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Data Nerd News

Miramar College Office of Planning, Research, and Institutional Effectiveness's Bi-monthly Newsletter

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Welcome back! It's been a busy few months for your in-house data nerds, and so our May volume is stuffed with news and information. If you still can't get enough of *Data Nerd News* after devouring this, download the [March 2018 volume](#) for even more helpful information and resources. Take **five** and spend some time catching up with the data nerds!

-Your in-house data nerd team

High five! The 2018 College-wide Planning Summit was a huge success!

On March 16, 2018, over 100 people attended the 2018 College-wide Planning Summit (CWPS). The Summit began with introductory remarks by President Hsieh and a short game that challenged participants' knowledge of Miramar College. Next, Daniel Miramontez, Dean, PRI-ELT and Naomi Grisham, PIEC Co-Chair, reviewed the [San Diego Miramar College \(SDMC\) Roadmap to Success](#), which combines the Six Factors of Student Success, the Loss/Momentum Framework, and the Eight Principles of Redesign which serves as a basis for Miramar College's planning and continuous improvement efforts. Five students shared their experiences attending Miramar College with the audience, with Professor David Mehlhoff serving as the moderator of the discussion.

Using the Roadmap to help situate their efforts, the room broke into cross-functional discussion groups to dialogue about potential interventions to respond to SDMC's six college-wide priorities (identified by assessing the strategic goals found in the [Educational Master Plan Update](#)). Over 14 interventions to increase student success, persistence, and completion were developed!

PRIE has developed an [interactive data packet summarizing the interventions](#) YOU developed. The data packet includes a set of guiding questions for helping constituencies adopt all or part of an intervention through their unit-level planning.

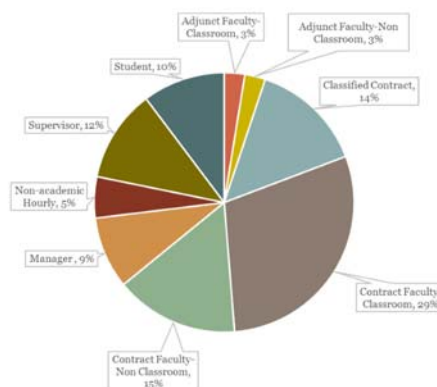
Of the 80 people who responded to the evaluation, 93%

shared that they were satisfied with the summit. In addition:

- 100% of respondents agreed that the Summit was well planned.
- 92% agreed that participating in this Summit made them feel more connected to the Miramar College Community.
- 86% agreed that participating in this Summit helped them feel like they had a voice on campus.

In open-ended responses, participants expressed that they enjoyed the opportunity to collaborate with people from across the college to work toward the shared goal of supporting the success of Miramar College students. Student participation was considered essential for driving conversation and focus. The full [evaluation report on the 2018 CWPS](#) is available for download.

Take a look at who attended the 2018 CWPS!



SPOTLIGHT ON RESEARCH

In this issue, we interview Patricia Manley, Assistant Professor of History, and the point person for program review for Liberal Arts at Miramar College. PRIE worked closely with Professor Manley to make sure that the program review data packets reflected the current structure of liberal arts disciplines, and that program review leads had the data they needed in order to plan for continuous improvement.

Professor Manley, what sorts of program review related requests did you refer to our office?

I made several requests. In the past, the history program review data packets included Black Studies courses. I let PRIE know that this was not an accurate reflection of my discipline's offerings. I also notified PRIE about an issue with the art program review data packet. In the past, all art courses were included in the same report. However, in actuality we have three different art disciplines: Art History, Graphics, and Studio Art. Upon notification of the issue, PRIE quickly reassembled new data packets to reflect these divisions. PRIE also responded to requests for further disaggregation of program review data.

We really appreciate all the feedback you provided to our office, Professor Manley! It's important for us to create program review data packets that reflect disciplines' needs, but we can't do that without content experts like you. Can you share how you use data in informing your own program review for history? Did you identify any interesting trends or new insights?

The data packets were very helpful in providing an overall view of our programs. The History program and courses provide support for the History AA-T degree, but also the entire college, through providing required courses to students. It was important for us to place our program in context of the overall goals of the College. We used the data to evaluate not only course-level information but also to understand the student population supported.

