



Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment

Guidelines For Administrative Assessment Plans for Colleges, Centers and Institutes

The purpose of this document is to provide recommendations/guidelines for developing an assessment plan for college level administrative functional and centers/institutes within colleges. The document reflects guidelines for designing and tailoring assessment plan aligned with the needs and purposes of colleges' administrative functions as well as center and institutes within colleges¹.

Developing an Administrative Plan for College, Institute or Center

The principal aim of developing an assessment plan is to clarify the focus and content of your plan, which should be based upon the needs of your administrative or educational support unit. Approach to developing the plan should be determined by the mission of the unit.

Below are specific steps to assist in developing an effective assessment plan. The steps align with the assessment plan templates:

Step 1: Define the mission of the college, center or institute

The mission is a broad statement that reflects the aim of the college, center or institute.

The college's mission statement should:

- Be concise
- Be linked directly to USF's mission statement
- Include the major functions of the college

The center's or institute's mission statement should:

- Be concise
- Be linked directly to the college's mission statement
- Include the major functions of the center/institute

Step 2: Define the Goals of the college, center or institute

The goals of the college should be aligned with the goals of the institution while the goals of center's and institutes within each college should be aligned with the goals of the college. Goals are broader/general assertions that describe the overarching long-term intended objectives of the college. Goals may or may not be measurable and usually need to be further developed as separate/distinct objectives, that, when measured appropriately, provide evidence of how well a given unit is accomplishing its goals.

¹ College compact plans and/or strategic plans can be valuable sources of information for the college assessment plan.

Example of a college goal: *To promote excellence in undergraduate and graduate education.*

Step 3: Define Intended Objectives

Objectives are measurable statements that describe the expected or intended quality relative to timeliness, responsiveness, accuracy, etc. Objectives often describe how well a unit intends to function or improve its functioning or the services provided.

Client satisfaction is the most common type of administrative outcome/objective. Less common, but equally acceptable administrative outcomes/objectives are those that focus on the ability of clients once services have been provided (e.g., staff's ability to process a requisition after training has been provided).

College level administrative objectives must be:

- Linked to the university goals [*objectives of the centers/institutes should be linked to goals of the college*]
- Realistic in terms of the resources and support currently available within the college
- Measurable – feasible to collect accurate quantitative and/or qualitative data usable for making improvements.

Example of a college level objective: *To hire new faculty to teach various undergraduate and graduate courses in order to promote excellence in our Undergraduate and Graduate programs.*

Step 4: State the Methods of Assessment and Performance Targets

Method of Assessment refers to the "measures" your unit intends to use to reach or attain the objectives (e.g. surveys, focus groups). Description of your assessment method(s) should include *baseline* data/information which focuses on "the current state of the college" regarding a given objective whereas "*Performance Target*" refers to "where the college would like to be". The statement(s) should briefly state how you will define success based on the defined objectives.

It is important that the methods chosen enable the unit to evaluate its effectiveness in terms of services offered. A primary objective of assessment is to illuminate strengths and weaknesses in your unit that that can lead to improvement.

Example of Baseline information and Performance Target: *"The College will hire 10 new faculty by Fall 2009 to join the current 10 in teaching foundation courses at the undergraduate level and advanced research courses at the graduate levels in five of our departments that are currently understaffed."*

Step 5: Assessment Results

This section, which forms the first part of the assessment report, requires actual data/information based on the previously stated objectives/outcomes, methods of assessment and performance targets. The data gathered must be analyzed and formatted in a way that it provides useful information for identifying strengths and weaknesses and improving processes and services.

Step 6: Action Plan - Use of Results Improvement

This section, commonly referred to as “closing the loop”, requires an action plan of the unit based on the achieved results. Every entity is required to review assessment results with a focus toward uncovering services or parts of services that need to be improved. Since the express purpose of assessment is to use what is learned in the process to improve performance of units, it is important that annual assessment report contain a description of the actions or “steps” that were taken in response to the assessment results to improve the unit’s services (e.g., enhance services, add personnel, enhance technology, etc).

Please note that the action plan or use of assessment for improvement is the most critical part of the assessment report as it serves both as a conclusion of one assessment cycle and as the point of departure for the next assessment cycle. SACS evaluators pay a lot of attention to the decisions or actions that each unit has made based on assessment results.