

Messiah College

Institutional Research Office

Procedures and Policy Manual

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INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH OFFICE
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INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH OFFICE

Messiah College Procedures and Policy Manual

Mission Statement

The Institutional Research Office (henceforth referred to as IRO) is an information source and warehouse for many College statistics. The primary purpose is to facilitate the systematic collection, maintenance, analysis and reporting of institutional information, as well as comparisons of this information with other institutions, and to support College planning and decision-making. This office assists others within the College with ad-hoc requests for information and is also a central contact for submitting data to federal, state, and local governmental agencies as well as commercial agencies. The IRO provides members of the campus community with timely and relevant information on diverse college facts. The IRO should be an early and central contact for planning and decision-making data.

What is Institutional Research?

Institutional Research is the planning, coordination, collection, organization, compiling and dissemination of information concerning the characteristics and performance of the institution.

The purpose of Institutional Research is to provide objective, systematic and thorough research that supports the institution's enrollment goals, planning, policy formation and decision making.

"Broadly, 'institutional research' is viewed as a range of activities involving the collection, analysis and interpretation of information descriptive of an institution and its activities, including its students and staff, programs, management and operation. The findings of such 'institutional research' can assist institutional leaders...through informing their planning and decision making." (Zimmer, B; JIRA, Vol4, No.1, May 1995, pg. 74, "Achieving Quality Withing Funding Constraints: The Potential Contribution of Institutional Research.")

Reporting Structure

The Institutional Research Office reports directly to the Vice President for Planning.

Objectives

- To gather, compile and provide reliable, timely information for internal and external requests as well as ad-hoc requests
- To monitor the College's ongoing responsibilities for compliance with requests for information from external agencies, both governmental and commercial, and assure accurate and timely completion of necessary reports
- To be the official source of comprehensive information about the institution
- To serve as a repository/archive for institutional data
- To provide information and analysis that is relevant and responsive to individuals and departments in policy-making and decision-making activities
- To provide technical and support assistance for research projects endorsed by the College
- To serve in an advisory capacity to administrative functions related to institutional research
- To maintain annual procedures for such things as data collection, reporting deadlines, and project listings
- To develop and maintain a cycle of institutional studies, reports and databases to support the needs of the institution
- To be a clearinghouse for survey instruments
- To maintain an web site of useful research information
- To maintain contact with the campus community to determine current and future research needs of the institution
- To evaluate the IRO by seeking input from the campus community

Data Infrastructure and Maintenance

The IRO produces census files and other reports to maintain accurate historical reference information on various aspects of the College. The “census” file is typically made from the College record system for use as a read-only source of institutional data. Information created in these databases will be archived by the IRO.

- Role of the IRO
 - Active in the data resource management process
 - Information Archivist of institutional information

- Data Documentation
 - Maintain documentation for all databases and reports
 - Data dictionary & support manuals
 - Maintain documentation on available sources of information

- Data Evaluation
 - To assure valid and reliable data
 - Four Questions
 - Is the data present?
 - Is the data complete?
 - Is the quality of the data high?
 - Is the data consistent with other sources of information?

Data Policy for Institutional Research

1. By definition, institutional research is part of the business of the College and is therefore a valid use of College data.

2. Access to data for the purposes of institutional research will be provided by the data custodian of each respective area of data.

3. Access to institutional information will be provided for faculty, administration or staff who have a “need to know” in order to conduct the College’s business.

4. The integrity of institutional information must be guaranteed. All who use the information have the right to expect it to be accurate.

5. The College will meet all legal obligations concerning the gathering, storage, use and disclosure of College information.

6. Reasonable and prudent care must be taken to protect all institutional information from unauthorized modification, destruction or disclosure, whether accidental or intentional.

Official Records

- The IRO will maintain copies of official student lists and general student body population
 - Examples include, but are not limited to: (1) RIM41 (General Summary), SIP26 (IPEDS Report), SIP31/SIP32 (Student Roster)

Query Databases

- Student Body Database (RIM)
 - Key database that keeps track of all current enrollments at census date
 - Timeline - Fall and Spring semesters; run after the 10th day of classes
 - Data retrieved from the RIM system
- Admissions Database (SAM)
 - Stores admission information for all deposit-paid new students
 - Timeline - Fall and Spring semesters; run after the 10th day of classes
 - Data retrieved from the SAM system
- Graduates Database
 - Stores similar information as the Student Body Database, but only for graduates for a specific academic year (i.e., fall, spring, summer)
 - Timeline - September 1
- Withdraw Database
 - Maintains records of official withdraws as per memos received from the Registrar's Office
 - Timeline - continuous throughout the year
- Honors Program Database
 - Includes Demographic, Term, and GPA information for students in the College Honors Program
 - Timeline - Fall and Spring semesters; run after the 10th day of classes
 - Data retrieved by exporting from the Student Body Database
- Faculty Database
 - Includes all demographic, rank, tenure, and compensation data
 - Full-Time & Part-Time
 - Data gathered from the Academic Office, Office of the Provost, and Human Resources
- Other Databases — will be developed as needed

Internal Reporting

- Fact Book
 - Compiled and distributed annually to various administrative and academic departments
- Annual Fact Sheet
 - A one-page, double-sided document updated by Institutional Research and Public Relations
 - To be used as the official public document on general college statistics
- Common Data Set (CDS)
 - Completed annually to aid in the completion of most external survey requests
 - Exists as an excellent source for general institutional information including student, faculty and financial aid information
- Additional Survey Questions Sheet
 - Supplement to the CDS for additional institutional information
- Freshman Class Profile
 - Presents general demographic and academic information for the entering class
- Enrollment Statistics
 - Produced for fall and spring semester
 - Presents a general academic picture of the student body
- Department Enrollment Summary
 - Similar to Enrollment Statistics
 - Illustrates academic information of students for each department
- Housing Summary
 - Presents student housing data by location and full-time/part-time student status
- Weekly Enrollment Summaries
 - Produced for fall and spring semester from end of registration to start of semester
 - Gives a weekly snapshot of the enrollment picture for the following semester

