

CPR Administrative

A. DEPARTMENT DESCRIPTION

1. What are critical ways your department advances the mission and goals of the college? Cite some examples. Limit 500 words.

Santa Monica College seeks to be “a leader and innovator in college transfer, career preparation, upward mobility, and lifelong learning,” offering “an inclusive, equitable, and high-quality education designed to transform the lives of our students, their families, and the community.” The mission emphasizes delivering “robust educational programs and support services ... in an inclusive and dynamic learning environment,” and committing to eliminate racial equity gaps as a proud minority-serving institution.

The Office of Institutional Research (IR) advances this mission by providing timely, high-quality, equity-centered research, evaluation, and data support that informs planning, decision-making, and continuous improvement across the College. IR plays a central role in ensuring that SMC remains a data-informed institution committed to access, equity, academic excellence, and student success.

IR advances SMC’s mission and goals through several core strategies (not a comprehensive or exhaustive list of our office functions):

Equity-Minded Data & Analysis

We apply a race-conscious, equity-minded lens to data gathering, analysis, and reporting, disaggregating data by race/ethnicity and other student characteristics to surface structural inequities and support departments in identifying root causes for gaps. IR provides consultations and trains practitioners on data interpretation using an equity-minded lens and using evidence to redesign practices, policies, and services to better serve racially and other minoritized students.

Building Capacity Through Data Coaching

IR leads the College’s data literacy and capacity-building efforts through the Data Coaching Program which aims to train practitioners in analyzing disaggregated data, conducting equity-focused inquiry, exploring root causes of equity gaps, and designing targeted interventions. This hands-on approach strengthens the College’s culture of inquiry and supports the College’s commitment to evidence-informed planning, learning, and continuous improvement.

Supporting Planning, Evaluation, and Institutional Effectiveness

IR facilitates the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data at multiple levels, including course, activity, programs, initiatives, departments, committees, and collegewide efforts. IR helps practitioners across all areas of the college, Student Services, Academic Affairs, Administrative and Operational, assess practices and identify opportunities to improve them.

Developing and Maintaining Data Dashboards

IR develops and maintains interactive data dashboards in Precision Campus for the college community and public. These dashboards provide interactive, dynamic information on student demographics, enrollment patterns, course success, persistence, degrees and certificates, and other outcomes. Users can explore multi-year trends, apply filters, and access historical insights that support program review, departmental planning, and institutional decision-making. These tools expand transparency, promote shared understanding, and strengthen the College’s capacity to engage in data-informed inquiry at all levels.

Together, these examples illustrate how IR advances SMC’s mission and goals of access, equity, academic excellence, and effectiveness. By providing clear, meaningful, and equity-minded data, IR helps the College see where students are succeeding, and where they need additional support. Our work gives practitioners the tools to make informed decisions, improve practice, and address barriers experienced by racially and other minoritized students. In doing so, IR enhances SMC’s ability to create an inclusive, supportive, and high-quality learning environment, one that truly transforms students’ lives and moves the College closer to its mission and goals.

2. What internal and external factors have impacted your department since the last review that would provide context for your self-evaluation report? Limit 500 words.

Externally, the California Community Colleges system's accountability frameworks shape the work of our department. IR plays a central role in helping SMC align its institutional effectiveness efforts with state priorities, including supporting college governance in setting goals for accountability metrics, communicating progress to the campus community to foster meaningful dialogue, and monitoring outcomes in ways that inform planning, guide decision-making, and support continuous improvement. The most recent framework introduced since our last comprehensive review is Vision 2030 which requires colleges to more intentionally track enrollment, completion, transfer, living wage, and equity gaps for these outcomes.

Federal and state mandated reporting have substantially increased since the last full program review in 2016, adding significantly to IR's workload. New requirements include validation studies related to AB 1705/1805, implementation of Financial Value Transparency/Gainful Employment (FTV/GE) regulations, Student Centered Funding Formula (SCFF) data audits, and the launch of the Vision Aligned Reporting (VAR) initiative. These demands are layered on top of existing reporting responsibilities such as the federal Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), the state Student Equity and Achievement (SEA) reporting, and annual accreditation data submissions.

The COVID-19 pandemic further expanded IR's workload and required rapid operational shifts to support urgent institutional needs. For example, IR supported Human Resources in transitioning paper-based classroom evaluations to temporary online administration until a permanent digital system could be secured. In another example, IR worked closely with Financial Aid (2020-2024) to verify eligibility and support outreach for federal and state emergency aid programs (CARES, HEERF, and state disaster relief funding). During this period, IR also conducted numerous studies to assess student and employee needs, experiences, and barriers during the pandemic, enabling the College to respond in real time to a rapidly changing environment.

Internally, SMC's ongoing structural budget challenges have continued to significantly impact staffing within IR. Over the past several years, the office has experienced a steady reduction in personnel due to retirements, separations, and unfilled vacancies. Positions that were vacated during the pandemic period (2020-2023), including a Senior Research Analyst and an Administrative Assistant II, were not refilled as part of broader institutional budget constraints. More recently, as part of the District's budget alignment efforts and workforce reduction plan, two of the remaining three classified positions (analysts) are scheduled to be eliminated effective July 1, 2026. The third analyst will retire effective May 1, 2026. As a result, IR will transition from a team of four to a single position consisting of the Dean. **This represents a substantial reduction in institutional research capacity**, limiting the College's ability to sustain its current level of support for program review, accreditation, compliance reporting, equity-focused inquiry, and data-informed decision-making. While grant-funded positions have intermittently supplemented capacity in the past, the current federal and state funding landscape makes reliance on grants and increasingly uncertain and unsustainable strategy for maintaining core IR functions.

