The purpose of the newsletter is to provide information regarding planning and assessment at Texas Tech and other universities.

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**OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING**

**Mission**
Enhancing the application of strategic planning to improve the university through coordination, facilitation, and education

The Office of Strategic Planning provides coordination and facilitation of the planning and assessment activities for the university, including all academic and support programs and services. The office also offers educational opportunities for faculty, staff, and administrators on policies, procedures, and best practices related to planning and assessment in higher education.

**Vision**
The Office of Strategic Planning will be:
- acknowledged on campus for its efficient and effective service to the university on planning and assessment;
- recognized nationally for its contributions to strategic planning and assessment in higher education.

**TIMELINE FOR 2007 ASSESSMENT REPORTS**

March 14, 2008 – Academic departments, centers/institutes, and support units submit 2007 assessment reports to Deans and Vice Presidents

April 23, 2008 – Deans and other area leaders reporting to Provost submit reports to Provost

May 5, 2008 – Provost and Vice Presidents submit 2007 assessment reports to President

**SACS-COC REAFFIRMATION UPDATE**

Valerie Osland Paton, Ph.D.
Associate Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

The Texas Tech community, and in particular those of you who work closely with the strategic planning process, are keenly aware of the SACS-COC action to place Texas Tech on probation last December. SACS-COC’s President Belle Wheelan’s January 9, 2008 letter to President Whitmore states: “…The institution should provide evidence that students have attained the competencies identified in the general education….”


Under the leadership of Provost Marcy, in December 2007 many faculty and staff members began work to provide the evidence required in the statement above. A web-site has been created to archive detailed information on the plans and actions that are underway: go to [http://www.ttu.edu/administration/provost/](http://www.ttu.edu/administration/provost/) and then click on “SACS-COC Reaffirmation Update” on the right-hand menu, and then use your e-raider to access the SACS-COC site. Some of the actions that are completed or underway include:
- Establishment of nine faculty teams who were charged with
responsibility to: 1) develop course-level student learning outcomes for each General Education category and Foreign Languages; 2) develop competency statements; 3) develop assessment plans; 4) evaluate assessment findings; 5) make recommendations for improvement to the GEC.

- Adoption by the GEC of the course-level student learning outcomes and GE competency statements.
- Documentation of existing competency-level assessment activities (Graduating Student Survey, Educational Benchmarking, TExCT EC-4, NSSE, CSS, 2004 Core Curriculum Survey, etc.).
- Implementation of further assessment activities (Collegiate Learning Assessment administered in Fall 2007 to freshmen and Spring 2008 to seniors; Online Senior Assessment implemented week of Feb.24th).
- Consultants contracted to assist with response to General Education assessment as well as Quality Enhancement Plan.

- Analysis of software solutions to provide more robust support for documentation of student learning outcomes, assessment findings, and use for improvement.
- Additional resources allocated to academic planning and assessment functions.

We have received input from our SACS-COC representative, Dr. Joseph Silver, which indicates that we are on the right track to resolve this issue that resulted in probation. In terms of long-term improvement, the actions initiated this spring are intended to create institutional effectiveness systems that improve academic planning and assessment, within the General Education curriculum and beyond, so that we are successful in future SACS-COC reaffirmation cycles.

By the end of this spring, hundreds of faculty and staff members and thousands of our seniors will have participated in one or more of the activities cited above. It is my hope that this broad-based participation will accomplish even more than compliance with SACS-COC standards, although that is our central focus at this time. We are working toward a climate of best practices in course-level, program-level and general education assessment. I am thankful for the wonderful support from the Texas Tech community and the significant expertise of our faculty in the area of academic assessment. I anticipate that the result of this process will be that we will be strengthened in our commitment to excellence in teaching and learning, and positioned to share what we have learned through robust research and scholarship about academic planning and assessment.

