employee indicated that the fact that the President has the ability to suggest modifications to IR goals led to their neutral perception of the opportunity to participate in the unit's goal setting process.

4. To what extent have the present goals been achieved?

The **strategic goals** of guide the overall work of IR office long-term. It is anticipated that these goals will be reviewed every five years in conjunction with the Administrative Unit Review to ensure relevancy and currency. **Annual office goals** and **individual staff goals** are reviewed every year during the annual evaluation period. For instance, below are the **annual office goals** for FY06:

- 1) Continue providing accurate and efficient data support to decision-makers and all members of the campus community alike.
- 2) Ensure accurate and timely completion of all external reports.
- 3) Develop office mission statement.

Accomplishment of these goals:

- **Providing Accurate and Efficient Data Support:** IR staff works hard to provide the most accurate and complete information to the decision makers at TMCC. Every attempt is made to deliver the data and information in a very timely fashion. Some examples of such support include, but are not limited to assembling basic figures on enrollment and institutional characteristics for presentations given by the President to external constituencies and compiling baseline data on scheduling, space utilization, and faculty workload. The Institutional Research office is in regular contact with the vice presidents providing data on issues that range in scope from simple enrollment requests to more complex questions that require substantial research.

This past year, for the first time, the number of data/information requests made by faculty exceeded the number of requests from staff. Over 30, primarily full-time faculty, have requested a variety of data and information from the IR office. Those requests address enrollment figures, information related to program review, student success, national trend data, and much more. Also, faculty members come to our office just to discuss some ideas and projects they are working on, asking for suggestions.

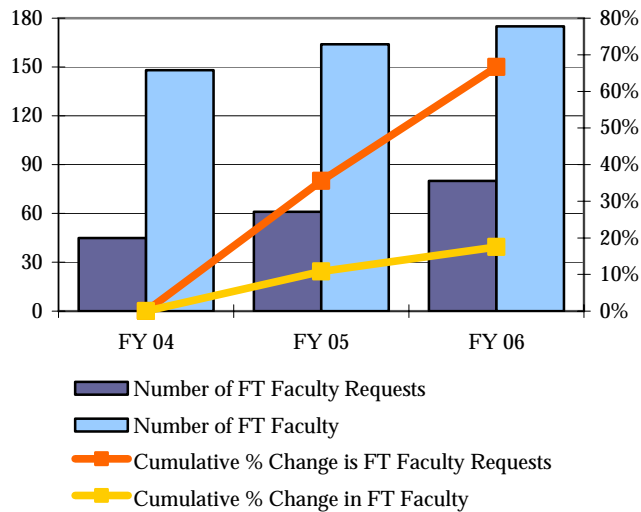
“Institutional research at TMCC is becoming part of its culture. The processes and results of institutional research are widely disseminated at the institution, through email, electronic newsletters, and the Institutional Research Office website.

-Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

Today, there is a much more profound utilization of IR services on campus than there has been in the past. Perhaps, one of the strongest indicators that IR is successful in its efforts to provide top notch data support to the campus community can be found in the results of the IR Customer Satisfaction Survey. One hundred percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that IR provides strategic support to their departments. (*Appendix 1, IR Customer Satisfaction Survey, Question 9*).

The table below shows that the growth in the number of requests for data from full-time faculty have far outpaced the growth in faculty headcount. This is another strong indicator of the degree to which TMCC employees have come to rely on the information disseminated by the IR office.

Number of Faculty Requests FY 04 - 06



In addition, the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities in its comprehensive evaluation report for TMCC’s reaccreditation noted: “Institutional research at TMCC is becoming part of its culture. The processes and results of institutional research are widely disseminated at the institution, through email, electronic newsletters, and the Institutional Research Office website. The director regularly meets with committees and task forces throughout the college and presents data and analyses to the cabinet, Extended Cabinet, dean’s meetings, the Planning Council, and the Assessment Committee.” (p. 33, A Comprehensive Evaluation Report 10-12 October 2005). For a complete copy of the evaluation report, visit:

<http://www.tmcc.edu/selfstudy/pdf/standards/FinalSelfStudyComplete090205.pdf>.

- **Accurate and Timely Completion of External Reports:** All external reports are completed and submitted on time. The IR office is frequently complemented by entities such as the NSHE System Office and the P-16 Data Profile group for being the first institution to provide the required data.
- **Office Mission Statement:** The draft of the IR office mission statement was developed in 2005 and during the summer 2006, while the office was gearing up for its first self-study, the mission statement was finalized and published on the IR web page.

5. What performance indicators are utilized by the unit to measure its performance?

- *Performance indicators are data that assists the unit in knowing that the unit is making accomplishments.*
- *In this section please note what are the unit's notable accomplishments?*
- *In this section please note how is achievement measured?*

The following are the main indicators that Institutional Research reviews to assess its performance:

- Level of data accuracy
- Frequency of meeting deadlines
- External reporting compliance
- Level of faculty/staff satisfaction
- Number of innovative research projects
- Data error occurrence

Each one of these indicators is being reviewed in a variety of formal and informal ways as described below.

Level of Data Accuracy

Although IR is a secondary user of the data, mostly utilizing existing data sources to conduct research, it takes a number of different steps to ensure the accuracy of data for every project and report. For example, when conducting research involving faculty data, such as faculty workload or full-time to part-time faculty ratio, IR always takes the initiative to work with Human Resources and Admissions and Records staff to address discrepancies or inaccuracies. IR never takes a passive approach to data reporting simply what the databases contain. Instead we check the data against multiple sources and spend a lot of time working with other entities on campus to clean it up. Key campus data holders such as Human Resources, Admissions and Records, and Applications Development routinely ask for data verification by IR when working with their data. This indicates that the data analysis performed by IR has a high level of accuracy. In addition, every project and report is thoroughly discussed in staff meetings with respect to the steps needed to ensure the highest data accuracy possible. When asked about the accuracy of information provided by IR on the Customer Satisfaction Survey, 96% responded that they are satisfied or very satisfied. (*Appendix 1, IR Customer Satisfaction Survey, Question 23*)

Frequency of Meeting Deadlines

The IR office strives to meet all deadlines for reports and data requests. The deadlines are almost always met, except in cases where IR depends on external entities to contribute data utilized in the analysis. If the deadline cannot be met, the IR staff always discusses this in advance with the individual who requested the information. Keeping individuals apprised of the progress when handling their request is something that IR staff does regularly. As evidenced by the results of the IR Customer Satisfaction Survey conducted as part of the self-study process, 96% of IR clients indicated that their requests for information were responded to in a timely manner. (*Appendix 1, IR Customer Satisfaction Survey, Question 22*) During regular meetings, the IR director discusses with staff the current state of all projects with respect to meeting deadlines.

External Reporting Compliance

It is critical that IR stays in absolute compliance with all external reporting requirements that fall under the responsibility of the office. The requirements and deadlines of all external reports are carefully reviewed each time a request comes in. In addition, to help stay on top of various external reports that IR prepares on behalf of TMCC, the IR Project Calendar was created. (*Appendix 28*) This document contains all standing IR reports that need to be completed throughout the year.

In addition to listing the report deadline, other activities are placed on the calendar that will guarantee full compliance with external reporting requirements. For example, improper coding of recent high school graduates during admission application processing may result in a smaller capture rate reported for TMCC. So we built into the process an additional step requiring a preliminary run of the data for the purposes of identifying any records that appear to fit the profile of a recent high school graduate but which do not have proper coding in the student information system. We then work with Admissions and Records to reconcile the data and after that, the master data file is run that is used in report production. This process provides for a more accurate report while still honoring set deadlines.

Level of Faculty/Staff Satisfaction

There is no formal mechanism that is used to collect feedback regularly from faculty and staff utilizing IR services. However, as indicated on the IR Customer Satisfaction Survey, faculty and staff are extremely satisfied with the quality of services provided by IR. The survey was sent to a diverse pool of 32 faculty and staff from all areas of the college. Twenty-eight of the individuals responded, a response rate of 88% (*Appendix 1, IR Customer Satisfaction Survey*) An overwhelming majority of respondents expressed strong positive feedback on nearly every question. A very diverse pool of faculty, staff, and administrators indicated familiarity with IR functions and a high level of satisfaction with our services. Over 90% of respondents agreed that IR strives for the highest standards of quality to achieve superior value. Respondents appear to be quite satisfied with accessibility, professionalism, communication style, and courtesy of staff. For all of these items, the level of satisfaction is above the 90th percentile.