At the same time, SMC has a strong data literate, inquiry-driven culture, which creates sustained and increasing demand for IR services. While this culture strengthens institutional learning and planning, this high demand, combined with expanding state and federal mandates, creates workforce pressures that are increasingly difficult to manage with current staffing levels.

Broader external trends also shape IR's work. The field of IR is rapidly evolving, fueled by advancements in big data, visualization, automation, and AI-enabled analytics. However, SMC's software and technological infrastructure constraints limit the department's ability to adopt state-of-the-art tools, reducing capability for innovation and efficiency.

B. DEPARTMENT'S CUSTOMERS

3. Whom do you primarily serve? Describe the services you provide for each of the groups you identify (for example, students, employees, Enrollment Services Department, City of Santa Monica). Limit 250 words.

The Office of Institutional Research serves the entire College community, including students, faculty, staff, managers, senior administration, instructional departments, student and learning support service programs, administrative units, college committees, and the Board of Trustees. IR also supports external stakeholders such as the Accrediting Commission, the federal government, the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, and entities that request institutional data.

IR serves these groups by responding to ad hoc data and research requests; providing assessment, evaluation, and research support; and offering training and consultation related to planning, program review, equity-focused inquiry, and institutional effectiveness.

In addition, IR oversees the College's Institutional Review Board (IRB) function, ensuring the ethical and safe treatment of human subjects who participate in research studies conducted by external researchers. In this role, IR serves external researchers who wish to collect data directly from SMC students or employees for their studies, helping ensure compliance with federal regulations and protecting the rights and well-being of participants.

C. ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

4. Describe the progress your department has made on meeting the objectives and recommendations from your last program review. (Skip if first time completing program review) Limit 500 words.

The past two objectives were part of 2020-2021 annual program review, and our progress on these objectives were reported on in our 2023-2024 Progress Update.

Objective #1 – Precision Campus Tools and Training

The first objective focused on developing a suite of tools and training materials to support the implementation of Precision Campus, the College's data reporting and dashboards platform, which was adopted in Spring 2021. As reported in our last PU, this objective was completed. Since 2021, IR has provided nearly a dozen trainings, both via Zoom and in person, including most recently during Fall 2025 Flex Day. We will continue to offer these trainings, and we regularly invite department chairs, program leaders, and managers to request customized trainings tailored to their specific programs and staff.

To further support campus use of Precision Campus, IR has developed a comprehensive set of resources, including:

- A data dictionary
- Step-by-step guides and manuals with hands-on data exercises
- More than a dozen "how-to" tutorial videos highlighting the platform's key functions
- Dedicated office hours for Precision Campus support

We also continuously respond to stakeholder feedback by adding new data filters, updating existing reports, and anticipating emerging needs. For example, we recently added the MOCAN program as a new filter across all data reports based on campus requests.

IR partners with departments and programs, such as Equitizing Gateway Courses Program, to integrate Precision Campus into their inquiry processes, helping faculty and staff pull, explore, and analyze data in the context of their work. These collaborations have significantly increased campuswide usage of the tool.

Finally, IR actively monitors Precision Campus usage trends and regularly discusses as a department how to further engage the campus community in using the platform to address data questions and initiate inquiry in departments.

Objective #2 – NACC Analyses

The second objective focused on developing support materials to help the campus interpret and meaningfully engage with the results of the 2019 National Assessment of Collegiate Campus Climates (NACCC) student survey. The 110-item racial climate survey was administered to SMC students in November/December 2019, and the College received the official findings from USC's Center for Race and Equity during the 2020–2021 academic year. In collaboration with the Equity Steering Committee, IR shared the results widely across the campus community, including presentations during Fall and Spring Flex Day, the annual Equity Summit, and dedicated Equity Speaks and Research Roundtable events.

During the 2021–2022 academic year, IR advanced this objective further by developing tools and guides to support campus leaders in facilitating their own discussions. These resources included a customizable PowerPoint template and a set of guiding questions designed to help departments and committees engage in thoughtful sense-making, contextualize the findings, and identify implications for practice.

The NACCC survey was administered again in Spring 2025, and IR is currently partnering with the Dean of Equity, Pathways, and Inclusion to socialize the campus to the new findings.

5. Outcomes are the results your department hopes to achieve after providing services and carrying out the functions of your department. What are one to three outcomes your department has focused on since the last program review cycle? How do you assess or measure them (i.e. survey, internal tracking)? Limit 300 words.

IR began systematically assessing its Unit Outcomes (UOs) in July 2011 by embedding assessment items into the Institutional Research Services Feedback Survey. This survey is administered to SMC faculty, staff, and managers who received data or research support through the ad hoc request process. Over time, the survey has evolved to better meet the office's assessment needs. The current version, which was first administered in June 2025, includes 8 items.

Since 2011, IR's UO statements have been revised four times to reflect the changing scope of the office and the evolving needs of the College. The most recent revision, completed in May 2022, updated the UOs to better align with IR's revised mission statement, which now explicitly centers equity and supports the College's equity-focused goals. These UOs are assessed using two sets of questions embedded in the eight-item survey:

UO 1: Meaningful Use of Data for Inquiry and Action

At least 70% of users will report that IR data, tools, or consultation directly supported evidence-informed decision-making, planning, or continuous improvement efforts.

Survey Q: How much do you agree with the following statements?

- IR data, tools, or consultation supported me in making informed decisions in my role
- IR support helped me contribute to planning, evaluation, or program improvement efforts.
- The data or insights provided by IR directly influenced next steps in my project, program, or area.

