INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM REVIEW

Economics Discipline

RCCD COMBINED

Riverside Community College District
Office of Institutional Effectiveness

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http://www.rcc.edu/administration/academicaffairs/effectiveness/review.cfm

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Riverside Community College
Economics Discipline
Program Review
2010

A. Mission and Relationship to the College(s)

In accordance with the mission of the Riverside City College, Norco College, and Moreno Valley College, the Economics discipline seeks to

“empower and support a diverse community of learners…Based on a learner-centered philosophy, the college fosters critical thinking, develops information and communication skills, expands the breadth and application of knowledge, and promotes community and global awareness.” (Riverside City College Mission Statement). Further, “we equip our students with the knowledge and skills to attain their goals in higher…education” (Norco College Mission Statement). This includes “baccalaureate transfer…curriculum for all who can benefit.” (Moreno Valley College Mission Statement).

The core offerings in economics (principles of macroeconomics and principles of microeconomics) parallel the standard core offerings at four-year institutions and therefore parallel the first two years of university offerings in economics as well as business. This allows students who wish to transfer to a four year degree to do so at the junior level in either field. Additionally, courses in economics (principles of economics) serve General Education requirements for the A.A. and A.S. degrees at RCCD; thus, non-economics majors who wish to achieve the terminal A.A. or A.S. degree are also served.

Courses in economics serve to promote critical thinking and active student engagement. We achieve this goal by presenting material which requires students to assimilate abstract concepts and theories into concrete models, which relate directly into their everyday lives. Students are given the task of using mathematic problem solving, written and graphical analysis combined with their logic to analyze the behavior of exchange.

B. History

1. History (update) since last review:
   a. What have been the major developments, activities, changes, and/or projects in the unit since the last review?

   The Physical Science Department and the courses we offer have been housed in the Physical Science Building and Planetarium since these buildings opened for use in 1968. Currently a new facility is under construction scheduled for completion by Fall 2011. The Physical Science Department is scheduled to occupy the second floor of this new facility and only the Planetarium will remain in use from the original facilities with no plans for modernization or upgrade.
2. What were the goals and recommendations in the unit’s last program review (if any) and how has the unit responded to those goals and recommendations?
   a. For example, what strategies have been used to accomplish the goals and recommendations?
   b. Have these strategies proved successful? If so, please describe.

*Please note that the unit is asked to address its new goals and objectives in Section I, so they do not need to be addressed here.

In 1979 there was one full-time instructor for the Riverside City College District (RCCD). This instructor was only the third economics instructor in the history of the discipline at RCC. In the mid-1980s, with growth on the City campus, the second full-time instructor was hired. With the opening of the Norco and Moreno Valley campuses in the Spring of 1991, economic courses were first offered at both campuses. The increased demand for courses required the full-time instructor to initially split his load between the City campus and the Moreno Valley campus. The remaining courses were taught by part-time instructors. By the late 1990s the growth at Norco allowed for a full-time position. Therefore, there was a need to hire another full-time faculty. By the early 2000s a third full-time instructor was added to the City campus to replace the faculty member that transferred to the Norco campus. Therefore, there were two full-time faculty members at the City campus and one full-time faculty member at the Norco campus.

Until recently, the Moreno Valley campus has lagged behind in growth and there have been fewer sections offered, always staffed by part-time faculty. However, due to increased enrollments, the newly accredited Moreno Valley College required a full-time faculty member. Therefore, there are four full-time faculty in the economics discipline: two at Riverside City College, one at Norco College, and one at Moreno Valley College.

Currently, on the Riverside City campus the economics discipline is housed in the “Economics, Geography, and Political Science” Department. However, on the Norco and Moreno Valley campuses, economics is housed in a department with a broader mix of disciplines. Prior to the mid-1990s the economics discipline was concentrated in a larger department “Humanities and Social Sciences”.

