

RP Group BRIC
Technical Assistance Program



the Research & Planning Group
for California Community Colleges

The Bridging Research, Information, and Cultures Initiative (BRIC)

Technical Assistance Program

Thank you for your interest in participating in the Technical Assistance Program (TAP), a segment of the RP Group's Bridging Research, Information, and Cultures (BRIC) Initiative. This packet includes the application to participate in the Technical Assistance Program (TAP) as well as overviews of the BRIC Initiative and the RP Group. The BRIC Initiative is funded by a two-year grant from The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

*Please complete and submit the TAP application by **Monday, March 1st, 2010**. Kindly contact Rob Johnstone at johnstone@smccd.edu if you have any questions.*

The BRIC Initiative

The purpose of the BRIC Initiative is to strengthen inquiry-based practice and build cultures of evidence at the California community colleges in order to enhance student success and facilitate goal attainment. Acknowledging that research is fundamentally an intervention-based activity, BRIC seeks to encourage the use of research to optimize the conditions and systems under which students learn. By examining institutional-level metrics and facilitating opportunities for practitioners to better understand how data and information can be used at the ground level, institutions can leverage collaborative discussions on ways to improve outcomes and enrich students' experiences.

In order to create opportunities for collaborative inquiry and meaningful discussions about using data and evidence to enhance student success at California community colleges, this initiative aims to:

1. **Increase the efficiency of institutional research offices to handle existing workloads.** The RP Group has hired an Institutional Research "conierge" to stay current on available and newly-developed tools and resources and effectively communicate them with researchers and planners statewide.
2. **Develop an online and regional professional development structure to enable practitioners to work more effectively with data and information.** The budget crisis has resulted in deep cuts to the professional development infrastructure of the California community college system. The RP Group is developing a series of opportunities that can be easily accessed at little or no cost and that addresses the limited time that will be available for professional learning. Many of these resources will be tailored for non-research professionals and will address the value of research, data coaching, and using evidence for decision making.

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3. Provide tailored assistance that enables colleges to strengthen cultures of evidence. The RP Group's Technical Assistance Program (TAP) will send specialized teams to increase the capacity of practitioners (faculty, staff, administrators, and researchers) to collaboratively analyze and act on information.

The Technical Assistance Program Benefits

Up to fifteen colleges will be selected to receive an organizational needs assessment, professional development training, and customized data facilitation and coaching interventions during the 2010-11 academic year. This support will be provided by the BRIC TAP Lead Team - comprised of faculty members, researchers, and student services professionals with a broad collection of expertise in using information to inform planning, enabling student success, and building institutional effectiveness. These teams will work with existing institutional infrastructures through a combination of on-site skills trainings, regional meetings, conference calls, and online support. A small group of pilot institutions will receive support beginning in spring 2010.

The TAP seeks to assist practitioners achieve the following outcomes:

1. Developing Actionable Information
Apply evaluation and assessment techniques, practices and models that are grounded in good assessment principles and result in actionable data.
2. Interpreting Data through Discussion
Interpret research and assessment data through meaningful and thoughtful discussions that lead to improved program interventions and classroom teaching and learning strategies.
3. Facilitating Dialogue
Use effective facilitation skills for discussing institutional research and assessment with various college constituency groups.
4. Integrating Evidence into Institutional Processes
Implement integrated planning strategies that are equity focused and have well-defined links to budget and other core decision-making processes.
5. Building an Inquiry-Based Practice
Develop an infrastructure for building a culture of evidence that promotes collaborative inquiry.

Expectations of the Participating Institutions

Colleges who participate in TAP should be prepared to provide:

- o A point person for the project
- o Individuals or groups from within the college who will work with and be trained by the BRIC TAP Lead Team during the on-site interventions
- o Telephone/in-person interviews during the organizational needs assessment phase
- o Opportunities for staff, faculty, and administrators to participate in professional development and data coaching activities
- o Willingness to make changes in response to the technical assistance process
- o Participation in an evaluation regarding the impact of the technical assistance
- o Attendance at an all-day launch/orientation meeting

(2009-2010)

The Bridging Research, Information, and Cultures Initiative (BRIC)

Technical Assistance Program Application

Due date: March 1st, 2010

Guidelines for Filling Out the Application

This form is intended to help focus applicants on specific arenas where technical assistance could strengthen existing efforts to create cultures of evidence and inquiry. It will also help the project team to better understand the existing culture within your college. Your responses will be confidential, so we prefer that applicants directly address concerns that might be integral to the project.

Please email a PDF copy of your response to johnstoner@smccd.edu by the application deadline of March 1st, 2010. Given that we're asking for a signature page, we are requesting that you additionally mail a hard copy of your application to us at the following address:

RP Group / BRIC Project
1528 Sacramento Street
Berkeley, CA 94702

If you'd like to be considered for the Spring 2010 BRIC TAP pilot, we are requesting that your application be submitted by February 1st, 2010. This will allow us to work with the 2-3 pilot schools in March and April, fleshing out our ideas while providing additional on-site assistance to the pilot schools. Note that the pilot schools will also continue with the BRIC Tap project through the 2010-11 year.