For example, after reviewing the data we saw that a large proportion of our students are online; however, the success rates of these students tend to be lower than those in traditional classroom environments. We used that data to discuss how we could improve online instruction to support those students. History faculty collaborated on various tools and pedagogical methods to improve online student success. We want to create an online teaching lab for adjunct faculty to provide them with software and equipment to increase student interaction.

To really understand the problem, we reviewed recent research on online teaching. We found that current research supports our experience that online students are often less successful than on campus students. The good news is that online students are more successful in completing degrees and certificates. In other words, despite having lower course-level outcomes, they have higher persistence and completion. This reinforced our plan to continue offering online courses, while seeking ways to further support student success.

One interesting trend we found in the data was that despite a 42% increase in the number of courses offered over the last five years, History courses retained about an 83% fill rate. One concern was that as we continued to offer more courses, we would experience lower fill rates and that the demand would not be there. But this was not the case: Enrollment in history sections

continue to increase and success and retention rates have increased as well. For us this confirmed we are focused in the right direction. It also supports the importance of the History program and its place in the overall success of the College and other degree programs.

The information provided in the data packet was also used to support the need for additional contract faculty. Given the increases in the number of history courses we offer and growing enrollments, it is understood that, to continue to meet that demand, additional contract faculty are necessary. Using the data provided in the packet, we were able to prove that need clearly.

As the program review coordinator for Liberal Arts, do you have any advice for how disciplines can use program review as a chance to strengthen their programs rather than just "check the box"?

After spending time really reviewing the data and looking at the information, it actually gave us a clear view of our program. Data can be used to strengthen a program just by showing what areas you are already successful. If overall student success and retention is great that in of itself shows the strength of a program. If the data shows a disproportional impact in one area, then it is clear where a program can start to focus.

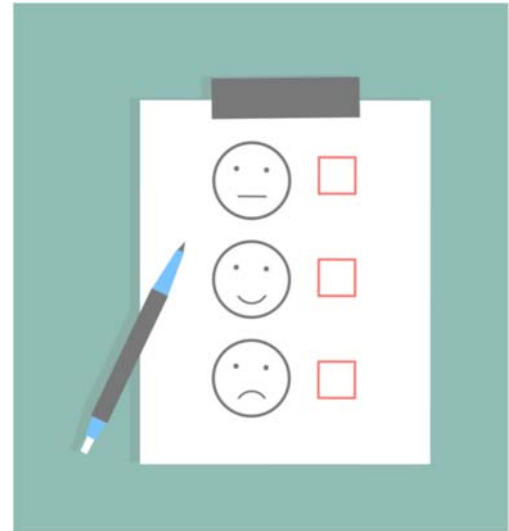
The data packet and the interactive data dashboard were great for looking at individual courses, semesters, and different course modalities. If there was a weakness or need, that need can be turned into a goal and then setting the action plans are very clear. Faculty often say that equipment or materials are necessary because they inherently through their experiences know that student success and retention will improve if that added faculty, material, or equipment is available. Unfortunately, it can sometimes be difficult to quantify the cost and benefit. If faculty, equipment, or materials are needed, and you want to find the supporting information, look to the data packet. I would also suggest that the person responsible for program review really reach out to other faculty in their departments and talk about these data packets and how they used them. I found that the more we talked about information in the data packet the more we were able to learn from it and use it in our program review. My last comment would be if faculty need help understanding the data packet or need information not in the data, just ask. The only way the data can be helpful is if it is used and understood. It is a collaborative effort. The PRIE staff were extremely helpful and friendly.

By the numbers: More than five ways PRIE supports instructional program review!

