Annual Assessment Reporting Manual
Administrative Units

Revised March 2017

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Background

<u>Regional Governance</u>

In the early 1980s, a reform of higher education was initiated by the federal government. From that point forward, regional accrediting agencies would be required to measure the effectiveness of institutions.

The regional accrediting agency responsible for setting standards for Auburn University at Montgomery (AUM) is The Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools – Commision on Colleges (SACS-COC). According to the commission, the "mission is the enhancement of educational quality throughout the region and it strives to improve the effectiveness of institutions by ensuring that institutions meet standards established by the higher education community that address the needs of society and students," (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, 2011). A core of the SACS philosophy is that each institution should be "engaged in an ongoing program of improvement and be able to demonstrate how well it fulfills its stated mission," and should engage in "continuous assessment and improvement." (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, 2011). Requirements 2.5 and 3.3 as described by SACS explains in detail the expectations for demonstration of "Institutional Effectiveness" (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, 2012).

SACS website is http://sacscoc.org/. Accreditation standards can be found at http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/Resource%20Manual.pdf.

<u>State Governance</u>

At the state level, the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) practices governance over some aspects of the Institution. One of the reasons of this governance is to ensure that taxpayers are afforded evidence of accountability. ACHE emphasizes the use of assessment results to improve services (Alabama Commission on Higher Education, 2001).

ACHE's website is http://www.ache.state.al.us/.

Institutional Governance

Mission Statement

The mission of Auburn University at Montgomery is to provide quality and diverse educational opportunities at the undergraduate and graduate levels through the use of traditional and electronic delivery systems, and to foster and support an environment conducive to teaching, research, scholarship, and collaboration with government agencies, our community, and other educational institutions.

Core Values

Auburn University at Montgomery values and promotes:

• a Student-Centered Experience,
• Citizenship & Community Engagement,
• Excellence as Our Standard,
• Commitment to Constant Improvement,
• Diversity of People & Perspective with a Culture of Inclusiveness,
• Lifelong Learning, and an
• Environment of Collaboration

Vision 2018

Auburn University at Montgomery will become a university that…

• Is known for its commitment to developing dynamic and applied academic and research programs.
• Is a student's first choice in a variety of programs of distinction.
• Embraces and builds an international presence at home and abroad and is increasingly known for its ability to prepare students to thrive in a global community.
• Graduates students who become engaged alumni with a life-long interest in and personal connection to AUM.
• Is recognized as an integral community partner and a resource for the enrichment and economic development of the Southeast region and beyond.

 An updated strategic plan was approved by the Board of Trustees in 2013. The Strategic Plan can be found at http://www.aum.edu/docs/default-source/university-policy/final-strategic-plan---strategies-only---september-2013.pdf?sfvrsn=0.

Assessment Activities

<u>Process</u>

Primarily, assessment consists of several parts: planning, measurement, the interpretation of results, and adjustments made after interpretation. It is a continuous process with the most important part being the "closing of the loop".

Develop **GOALS** using baseline data for next year.

CRITERIA: Develop ways to measure success for each goal.

Gather evidence based on **EXPECTED OUTCOMES.** Measure **RESULTS**.

Interpret results.

CLOSE THE LOOP: Use results to make changes.

Each unit should review or develop a mission statement for their area that supports their department's mission and the university's mission. The mission statement will briefly summarize what the unit does.

Mission Statement	
☑ Brief	⊗ Rambling
☑ Focused	⊗ Broad
☑ Justifies existence	⊗ Does not describe reason for being
☑ Describes goals	⊗ Not goal oriented
☑ Reinforces department mission	⊗ Does not support department mission
☑ Reinforces AUM mission	⊗ Does not support AUM mission

The AUM Mission Statement: The mission of Auburn University at Montgomery is to provide quality and diverse educational opportunities at the undergraduate and graduate levels through use of traditional and electronic delivery systems, and to foster and support an environment conducive to teaching, research, scholarship, and collaboration with government agencies, our community, and other educational institutions.

Development of Goals

Administrative units must measure Operational/Administrative Process goals each year. They must have clear criteria set to demonstrate success.

- **Operational/Administrative Process goals** are those measuring administrative operations or student services provided by the unit. Examples include:
    - Assessment of advising effectiveness
    - Plans to staff adequate faculty and support personnel
    - Fund-raising activities and goals

Operational/Administrative Process Goal Statement	
☑ **S**pecific – describes the process exactly	⊗ Vague – does not describe the process
☑ **M**easurable	⊗ Not measurable
☑ **A**ttainable	⊗ Difficult to attain
☑ **R**esults-oriented –information for decision-making	⊗ Does not provide information for decision-making
☑ **T**ime-bound	⊗ Not time-bound
☑ Improvable	⊗ Not improvable
☑ Identifies assessment tools	⊗ Assessment tools not identified
☑ Describes/explains technical language	⊗ Does not describe/explain technical language
☑ **Includes data-supported justification for the goal**	⊗ **Does not include data-supported justification**

Example: As a result of earning a score of 3.46 out of 5.0 on effectiveness in the Employee Satisfaction Survey, in 2016 Human Resources will create newsletters that will provide information about unit operations and opportunities for employee professional development. An edition will be delivered electronically during the fall and spring semesters. Each employee will receive an e-mail announcement when the newsletter becomes available.

