A Plan for Assessment of Institutional Effectiveness
Fairleigh Dickinson University

Introduction

The purpose of the Assessment of Institutional Effectiveness Plan is to provide a roadmap for a systematic and ongoing process of collecting information for improving the overall effectiveness of the institution. The plan is grounded in the University’s mission of providing quality education to its students and, is guided by both University and Campus goals.

Assessment of institutional effectiveness is not new to Fairleigh Dickinson University. It has a long tradition of using assessment to inform decision-making in diverse areas such as planning, budgeting, enrollment management and student life. Assessment is an integral component of all its accredited and externally certified programs. What the Institutional Assessment plan does is to provide a complete framework of assessment for all units, departments, programs and offices with uniform standards and consistency of implementation, documentation and dissemination of assessment activities and results.

Definition of Institutional Assessment

Assessment of institutional effectiveness is not just assessment of student learning. It also includes all non-instructional components of the institution that either directly or indirectly contribute to student success in college. In doing so, it acknowledges the fact that a well-rounded college experience goes beyond classroom learning to include co-curricular and residential life experiences, service and research activities, all of which influence and shape the students’ intellectual, social, psychological and personal development. Beyond these, administrative units are also part of assessment of institutional effectiveness since they carry out the business of education.

The focus of this document is on the assessment of administrative and academic/educational support units of the University. Currently, the Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Committee under the leadership of the University Provost and Senior Vice-President for Academic Affairs is charged with the task of developing a university-wide assessment plan for student learning. However, an institutional assessment plan must include assessment of its non-instructional and administrative units also. As stated in Standard 7 in the Standards of Excellence by Middle States Commission on Higher Education:

*The institution has developed and implemented an assessment plan and process that evaluates its overall effectiveness in: achieving its missions and goals; implementing, planning, resource allocation, and institutional renewal processes; using institutional resources efficiently...and assuring that institutional processes and resources support appropriate learning and other outcomes for its students and graduates.*
To be complete, the institutional plan we are required to present to the Middle States in April 2008 should also include an assessment plan for administrative and academic/educational support units.

The following is a framework for assessment of areas outside student learning. This framework has been developed by the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment using models available in the assessment field. The following pages provide the guiding principles, description of assessment process flow, operational structure, a general timeline for implementation, a protocol for assessment, indicators for measuring effectiveness, and a sample list of assessment activities.

**Relationship between Strategic Plan and Institutional Effectiveness Assessment Plan**

Strategic plan and institutional assessment plan are both based on institutional mission. There is often a symbiotic relationship between the two with commonly shared goals and, sometimes, assessment itself can become a strategic goal. However, institutional effectiveness planning is fundamentally different from strategic planning. While strategic planning is focused on repositioning the institution, institutional assessment is focused on the effectiveness and efficiency of institutional services and programs. It is outcomes oriented with the focus on continuous quality improvement. Unlike strategic planning, assessment planning does not end once an action item is completed; it continually revitalizes itself through reflection, reevaluation and renewal.

**Guiding Principles for Assessment of Institutional Effectiveness at FDU**

Assessment of institutional effectiveness at FDU derives its purpose from the University or Campus mission. It should take place at all areas and levels of the institution. The responsibility for the development and implementation of assessment plan should rest with individual departments and should be a collaborative participatory process involving the entire staff. The plan should be realistic with achievable goals and measurable outcomes.

The plan for assessment of institutional effectiveness serves as the primary means to evaluate institutional processes used to achieve University/Campus goals. It seeks to affirm, improve, refine and renew the work of the stakeholders with openness and transparency. It conceptualizes the assessment processes as taking place at two levels: University/Campus level and the unit level each complementing the other. It is a multi-step, multi-year process involving setting goals, implementing, evaluating, demonstrating effectiveness and improving programs and services (Figure 1.) It is data oriented and expects that the information gathered from assessment processes will be used for making decision about policies and programs.
Figure 1
Assessment Process Flow
Table 1: Steps for Administrative/Academic and Educational Support Units

1. Develop Area/Unit Mission Statement/Goals

1.1. Use University/Campus mission statement to develop a mission statement for the unit.
1.2. Develop goals using unit mission statement as the guide.
1.3. If there are external standards of certification or accreditation use them to develop goals.
1.4. Determine the order in which each goal will be implemented and assessed.