External Reporting

- Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)
 - Collects information on Student Charges, Students, Faculty, Staff, Majors and Finance

- Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools
 - Annual Institutional Profile of the College for accrediting purposes

- Council for Christian Colleges & Universities (CCCU)
 - Confidential Compensation Survey, Enrollment Survey

- Association of Independent Colleges & Universities of Pennsylvania (AICUP)
 - Student Charges, Financial Aid, Finance

- American Association of University Professors (AAUP)
 - Faculty Compensation Survey

- Christian College Consortium (CCC)
 - Compensation Survey

- Other Surveys – Peterson’s, The College Board, U.S. News, CUPA, and others

Information and Research Analysis Activities

It will be the job of the IRO to provide relevant information and analysis, including peer group comparisons, to aid in decision-making and policy-making. The peer groups will remain consistent with those selected in the College's Strategic Plan.

- Institutional Projections
 - Enrollment Projections - Fall & Spring
 - Projects the College enrollment for future years based on historical data
 - Faculty Salary Projections - Fall
 - Projects peer group faculty salary increases
 - Allows a benchmark of data to project and budget College faculty raises

- Institutional Studies
 - Tuition & Fees, Room & Board – Comparative Peer Group Analysis
 - Compares both tuition & fees and room & board
 - Timeline – completed annually during the fall semester
 - Undergraduate Enrollment – Comparative Peer Group Analysis
 - Compares undergraduate enrollment as a whole as well as broken out by gender and ethnicity
 - Timeline – completed annually during summer
 - Faculty Salary and Compensation – Peer Group Analysis
 - Compares both salary and compensation by college and rank
 - Timeline – completed annually during the spring semester
 - Graduation Rates of Peer Group Institutions
 - Compares cohort size and graduation rate by institution and ethnicity
 - Timeline – completed annually during the fall semester
 - US News – America's Best Colleges
 - Analyzes the U.S. News criteria among peer group institutions
 - Timeline – completed annually during the fall semester

- External Studies (based on approved assessment schedule)
 - CIRP – Freshman Survey - Fall
 - AICUP – First-Year Student Survey - Spring
 - NSSE (National Study of Student Engagement) - Spring
 - CSS (College Student Survey) - done by Assessment Office
 - CSEQ (College Student Experiences Questionnaire) - done by Assessment Office
 - SSI (Student Satisfaction Inventory) - Fall
 - Other (added as needed)

- CCCU Salary Study
 - Completed for the CCCU
 - Studies average salaries of CCCU institutions

Central Repository

The Institutional Research Office will act as a central repository for all internal and external student-subject surveys.

Role of Institutional Research in Studies and Data Analysis

Internal Studies

- Community (faculty, staff, students) opinion studies
- Other ad-hoc studies

Academic & Non-Academic Departmental Assessment

- **Institutional Research Office**
 - Can assist in the evaluation of tools and survey instruments
 - Can create survey file for data entry
 - Can provide college-wide data, where appropriate, to aid in department analysis
- **Department**
 - Survey creation
 - Mailing
 - Data entry and analysis
- **Assessment Office**
 - The contact for help with data collection and analysis
 - The contact for departmental assessment

IRO Web Page

- Purpose: To give individuals access to a wide variety of information on the College
- Location: <http://www.messiah.edu> | Campus Offices | Institutional Research
- Contents of the IRO web site
 - Staff Listing
 - IR Policy Document
 - Messiah Statistics (abbreviated Fact Book, Common Data Set, Freshman Profile...)
 - Project Listing
 - List of Helpful Research Links
 - List of other closely-related institutions

Relations to Other Offices

The IRO maintains integral working relationships with many other departments and individuals on campus. A non-exhaustive list of areas include the:

Academic Office	College Development
Academic Departments	Financial Aid Office
Admissions Office	Office of the Provost
Business Office	Student Affairs

Relations with Outside Organizations

Association of Independent Colleges & Universities of Pennsylvania (AICUP)
Council for Christian Colleges & Universities (CCCU)
Christian College Consortium (CCC)
American Association of University Professors (AAUP)
Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at UCLA

Self-Evaluation of the Institutional Research Office

Assessment of the IRO will be done on a periodic basis. The goal of this evaluation will be to identify strengths and weaknesses of the IRO as well as to gather information on campus needs.

The assessment process for the IRO can be broken down into a set of questions:

- What is the office supposed to be doing?
- What is it actually doing?
- Is the office accomplishing its goals?
- Do others feel that the office is accomplishing its goals?
- How can we improve what we do?
- What don't we know or understand about what we are doing?

Ethics of Institutional Research

The following is summarized from the Code of Ethics passed by the membership of AIR:

Competence: The institutional researcher is to be responsible for accurate claims of his or her competency and the acceptance of tasks based on those competencies. The institutional research practitioner is further responsible for the training and professional development of subordinates, as well as their own professional developments.

Execution: Basically the institutional research practitioner is charged to use standards of good practice in the execution of his/her duties. Each item under this heading explicitly describes what these practices consist of.

Confidentiality: the institutional research practitioner is charged with protecting the confidentiality of individuals that are the subject of data collection activities and maintaining appropriate levels of security to prevent loss and unauthorized access of confidential information. Further, the institutional research practitioner is charged with developing local standards and guidelines for the acquisition, handling, use, and storage of confidential data.