

**Office of Research & Effectiveness
Operating Plan**

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Office of Research & Effectiveness (ORE) Operating Plan Outline

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Executive Summary

ORE Mission: Expanded IR Mission

The mission of the Office of Research and Effectiveness is to facilitate evidence-based decision-making at NMC.

In order to accomplish its mission, the ORE will develop, implement and maintain an institutional research program that supports the ongoing strategic planning and institutional effectiveness priorities of the College. The ORE will collect, analyze, interpret, and disseminate accurate and timely information to assist leaders in understanding the College's internal and external operating environment. It will gather and synthesize data in order to aid in identifying institutional, programmatic, and service-area strengths and opportunities for improvement.

General description of plan

This operating plan describes a proposed ORE, the history of the ORE's predecessor (IR), the current operating environment, and the future operations and structural design. The operating plan details a "picture" of the proposed ORE that includes job descriptions for three staff members, and a breakdown of the division of labor for the proposed work group.

Proposal in Summary

NMC must be able to continually monitor the dynamic environment in which it functions. Demographic, economic, social, political, and technological influences impact NMC's community learning needs and alter demand for programs and services. To maintain viability NMC will need to be able to stay abreast of the operating environment and adjust its portfolio offering accordingly. Moreover, ever increasing pressure on NMC from external stakeholders to provide evidence that it is achieving its mission, purposes, and goals, and mandated standards, requires the College to analyze its processes and measure results. While NMC has been engaged in the internal assessment and measuring of programmatic and institutional effectiveness through Institutional Research, the Understanding Community Learning Needs (UCLN) action project team identified several gaps in the collection, access, and synthesis of information regarding NMC's operating environment (i.e., environmental scanning, formal market research, and capacity analyses).

This proposal is for an Office of Research and Effectiveness, whose creation would represent an appropriate evolution of the Institutional Research department. To begin to fill the gaps identified by the UCLN team, to more clearly delineate responsibility for the management of the continuous improvement and accountability system, and to better serve NMC as a whole, the ORE represents a higher level of capacity for providing research to facilitate evidence-based decision-making.

Overview of the ORE Predecessor

History of Institutional Research

1993	Institutional Research Committee formed with six members (two administrators, two professional staff, one faculty member) to develop the Indicators for Success
1996	Committee dissolved; Institutional Research duties performed by a single faculty member with 50% release
1998	Faculty member release increased to 100% to perform IR duties, which included the role of Process Improvement Coordinator
2000	NCA Self-Study Review recommended that "the College should consider the establishment of an office of Research and Planning to support assessment and planning

	activities.” (<u>Report of a Visit to Northwestern Michigan College</u> , Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, 2000, p. 36) Moreover, “the College should consider professional staff for institutional support for its research activities (paraphrased).” (<u>Report of a Visit</u> , p. 56)
2002	Office of Institutional Research was established with one regular professional staff – Coordinator III
2006	Increased accountability requirements necessitated expanding IR by one professional staff; added Research Associate – Specialist I
2008	Proposal for Office of Research and Effectiveness

Staff Structure and Service Description

IR is currently staffed with one Director (Professional level 4 – Coordinator III) and one Research Associate (Professional level 1 – Specialist). Currently the time of the Director of IR is allocated as follows:

- 30% on measuring and reporting on institutional effectiveness
- 20% on coordinating general education assessment
- 10% overseeing the administration and analysis of evaluations and survey data
- 20% data and research requests
- 20% serving the College on committees/councils (three action project teams, Curriculum Committee, PBC, SEM, other various)

The Research Associate – Specialist is engaged:

- 40% on survey and evaluation administration and analysis
- 30% on external, state and federal data reporting
- 10% on College Committees/councils
- 20% responding to data and research requests

Future Direction and Goals of ORE

Future Direction: Why Change Is Needed

As mentioned in the Proposal Summary, there is a growing need for NMC to be better able to understand its external and internal operating environments. NMC needs research and analyses related to its current capacity and related to understanding community learning needs so that it may adjust its portfolio offering accordingly. The demand for ORE services and research is expected to increase as individual areas are held accountable for their effectiveness and as NMC fully implements evidence-based decision-making, the strategic initiatives, and a continuous quality improvement system.

NMC through previous institutional efforts has incrementally moved toward processes that will inform portfolio decisions which are essentially focused on developing new programs and transforming existing programs. Since 2002, NMC’s progress in developing this capability has been advanced through the efforts of Program and Service Prioritization (PSP), business plans, Learning Design, Development, and Delivery (LD3), Understanding Community Learning Needs action project and the first phase of the Strategic Enrollment Management team. In order to synthesize and apply what we have learned from those efforts and to implement the most salient recommendations related to research and analyses, a work group aligned within the organizational structure needs to be charged with that work. The ORE will be responsible for crafting a research program that will meet the needs of decision-makers and that is aligned with all institutional research priorities. Specific results from these efforts which will serve as a starting point for the ORE are outlined in the next section of this plan.