“I really do appreciate everything Institutional Research provides. Numbers are very important to my job and those I serve. There are times when I have just gone to them to brainstorm ideas or garner their support, and they have bent over backwards to support me in my requests and needs. I live by the FactBook and if there is anything I need outside the FactBook, they are always there to provide the information. I could not do my job as well as I do without their support.”

- Customer Satisfaction Survey

Number of Innovative Research Projects

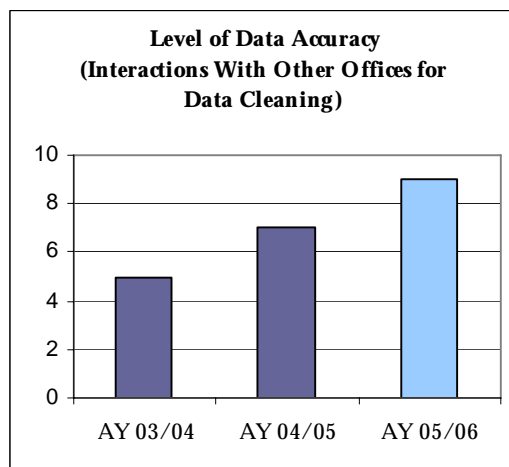
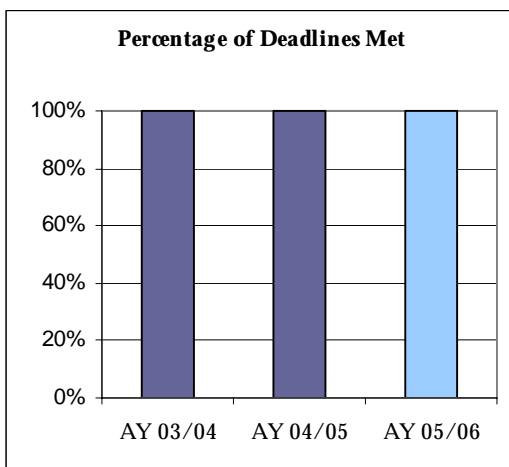
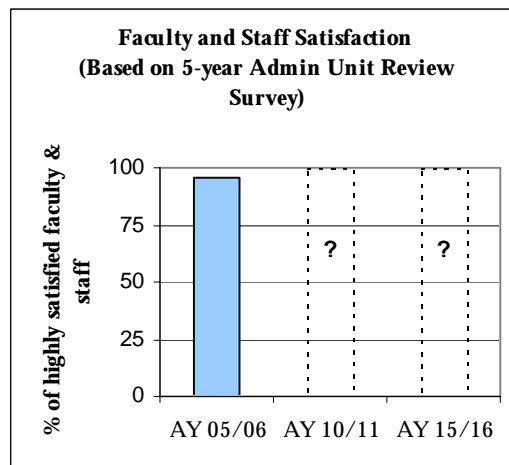
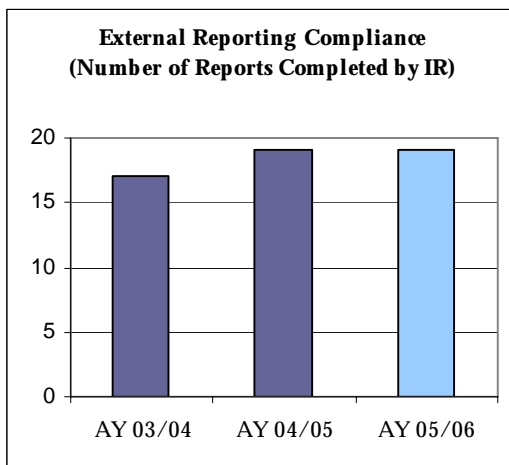
Each year, IR strives to complete innovative projects or research. Due to a large number of ad hoc data requests, many standing reports, and small staff, it is often difficult for IR to explore new projects or get involved with many projects that are outside of the research calendar. Therefore, the office aims for at least one innovative research project per year. Examples of such innovative projects over the last few years include creation of the transfer data warehouse, identifying degree-seeking students by criteria other than officially declared intent (i.e. number of general education credits completed, etc.), and analysis of students who have been purged for non-payment. Unfortunately, current staffing of the IR office is barely enough to cover the basic

research needs of the campus community and does not allow us to engage in advanced innovative research more aggressively.

Data Error Occurrence

Minimizing the error occurring in IR publications or research is viewed as an extremely important task. These instances are rare, but when they do occur, IR staff reviews the source of the data and processes that led to the mistake. When an error is discovered, the documentation that is attached to a project is supplemented with a flag which alerts staff to run necessary data verification procedures. Production of any IR publications such as *TMCC FactBook* is a multistage process that incorporates many levels of checks and verification of data. The occurrence of data errors in IR work is rare, but when it does happen it is highly scrutinized by the director and staff of the unit.

As the unit went through its first self-study, it became evident that even though performance indicators exist and are being reviewed regularly, there is no document or appropriate format that can be formally presented to anyone outside the office. After some discussions and brainstorming, a graphic format for tracking and displaying some IR performance indicators has been created. Below is the compilation of IR’s progress in meeting its performance indicators:



In addition, at the end of each year, the director of the office compiles a report displaying the number and types of projects completed. The report is reviewed during a staff meeting and completed projects are discussed. The end-of-the year review often includes discussion of the performance indicators described above to ensure that the overall work of IR continues to be performed at a high quality level.

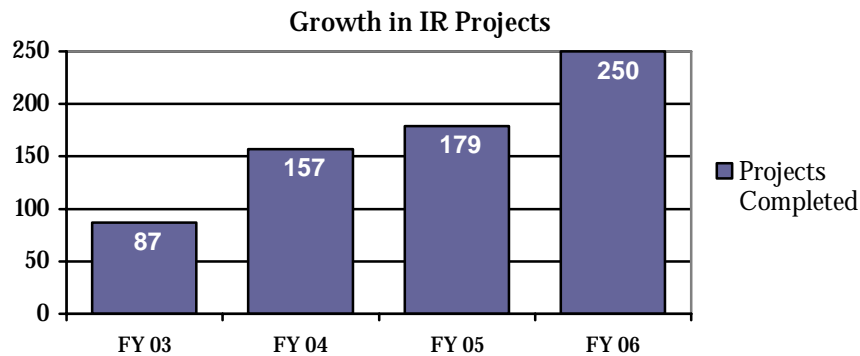
The project management system utilized in the office is shown below.

<u>Project Category</u>	<u>Type of Research/Activities</u>
Accreditation	Assessment & Testing
Ad-hoc (Faculty)	Committee Work
Ad-hoc (Staff)	Enrollment/Student Data
External	Miscellaneous
Institutional Research	Other Institutional Data
Office Management	Presentation
President	Program Review
Public Service	Survey

See Appendix 29 for the IR Project Management Summaries.

The categories are constantly refined to better capture the scope and purpose of requests and projects that the unit works on. This is important not only for the purpose of keeping track of workload, but descriptions and categorization of projects are useful when writing year-end evaluations, reviewing research performed, and when planning future projects. It allows the unit to analyze where most of the resources and time are concentrated and where there are gaps.

The volume of work performed by the unit has grown tremendously over the last several years. The number of requests increased by 187% from FY 03 to FY 06. Below is a chart which demonstrates that growth:



Another mechanism that enables IR to measure its performance is recognition of the TMCC institutional research practices by peers from other higher education entities. For example, after implementing the new assessment and placement processes at TMCC, the director of IR was invited to give a presentation to faculty and staff of WNCC on setting up basic skills assessment

utilizing ACCUPLACER. In 2004, the IR director was invited to the national College Board Conference in Dana Point, CA to give a presentation about student assessment and placement, cut score validation, and collaborative work with academic faculty on setting up prerequisites at TMCC. In 2005, TMCC was featured in the College Board brochure as one of institutions utilizing best testing practices. That same year, IR staff presented a paper titled "The Role of IR in the Accreditation Self-Study: A Tale of Survival" at the Association for Institutional Research (AIR) national meetings in San Diego. This presentation was subsequently selected by AIR to serve as an exemplary paper for authors to review when submitting for the 2006 AIR meetings the following year.