Tech’s Continuing Focus on Institution-Wide Planning and Assessment

Although Tech failed to satisfy one of the SACS-COC standards in the Principles of Accreditation, the institution was compliant with all other standards. Several of those standards relate directly to strategic planning and assessment. Specifically, SACS-COC Core Requirement 2.5 states that “The institution engages in ongoing, integrated, and institution-wide research-based planning and evaluation processes that (1) incorporate a systematic review of institutional mission, goals, and outcomes; (2) result in continuing improvement in institutional quality; and (3) demonstrate the institution is effectively accomplishing its mission. (Institutional Effectiveness)” Since 2001, the university and all areas and units within the university have
been engaged in planning and assessment. The strategic plans maintained by the areas and units and their annual assessment reports were used in the reaffirmation of accreditation process to document Tech’s compliance with CR 2.5. These two documents provide for effective and efficient planning, data-based resource allocation, and informed decision making to improve our programs and services. The continued and committed use of planning and assessment is central to Tech’s compliance with SACS-COC CR 2.5. All area and unit leaders should seek opportunities to engage faculty, staff, and students in the process of planning and assessment. Figure 1 below on the Levels of Planning and Assessment illustrates the cycle required to be compliant with CR 2.5 and to benefit from our efforts in planning and assessment. See the related article on the planning and assessment cycle in v3, n3 Newsletter (reprinted in v4, n1).

Another SACS-COC standard that relates directly to planning and assessment is the Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1. This standard states “The institution identifies college-level general education competencies and the extent to which graduates have attained them. (College-level competencies)” and is the standard that Tech failed to satisfy, resulting in probation (see article presented earlier in this newsletter on Tech’s response to SACS-COC probation).

Our faculty and academic department chairs worked hard to identify expected learning outcomes for their degree programs in 2005 and in 2006 began reporting the results in their annual assessment reports. This commitment to assessing student learning outcomes was documented in our SACS-COC reaffirmation reports.

SACS-COC accreditation of an institution is based on many standards, both Core Requirements and Comprehensive Standards. Each member of the university community should be aware of which standards address the responsibilities of her/his position or office. It is an individual responsibility to attend to these standards, so that collectively the university can maintain its accreditation and in the future avoid facing probation.

Department directors and chairs should remember that their obligations are to improve the programs and services through planning and assessment. Deans and those in central administration must use the information gained from the annual assessment reports to provide feedback to their units, to make data-based resource allocations, and to use informed decision making to guide their areas and units.

As noted previously, SACS-COC has three based expectations. Those are that the institution:
1. **DOES** planning and assessment;
2. **USES** the results of assessment to improve programs and services; and
3. **DOCUMENTS** the improvements made through the use of planning and assessment.
Preparing and Submitting the 2007 Assessment Reports

As noted on page 1, the unit annual assessment reports are to be submitted (locked) on March 14. **Here are some suggestions for finalizing and submitting the assessment reports.**

- Verify that your unit has its current strategic plan linked to the Strategic Planning and Assessment Report homepage. If it is not linked correctly to this homepage, then follow the steps outlined in the October 2006 (v3, n1) newsletter;
- Use the option to “Add Users” to include others in the preparation and review process;
- Review your strategic plan to confirm that your assessment report includes all goals and benchmarks from the strategic plan;
- Be sure to include in the report significant changes in courses and programs and additions of new faculty and staff that have been made over the past year;
- Document committee work and faculty meetings that used the unit’s strategic plan and assessment reports in making recommendations or decisions that resulted in improvements to programs and services;
- Use the data presented in Sections 2 and/or 3a to engage faculty and staff in discussions about what needs to be done to enhance student learning and improve teaching;
- Include information from the Faculty Annual Reports to help summarize the work of the faculty over the past year (publications,
presentations, editorial appointments, awards, new funding, etc.)

- Distribute the annual assessment report to those in the department prior to submitting the report (ask for their feedback and input);
- Section 4 has been revised based on suggestions and now includes only a Commentary and an Implementation Plan. Both of these sections ask for specific information to be addressed. Be sure to complete both sections and to discuss the required information;
- Prior to submitting the report, verify that all sections have been completed and that the report is an accurate statement of what was accomplished over the previous year and what needs to be done in the future.
- If more time is needed to complete report preparations, the request for an extension should be made to YOUR AREA LEADER (not to the director of strategic planning).
- When submitting (locking) the report, use the e-mail notification step to inform your area leader (dean or VP) that the report is locked and copy others who need to review the final report as well;
- Ask for a meeting with your area leader to review your strategic plan and to gain support for requested resources and guidance on future plans.