The curriculum has varied only moderately over the past thirty years, as is consensus in the profession. The typical student will take macroeconomics and microeconomics and then transfer to a four year institution, typically as a business major. In 2005, roughly half of students enrolled in economics courses identified as having a BA as their goal where as the remaining students were either undecided (25%) or had various other objectives. There were, however, a few specialty courses offered in the late 1970s, such as consumer economics and the economics of aging. These courses were generally offered to a specialty audience and have not been taught since the early 1980s. These courses have subsequently been removed from the curriculum. Moreover, there have
been several courses that have been added in order to meet the needs of particular student populations. For instance, we have added a course specializing in the study of the environment for science and other non-economics majors. The discipline has also added an honors course and a political economy course so that there are many courses available to the honors students and so that offerings at RCCD are consistent with the offerings of the transfer institutions. Lastly, with the elimination of Tele-courses, we have begun to offer online and hybrid courses to meet the needs of our commuting students.

The way in which the economics curriculum is delivered has varied, however, to incorporate active learning techniques, technology such as PowerPoint presentations as well as online and hybrid delivery methods. Therefore, the discipline is becoming more reliant upon information regarding best practices in pedagogy as well as the use of technology.

C. Data Analysis and Environmental Scan

1. The unit was provided with a substantial amount of data from Institutional Research. Review the data, discuss it with your colleagues, and identify major changes or trends you expect to be of particular relevance to your discipline in the next four years. Not everything provided will be useful to every unit. Please use only data you believe to be of relevance to your discipline, which should at a minimum include:
   - WSCH/FTES
   - Student Success (including retention and persistence as applicable)
   - The number of degrees and certificates, if applicable

Discuss (verbally) with your unit enrollment trends which might include data on gender, ethnicity, night vs. day, traditional vs. non-traditional age, etc. Think BIG picture trends, not small details.

a. Write about enrollment trends that the unit believes are important to the unit’s planning and resource needs. Why might these trends be occurring? NOTE: If enrollment trends suggest stability, state that and go to question 2 in this section.

b. Considering these trends how well is the unit doing in meeting the needs of the various learner populations in the District? And, what might the unit need to do to address these trends?

2. In addition to the enrollment trends, which you have described above, what is the unit’s overall assessment of its performance? Clearly state the performance/quality indicators unit uses to judge this (you may wish to reference the District or College Strategic Plan). In framing your answer reflect on the strengths, weaknesses, improvements, and accomplishments of the unit.

1. During the 2008-09 academic year the proportions of students taught at each college were 63% of students taught at Riverside, 26% taught at Norco, and 11% taught at Moreno Valley. This marks an increase in numbers of students taught at Riverside and
Norco with respect to Moreno Valley. During the last review cycle in 2006 the percentages were 62%, 22% and 19%, respectively. This can be explained by the inability of Moreno Valley faculty to expand enrollments due to the fact that there was not a full-time faculty member at Moreno Valley until Fall of 2009.

The majority of students who enroll in economics courses are White (35%), Hispanic (29%), African American (10%), and Asian (18%). These statistics mirror the District trends. However, they show that diversity in our economics classes has increased in the past four years. During the last program review cycle in 2006 the ethnic breakdowns were at Riverside and Norco: White (41% and 46%), Hispanic (30% and 32%), African American (11% and 7%), and Asian (10% and 8%). In 2006 at Moreno Valley, the largest number of students were Hispanic (34%), White (30%), African American (20%) and Asian (10%).

i. All races are retained at a similar rate (between 85% and 82%). Whites and Asians have the highest success rates (67% and 62% respectively) while Hispanics and African Americans have lower success rates (59% and 51%) respectively (i.e. success is defined as completing a course with a C or better).
   a. Members of the economics discipline have involved themselves with Ujima (Riverside City College) and the Puente Program (Riverside City College and Norco College) in order to attract and retain students of color (in particular African American and Latino students respectively) as well as first generation college students.

ii. The majority of students in economics courses are male (55%). However, success rates of males and females are similar (63% and 61% respectively).
1. Interestingly, nationally, most students of economics are not females. Although those females who decide to take economics have success rates similar to males (American Economics Association).

   - The majority of students are 24 years of age or younger (between 67% and 73%) at all three campuses and the majority of them have already had some college experience (56%). However, the older students have slightly higher success rates on average (72% over 24 years of age versus 65% of those under 24 years of age).

   - This is no surprise given that those with some life experience are often more likely to understand key economic principles.