UO 2: Advancing Racial Equity through Research Support

At least 75% of users will report that IR data, consultation, or training helped them apply a race-conscious and equity-minded lens to their work (e.g., identify equity gaps, ask new questions, inform program changes).

Survey Q: How much do you agree with the following statements?

- IR data or consultation helped me examine racial equity gaps in access or outcomes.
- Working with IR helped me think more critically about the causes of equity gaps.

6. Describe how your department incorporates stakeholder (student, employee groups) feedback for unit planning. Limit 300 words.

In addition to the Institutional Research Services Feedback Survey, IR gathers feedback from staff and faculty who attend our workshops, trainings, and presentations through the IR Workshop Feedback Survey. This information helps us continuously refine our training content, facilitation approaches, and presentation skills. In response to this feedback, IR has expanded its professional development offerings to include more in-person training options and has developed new Precision Campus training materials that are more accessible and user-friendly, with an emphasis on clear, lay-friendly language to support broader engagement with data tools.

We also maintain an IR Suggestions Box, which allows anyone in the campus community to provide anonymous feedback on how IR can improve its services and support. All feedback received through these mechanisms is reviewed annually and incorporated into unit planning during the IR staff retreat, ensuring that our practices evolve in response to campus needs.

7. Based on analyses of the data your department collects, address the following questions Limit 500 words.: a. What is your department doing well? b. What didn't work as well in your department in the last six years? c. What are the lessons you learned? What will you do differently in the future?

What IR Is Doing Well:

- **Increased PC Usage**

| | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 |
|--------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| View | 39,365 | 28,258 | 34,754 | 49,209 | 49,085 |
| Unique Users | 324 | 244 | 203 | 214 | 197 |

Precision Campus (PC) usages data shows strong engagement with the platform since its 2021 adoption, with tens of thousands of views annually. After a dip in 2022 (28K views), usage rebounded and grew steadily, reaching just over 49K views in both 2024 and 2025. The sustained high volume of views in 2025 suggests that PC has become an embedded tool for ongoing inquiry and planning rather than a tool used episodically or solely for compliance-driven reporting.

While the number of unique users is relatively smaller than total views (197-324 annually), the patterns indicate deep, repeated use by a core group of institutional users (chairs, program leads, and managers) using the dashboards regularly for planning, program review, and evaluation.

These usage patterns reinforce the ongoing need for training, office hours, and customized departmental workshops, as the effectiveness of the tool depends on user skill and confidence.

- **Timeliness/Quality of Interactions with IR Staff**

Findings from the 2025 Survey (n=30; response rate 43%) show strong satisfaction with IR services. 100% of respondents reported that IR's response to research/data support were "Always" or "Usually" timely, and 93% described interactions with staff as "very positive, courteous, helpful, and easy to work with".

- **IR Support Directly Contributes to Planning and Continuous Improvement**

Survey findings also indicate that IR is meeting UO#1: IR tools, data, and/or consultation directly supported planning, decision-making, and continuous improvement efforts.

- 85% strongly agreed that IR data, tools, or consultation helped them make **informed decisions** (n=27)
- 89% strongly agreed that IR support helped them **plan, evaluate, or improve** their programs (n=28)
- 78% strongly agreed that data or insights provided by IR influenced their **"next steps"** (n=27)

Where We Need to Improve:

Survey results show that we are not fully meeting UO#2 which focuses on helping practitioners apply a race-conscious and equity-minded lens to their work:

- 68% strongly agreed that IR helped them examine racial equity gaps (n=22)
- However, only 59% strongly agreed that IR helped them think more critically about causes of equity gaps (n=22). Our goal is 75%.

Lessons Learned

UO#2 results suggest an opportunity to deepen IR's support for equity-minded data interpretation, sensemaking, and dialogue.

Furthermore, the demand for IR services continues to grow, but current staffing levels make it difficult to sustain the volume and quality of support expected across the College. The table below illustrates a recent decline in the number of ad hoc requests IR is able to complete, which coincides with declining full-time employee (FTE) over the past six years. These figures don't include administrative work completed by the dean nor IR-initiated projects, for example IR trainings, committee work, etc.

This reinforces the need for creative and innovative approaches to meet SMC's research needs.

| | 2019-2020 | 2020-2021 | 2021-2022 | 2022-2023 | 2023-2024 | 2024-2025 |
|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Employee FTE | 6.0 | 5.0 | 4.0 | 3.5 | 4.5 | 4.0 |
| Ad Hoc Requests Completed | 209 | 232 | 225 | 164 | 195 | 165 |

D. FUTURE OF THE DEPARTMENT

8. Tell us your department's vision: Where would you like your department to be six years from now? Limit 500 words.

Every year, the IR department engages in a two-day retreat: one day focused on team building and the second on strategic planning for the year ahead. The 2025 retreat centered on setting a six-year vision for the office. Framed by the theme “**Vision 2030: Shaping our IR Department’s Strategic Direction**”, the retreat included a deep dive into the Chancellor’s Office Vision 2030 goals, an assessment of SMC’s current data culture, and future-focused visioning activities to help us imagine an IR Office prepared to meet the emerging research and institutional effectiveness demands aligned with the statewide framework.

IR worked with the following prompts:

Imagine a future where it's the year 2030 and our IR department is nationally recognized for advancing equity-minded institutional research in a community college setting. What does that look like?

- What role did we play in achieving Vision 2030's *Equity in Access, Success, and Support* goals?
- What are our signature practices in data use, visualization, and storytelling?
- How are we engaging faculty, staff, and students with research and data?
- How are we using technology (e.g., AI, dashboards, data platforms) to empower decision-making, thinking, planning?

