Tulane University SACS Accreditation Re-Affirmation

Staff Information Sessions
Spring, 2009
What is SACS?

- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
- Accrediting body in the eleven U.S. Southern states
- Commission Colleges
  - Performs the accreditation process for SACS
- Level refers to the highest degree offered by an institution.
  - Level I - Associate Degree
  - Level II - Baccalaureate Degree
  - Level III - Master's Degree,
  - Level IV - Master's Degree and Education Specialist Degree
  - Level V - 3 or fewer Doctoral Degrees
  - Level VI - 4 or more Doctoral Degrees
Basic Components of Accreditation Process

- Compliance Certification
  - Institutional Effectiveness
  - Faculty Credentialing
- Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) *The Big Idea*
  - New initiative
  - Student learning focus
- Off-Site Review Committee
  - Reviews Compliance Certification Documents
- On-Site Review Team
  - Reviews QEP
  - Reviews responses to Off-Site comments
  - Reviews Institutional Effectiveness
Tulane's Abbreviated SACS Timeline

- “Re-Affirmation” occurs every ten years; last was in 2001
- **September 2010**
  - Compliance Certification documentation submitted
- **November 2010**
  - COC Off-Site Committee reviews Compliance documents
- **December 2010**
  - Off-Site Committee reports findings to Tulane
- **January 2011**
  - QEP, Focused Report submitted
- **March 2011**
  - COC On-Site Committee visits
- **Fall 2011**
  - Recommendations, responses
SACS Institutional Effectiveness

3.3.1 The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results in each of the following areas:

- 3.3.1.1 educational programs, to include student learning outcomes
- 3.3.1.2 administrative support services
- 3.3.1.3 educational support services
- 3.3.1.4 research within its educational mission, if appropriate
- 3.3.1.5 community/public service within its educational mission, if appropriate
What does this mean?

Every “unit” at the university must have a mission statement, identified outcomes, a plan to assess those outcomes, and a way of using the results of assessment practices to improve effectiveness.
Assessment in a Nutshell

• DEFINE A MISSION FOR YOUR UNIT
  • How does your work help the university achieve its mission?

• DEVELOP OUTCOMES
  • What is the desired end result of your activities as an office?

• LINK PROGRAMS/ACTIVITY TO OUTCOMES
  • What do you do to achieve those outcomes?

• ASSESS PROGRESS
  • How will you measure your progress toward outcomes?

• USE RESULTS
  • How will you use the results of this evaluation to improve effectiveness?
Define the mission of your unit

- The foundation for assessment planning
- Describes the purpose of the unit
- Reflects the mission of the overall program and the university
- Should be not more than three or four lines
- Should clearly and effectively communicate **WHAT** you do, **WHY** you do it, and **HOW** you do it
Tulane's purpose is to create, communicate and conserve knowledge in order to enrich the capacity of individuals, organizations and communities to think, to learn and to act and lead with integrity and wisdom.

Tulane pursues this mission by cultivating an environment that focuses on learning and the generation of new knowledge; by expecting and rewarding teaching and research of extraordinarily high quality and impact; and by fostering community-building initiatives as well as scientific, cultural and social understanding that integrate with and strengthen learning and research. This mission is pursued in the context of the unique qualities of our location in New Orleans and our continual aspiration to be a truly distinctive international university.
1. The Main Library
   - To develop, maintain and enhance the resources, services, and environment necessary to provide the highest level of support for the instructional and research needs of the Tulane community.

2. The Writing Center
   - The Writing Center is committed to developing students’ communication abilities by providing services to enhance critical thinking, presentation, and writing skills for both graduates and undergraduates in all disciplines. As a function of this mission, we support the efforts faculty in all disciplines.
Developing Outcomes

- A specific statement describing the benefit a department hopes to achieve or the impact on a “customer” or the institution that is a result of the work that your unit performs.
  - Should be challenging but attainable.

