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Signature Dale E. Oberlander

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THE CURRENT STATUS OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH IN NORTHWEST COMMUNITY COLLEGES

by

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ABSTRACT

The problem of this study was twofold: (1) to determine the status of institutional research in community colleges accredited by the Northwest Association of Secondary Schools and Colleges as of Fall 1978, and (2) to compare the amount of time spent on selected institutional research functions with the relative importance placed on these functions by institutional research officers in the above population.

A survey instrument was mailed to the 56 community colleges accredited by the Northwest Association during November, 1978. The survey instrument was designed to determine if an institutional research program had been established, the characteristics of these programs and of the persons primarily responsible for institutional research, areas researched, the amount of time spent on selected research functions, the relative importance of these selected research functions, membership in professional research organizations and their value, and the desirability of certain in-service staff training programs.

The study found that 60% of the responding institutions are engaged in some form of institutional research. The average program was seven years old and consisted of one full-time professional and one full or part-time clerk or paraprofessional. Seven of the programs served more than one campus.

The average research officer: (1) held a Master's degree or higher; (2) had five years of experience in the field; (3) was trained in an area related to Education; (4) reported directly to the executive officer of the institution or his assistant; (5) had a title related to institutional research; and (6) devoted at least 25% of his time to institutional research functions.

A significant (.05 level) positive relationship existed between the amount of time spent and relative importance of the selected institutional research functions. To test the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between the amount of time and importance of the functions, weighted averages were computed for each function. The functions were then ranked according to these averages and the Spearman Rank r was computed. This computation resulted in + .81. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

The researchers in the study felt that not enough time was being devoted to functions which they perceived as being of high importance to their institutions. These included determining the strengths, weaknesses, and needs of their institutions. They also felt that functions that were taking most of their time were important. These were the routine data collecting and report answering which researchers in other studies of this type felt were not as important as determining the strength, weaknesses, and needs of their institutions.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

During the several centuries of higher education in America, higher education institutions have spent a great deal of time providing research tools for society. Little was accomplished in the development of research tools to study their own operations and problems. During this period higher education was for the wealthy or privileged and little concern was shown for the manner in which colleges and universities were operated. Starting in the 1950's, with the influx of veterans into colleges and the Russian launching of Sputnik, the public interest in higher education increased considerably (Brubaker, 1976). Higher education became a primary path for upward mobility.

The days of simple operations are now over for institutions of higher education. No longer can higher education leaders run institutions as Stickler stated, "by the seat of their pants" (1961, p. 542). Enrollments have been increasing, costs are skyrocketing, services are expanding, curriculum is changing, and operational problems have grown in both number and complexity (Kovach, 1971).

Society looks to higher education for solutions to many current problems. Different groups seem to have their own expectations of what higher education should accomplish. As a result, higher education has become the focus of criticism and suspicion when it has not or cannot live up to its expected role (Dressel, 1972).

In part, the failures of higher education were fostered by the lack of clear institutional goals or social purpose. As Dressel suggested, it is now the time for institutions of higher education to use some of their external research tools to study their own operations and develop clear priorities and goals (1972). It is time for new policies, procedures, evaluative techniques, and objectives to improve the operation of institutions of higher education in today's complex environment.

In the community colleges specifically, there has been an explosion in the number of students desiring to enter as well as an explosion of new knowledge (Kovach, 1971). To meet these demands, the community college has gone to the public for additional money. In return, the public has demanded that these institutions become accountable.

As enrollment projections continue to forecast leveling or even a decline for the future, community colleges are searching out new types of students and trying to identify and understand more completely the needs of the community they serve.

In order to deal effectively with this complex environment, institutions of higher education in growing numbers, are turning to institutional research programs for assistance at all levels (Dressel, 1972).

Institutional research programs are designed to conduct research within an institution to provide data which is useful in making administrative decisions as well as the maintenance, operation, and improvement of an institution (Stickler, 1961).

Turning to institutional research has resulted in the discussion of several major issues concerning the role and functions of institutional research by professionals in the field.

The following are some of the important issues that have developed: (1) what types of research should be conducted and what types of data should be collected in these studies; (2) what role should institutional research play in the planning and evaluation functions of an institution; (3) what role should institutional research have in institutional decision making; and (4) how widespread should be the dissemination of research findings.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem of this study was twofold: (1) to determine the status of institutional research programs in community colleges accredited by the Northwest Association of Secondary Schools and Colleges as of Fall 1978, and (2) to compare the amount of time spent on selected institutional research functions with the relative importance placed on these functions by institutional research officers in the above population.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

Institutional research programs have grown steadily in number since Roueche and Boggs conducted their national survey entitled "Junior College Institutional Research: The State of the Art" (1968) in which they found that approximately 33 percent of community colleges had pro-

grams of institutional research. Later studies have shown, however, that certain states are as much as 21 percentage points ahead of the national average (Gross, 1977). It is important to determine what the percentage is for colleges in the Northwest.

Since 1968 there have been several changes in the role of institutional research programs within various institutions. There has been a shift from routine data and background information collection to becoming a planning and management tool in certain institutions (Alfred, 1977). As Shay suggested, within the ranks of higher education and community colleges in particular, there seems to exist a great deal of controversy and confusion over the issue of the changing role of institutional research (Shay, 1977). Considerable confusion exists among institutional researchers, as well as others involved in higher education, in defining the role of institutional research in the community college according to Alfred, Fremer, and Lightfield (1977).

With institutional research being a relative new phenomenon in higher education and with the changes that it has undergone, it is important to determine if there is a concensus among institutional research officers concerning the role that institutional research programs should have in community colleges in the Northwest, as well as the specific functions within that role. It is also important to determine the extent to which the role has been operationalized. Furthermore, it is important to determine the office and personnel characteristics within

these programs of institutional research since they play an important part in the role and functions of an institutional research program (Shay, 1977).

If this information can be obtained it will help in providing answers to the following key questions:

1. How prevalent is the institutional research activity in community colleges?
2. Do institutional research officers have common definitions of the role of institutional research?
3. To what extent are institutional research officers able to practice their perceived role?
4. Are there common office and personnel characteristics among institutional research programs?

Partly because of the climate in which it has grown, institutional research as a data collection agency has been relatively successful. However, as the climate changes and the role of institutional research becomes more ambiguous, institutional research officers are going to be charged with the task of reaching some concensus as to what their role should be in order for institutional research to remain a viable program.

GENERAL QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED

Based on the previous description of the problem statement, the following questions are answered by this study:

1. Do community colleges accredited by the Northwest Association

of Secondary Schools and Colleges have institutional research programs?

2. What are the characteristics of these institutional research programs?
3. What professional research organizations do officers in these institutional research programs belong?
4. How beneficial do these institutional research officers think these research organizations are to their institutional research programs?
5. What types of inservice training programs do these institutional research officers think would be valuable for the improvement of their institutional research programs?
6. What is the relative amount of time spent on selected research functions by these institutional research officers?
7. What is the relative importance placed on selected research functions by these institutional research officers?
8. Is there a relationship between the relative amount of time spent on selected research functions and the relative importance placed on them by these institutional research officers?

GENERAL PROCEDURES

The problem was investigated according to the following procedures. First, a survey instrument was used to determine if institutional re-

search programs have been established, the characteristics of these programs, characteristics of the persons primarily responsible for institutional research, the types of areas researched, the amount of time spent on selected research functions, and the relative importance given to the same selected research functions by institutional researchers.

Second, a list of institutions was constructed by consulting the Educational Directory: Colleges and Universities (1976). Community colleges accredited by the Northwest Association of Secondary Schools and Colleges were included in the list.

Third, a survey was mailed to the presidents of the community colleges identified, instructing them to forward the survey to the person primarily responsible for institutional research at that college. Fourth, once a 75% return was achieved, the data was analyzed in order to answer the questions raised by the study. These two steps occurred during the Fall of 1978.

Finally, appropriate conclusions and recommendations were formulated and presented during Spring quarter of 1979.

LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Limitations

1. Certain institutions within the population did not have institutional research programs or anything closely resembling an institutional research program.

2. Conclusions and recommendations drawn from the data are only applicable to institutional research programs located in community colleges accredited by the Northwest Association of Secondary Schools and Colleges.
3. The institutional research areas and functions to be used were taken from those identified by Hazard and Lack and used by them in status surveys of institutional research in Ohio (1977) and Illinois (1976) respectively.

