

INSTITUTIONAL DIRECTIVE 2-8

October 24, 2005

Title: Institutional Effectiveness and Research

I. Purpose

The purpose of this directive is to set forth the principles and procedures that will be used in conducting institutional research and effectiveness studies within the college.

II. Policy

It is the policy of Piedmont Technical College to conduct applied research of the college's operations and programs in order to provide accurate and valid information, for the purpose of improving the efficiency, effectiveness, strategic planning needs and performance quality of the college.

III. Philosophy

Institutional research in partnership with the college President and Institutional Officers will monitor, regulate and report information consistent with Performance Based Legislation mandate for the college. Baseline reporting data will be driven by the Fall term IPEDS reports and the CORE extract of each Fall term. Institutional research and performance based outcomes will be conducted within the institution to provide information that will augment institutional planning, policy formulation and decision-making. Typically, such research is either in the form of applied research to answer specific questions which the college's administration and staff may have regarding particular decisions, policy or planning situations or evaluative research leading to judgment about program effectiveness, continuation, and improvement. In addition, research and effectiveness issues may be undertaken on a general topic with the expectation that the finding will be generally informative and result in improved comprehension of the overall institution. Institutional research and effectiveness studies will be done in an objective, systematic and thorough manner.

Office of Responsibility: President

Its aim is to provide the objective information and analysis to institutional decision-makers, which they can combine with their academic and professional judgment in planning and other decision-making processes. The quality of institutional research and effectiveness studies is affected by the adequacy of the design, implementation and analysis undertaken. In recognition of this fact, it is vitally important to ensure the validity and usefulness of the institutional research conducted by the college. Although all institutional activities need not be conducted by the person(s) designated as the college's institutional researchers, all such activity should be designed, implemented, and completed under the professional guidance of such individuals. An effective institutional research program recognizes the interdependence between the administrative and educational processes of the college. The aim of educational studies should be to maximize the institution's educational processes, but the means to do so must be cognizant of related institutional cost and administrative concerns. Similarly, because education is the fundamental reason the college exists, administrative decisions must be based, in large measure, on their essential effects on the institution's educational program. Thus, institutional research within the college should aim to maintain the interrelationship between administrative and educational research.

IV. Definitions

For the purpose of this directive, the following definitions will apply:

- A. Institutional Research and Effectiveness - The function of data collection, analysis, reporting, and related staff work designed to assess quality, effectiveness, and decision-making within institutions of higher education.
- B. Data Collection - The collection of data manually by means of either questionnaires, interviews, tests, and other techniques or electronically by means of the institution's computerized data base management system. A function of data collection is to organize the existing raw data into forms especially useful for analysis and interpretation.
- C. Analysis - The compilation of data into tables, charts, or graphs giving data new meaning or at a more fundamental level of analysis using statistical treatment to relate different types of data, and specifying the implications of the data.
- D. Reports - The reports presenting the data collected and its analysis including interpretations, conclusions, and alternative recommendations for possible future action.
- E. Staff Work - The consultation with administrators, faculty, or committees of the institution with regard to the conduct of institutional research projects, development of procedures for institutional operations and formulations of position papers on issues of institutional concern.
- F. Performance Indicator(s) - Those measures outlined in the Performance Based Legislation (refer to attached Summary Chart for each Indicator). These measures are reported to CHE and SBTCE on a yearly basis and dictate the college's funding for the following year.

V. Scope of Institutional Research

The scope of institutional research and effectiveness within the college should include the following functions:

- A. Analytical Reports - Analytical reports are periodic analyses of quantifiable aspects of the college's operations, including interpretation, but primarily tabular presentations. These include reports on enrollment trends, class size, teaching load, unit cost analysis, space and facilities utilization studies, and key indicators reports.
- B. Summary Reports - Summary reports are presented generally in tabular, graph, and/or chart form of summary information from operating and analytical reports, pertaining to the numbers of faculty and other staff, student enrollment, student credit hours, budgets, revenues, and expenditures, degrees granted, class size, and teaching loads, etc. Such reports cover a period of years in a form that permits ready reference and easy annual updating.
- C. Basic Research Studies - These studies are those of the institution leading to general comprehension of the institution and/or its environment. Examples of such studies would be educational needs, assessments, graduate follow-ups, student interest, organizational climate, community impact studies, and market research.
- D. Special Studies - These studies are intended to answer specific questions in planning, policy, or decision situations. Included in such studies would be those related to students, (i.e. student ability, student retention, student advising, student achievement, course selection behavior, student attrition, etc.), faculty (i.e. faculty recruitment tenure policies, fringe benefits, etc.), curriculum (i.e. degree requirements, grading practices, class scheduling, etc.).
- E. Evaluation Studies - In Support of Educational Development-Evaluation involves the assembling of the quantitative and qualitative information which underlies periodic reviews of programs resulting in the judgments and decisions about program revision, improvement, and continuation.
- F. Mathematical Modeling and Simulation Studies - The intent of these studies is to produce an analysis by which implications of alternative courses of action are assessed in the context of program planning, budgeting, and costing. An example of such studies would include enrollment projection, resource allocation strategies, modeling space utilization, etc.
- G. External Questionnaires - The institutional research office may be asked to assist in providing the often-extensive information required to support proposals for outside funding, to serve as a focal point for the assembling of the institutional information required for self-studies and to respond to special requests for information from outside the college.
- H. Related Staff Work - The institutional research office will provide staff assistance in the form of consultation with faculty and administrative councils or committees which are considering problems of and policies for the institution. The Office of Institutional Research may serve as staff to such groups and, in addition to providing information for their consideration, may be asked to prepare position papers for discussion.