A strong indicator of how well our office accomplishes its mission is the extent to which various campus constituencies utilize IR services. The results of the IR Customer Satisfaction Survey indicate not only a high level of satisfaction among respondents with the work performed by IR, but also a high level of frequency with which faculty and staff utilize IR services at TMCC. Twenty-five percent of respondents indicated that they utilize IR services once per week or more, 43% reported working with IR one to three times per month. (*Appendix 1, IR Customer Satisfaction Survey, Question 21*)

As previously mentioned, for the first time, the number of data requests coming from faculty exceeded the number of requests from staff and administrators. This indicates to us that more and more faculty members are utilizing data and information (and thus IR services) in their decision making, planning and assessment. Formal feedback, as evidenced by the IR Customer Satisfaction Survey, as well as a lot of informal feedback that we receive from faculty regularly, indicate that Institutional Research is viewed at TMCC not only as a source of data and information but also as a partner in strategic planning, discussions, and decision making. We consider this to be the highest validation of our work, expertise, and efforts.

Another measure of IR performance is the extent of involvement in major college-wide initiatives and governance structure. At most meetings of the Extended Cabinet there are items on the agenda for which IR prepared data or conducted analysis. IR also provides significant support to the TMCC Planning Council and to the Enrollment Management Committee, such as preparing data and presenting information. An IR staff member currently serves on the college wide Web Advisory Committee and another on the NSHE Integrate Data Integration Team. All major plans completed by the college within the last few years, such as the Academic Master Plan, Strategic Plan, Branding Campaign, and Facilities Master Plan have utilized research and analysis prepared by the TMCC IR unit.

Some of the most notable accomplishments of the Institutional Research office include the following:

- Increased utilization of data for decision-making by all members of the campus community
- Implementation and maintenance of an IR Data warehouse that enables the unit to handle a large number of data requests efficiently and independently
- Solid enrollment projection and monitoring practices that allow for appropriate internal fiscal planning
- Design and creation of the transfer data warehouse
- Implementation of the Faculty Workload Survey on-line

-
- Creation of the Online Data Inventory in support of TMCC's self-study accreditation process
 - Increase of 187% in the number of projects completed over the last 3 years
 - Strong collaborative relations with other offices on campus
 - Participation and active contribution to the research conducted by the Data Profile Group, a collaboration between TMCC, UNR, and WCSD for the last 8 years
 - Creation of TMCC Fact Sheets that faculty and staff find very useful
 - Administration of the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) and the Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (CCFSSE) in Spring 2005
 - Joining the National Community College Benchmark Project (NCCBP) in Summer of 2006
 - Running a highly productive research operation with limited staff

6. Does measurement include feedback from the providers and recipients of the service/ product?

Several mechanisms for feedback have already been described in response to question 5 of this section. Institutional Research receives regular informal feedback from many staff and faculty members that utilize data and research provided by the unit. Also, the IR unit is comprised of three professionals, whose performance is reviewed regularly through annual evaluations, as well as the 360 degree evaluation process. The administrative unit review is another process that will allow IR to thoroughly review its performance and survey its customers every 5 years.

III

SERVICES PROVIDED TO CUSTOMERS

1. Identify and describe services/programs the unit provides.

The Institutional Research office provides a wide range of services and products to various campus constituencies. Below is a list of major services provided by IR with selected annual tasks and examples of products.

Institutional Research

Perform traditional institutional research and data analysis of institutional characteristics, demographics of faculty, staff, students, and the community. Produce annual data publications, such as *TMCC FactBook (Appendix 2)*, *Performance Indicators (Appendix 5)*, *Fact Sheets (Appendix 30)*. *More documents are available upon request.*

Selected Annual Tasks

- Data Access and Management
 - Update the IR data warehouse throughout the year
- Enrollment Research
 - Report current enrollment and projections for the future
 - Respond to ad hoc enrollment requests from faculty and staff
- Student Success Data
 - Conduct Annual Millennium Scholars Cohort Tracking
 - Prepare Annual Quest Program Success Report
 - Respond to ad hoc student success data requests from faculty and staff
- Program and Administrative Unit Review
 - Provide course and program level data for academic programs being reviewed
 - Provide survey administration support to units being reviewed

-
- TMCC *FactBook* and *Fact Sheets*
 - Compile and produce the TMCC *FactBook* (hard copy & on-line)
 - Compile and publish *Fact Sheets* containing basic institutional information and data highlights at the census and end of each semester
 - IR Web site maintenance
 - Maintain and update IR Web site throughout the year

Accountability Reporting

Coordinate and complete appropriate reports for federal, state and local agencies, in order to comply with mandated reporting requirements. (*Appendix 31*) Please note, some federal and state reports are submitted in the form of data uploads and are not conducive to being included in appendices of this document. However, hard copies of more documents can be presented upon request.

Selected Annual Tasks:

- Annual NSHE System Reports
 - High School Student Report
 - Good Neighbor Report
 - WICHE/WUE Report
 - Fall, Spring, and Summer Official Enrollment Reports
 - Remedial Enrollment Report
 - Space Inventory and Utilization Report
 - NSHE Faculty Workload Report
- Annual Federal Reports
 - IPEDS Reports (8) - Institutional Characteristics, Fall Staff, Salaries, Employee Assignments, Fall Enrollment, Completions, Financial Aid, and Graduation Rate Survey
 - Perkins Occupational Accountability Report – Nevada Department of Education
 - Occupational Report Survey (ORS) – Nevada Department of Education
- Ad hoc data and information requests by the NSHE System Office, Legislative Council Bureau, and other external constituents

Survey Research

Conduct major college-wide surveys and on-demand surveys to gather information that is not contained within institutional or external databases. (*Appendices 3, 4, 18, 19, 26*) *More documents are available upon request.*

Selected Annual Tasks:

- TMCC Graduate Outcomes Survey
- TMCC Graduate Follow-up Survey
- Quest Outcomes Survey
- Ad hoc survey requests from faculty and staff

Special Projects (President's Requests):

Assist the President with projects requiring the use of Institutional Research data and information. *(Appendix 32) More documents are available upon request.*

Selected Annual Tasks:

- Assisting with locating and validating internal and external information
- Coordinating and/or conducting research and compiling data for various topics upon request

2. To what groups/individuals are these provided:

- *students?*
- *staff?*
- *faculty?*
- *alumni?*
- *Others?*

The Institutional Research office has a strong reporting relationship with all campus entities and acts as a major source of data, information, and analysis for every constituent group of the college.

Students

- Respond to questions from the student government and/or student newspaper about institutional data and trends
- Provide assistance with surveys when requested

Faculty

- Respond to data requests
- Work on special projects that impact areas like workforce development and the expansion of educational programs
- Help select data to measure college goals, individual programs, and disciplines
- Provide support with academic program review
- Provide data support to assist with assessment

Staff

- Provide survey and other data support in conducting Administrative Program Review
- Provide a wide range of research services to members of the President's Cabinet and Extended Cabinet
- Respond to ad hoc data requests

Alumni

- Conduct Graduate Survey
- Conduct Graduate Follow-up Survey
- Conduct Nursing Graduate Survey

NSHE and Nevada Legislative Council Bureau

- Provide student information for the NSHE's regularly scheduled reports
- Respond to legislative requests made to the NSHE
- Provide student information for other requests as necessary
- Meet with state institutional researchers to set policy and procedures

State Department of Education

- Perkins Occupational Accountability Report
- Occupational Report Survey (ORS)

Federal Agencies

- Fulfill institutional reporting requirements for IPEDS (Integrated Post-Secondary Education System)

3. How does the unit make potential customers aware of available services/products?

Services and products provided by the Institutional Research office are described on the IR Web site (<http://www.tmcc.edu/ir/>). Potential customers are also reminded about IR services in an annual electronic newsletter published by Institutional Research. (*Appendix 33*) In addition, IR staff serves on many major campus committees, participates in discussions of issues, and often prepares data and research that guide these discussions. These opportunities are also utilized to publicize research and data available in IR. IR publications, such as the *FactBook*, *Fact Sheets*, *Performance Indicators*, and others are used as a means to inform the campus community about the type of data and services available through the IR office.

4. Describe the process by which services are prioritized and scheduled:

- ***How are decisions made***
- ***By whom?***
- ***Are decisions customer driven?***
- ***How does the unit manage workload?***
- ***Are employees included in decision making? Is this a team driven process?***

The IR unit maintains a research calendar of all standing projects and mandatory reports. (*Appendix 28*) The deadlines for completion of mandatory reports are typically set by external agencies. Completion of many of these reports is tied to TMCC's eligibility for grants and federal funding, thus the completion of these reports has high priority. Over the last several years, most of the standing reports have been automated to minimize the time needed to produce such reports. A program (written in SPSS programming language) was created for most projects that significantly reduces the time needed to compile these reports. This allows for the most efficient planning and eliminates the possibility of delaying completion of these reports in the event of unexpected workload in the IR office. It also frees up a lot more time for IR staff to devote to completion of ad-hoc data requests and long-term research projects.

