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

Contents:
- Program-level Assessment of Student Learning: Moving Beyond the Assessment Plans
- SACS Accreditation: Continuing Compliance with SACS Criteria
- Updating the Area and Unit Strategic Plans: Guidelines
- Area-Level Dashboards: Creating a Dashboard Based on the Annual Assessment Report

PROGRAM-LEVEL ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING: MOVING BEYOND THE ASSESSMENT PLANS

In December 2005, all academic departments submitted program-level assessment plans to their Academic Deans. Each Dean verified to the Provost that program plans had been received from all degree programs within the College.

Department chairs were instructed to begin to report the assessment data compiled from their degree programs with the understanding that not all planned assessments would be conducted during the first round of assessments. However, departments must fully report the results of their assessment of student learning in the 2006 Annual Assessment Reports and to indicate how those results are used to improve instructional delivery and student learning.

The February 2006 Strategic Planning and Assessment Newsletter (V2, N2) provided instructions for including the outcomes assessment in the annual departmental assessment report.

The use of these assessment results to improve student learning is the primary responsibility of the faculty (see OP 10.13). Often faculty and administrators discover obstacles in moving from outcomes assessment planning to data collection and analysis. One obstacle is that the assessment plan indicates what data will be used in the assessment but does not clearly specify how, when, and by whom the data will be collected and analyzed.

In other words, the need exists to move beyond the plan to the actual data collection and to do so requires, well, some more planning!

The next step for departments is to specify the “how, when and who” necessary to ensure that the data are collected and analyzed. Several departments and colleges have already taken this next step but not all have done so.

The College of Education, as part of its focus on NCATE Accreditation, developed a template to help degree programs define the process by which each of the assessment measures would be collected. Attached to this newsletter (see page 7) is a similar template that has been adapted from the one used by the College of Education. Obviously, each department could develop its own template to help specify how the data will be collected.

Suggestions for implementing the Program-Level Assessment in the Academic Departments:
- Develop a process that allows for the collection of the assessment data

STRATEGIC PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT NEWSLETTER
required for the outcomes assessment of student learning.

- Hold a faculty meeting or retreat to focus discussion on program-level assessment of student learning.
- Based on available data, begin discussions among faculty on how to improve student learning (improving student attainment of learning objectives for programs).
- When appropriate, submit program and course changes and document these changes in the annual assessment reports.

Some faculty and departmental administrators wait for a “response” from above to use their outcomes assessment plans. However, because student learning is the responsibility of the faculty, the assessment of student learning must occur at the departmental (or program) level. That is, if the assessments are to be done and the results are to be used, then they must occur within the department.

Department chairs must take the initiative to ensure that outcomes assessments of student learning are conducted within their departments and the results are reported appropriately in the annual assessment reports.

**Academic Deans are responsible for verifying** that their departments are fully engaged in the assessment of student learning in their academic degree programs.

**SACS ACCREDITATION: CONTINUING COMPLIANCE WITH SACS CRITERIA**

In December 2005, the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) reaffirmed regional accreditation for Texas Tech University. This reaffirmation of accreditation was based in part on Tech’s compliance with the SACS Principles of Accreditation. SACS accreditation is paramount in terms of accreditation because accreditation:

- Allows our students to graduate from an accredited institution;
- Ensures federal funding sources;
- And allows our academic programs to be accredited by other external agencies.

Although Tech’s accreditation was reaffirmed by SACS, we are required to stay in compliance with all SACS standards and to monitor specific activities to continue to demonstrate our compliance. Specifically, we have been requested by SACS to provide evidence that we are engaged in an ongoing process of planning and assessment and that we can demonstrate that we are using the results of our assessments to improve the institution and our students’ learning.

There are four areas of primary concern for SACS. These areas are:

- Assessment of our quality enhancement plan (Tech’s Ethics Initiative)
- Institutional Effectiveness: Using planning and assessment in decision making for all areas and units.
- Assessment of learning outcomes for all degree programs and demonstration of how assessments have been used to improve student learning.
- Assessment of college-level competencies in the general education program.

Each of these concerns will require regular reporting to SACS in which we provide specific evidence that we are engaged in ongoing planning and assessment for the purpose of improving our programs and services.
This summer all areas and units will be asked to provide specific examples of how assessment outcomes have been used to improve programs and services.