NMC’s institutional research capacity is at its second critical juncture (since 2002). IR has

evolved from being more narrowly focused as was required on general education assessment, survey research, and data reporting, to an increased capability and emphasis in measuring and reporting on institutional effectiveness and accreditation management. At this next juncture the creation of the Office of Research and Effectiveness as proposed, allows NMC to expand its research capability in order to inform strategic enrollment management and the portfolio offering. NMC's Strategic Initiatives lay a framework for prioritizing research needs from the ORE.

Strategic Plan Initiatives

In Strategic Initiative #1, the ORE will play a primary role in defining and accomplishing the research for identifying and understanding community learning needs. One outcome for the ORE is the creation and maintenance of a regional research collaborative to help NMC understand the workforce development needs of the region, perhaps in conjunction with the Northwest Council of Governments and the Chamber of Commerce. Secondly, the ORE will serve as the research arm of the strategic enrollment management planning team, providing or assisting with capacity analyses of how NMC uses space, human resources, and technology.

Third, in order for NMC to assure that academically under-prepared students are as likely to achieve their educational goals as their college-ready peers (goal #5, Strategic Initiative #1), the ORE will provide baseline and benchmark data to action project and implementation teams, and measure the success of recommendations on which NMC has taken action.

Finally, in the continuing role of Assessment Coordinator, the ORE will have a prominent responsibility in goal #7 to continuously improve assessment methods.

In Strategic Initiative #2, as NMC defines resource needs for priority areas and institutional sustainability, the ORE will be able to provide information about how the reallocation of resources will impact the institutional portfolio.

The ORE will play a major role in accomplishing Strategic Initiative #3, the Director serves as a member of the Decision-Making action project team (goal #1, Strategic Initiative #3), providing facilitation and encouragement in the use of quality project management tools. As a member of the Portfolio Project Team, under the guidance of the Institutional Effectiveness Steering Team, and as the newly appointed AQIP liaison, the ORE will be instrumental in achieving goal #3, fully implementing the AQIP accreditation process.

ORE Unit-Level Strategic Directions

In order to accomplish its mission, the ORE will have three unit-level strategic directions for 2008-2009, as presently adopted by Institutional Research. These are: 1) relationship-building, 2) capacity building, and 3) value-adding. By means of relationship-building, ORE will market its research, getting the results to the people who can act on them, cultivating buy-in for evidence-based decision-making, and building credibility. This goal will be measured by research presentations, committee consultative work, face-to-face dialogue and training on the interpretation of data, and the creation of a regional research collaborative.

The ORE will build capacity by seeking out professional development activities that will translate directly to current work projects. For instance, the Research Associate-Specialist is focusing on learning statistics so that in the future she will be able to write-up the survey analyses results for ORE customers. The addition of a third professional staff researcher with the skills and interests in conducting market research and capacity analyses would enhance the capability of the ORE to provide decision-makers with assessments of dynamic operating environments. Also, working as a synergistic project team, the three staff in ORE would be able to structure a program of intentional environmental scanning in collaboration with College leadership. Finally, the ORE can add value by being responsive to customer requests, setting timelines, and in managing work more efficiently.

Proposed Operations and Structure of ORE

Proposed Operations of ORE

Broadly, the work of the ORE can be diagrammed in a process flow map (Figure 1). In stage 1, Data Gathering, Access, and Dissemination, the ORE will gather data through appropriate sources to answer the research question. Data from this stage are typically unaltered from how gathered. The ORE will provide access to data and research databases (i.e., website). In stage 2, Analysis and Interpretation, the research method design will be determined based on the purpose of the research. What questions are decision-makers trying to answer? In Analysis and Interpretation, the ORE will transform the data in some way in order to provide information to decision-makers. The Analysis and Interpretation will inform Strategic Enrollment Management (stage 3) (i.e., the composition of the portfolio offering and the modes of delivery). Research will help to answer this question:

- Does NMC's portfolio offering (business model) make the best use of its interests, its areas of expertise, and its resources? Is NMC engaged in the right programs and services given its internal and external operating environment?

Secondly, Analysis and Interpretation and the outcomes from Strategic Enrollment Management inform Institutional Effectiveness and Accountability (stage 4). In this work stage, the ORE will assist in answering the question:

- What are NMC's performance results? Is the College continuously improving in the areas it is focusing its interests, expertise, and resources?