Based on our retreat activities, IR developed the following six-year vision:

We envision an IR department that is nationally recognized for advancing equity-minded research and for modeling what it means to elevate student experience and racial equity.

In this future state, IR serves as a hub of collaborative inquiry where faculty, staff, and managers engage with data as a shared tool for understanding and improving student learning and experience, not just for compliance. Our signature practices will include:

- Accessible, equity-centered storytelling

- Intuitive data visualizations
- Mixed-methods research that brings student voice to the forefront

We will be known for translating complex datasets into clear, actionable insights that help SMC understand not only *what* is happening, but *why*, and what steps can improve outcomes across all student groups.

By 2032, we envision a campus where all constituencies have the confidence and capacity to interpret disaggregated data, identify equity gaps, and engage in reflective sensemaking. IR's data coaching, professional learning, and collaborative inquiry models will be institutionalized and scaled, making data literacy a defining strength of SMC.

Technology will play a critical role. By leveraging AI, automation, and modern analytics platforms, IR will streamline routine processes and devote more time to deeper research, evaluation, and institutional learning. Dashboards will be more interactive and user-centered, supporting real-time monitoring of progress toward goals. IR will also lead in the ethical and equitable use of AI.

By 2032, IR will be resilient, well-resourced and supported and able to meet rising research and data demands with a sustainable, cross-trained team. Overall, we envision an IR office that centers equity, elevates student voice, embraces innovation, and empowers SMC to fulfill its mission of transforming lives through education.

9. What are some challenges you anticipate facing in accomplishing your department's vision? Limit 500 words.

Achieving our six-year vision will require addressing several significant challenges, many of which stem from long-standing structural, fiscal, and organizational challenges that directly impact IR's capacity to meet growing institutional demands.

Staffing limitations present the most immediate and significant challenge. Since the last review, IR has experienced multiple retirements and separations without replacement, shrinking from six full-time employees to three. Beginning in 2026-2027 due to planned layoffs and a retirement, the office will be reduced further to a single position consisting of a Dean. This is occurring while external accountability requirements and internal expectations continue to expand. With a smaller team responsible for increasingly complex, equity-focused research and a wide range of compliance needs, our ability to sustain high-quality service, deepen analysis, and engage meaningfully with campus partners is becoming more difficult or deliver on practices to help us realize our six-year vision.

A second major barrier is **the absence of a professional development budget**. IR as a field is changing rapidly, driven by advances in data science, AI, automation, visualization, and mixed-methods research. Without funding for technical training, conference attendance, or certifications, staff cannot easily keep pace with evolving best practices. This limits our ability to innovate, adopt new methodologies, and maintain the level of expertise expected of a department aspiring to provide high quality support.

Technology and infrastructure limitations compound these challenges. IR currently lacks the funding needed to invest in modern analytics platforms, automation tools, qualitative analysis software, or emerging AI-supported workflows. As a result, we rely on older systems that restrict our ability to conduct advanced analysis, streamline processes, or provide the real-time dashboards and integrated data tools envisioned in our six-year plan. This limits innovation and slows progress at a time when data-informed decision-making is becoming more central to institutional effectiveness.

These resource constraints are intensified by **growing institutional demand**. SMC has a strong, data-informed culture, which means departments heavily rely on IR for planning, program review, evaluation, equity inquiry, and consultation. Simultaneously, state and federal requirements continue to expand. IR must absorb these mandates without additional staffing or technology support.

Finally, IR's **organizational placement** will play an important role in realizing our six-year vision. Over the past decade, IR has supported the institution from several different divisions: Enrollment Development, the

Executive Vice President's Office, and, since January 2020, Academic Affairs. Each placement has offered different opportunities to contribute to collegewide work. Looking ahead, ensuring that IR remains positioned in a way that allows the department to collaborate closely with leadership and participate in cross-functional conversations will be essential. This will help IR continue evolving from a traditional request-response (vending machine) model toward a more integrative approach. Strategic placement will ensure IR can work holistically and across silos to meet the College's growing research and effectiveness needs.

10. What are the action steps your department needs to take to accomplish the vision? Limit 500 words.

Over the next six years, IR will pursue two action plans designed to advance our vision: an SMC where leaders use equity-minded, race-conscious data inquiry to improve programs, close equity gaps, and ultimately strengthen student success. These actions are designed to expand **institutional capacity for meaningfully using data**, while operating under significant budget constraints and with no expectation of increased staffing or personnel.

Action Plan #1: Increase Institutional Capacity for Meaningful and Equity-minded Use of Data by Expanding Current IR's Professional Development (PD) Offerings

IR will review and expand our current PD curriculum, structures, and delivery to ensure employees are not only more data literate, but are skilled in interpreting and applying data through a race-conscious and equity-minded lens.

Some of our current flagship PD offerings include:

- **Research Roundtables** – Informal campus conversations about ongoing studies that build shared language and comfort discussing research findings.
- **Democratizing Data Series** – Hands-on technical training focused on navigating Precision Campus and other data tools (e.g., Chancellor's Office Data Mart).
- **Donuts & Data Office Hours** – One-on-one or small-group consultation time to ask questions, receive coaching, and troubleshoot data challenges.
- **Data Sensemaking Sessions** – Campuswide presentations that go beyond reporting results to model how to interpret patterns and identify root causes.
- **Data Coaching Program** – IR's signature cohort-based model that trains faculty, staff, and managers to examine disaggregated data, investigate equity gaps, and design interventions.
- **Learning Labs (New in 2025-2026)** – Interactive workshops where participants learn by doing. Unlike lecture-based trainings, they emphasize hands-on learning and collaboration. Our first LL focused on building surveys.

