San Diego City College
Research Committee
Guidelines for Implementing the Research Planning Agenda (GIRPA)
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q1: What is the purpose of the GIRPA?

San Diego City College encourages research on education issues and believes that information should be transparent and available to students, faculty, staff, and the general public. At the same time, the college upholds these guidelines on the access, security, use, and dissemination of sensitive data in order to assure the integrity of research and protect the rights and privacy of personnel and students. The GIRPA reinforces the exercise of sound judgment and the professionalism of data stewards.

Q2: What determines the "need-to-know"?

The research question determines the "need-to-know."

- A research question generally is a problem to be solved, decision to be made, or knowledge to be gained through the gathering, analysis, and consideration of information.
- A good research question guides the process of seeking information to contribute to knowledge and/or practice.

If a requestor has a research question that can only

- be answered with Level III data and
- the requested data are necessary for
    - reasonable operation,
    - strategic planning,
    - the accomplishment of the requestor's expected and stated job duties, and/or
    - serving a legitimate educational interest,

then there is a need-to-know. Examples include, but are not limited to, schedule development, Program Review, and data-driven decision-making by School Deans or Department Chairs.

Q3: Where do I consult when I am not sure about the level of confidentiality or sensitivity associated with a research request?

You should contact the Campus Based Researcher for City College.

Q4: What are the requirements to obtain research data?

- There is a "need to know".
- The Campus Based Researcher requires a minimum of 2-6 weeks for general research questions.
- Complete and sign an ERRF. Contact the Campus Based Researcher as needed.
- Check the San Diego City College Research Committee website for current updates.

Q5: What is the meaning of aggregated/disaggregated data?

Data specificity is on a continuum with extremes of aggregated data on one end and disaggregated data on the other. The following example illustrates this principle of data specificity:

- Aggregate data in the extreme would be data such as an institution-wide success rate (Level I).
- This institution-wide success rate can be disaggregated, or broken out, at the school and program level to yield success rates by school and program (Level II).
- If we disaggregate further and break it out by CRN, we would be able to see the success rate for a single professor's class (Level III).
- We may disaggregate even further and determine the success rates for individual students (also Level III).

While aggregate data in the extreme would include data such as institution-wide figures, disaggregated data in its extreme would comprise any data that are personally identifiable to individual personnel or students. Rarely do research questions necessitate personally identifiable information; most research questions can be answered with Level I or Level II data.

Q6: Can I access Level I data generated for others?

YES – the Office of Institutional Research keeps copies of all reports it produces. Your access is dependent upon your need-to-know.

Q7: Can I access existing research and information stored online?

YES – visit http://research.sdccd.edu/, the District's Institutional Research and Planning website and ___, the San Diego City College Research Committee website.

Q8: If my school, department, program, unit, or discipline generates and maintains Level III data, does GIRPA apply to all these data?

YES – good research practices dictate ethical and professional behavior. All sources of Level III data demand adherence to existing GIRPA policy. Although all data (including data used for SLO assessment) are not generated or maintained by the CAMPUS BASED RESEARCHER, GIRPA guides the access, security, use, and dissemination of sensitive data throughout the college.

Q9: What are the consequences for unauthorized dissemination of Level III data?

Failure to comply with these precautions and restrictions shall meet with serious consequences, as per FERPA. Individuals receiving Level III data from the City College Research Office must comply with the GIRPA policy. Standards of good judgment and professionalism are required when working with highly disaggregated information. Existing District disciplinary procedures will be enforced when inappropriate dissemination of Level III data occurs.

Q10: May Level III data be shared with my colleagues?

NO – unauthorized reproductions and dissemination of Level III data are prohibited. Please see GIRPA for additional dissemination guidelines.

Q11: How does GIRPA differ from the Institutional Review Board (IRB)?

Requests for data from the City College Office of Research are under the auspices of the GIRPA. Research involving City students as human subjects must be reviewed and approved by the City College Research Committee Institutional Review Board (IRB).