Delimitations

1. The study was conducted during the 1978-1979 academic year in the seven state Northwest Association of Secondary Schools and Colleges region.
2. The data was collected through mailed surveys sent to community college presidents and forwarded to persons responsible for institutional research.
3. The institutional research programs to be studied were in community colleges.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Some of the terms used in this study are subject to various interpretations. For the purpose of this study, the following terms are defined.

Institutional research. Those self-organized, fact-finding acti-

vities within an institution whose goal is to improve the institution by assisting in evaluation, planning, and proper decision making (Stickler, 1961).

Institutional research program. The formally organized and systematic operations of institutional research which have been identified with the administration of an institution (Kovach, 1971).

Institutional research office. An entity within the organization of an institution which includes at least one professional institutional research staff member.

Institutional research officer. The individual who is primarily responsible for the implimentation and coordination of the functions of institutional research.

Institutional research role. The specific behavior patterns expected of or carried out by an institutional research officer within the context of the institution.

Institutional research function. Those appropriate or assigned duties, responsibilities, and tasks of the institutional research program, office, and officer which constitute the institutional research role.

Institutional research areas. Those categories or components within an institution which lend themselves to data collection and analysis.

Community college. Colleges, both public and private, which offer

two years of training at the thirteenth and fourteenth grade levels in either terminal or preparatory programs, and awared an associate degree of some type. Institutions which award both associate and higher degrees are not included.

Northwest Association of Secondary Schools and Colleges. A regional United States accreditation organization for colleges, universities, community colleges, and secondary schools which includes the states of Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Washington (Educational Directory, 1976).

SUMMARY

The growth of institutional research in community colleges over the past ten years resulted in discussions concerning the roles and functions of institutional research. The major purposes of this study were to determine the status of institutional research in community colleges in the Northwest, and to compare the importance given to specific institutional research functions with the amount of time spent on these functions by institutional research officers.

This study is needed to determine the characteristics of community college institutional research programs found in the Northwest and to assist institutional research officers in defining their role. This research was limited to community colleges accredited by the Northwest Association of Secondary Schools and Colleges, and therefore, the con-

clusions are applicable only to those programs in the seven state region identified.

At the end of Chapter I a definition of terms section is included which describes the meanings of unique terms used in this study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The following review of literature is intended to give the reader an understanding of the theoretical role and actual status of institutional research at the post-secondary level. The following discussion is divided into two major sections: (1) a review of the role of institutional research in higher education, and (2) a review of the status surveys that have been conducted concerning institutional research in higher education.

THE ROLE OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Institutional research (IR) is the organization within institutions of higher education whose main function is to conduct self-organized, fact-finding studies with the goal of improving the institution. In other words, it is a purposeful self-study (Kovach, 1971).

Authors who have written about institutional research have first stated their particular definition of the concept before discussing it in general. The following were typical examples of definitions found in the literature:

> Institutional research refers to research which is directed toward providing data useful or necessary in the making of inteligent administrative decisions and/or improvement of a given institution of higher education (Stickler, 1961, p. 542).

> ...Institutional research is a variegated form of organizational self-study designed to help colleges and universities gather an expanding range of information about their own internal operations and the effectiveness with which they are using their resources. By collecting such data, institutions hope to make informed judgements instead of guessing or relying on the intuitions of the administrator in framing decisions on university policy (Rourke, 1966, p. 44).

Although institutional research as a formal organization is a relatively new phenomenon, it had existed in a variety of forms long before the appearance of institutional research in the organizational tables of colleges and universities (Rourke, 1966). Roueche and Boggs stated:

> Institutional research, however, has been recognized only recently as a major need and function in all of American higher education. Most of the institutional research in higher education has occurred during the past decade, although a few institutions have provided for such activities for at least fifty years (1968, p. 1).

Authors writing about higher education in the early 1970's mentioned, almost without exception, the concept of accountability. As the world of higher education became more complex because of increasing numbers of students and new knowledge, community colleges continued to go to the public for additional money. In return, the public (usually state and federal government) demanded proof that the colleges were utilizing the maximum value from the dollars given to them (Blai, 1973).

Kovach emphasized that colleges had to make use of modern management techniques to answer this call for accountability. Kovach stated that:

> The college administrator must develop a systematic procedure for gathering information that is essential if he is to make better informed decisions concerning the present and future operations of his institution. Out of this need has grown the formalization of institutional research operations on many community college campuses (1971, p. 8).

There have been several issues of major importance discussed by authors since the inception of institutional research. The first of these major issues dealt with two major theoretical points of view about the role of institutional research in higher education. The first point was that institutional research should deal wholly with operational problems within the administrative and fiscal operations of the college. With this as the role, the institutional research officer would be directly responsible to the president of the institution. In this capacity, the institutional research office would actually be an operations research bureau dealing mainly with the business aspects of the college (Dyer, 1966).

The other major view was that institutional research should broaden its scope and be concerned with the resolution of problems in all areas of the institution, especially those dealing with instruction or other academic questions. The proponents of this viewpoint contended that the institutional research office should be an entity which was somewhat free from control by the institution. At least the office should be free of demands from the institution, and be able to study any problem that it saw fit. Realistically, however, the institutional research office would probably have to remain responsive to the demands

of the institution, but not be totally controlled by any particular department or office (Dyer, 1966).

This second view was strongly supported by Rourke and Brooks. They felt that the institutional research office should concern itself with the academic aspects of the college rather than the fiscal side of operations. They contended that:

> An IR office with an academic orientation can focus attention instead on the goals of a university and the need to subordinate all other concerns to the achievement of academic objectives, rather than, as is often the case, fashioning academic goals merely to capitalize on the availability of resources (1966, p. 66).

Dyer proposed that for institutional research to have a positive impact, it would have to integrate both of these viewpoints. The operational research is important to assure proper use of resources, and to determine environmental demands on institutions. Operational research, however, does not take into account the fundamental purposes of an institution or the value systems that control it. Dyer stated that;

> Operational research, uninformed by theory, goes nowhere. The answers it provides may be helpful in reaching short-term decisions, but they will be less useful than they could be as long as the questions asked and the facts gathered are not embedded in some sort of framework, however tentative, that will give them significance beyond the demands of the moment (1966, p. 453).

Authors agreed that the academic program research viewpoint was the prominent one in actual practice. The operational research viewpoint will probably not disappear, however, due to its characteristic of having readily available and quantifiable data.

An issue concerning the role of institutional research which was closely related to the operational versus academic issue was whether institutional research should be basic (pure) or applied (problem-oriented) in nature. Alfred and Iven stated that the focus was shifting in 1978 to applied over pure research, which had led to an increase in functional over abstract models of research (1978). The general consensus was that institutional research should be concerned with finding solutions to current or future problems of the institution. There was also a general consensus that the research officer should not be inundated with repetitive statistical reports or questionnaires which prevented them from working on the major problems of the college. Roueche and Boggs went even further when they suggested that research officers should limit their research only to major college problems and not be burdened with periodic reports (1968).

Another major issue concerning the role of the institutional research officer was whether the officer was simply a fact finder, or a recognized decision maker within the administration. The prevailing argument was that the institutional research officer was primarily a fact finder who gathered data and provided the information upon which decisions were made by others. Shay contended that the institutional research officer, to some degree, was a decision maker. It was the responsibility of the IR officer to point out what information could be useful and how it could be used by other college decision makers. The

institutional research officer should also translate quantitative data so that it would be meaningful to decision makers. Shay conceived of the IR officer as being a change agent who used information to influence decisions and in this manner became a decision maker in the process (1977).

Roueche and Boggs conducted a survey of IR officers in 1966 questioning them on the issue of fact finder versus decision maker. They found that 43 percent of the officers claimed to be fact finders and only 20 percent claimed participation in the major university decision making. These officers did state, however, that data gathering itself had substantial policy implications.

In summary, the general concensus was that the office was a clearing house which collected, analyzed, and disseminated information obtained from a variety of sources to facilitate the decision making process. This information function also had strong implications for responsibilities of institutional research in the planning and evaluation functions of the college.

The final major issue concerning the role of institutional research in higher education involved dissemination of research findings among institutions of higher education. In a 1968 national survey, Roueche and Boggs attempted to determine the extent of dissemination of findings. They found that no more than five percent of all institutional studies had been made available for widespread dissemination. The advocates of

wide dissemination felt that it was important to have access to studies by others to prevent duplication of mistakes and improve research techniques among community colleges. The advocates for the opposite viewpoint felt that the uniqueness of their particular institution waranted the use of research findings only by those directly connected with that institution. Rouche and Boggs stated that:

> It takes courage to think alound regarding institutional weakness at a time when everyone is critical of higher education and when many question the extent to which it is fulfilling its role in a modern society (1968, p. i).