IR will expand our offerings. Some ideas include developing asynchronous self-paced modules using Learning Cloud, a new instructional platform that houses online courses and tutorials managed by the Library Department

Other ideas we brainstormed include:

- **Tide Talks** – Short, TED-style sessions where departments share how they used data to improve their program, course, practice, or student experience. Designed to build a culture of storytelling with evidence.
- **Data Digs** – A recurring series where IR highlights one disaggregated institutional metric at a time, drawn from Vision 2030, SCFF, or IE dashboards, and works with campus to:
 - Understand how metric is calculated and what is measured
 - Examine disaggregated results to surface racial equity gaps
 - Explore what may be driving those patterns
 - Reflect on how different institutional factors (processes, structures, practices, etc.) influence that outcome
 - Identify small, meaningful actions individuals or teams can make to move the needle on the metric

Action Plan #2: Integrate AI to Increase Efficiency and Research Capacity

To meet rising research and compliance demands with limited staffing, IR will explore and pilot the use of AI agents and automation tools. Some examples include, but are not limited to,:

- Streamline recurring tasks (e.g., coding open-ended responses)
- Generate documentation of project notes for internal use
- Support regular ad hoc data requests with automated data pulls
- Expand the accessibility of dashboards by providing AI-assisted “Explain this chart” or “Generate key findings” functionality
- Build internal knowledge bases and interactive “Ask IR” tools to field basic data questions without staff intervention

11. How will you know you’ve successfully made progress towards your vision? What are the expected outcomes/results (transformative change in skills, attitudes, behaviors, workflow, etc.). If relevant, discuss your departments’ progress towards the goals of the six-year action plan. Limit 500 words.

Progress toward our vision will be demonstrated when the College increasingly operates as a data-empowered, equity-minded learning institution where campus leaders use disaggregated evidence to reflect, redesign practice, and address equity gaps. The following outcomes will serve as indicators that we are moving in the right direction.

Progress Toward Vision: Campuswide Data Culture Strengthens Over Time

Beginning in 2026-2027, IR will administer **Data Culture Survey** to campus leaders (department chairs, program leaders, managers) to establish a baseline of campus data literacy, confidence, and use of disaggregated evidence for planning and decision-making.

This survey will assess:

- Comfort interpreting dashboards and institutional metrics
- Familiarity with racial equity concepts in data
- Frequency of using disaggregated evidence in program evaluation and resource prioritization
- Perceptions of IR as a strategic thought partner versus a transactional data provider

This survey will be administered every two years to monitor growth. Improvement in these indicators will serve as measurable evidence of progress.

Action Plan #1: Professional Development Becomes Scaled and Institutionalized

We will know that Action Plan #1 is successful when IR is consistently offering a robust, sequenced portfolio of professional learning opportunities that explicitly build equity-minded data skills across the institution. Success will be demonstrated when:

- Our PD offerings integrate intentional curriculum focused on race-conscious, equity-minded data interpretation, including how to examine disaggregated outcomes, identify root causes, and connect findings to programmatic or instructional change.
- Participant feedback demonstrates increased confidence and skill in interpreting disaggregated data.
- Participants report that they not only understand the data, but feel empowered to use it.
- IR expands asynchronous and self-paced offerings, allowing practitioners to build skills without being limited by scheduling.

Action Plan #2: Increased Efficiency and Higher-Value Work Through AI Integration

We will know Action Plan #2 is succeeding when:

- Reduce time spent on recurring tasks (e.g., coding open-ended responses, routine data pulls).
- Allow IR to reallocate staff time toward deeper research, evaluation, and sensemaking support, as reflected in the IR project tracking system.

Evidence of Institutional Impact

Ultimately, progress will be reflected in:

- More programs identifying and responding to racial equity gaps in their program review
- Decreased equity gaps for racially and other minoritized students in key student outcome metrics like persistence, course completion, completion, and transfer.

E. EMPLOYEE/STAFF AND DEPARTMENTAL CULTURE

12. Who makes up your department? Describe your staffing levels including full-time/part-time status and classification (per unit, if applicable) Limit 200 words.

IR is currently staffed by four full-time employees:

- **Dean of Institutional Research** – Oversees department operations, strategic direction, and planning, state and federal reporting, and collegewide research priorities.
- **Research and Planning Analyst** – Provides primarily **quantitative** research support.
- **Research and Planning Analyst (50% district-funded / 50% SEA-funded)** – Supports equity-focused inquiry and primarily **qualitative** research support.
- **Senior Research Analyst** – Serves as the department's most experienced technical researcher, responsible for advanced statistical analysis, data visualization, longitudinal studies, and managing complex datasets. This staff member will retire April 2026 after ten years of service, resulting in the loss of significant institutional research expertise and historical knowledge.

As part of the District's workforce reduction plan, both Research and Planning Analyst positions are scheduled to be eliminated effective July 1, 2026. In combination with the upcoming retirement of the Senior Research Analyst, these changes will reduce the department from four full-time staff to a single position (Dean) beginning in 2026–2027. There are no identified plans or funding sources to replace the retiring Senior Research Analyst or the eliminated analyst positions. This represents a substantial loss of both technical capacity and institutional knowledge, significantly constraining the department's ability to carry out its core functions.

13. Analyze your current staffing levels in the context of your department's vision and goals for the next six years (refer to response in question #9). Limit 300 words.