2. Develop Objectives (planned activities)

2.1. List and prioritize possible activities for each goal.
2.2. Identify expected outcomes from each activity. Outcomes should be explicit and measurable.
2.3. Establish criteria for success or benchmarks for each outcome.

3. Identify Assessment Methods/Tools

3.1. Use local expertise to develop surveys internally. Otherwise, use published instruments.
3.2. If necessary, use both quantitative and qualitative (interviews, focus groups) measures.
3.3. When necessary, get the approval of IRB.

4. Establish an Assessment Timeline

4.1. Develop a realistic and flexible implementation schedule.
4.2. To avoid straining of resources, implement the plan in phases, over a multi-year period.

5. Collection and Analysis of Data

5.1. Collect and analyze data.
5.2. Identify key findings.
5.3. Discuss findings among staff members.

6. Feedback Loop

6.1. Decide how to use the findings to improve processes.
6.2. Disseminate assessment results to important stakeholders.
6.3. Develop future assessment activities.

---

1 Adapted from Protocol for Institutional Assessment, University of Albany, Institutional Assessment Plan, February, 2005.
Table 2: Commonly Used Outcome Measures for Assessment of Institutional Effectiveness

1. Measures of volume of activity
2. Measures of efficiency
3. Measures of service quality
4. Client satisfaction surveys
5. Other methods to obtain client feedback
6. Staff discussions/evaluations of services to clients
7. Review of existing data
8. Standard/guidelines provided by professional associations
9. Standards set by federal, state, county, city, FDU regulations
10. External evaluators/auditors
11. Benchmark/comparisons with peer institutions
12. Other

Table 3: Resources for Assessment of Institutional Effectiveness

While there has been a spate of publication in assessment of student learning, assessment of institutional effectiveness is not as widely covered. The following are the most popular books in this area:

1. Nichols, Karen and Nichols, James: The Department head’s Guide to Assessment Implementation in Administrative and Educational Support Units
3. Lee Upcraft, M and Schuh, J: Assessment in Student Affairs

Middle States Commission on Higher Education: Assessing Student Learning and Institutional Effectiveness: Middles States Expectations
Who Should Do Assessment

It is expected that each area/unit within the University/Campuses will develop and implement its own assessment plan using the process described above. Each unit shown in the operational structure (Figure 2) is responsible for determining its goals and objectives, indicators, assessment methods and follow-up action.

Figure 2
Institutional Effectiveness Assessment Flow Model
Operational Structure
Table 4: Areas/Divisions/Units of Institutional Effectiveness Assessment

University

I.  
   A. Office of the University Provost and Senior VP for Academic Affairs  
      B. 1. Global Learning  
      2. Center for Teaching and Learning  
         1. Teaching and Learning  
         2. Academic Technology  
      3. Grants  
      4. Global Partnerships  
      5. Institutional Research and Assessment  
      6. Library  
      7. Enrollment Management  
         1. Offices reporting to VP for Enrollment Management

II.  
   A. Office of the Senior Vice-President & Chief Operating Officer  
      B. 1. Accounting/Treasurer  
      2. Bursar  
      3. Risk Management  
      4. Budgeting  
      5. Purchasing  
      6. Human Resources  
         1. Payroll  
         2. Human Resources  
      7. Information Technology  
         1. MIS  
         2. Telephone  
         3. UTAC  
         4. Networks  
         5. Other  
      8. Facilities and Administration  
         1. Offices reporting to VP for Administration  
      9. Enrollment Services

III.  
   A. Office of the Campus Provosts  
      B. 1. Student Life  
         1. Orientation  
         2. Resident Life  
         3. Judicial Affairs  
         4. Health Services  
         5. Counselling Services  
         6. Other
2. Academic Advising/ Tutoring
3. Special Admits (EOF, EFE)
4. Campus Safety
5. Athletics
6. International Student Services
7. Career Services
8. Other

IV.

A. Office of the College Deans
   B. 1. Academic Advising
      2. Special Admits Programs
      3. ESL Program
      4. Continuing Education
      5. Other

V.