In addition to the major issues mentioned thus far, there were several other minor issues that authors felt indirectly, and in some instances, directly influenced the role of institutional research in the community college. The first of these minor issues dealt with the organizational nature of institutional research. One question was whether the functions of institutional research should be centralized or decentralized. There didn't seem to be any set pattern among the established offices of institutional research. As Shay pointed out, "There must be adaptation to the given local situation, and within that local situation there must be adaptation of institutional research roles and functions to specific conditions, needs, and problems" (1977, p. 6). Rourke and Brooks claimed that centralization of research under one office created anxiety within the ranks of the college faculty and administration. Their theory claimed that there was no widespread support for centralization and that research centers had actually tended to multiply

on most campuses. One problem Rourke and Brooks found that discouraged centralization was that there existed many barriers to the free flow of information, including the fear of disclosure of sensitive information (1966). Brumbaugh, however, disagreed with Rourke and Brooks and stated that there had been a trend toward centralization, with the main responsibility for coordination and supervision of research activities being assigned to a full or part-time institutional research officer. This type of organization, in his view, had tremendous advantages over decentralized research (1960).

Even if the research function was not centralized, many authors felt the institutional research office should be responsible for coordination of research efforts to avoid duplication and obtain the greatest possible amount of information for the college. Shay stated that the IR office should be aware of the work that was being done in other areas, be of assistance when needed, and coordinate the work of institutional research with other undertakings (1977).

A second organizational issue was whether the IR officer should be in a line or staff position. There was consensus in the literature that it should be a staff position. Rourke and Brooks stated that on most campuses it indeed was a staff position (1966). Dressel was very emphatic in claiming that institutional research should be a staff position. His theory contended that the IR officer should not be in a position of decision or policy maker, and should seldom recommend a

single course of action (1967).

Along with the issue of being a staff or line position was the question of to whom the IR officer should report. There appeared in the literature to be two different ideas on this matter. The main difference relates back to the major issue of operational orientation versus academic orientation. Those that perceived the role of institutional research as operationally oriented felt that the officer should hold a staff position and report directly to the president of the institution. Stickler stated that if the institutional research office was to have the status and raw materials it needed, high administrative placement would be essential (1961).

The other viewpoint was that, since the major goal of institutional research was to study academic programs and policies, it should not be identified as part of the administration. The office of institutional research should try and obtain a reputation of neutrality and independence if it was going to work effectively with academic areas of the college. Rourke and Brooks stated that,

> To the extent that an office of institutional research becomes an arm of administrative authority it loses some of its persuasive capacity with the academic departments (1966, p. 61).

Shay stated that the roles and functions of an institutional research officer were largely determined by the formal position of the IR officer himself. He said, "In some colleges the officer may have a position which is equivalent to that of Vice-President or a Dean, while

in other colleges the position is several levels lower than that" (1977, p. 3).

Another minor issue that Shay and others believed influenced the role of the institutional research officer was the training and experience that the officer brought with him to the job. Shay stated that some officers were trained in the area of educational issues and process, but had little training in the area of data collection or statistical analysis. Others were in just the opposite situation. Officers with only statistical training tended to concentrate on data collection and those with only education training tended to concentrate on the theoretical academic issues (1977).

The final minor issue discussed was the influence that the size of the institution and institutional research staff itself had on the role of institutional research. In their study, Roueche and Boggs found that the size of the institution was a tremendous factor in the development of an IR office. Their study showed a difference in the percentage of schools with IR offices from 20 percent in schools with enrollment under 2,000 to 72 percent in schools with enrollment over 10,000 (1966). Shay recognized the influence of size and contended that,

> It is relavant to note here that the size and age of the college, the size of the institutional research office staff and the age of the institutional research office also seem to be factors which have an impact upon the responsibilities given to the institutional research office (1977, p. 5).

The authors felt that the typical institution resolved each of the

above issues in a manner that best fit their particular situation. Stickler, however, felt that in whatever manner they answered these arguments, they should have adhered to certain guiding principles. These included the following:

1. Institutional research must be planned.
2. Responsibility for the direction, coordination, and review of institutional research should be centralized.
3. The executive officer of the institutional research agency should report to a major institutional officer, preferably the president.
4. An institution-wide advisory committee should assist the institutional research agency in carrying out its responsibilities.
5. Provision should be made for wide participation by faculty members and administrative offices in planning and conducting institutional research projects.
6. Institutional research must be adequately financed (1961, pp. 547-548).

STATUS SURVEYS OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES

In an attempt to determine the number of formally organized programs of institutional research existing in community colleges, Swanson conducted a national survey of junior colleges in 1964. Since that time, other researchers have expanded that survey to measure some of the actual characteristics of institutional research offices which had been established. These studies were conducted on both a national and statewide scale.

National surveys concerning the prevalence of institutional research in community colleges seemed to disagree and failed to indicate a pattern of growth in the number of institutions with institutional research programs over time. The problem with these surveys was that they defined institutional research programs in different terms and thus weren't truly measuring the same thing. The surveys did seem to suggest, however, that the percentage of community colleges which conducted some type of research activity had grown from 63 percent in 1974 to 85 percent in 1977 (Platt, 1975; Alfred, 1977). There also appeared to be concensus among the surveys that over half of all community colleges have some form of formally organized research program (Platt, 1975).

States differ in their emphasis on institutional research. For example, a survey in Ohio showed that 62 percent of the community colleges in that state had established institutional research offices (Hazard, 1977). On the other hand, a 1976 survey conducted in Illinois showed only 51 percent of the community colleges in that state with institutional research offices, a 4 percent increase over the previous survey conducted in 1973 (Lach, 1974, 1977).

National surveys suggested that establishment of a research office was related to institutional size, and in turn to the size of the institution's budget (Roueche and Boggs, 1968; Platt, 1975; Alfred, 1977).

After determining the number of established institutional research

programs, the surveys attempted to determine the characteristics of such programs. The first of these characteristics was the percentage of time devoted by the person responsible for institutional research to IR functions. In 1965 less than 2 percent of community colleges had researchers who devoted over half of their time to IR functions, while by 1968, this percentage increased to 22.9 percent (Roueche and Boggs, 1968; Swanson, 1965). There wasn't much varience in Illinois between 1973 (26%) and 1976 (27%), but Illinois was above the national average (Lach, 1977). Ohio, on the other hand, was below the national average in 1977 with 20 percent of the community colleges reporting half-time researchers (Hazard, 1977).

The training and experience of institutional research officers appeared quite high in Illinois and Ohio. Over 75 percent of the researchers in both of these states held master's or doctorate degrees and approximately 50 percent had four or more years experience in institutional research (Hazard, 1977; Lach, 1977). Hazard's study in Ohio also showed that researchers' areas of specialization varied over a wide range of disciplines (1977).

An important variable which made the area of institutional research difficult to study was the various titles carried by persons who were responsible for institutional research functions. For example, Hazard found that only 16 percent of the people he surveyed were called the Director of Institutional Research in Ohio, while 54 percent had a title

which did not imply institutional research (1977). In Illinois, Lach found that 38 percent had a title containing institutional research while 38 percent had titles without reference to IR (1977). As Gross suggested in 1977, certain words did tend to appear in institutional research officers' titles with some frequency. These included director, coordinator, assistant to, research, planning and development.

Another characteristic dealt with by the statewide surveys, was the organizational position of the institutional research officer. While figures varied between the different states, the institutional research officer in over 50 percent of reporting institutions had as their immediate supervisor the president or chief executive officer of the institution (Gross, 1977). In Illinois, this percentage was a high 76 percent (Lach, 1977).

Characteristics of the institutional research office staff were also important variables in institutional research surveys. As Gross suggested nationally, and state surveys by Lach and Hazard appeared to verify, the typical institutional research office was comprised of one full-time professional and one full-time paraprofessional or clerical person (1977; 1977; 1976).

A final characteristic of institutional researchers that was considered in the state surveys of Lach and Hazard was the membership in professional research organizations by researchers. While less than 50 percent of the researchers in Illinois belonged to at least one pro-

fessional research organization all of the professional research organizations listed in the survey were considered to be very beneficial (Lach, 1977). Some of the professional research organizations listed were: 1) The Association for Institutional Research (AIR); 2) The American Educational Research Association (AERA); and 3) AERA North Central-Special Interest Group for Community/Junior College Research (Hazard, 1977).