VI. Procedures

- A. Requests for information may be on a formal or informal basis. Regardless of the pathway for the request, the purpose is to define the scope, purpose, and time frames for such requests. A formal request is in writing, specifying data required, background search years; type of format (narrative, graphic visuals, or combinations). Informal requests will also require that specific requirements be made. In some instances a brief meeting will be held with the person(s) making the request to determine the time frames and desired format of the information requested.
- B. Extracting Operational Data - All data will be extracted from three main functional sources. The Primary Source will be the college's computerized data base; A Secondary Source will be the utilization of the state's MIS data base and the Tertiary Source will be the collection and analysis of data from functional program units of the college.
- C. Initiation of Research Requests - The Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness encourages potential users to provide the Research office ample lead time for the development of reports, studies, surveys, and other institutional research projects. Initial requests may be made in writing or by personal visit but should include:
 - 1. use and purpose for the research;
 - 2. suggested design needs for research and
 - 3. format of final report (i.e., narrative, graphic, tabular, etc.)The Office of Institutional Research, to insure quality and validity of all reports, may present alternative methods for the design and final product of requests. Research requests, which in the judgment of Institutional Research, do not improve the efficient and effectiveness of the institution, will be reviewed by the President to determine further disposition.
- D. Conducting Surveys - Surveys remain a valuable and often used method for the collection of information both within the institution and the general community. Surveys distributed externally within the community and internally within the college are a direct reflection of the quality of the institution. Therefore, particular care should be given in preparing, distributing and collating all surveys conducted under the auspices of the college to use proper techniques of survey research. The use of such techniques will ensure that the type and quality of survey information is accurate and useful in conducting institutional business.
 - 1. Design - The Office of Institutional Research should review the design of all surveys conducted by staff members of the college prior to distribution. Such a review ensures that the information to be obtained from the proposed survey is not already available and that the survey design is appropriate. When appropriate, the OIR will make necessary recommendations for strengthening a given instrument.
 - 2. Distribution - All surveys conducted internally to the College will be approved by the President and members of the Executive Council prior to distribution.
 - 3. Collation – All surveys returned to the office of Institutional Research will be tabulated and distributed to the proper official of the college, committee, etc. As surveys are designed to be confidential instruments, completed surveys will

remain within the Office of Institutional Research until such time that the completed survey instrument may be discarded in such a manner (i.e. shredding) to insure confidentiality of respondents. Individuals may request to view completed surveys by making such a request through the Office of the President.

4. Confidentiality – All data and information contained in studies of college operations and programs will not include the names or social security numbers of individual students and college personnel. The Institutional Research and Effectiveness Office will adhere to a confidential structure that will protect and provide the reliability for conducting and analyzing operational data.
- E. Regular Reports – The Institutional Research office will prepare summary reports on a regular quarterly and yearly basis. The summary reports will focus upon those issues, which may have an impact upon the decision making processes at the college as well as serve as a baseline for future comparative evaluative studies. These reports include, but may not be limited to, Headcount, FTE, Contact Hours, Student Profiles, Retention, Faculty Loading, and Grade Distribution. These reports will be generated through the college's data base, SBTCE Data Bases, and/or developed computer programs for manipulating the college's existing data base. These reports will be provided to the College President, Institutional Officers, Academic Deans and Department Heads.
- F. Special Studies – The Institutional Research office may serve as the responsible office or as an “ad-hoc” member of task forces or other groups with special requests made through the Research Office to assist with, and/or coordinate the development of one-time special studies. Special studies are those reports which would be a one time endeavor to review, finalize, or research a topic or concern which is relevant to the decision making process of the college. Special studies may be requested by administrators or staff of the college. Results of special studies will be disseminated to the appropriate college personnel and a copy will be kept on file in the Research Office.
- G. Institutional Effectiveness – The Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness shall serve as the coordinator of Institutional Effectiveness for the college. This office shall assist in planning, developing, and implementing Institutional Effectiveness endeavors. Quality Assurance standards and measures will be developed jointly with the appropriate college personnel; Implementation may be a singular or joint activity, dependent upon the scope and direction of the project; findings will be prepared by the Research Office. The findings will be reviewed by the Institutional Officers of the college and the college President. Copies of effectiveness reports will be provided to each institutional officer, the college president, academic deans the Institutional Effectiveness coordinator for SBTCE, and the CHE liaison.
- H. Evaluation of Institutional Research - Attempts will be made to evaluate the effectiveness of Institutional Research on a biyearly basis. Evaluation will consist of a survey based upon SACS criteria and distributed to Institutional Officers, Deans, Department Heads and users of Institutional Research for the current year. All evaluative data will be returned to the college president and Institutional Officers.

VII. Responsibilities

- A. The of Director of Institutional Research is responsible for implementing and coordinating all institutional research within the college. This responsibility includes either the actual conduct of institutional research studies through the college's Office of Institutional Research or the coordination and oversight of studies conducted in other parts of the college. In addition, the Director of Institutional Research is responsible for coordinating with the College's Director of MIS the development of the college's database to ensure that the data needed to support summary reports is routinely processed. Finally, the Coordinator of Institutional Research should suggest and initiate research projects in those areas of the college's operations and/or educational programs warranting such study.
- B. The college president is responsible for the effectiveness of the college's institutional research programs. As such, he will establish annual institutional research priorities and conduct periodic evaluations of the institutional research function.

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