



MEMORANDUM

TO: Becky Babcock, Faculty Senate President, and Elizabeth Baxter, Chairperson of Special Committee on Administrative Affairs

FROM: Gretchen Wood, Vice President, Institutional Advancement and Executive Director, MCC Foundation

DATE: 11.18.24

RE: Reorganization of Institutional Research

Monroe Community College's existing Department of Institutional Research (IR) has served the institution admirably over many years but is not staffed appropriately to accomplish all that is demanded of it currently. This reorganization will expand the scope and responsibilities of this well-respected department. The future retirement of the Director of Institutional Planning, Effectiveness and Accountability necessitates the consideration of staffing and resources in this area. The Department of Institutional Research, Planning and Assessment, will allow for the absorption of the planning and effectiveness work for the College, led by a Chief Data Officer (CDO) and Associate Vice President (AVP) of Institutional Research and Assessment, rather than a director.

Background

The current Department of Institutional Research plays a crucial role in providing accurate and timely data to inform strategic planning, accreditation, assessment, and institutional effectiveness. The IR department is also responsible for the College's, including the Economic and Workforce Development and Career Technical Education division's, access to New York State Labor Market Data. As our College evolves and faces increasingly complex challenges, the demands on this department have expanded significantly. For example, IR provides crucial support to the College's Office of Strategic Resource Development and Grant Management—the number of grants secured and managed by that department has grown from 53 in 2017-2018, totaling \$8 million, to 115 as of this month, totaling \$71 million. Grants play an increasingly important role in the College's overall financial strategy.

The current structure of IR, led by a Director, no longer adequately supports the strategic importance of institutional research within our organization. When the current Director was brought on in 2017, the department was a staff of seven. The department now comprises three professional staff, with an additional position currently being searched. Elevating the leadership of this department is consistent with the work that is underway to ensure the College has access to the data it needs to make impactful change for our students.

Again, the Director of Institutional Planning, Effectiveness and Accountability (IPEA) has announced their intent to retire soon. I propose the responsibility for planning and assessment be assigned to the IR department, creating the Department of Institutional Research and Assessment, upon that retirement, and the IPEA position transferred to that department. Additionally, I have worked with Greg Hinton, CFO

and Vice President of Administrative Services, to allocate other responsibilities of IPEA to the Capital Planning and Project Management Department. No current positions are proposed for elimination, allowing for natural attrition.

Justification

During August and September of this year I conducted a staffing analysis of the IR Department, in consultation with the director of the department, to properly assess the capacity of the department to meet the needs of the College. The analysis confirmed that there were gaps that can be addressed via a reorganization. As a first step, the department is in the process of hiring an additional specialist to better meet the needs of the College.

By establishing the position of a Chief Data Officer and AVP of Institutional Research and Assessment, the College can enhance our ability to make data-driven decisions, improve student outcomes, increase operational efficiency, and ensure compliance with data security and reporting requirements. This role is critical for MCC in an increasingly data-centric educational environment.

Strategic Alignment and Visibility:

- **Elevated Status:** Elevating the leadership to a CDO/AVP level will provide the department with greater visibility and strategic alignment with the College's executive leadership. This change supports Institutional Research being directly involved in high-level decision-making processes, as is required for making effective, data-driven decisions.
- **Enhanced Influence:** A CDO/AVP has the authority to influence college-wide policies and initiatives, ensuring that data and research are integral components of strategic discussions and planning.

Improved Resource Allocation and Support:

- **Greater Access to Resources:** A CDO/AVP position can advocate effectively for the resources needed to support comprehensive research initiatives, including advanced analytics tools, staff development, and external collaborations.
- **Interdepartmental Collaboration:** The CDO/AVP can foster strong partnerships across departments, facilitating an integrated approach to data collection, analysis, and application. The CDO/AVP can also support data-driven decision-making pertaining to the pursuit of grants; offering an analysis of the (+)/(-) of pursuing opportunities based on alignment with College goals, values and mission.

Responding to Increased Complexity and Demands:

- **Complex Data Needs:** As the College's work evolves, the complexity and volume of data required for decision-making increases. A CDO/AVP with a higher level of authority and expertise can better navigate these complexities and prioritize initiatives that align with the college's strategic objectives.
- **Regulatory and Accreditation Requirements:** Compliance with accreditation standards and regulatory requirements necessitates robust and sophisticated data management. A CDO/AVP can ensure that the department remains proactive and responsive to these demands.

Talent Attraction and Retention:

- **Competitive Edge:** Elevating the role to a CDO/AVP level will make the position more attractive to highly qualified candidates, enhancing our ability to recruit and retain top talent in the field of institutional research.
- **Professional Development:** A CDO/AVP is better positioned to create a culture of continuous improvement and professional development both internal and external of the department, fostering a data-driven campus culture that is innovative and forward-thinking.

Strategic Initiatives and Innovation:

- **Proactive Leadership:** A CDO/AVP can take a proactive stance in identifying emerging trends, technologies, and methodologies in institutional research, positioning the college as a leader in data-driven decision-making.
- **Innovation and Best Practices:** The CDO/AVP can spearhead initiatives that incorporate best practices and innovative approaches to data analytics, enhancing the overall effectiveness and impact of institutional research.

Conclusion

Restructuring the Department of Institutional Research to be led by a Chief Data Officer and Associate Vice President of Institutional Research and Assessment is a strategic move that aligns with our commitment to excellence and continuous improvement. This change will enhance the department's capacity to support the College's mission and strategic goals through robust data analysis and informed decision-making. By elevating the leadership position, we ensure that Institutional Research is well-positioned to meet current and future challenges, ultimately contributing to the long-term success of our college. Additionally, having the position be management/confidential is also consistent with SUNY's classification guideline for [Director of Institutional Research \(MP\) - SUNY](#). The existing director position will also be maintained, to allow for appropriate staffing in the department going forward.

Investing in the department aligns with several priorities outlined in *Vision2027*, including:

- 2.2. Identify, analyze, understand, and reduce equity gaps to increase access and improve outcomes.
- 2.4 Identify and reduce barriers that impact student enrollment and success.
- 5.1. Strengthen employee recruitment, onboarding, retention, technology training, professional development, and succession planning.
- 5.2 Invest resources into internal data-sharing, communication, decision-making, and systems integration.
- 5.3 Advance institutional effectiveness and organizational efficiency through integrated planning, collaboration, assessment, evidence-based decision-making and automation.