Moreover, the ORE will serve as the accountability office, in that, Institutional Effectiveness results are documented in the IE portfolio, in program reviews, and in assessment results, and then reported to the appropriate stakeholders both internal and external.

The division of labor among ORE staff as delineated by these work stages is illustrated in Table 2 after the appendices.

Proposed ORE Structure

To accomplish the goals laid out in the previous section of this plan, the structure of the ORE is proposed as follows:

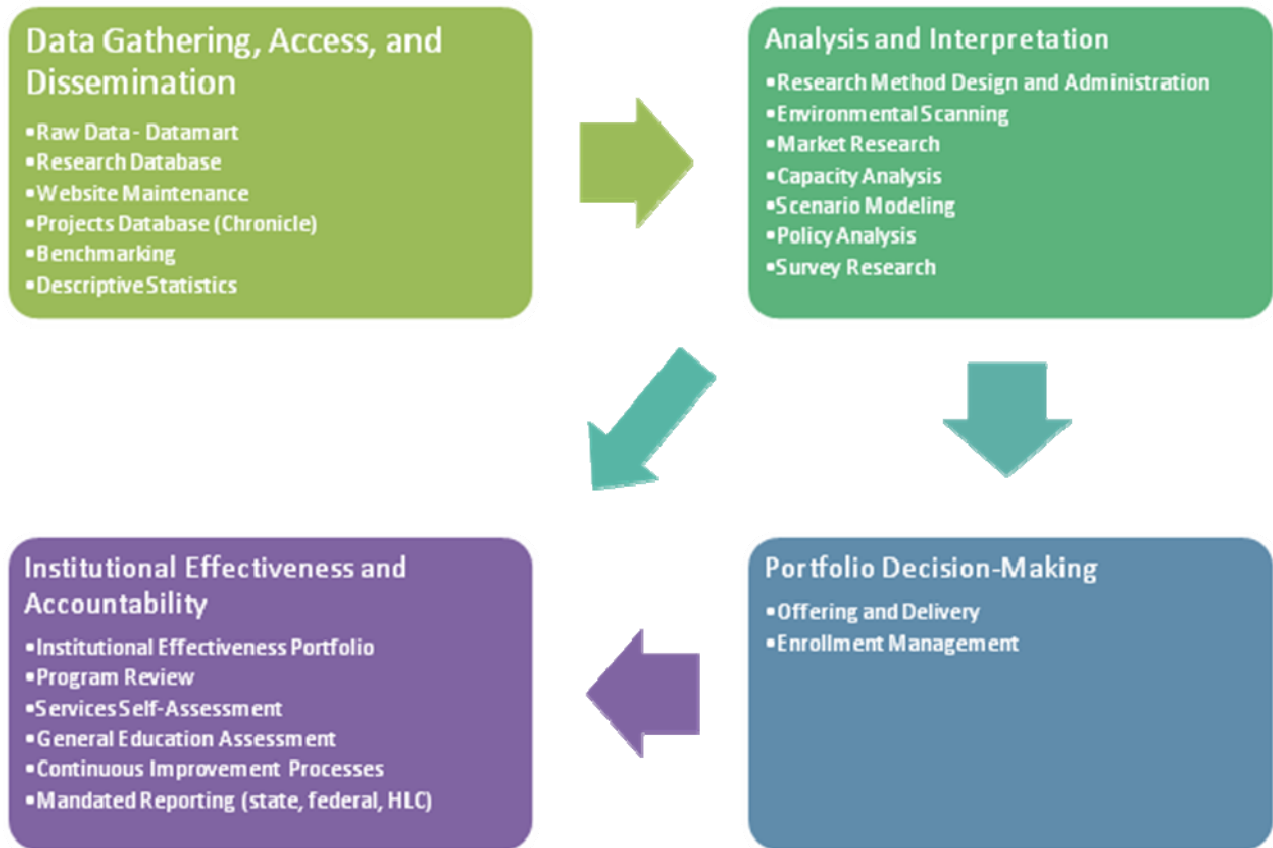
- Director
- Coordinator of Research and Market Analysis
- Research Associate

In order to know whether the goals can be accomplished with this amount of human resources NMC would need to try it, and then adjust accordingly through increased internal and external collaboration.

Director

The Director will have the chief responsibility for leading the development and implementation of the institutional research program. As the chief accountability officer, the Director, guided by the Institutional Effectiveness Steering Team, will manage continuous improvement processes and bears primary responsibility as NMC's Data Coordinator to comply with state, federal, and accrediting body reporting mandates. The Director will oversee the development and implementation of data collection and analysis strategies. The Director's research and evaluation informs institutional planning, enrollment management and decision-making. The Director will create a synergistic regional research collaborative in order to leverage expertise in understanding community learning and workforce training needs. The proposed job description for the Director position is presented in Appendix A.