Typically, each member of the staff is responsible for the completion of specific reports and thus plans their time accordingly, since the deadlines for these reports are known in advance. Each member of the staff gets an opportunity to be a lead researcher on a major report. This year, overall cross-training of staff began to ensure that all staff members have the skills and knowledge necessary to complete all mandatory reports.

The number and unpredictable nature of ad hoc requests introduces an element of high intensity to the IR workload. The vast majority of ad hoc data requests have a short turn around time. Often, individuals are seeking data and information from IR when preparing for a meeting or when trying to make a decision. Timely delivery of information is as important as the information itself. IR treats every data request with a high level of attention and commitment to accurate and speedy response whether it comes from the President, faculty, or staff. Nearly, 100% of the time, IR can meet the deadlines requested. The following three elements enable IR to provide such service to its constituents:

- 1) **IR data warehouse:** having a comprehensive data warehouse containing major institutional data elements allows IR to quickly respond to most data requests without having to turn to any other entities on campus for data or having to query resident data bases on the mainframe every time a question is posed;
- 2) **Statistical and programming expertise of staff:** this allows the IR unit to manipulate, compile, and analyze large amounts of data in a very efficient and sophisticated fashion; and
- 3) **Strong ability to multitask:** this skill is absolutely critical to the success of individual employees and the entire office. At any time, IR staff can be expected to work on several projects and juggle multiple priorities.

The director of the office is largely responsible for managing the office workload and for assigning projects to staff. Every effort is made to match the research project with the skill level and interests of individual employees. Assignments and projects are regularly rotated to provide for equal opportunity for training and contribution. Frequently, the individuals' workload is reviewed during staff meetings and decisions are made collectively with respect to project assignments. Employees of the unit are always encouraged to make their concerns and preferences known with respect to workload assignments.

5. Do any laws, regulations, or other requirements external to the college affect the provision of services/programs? If so, please identify.

The following are the main laws and regulations that guide the work of the Institutional Research office:

- 1) U.S. Family Education and Privacy Act (FERPA)
- 2) IR Code of Ethics
- 3) Accountability reporting requirements (IPEDS, NSHE, DOE, Nevada Legislature, other external agencies)
- 4) The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU)

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- 5) Faculty/Staff Handbook
See http://www.tmcc.edu/hrs/forms/Professional/Faculty_Staff_Handbook.pdf
 - 6) Administrative Manual
See <http://www.tmcc.edu/manual/TMCCAdminManual.pdf>
 - 7) TMCC Bylaws
See <http://www.tmcc.edu/forms/pdf/TMCCBylaws.pdf>
 - 8) NSHE Handbook
See <http://system.nevada.edu/>
 - 9) NSHE Nevada Master Plan
See <http://system.nevada.edu/>

For copies of selected documents see Appendix 34.

6. How does the unit make customers aware of policies, procedures, and priorities?

All of the major policies and procedures that guide IR work are published on the web. When responding to data requests or conducting research for faculty and staff, every effort is made to provide results which respect the privacy of student information and which demonstrate an ethical approach to conducting research. When IR worked collaboratively with Chemistry faculty on an assessment project in 2002, all principal investigators, including the IR director, completed a **Human Participants Protection Education for Research Teams** online course, sponsored by the National Institutes of Health. This was done to ensure that all participants of this research collaboration were fully informed about important aspects of conducting research involving students. (*Appendix 35*)

During the course of the self-study, IR staff concluded that a need exists for developing a set of guidelines for members of the campus community to help them with conducting surveys. Assisting with surveys to all campus constituents is a major function of IR. Currently, there is no information in place that would help faculty and staff understand the survey process, the responsibilities and capabilities of the IR office, and the type of preparatory work that is required before a survey can be designed. One of the recommendations is that the IR staff develops a set of guidelines and place them on the IR Web site to aid faculty in this important process. This document will contain helpful suggestions and will be geared toward anyone in the campus community who would like to conduct a survey.

In terms of making customers aware of priorities, IR prides itself on being able to treat every customer as a priority and to fully attend to their research and information needs. Despite the reality of having many high profile responsibilities, such as supporting the academic and administrative leaders and responding to external agencies, IR staff never evokes these issues as justification for not serving the needs of other members of the college community. It is our deepest belief that timely and thorough response to the smallest (in scope) research requests coming from individual staff and faculty members is what ultimately promotes intellectual curiosity, positive involvement and utilization of data in the decision making on campus. IR practice is to treat every individual seeking the assistance of the office as a high priority. However, without additional staff, it will become harder and harder to maintain the same level of responsiveness and turn around time.

7. How does the unit learn about customers' needs and obtain feedback regarding service delivery?

The nature of the services provided by IR is such that the most common mechanism for learning about customers' needs is through their request for data and information. Review of the most commonly requested data elements often determines the content of IR publications as we try to anticipate the information needs of the campus community and to make data more readily available. For example, in preparation for the re-accreditation self-study, the IR unit took the initiative to review the accreditation standards and required exhibits listed in the handbook. The result of that was the creation of an on-line data inventory organized by standard. Each standard contained all of the data that Institutional Research could assemble that spoke to that standard. Not all of the data were used by faculty and staff, but it provided solid data support for the many individuals who participated in the college-wide self-study.

Taking part in the work of many college committees provides a significant avenue for IR to learn about customers' needs. Many campus groups at TMCC have an interest in learning more about our transfer students. This need pushed IR to explore and eventually create a comprehensive transfer data warehouse. This data warehouse allows IR to answer many questions about transfer students, such as their subsequent enrollment and degree attainment at other institutions.

The IR office regularly receives informal feedback from individual customers as well as from various governance groups and committees. As the IR Customer Satisfaction Survey indicates, IR customers appear to be highly satisfied with the services they receive. Here are a few highlights from the survey demonstrating positive feedback about the work of IR:

- 85% of respondents indicated that the work of the unit is well planned and organized
- 100% indicated that the IR unit provides strategic support for their department
- 96% of respondents agreed that IR always locates/utilizes specialized knowledge in response to their requests
- 82% of respondents agreed that IR solves difficult problems with effective solutions
- 96% of respondents rated the services they received from IR as superior or very satisfactory

IR receives regular feedback from its customers in a variety of informal ways. Due to the nature of services provided by the unit, the IR staff stays in close contact with all of its customers throughout every project. Individuals often seek follow up research if additional questions arise. Frequently, Institutional Research staff is expected to present results of their research to larger audiences of campus constituents. This allows for immediate feedback and assessment of IR's performance by recipients of its services. All three professional staff members of IR are being reviewed annually and through a 360 degree evaluation process. The Administrative Unit Review process will also allow IR to conduct an in-depth survey of its customers, as well as to receive all-campus feedback every five years. IR believes that existing mechanisms for feedback collection are sufficient and adequate. After reviewing the idea of implementing a regular

"I have always found the Institutional Research Staff to be helpful and willing to assist with data capture and analysis to meet deadlines. They are easy to work with and responsive to customer's needs."

-All Campus Feedback

customer satisfaction survey, it was determined that at this point, it is unlikely to yield any critically new information.

8. How well are customers' needs defined and met?

- ***Are there services/products that customers need which the unit cannot provide?***
- ***What would the unit need to be able to provide these?***

The response to the previous question describes the extent to which our customers' needs are met. However, as the number of responsibilities and projects that IR is involved with grows, it is becoming harder and harder to maintain the same high level of responsiveness. For example, improvements in the Academic Program Review process resulted in a higher workload for Institutional Research. In addition to providing baseline data for all academic programs, IR now responds to a large number of requests for additional data from faculty as the process is being more seriously embraced. Implementation of the Administrative Unit Review process has also resulted in additional workload for the unit. Although wider utilization of data in academic assessment and other areas is a welcome trend, it does present a workload challenge for the IR unit.

When Academic assessment and testing were transferred to Student Services and Academic Affairs, a full-time position was taken out of the IR unit. However, IR still provides significant research support to these functions including but not limited to the following: pre- and post-test data compilation and analysis, course prerequisites research, cut score validation research, and placement and student success in courses. Individual faculty members also come to IR for assistance when working on their academic assessment plans. We are glad to serve our colleagues and believe that we are often in a good position to do so, having easy access to the relevant data. However, with the rising demand for data throughout the campus community, a 3-person IR staff is quickly reaching its capacity.