2. During the last review cycle the goals of the economics department were in the next five years to:

   a. Offer a wider range of courses in more varied time configurations and format (e.g. online, hybrid, Teleweb) to reach students with time constraints and varying learning styles.
      i. We have done so by increasing our online offerings.
   b. Increase the number of faculty members in the discipline by one full-time faculty member at the Moreno Valley campus. This will allow us to meet the needs of students across the district by making an economist available in Moreno Valley.
      i. The full-time economist at Moreno Valley began in Fall of 2009.
   c. Work with other disciplines and departments on campus in order to improve the delivery and design of courses. For instance, we plan to meet with the counseling department so that we are sure students are referred to the appropriate course for their major. Additionally, we plan to meet with faculty in the Reading, English and Math departments to discuss possible solutions to improve the basic skills of our students. Such outreach will surely result in improved reading, writing, and mathematic ability\(^1\).
      i. Discipline members serve on Student Success and other committees where they discuss outreach in the context of committee goals and objectives.
   d. Promote the research and practice of innovative pedagogy which improves students’ ability to critically evaluate problems and

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\(^1\) Ideally, if there was a learning center on campus this information exchange would have far fewer transaction costs and thus be more efficiently carried out.
improves their overall love for learning and questioning. This will require faculty to remain current on the economic education field.

i. Faculty utilize many active learning strategies in their courses such as: free-writes, IF-AT testing forms, in-class discussions and exercises, and online discussions.

3. Other Student Success Data

The economics discipline feels strongly that students are not prepared to take our courses and therefore have lower success rates. In particular, students need to have a basic level of writing skills and math skills. We asked for data on student success compared to a wide variety of skills to see which was most important. For writing preparation we asked if students were more successful if they took or were eligible to take English 60, 50 and 1A. In fact, the more prepared (or courses taken or eligible to take) the more successful students were in all Economics courses. Further, for mathematics we asked if students were more successful if they took or were eligible to take Math 35 or 45. Again we found that the more prepared the student, the more successful in the course.

The implication of this is that the advisories on Economics courses for English 50 and Math 35 are valid. However, since these are advisories are not mandated, we request that counselors strongly recommend that students do not take these courses unless they have taken or are eligible to take English 50 and Math 35.

D. Programs and Curriculum (please keep your response to two pages maximum – the evidence to back this section will be in Curricunet)

One of the very important tasks within the program review process is to complete a thorough review of all Course Outlines of Record (CORs), and Program Level SLOs.

The process you use to start the review of all your CORs should commence with a top down analysis review of the following:

(*the verbal conversation within your discipline should be detailed, but if you need to answer any of these questions in writing please do so in an annotated list and keep the comments brief)

1. What programs/courses do you currently offer and why? (This may be self-explanatory, if you choose to elaborate please use an annotated list). Be sure to update the program level SLOs in Curricunet.

2. Review and summarize recent additions, deletions, or revisions. (if significant changes are made use an annotated list of the changes)

3. Check on the adequacy of offerings related to transfer articulation, vocational certificates and the relationship of your offerings to our college’s mission statement (comment on this only if you make changes).

2 We will need to travel to various conferences such as the American Economics Association (AEA) and the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (ISSOTL) as well as subscribe to journals such as the Journal of Economic Education (JEE).
4. A critical element of this review is the content review required for each prerequisite, co-
requirement, advisory and limitation on enrollment (LOE). The content review’s purpose is
to ascertain that the prerequisite, co-requisite, advisory and LOE are still supported by the
discipline, your department and that they are in compliance with Title 5 Section 55201.
(Contact your curriculum committee representative for assistance if needed)
   a. Perform entry skill validation if applicable (Note that you have done this and
      comment further only if you make changes)
   b. Perform validity of entrance skills testing, if applicable (Note that you have done
      this and comment further only if you make changes)

When you have updated all CORs notify your respective curriculum committees that your current
CORs have been reviewed and are up to date. All changes to curriculum are now submitted
through Curricunet.

The economics curriculum consists of the following courses, which are offered every
semester, in a variety of methods (traditional, hybrid, and online, which replaces former
Telecourses as of Summer 2007):

   Eco 4-Introduction to Economic Principles
   Eco 5-Environmental Economics
   Eco 6-Introduction to Political Economy (Cross-Listed with Poli Sci 6)
   Eco 7-Principles of Macroeconomics
   Eco 8-Principles of Microeconomics

Eco 4 is designed as a one semester principles course to meet the general education
requirements for the non-major. However, some students opt to take Eco 4 as a primer to
Eco 7 or Eco 8.