Figure 1 – ORE Operational Work Flow



Coordinator of Research and Market Analysis

The Coordinator of Research and Market Analysis will be chiefly responsible for institutional portfolio modeling and unit-level scenario modeling to include financial analyses. The Coordinator of Research and Market Analysis will coordinate institutional efforts of intentional environmental scanning to include leading a project team. Environmental scanning is comprised of tracking and describing trends and making projections about external factors most likely to affect the College, its learner markets, and the community, such as local industry and occupation projections.

The Coordinator of Research and Market Analysis will be responsible for providing expertise in the area of market research. A preliminary process suggested by LD3 will serve as a jumping off point. The Coordinator of Research and Market Analysis will guide the systematic gathering, recording and analyzing of data and information about NMC’s learners, its competitors and the market. It would be expected that the Coordinator in collaboration with the Director will determine the best way to gather information, such as through primary or secondary research. Specifically, understanding the market means knowing who NMC’s learners are, where they are located, what they want from NMC’s programs and services and when. With this information NMC’s market can be segmented into subgroups based on geographic differences, demographic differences, motivation and educational goal differences, and user characteristics. This research will serve as part of the evidence for decision-makers who are determining whether to offer new programs or transform existing ones. Moreover, the Coordinator will

support other strategic enrollment management and programmatic information needs such as pricing analyses. The proposed job description for the Coordinator of Research and Market Analysis is located in Appendix A.

Research Associate

The Research Associate position duties would remain largely the same as the IR Research Associate’s duties currently. The Research Associate is primarily responsible for the design and implementation of survey instruments and the write-up of the results. The Research Associate – Specialist will coordinate survey administration and processing. The Research Associate – Specialist is the lead person on facilitating data reporting to the state and federal governments with guidance from the Director. The Research Associate is the logistics manager for administering general education assessment methods. In the ORE, the Research Associate will contribute as a team member on the Environmental Scanning project team, providing input and technical support. The Research Associate is the primary caretaker of the institutional research databases and the means of access to organizational intelligence data. The proposed job description for the Research Associate is located in Appendix A.

Division of Labor

Beyond the general responsibilities described above and in the proposed job descriptions in the appendices, a specific task breakdown is provided in Table 2 – Appendix F. This Division of Labor spreadsheet gives detailed information about the types of tasks that may be required in each broad level work sphere. It also shows which ORE staff member will bear principal responsibility for that task.

Ideally, all the staff members in the ORE would have experience in statistics and running statistical analyses. All the staff members would have excellent communication skills, both verbal and written. The Director and the Coordinator of Research and Market Analysis must have methodological expertise, so that the proper research methods will be employed to meet the information needs of decision-makers. All of the ORE staff members will need to exhibit the core competencies as outlined in the performance feedback materials. However, due to the highly analytical nature of the work to be performed in the ORE, problem solving and communicating will be the most valued competencies.

APPENDIX A. Job Descriptions

Northwestern Michigan College Job Description

Job Title: Director of Research and Effectiveness
Classification: Division Director, Administrative Level III
Department: Office of Research and Effectiveness
Reports To: Vice President for Educational Services
FLSA Status: Exempt
Prepared By: Darby L. Hiller
Prepared Date: 10/8/08
Approved By: Cathy Jones, Vice President of Finance and Administration
Approved Date: 10/21/08

SUMMARY

The Director leads the development, implementation, and maintenance of an institutional research program to support the ongoing strategic planning and institutional effectiveness priorities of the College. The Director manages accountability and continuous improvement processes through critical inquiry and assessment of institutional effectiveness criteria. As the chief research officer, the Director leads the development and implementation of data collection and analysis strategies regarding the College's internal and external operating environment as related to market research, capacity analyses, and feasibility studies. The Director's research and policy evaluation informs institutional planning, enrollment management and decision-making. The Director bears primary responsibility for compliance with state, federal, accrediting body and other critical accountability mandates, and the dissemination of information to internal and external constituents.

ESSENTIAL DUTIES AND KEY RESPONSIBILITIES include the following. Other duties may be assigned.