After determining characteristics of institutional research offices and the researchers making up these offices, the surveys went on to determine and analyze the nature of research conducted by institutional research offices. Special national and state surveys specifically for this purpose were developed, approaching the problem from different sides. For example, in 1968 Roueche and Boggs conducted a national survey and determined areas of research according to ranked frequency of studies as well as ranked frequency of responses by junior college administrators on prefered research areas. The following shows the results of the ranking by frequency of studies:

TABLE I

AREAS OF JUNIOR COLLEGE INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH EMPHASIS, RANKED BY FREQUENCY OF STUDIES (N=70)

RANK	AREA	RESEARCH STUDIES IN PROGRESS	RESEARCH STUDIES COMPLETED IN PAST TWO YEARS	TOTAL	PRECENT OF TOTAL STUDIES
1	Students	45	54	99	41.6%
2	Curriculum & Program	23	26	49	20.6%
3	Institutional Operations	20	20	40	16.8%
4	Faculty	13	8	21	8.8%
5	Student Personnel Services	9	7	16	6.7%
6	Other	6	4	10	4.2%
7	Instruction	3	0	3	1.3%

Source: Roueche and Boggs, 1968, p. 40.

In 1974 Chester Platt conducted a similar study based partially on the 1968 study. Platt, however, aggregated the data by "total percentage of colleges which conducted research" within a particular category. The most significant difference in emphasis from Platt's 1968 study was that the number of institutional studies had increased while the number of curricula and program studies had decreased. Students still remained the most popular area for research. As Gross suggested however, the

difference in methodology used by Platt left some room for doubt concerning his conclusions (1977).

The state survey conducted by Hazard in Ohio also looked at which areas were emphasized for study by the frequency of studies conducted (1977). He used somewhat different categories, however, so a comparison with the national surveys was difficult to make. The results did tend to confirm Platt's conclusion that institutional studies were ranked higher than curricula and programs.

In 1977, Alfred, Fremer, and Lightfield published the results of a national survey they had conducted concerning the functions performed by the institutional research office. They asked the presidents of the institutions to identify which functions they thought were being performed by the office of institutional research and then which functions they thought researchers should be performing. What they found was a dichotomy. The presidents showed a concern for planning, data systems, and evaluation. The researchers, on the other hand, were spending much of their time on routine data collection and provision activities and did not concern themselves with the critical issues faced by their institutions.

The statewide surveys conducted by Lach and Hazard used this same technique with researchers instead of presidents to attempt to determine the proper functions of institutional research officers in Illinois and Ohio. The results of their surveys are summarized in the following table:

TABLE II

COMPARISON OF RANKING OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH FUNCTIONS BY TIME SPENT AND RELATIVE IMPORTANCE

	ILLINOIS RANK		OHIO RANK	
IR FUNCTION	TIME SPENT	RELATIVE IMPORTANCE	TIME SPENT	RELATIVE IMPORTANCE
Respond to Required Reports	1	6	4	6
Preparing Reports on Institutional Status	2	4	2	5
Compiling Data	3	7.5	3	4
Master Planning	4	3	5	3
Determining Immediate and Future Needs	5	2	1	1
Identifying Strengths and Weaknesses	6	1	7	2
Developing Proposals and Grant Requests	7	5	8	8
Assisting Staff	8	9	6	7
Maintaining Research File	9.5	7.5	9	9
Communicating Research	9.5	10	11	11
Coordination of Research	11	11	10	10

Sources: Lach, 1977, p. 21; Hazard, 1977, p. 16.

Researchers in both states reported that they spent the greatest amount of time performing fact finding and routine report answering. Both

groups also felt that determining immediate and future needs and identifying strengths and weaknesses were the most important functions of institutional research (Lach, 1977; Hazard, 1977).

Two additional areas of institutional research were covered by Platt in his national survey in 1974. He found that only about 15 percent of responding institutions based important decisions routinely on the results of institutional research. He did find, however, that over half of the colleges did involve their institutional research officers in important decisions. He also found that a majority of the institutions had a desire to exchange research ideas and methodologies.

SUMMARY

Formally organized institutional research offices are a relatively new phenomenon in higher education.

The literature on institutional research discussed four major issues concerning the theoretical role of institutional research. These were as follows: (1) should institutional research be operationally or academically orientated; (2) should institutional research be basic or applied research; (3) should the IR officer be a fact finder or decision maker; and (4) how widespread should be the dissemination if institutional research findings.

In addition to these major issues, there were several minor ones

which the authors felt had an influence on the role of institutional research in the community college and other institutions of higher education. These issues included: (1) should the functions of research be centralized or decentralized; (2) should the office be in a line or staff position; (3) to whom should the IR officer report; (4) what types of training and experience should the IR officer have; and (5) the influence that the size of an institution has on institutional research.

Institutions resolved these issues in a manner that best fit their own particular situation. However, some authors have proposed a set of guiding principles which they felt should have been followed in developing offices of institutional research.

Since the national status survey conducted by Roueche and Boggs in 1968, there have been several other attempts made by researchers to measure the status of institutional research in community colleges. These attempts were both on a national and statewide scale.

The major conclusions from these surveys were: (1) more than half of all community colleges have some form of formally organized research program; (2) slightly over 20 percent of the institutions have full time research officers; (3) years of training and experience of institutional research officers are quite high; (4) institutional research officers carry a variety of titles; (5) the research officer typically reports to the president of the institution; (6) the typical institu-

tional research office consists of a full time professional and full time clerical assistant; and (7) professional organizations are considered valuable, but the majority of researchers do not belong to them.

Special surveys and special sections of surveys mentioned above have been devoted to analyzing institutional research study emphasis. Students ranked the highest according to the frequency of studies conducted. Institutional operations studies appeared to have climbed the most and curricula and program studies have dropped the most when considering the ranks of all areas.

Researchers reported that they felt they were spending too much time in routine fact finding and report answering functions and that identifying needs, strengths, and weaknesses were the most important and more time should be devoted to the latter.

While most institutions did not in practice base all their important decisions on facts generated by institutional research studies, institutional research officers were often included in the decision making process. Also, there was a large desire among institutions to exchange research ideas and techniques.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The problem of this study was twofold: (1) to determine the status of institutional research programs in community colleges accredited by the Northwest Association of Secondary Schools and Colleges as of Fall 1978, and (2) to compare the amount of time spent on selected institutional research functions with the relative importance placed on these functions by institutional research officers in the above population.

In describing the procedures that were undertaken to solve the problem stated above, Chapter 3 covers the following methodological topics: (1) a description of the population studies; (2) a definition of the categories of investigation including the necessary controls taken for eliminating contaminating variables; (3) the method of collecting the data including characteristics of the survey instrument; (4) a statement of the statistical hypothesis tested in the null form and the level of significance used; (5) the statistical methods used for analyzing the data; (6) precautions taken for accuracy; and (7) a summarization of procedures undertaken.

DESCRIPTION OF THE POPULATION

The population to be surveyed included all persons primarily responsible for institutional research functions in community colleges in the seven state Northwest Association of Secondary Schools and Colleges

region which are accredited by this association. This region includes the states of Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah and Washington. These community colleges were identified by consulting the Educational Directory: Colleges and Universities (1976). Therefore, only those community colleges that were accredited by 1976 were used.

The specific person at each college primarily responsible for institutional research was identified by the president of that institution who was requested in the cover letter to forward the survey to this person. The survey was mailed during the Fall of 1978.

DEFINITION OF CATEGORIES OF INVESTIGATION

The general categories of investigation included the following: (1) characteristics of the institutional research program; (2) characteristics of the person primarily responsible for institutional research functions; (3) areas studied by institutional research officers during the previous two years; (4) amount of time spent on and the relative importance placed on selected institutional research functions by institutional research officers; (5) professional research organization membership; and (6) inservice training programs.

The category concerning characteristics of the institutional research program included the following specific items:

1. If an institutional research program had been established and in what year.

2. If the institutional research program is responsible for more than one campus and the names of these campuses.
3. The number of full time and part-time professional, paraprofessional, and clerical staff employed in the institutional research program.

The category concerning characteristics of the person primarily responsible for institutional research functions included the following specific items:

1. The name and title of the person.
2. The highest degree held, area of specialization, and amount of institutional research experience of the person in years.
3. The person that this person reports to directly.
4. The amount of time this person devotes to the functions of institutional research.