As noted in previous newsletters, there are three aspects to these SACS standards:
1. We must have a process of planning and assessment,
2. We must use the results from the assessments;
3. And we must document the improvements we have made based on planning and assessment.

UPDATING THE AREA AND UNIT STRATEGIC PLANS

Area and units are to revise their strategic plans and to post the updated plans on their Web sites, with links to the Strategic Planning and Assessment Report Homepage. The February 2006 Newsletter (V2, N2) provided guidelines for focusing and updating the strategic plans. The guidelines and revised University Strategic Plan also are attached to this document (see pages 4-6).

AREA LEVEL DASHBOARD:
A NEW FEATURE FOR THIS YEAR
(Reprinted from February 2006 Newsletter.)

This year when area leaders lock (submit) their annual assessment reports a new menu will appear on their screens. The menu will only be available when an area’s assessment report is locked. The menu will provide the information and options needed for each area to develop its own dashboard (similar to Tech’s state accountability dashboard; see http://techdata.irs.ttu.edu/statreport/index.asp). The dashboard will provide a visual display of the primary quantitative measures from the annual assessment report. The programming allows goals to be identified and measures (benchmarks) to be selected for each goal. The dashboard will show the most recent values for the benchmark and a colored arrow indicating whether the data has moved up or down and whether the direction of the change was positive or negative (toward or away from the desired target value) for that benchmark. The dashboard will allow one to “drill” the data base to see a 6-year graph of performance on the benchmark. For a measure to be in the dashboard it must be in Section 2 or 3a of the annual assessment report.

Additional instructions will be provided for preparing the dashboards, once areas lock their annual assessment reports.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT

The Strategic Planning and Assessment Reports homepage provides additional resources for those engaged with planning and assessment. The “Related Links” menu on the homepage includes the following sources of information:

- Planning and Assessment at Other Universities
- Outcomes Assessment Resources (including previous assessment workshops)
- Presentations on Planning and Assessment

THE BOTTOM LINE

Texas Tech University will continue to be engaged in planning and assessment for the purpose of improving programs and services. These efforts and the results that occur must be documented. Vice Presidents, Deans, Department Chairs and Directors are responsible for ensuring that their areas and units are fully participating in planning and assessment.
GUIDELINES FOR UPDATING AND FOCUSING STRATEGIC PLANS FOR AREAS AND UNITS

The University Strategic Plan has been revised to better focus the plan. In revising the University Strategic Plan, the total number of goals has been reduced from 9 to 7 and broader statements have been added to organize the goals around strategic priorities.

All areas and units (including departments, centers, and institutes) are asked to revise and update their strategic plans. The strategic plans should be aligned with the university priorities/goals when appropriate but more importantly the strategic plans for the areas and units must reflect the critical goals for the individual areas/units. That is, each area or unit strategic plan must represent the mission and vision for that area/unit.

For the area and unit strategic plans, the following outline should be followed:

**Mission** – a statement of the key functions or purposes of the area or unit.

**Vision** – a statement of what the area or unit wants to achieve in the near future (usually a 5-year time period). The vision should indicate a level of achievement or recognition based on the mission of the area or unit.

**Core Values** – those characteristics that serve as the foundation upon which the area or unit will operate. Values include such characteristics as honesty, support of diversity, academic freedom. In most cases, areas and units will not need to revise their mission and vision statements, nor their core values.

**Strategic Goals** – statements that advance the area/unit to fulfill its mission and achieve its vision.

**Benchmarks** - measures of the degree of success in achieving each goal over the next 5 years. Benchmarks are measurable, specific indicators of performance for each goal. There should be multiple benchmarks for each goal.

**Objectives** – focused statements to address a specific benchmark in each goal. Objectives support the work toward the benchmarks.

**Strategies** – statements of actions to achieve objectives

The above outline differs from the 2001 strategic plans in two ways:

1. The term Benchmarks is now used rather than Critical Success Factors, although the intent of the new term is the same as the former phrase;
2. The “Assessments” that were included with each Objective have been deleted. The Objectives focus on the Benchmarks and different measures within each Objective are not necessary.