What to do after the 2007 assessment report is submitted?

Congratulations, you’ve just submitted your 2007 annual assessment report! So what do you do now? Remember the report was for the year 2007 and this is now Spring Semester 2008! So you should be well on your way to implementing plans and making decisions for the upcoming year.

During the Spring Semester, consider doing the following:
- Hold a faculty/staff retreat to review the annual assessment report and to determine important next steps;
- Have a faculty committee review the student learning assessment outcomes and make recommendations for improving courses and programs (recommendations are to be presented for faculty consideration and approval, if appropriate);
- Allocate available resources to support programs and services needing improvement;
- Seek strategies to further advance the unit’s mission and vision;

During the Fall Semester, consider doing the following:
- Prior to the start of the semester, schedule a faculty/staff meeting to focus on the objectives and strategies that will be used during the coming year to work toward achieving your strategic goals;
- Assign individuals and committees to address specific issues related to the strategic plan and the implementation plan from the 2007 assessment report;
- Inform your area leader of the work you are doing related to planning and assessment;
- Ask for support (resources) needed to move ahead from appropriate sources;
- Keep faculty, staff, students, alumni, and others informed of the work being done related to the strategic plans and highlight successes;
• Use the strategic goals and specific objectives in setting the agenda for departmental meetings;
• Make decisions and allocate departmental resources that are consistent with the strategic plan and the implementation plan from the previous year’s assessment report.

Preparing and submitting the annual assessment reports are required tasks but the most critical requirement is using the planning and assessment process to improve our programs and services and to achieve our strategic goals.

Planning and Assessment Liaisons – Area Level Representatives

During the Fall Semester 2007, Area Leaders were asked to assign a Planning and Assessment Liaison (PAL). The purpose of the PAL is to provide an avenue for direct communication with someone at the area level who is knowledgeable about the university’s planning and assessment responsibilities, policies, and processes and who will be able to provide guidance to others with each area (i.e., the unit leaders, faculty and staff). The PAL facilitates the planning and assessment within the area and its units and provides oversight to ensure that university policies and SACS-COC standards are satisfied.

Outcomes Assessment of student learning is one part of the planning cycle:

**PLANNING**
Program Purpose and Goals
**IMPLEMENTING**
Program courses
**ASSESSING**
Student Learning
**REVISING/UPDATING**

Program goals and courses In most cases, the revisions involve changes to the courses and curriculum to achieve the intended purposes and goals. The strategic planning and annual assessment reporting allows academic departments to report outcomes assessments. The specific measures to be used for assessment of student learning should be identified and reported in Sections 3.a and 3.b of the department’s annual assessment report. These data are discussed in the Commentary and needed changes are indicated in the Implementation Plan in Section 4. Improvements are documented in the Goals and Accomplishments in Section 1. See these Strategic Planning and Assessment Newsletters for additional information:
January 2005 v1, n2; October 2005 v2, n1; October 2006 v3, n1; February 2007, v3, n1.

QUESTIONS? Contact Dr. Gil Reeve, Director of Strategic Planning (742-2121; Gilmour.Reeve@ttu.edu)

In the Spring Semester 2009, as you prepare the 2008 Annual Assessment Report, you should be certain to include the meetings held, the committee recommendations, and the work of individuals in the department that supported and advanced the department’s strategic plan. That is, don’t just provide the data but also describe the actions that the department has taken to achieve its strategic goals and to improve student learning outcomes.

Remember that the Annual Assessment Reports become the archives for what was done each year relative to planning and assessment. When SACS-COC requests evidence of planning and assessment, what is included in the annual assessment reports will be used to document each department’s engagement in planning and assessment to improve programs and services.