The study in the category of areas of research studies was concerned with the determination of the number of studies completed in each area during the previous two years and included the following specific items:

1. Admission, Registration and Enrollment
2. Students
3. Administration
4. Curriculum
5. Physical Plant

6. Finance
7. Instruction
8. Faculty
9. Goals and Objectives
10. Public Relations
11. Community

Eleven selected functions were used in the next category which had as its major concern to compare the amount of time spent with the relative importance given to these selected functions by institutional research officers. The following are the specific functions used:

1. The preparation of descriptive reports on institutional status.
2. The identification of strengths and weaknesses in the institution.
3. The determination of immediate and future needs.
4. Compiling data and other information which might be needed.
5. The coordination of intra- and interinstitutional research.
6. Master planning.
7. The provision of assistance to any staff member, administrator in the planning, execution, and data analysis of studies which are conducted by them.
8. The periodic communication of briefs and summaries on research just completed or currently in progress.
9. The maintenance of an up-to-date research file on all studies

conducted at the institution.

10. Developing or assisting in the development of proposals and grant requests.

11. Responding to state, federal, and other requested reports.

The study in the next category was concerned with the determination of which professional research organizations the institutional research officers have membership in and their perceived importance of these organizations. The following professional research organizations were included in this survey:

1. Association for Institutional Research
2. American Educational Association
3. Rocky Mountain Association for Institutional Research
4. AACJC National Council on Planning

The primary concern in the last category was to determine which inservice training programs institutional research officers think would be valuable for the improvement of their program. The types of inservice training programs included in the survey were as follows:

1. Workshop on methods of conducting follow-up studies
2. Workshop on basic research design and methodology
3. Workshop on statistical methods
4. Seminar for exchanging two-year college research studies
5. Workshop on organizing an institutional research office

There are contaminating variables which could have affected the

findings of the study if they were not properly controlled. First, if the respondents perceived that the survey was an evaluation of their institution or institutional research program in particular, it might have affected their responses. A statement was included in the cover letter explaining that the survey was only an informational study and not an evaluation of their institution or program.

Second, only community colleges which had been established prior to 1976 were included in the population which allowed for at least two years for institutions to have developed an institutional research program.

Third, programs which serve more than one campus were identified along with the names of the campuses that they serve.

Fourth, if a formal institutional research position did not exist on a campus, the president was instructed to forward the survey to the person most closely performing the institutional research function on that campus. A list of the types of research typically included in the institutional research program was provided to assist the president in identifying the appropriate officer at his institution.

Finally, some of the categories did not contain all of the possible specific items. Therefore, in these cases an item called "other" was included requesting that these items be identified or specified.

METHOD OF COLLECTING THE DATA

Data was collected from the population by means of a mailed written

survey instrument sent out in the Fall of 1978. A follow-up letter and additional survey form was sent out to non-responding colleges approximately three weeks after the first mailing.

After the designated percentage of returns was received, non-responding colleges were contacted to determine why they failed to complete and return the questionnaire.

The instrument used was adapted from a study entitled, Status Survey of Institutional Research: Ohio's Two-Year Campuses, conducted by Dr. Francis Hazard, The researcher mailed a letter to Dr. Hazard during the Summer of 1978 asking for his permission to use the instrument. The letter also requested specific information and data concerning the validity and reliability of the instrument.

The instrument was tested for ambiguity during the Summer of 1978. Various institutional research officers in the region were sent a copy of the instrument to examine. The researcher contacted each of these individuals by telephone to receive their comments.

STATISTICAL HYPOTHESIS

Based on general question eight in Chapter I, the following null hypothesis was tested.

Null Hypothesis. There is no significant relationship between the relative amount of time spent on selected institutional research functions by institutional researchers and the relative importance placed on these functions by these researchers.

Alternative Hypothesis. There is a significant negative relationship between the relative amount of time spent on selected institutional research functions by institutional researchers and the relative importance placed on these functions by these researchers.

The level of significance chosen for testing this hypothesis was .05. The .05 level was chosen in order to balance the probability of making a Type I or Type II error. Since the study was primarily descriptive in nature, this balance was necessary in order that the findings would give an accurate picture of institutional research functions in the region studied.

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The data collected to aid in answering general question one was analyzed by reporting the number of responses given and the percentage of these respondents that reported having institutional research programs.

The data collected for general questions 2, 3, 4 and 5 was analyzed by reporting the number of responses given and appropriate response percentages for each response choice available for each item within each category.

Data collected for general questions six and seven was analyzed by reporting the number of responses given for each alternative rating choice, for both amount of time spent and importance placed, for each

institutional research function.

Data collected for general question eight was analyzed by reporting the number of paired responses given for all combinations of ratings for the total group of institutional research functions.

The null hypothesis was tested at the .05 level using the Spearman Rank r. The ranks were determined by assigning weights to each response choice, multiplying the number of responses for each choice by the corresponding weight, and summing the totals of these weighted values.

PRECAUTIONS TAKEN FOR ACCURACY

Data that relates to answering the eight general questions presenting descriptive information were hand calculated with all numerical totals and percentages double-checked.

Data that relates to the statistical analysis of the null hypothesis was computed using the Spearman Rank r program of the Burroughs Desk-Top Programmable Calculator, Model C 7206.

SUMMARIZATION

This chapter contains a detailed description of the methods and procedures undertaken in the study. The survey population included all persons primarily responsible for institutional research functions in community colleges accredited by the Northwest Association of Second-

ary Schools and Colleges which were established by 1972. A survey was mailed out during the Fall of 1978 that determined the status of institutional research in the population and the comparison between the amount of time spent on selected institutional research functions and the relative importance placed on them by institutional researchers. The instrument does take into account certain contaminating variables which might have influenced the results of the study.

Data was analyzed descriptively to answer the study's eight general questions. The Spearman Rank r was used to test the null hypothesis at the .05 significance level. Precautions for computational accuracy were taken by using the Burroughs Desk-Top Programmable Calculator, Model C 7206.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF DATA

Of the 56 community colleges included in this study, 48 responded to the questionnaire for an 84 percent return.

The responses indicated that 19 (40%) of the community colleges have a formally established institutional research program. Another 10 community colleges reported that while they did not have a formally established program, they did conduct institutional research studies. Four of these also reported having a person who devoted at least 25 percent of his time to institutional research functions. Therefore, 29 community colleges or 60 percent of the respondents are engaged in institutional research in some manner.

The average formally established institutional research program had been in operation for seven years. The range was from two months to twenty-two years in operation.

Seven of the community colleges reported having an institutional research program which served more than one campus. Six of these were serving two campuses and the other three campuses.

CHARACTERISTICS OF ESTABLISHED INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH PROGRAMS

The educational qualifications of persons responsible for institutional research were very high in this study. Twenty-six of the

twenty-nine researchers held master's degrees or higher, with fourteen of these holding a doctorate. The experience of these people was also quite high with the average person having five years of experience in the area of institutional research. The majority of these people specialized in higher education administration or some field of computer science or research during their training. Seven of them, however, specialized in other fields which are not related to institutional research.

The typical research office was staffed by one professional and one clerk or paraprofessional committed to the institutional research function. Table III shows the summary results of this item in the study.

TABLE III

THE NUMBER OF NORTHWEST COMMUNITY COLLEGES WITH VARIOUS TYPES OF STAFF MEMBERS INVOLVED IN THE INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH FUNCTION

	PROFESSIONAL		PARAPROFESSIONAL		CLERICAL	
	FT*	PT**	FT	PT	FT	PT
2 or more staff	1	2	1	1	0	1
1 staff	16	7	2	1	9	9

* Full time staff members ** Part-time staff members

An analysis of the titles of persons responsible for institutional research revealed that over 50 percent of these people have the

title of Director of Institutional Research or something similar. Almost one-third, however, had titles which did not imply involvement with institutional research. The table below gives the detailed results of this analysis.

TABLE IV

TITLES OF PERSONS IN NORTHWEST COMMUNITY COLLEGES WHO ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

TITLE	NUMBER (29)	PERCENT
Director of Institutional Research or Similar	15	52%
Director of Institutional Research or Similar and Another Function	5	17%
Title Which Does Not Imply Institutional Research	9	31%

Sixteen of the twenty-nine persons responsible for institutional research report directly to the president or chancellor of the college who is their immediate supervisor. All of the researchers reported having as an immediate supervisor an administrator who had campus-wide responsibilities. Table V shows the actual responses to this question on the survey instrument.