When analyzed in the context of our six-year vision, IR staffing levels are significantly below those of other single-college districts in LA Country and are insufficient to fully achieve the department's goals.

| Fall 2024 | | | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|------------------|----------|----------|-------------|
| College | Student Headcount | VP/Dean/Director | Analysts | Clerical | Total Staff |
| Cerritos | 23,946 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 7 |
| Citrus | 10,861 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 5 |
| College of Canyons | 21,145 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 6 |
| El Camino | 22,702 | 1 | 5 | 0 | 6 |
| LBCC | 26,737 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 6 |
| Mt Sac | 42,158 | 1 | 7 | 1 | 9 |
| PCC | 27,861 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 6 |
| SMC | 27,191 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 4 |

This staffing deficit directly limits the department's ability to fulfill its six-year vision, which calls for IR to:

- Expand and strengthen PD opportunities that build campus capacity for equity-minded data analysis, interpretation, and action
- Serve as the SMC's hub for equity-minded inquiry and reflective use of disaggregated data to advance meaningful improvements in student experience and outcomes, especially for our most marginalized and disproportionately impacted students.

With current staffing, **IR must prioritize compliance and mandated data reporting**, leaving limited capacity for the deeper, collaborative, equity-minded sensemaking work that defines our strategic direction.

Unless staffing is restored or alternative support models are identified, the department will be constrained in its ability to help the College close equity gaps, meet Vision 2030 goals, and sustain a data-empowered culture of inquiry.

14. Describe how your department provides ongoing professional development opportunities for employees. Limit 300 words.

Although the IR department has had no dedicated professional development budget for approximately a decade, we have intentionally built internal structures that ensure staff continue to learn, grow, and deepen their technical skills and equity-minded research practice.

Weekly Team Huddles

The IR team holds weekly huddles to collaboratively troubleshoot active projects, share thought partnership, and build collective capacity. These meetings function as ongoing, real-time professional learning, where analysts receive feedback on their work.

Monthly Team Meetings

Once a month, the team dedicates a full staff meeting to professional learning. These meetings, while includes department plannings, also includes agenda items that include professional learning topics. Team members take turns leading the agenda item - sharing articles, tools, or new approaches they have learned - creating a reciprocal learning culture and reinforcing internal expertise.

First Fridays (since 2011)

For more than 13 years, IR has protected one Friday per month as dedicated professional learning time. First Fridays allow staff to step away from daily projects and engage in self-directed learning activities such as reading research articles, experimenting with new tools, or developing new analytic techniques. This protected time has been essential to sustaining innovation, supporting equity-focused growth, and keeping the team current despite the absence of a professional development budget.

Despite having no external PD funding, these intentional learning structures have enabled IR to remain innovative, equity-focused, and responsive to institutional needs.

15. What is the impact of professional development engagement on the effectiveness of your department? Limit 300 words.

IR's intentional internal learning structures have had a significant positive impact on the department's effectiveness, agility, and ability to meet campus needs.

Weekly team huddles, monthly PD-embedded meetings, and First Fridays ensure that staff continually develop their technical, analytical, and equity-minded inquiry skills. These regular learning routines allow the IR team to deepen expertise in real time, troubleshoot complex methodological or reporting challenges collaboratively, and stay current with emerging frameworks in research, data storytelling, and mixed-methods analysis.

The impact is visible in several ways:

- **Higher quality and depth of research support** – IR's ability to translate disaggregated data into actionable insights, facilitate equity-minded sensemaking, and provide consultation beyond simple reporting reflects the cumulative effects of sustained internal learning.
- **Capacity to absorb new mandates** – The department has successfully taken on major new accountability and compliance responsibilities despite shrinking staff levels, largely because internal PD continuously strengthens collective capability.
- **Internal expertise drives external training** – Many of IR's campuswide offerings (e.g., Data Coaching, Democratizing Data) are direct extensions of skills first developed and refined internally. Professional development for IR staff directly becomes professional development for the College.
- **Resilience and continuity** – Cross-training and shared learning reduce vulnerability when staffing changes occur, ensuring institutional knowledge is carried forward even as personnel retire or separate.

In short, IR's internal professional development culture is a central reason the office continues to provide high-quality, equity-centered research support, even in a resource-constrained environment.

16. Describe the elements of your department's workplace culture and climate that significantly impact (both negatively and positively) your ability to achieve your goals. Limit 500 words. For example, a departmental culture with little opportunities for collaboration and an emphasis on independent work may mean loss of knowledge/skills on specific domains when a team member leaves. Or the positive impact of working in a state-of-the-art facility has improved the productivity of the employees in the department.

Three of the four IR staff members have been at SMC for more than a decade, with an average tenure of 13 years. This longevity has created a deep reservoir of institutional memory, historical context, and shared values that strengthen the department's effectiveness. We work well together, we trust one another, and we have intentionally invested in building community and psychological safety over many years. As a small but mighty team, we are highly collaborative, interdependent, and supportive as our size requires that we rely on one another, and it has fostered a close-knit, high-trust culture that enables us to produce high-quality work despite limited staffing.

At the same time, the increasing volume and complexity of research requests, compliance reporting, and institutional expectations create stress and workload strain. These pressures are felt more acutely in a small office where every person is responsible for multiple projects at once. However, our strong culture of trust and mutual care helps buffer against burnout. IR intentionally makes space for relationship-building through weekly huddles, collaboration, and an annual retreat that includes team-building and reflection. We also invest time in celebrating birthdays, milestones, and life events, which reinforces belonging and helps sustain morale.