**Suggestions** for revising area and unit strategic plans:

1. Align the area and unit strategic plan with the university strategic goals to the extent that such an alignment is consistent with the mission and vision of the area or unit.
2. Be sure to include the important goals that advance the area/unit toward its vision.
3. The goals do not need to address policy, procedures, or area/unit normal operations as these should be addressed in other documents (OPs, operational handbooks, etc.)
4. Keep the number of goals limited to those most critical to achieving area/unit’s vision. Goals can be updated as situations demand. Keep the strategic plan manageable.
5. Use only benchmarks that are clearly measurable (quantitative or qualitative measures may be used) and directly relate to the goal.
6. Program-level assessment of student learning must be addressed in the annual assessment reports and should be reflected in the academic colleges and departments as appropriate. Goals related to the undergraduate and graduate educational experiences can capture the program-level assessments (course-level outcomes and assessments are not included).
7. Engage faculty, staff, and students in the revision of strategic plans.

Resources are available on the Strategic Planning and Assessment Reports homepage.

http://techdata.irs.ttu.edu/stratreport/index.asp

Please contact Dr. T. Gilmour Reeve, Director of Strategic Planning (742-2121; Gilmour.Reeve@ttu.edu) for additional information or questions about revising the area and unit strategic plans.
MISSION STATEMENT

Committed to teaching and the advancement of knowledge, Texas Tech University, a comprehensive public research university, provides the highest standards of excellence in higher education, fosters intellectual and personal development, and stimulates meaningful research and service to humankind.

VISION STATEMENT

Texas Tech University will be a national leader in higher education—manifesting excellence, embracing diversity, inspiring confidence, and engaging society. The university aspires to a national recognition of excellence and performance in scholarship through teaching, research, and service.

Texas Tech University will
- be recognized as one of the top public educational and research universities in the United States, attracting the best students, faculty, and staff;
- prepare students to be leaders and decision makers, articulate and principled, innovative and confident, and able to think critically with sound reasoning ability;
- be a research-intensive institution where faculty discovery enhances learning and prepares students to compete in a knowledge-based society; and
- be engaged in local, regional, and state social and economic development for the benefit of both the public and private sectors.

Texas Tech University is committed to the values of
- mutual respect;
- cooperation and communication;
- creativity and innovation;
- community service and leadership;
- academic and intellectual freedom;
- pursuit of excellence;
- public accountability; and
- diversity.
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND GOALS

INVEST IN THE PEOPLE OF TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

Access and Diversity: Recruit, retain, and graduate a larger, more academically prepared, and more diverse student body.

Human Resources and Infrastructure: Increase and use resources to recruit and retain quality faculty and staff and to support an optimal work environment.

ENRICH THE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Undergraduate Teaching and Learning: Provide nationally recognized instruction in our undergraduate programs.

Graduate and Professional Education: Enhance graduate and professional education opportunities.

Engagement: Provide scholarly outreach opportunities that contribute to students’ learning and that benefit our communities, the state, and nation.

ADVANCE RESEARCH AND CREATIVE ENDEAVORS

Research Productivity: Increase research productivity and funding for all areas of inquiry within the university.

STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships: Build strategic partnerships and alliances with community, government, business, industry, and schools (K-12, community colleges, and universities).

Note: Texas Tech initiated its current strategic planning effort in December 2001 when the Board of Regents approved the university plan. Over the past 4 years, Tech has conducted annual assessments for the university, and all areas and units based on the strategic plans. Benchmarks are used to measure the progress toward each goal. Benchmarks for the 2005 strategic plan are being reviewed and will be included with the plan when finalized. Additional information is available at http://techdata.irs.ttu.edu/stratreport/.
# ASSESSING STUDENT LEARNING IN DEGREE PROGRAMS

## TEMPLATE FOR IMPLEMENTING THE PROGRAM ASSESSMENT PLAN

**PROGRAM TITLE:**

**PURPOSE OF PROGRAM:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Expected Learning Outcomes from Program Assessment Plan</th>
<th>Methods of Assessment from Program Assessment Plan</th>
<th>Who Collects Data and When are Data Collected</th>
<th>Who Analyzes Data</th>
<th>How Will Data Be Used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>