TABLE V

IMMEDIATE SUPERVISORS OF PERSONS RESPONSIBLE FOR INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH IN NORTHWEST COMMUNITY COLLEGES

IMMEDIATE SUPERVISOR	NUMBER (29)	PERCENT
President or Chancellor	16	55%
Vice-President or Dean	12	41%
Other	1	4%

The percentage of time that persons responsible for institutional research devoted to the institutional research function was evenly spread over the four categories of time used in the survey. Eight (28%) of these people devoted 75-100% of their time and the same percentage devoted less that 25% of their time to the institutional research function. Table VI shows the details of responses in this area.

TABLE VI

PERCENT OF TIME THAT PERSONS RESPONSIBLE FOR IR DEVOTE TO THE FUNCTION OF IR IN NORTHWEST COMMUNITY COLLEGES

PERCENT OF TIME DEVOTED TO IR	NUMBER (29)	PERCENT
75 to 100%	8	28%
50 to 74%	6	20%
25 to 49%	7	24%
Less than 25%	8	28%

As noted earlier in this chapter, twenty-nine of the reporting community colleges had conducted some type of institutional research study within the preceeding two years. As a group, these community colleges had completed over 770 of these types of studies. The most popular area of study was students, with admissions, registration, and enrollment as a close second. The number of studies completed in these two categories were considerably higher than any other category. The table on the next page indicates the number of studies completed in each area and how they rank according to the frequency of studies.

TABLE VII

INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH STUDIES CONDUCTED IN NORTHWEST COMMUNITY COLLEGES WITHIN THE PAST TWO YEARS

CATEGORY	NUMBER COMPLETED	RANK
Admissions, Registration, and Enrollment	139	2
Students	142	1
Administration	44	8
Curriculum	63	5
Physical Plant	27	11
Finance	50	7
Instruction	83	4
Faculty	86	3
Goals and Objectives	54	6
Public Relations	43	9
Community	32	10
Other	8	12

PROFESSIONAL RESEARCH ORGANIZATIONS

Membership in a professional research organization was reported by all of the community colleges with formally established institutional research programs. Four of the remaining colleges, which did conduct institutional research studies, indicated that they would have

joined a professional research organization, but that they were unaware that such organizations existed.

The most popular professional research organization was the Association for Institutional Research with over 40 percent of the respondents reporting membership.

While not a large percentage of the persons responsible for institutional research belong to a professional research organization, those that did reported that membership was very beneficial. The AACJC National Council on Planning was the sole exception, respondants who are members of this organization reported that membership was not beneficial than those reporting it as beneficial. The following table presents the detailed responses in this area.

TABLE VIII

MEMBERSHIP IN RESEARCH ORGANIZATIONS AND RELATIVE VALUE OF EACH ORGANIZATION

ASSOCIATION	MEMBER		RELATIVE VALUE	
	YES	NO	VERY VALUABLE	NOT VERY VALUABLE
ASSOCIATION FOR INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH (AIR)	12 41%	17 59%	10 83%	2 17%
AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION (AERA)	3 10%	26 90%	2 67%	1 33%
ROCKY MOUNTAIN ASSOCIATION FOR INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH (RMAIR)	4 14%	25 86%	3 75%	1 25%
AACJC NATIONAL COUNCIL ON PLANNING	7 24%	22 76%	3 43%	4 57%

DESIRED IN-SERVICE STAFF TRAINING

A number of institutional researchers indicated a desire to have their research staff participate in various types of in-service training programs. Once again the number of responses was fairly evenly spread over all of the available choices. Seminars for the exchanging of two-year college research studies was the most popular.

TABLE IX

IN-SERVICE STAFF TRAINING PROGRAMS DESIRED BY NORTHWEST COMMUNITY COLLEGE INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCHERS

IN-SERVICE TRAINING PROGRAM	NUMBER (29)	PERCENT
Workshops on methods of conduction follow-up studies	8	28%
Workshop on basic research design and methodology	10	35%
Workshop on statistical methods	8	28%
Seminar for exchanging two-year college research studies	14	48%
Workshop on organizing an institutional research office	11	38%

INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH FUNCTIONS

Respondents in this study were asked to indicate the relative

amount of time spent by their college and the relative importance they placed upon a group of selected institutional research functions. Tables X, XI, and XII summarize the results of the data from this question.

It can be seen from the tables that for most of the functions, the respondents considered the amount of time spent on the various functions corresponded with the relative importance of the functions. The varience from this is primarily shown in Table X where it can be seen that researchers felt that not enough time was being devoted to some functions which they believed to be of moderate or high importance.

TABLE X

THE RELATIVE AMOUNT OF TIME SPENT AND IMPORTANCE OF SELECTED INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH FUNCTIONS

		AMOUNT OF TIME SPENT			
		HIGH	MODERATE	LOW	NONE
RELATIVE IMPORTANCE	HIGH	54	33	19	2
	MODERATE	11	58	28	4
	LOW	2	8	72	7
	NONE	0	0	6	15

Very few researchers felt too much time was being spent on unimportant functions.

TABLE XI

THE NUMBER OF COLLEGES INDICATING THE RELATIVE AMOUNT OF TIME SPENT AND IMPORTANCE OF EACH OF THE SELECTED INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH FUNCTIONS

IR FUNCTION	RELATIVE AMOUNT OF TIME SPENT				RELATIVE IMPORTANCE			
	HIGH	MOD	LOW	NONE	HIGH	MOD	LOW	NONE
The preparation of descriptive reports on institutional status	10	7	10	2	9	11	8	1
The identification of strengths and weaknesses in the institution	8	11	9	1	18	8	3	0
The determination of immediate and future needs	13	11	4	1	23	4	2	0
Compiling data and other information which might be needed	7	14	8	0	9	14	6	0
The coordination of intra and interinstitutional research	1	5	17	6	5	4	14	6
Master Planning	8	9	10	2	16	7	5	1
The provision of assistance to any staff member, administrator in the planning, execution, and data analysis of studies which are conducted by them	2	11	4	2	6	13	10	0
The periodic communication of briefs and summaries on research just completed or currently in progress	0	5	21	3	4	10	13	2
Maintenance of an up-to-date research file	1	8	16	4	3	12	11	3
Developing or assisting with proposals or grant requests	3	11	12	3	5	10	8	6
Responding to state, federal, and other required reports	15	9	4	1	11	8	9	1

The largest difference in rankings of the functions can easily be determined from Table XII as being "responding to state and federal reports." It ranked much lower (Number 5) for relative importance than for amount of time spent (Number 1). Other major differences include "master planning" ranked Number 6 in time spent and Number 3 in importance, and "developing programs and proposals" which ranked Number 7 for time spent and Number 10 for relative importance.

Generally, respondents indicated that they spent too much time responding to routine reports and collecting data and not enough time on functions such as determining needs, strengths, and weaknesses which they felt necessary for master planning and of much greater relative importance.

The analysis presented in Table XII used a weighting to determine an average and rank for each of the selected functions. The Spearman Rank r was computed to determine if there was a significant correlation between the two criteria.

TABLE XII

COMPARISON OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH FUNCTIONS
BY TIME SPENT AND RELATIVE IMPORTANCE

IR FUNCTION	TIME SPENT WT. AVE.	TIME SPENT RANK	RELATIVE IMPORTANCE RANK	RELATIVE IMPORTANCE WT. AVE.
The preparation of descriptive reports on institutional status	2.86	5	6	2.97
The identification of strengths and weaknesses in the institution	2.90	3	2	3.52
The determination of immediate and future needs	3.24	2	1	3.72
Compiling data and other information which might be needed	2.97	4	4	3.10
The coordination of intra and interinstitutional research	2.03	11	11	2.28
Master Planning	2.79	6	3	3.31
The provision of assistance to any staff member, administrator in the planning, execution, and data analysis of studies which are conducted by them	2.45	8	7	2.86
The periodic communication of briefs and summaries on research just completed or currently in progress	2.07	10	8	2.55
Maintenance of an up-to-date research file	2.21	9	9	2.52
Developing or assisting with proposals or grant requests	2.48	7	10	2.48
Responding to state, federal, and other required reports	3.31	1	5	3.00

r = .81 (Critical value at .05 level of significance - .62)

The Spearman Rank r was computed to be .81 and this was determined to be significant at the .05 level. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a significant positive relationship between the time spent and relative importance of the selected institutional research functions. The null hypothesis and alternative hypothesis, that there would be no significant relationship and that the relationship would be negative respectively, were both rejected.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SUMMARY

Institutional research is the organization within institutions of higher education whose main function is to conduct self-organized, fact-finding studies with the goal of improving the institution.