Our hybrid work environment adds another layer of complexity. Since the pandemic, we are not physically together every day, which means maintaining connection requires more intentionality. This is not a negative shift as flexibility supports work-life balance, mental wellness, and productivity. However, the hybrid environment requires purposeful practices to preserve belonging and our shared learning culture. Regular in-person meetings, ongoing communication rituals, and structured collaboration time continue to be essential to keeping our office climate and culture positive.

17. Discuss ways your department creates a more equitable departmental culture. Address one or more of the following points: Limit 500 words. *Creating space for discussing issues of race and racism in ways that are relevant to work *Promoting trainings and professional development opportunities focused on racial equity *Setting and enforcing departmental norms related to open, honest, and collegial communication *Ensuring staff who belong to a racially or other minoritized group (sexual orientation, gender, etc.) feel validated and respected and are part of the decision-making process on an ongoing basis *Deepening trust and sense of community amongst the diverse staff *If relevant, ensuring departmental practices, policies, and procedures do

not create barriers for minoritized student groups (racially minoritized, low-income, first-generation college, undocumented, Veteran, students with disability, etc.)

The IR department has intentionally worked to cultivate a workplace culture rooted in equity, trust, and shared responsibility for racial justice. Because we expect the College to engage in race-conscious, equity-minded inquiry, we believe it is essential that we model these practices within our own department.

Revising Our Mission to Explicitly Center Equity

One of the most significant internal shifts was the revision of our departmental mission statement in 2022. The previous statement focused on providing accurate and timely data. The revised statement explicitly asserts IR's commitment to *equity-centered research and race-conscious inquiry* and frames our purpose as supporting institutional learning and eliminating outcome gaps. This change was not symbolic; it was a collective process involving open discussion about our values, how our work affects students differently across racial and social identities, and what it means to conduct research in ways that humanize students rather than reduce them to metrics.

Creating Space to Discuss Race, Identity, and Equity

The department routinely makes space to discuss issues of race and racism as they relate to our work. Monthly team meetings include facilitated discussions about articles, research commentaries, or equity frameworks (e.g., Centering Student Voice, Equity-Minded Inquiry, Critical Quantitative Methods). These conversations build shared language and help staff reflect on how to frame findings, interpret data responsibly, and avoid reinforcing deficit narratives.

Department Norms That Support Psychological Safety and Inclusion

Our departmental culture rests on norms of open, honest, and collegial communication. Staff are encouraged to speak candidly about challenges, ask questions without judgment, and provide constructive feedback. Decisions are collaborative, and staff have agency in shaping priorities, methods, and deliverables.

We also intentionally reinforce belonging. Time is built into meetings to check in on personal well-being, celebrate life milestones, and strengthen connection. While workload is heavy and the work is intellectually demanding, these practices help ensure staff feel valued not just for their output, but as whole people.

Equity-Minded Practices Affecting Students

Because IR's work directly impacts how the College understands and serves students, we continuously examine whether our practices reinforce or disrupt inequities. For example, after reading an RP Group brief on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) practices during one of our monthly team meetings, one of our analysts initiated a collaboration with the SMC Student Equity Center to co-develop a standardized set of SOGI demographic items for use in campus surveys. Rather than imposing language from external instruments, the analyst met with student leaders and equity staff to co-construct terminology that is inclusive, community-informed, and reflective of how SMC students identify. This work ensures that marginalized student communities are not erased in our data collection and models how IR can use its influence to advocate for more humanizing and culturally responsive research practices.

F. BUDGET AND RESOURCES

Human Resources and Professional Development

18. Based on your department's six-year vision and the action plans to get there, discuss the optimal staff structure to achieve your vision. Include in the discussion: Limit 500 words. a. The opportunities to revamp your workflow, procedures, and processes to increase efficiency b. Re-envisioning of existing job classifications and/or creation of new job classifications, if applicable c. Your succession and training plans (including cross-departmental training) to ensure that you have the right people in the right jobs today and in the years to come d. Knowledge management practices - documentation of key workflow and processes to ensure continuation of critical services provided by your unit

To achieve our six-year vision, the IR department must strengthen its staffing structure, streamline workflows, and modernize practices to support equity-centered inquiry, increased automation, and growing institutional research demands. With staffing already reduced from six employees to one full-time employees starting July 1, strategic reorganization and capacity planning are essential.

a. Opportunities to Revamp Workflow, Procedures, and Processes

A key strategy for increasing efficiency is examining historical trends in repeat ad hoc requests and determining where processes can be automated or shifted to self-service. Many recurring requests could be addressed by expanding Precision Campus capabilities and training users to generate their own reports. For example, the platform contains modules that are currently underutilized or not yet unlocked, including the ability for users to upload student lists to generate customized data reports (e.g., course success, term persistence, degree and certificate attainment, special program participation). IR also plans to add new data dashboards, for example, a Counseling Usage Report.

By increasing user-facing data capacity and investing more time in training requestors, rather than repeatedly producing the same reports manually, IR can reallocate staff time to deeper research and evaluation.

b. Re-Envisioning Job Classifications

Given the evolving nature of IR's work, we anticipate the need to review role classifications in consultation with the Personnel Commission. One emerging need is explicit recognition of AI-supported work. Rather than immediately creating a new classification, IR may seek approval for AI-related duties within existing job descriptions, while exploring a future role focused on data automation and research technology. This work will be particularly critical once the District is on more stable financial footing and the IR Office is able to rebuild staffing capacity in future years. Establishing clear role definitions and expectations now will help ensure that, when positions are restored, the department is structured to meet emerging demands in data analytics, automation, and equitable use of technology.

c. Training Plans

With the transition to a single-person office, the responsibility for maintaining and advancing technical expertise in Institutional Research will rest solely with the Dean. As with many IR professionals, the Dean's formal training predates the emergence of generative AI and modern analytics tools, making ongoing re-skilling essential.