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- Leads the College's institutional effectiveness, assessment and continuous improvement processes
Establishes and evaluates the Institutional Effectiveness model criteria, and measures with senior leadership on the Institutional Effectiveness Steering Team
- Ensures validity and reliability of methods used to measure institutional effectiveness outcomes
- Manages the measurement of programmatic and service related outcomes and data collection in order to facilitate continuous improvement actions
- Supervises the interpretation and presentation of results to senior leadership and the campus community
- Leads the development of the College's general education assessment plan; collaborates on establishing outcomes and methods of assessment
- Oversees the administration of assessment methods and authors results reports
- Collaborates on program review processes by providing assessment expertise in establishing outcomes, setting target goals, measuring outcomes, and planning for continuous improvement
- Manages the College's accountability processes by serving as the accreditation liaison officer and coordinates continuing institutional portfolio efforts
- Creates response efforts as required by the accreditation commission by managing the compilation and submission of accreditation update reports

- Directs the College's state, federal and accreditation agency reporting functions

Analysis and Interpretation

- Bears chief responsibility for developing, implementing and maintaining an institutional research program to will affect evidence-based decision-making at the College
- Proactively identifies information needs to support institutional planning, enrollment management and decision-making (i.e., evaluating enrollment data and retention trends)
- Directs research efforts and analysis strategies (i.e., predictive modeling) to support systematic enrollment management to include market research, capacity analyses, and feasibility studies

Data Gathering, Access, and Dissemination

- Directs the collection of primary data through intentional scanning, market research, data mining, etc., to further research efforts about the College's internal and external operating environment
- Oversees design and implementation of information-gathering tools such as survey instruments
- Directs institutional research staff in survey administration, processing, and results dissemination
- Determines appropriate sources of benchmarking data
- Develops relationships with NMC staff and as well as external partners to foster ongoing communication and collaboration in areas managed
- Works with member of the Office of Research & Effectiveness to educate College faculty and staff on the interpretation of data and research
- Performs policy evaluation such as pre-requisite analyses
- Guides research about the College's program and service portfolio offering in order to inform strategic decision-making
- Chiefly responsible for developing a Research Collaborative with community partners in order to facilitate the sharing of resources and information regarding the development leading indicators
- Collaborates on institutional research-related activities within the College

OFFICE MANAGEMENT

- Manages research staff; conducts performance feedback regularly
- Prioritizes work projects with staff input
- Consults on the budget for the Office of Research and Effectiveness, including of general education assessment budget and accreditation budget

SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITIES

This position supervises two other professional staff members. Carries out supervisory responsibilities in accordance with the organization's policies and applicable laws. Responsibilities include interviewing, hiring, and training employees; planning, assigning, and directing work; appraising performance; rewarding and disciplining employees; addressing complaints and resolving problems.

EDUCATION and/or EXPERIENCE

Master's degree (M.A.) or equivalent; or four to ten years related experience and/or training; or equivalent combination of education and experience.

Critical Success Factors and Skills

- Experience and/or formal training in research methodology, quantitative statistical analysis and qualitative analysis is required

- Mastery of specific software and computer skills including integration of multiple word processing programs, databases, spreadsheets required; data analysis (e.g., SPSS); survey design (i.e., Snap) and presentation software
- Must be able to convert data and statistics to graphics
- Problem solving and good analytical skills are essential
- Ability to communicate effectively with College leadership, colleagues and constituents of varying technical backgrounds is expected
- Excellent verbal communication skills, with the ability to develop rapport quickly, speak and listen effectively, and the ability to give succinct feedback

CERTIFICATES, LICENSES, REGISTRATIONS

None.

QUALIFICATIONS

To perform this job successfully, an individual must be able to perform each essential duty satisfactorily. The requirements listed below are representative of the knowledge, skill, and/or ability required. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

LANGUAGE SKILLS

Ability to read, analyze, and interpret the most complex documents. Ability to respond effectively to the most sensitive inquiries or complaints from customers, regulatory agencies, or members of the business community. Ability to write speeches and articles using original or innovative techniques or style. Ability to make effective and persuasive speeches and presentations on controversial or complex topics to top management, public groups, and/or boards of directors.

MATHEMATICAL SKILLS

Ability to work with mathematical concepts such as probability and statistical inference, and fundamentals of plane and solid geometry and trigonometry. Ability to apply concepts such as fractions, percentages, ratios, and proportions to practical situations. Ability to apply advanced mathematical concepts such as exponents, logarithms, quadratic equations, and permutations. Ability to apply mathematical operations to such tasks as frequency distribution, determination of test reliability and validity, analysis of variance, correlation techniques, sampling theory, and factor analysis. Ability to comprehend and apply principles of advanced calculus, modern algebra, and advanced statistical theory. Ability to work with concepts such as limits, rings, quadratic and differential equations, and proofs of theorems.

REASONING ABILITY

Ability to apply principles of logical or scientific thinking to a wide range of intellectual and practical problems. Ability to deal with nonverbal symbolism (formulas, scientific equations, graphs, musical notes, etc.) in its most difficult phases. Ability to define problems, collect data, establish facts, and draw valid conclusions. Ability to interpret an extensive variety of technical instructions in mathematical or diagram form and deal with several abstract and concrete variables.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS

The physical demands described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

While performing the duties of this job, the employee is regularly required to sit;; and talk or hear. The employee occasionally is required to stand, walk, and reach with hands and arms. The employee must frequently lift and/or move up to 10 pounds. Specific vision abilities required by this job include close vision, distance vision, color vision peripheral vision, depth perception, and ability to adjust focus..