A. Other
Timeline for Assessment Planning

Short-Term

2007

April    Review by Executive Council

May-August    Review by President Adams and BOT
                          Prepare an inventory of current assessment activities
                          Formation of University-wide Institutional Effectiveness Committee
                          Create website dedicated to assessment

Sept-Dec    Units develop assessment plans

2008

Jan-Jun    Units begin implementation of assessment plans

April    Institutional Assessment Plan submitted to the Middle States

July    Annual assessment reports due

Long-Term

It is expected that assessment implementation cycle in each unit would be spread over a multi-year period, so that in any given year, the unit is engaged in at least one aspect of the plan. It is important to recognize that assessment is continuous process of reflection and improvement over time.

Organizational Structure of the Assessment Process

I. The Institutional Effectiveness Committee

The Institutional Effectiveness Committee will serve as an advisory body in the implementation of the assessment of administrative and academic/educational support units. Its membership will be drawn from both campuses and the central administration to ensure that all functional areas are adequately represented. Its general role will be to promote a culture of assessment at the University, to ensure the integrity of assessment activities and to provide support to units engaged in assessment. The Committee will be chaired by the Assoc. Vice-President for Institutional Research and Assessment.
II. **Office of Institutional Research and Assessment**

The Assoc. Vice-President for Institutional Research and Assessment will assist administrative and academic/educational support units in developing their assessment plans, provide guidance in developing appropriate assessment methods and tools, facilitate the implementation of assessment plans and support the work of Institutional Effectiveness Committee.
Appendix 1

Assessment Report Form for Administrative and Educational Support Units
2007-2008
Cover Sheet

This form allows all departments or groups doing assessments at FDU to document their assessment activities in accordance with the University’s five-step approach. Every unit receiving this form is required to complete an assessment of at least one objective in 2007-08.

The AES assessment activities are coordinated by the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment and the Institutional Effectiveness Committee. For additional information, contact Indira Govindan at govindan@fdu.edu.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Report for 2007-2008 Information Signatures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name of the Unit:</strong> (dept, division, service or educational support unit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment Team Member/s</strong> (note person who led/chaired assessment team)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Signature of Assessment Team Leader for Steps 1-3: (due Jan 4, 2008)** | The Assessment Team completed Steps 1-3 of this study by ________
Signature: |
| **Signature of Assessment Team Leader for Steps 4-5 (due Sept 30 2008)** | The Assessment Team completed Steps 4-5 of this study by______________
Signature: |
| **Signature of Vice-President/Provost/Dean** | The Assessment Team completed its assessment plan for AY07-08 by
______________
Signature: |
Assessment Report Form for Administrative and Educational Support Units *

(Name of the Unit: ________________)
2007-2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Administrative Objective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 1</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 2</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 3</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 4</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 5</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix 2
Assessment Terminology

Assessment

A process that asks important questions about student learning or unit performance or program effectiveness; gathers some meaningful information about these questions; uses the information for improvement.

Institutional Effectiveness

The extent to which an institution achieves its mission and goals

Institutional Mission

A broad statement of institutional philosophy, role, scope, etc.

Institutional Goals

Institutional-level action statements that implement, support, and are derived from the mission

Means of Assessment and Criteria for Success

The "when," "how," and "how well" of assessment activities. When will assessment activities take place? Where will the unit find information that will reflect accomplishment of its objective? How will the assessment be accomplished? How well should the unit perform on the means of assessment identified, if the unit is functioning the way it should?

Mission Statement for Administrative and Educational Support (AES) Units

Describes the unit's purpose and serves as the intermediary linkage between the institutional mission statement and the more specific administrative objectives of the AES unit.

Objectives for Administrative (AES) Units

Statements which describe how well the AES unit intends to function or improve its services. They support the Unit Mission Statement and are the linkage to the means of assessment. Depending on the purpose of the unit, they may be all "process-oriented" or mixed with "results-oriented" intended (student) educational outcomes.
**Outcome Oriented Administrative Objectives**

Knowledge or skills (outcomes) gained by students from services provided by educational support units (AES). To validate these it is necessary to measure the students’ ability after the provision of these services.

**Point-of-Contact Survey**

Survey distributed and collected by AES units at the time the student receives the service. The purpose of the survey is to ascertain in greater depth or detail the satisfaction of the student with particular aspects of the services provided.

**External Evaluation**

Reports rendered by external evaluators regarding the operations of AES units.

**Closing the Loop**

The demonstration of the use of assessment results to improve the educational or service program.

**Criteria for Program Success**

For AES units this means identifying a reasonable level of service improvement to expect given the resources and personnel the unit has available