Current staffing limits the IR unit to being reactive in its research style, i.e. responding to ad hoc data requests as they arise and maintaining its schedule of compliance reporting. To allow the work of our office to include a more proactive approach to research would require at least one more full-time professional employee. As TMCC moves towards more serious academic and institutional assessment, the need for proactive research will only grow. The current composition of the IR unit will not be able to accommodate such needs of the campus.

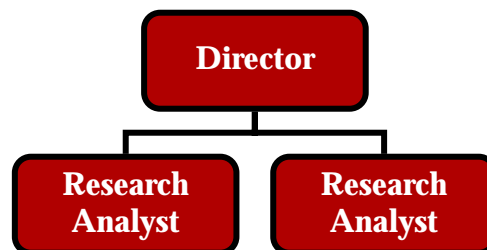
IV

STRUCTURE, ORGANIZATION, AND CLIMATE

1. *What is the unit's organizational structure?*

- *Provide an organizational chart.*
- *Provide a brief job description for each individual and credentials held by staff.*
- *When discussing the structure of the unit, personnel and their functional responsibilities, include overview of any historical changes in order to present full overview of the unit's history and development over the last 5 years.*

The IR unit consists of 3 professionals: the director of the unit and 2 research analysts.



For copies of detailed job descriptions of office staff see Appendix 36.

Credentials held by staff:

Elena Bubnova, Director

Master of Arts, Public Administration and Policy
University of Nevada, Reno, NV

Cheryl Scott, Research Analyst

Master of Science, Medical Genetics
Indiana University, Purdue University at Indianapolis

Jason Oetjen, Research Analyst

Bachelor of Science, Business Administration

University of Nevada, Reno

The director of Institutional Research is responsible for developing, organizing, and directing activities necessary to establish and carry out campus-wide institutional research functions. Reporting directly to the President, this position utilizes institutional research to promote informed decision-making and strategic planning, as well as accountability reporting. Through the use of quantitative and analytical methods, it is the responsibility of this position to access, analyze and disseminate information pertaining to academic and administrative programs, services, and operations. In addition, this position participates in enrollment management activities and research. This position interacts with all facets of the campus community, as well as external bodies such as the NSHE Chancellor's Office, the local K-12 school district, and the Department of Education.

Both research analyst positions are similar in terms of the functions formally assigned to them. Research analysts are responsible for assisting the IR director with a variety of institutional research activities such as analyzing institutional data for internal planning, conducting external accountability reporting and surveys, and providing statistical and technical support.

However in every day work, the current research analysts have a set of functions and responsibilities that are unique to them. The research analyst position currently held by Cheryl Scott is more focused on the programming and data management aspect of institutional research. Ms. Scott performs the bulk of data programming in the office. This position evolved into a more technical position when Ms. Scott brought more than 20 years of programming experience to the job. Ms. Scott has been with the office for 4 years and has developed strong expertise in all aspects of institutional research. The IR director relies on this position for assistance with representing IR in college-wide initiatives and projects that call for analytical and leadership skills.

The research analyst position currently held by Jason Oetjen is focused on managing production and design of many IR publications. Mr. Oetjen has been with the office for nearly 2 years and is also handling many ad-hoc data requests. The research analyst position held by Mr. Oetjen is responsible for survey development, administration, and analysis. Starting this year, this position will be exposed to cross-training in all major mandatory reports.

All three positions currently assigned to the Institutional Research unit are very hands-on and perform a variety of tasks from making copies to producing complex analyses. IR employees are expected to multitask and work on projects independently as well as collaboratively.

In the last five years, the Institutional Research office has undergone some changes. In 2004, testing and assessment (formerly part of the unit) were moved to the offices of Student Services and Academic Affairs respectively. A full-time classified position was moved out of Institutional Research to Student Services to support testing. The Academic Affairs area of the college assumed the coordination of academic assessment to promote this as a faculty-driven activity. Many assessment activities such as data analysis, pre- and post-testing, and student success research are still being conducted by the Institutional Research office. IR also provides a significant amount of support to planning and institutional effectiveness initiatives on campus. In the past, these functions were largely performed by the office of the Dean of Institutional Effectiveness staffed with a full-time management analyst.

2. Is this form of organization appropriate to meeting the unit's goals and objectives?

- *If it is appropriate, describe the features that make it appropriate*
- *If it is not, describe the problem areas and potential solutions*

There are three challenges that exist with the current structure of the unit:

- 1) lack of professional progression within the office;
- 2) the need for a formal establishment/recognition of a technical position in the office focused on programming and data management;
- 3) the need for an additional professional position in the office.

Knowledge of the institutional research field as a profession is not the only factor required by the nature of the work performed by institutional research. A multitude of highly sophisticated skills are required in order to be successful as an IR professional: computer proficiency, strong writing and analytical abilities, extreme attention to detail, and the ability to multitask, be a self-starter, and an independent decision-maker. Individuals possessing such skills are highly marketable. However the structure of the research analysts positions are such that they do not allow for any growth in salary or title other than annual incremental pay changes that all professionals on campus receive. Lack of any gradation in research analyst positions makes it difficult to recruit and retain professionals with the skill level necessary to deliver high quality IR work.

There is a different level of responsibility, complexity, and volume of output associated with each research analyst position currently in the office. However, the two research analyst positions are currently identical on paper and there is no scale of any kind that would differentiate the positions according to the experience and level of training they bring to the job.

The director of Institutional Research has already proposed to Human Resources and to the President the need to have steps in a research analyst position, such as Research Analyst I, II and III. This will allow upward movement for any research analyst and could help recruit and retain highly skilled professionals. Differentiating by step will also provide for more equitable compensation among research analysts depending on the complexity of tasks performed.

The second challenge is the need for a formal establishment of a technical position in the office. Historically, IR offices have been mostly staffed with research analysts. These types of positions are often geared towards individuals with social science backgrounds who may not have technical skills of the appropriate rigor and breadth. However, the field of institutional research is becoming highly technical. As the databases housing institutional data are becoming more sophisticated, it is becoming the norm for an institutional research office to have a programmer or a data manager on staff. Such a position is typically responsible for extracting, matching and compiling data, and preparing it for further analysis. Currently, the IR office at TMCC has an individual on staff with programming skills, but there is no formal position with programming responsibilities requiring technical background. Below is the rationale for IR's need to have an additional professional position in the office.

"I believe they need additional staff, space and equipment. They do an excellent job now and could provide much more service if they had additional staff and resources.

-Customer Satisfaction Survey

Increased Use of Data

Current staffing of the IR office is barely adequate to handle existing mandatory reporting and routine data requests from faculty and staff. In FY 2006, IR responded to 250 data requests from more than 100 individuals and entities: faculty, staff, and external constituencies. In the last few years, the college has moved more aggressively towards utilizing data for all of its major decisions and the number of data requests handled by the Institutional Research office has increased 150%. IR finds itself under increasing pressure to provide accurate data on a variety of topics and under relatively tight timelines.

Need for In-depth and Systematic Enrollment Analysis

More and more frequently, IR is being asked enrollment-related questions that go well beyond straightforward reporting of enrollment figures or student demographics. These questions frequently come from the executive officers and faculty of virtually every area of the college and are often complex in nature, requiring integration of multiple data sources and unique analytical approaches.

Increased utilization of data for decision-making at TMCC and pressure to optimize enrollment, illuminate the need for a more in-depth analysis of enrollment trends, scheduling, student demand, and fiscal and human resources (e.g. faculty workload, space utilization). Systematic and high level analysis of these factors is critical in order to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of our academic offerings and infrastructure. This will ultimately result in greater opportunities for the students we serve. Without acquiring additional staff, the IR office is not in a position to take enrollment analysis beyond the descriptive level at which it is currently provided.

Data Integrity and Consolidation of Reporting

Traditionally, the Institutional Research office is the entity on campus that reports a wide range of data about the college. Currently, IR appears to have more versatile tools for running multifaceted analyses that require cross-referencing and merging of multiple data sets and thus, frequently becomes a focal point for handling questions that are typically outside of the traditional institutional research responsibilities. Increasingly Institutional Research is becoming the party responsible for normalizing the data from other areas of the college (for e.g., HR, Finance, Admissions and Records, etc.) to ensure its validity and consistency for reporting and public consumption purposes. This requires IR staff to conduct additional, often labor intensive, research to clean up, verify and compile the data before it can be reported.