WORK ENVIRONMENT

The work environment characteristics described here are representative of those an employee encounters while performing the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

The noise level in the work environment is usually moderate.

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Northwestern Michigan College
Job Description

Job Title: Coordinator of Research and Market Analysis
Classification: Coordinator III, Professional Level 4
Department: Office of Research and Effectiveness
Reports To: Director of Research and Effectiveness
FLSA Status: Exempt
Prepared By: Darby Hiller
Prepared Date: 10/8/08
Approved By: Cathy Jones, Vice President of Finance and Administration
Approved Date: 10/21/08

Summary

The Coordinator of Research and Market Analysis implements institutional research activities that enhance institutional preparedness in responding to current and future market needs and helps facilitate evidence-based decision-making. The Coordinator of Research and Market Analysis performs data collection and analysis in support of institutional planning, strategic enrollment management and continuous improvement processes. Key areas of focus include environmental scanning, primary and secondary market research, capacity analyses, programmatic feasibility studies, and financial modeling. Additionally, this position supports the Office of Research and Effectiveness in all areas of responsibility including measuring and reporting institutional effectiveness and responding to stakeholder accountability mandates, along with other research projects as required.

Essential Duties and Key Responsibilities include the following. Other duties may be assigned.

Analysis and Interpretation

- Manages institutional intentional environmental scanning which includes leading and collaborating on a project team to deliver information to College leadership
- Tracks trends and makes projections about the College's external operating environment
- Provides analysis and interpretation to help inform strategic enrollment management regarding the offering (product), pricing, delivery (place) and promotion of NMC's programs and services
- Conducts market analysis and interpretation related to competition, learner needs, pricing, and program and course delivery.
- Conducts opportunity analysis related to capacity (space, human resources, and technology), feasibility and financial modeling
- Conducts secondary research (such as research on best practices) or collaborates with others as appropriate
- Ensures the validity and reliability of the methods used to examine the College's operating environments
- Provides support on research-related processes to faculty and staff of key areas of the College
- Collaborates as required to develop demographic projections and job projections by industry and occupation
- Proactively seeks to build institutional capacity related to research and analysis

Data Gathering, Access, and Dissemination

- Coordinates market research projects including secondary research and primary research (ex. focus groups and surveys) in conjunction with Office of Research and Effectiveness staff
- Presents research results to College and program leadership as appropriate
- Assists in the maintenance of research results databases and methods for accessing organizational intelligence
- Seeks sources of data with which NMC can benchmark measures and results
- Works with member of the Office of Research and Effectiveness to educate College faculty and staff on the interpretation of data and research

Institutional Effectiveness and Accountability

- Supports NMC's institutional effectiveness portfolio development in data gathering and synthesis
- Supports NMC's accreditation process and continuous improvement system including facilitation of and participation with action project teams as appropriate

Education and/or Experience

Bachelor's degree required; Master's degree preferred. Three to five years of professional experience specifically related to area of coordination.

Critical Success Factors

- Experience and/or formal training in research methodology, quantitative statistical analysis and qualitative analysis is required
- Mastery of or ability to learn software and computer skills including integration of multiple word processing programs, databases, spreadsheets, and presentation software required (MS Office); data analysis (e.g., SPSS, Tableau, Stat Transfer); and project management (Project KickStart)
- Must be able to convert data and statistics to graphics
- Problem solving and good analytical skills are essential
- Ability to communicate effectively with colleagues and constituents of varying technical backgrounds is expected
- Excellent verbal communication skills, with the ability to develop rapport quickly, speak and listen effectively, and the ability to give succinct feedback
- Familiarity with the Banner information system is preferred
- Willingness to work some non-traditional hours as needed

Certificates, Licenses, Registrations

None required.

Supervisory Responsibilities

This job has no supervisory responsibilities.

Qualifications

To perform this job successfully, an individual must be able to perform each essential duty satisfactorily. The requirements listed below are representative of the knowledge, skill, and/or ability required. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

Language Skills

Ability to read, analyze, and interpret common scientific and technical journals, financial reports, and legal documents. Ability to respond to common inquiries or complaints from customers, regulatory agencies, or members of the business community. Ability to write speeches and articles for publication that conform to prescribed style and format. Ability to effectively present information to top management, public groups, and/or boards of directors.

Mathematical Skills

Ability to apply advanced mathematical concepts such as exponents, logarithms, quadratic equations, and permutations. Ability to apply mathematical operations to such tasks as frequency distribution, determination of test reliability and validity, analysis of variance, correlation techniques, sampling theory, and factor analysis.

