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OVERVIEW OF INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

What is Institutional Effectiveness?

Institutional Effectiveness (IE) is a planning, implementation and assessment process that allows us to evaluate whether our practices are meeting our goals. IE activities help assess performance and provide university accountability. The process reinforces instructional and administrative quality and effectiveness through a systematic review of goals and outcomes that are consistent with FSU’s mission.

Why do we evaluate Institutional Effectiveness?

For three reasons: 1) to self-evaluate and improve for the benefit of faculty, staff, and students, 2) to demonstrate the product of our efforts to the public and campus community, and 3) to meet the requirements for accreditation. Academic and student
services units provide direct support to faculty and students, indirect support for student learning, or serve a specific co-curricular mission that supports the college experience (SACSCOC Resource Manual, page 73). The IE process is a key way to measure how well we are meeting important support services goals.

**How do we assess Institutional Effectiveness?**

IE is typically evaluated at the level of individual academic and student support services (A&SSS) units, which are defined as the basic units of organizational hierarchy, usually with a director as the head of the unit/office. For example, FSU Career Center, Office of Faculty Development and Advancement, the Center for the Advancement of Teaching, etc. are considered to be individual A&SSS units for the IE assessment purposes.

Every A&SSS unit sets annual performance goals that are measured and evaluated to determine how well they performed in a given year.

**POs** – All university units (academic, administrative, and academic and student support services) define and set expectations for their program outcomes. POs are the broader goals of the A&SSS unit and may align with FSU Strategic Plan implementation, state funding metrics, strategic plans of the unit’s division (for example, Division of Student Affairs strategic plan), or unit’s mission and values (for example, University Housing statement of mission and values). Each A&SSS unit should formulate at least 2 Program Outcomes.

**Who governs Institutional Effectiveness?**

The Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President is responsible for the overall coordination of the university assessment processes. The Office of Institutional Performance and Assessment (IPA) within the Office of the Provost provides assistance to FSU units during all stages of their IE assessment cycles. The final review and approval of entries in the IE portal is the responsibility of the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs (or an authorized designee).

At the level of individual A&SSS units, the IE assessment process is a shared responsibility between the department/office leadership, assessment coordinators, and staff members. As such, they all are involved in an annual workflow that assures that defined outcomes are appropriately designed, measured, analyzed and reported in a timely fashion. Each A&SSS unit creates an assessment governance structure most suitable to its size and functions.

Typically, each A&SSS department/office designates one or two staff members as assessment coordinators who lead and manage the assessment process and implementation of improvements. However, it is expected that all employees of the unit understand, provide input for, agree with, and participate in the IE assessment process.
Prior to or shortly after A&SSS unit’s assessment coordinators submit the description of the IE assessment components into the IE portal, the department/office head (or designee) reviews and approves the submissions. The final review and approval should be conducted by the division’s Vice President (or authorized designee). Suggested rubrics for evaluating the IE submissions are developed and distributed by IPA on its website.

**When do we assess Institutional Effectiveness?**

While the process of improvement is always continuous and ongoing, we only formally evaluate attainment of Program Outcomes once a year, at the end of each unit’s IE cycle. Each A&SSS unit determines the best start and end dates for their IE timeline. Generally, most departments/offices that provide academic and student support services operate on an academic year cycle. Common academic year cycle timeframes are: 1) Fall and Spring semesters, 2) Summer, Fall, Spring semesters, 3) Summer C, Fall, Spring, Summer A & B semesters.

The recommended calendar for engaging in and completing various components of the IE cycle is provided by IPA. This calendar for submission of assessment plans and outcomes is aligned with yearly cycles of academic, administrative, and A&SSS units. For the A&SSS units, the IE assessment cycle calendar begins in July. All campus units are allowed and encouraged to complete their IE assessment components before the specified deadlines.
**Program Outcomes**

**Description of Program Outcomes**

POs of A&SSS units are designed to focus our efforts on improving direct support to faculty and students, indirect support for student learning, or serving a specific co-curricular mission that supports the college experience. These Outcomes reflect priorities of individual A&SSS units and may align with FSU [Strategic Plan](#) implementation, state funding [metrics](#), strategic plans of the unit’s division (for example, [Division of Student Affairs strategic plan](#)), or unit’s mission and values (for example, [University Housing statement of mission and values](#)). Chosen POs should be a result of a unit’s analysis of program’s strengths and weaknesses and should reflect its commitment to advancing the University’s mission.