- Distributed **41** comprehensive data packets
- Created **1** interactive data dashboard
- Created **2** FAQ guides
- Led **1** college-wide workshop to support program review leads
- Held **10** "office hours" to provide one-on-one help interpreting program review data, and visited multiple departments in-person for data coaching
- Responded to more than **5** requests for additional data and disaggregation to support program review

Research Update Corner

- PRIE assisted with more than **5x2** Basic Skills and Student Equity grant proposals, from providing extant data to justify funding needs to developing evaluation plans.
- This spring, PRIE has assisted with almost **5x2** surveys, including an employee survey, a college-wide student survey, classroom surveys, and point-in-time surveys. PRIE assists in all aspects of survey research, from design to distribution to data analysis and data coaching to reporting results.
- This summer, PRIE will be busy as always. Major undertakings include:
 - Continuing to develop more interactive data dashboards (a special gift for all our fellow data nerds!)
 - Producing the 2017/18 Miramar College Qualitative Data Packet
 - Updating College-wide Annual Reports



Five Quick Tips for Better Surveying from the Data Nerds

In research, there is a common saying: “garbage in, garbage out.” That is, your research is only as good as the quality (validity, reliability, and completeness) of your data. Here are a few quick, easy tips for improving your surveys.

1. Make sure a survey is the right method for gathering the type of information you need. Surveys are best for providing a snapshot of how a group of people feel and/or perceive reality at a given point in time (perceptual/attitudinal data).
2. Avoid asking too many questions, too many types of questions (e.g., yes/no, Likert, open-ended), or questions about too many topics. As for the latter, questions should be focused on finding information about a theme or related set of themes.
3. Don't ask more than 2-3 open-ended questions. Instead, you might consider conducting interviews or focus groups.
4. Always make sure to include a preamble about why you are collecting data and how participants can expect their data to be used and shared.
5. Contact PRIE for help using the [Miramar College Research Request Form](#).

Five Reasons You Shouldn't Wait to Include Research

From many years of experience, we've identified a troubling trend: Too often research comes as an afterthought. But if you've waited until your granting agency asks you for evidence that the program or initiative that it helped fund has been successful, you've already missed your window of opportunity. In this issue, we make the case for including research early on in the planning process for rolling out a new program or initiative.

1. You'll clarify the goals and objectives of your program or initiative.

In order to measure a program or initiative's success, you need to have a holistic and realistic understanding of the goals and objectives it is designed to meet. The process of designing a research plan presses you to define your aims, as well as to be realistic about expected accomplishments. (It's easier to shoot for the moon when you don't plan to measure the distance you actually travel!) This planning process can ultimately help your program or initiative be more successful.

2. You'll collect the data you need to effectively evaluate your program or initiative.

Let's say the main goal of your new initiative is to increase the number of students who access a particular resource on campus. However, you didn't collect data on how many students accessed the resource before you introduced your initiative, and you waited ten months into the year-long initiative before you started collecting data. It's now impossible to measure whether or not your program worked. By considering research early on in the planning process, you'll have a better chance of collecting the data you need to measure success.

3. You'll budget for high quality research.

The data nerds are excited to help you plan and carry out your program evaluation. However, PRIE has no dedicated budget to support research efforts on campus. That means your program or initiative is responsi-

ble for aspects of research like: computers to collect survey information on-site, scantrons, extensive data entry, and/or incentives for research participants. By planning early, you'll remember to set aside funds for these important items.

4. You can find and fix problems in the implementation of your program or initiative early.

If you conduct research throughout a program or initiative instead of waiting until the end (or the completion of year one), you'll be able to identify and correct problems or issues right away. You'll also be able to tell a longitudinal story through your data, showing how your engagement in the process of continuous improvement helped make your program stronger over time. But most importantly, the earlier you identify problems and fix them, the more people you are able to positively impact. Alternatively, the longer the wait, the fewer students or staff get to realize the benefits of your new program or initiative.

5. You'll be honest with yourself and your constituents about what your program or initiative actually achieved.

Initiating research after a program or initiative has already been implemented incentivizes focusing only on measuring what worked. When you decide how to measure how well you've met your goals and objectives in advance, the research findings will better reflect both your success and mishaps. It can be easy to forget that the goal of research isn't getting more funding to support another year of an initiative, the goal is to support student success. Sometimes it can take a few years to see results from a program. However, if you've had time to iron out the wrinkles and kinks and the program still isn't benefitting students in sizeable ways, it's time to dump it and try something new.