Reasoning Ability

Ability to define problems, collect data, establish facts, and draw valid conclusions. Ability to interpret an extensive variety of technical instructions in mathematical or diagram form and deal with several abstract and concrete variables.

Physical Demands

The physical demands described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions. While performing the duties of this job, the employee is regularly required to sit and talk or hear. The employee is occasionally required to stand; walk; and reach with hands and arms. The employee must frequently lift and/or move up to 10 pounds. Specific vision abilities required by this job include close vision, distance vision, color vision, peripheral vision, depth perception and ability to adjust focus.

Work Environment

The work environment characteristics described here are representative of those an employee encounters while performing the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

The noise level in the work environment is usually moderate.

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**Northwestern Michigan College
Job Description**

Job Title: Research Associate
Department: Office of-Research and Effectiveness
Classification: Specialist I, Professional Level 1
Reports To: Director of Research and Effectiveness
FLSA Status: Exempt
Prepared By: Darby L. Hiller
Prepared Date: 1-26-05, revised 10/8/08
Approved By: Cathy Jones, Vice President of Finance and Administration
Approved Date: 10/21/08

SUMMARY

The Research Associate provides technical and research assistance to the office of Research and Effectiveness. Primary responsibilities include establishing research results databases, designing and administering data collection methods, and providing data and information for program and service planning and decision-making needs. The Research Associate supports the College's accountability requirements by responding to state and federal reporting mandates.

ESSENTIAL DUTIES AND KEY RESPONSIBILITIES include the following. Other duties may be assigned.

Data Gathering, Access, and Dissemination

- Establishes and maintains research results databases (such as shared electronic folders and the website)
- Collaborates with other College departments to continuously improve the Datamart database
- Collaborates with staff on the maintenance of the ORE web site
- Educates other College departments -data-gathering processes (e.g., survey design, data gathering, data analysis)
- Designs and implements information-gathering tools such as course evaluations and surveys
- Collaborates with other College departments on the administration of surveys including web-based, paper, and computer-aided telephone interview surveys
- Manages the ORE's capacity to administer web-based surveys
- Performs survey processing including scanning of paper-based surveys and data file maintenance

Analysis and Interpretation

- Retrieves and analyzes data from the Datamart
- Presents data in meaningful formats (e.g., tables, charts, graphs) to various audiences
- Performs data analysis from survey research
- Provides descriptive statistics, including frequency distributions and cross-tabulations, as well as narratives for qualitative data
- Provides input and contributes technical assistance in environmental scanning efforts

Institutional Effectiveness and Accountability

- Supports NMC's institutional effectiveness portfolio in data gathering
- Assists in interpreting and presenting institutional effectiveness results

- Manages the logistics of assessment method administration, including communicating with vendors, ordering tests, scheduling tests, collecting and organizing student work, and organizing scoring day details
- Draws student and course samples for general education assessment methods
- Communicates with instructors on assessment method administration
- Chiefly responsible for preparing and submitting federal, state, and accreditation agency mandated reports
- Responds to annual external institutional surveys and provides survey follow-up

Office Maintenance and Service to the College

- Provides administrative support to the ORE by generating correspondence, scheduling meetings as needed
- Maintains the ORE budget including submitting requests for pay, purchase orders, balancing procurement cards, and responding to budgeting and Business Office requests
- Develops annual ORE budget in conjunction with staff
- Keeps the office running efficiently by maintaining supplies
- Participates in College-wide governance committees regularly as appropriate

SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITIES

None

EDUCATION and/or EXPERIENCE

Bachelor's degree and one to three years of related work experience. Two years of post-secondary coursework plus an additional four years of paraprofessional experience in the subject matter area may be substituted for the bachelor's degree.

Critical Success Factors and Skills

- Experience and/or formal training in research methodology, quantitative statistical analysis and qualitative analysis is preferred
- Three (3) years of experience in institutional research or higher education a plus
- Mastery of or ability to learn software and computer skills including integration of multiple word processing programs, databases, spreadsheets, and presentation software required (MS Office); data analysis (e.g., SPSS, Tableau, Stat Transfer); survey design (Snap, Teleform); and project management (Project KickStart)
- Web page design experience is preferred (Dreamweaver)
- Attention to detail and good analytical skills are essential
- Excellent verbal communication skills, with the ability to develop rapport quickly, speak and listen effectively, and the ability to give succinct feedback
- Familiarity with the Banner information system required
- Willingness to work some non-traditional hours as needed

CERTIFICATES, LICENSES, REGISTRATIONS

None.