POs selected by the A&SSS units are typically focused on the efficiency, breadth and/or quality of unit’s support services. For example, FSU Academic Center for Excellence may have a PO aimed at improving academic support provided outside of the classroom, which they plan to achieve by expanding the list of academic courses for which they offer Peer-Assisted Study Sessions (PASS). FSU Office of Financial Aid may have a PO to optimize processing time in order to disburse financial aid at least two weeks before classes begin. Office of Faculty Development and Advancement may have a PO focused on strengthening junior faculty mentoring through providing additional programming and incentives. Most Outcomes for A&SSS units are chosen because of their assumed or proven positive impact on faculty and student success.

Here’s an example of a PO description for FSU Career Center unit:

- Provide a succinct name for the PO:

  **PO Name:** Experiential Learning.

- Identify the improvement to be made at the A&SSS unit level:

  **Program Outcome:** Increase student participation in experiential learning opportunities.

**Assessing Program Outcomes**

Assessment methodology for a PO should be focused on accurately measuring the extent to which an A&SSS unit achieved the established Outcome. The unit may choose to assess the Outcome through measuring the efficiency of its day-to-day operations, quality of provided services, number of individuals who received support, or the final products of these processes. When units decide how high they should set the PO goal/benchmark, it may be valuable to study relevant industry standards/...
It is important to evaluate POs with appropriate assessment instruments, within the context of a unit’s functions, and in a methodologically consistent fashion to allow for year-over-year assessment. When designing an assessment methodology, it is useful to adhere to the S.M.A.R.T. guidelines – program-level outcomes should be **Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.** When feasible, IPA and Office of Institutional Research (IR) will provide additional data and analytic support to A&SSS units in need of custom reports and datasets.

Here’s an example of the University Counseling Center PO assessment methodology:

- Describe how the assessment of the PO will be conducted:

  **Assessment Process:** Effectiveness of mental health services provided to FSU students by the UCC will be based on the percentage of students whose symptoms stabilized or improved. The percentage will be calculated by dividing the number of students who self-reported stabilization or decrease in symptoms of anxiety, depression, and distress by the total number of students who accessed UCC clinical support and reported experiencing these symptoms.

  We chose as the assessment instrument the Counseling Center Assessment of Psychological Symptoms (CCAPS) survey. The survey has eight subscales, each measuring a different aspect of psychological and mental health. Three of these subscales will be used to assess this PO. The survey has good psychometric properties (https://ccmh.psu.edu/ccaps-instruments/).

- Specify a measurable assessment standard that defines success:

  **Goal/benchmark:** In 2019-20 academic year (Summer 2019, Fall 2019, Spring 2020), at least 91.70% of students will report stabilization or decrease in symptoms of anxiety, at least 91.55% of students will report stabilization or decrease in symptoms of depression, and at least 92.05% of students will report stabilization or decrease in symptoms of distress.

**Recording and Analyzing Results**

During the academic year, A&SSS units deliver support services to students, faculty, staff, and community members as planned before the start of the cycle. Designing good assessment mechanisms and providing activities promoting strong performance are the key to successful IE reporting. At the end of each assessment cycle, A&SSS units aggregate information/data and then analyze the degree to which POs were met or not.
The culmination is a brief report with an analysis of why the Outcome selected at the start of the cycle was achieved at that particular level. Proper results statement for each PO is largely quantitative and provides plethora of methodological details. In some case, qualitative analysis can be appropriate.

Per FERPA guidelines, do not provide information about individual student’s academic performance and exercise caution when reporting aggregated assessment results of groups with fewer than 5 students.

Here’s an example of the Advising First program PO reporting of results and analysis:

- Present information regarding the levels at which the PO was achieved:

  Results Statement: The quality of provided advising services was measured via post-advising session survey that was sent to students through email. In 2018-19 academic year (Summer 2018, Fall 2018, and Spring 2019), 1,014 students responded to the survey. Out of them, 724 self-reported that they were ‘very satisfied’ and 184 self-reported that they were ‘satisfied’ with their academic advising session. In summary, 89.5% of students who were surveyed and responded indicated that they were satisfied.