Conversion

Over the next several years the Nevada System of Higher Education will be going through the process of implementing a new integrated data information system. This new system will be implemented at all of the NSHE institutions, including TMCC. Along with the main data custodians on our campus, IR has a role to play during all stages of the process: from developing data definitions and data-capture procedures to setting business rules and policies. One of the strengths of the IR office at TMCC today is its ability to quickly and independently access and retrieve data from resident databases. The proactive position that IR takes by participating in many major initiatives at the college enable this office to provide not just data, but information useful for policy and decision-making. In order to preserve this ability, IR will have to devote a

significant amount of time and effort to the upcoming conversion process, as all of the ways that we currently access and retrieve data will change.

3. Identify all critical functions and describe the level of backup for these functions.

The back up for all major functions in the office occurs on three different levels:

1. Electronic back up

One of the most important elements of our unit – the Institutional Research data warehouse – is backed up on a shared network drive, as well as on the hard drive and external back-up device belonging to the director of the office. Copies of all mandatory external reports, original data requests, instructions for completion and programming syntax are maintained on the shared network drive. The file folders are organized by report and by year. Consistent file naming conventions are followed to ensure accuracy and uniformity. Pertinent input and output data files are preserved, so that if needed, previous year's numbers can be recreated. (*Appendix 37*) In addition, each IR staff member owns a back up unit (an external hard drive) utilized to back up the entire system daily.

2. Hard copy back up

A hard copy of every major report and project is also kept on file in the office of the director. Hard copy files are structured similar to the electronic files. However, there may be additional information kept in hard copy files, such as copies of correspondence with other offices or individuals about the report/project. Every major project and report has a set of technical and procedural instructions associated with it kept in hard copy. However, the self-study process indicated the need for more polished projects documentation. Current documentation, at times, is highly technical and/or abbreviated. The current format may make it challenging for a new member of the staff or someone outside the office to follow the process and complete the report/project independently.

One of the recommendations that the staff came up with is that a comprehensive set of guidelines be created that would incorporate instructions already in place, expand and clarify where appropriate, and collate all documentation in one binder in a consistent format. The office staff had already started working on creating such binder. This binder will contain one sheet for each report describing the overall process, contact information of other units providing information, rationale for certain steps and data trouble shooting tips, etc.

3. Cross training of staff

Another important activity that ensures preservation of vital data and information is cross training of staff in the office. Currently, all IR staff members are generally familiar with major projects and processes in the office. However, more thorough cross training has begun. When complete, each member of the staff will have had the opportunity to generate each major report from start to finish.

4. For any services/products provided by the unit in conjunction with other units within the college, please describe the relationship.

- How is the work coordinated between or among units? Describe if it is working well or not.*
- How can such relations be facilitated?*

Admissions and Records Office

The Institutional Research office views the office of Admissions and Records as one of its primary partners. A&R is the official custodian of student data. That office is responsible for inputting and maintaining student records in the Student Information System (SIS). SIS is the main source of raw data that is utilized by Institutional Research to populate the IR data warehouse which serves as the main database used for all research and analysis. The IR data warehouse, in combination with statistical software and programming capabilities, allow the IR unit to match data from various sources and produce analyses with short turn around times. There is a 'division of labor' of sorts between A&R and IR that has been in place from the time the IR office was created at TMCC. Any requests for current semester data are typically handled by A&R and data requests that involve historic information are completed by institutional research. Nonetheless, our office is frequently asked to complete data requests from faculty, administrators and staff that involve current data. A&R staff will also ask the IR office for current semester enrollment analysis, projections and other information.

By and large, Institutional Research acquires its data independently by utilizing FOCUS programming language to extract the data out of the mainframe computer system. However, IR works closely with A&R in learning about admissions and records processes, interactions with students, rules, and exceptions. This knowledge is critical to IR's ability to analyze the data and spot check its accuracy. The accuracy of data entered by A&R staff is critical not only to IR's work but to the overall data integrity at the college. IR staff looks at SIS data more closely at the individual record level than any other user. IR provides data back to A&R and works collaboratively with the staff of that unit to resolve inconsistencies or discrepancies in the data. The most basic example of such collaboration would be completion of the TMCC enrollment report. IR may discover individual records in the enrollment file that have a missing gender or declared major. A file with such records is typically provided to A&R for investigation. A&R will then fix data in the student information system where appropriate. At that point, IR re-runs the enrollment file with corrected data and files it in the data warehouse. Accuracy of these records is critical, since these data are used for a wide range of activities: from grants to future enrollment projections.

To streamline the relationship with admissions and records, Institutional Research compiled a calendar describing various projects completed by IR that require collaboration of Admissions and Records staff. This document allows both units to stay organized, and to anticipate and plan all activities aimed at ensuring data accuracy accordingly. The calendar displays all reports prepared by IR that require timely and accurate completion of certain A&R activities. The calendar not only has deadlines for IR to request the data and A&R to provide it, the document also briefly describes the purpose of the report and the importance of specific data elements. (*Appendix 38, IR and A&R Collaborative Activities*)

The IR director also works with the director of A&R to verify FTE figures before they are reported to the system office. To streamline the FTE reporting as well as to ensure accuracy, IR

developed an FTE Verification policy. This policy was adopted by IR and A&R and is kept on file. (*Appendix 38, FTE Verification Policy*)

Public Information Office

IR frequently provides enrollment and other institutional data to PIO for the purpose of releasing it to the press or for inclusion in printed publications. IR also provides support to PIO with conducting marketing and survey research. For example, when engaging in a marketing campaign targeting particular population, PIO often asks for demographics and other research focused on the population of interest. This research helps PIO identify the marketing strategies most effective for that type of population.

Human Resources Office

The Institutional Research office works closely with the Human Resources office of the college. HR is the official custodian of personnel data, however IR frequently responds to data requests that involve faculty and staff. Due to technical limitations of the existing HR database, there is no easy access or retrieval of staff data. Furthermore, current processes of matching faculty information with course and student data are not adequate either. Every time IR works with faculty data, it is critical to get validation from HR. For example, faculty workload information cannot be obtained from a single database that is reliable. Typically, it is a multi-step process for IR to compile a valid list of full-time faculty and their accurate workload and overload assignments. During such projects IR works very closely with HR staff to verify the records. This year, IR plans to develop a formal mechanism of obtaining faculty data from HR, similar to the process that is in place with Admissions and Records.

Applications Development

Applications Development (as well as ITO) is another area with which IR maintains a regular working relationship. This area provides assistance to IR with many on-line surveys. Institutional Research oversees the design, administration, and analysis of surveys while Applications Development staff provides assistance with on-line publications of survey instruments. In addition, Institutional Research provides assistance to Applications Development staff with data verification as they move towards creating on-demand reporting tools using Crystal Reports software. Even though most of the enrollment and course reports provided online by Applications Development continue to be provided by IR to constituents in hard-copy, there is very little duplication. Frequently faculty and staff need the data in a different format or with more detail than the on-line module is set up to provide. Also, the analytical component added by IR to any data request makes our services unique.

5. Are duplicate or parallel services offered within the unit or elsewhere in the College?

- ***Describe any overlap and discuss what changes might be indicated (e.g., centralization, coordination, elimination of duplication).***

Sometimes, there could be duplication between the data provided by Admissions and Records and data provided by Institutional Research. Both entities have access to the student information system and use it as a primary resource for enrollment analysis. As previously discussed, IR typically provides historic information and A&R is in charge of current data

reporting. However, some customers, when asking for historic data, might request current data for comparison purposes. Since IR often has access to that type of information, it can be provided by our unit. The IR office has the means and expertise to process and analyze large amounts of data relatively quickly. Occasionally, Admissions and Records staff or others in Student Services may request that IR prepare current data analysis that helps them monitor enrollment dynamically and allows them to suggest appropriate initiatives.

There are also isolated incidents of faculty and staff requesting similar information from both offices. IR and A&R work closely together to ensure that minimum duplication occurs. A&R also contacts Institutional Research to inquire if IR may already have the data requested of them. It could potentially reduce duplication if all data requests, both current and historic, were concentrated in one area. However, the current staffing of the Institutional Research office is not nearly sufficient to even make such proposal. There is already a need for an additional position in the IR office (see discussion in question 2 of this section) considering the existing workload, without assuming new responsibilities.