- **Identify at least one outcome for each of its functional responsibilities.**
Hints for writing outcomes

1. Begin the outcome statement with the beneficiary of the service you provide: “Students are aware of...,” “Administrators have the...,”
2. Focus on the ends, not the means -- what the desired “end state” should be.
3. An outcome should be stable over a number of years, not time dependent. If it is time dependent, you are probably writing an objective rather than an outcome.
4. Outcomes need to be measurable and related directly to the work of your department.
5. List only key outcomes – between three and five is ideal.
Outcomes Examples

- “Prospective applicants will meet a welcoming and informative environment when they enquire about enrollment.”
- “Evaluation and testing of the English language proficiency of incoming students will be timely and accurate.”
- “Library patrons have access to the appropriate information resources needed for learning and research.”
- “Users will receive prompt assistance to resolve technical problems related to university networking services.”
- “Faculty, staff, and students will be able to identify EO/AA laws, policies, and procedures and know how and from where to seek assistance.”
More Outcomes Examples

- “Eligible employees have the information they need to make appropriate decisions regarding employee benefits packages.”
- “The university’s senior administrators have the information they need for decision-making related to budgets and financial planning.”
- “Students will be able to write an effective resume.”
- “Faculty members effectively use technology to promote student learning.”
- “All inquiries from the news media will be answered in a timely and appropriate manner.”
Define how you will assess progress towards these outcomes

- Assessments don’t have to be complicated
  - can be a powerful tool for improvement, providing better information for planning, budgeting, new programs, staffing, and student support.

- Assessment data help us understand
  - where the unit is in progress towards expected outcomes
  - where we might be having difficulty,
  - how we might change the way we work to improve our effectiveness.

- Assessment is not a performance evaluation of individual staff members
Defining Assessment Methods

- Take an inventory of the kinds of tools your unit is already using
  - What information are you already collecting?
  - What kinds of assessments are you already using or are already familiar with?
  - What kinds of assessments are recommended by your profession?
- For each outcome, describe methods to measure how well your department or unit is actually performing in relation to the outcome.
- Assessment measures can be direct or indirect, qualitative or quantitative, objective or subjective
  - more than one measure should be used for each outcome.
- An assessment measure can also be used to assess progress towards more than one outcome.
Examples of Assessment Instruments

- Student satisfaction surveys
- Number of complaints
- Count of program participants
- Growth in participation
- Average wait time
- Comparisons to professional organizations’ best practices
- Statistical reports
- Average service time
- Staff training hours

- Number of applications
- Processing time for requests
- Number of users
- Focus groups
- Opinion surveys
- External review
- Number of staff trained
- Dollars raised
- Attendance at events
- Student participation statistics
Complete the assessment plan

- Not all outcomes need to be assessed – only those that are the most important.
- Three to five is manageable
- Not all outcomes must be assessed each year
  - Units can schedule assessment cycles over several years
Tulane University
Unit Outcomes Assessment Plan

Degree/Unit:
Assessment Coordinator:  
Name:  
Phone:  
Email:  
Date Submitted:  

Mission Statement:  

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<tr>
<th>Outcomes (Add lines as needed)</th>
<th>Assessment Methods and Procedures</th>
<th>Targets/Benchmarks</th>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Planned/Actual Improvements Based on Assessment Results</th>
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<td>1 Something the department or unit wants to achieve; desired end results for the organization or program, rather than actions 3-5 ideal, maximum 10.</td>
<td>What factors, variables, or elements will you measure to gauge your success at reaching your expected outcome?</td>
<td>For each of these indicators, what is the minimum result, target, benchmark, or value that will represent success at achieving this outcome?</td>
<td>How will you use results for planning, improvements, and decision making?</td>
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Conduct Assessment and Review Results

- Carry out the assessment
- Collect, analyze, communicate, and report on your findings.
- Results should be used
  - in preparation of departmental budgets and changes to long-range plans
  - to review and adjust the department’s assessment plans
  - to ensure that the highest quality information is available to assist the department in meeting its expected outcomes.
Take action based on those findings

- Use results to improve effectiveness and inform decision-making and resource allocation
- How do the results of the assessment meet the expectations of the outcomes?
- Keep track of planned changes, those changes that have already been carried out in response to assessment results, and the impact those changes had on performance and effectiveness.

»Annual Report to Supervisor
Start the process all over again...

- The goal is continuous quality improvement
- Assessment results are important evidence upon which to base requests for additional funding, new staff lines, and more
- Even negative assessment results can have powerful, positive impact when they are used to improve performance, effectiveness, and ultimately, the university’s ability to achieve its mission
Questions?

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