The number of sections offered at each college varies, with Riverside City College
holding the largest number of sections with 2 full-time faculty members. Norco, with one
full-time faculty member, holds fewer sections than the City campus but significantly
more sections per term than Moreno Valley. This is largely due to the fact that course
offerings at the Moreno Valley until recently relied upon one or two part-time faculty
members. Adding sections becomes problematic because it is difficult to find part-time
instructors to teach in Moreno Valley, especially during peak hours.

In 2006, program review activities have included major revisions of the course outline of
record (COR) since they had not been formally reviewed in over ten (10) years. In
particular, the Eco 4 course was entitled “Contemporary Economic Problems”; however
the course was not being taught as an issues course but, rather as an entry level course.
Moreover, the four year institutions were transferring the course as an entry level course.
The major revision of this COR, made the title reflect the actual course material on the
COR as well as signal students to the true nature of the course as an entry level course for
non-economics majors.

There have also been additions and deletions to the course offerings. The economics
discipline had offered a course entitled “Consumer Economics”. This course has become
outdated and has not been offered since the early 1980s and thus, was deleted from the curriculum. Moreover, three courses have been added: Eco 5 - Economics of the Environment, Eco 6 - Introduction to Political Economy, and Eco 7 Honors. These courses were offered to broaden the scope of offerings for economics majors as well as transfer students and so that the economics courses offered were more in-line with those offered at other local community colleges. Additionally, we now offer Economics 7 and 8 online to meet the community’s needs for distance education.

E. Student Learning Outcomes Assessment

1. SLO Assessment is currently completed at individual Colleges within the District to be reported on Annual Program Review documents.

F. Collaboration with Other Units including Instructional, Student Services or Administrative Units (Internal)

Discuss any collaborative efforts you have undertaken with other units; offer an assessment of success and challenges; and evaluate any potential changes in collaborative efforts.

The economics discipline has recently begun dialogue with other disciplines in order to improve service to our students. There has been collaboration with the Political Science discipline to create Economic 6 (Introduction to Political Economy). There is an ongoing discussion with the Library to create an information competency assignment or module for economics students. The discipline has also discussed collaborating with the math department to see if teaching mathematics in the context of economics fosters greater understanding of the basic principles. There has been discussion regarding the need for students to sharpen their writing and reasoning skills. Collaboration with the English department may lead to improved methods of teaching which enable students to learning those skills in context. Studies show that doing so creates deeper understanding of the ideas. There needs to be further collaboration with counseling so that the economics course offerings are made for the most benefit to students. We want students to take courses once they are prepared which will improve their success rates. This would require counselors to recommend students to economics when they are eligible to take English 1A and Math 52. Lastly, students who take online courses need extra help with time management. We would like to see a program where tutors or other staff members could call students who fail to log in to their courses or fail to complete assignments on time. This would be similar to early alert.
G. Outreach Activities (External)

Discuss any activities or projects you have undertaken with other educational institutions, the community, or business/industry. Do you plan to begin any new outreach activities? If so, please describe.

The outreach efforts of the economics discipline have been varied and informal. For instance, economics faculty members have offered courses to prisoners at the California Rehabilitation Center in Norco. There have also been collaborative efforts with other departments to promote transfer among our majors. Recently, there have been discussions with the job placement center regarding internship opportunities. Lastly, members of the economics discipline have involved themselves with Ujima (Riverside City College) and the Puente Program (Riverside City College and Norco College) in order to attract and retain students of color (in particular African American and Latino students respectively) as well as first generation college students.

H. Long Term Major Resource Planning

Normal resource requests are addressed in the annual program review process. However, occasionally a resource need is so substantial that it may impact district-wide planning (examples include: capital expenditures such as construction of a building, or starting a completely new program that requires space, people and equipment).

If applicable, describe significant long term resource needs that need to be addressed by the entire district in the next four years. If appropriate, indicate how these resource needs are related to the district’s strategic plan. The McIntyre Report and Educational Master Plans for each campus may provide reference information to support your response. Please feel free to write N/A as your response to this section if there are no substantial needs at this time.