Application Questions

1. The overarching purpose of the BRIC initiative is to strengthen inquiry-based practice at institutions. Describe your institution's historical and current use of information and evidence to inform planning and make decisions. Identify projects or initiatives that have been successful in using information. Additionally, identify areas where gaps exist in either the use or availability of information or evidence. In this latter domain, where would you like to see the college evolve? (500 words maximum)

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2. The TAP is designed to collaborate with existing campus infrastructures to strengthen the capacity of the practitioners at the institution. Examples of such infrastructures include Student Success Committees, Basic Skills Committees, Student Learning Outcomes Committees, Faculty Inquiry Groups, Flex Days, and department meetings. Describe the existing internal and external institutional structures that could be involved in the implementation of this project. Include the functions served by these groups and how they could expand your institution's ability to improve programs and services through the use of timely and relevant information

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and evidence. Describe how these institutions fit into your governance structure. (300 words maximum)

3. What actions do you expect the college to take as a result of participating in TAP? Are there particular changes you hope to implement as a result? (300 words maximum)
4. The BRIC Initiative is preparing resources on the following topics. Select between one and three topics on which your institution would like to collaborate with the BRIC team in the 2010-11 academic year. Please ensure that at least one of your selections is from the CORE MODULES list.

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CORE MODULES

- A. Assessing Student Learning Outcomes
- NO * B. Using an Equity Lens to Assess Student Learning
- C. Assessing Student Services Outcomes

SUPPORT MODULES

- ✓ 1. Building Information Capacity and Promoting a Culture of Inquiry
 - 2. Assessing Institutional Effectiveness
 - 3. Assessing Basic Skills Outcomes
 - 4. Maximizing the Program Review Process
 - ✓ 5. Turning Data into Meaningful Action
5. If your institution is selected as a participant, identify the individuals who would collaborate with the individuals in the BRIC teams. Please list their names and titles.
6. Please let us know if you would like to be considered as a pilot institution. A pilot institution would begin its participation in spring 2010. In exchange for receiving an additional term of support, it would provide feedback on the TAP's design, process, and reference materials. If you would like to be considered for the pilot, please submit your application by February 1st, 2010.

Signatures

President/Chief Executive Officer

Chief Instruction Officer

Chief Student Services Officer

President, Academic Senate

Chief Research Officer

The RP Group

The RP Group seeks to build a community college culture that views planning, evidence-based decision-making, and institutional effectiveness as key strategies for student success. We use an integrated model of research and evaluation services, professional development, and statewide projects to achieve these goals within the California community college (CCC) system.

At the core of RP's approach is an effort to expand the definition of research. More than gathering information, we envision a process that also encompasses dissemination, interpretation, action, and ongoing evaluation of practice.

The California community college system, with 110 colleges and 2.9 million students, is the largest system of higher education in the world. Growing from its roots as a professional association for research and planning staff within this system, RP now works on multiple levels to facilitate the transformation of how evidence is understood and integrated into the classroom, the institution, and the system as a whole.

Gathering institution- and system-wide data from an insider's perspective. Most research conducted on community colleges is instigated by four year institutions. The RP Group is unique because its research projects are generated by questions from within the system and conducted by teams of community college faculty, administrators, institutional researchers, and student services staff who can gather more nuanced information. Furthermore, our teams are able to contextualize research results so they can be used by practitioners to better understand and take action on issues at their own colleges. For example, an RP research report popularly known as *The Poppy Copy* became an organizing framework for local efforts and statewide funding for basic skills. Our key research topics include workforce training, transfer, and basic skills. RP also provides evaluation services to colleges, funders, and statewide initiatives.

Providing venues for sharing and analyzing information. Given the size and diversity of the CCC system, practitioners may be unaware of work being done at other colleges. Therefore, RP offers a range of opportunities for practitioners to engage research findings, build skills, and share information from their own colleges, including large state-wide conferences, multi-day institutes, regional networks, and internet-based exchanges. In addition, RP serves as a neutral convener of stakeholders in order to facilitate planning and consensus-building on statewide issues. For example the RP Group has helped shape revisions in the structure of the Basic Skills Initiative, recommended consistent measures for statewide accountability, and strengthened implementation of student learning outcome assessment.

Building a stronger understanding of the use of information in California community colleges. Although data has traditionally been perceived as the purview of institutional research offices, the increased focus on accountability requires that faculty, administrators, and student services staff engage with gathering, analyzing, and acting on information as well. The RP Group helps facilitate this shift through tailored support, often in partnership with other organizations. For example, RP offers workshops and conference sessions for administrators in conjunction with CCLC and ACCCA and collaborates with the statewide Academic Senate to train and support student learning outcome coordinators. By incorporating faculty, staff, and administrators in our research projects and partnering with other organizations to tailor and disseminate research results, we also help build expertise and confidence in research. Finally, RP works with institutional researchers to build their skills in providing data coaching and support.