QUALIFICATIONS

To perform this job successfully, an individual must be able to perform each essential duty satisfactorily. The requirements listed below are representative of the knowledge, skill, and/or ability required.

Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

LANGUAGE SKILLS

Ability to read, analyze, and interpret general business periodicals, professional journals, technical procedures, or governmental regulations. Ability to write reports, business correspondence, and procedure manuals. Ability to effectively present information and respond to questions from groups of managers, clients, customers, and the general public.

MATHEMATICAL SKILLS

Ability to apply advanced mathematical concepts such as exponents, logarithms, quadratic equations, and permutations. Ability to apply mathematical operations to such tasks as frequency distribution, determination of test reliability and validity, analysis of variance, correlation techniques, sampling theory, and factor analysis.

REASONING ABILITY

Ability to define problems, collect data, establish facts, and draw valid conclusions. Ability to interpret an extensive variety of technical instructions in mathematical or diagram form and deal with several abstract and concrete variables.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS

The physical demands described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

While performing the duties of this job, the employee is regularly required to sit and talk or hear. The employee is occasionally required to stand, walk, and reach with hands and arms. The employee must frequently lift and/or move up to 10 pounds. Specific vision abilities required by this job include close vision, distance vision, color vision, peripheral vision, depth perception, and ability to adjust focus.

WORK ENVIRONMENT

The work environment characteristics described here are representative of those an employee encounters while performing the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

The noise level in the work environment is usually moderate.

Table 2 Proposed Division of Labor – Office of Research and Effectiveness

Categories	Job Description projects and key tasks	IR does now	ORE Proposal		
			Director	Coordinator	Associate
Data Gathering, Access, and Dissemination	Extract and transform data into information for analysis	√	√	√	√
	Design information-gathering tools	√			√
	Survey design and administration, including timelines	√			√
	Survey processing: scanning, data file maintenance	√			√
	Perform descriptive statistics analysis	√			√
	Write interpretive reports	√			√
	Maintains website	√			√
	Maintains database on NMC research	√			√
	Maintains continuous improvement project database			√	√
Analysis and Interpretation	Develop institutional research program		√		
	Research method design	√	√		
	Ensure validity and reliability of methods	√	√		
	Conduct policy evaluation (i.e., pre-requisite analysis)	√	√		
	Coordinate environmental scanning			√	
	Contribute to environmental scanning project team		√	√	√
	Synthesize environmental scanning information			√	
	Report to College leadership on scanning results		√	√	
	Develop demographic projections			√	√
	Develop job projections by industry and occupation			√	√
	Coordinate Market Research			√	
	Potential Learning Needs Analysis (cluster, conjoint or choice modeling)		√	√	
	Competitor analysis			√	
	Coordinate Capacity Analyses (i.e., space, hr, technology)			√	
	Current Learner Needs Analysis		√		
	Pricing Assessments			√	
	Program and course offering and delivery research			√	
	Provide information to inform marketing and communication plans		√	√	
	Program and service scenario modeling			√	
	Conduct focus groups to support primary research			√	
	Integrate external research collaboration efforts		√		
	Perform secondary research			√	√
	Educates staff on interpretation of data	√	√	√	√

Institutional Effectiveness and Accountability	Leads measurement of institutional effectiveness criteria	√	√		
	Serves on Portfolio Project Team and IE Steering Team	√	√		
	Support institutional effectiveness portfolio development			√	√
	Write institutional effectiveness portfolio	√	√		
	Facilitate action project groups		√	√	
	Collaborates on Program Review		√		
	Supports services self-assessment		√		√
	Coordinates general education assessment	√	√		
	Establishes and reviews measures and methods	√	√		
	Ensure course outcome support is updated	√			√
	Draw student and course samples	√			√
	Order and schedule methods	√			√
	Collect and compile student work	√			√
	Manage Scoring Day logistics	√			√
	Provide feedback to instructors on assignments	√	√		
	Interpret assessment results	√	√		
	Present assessment results	√	√		
	Provide feedback to instructors	√	√		√
	Provide results in such a way as to inform curricular review	√	√		
	Seek sources for benchmarking data and processes		√	√	
	Serves as CQIN REP; coordinates participation in Summer Institute	√	√		
	Manages accountability process		√		
	Serves as Accreditation Liaison Officer		√		
	Coordinates continuing portfolio efforts		√		
	Manages compilation and submission of accreditation update reports		√		
	Serves as Data Coordinator for state and federal reporting	√	√		
Coordinates federal and state reporting activities	√			√	
Enters data for reporting and/or facilitates automation	√			√	
Attends state data workshop	√			√	
Provides data as data contact to Higher Learning Commission	√			√	
Management	Manage staff; performance feedback	√	√		
	De-facto budget manager	√			√