As a number of institutional research programs has grown over the past ten years, there has been a great deal of discussion and concern among institutional researchers and other members of higher education concerning the appropriate roles and functions of institutional research.

The major purposes of this study were to determine the status of institutional research in community colleges in the Northwest area of the United States, and to determine if there was a relationship between the importance given to specific institutional research functions and the amount of time spent on these functions by institutional research officers.

This study was needed to determine the characteristics of community college institutional research programs in the Northwest and to assist institutional research officers in coming to grips with the questions about their appropriate roles and functions.

The population selected for this study was limited to community colleges accredited by the Northwest Association of Secondary Schools

and Colleges in the seven states of Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah and Washington.

The literature concerning institutional research was of two basic types: (1) discussion of the theoretical role of institutional research covering several major and minor issues important to institutional research; and (2) surveys of both a national and statewide scope which assessed the actual characteristics of existing institutional research programs.

The major conclusions drawn from the literature were: (1) institutions must resolve the theoretical issues of institutional research in a manner that best fits their own particular situation; and (2) institutional researchers typically reported spending too much time in routine fact finding and report answering functions and that identifying needs, strengths, and weaknesses were the most important functions of institutional research. They also felt that more time should be devoted to these functions. The literature also indicated an expressed desire by research officers to exchange research ideas and techniques.

This study was conducted during the Fall of 1978. A survey instrument was mailed to the presidents of all 57 community colleges in the population described above. Of the 57 colleges included in the study, 48 (84%) responded to the questionnaire. Of these, 29 or 60% reported being engaged in some form of institutional research. Forty percent of the respondents had formally established institutional research programs.

CONCLUSIONS

Community colleges in the Northwest appear to be lower than the nation as a whole in the percentage of community colleges with institutional research programs. In 1977, Alfred found that 85 percent of the nation's community colleges conducted some type of research, while only 60 percent of the community colleges in this study were engaged in such activities. Also, only 40 percent of the community colleges in this study had formally organized institutional research programs, while the national average found by Alfred was 50 percent of all community colleges.

The formally established research programs in the Northwest community colleges were in a variety of developmental stages, with some being only two months old and others having been in existence for several years. The average age of seven years for these programs was quite high, however.

When the data presented in Chapter 4 is compared with other studies (see the second section of Chapter 2) the following conclusions can be made:

1. The educational qualifications and experience of persons responsible for institutional research were high, with most having master's degrees and an average of five years experience.

2. The areas of specialization of research officers weren't as varied in this survey as in the national surveys.
3. The typical research office in the study was staffed in a manner similar to others in the nation with one full-time professional and one full or part-time clerical or paraprofessional member. (Table III)
4. A higher percentage of persons responsible for institutional research in the Northwest community colleges reported having the title Director of Institutional Research than those reported in the studies of Chapter 2. (Table IV)
5. The substantial majority of research officers report to the chief executive or their assistant. (Table V)
6. The colleges in this survey were at or above the national average and certain state averages in the percentage of researchers within the institutional research program who devote more than 50 percent of their time to institutional research functions. (Table VI)
7. Similar to the results of studies described in Chapter 2, community colleges in this study conducted more institutional research studies in the area of students than in any other category. (Tables I, III)
8. The community colleges in this study agree with what institutions of higher education have reported in studies

conducted since the Rouche and Boggs study of 1968 have indicated, that the area of institutional studies ranks higher than the area of curricula and program studies when considering the number of studies completed in each area.

The results presented in section two of Chapter 4 also indicate that the institutional research programs in the Northwest community colleges appear to be a combination of operational and academic orientations.

The data in section five of Chapter 4 gives evidence that the community colleges in this study consider institutional research to be applied research. (Table XII). The major difference between this study and others in the area of institutional research functions, was that in this study the researcher considered routine fact finding and reporting functions to be very important. Researchers in other studies have generally considered such functions as being time consuming and not very important. The major concern of researchers in this study was that not enough time was being devoted to applied research areas such as identifying needs, strengths, and weaknesses of the institution. (Tables X, XI, XII) The results from Table XII also indicate that there was a definite positive relationship between the amount of time spent on institutional research functions and the relative importance placed on these functions by institutional researchers in Northwest community colleges. This relationship was also higher than the relationship reported in any

of the studies reviewed in Chapter 2 with a Spearman Rank r of .81. This relationship was found to be significant at the .05 level.

Data in this section of Chapter 4 also indicated that researchers in this study did not feel that it was extremely important for them to be a clearing house of research studies, to make periodic reports on research, or to coordinate research for the institution. The weighted averages for these functions were all in the low to moderate range. (Table XII) This data disagrees with what Thomas Shay believed to be some of the major functions of an institutional research program mentioned in Chapter 2.

As was the case in studies described in Chapter 2, the data in section three of Chapter 4 indicated that there wasn't a large percentage of research officers who belonged to professional research organizations. Also, those that did belong to such organizations typically reported them to be very valuable. The one exception in the case of this study was that more members of the AACJC National Planning Council reported that it was not valuable than reported it was valuable. (Table VIII)

Section four of Chapter 4 presents evidence that there was a strong desire among community colleges in the Northwest to exchange research ideas and methodologies. Of all the possible in-service training programs mentioned, "a seminar for exchanging two-year college research studies" received the highest percentage of positive responses at 48%. (Table IX)

RECOMMENDATIONS

The data presented in Chapter 4 of this study showed that a substantial percentage of community colleges in the Northwest reported engaging in some form of institutional research. While the particular characteristics of the individuals and factors surrounding the research varies among the institutions, this writer suggested that certain common characteristics found in these institutions were desirable for community college institutional research programs. These are as follows:

1. The person primarily responsible for institutional research should have at least a master's degree in some area of college administration and three years of experience.
2. The person primarily responsible for institutional research should report directly to the chief executive officer of the college.
3. The institutional research office should have at least one full time professional and one full time paraprofessional or clerical person.
4. The person primarily responsible for institutional research should have that role reflected in his title.
5. More emphasis must be placed on studies of the community which are very important to community colleges.
6. Institutional researchers should become members of professional research organizations.

7. There should be an effort made to exchange research ideas and methodologies with other colleges, both two and four-year .
8. Institutional researchers must be permitted to spend more time on functions they consider of high importance and must make a concerted effort to do so.
9. The institution must provide the institutional research program with enough money to accomplish at least the most important functions.
10. The institutional researcher should be included as an important resource in the major decisions made by an institution.

As the environment of higher education in general and community colleges in particular becomes more complex, with increasing financial pressure, the writer recommends that community colleges give more consideration to institutional research activities. Also, institutional research officers should be permitted to act in a role as an active participant in the decision making processes of the community college.

It appears from this study that there was still considerable room for expansion of institutional research activities and programs in Northwest community colleges. It is recommended that colleges who are considering such expansion, or the addition of institutional research give consideration to the qualitative factors in addition to the quan-

titative factors discussed in this study. A future study conducted on a state, regional, or national scope which would attempt to measure such qualitative factors would be of considerable value to the growth and improvement of institutional research.

A regional professional research organization might be established which would include the community colleges in this study. This could be a very useful tool for the exchange of research ideas and methodologies. It could also be an effective and economical means of offering training to institutional research staff members in other aspects of institutional research.

During the process of conducting this study, it was found that certain states within the population have developed extensive management information systems. Because of the expense of participation, few resources are left to conduct other types of institutional research tailored to a particular institution's needs. The additional problem with management information systems, is that it takes several years in many cases before the system begins to return usable data to individual institutions.

Since the trend nationally appears to this writer to be one of centralization of the various aspects of higher education, it is important that a future study be conducted to determine the effects this might have on institutional research in community colleges. Studies should also be conducted to determine how institutional research pro-

grams might be established at individual colleges which would meet the local needs as well as those of a state management information system.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

Letter Sent To Community College Presidents

November 15, 1978

Mr. _____
_____ Community College
_____, _____

Dear Mr. _____

As community colleges continue to grow in the United States, so does the amount of information needed to make the necessary decisions to operate effectively. Many institutions are turning to institutional research programs to meet these information needs. Accompanying this growth in institutional research are questions concerning the specific role of institutional research.