  Compared to the student satisfaction level of 88.1% in 2017-18 academic year, a greater proportion of students self-reported being satisfied/very satisfied with their academic advising session in 2018-19. The Program Outcome set in Summer 2018 to increase the satisfaction level to 90.0% was not achieved, but there is a positive trend indicating improvement.

- Examine the reason(s) for the attained results:

  Analysis of Results: We believe that the increase in student satisfaction levels was due to the enhancements to the training resources provided to the academic advisors in the Advising First program. Specifically, before the start of the 2018-19 academic year, every continuing advisor participated in the refresher training and every new advisor participated in an enhanced training that included a new module explaining in greater detail how to better address frequently occurring problems.

  We hypothesize that the increase in student satisfaction level was not as high as we set out to achieve because of a high turn-over rate. About 1/5 of Advising First academic advisors voluntarily separated from their positions in the 2017-18 academic year, which required hiring 12 new employees to fill the vacancies. The newly hired advisors were not as experienced and therefore their student ratings were not as high. The voluntarily separated advisors cited inadequate pay as one of their main reasons for leaving.
Formulating Improvement Plans

The most intensive component of the assessment cycle is devising plans for, and committing to, continuous improvement. Formulating sound improvement plans requires participation, engagement and meaningful contribution of as many members of the A&SSS unit as possible. Whether POs have been met or not, it is the responsibility of the department/office leadership and assessment coordinators to determine a plan of action for the next year.

Occasionally, an Outcome does not meet the desired goal/benchmark. In this case, A&SSS units should provide reasons as to why these goals/benchmarks were not met and then develop an improvement plan. These plans should be well-thought-out and describe specific changes to be implemented, ranging from small-scale enhancements to significant changes in a unit’s operations. Improvement plans may also require new or modified assessment practices or modifications to job responsibilities.

In cases when POs are being consistently achieved at a high level, it is recommended to either increase the desired goal/benchmark or to derive a new PO that would address other important aspects of the University mission. If these changes are not feasible, the units should consider how they expect to maintain high level of performance. Most importantly, “Plans to make improvements do not qualify as seeking improvement, but efforts to improve a program that may not have been entirely successful certainly do.” (SACSCOC Resource Manual, page 68).

Here’s an example of the Advising First PO improvement plan:

- Describe specific plans to improve or sustain performance:

  Improvement Plan: In order to continue improving student satisfaction levels with their academic advising services, the program will, first, design and provide additional training to new advisors and, second, will request increases in salary of the advisors whose compensation is below the median in their job class.

  For additional details, please see the two attached supporting documents:

  o The draft of the second training module designed specifically for new advisors.

  o Salary analysis of all currently employed advisors and recommended increases.
Appendix A: Assessment Components of Program Outcome
FSU Office of Admissions Example

• Provide a succinct name for the PO:

  PO Name: Enrollment Diversity.

• Identify the improvement to be made at the A&SSS level:

  Program Outcome: The students in the incoming First-Time-in-College (FTIC) cohort will be more racially/ethnically diverse.

• Describe how the assessment of the PO will be conducted:

  Assessment Process: First, we’ll count how many first-year undergraduate students entered FSU in Summer and Fall 2019. We will then calculate the number and percentage of students who were Black or African American, Hispanic/Latino, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, American Indian or Alaska Native, Two or More Races. We will use the university official data reporting system (OBI) to retrieve the necessary data on the 2019 FTIC cohort.

• Specify a measurable assessment standard that defines success:

  Goal/benchmark: Racial/ethnic diversity of at least 40%.

• Present information regarding the levels at which the PO was achieved:

  Results Statement: 2,536 (41.3%) out of 6,140 enrolled students from the 2019 FTIC cohort were from racially/ethnically diverse backgrounds (see attached file for details). The goal/benchmark set for this PO was achieved.

• Examine the reason(s) for the attained results:

  Analysis of Results: Much of the improvement in student diversity can be attributed to the use of the College Board Landscape tool. This race-neutral tool provides socio-economic and academic information about applicants’ schools and neighborhoods, which helped us make more goal-oriented and data-driven admission decisions.

• Describe specific plans to improve or sustain performance:

  Improvement Plan: To continue improving our enrollment to better match the racial/ethnic diversity of Florida, we will refine the use of the Landscape tool in our admission decision processes. We also plan to add regional recruiters in Jacksonville and South Florida to increase our outreach to underserved areas.