6. What are the unit's planning, decision-making, and evaluation processes?

- *Who is involved in each?*
- *What factors drive the decision making?*

All staff members are involved in the goal setting processes (see detailed discussion of this in section 2, question 3). Decisions regarding day-to-day assignments are largely done by the director of the unit. However, feedback from staff is always solicited through regular staff meetings. Staff members are also encouraged to make their project preferences known and every effort is made to accommodate those interests. Project time lines, staff expertise, and current availability are the primary factors that drive the decision-making.

There is continuous evaluation of the quality of work coming out of IR. Every major data request or research project completed is reviewed by either the director of the unit or another staff member. Members of our staff take great care to ensure that data are accurate, analysis is thorough, and presentation of research is user-friendly. As evident from the IR Employee Satisfaction Survey, 100% of the IR staff believes that there is accountability for the quality of work produced in the unit and that the unit maintains very high standards of quality. (*See Appendix 27 for copy of IR Employee Satisfaction Survey, Question 11, 12 and 14*).

Regular staff meetings and yearly office retreats include in-depth discussions of goal accomplishment, existing processes and organization, and any concerns or need for change for the purposes of improvement. In addition, each staff member receives an annual evaluation completed by the director of the unit. All three members of the IR staff are subject to the 360 degree professional evaluation by various campus constituents.

In addition, the IR director and staff try to stay involved in the campus community for many reasons, one of which is self-education about the potential data needs of campus constituents. For example, it is the belief of IR that TMCC currently lacks a thorough student satisfaction feedback mechanism. To respond to this need the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) was conducted in the spring of 2005. If no other instrument is selected to monitor student satisfaction with educational experiences, IR plans to conduct CCSSE again in spring of 2008.

7. Describe the process that are used to:

- *Determine work responsibilities.*
- *Delegate/assign work responsibilities.*
- *Describe how well these processes work and if any changes are necessary*

Each staff member of the unit has a set of standard work responsibilities and regular projects that they are in charge of. For example, one research analyst is responsible for coordinating survey research. When a request for a survey comes into the office, it is often reviewed by the director. To eliminate the possibility of duplication and inefficiency, the director ensures that the data sought through the survey are not already available or cannot be obtained through other mechanisms. The research analyst, with input from the director, designs the survey instrument and may oversee the administration of it. The degree of involvement by other staff members in any given survey depends on the scope of the project. Some survey projects are completed entirely by the research analyst overseeing the survey function in the office. Some campus-wide surveys are conducted with the participation of the entire staff.

As indicated before, each staff member may have a history of responding to specific types of data requests and thus may be more proficient at completing those. This is also taken into consideration when assignments are made. However, cross-training is critical to the unit's ability to handle a variety of data requests under short time lines. Gradually, each staff member is getting trained in every major project or report completed by the unit.

Ad-hoc requests and special projects are a big unknown factor in managing the workload of the unit. Such requests vary in scope, complexity and urgency. They may increase during legislative sessions, following a change in personnel in the college or the system, or due to a change in regulations, media, or other factors. This introduces a significant element of pressure in juggling multiple priorities and dictates the need to be extremely organized. The unit has invested a great deal of effort in streamlining the production of standing IR publications and scheduled mandatory reports. This minimizes the possibility of not meeting the deadlines on mandatory projects and affords greater flexibility to respond to urgent ad-hoc requests in a timely fashion.

Based on the excellent feedback IR unit received from its constituents (*refer to discussion in section III, question 7 of this document*), it appears that the current system for handling IR workload is working well.

8. Describe the general morale, attitude, and culture of the unit?

An excellent blend of expertise, strengths, interests, and personal chemistry make the Institutional Research office at TMCC a very functional, productive, welcoming, and stimulating environment. All members of the IR team subscribe to the philosophy of excellence and high standards in every project and activity. There is a very strong commitment to providing the most accurate and sophisticated data support to all constituencies that rely on the data and information services provided by IR. Given the small size of the IR staff and the intensity of the office workload, it is critical that all individuals are not only highly competent, but are also capable of interacting with each other in a constructive manner.

The results of the IR Employee Satisfaction Survey contain a strong indication of a positive healthy environment in the office. The results of the survey also indicated that 33% of the staff expressed a 'neutral' feeling on several survey items related to structure, organization, and climate of the unit. Even though none of the results or comments indicate any serious dissatisfaction among staff, for a closely-knit office like IR this was sufficient to warrant an in-depth discussion. During a staff meeting dedicated to reviewing the survey results, staff members were encouraged to communicate any specific concerns or suggestions. Alternatively, they were invited to address any unresolved issues via a private email or in a private conversation with the IR director. It appears that some responses were driven by misinterpretation of the questions. Also, a need to more clearly articulate expectations, especially when multiple individuals are involved with the same project was brought up. It was decided that more written instructions would be provided by the director when assignments are made. No other concerns were brought forward.

Overall, IR is a healthy unit with highly competent staff who work well together and are proud to be part of the office.

9. Describe steps that are taken to ensure that the unit is appropriately sensitive to the cultural backgrounds of staff and customers?

The Institutional Research Code of Ethics states that the institutional researcher will “promote equal access and opportunity regarding employment, services, and other activities of his/her office, without regard to race, creed, gender, national origin, disability, or other accidental quality.” In addition it states that “in analysis, demeanor, and expression (the institutional researcher) shall be alert to the sensitivities of groups and individuals.” The TMCC IR office diligently adheres to these principals in every day work. IR strongly supports programs and units on campus focused on diversity by assisting with data analysis and research (refer to discussion in section II, question 2 of this document).

It is important to expand the definition of the word 'cultural' to go beyond ethnicity. Various constituencies on campus bring with them an element of 'their own culture' whether it is expressed through particular beliefs they hold, their life experiences, or their style of interacting with others. The Institutional Research staff is, itself, diverse in cultural background, age, gender, and beliefs, and goes above and beyond to ensure that data and research needs of all members of the campus community are served equally well and in a respectful and sensitive fashion. A recent example of cultural sensitivity is demonstrated with the Facilities Employee Satisfaction Survey conducted by IR in fall 2006. It was discovered that several members of the facilities staff were not fluent in English. An IR staff member had the survey form translated into Spanish to accommodate the needs of the Facilities staff. This is a strong demonstration of the level of respect that IR has for diversity.

V

RESOURCES

1. Each unit is provided a 3 year history of expense and revenues (if applicable) by object category and the current year budget by expense and revenue category.

- Analyze the data by object category to determine if the budget is at the appropriate level to provide current and proposed services.*
- Ideally the unit should address each object code category stating if the budget amount needs to be increased or decreased and provide a rationale for any changes.*

The current total budget of institutional research for FY07 is \$254,810. (*Appendix 39*) Out of that amount, \$186,418 is committed to professional salaries (object 11) and \$42,277 is allocated to fringe benefits (object code 16). The 3-year budget summary provided by the TMCC Budget office shows what appears to be a significant increase in professional salaries from \$71,879 in 2004 to \$144,541 in 2005. However, the budget summary for 2003 shows a total of \$135,005 in professional salaries for the unit. The change in the amounts indicates reorganization of the office and consolidation of accounts. In 2004, the vacancy created by the departure of the director of Institutional Research was officially filled. This left a vacant position of director of Assessment. As a result of the reorganization, the responsibilities for Assessment were split between the VPAA and IR. Thus, the position held by the director of Assessment was also split between the two units and a portion of it was left in IR to hire an entry level research analyst. In January of 2005 a research analyst was hired.

Also in 2005, several accounts that were assigned to Institutional Effectiveness and IR were consolidated into one. This accounts for an apparent increase in IR's overall budget. In 2004, some travel and operating expenses were paid out of the Institutional Effectiveness account, which was combined with the IR account in 2005.

The IR unit does not have any individuals employed on letters of appointment (object code 10), individuals employed as classified staff (object code 14) or employees receiving wages (object code 15). Please note, for 2004, the IR budget summary shows \$36,684 in classified salaries (object code 14). This reflects a classified position that is no longer in the unit and was moved to Student Services when ACCUPLACER testing was transferred to that division.

Average expenses for travel to professional conferences by IR staff are typically around \$4,000 a year. In 2006, the travel expenditures were higher because a staff member was invited to give a presentation at a conference taking place in Hawaii. Again, a lower amount in 2004 reflects the existence of an additional account which was used to cover travel.