In order to improve decision-making within the district on issues concerned with student learning and resource planning, faculty and other district personnel need increased and timely access to existing data on our students. One suggestion is to consider institutional adoption of modern database analysis software such as “SAS,” which has “capabilities that pull information together, analyze it and then make it available throughout the entire organization” (http://www.sas.com/govedu/edu/highered, retrieved on May 13, 2010). Access to updated service-area demographic data, similar to the data reported in the “External Scan” sections of the 2008 Riverside City College and 2007 Moreno Valley College master plans, is needed. Demographics in the district’s service areas change dramatically from one year to the next. Adoption of geographic information software that can provide this information should also be considered.
I. Summary

1. Briefly summarize in list form the goals and objectives the unit has for the next four years?
2. Describe support from the college or district that is needed to help the unit achieve its goals and objectives?

Vision: The Future of the Economics Discipline

In the next five years our goals for the economics discipline are to restore the courses that have been cut due to budget cutbacks. However, the other goals and objectives vary by college. Therefore we will present goals and needs individually:

Needs for Riverside:

Students who take economics at Riverside City College are not as successful as they can be. This is largely due to the fact that students are not prepared in both their language skills and mathematic skills before taking our courses. We placed English and Math advisories on all of our course outlines of record.

Moreover, we need access to more and better student data. We request a data analyst for Riverside City College who can devote time to this important task.

Further, to assist student preparation the Riverside City College economists request that the District offer a more comprehensive learning center, which would offer writing assistance to all students, regardless of whether or not they are enrolled in an English course. Moreover, the learning center should also provide drop in, as well as scheduled one-on-one tutoring for our students. As part of the existing learning center, tutors must be offered on all three campuses. Currently, tutors are provided by a system where faculty can recommend former students as tutors. This is problematic because the students who take economics courses soon transfer and it is therefore difficult to find students to tutor in following semesters. The recommendation is to pay part-time instructors for a few hours per week to tutor our students.

Additionally, RCCD economists would like to have faculty development opportunities such as travel funds to conferences, campus workshops, literature, and discussion by outside speakers to learn about how to incorporate reading, writing, mathematic ability and research across the discipline as well as advanced pedagogic techniques and to keep abreast of changes in our field.

Needs for the Norco College:

After the budget crisis is over, I plan to expand the number of sections offered each semester. Enrollment has grown and, our efficiency has increased from 493 students four years ago to 810 students in fall of 2008. Although I don’t have the latest efficiency data for last fall or the current semester, I expect the discipline’s efficiency to be significantly higher than 810 for this academic year.
As I expand the number of sections, I would also like to offer Introduction to Political Economy (ECO-6) which has never been offered at Norco. In the next two years, I will try to gauge student demand for this course.

I will be coordinating with the “Honors Program” at Norco to offer honors economics as needed. Currently, I am working with Dr. Carol Farrar, Honors Program Coordinator, to offer ECO-7H: Honors Principles of Macroeconomics.

One of the challenges for Economics is finding tutors. One of the problems is that many students take economics right before they transfer and, therefore, the pool of qualified students is very limited. Secondly, the current wage rate for tutors is too low to attract top students. Many of these students can earn substantially higher wages from other part-time jobs. As I have suggested before, the college needs to increase wage rates to attract more qualified students. If I had a larger pool of tutors, I could work closely with them and, therefore, increase success rates. I will continue working on recruiting tutors.

**Needs for the Moreno Valley College:**

The economics program at Moreno Valley will benefit from its first full-time economics faculty member hired in 2009. The economics program now consists of two instructors: the new hire and an existing part-time instructor. In the short-term, as acclimation of the new faculty to the college’s students, faculty, and staff proceeds, an improvement in student learning in economics courses is expected. In addition, there will be increased integration of the economics program into college’s existing learning support programs, such as basic skills and counseling services. In the long-term, the integration of economics with other disciplines will increase. This will result in an increase in interdisciplinary learning opportunities across disciplines such as the formation of learning communities and the creation of interdisciplinary lessons that include economics.