In an attempt to determine the growth of institutional research programs and the perceived roles of these programs in the northwest region of the U.S., the Office of Institutional Research at Miles Community College is conducting a status survey. This survey will include all community colleges which are accredited by the Northwest Association. This survey will also be part of a Master's professional project through the Department of Educational Services at Montana State University.

I would appreciate it if you could take 15-20 minutes to complete the enclosed one-page questionnaire and return it in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope. Please respond by December 1st if at all possible.

All information from this survey will be used in grouped statistics only, with no particular institution identified.

Let me thank you in advance for your valuable time in helping us with this project.

Sincerely,

Dale E. Oberlander, Director
of Institutional Research

Enclosures

APPENDIX B

INSTRUCTIONS

This survey should be completed by the person responsible for the institutional research function at your college. If you do not have an institutional research position, please forward this survey to your MIS coordinator or person most closely performing the institutional research function on your campus. Although the functions of an institutional researcher are comprehensive, his primary function includes doing some of the following types of studies:

1. Outcomes or Evaluation Studies

   Program or curriculum evaluation; student success, retention, academic achievement, student follow-up/placement studies, academic accreditation or multi-program mission achievement; teaching effectiveness; effectiveness of media, materials, or methods; other outcome or evaluation studies.

2. Descriptive Studies

   HEGIS, state reports and other externally required reports; student characteristics profiles; faculty characteristics; faculty load, student-teacher ratio; or class size reports, salary/fringe benefit studies, descriptions of applications, attrition, graduation, or the equivalent; information supporting the budgeting process; opinion samplings; other descriptive studies.

3. Planning Studies

   Enrollment projections; space utilization and/or needs; strategies to increase effectiveness of funds utilization; resource allocation or cost-effectiveness studies; devising simulation models of institutional dynamics; other planning or operational studies.

4. Policy Studies

   Institutional long range plans; analysis of economic and/or social conditions affecting the college; goal-setting effects of proposed policy changes; other policy studies.

This survey is not an evaluation of the institutional research function on the two year campuses. Instead, it is a bench mark study to determine the present status of institutional research in the Northwest. Survey findings will be generalized so that responses from no individual institution will be identified. Hence, we hope that you will give this survey your immediate attention. Your time and effort are greatly appreciated.

Direct any questions to: Dale E. Oberlander
Director of Institutional Research
Miles Community College
2715 Dickinson
Miles City, Montana 59301

APPENDIX C

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

A SURVEY OF THE CURRENT STATUS OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH IN NORTHWEST COMMUNITY COLLEGES

School _____

Date _____

Name of Respondent _____

Title of Respondent _____

A. Has your institution established a program for the Institutional Research function?

Yes . . . . . ( ) Year

No . . . . . ( ) Established . . . . . ( )

B. Is your research program singularly responsible for multi-campus research activities?

Yes . . . . . ( ) No . . . . . ( )

(If yes indicate number _____ and the name of each campus

_____)

C. Please indicate how many staff of each type are employed by your Institutional Research Program.

	Professional	Paraprofessional	Clerical
Full-time (More than 20 hrs/week)	( )	( )	( )
Part-time (20 hrs. or less per week)	( )	( )	( )

D. What is the name and title of the person responsible for Institutional Research?

Name _____ Title _____

E. Specify the educational background of the person primarily responsible for Institutional Research.

1. Highest Degree _____

2. Area of specialization _____

3. Years of experience in IR _____

F. Whom does the person responsible for Institutional Research report to?

1. President/Director/Campus Dean . . . . . ( )

2. Vice President/Asst. Director . . . . . ( )

3. Dean of Instruction . . . . . ( )

4. Business Manager . . . . . ( )

5. Assistant to the President . . . . . ( )

6. Dean of Student Services . . . . . ( )

7. Other (please specify) . . . . . ( )

_____

G. What percentage of time does the person responsible for Institutional Research devote to the Institutional Research function?

1. 75 to 100% . . . . . ( )

2. 50 to 75% . . . . . ( )

3. 25 to 49% . . . . . ( )

4. 0 to 24% . . . . . ( )

H. How many Institutional Research studies have been donducted at your institution in each of the areas below within the past <u>two years</u>?

1. Admission, Registration & Enrollment . . . . . ( )
2. Students . . . . . ( )
3. Administration . . . . . ( )
4. Curriculum . . . . . ( )
5. Physical Plant . . . . . ( )
6. Finance . . . . . ( )
7. Instruction . . . . . ( )
8. Faculty . . . . . ( )
9. Goals and Objectives . . . . . ( )
10. Public Relations . . . . . ( )
11. Community . . . . . ( )
12. Other (specify) . . . . . ( )

_____

_____

_____

_____

I. For each of the functions of Institutional Research listed below, indicate the relative amount of time spent by your college and the importance you place on the function.

IR FUNCTIONS	Relative Amount of Time Spent On Functions				Relative Importance of Functions			
	High	Moderate	Low	None	High	Moderate	Low	None
1. The preparation of descriptive reports on institutional status	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
2. The identification of strengths and weaknesses in the institution	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3. The determination of immediate and future needs	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
4. Compiling data and other information which might be needed	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
5. The coordination of intra and interinstitutional research	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
6. Master planning	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
7. The provision of assistance to any staff member, administrator, and data analysis of studies which are conducted by them	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
8. The periodic communication of briefs and summaries on research just completed or currently in progress	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
9. Maintenance of an up-to-date research file	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
10. Developing or assisting with proposals or grant requests	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
11. Responding to state, federal and other required reports	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
12. Others (please identify)	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

_____

_____

J. Which of the following research organizations do persons responsible for Institutional Research belong to and how beneficial is each organization?

Or	Organization	Member Yes	Member No	Relative Value Very Valuable	Relative Value Not Very Valuable
1.	Association for Institutional Research (AIR)	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.	American Educational Research Association (AERA)	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.	Rocky Mountain Association for Institutional Research	( )	( )	( )	( )
4.	AACJC National Council on Planning	( )	( )	( )	( )
5.	Other (specify)	( )	( )	( )	( )

_____

K. Indicate which of the following type of inservice training programs your Institution Research staff would like to participate in:

1. Workshop on methods of conducting follow-up studies ( )
2. Workshop on basic research design and methodology ( )
3. Workshop on statistical methods ( )
4. Seminar for exchanging two-year college research studies ( )
5. Workshop on organizing an institutional research office ( )
6. Others (specify) ( )

_____

_____

APPENDIX D

SCHOOLS PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY

Alaska

1. Sheldon Jackson College, Sitka
2. University of Alaska, Ketchikan Community College, Ketchikan
3. University of Alaska, Sitka Community College, Sitka

Idaho

1. College of Souther Idaho, Twin Falls
2. Northern Idaho College, Coeur D'Alene
3. Ricks College, Rexburg

Nevada

1. Clark Community College, Las Vegas
2. Northern Nevada Community College, Elko

Oregon

1. Blue Mountain Community College, Pendleton
2. Chemeketa Community College, Salem
3. Clackamos Community College, Oregon City
4. Judson Baptist College, Portland
5. Lane Community College, Eugene
6. Mount Hood Community College, Gresham
7. Portland Community College, Portland
8. Rogue Community College, Grants Pass
9. South Western Oregon Community College, Coos Bay
10. Umpqua Community College, Roseburg

Utah

1. Dixie College, St. George
2. Snow College, Ephraim
3. Utah Technical College at Provo, Provo
4. Utah Technical College at Salt Lake City, Salt Lake City
5. College of Eastern Utah, Price

Montana

1. Dawson College, Glendive
2. Miles Community College, Miles City
3. Flathead Valley Community College, Kalispell

Washington

1. Bellevue Community College, Bellevue
2. Big Bend Community College, Moses Lake
3. Centralia College, Centralia
4. Clark College, Vancouver
5. Columbia Basin Community College, Pasco
6. Edmonds Community College, Lynnwood
7. Everett Community College, Everett
8. Fort Steilacoom Community College, Tacoma
9. Grays Harbor College, Aberdeen
10. Green River Community College, Auburn
11. Highline Community College, Midway
12. Lower Columbia College, Longview
13. Olympic College, Bremerton
14. Shorline Community College, Seattle
15. Skagit Valley College, Mt. Vernon
16. Spokane Community College, Spokane
17. Spokane Falls Community College, Spokane
18. Tacoma Community College, Tacoma
19. Walla Walla Community College, Walla Walla
20. Wenatchee Valley College, Wenatchee
21. Yakima Valley College, Yakima
22. Whotcon Community College, Bellingham