Intended Results

An intended result describes exactly what is expected if the outcome is met.

Measurement

All intended results must be measurable. Methods of measurement will depend on the nature of what is being assessed. Ideally, direct methods will be used to measure results and when possible, multiple assessment method should be used to measure results for each outcome.

- Direct measures include:
    - Promotional/marketing materials
    - Attendance at event
    - Changed activity level (such as fewer complaints, increased visits by students, etc.)
    - Increased physical resources
    - Increased human resources

- Indirect measures include:
    - Self-reported data, from instruments such as:
        - Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory
        - National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)
        - Graduating Senior Survey
        - Alumni Survey
    - Focus group feedback

Criteria

Criteria should be set to indicate when a goal is being met or when change is indicated.

Criteria	
☑ Describes satisfactory results	⊗ Does not set a threshold for satisfactory results
☑ Be reasonable but challenging	⊗ Not reasonable and/or challenging
☑ Be data (numbers) based	⊗ Not data (numbers) based

Example: It is expected that Human Resources will prepare two electronic newsletters each year. One newsletter will be delivered to employees in the fall semester, and one will be delivered in the spring semester.

<u>Documenting Results and "Closing the Loop"</u>

After goals are measured, programs must document the results and use them to make decisions about how to create improvement.

Results describe what actually occurred. There are two parts that should be included to explain results:

> 1) Degree to which success was achieved. For example, a scale can be used such as:
>
> Not at all achieved
> Minimally achieved
> Adequately achieved
>
> 2) Specific **evidence** of what actually occurred. *Concrete* outcomes should be described. This includes survey results, scores, or records. The actual result should show performance related to the target that was set. Include any exhibits to support the evidence.

Results	
☑ Related to criteria	⊗ Not related to criteria
☑ Indicates how well expectations were met	⊗ Does not indicate how well expectations were met
☑ Describes what was learned that will be useful for decision-making	⊗ Does not describe what was learned that will be useful for decision-making
☑ Clear/succinct	⊗ Not clear

Example: In 2016, Human Resources met this goal and developed and delivered two newsletters to employees. Each newsletter included information about who should be contacted for what responsibilities in the office, recent news about changes in Human Resource office processes, and details about opportunities for employee professional development. As a result, we received a 4.29 in effectiveness on the annual Employee Satisfaction Survey.

The assessment process is not completed unless decisions are made from what is learned from results. To **close the loop**, assessors should set future goals specifying changes that will be made because of what was learned from the assessment.

Units should always strive to improve. Therefore, it is not good assessment practice to measure the same outcomes every year if all of the targets are consistently being met. It is expected that either targets should be re-evaluated to determine if they are appropriately rigorous or that new goals will be set.

Close the Loop	
☑ Describes changes that will be made based on results • Changes in processes • Changes in expectations	⊗ No changes or no justification why no change is needed
☑ Addresses any gaps in expectations and actual performance	⊗ Does not address gaps in expectations and actual performance
☑ Demonstrates a commitment to continuous improvement	⊗ Does not demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement

Example: In 2016, Human Resources will continue to develop and distribute a newsletter in the fall semester and spring semester. Additional material will be included in each edition about how employees can best prepare for retirement.

*Note: All examples are created for the purposes of illustrating good practices. They do not necessarily reflect actual goals and outcomes set by AUM units.

<u>Timeline</u>

August/September –Administrative departments/units are expected to set goal by the beginning of the annual academic year (August). Results can be measured using the annual calendar year, the academic year, or the fiscal year. Regardless of the calendar used for measurement, results must be reported by the end of the annual academic year (by the end of July).

Assessment is 100% mandatory.

<u>Administrative Assessment Committee</u>

AUM has an Administrative Assessment Committee with members who are available to provide assistance with assessment activities. For more information about how to contact representatives, call the Office of Institutional Effectiveness at 334-244-3732.

References

Alabama Commission on Higher Education. (2001). Proposal for a new baccalaureate degree program. Retrieved from http://www.ache.state.al.us/Content/Departments/Instruction/Instruction.aspx.

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools – Commission on Colleges. (2011). *Handbook for Institutions seeking reaffirmation*. Retrieved from http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/Handbook%20for%20Institutions%20seeking%20reaffirmation.pdf

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Contact

Justin Chandler
Associate Director
334-244-3918
jchandl7@aum.edu