**Resource Needs**

- **Economics tutors** as described in the 2006 program review.
- **Discussion sections.** At the University of California and other institutions that offer similar courses in economics, students taking an economics course are required to enroll in weekly, no-credit, discussion sections. Support for the creation and staffing of similar discussion sections to help students is needed.
- **Access to computing resources** for students needs to be increased inside and outside of the classroom. A growing body of learning tools is available online to help students. Using these tools not only improves the learning of economics but also improves computer literacy. In the classroom, each student needs their own computer or other computing device. Outside the classroom, more on-campus computer labs are needed. Students in households without high-speed access to the Internet
at home should be encouraged to obtain access through subsidy or other means.

- **Collaborative-oriented classrooms.** Tables and chairs that can be moved independently and freely to facilitate student collaboration are needed in classrooms that can accommodate 49 students. Collaborative activities require students to face one-another while working together. Existing classrooms with such furniture cannot accommodate 49 students. Other classrooms with the desk-chair combination units that can accommodate 49 students are too crowded to enable repositioning of the desk-chair units. This is a growing need as collaborative activities are becoming more prevalent in the classroom. In addition, economics is a science that studies human behavior. As such, experiments are conducted involving interaction with peers. These economic experiments and other collaborative activities require classrooms that are more conducive to collaboration.

- **Student classroom individual response devices.** These devices, sometimes referred to as “clickers”, encourage students to participate in class activities, increasing achievement. The clickers also allow for instantaneous assessment. Each student responds to questions during class using her own personal clicker. Having instantly tabulated results allows the instructor to adapt accordingly during a class. If the instructor requires students to use these devices, student purchases should be subsidized or otherwise encouraged.

- **Resources to automate the collection and reporting of SLO assessment data.** Using additional computing hardware and software, instructors can design assessment procedures with automated data collection and reporting. For example, students take assessments online. The response data is captured in electronic format. Analysis and reporting of the data, already in electronic format, is automated using statistical software. Compared to pencil and paper assessments, automation will save time and resources.

- **Resources to create and post electronic media online.** As more students are accessing the Internet to learn, faculty need multimedia computing hardware and software to create learning materials that can be made available to students online.

- **Financial support for attendance at economics conferences.**

- **Increased access to student data.** Detailed disaggregated profile data on each student in our classes can help instructors address student learning needs. For example, knowing the academic goals, prior coursework, and identifying his or her basic skills needs as they apply to economics. Access to this data needs to be improved. One suggestion is to consider institutional adoption of database analysis software such as SAS, which has “capabilities that pull information together, analyze it and then make it available throughout the entire organization” (http://www.sas.com/govedu/edu/highered/, retrieved on May 13, 2010).
Summary

Below is a list of resources needed by economics faculty at all three campuses in order to offer “courses [that] prepare students for intellectual and cultural awareness, critical and independent thought, and self-reliance” (RCCD Mission Statement)

- Access to student data via a data analyst at each college
- Collaborative classroom space
- Computer software and hardware to improve teaching and learning
- Tutors for economics who are paid enough to attract interest.
- A writing center available to all students
- Funding to support a Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program so that instructors have support for their efforts to teach writing in all disciplines
- Library workshops to teach information competency and funding to provide an overall Research Across the Curriculum (RAC) movement
- Travel funds to attend conferences to learn about innovative pedagogic techniques and remain current in the discipline

J. Recommendations to the Program Review Committee:

What changes will make the program review process more helpful to you?

We suggest that annual and comprehensive program reviews be done at individual colleges and NOT discipline-wide. Separate colleges can and must make their own recommendations.
Appendix

Extra data is available at http://www.rcc.edu/administration/academicaffairs/effectiveness/review.cfm see Annual Program Review Data 2010.

1. Demographic information (ethnicity, gender, age group, enrollment status)
2. Course Enrollments by time of day offered for each term
3. Counts of sections offered by term
4. Student Retention by course by term.
5. Student Success rates (two measures) by term
6. FTES generated by course and term
7. Weekly Student Contact Hours by course and term
8. Full-Time Equivalent Faculty by course and term
9. Percentages of student enrollments taught by Full-Time and Part-Time faculty for course and term
10. Class enrollment by course and term
11. Grade point averages and grade distributions by course and term
12. Student success rates (two measures) by Demographics by term
13. Degrees and certificates awarded, if applicable

Additional information and assistance with data analysis is available upon request. Please fill out a request form from http://academic.rcc.edu/it/request_form.html