Average operating expenses range from \$15,000 to \$20,000 a year. This not only covers office equipment, supplies, and other typical operating expenses, but also many college-wide projects, such as surveys, tests, participation in national data collection initiatives, and mandatory institutional membership fees.

There were no equipment items over \$2,000 purchased by IR within the last 3 years (object code 60). Computer equipment that IR acquires to keep its technology up to date for large data processing is typically under \$2,000 and is paid for out of general operations fund.

Overall, the fiscal resources allocated to IR are adequate to sustain the current level of services. However, in the event of assigning new responsibilities and/or expanding the scope of existing services additional funds will be needed.

2. What is the decision-making process for the distribution of budget allocations?

- *How are the decisions made?*
- *Who is involved in the decisions?*
- *What factors drive the decision making process?*

Currently, the Institutional Research office does not have any distinct areas within the unit that might potentially compete for resources. Thus, there is less pressure to make any hard choices as to how the resources should be committed. Typically, during staff meetings, any equipment, travel, or other needs are discussed and budget allocation decisions are made accordingly. The priorities include professional development as well as ensuring state-of-the-art technology, which is essential given the amount of data housed and processed by the IR office.

3. What is the space and facilities allocation?

Institutional Research has adequate space allocation for existing staff. Each member of the staff has a private office. However, any expansion of the office will bring space challenges.

4. To what extent does the allocation and its utilization allow unit goals and objectives to be realized?

The Institutional Research office is fortunate to have an adequate budget allocation that allows staff to participate in professional development activities annually, to keep office technology up to date, and to fully achieve all goals of which accomplishment depends on resources.

5. Do employee skills match the unit's needs?

- *Is additional training or cross training needed? If so, what kind?*
- *Is there a regular mechanism for providing training?*

One of the absolute strengths of the IR office at TMCC is its highly competent, well trained, and hard working staff. Each year, the office staff travels to the national conference organized by the

Association for Institutional Research (AIR), at which one or more staff members routinely present scholarly research. In addition, TMCC Training Days, the annual Community College Conference, local workshops, WEBinars, and professional publications are used as venues for professional development of our staff. Internal cross training is an on-going activity in the office.

However, it should again be noted that due to immense workload handled by three people in the IR office, there is virtually no time for staff to regularly read and stay current with professional IR and higher education publications, to play any active role in professional organizations, or to direct energy and resources to generate publishable research.

6. What changes could be made to produce greater efficiencies?

- ***Examples may include:, reduction, modification, or elimination of paperwork; structural reorganization***

As previously discussed, IR puts a lot of effort into streamlining and automating those areas of IR work that are scheduled and predictable, such as mandatory reports. The primary purpose for doing this is to ensure that reoccurring projects are run in the minimum amount of time and with maximum accuracy. This allows IR to juggle its standard functions with a highly unpredictable ad hoc workload. IR staff members are highly competent in technology and utilize every appropriate technical innovation that may help increase efficiency in the office. A most recent example of this would be the acquisition and implementation of new survey scanning software in 2004 that allowed us to significantly increase the efficiency of processing survey data and producing reports from such data. Internally, the office is highly efficient.

One aspect of running an efficient and effective office has to do with streamlining processes that deal with organization questions within the unit, such as purchasing, inventory tracking, etc. Currently IR does not have an office manual that would contain procedural information with respect to all these activities, policies, and guidelines of the institution. It is recommended that such a manual be developed.

7. What constraints must the unit address to achieve greater efficiencies?

- ***For example, resources, personnel, and technology***

One significant constraint to broadening the true research base of the unit (as opposed to straight data mining) is limited staffing. Currently, the IR unit operates at maximum capacity. Any future increase in workload or responsibilities stands to compromise the unit's ability to ensure basic reporting compliance of TMCC or the unit's ability to adequately serve the data needs of all members of the campus community.

VI

SUMMARY OF REPORT AND STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

1. Overall, what are the unit's greatest strengths?

- *What are the strengths that have been already highlighted in this report that you can summarize here.*
- *Add additional strengths that may not have been previously described.*

The unit's greatest strengths are:

- Highly competent, well trained, and hard working staff
- Comprehensive Institutional Research data warehouse
- Versatile data analysis and statistical tools
- Programming expertise on staff

The current Institutional Research office at TMCC is a strong blend of analytical, technical, programming, and graphic design expertise combined with a thorough knowledge and understanding of institutional research and higher education of Nevada, as well as commitment to TMCC and the success of its students.

2. How can the unit leverage the strengths that already exist?

- *Based on the analysis of the self-study how can the strengths be improved upon?*

The Institutional Research office at TMCC needs to be afforded the opportunity to move its work to a different level. Current staffing is adequate for performing traditional institutional research work, such as completing mandatory reports, and responding to ad hoc data requests from external and internal constituents. However, this does not allow involvement in any serious long-term research related to student learning, conducting in-depth analyses of institutional effectiveness, or undertaking truly innovative research. Without adding at least one more professional position, the Institutional Research unit is not in a position to deliver much more than what it currently does.

3. What areas need improvement, and what recommendations can address these?

Based on the self-study answer the following:

a. What, if any, changes are indicated in the unit's current mission, goals, and objectives?

None

b. What, if any, changes are indicated in the ways that achievement is measured?

As the unit went through its first self-study, it became evident that even though the performance indicators exist and are being reviewed regularly, there is no document or appropriate format that can be presented to anyone outside the office. After some discussions and brainstorming, a graphic format for tracking and displaying IR performance indicators has been created. This document will be maintained by IR and reviewed at the end of each year.

c. What, if any, changes are indicated in the services/products provided by the unit?

It is recommended that the IR staff develops a set of guidelines to assist faculty and staff with the survey process and publish it on the Web.

d. What, if any, changes are indicated in the unit's organizational structure, processes, and climate?

After discussing the results of the IR Employee Satisfaction Survey, it was determined that more efforts need to be made to ensure that the expectations are clearly defined when projects are assigned. This will be accomplished by providing more written instructions with projects at the time of assignment.

A binder with standardized instructions and consistent documentation for all major projects will be created to ensure consistency and availability of technical and procedural information on all major IR projects.

It is recommended that an Office Manual be developed. This document will incorporate policies, guidelines, and descriptions of all processes related to the office organization, such as budgeting, purchasing, inventory, etc.

e. What, if any, changes are indicated in the unit's resources (budget, space, staffing, etc.)?

There are three recommendations with respect to staffing of the IR unit:

- 4) Create a scale/steps that allows for an upward movement for research analysts (research analyst I, II, III). This would allow for appropriate compensation of analysts depending on knowledge, experience, and expertise.
- 5) Formally establish a position of IR programmer/Data manager, perhaps, by reclassifying one of the existing research analyst positions. This would bring the IR office in accordance with a growing trend in the institutional research field of having high tech experts on staff, thus raising the level of sophistication of data extraction and processes. It will also assist the IR office with conversion to a new student information system.

- 6) Add a full-time professional position to existing staff to help cope with demand for data and information as well broaden scope of research activities performed by the unit. *For more detailed rationale for adding an extra professional full-time position, please see page 33 of this document.*

Review the recommendations derived from 3a-e above.

- a. *What priorities among these areas should be set?*
- b. *What is a realistic timetable for the achievement of the recommendations (1-, 3-, 5-years)? Within each time frame, prioritize the recommendations.*
- c. *How does the unit plan to monitor progress?*
- d. *Sample format below: Be sure to include some type of goals priority list with a way to monitor progress*

One Year Goals

	<i>Prioritized recommendation(s)</i>	<i>Measure of Progress</i>
1.	Create a binder with technical and procedural information on all major IR reports	Completion and publication of such binder
2.	Create an IR Office Procedures Manual	Creation and publication of such manual
3.	Establish Survey Guidelines	Creation and publication of guidelines on IR Web site
4.	Formally establish a IR programmer/Data Manager position	Establishment of such position

Three-Year Goals

	<i>Prioritized recommendation(s)</i>	<i>Measure of Progress</i>
1.	Addition of a professional position	Hire IR professional
2.	Creating steps for research analyst positions	Implemented progression scale for research analysts I, II, III
3.	Conduct CCESSSE or any other major student satisfaction survey	Survey administration, compilation, and dissemination of results

Five-Year Goals

	<i>Prioritized recommendation(s)</i>	<i>Measure of Progress</i>
1.	Conduct more innovative research projects (contingent upon accomplishment of goals 1 and 2 in the previous section)	Completion of at least 2 major innovative projects per year