AI literacy and fluency in emerging data technologies are not optional for an office expected to guide the institution in the responsible and equitable adoption of these tools. Continued professional development in areas such as AI-assisted analysis, data automation, and advanced analytics will be critical to sustaining core functions, increasing efficiency, and positioning the College for future rebuilding of IR capacity.

d. Knowledge Management and Documentation

IR is formalizing documentation of all critical workflows, including, but not limited to: SCFF audit file preparation, IPEDS submissions, IRB processes, Precision Campus Dashboard update schedules and version control, Career Technical Education Outcomes Survey (state data submission). This work is essential to prevent loss of institutional knowledge as staff separate from the District.

Budget and Space

19. Based on your department's six-year vision and the action plans to get there, analyze your existing space and infrastructure environment and discuss changes that would improve your unit's productivity, efficiency, and effectiveness. Limit 500 words. Examples: redesign of existing space, additional space needed/space no longer needed, additional technology, change in technology)

While the IR department's physical workspace is adequate, the most significant infrastructure barrier to achieving our six-year vision is **technological**. To function as a modern, equity-centered IR office that leverages AI, automation, and real-time data insights, IR needs access to an integrated data environment, not the current system of fragmented extracts, manual pulls, and one-off database requests.

At present, IR does not have direct access to a centralized data hub or warehouse. Instead, analysts must request individual data table views from MIS for each new project, dashboard, or validation study. This process creates several challenges:

- Inefficiency and disruption of workflow, as analysts must wait for data access rather than work from a standing environment
- Duplication of effort, because similar data structures must be rebuilt repeatedly rather than reused
- Increased error risk, as multiple static extracts must be manually reconciled
- Limited ability to automate, as AI-enabled tools and scripted workflows require stable, persistent data infrastructure

SMC must transition to a modernized data environment that includes:

- A secure data warehouse or institutional data hub that integrates student and course data
- User-level access for IR analysts to query, build models, and connect directly to reporting tools

These investments are necessary to achieve our six-year vision. Without integrated data infrastructure, IR will continue to function in a reactive, transaction-based model that constrains innovation, limits automation, and prevents full use of AI tools that could dramatically increase capacity and efficiency.

In summary, the most critical infrastructure need is not additional square footage, it is a modern, unified data environment that unlocks reduces manual workload, and improves institutional decision-making across the College.

20. Assess whether your current budget aligns with your plan of work for the next six years and is adequate in helping your unit meet your goals. If not, what changes in the budget need to be made? Discuss reallocation of existing budget lines, increase/decrease of overall budgets or specific budget lines. Upload document or spreadsheet, if necessary. Limit 500 words.

The IR department's current operating budget does not align with the work required to achieve our six-year vision or to meet our growing workload. While staff have historically delivered high-quality work with minimal resources, current budget levels are no longer adequate to sustain required productivity, adopt necessary technologies, or ensure ongoing compliance with state, federal, and accreditation mandates.

Critical Budget Gaps

1. Technology and Data Infrastructure

IR has no dedicated budget for modern analytics tools, data warehouse access, or AI-enabled platforms. To automate repeat work and support real-time data-informed planning, the department must shift from one-off data extracts to a sustainable, integrated institutional data environment.

2. Professional Development

IR has operated for more than a decade with \$0 PD funding. With emerging accountability frameworks, rapid growth in advanced analytics, generative AI, and the pending retirement of the most senior analyst, re-skilling and professional upskilling for IR staff is now essential, not optional.

Potential Budget Strategies

Cost-Share Funding Model with Categorical Programs

A promising strategy is to pilot a shared-cost investment model in which categorical programs who rely on IR works for state-mandated reporting and program evaluation – contribute proportionately to shared institutional analytics infrastructure. Programs such as SEA, Strong Workforce, EOPS, DSPS, CalWORKs, and

Veterans already have allowable budget categories for technology purchases. Rather than each purchasing separate tools, a pooled investment in shared analytics platforms and a centralized data environment would:

- Reduce duplication of effort
- Improve alignment of reporting requirements
- Enable more efficient and higher-quality research support from IR

This model requires no new ongoing funding, only a small proportional contribution from existing categorical technology budgets toward shared infrastructure that directly supports their compliance, program review, and planning needs.

Institutional Effectiveness Partnership Seed Funds

In parallel, the College could seek a statewide Institutional Effectiveness Partnership Initiative (IEPI) grant, which provides up to \$250,000 per college to support institutional capacity building. A proposal aligned with IR's six-year vision could be framed as:

"Strengthening SMC's Race-Conscious and Equity-Minded Data Culture"

This project would directly advance IR's vision by investing in the foundational conditions needed to create a campus where:

- Faculty, staff, and administrators have the skills and confidence to interpret disaggregated data, identify equity gaps, and engage in reflective sensemaking
- Data systems and tools enable real-time, equity-centered decision-making rather than transactional or compliance-driven reporting
- Research and inquiry are collaborative and student-centered, expanding beyond traditional reporting to drive institutional learning and change

IEPI allowable expenditures align well with these needs and could include:

- Modern data infrastructure and technology to support integrated, equity-focused institutional inquiry and planning
- AI-related upskilling for IR staff, enabling automation of recurring tasks, development of new analytic workflows, and creation of tools and resources that expand campus capacity
- Faculty and staff training in equity-minded data interpretation, storytelling, and inquiry

This form is completed and ready for acceptance.