

Purpose of Guidelines

As an outcome of our reaccreditation visit by the Higher Learning Commission in 2013, the College has made substantial efforts to strengthen its assessment, not only in academic and student affairs, but also with respect to its institutional processes. Our aim is to create a culture of assessment where self-evaluation and improvement is an essential and systematic part of our operations.

As members of the institution's Shared Governance structure, it is essential that each of our committees contributes to this goal through annual assessments. The College Council is issuing these guidelines to help committee members create meaningful assessments that inform committee work and drive improvement.

We believe that assessments can be impactful and worthwhile without being burdensome. Our goal is to keep the elements of assessment simple and streamlined, while allowing committees the flexibility to structure assessments in ways that are most useful to its members and function.

Recommended Components of Assessment

1. **Mission/Purpose Statement**

Reiterating the committee's mission/purpose statement at the top of the assessment document serves two purposes. First, it provides context for a reader/reviewer of the document who may not be familiar with the committee's overall purpose. Second, it allows for an annual review of the statement by the committee to ensure that the statement does not become outdated over time.

Timing: *It is recommended that committees review their mission/purpose statements at their first meeting of the fall semester.*

2. **Academic Year Goals**

Providing a clear statement of the committee's goals for the year is essential to conducting a meaningful assessment at the end of year. Without clearly established goals, the committee will have no ability to measure its work against any desired outcomes.

It is recommended that committees review their assessment from the prior spring (particularly the changes/improvements section) when setting their goals for the new academic year. Using our assessment results to inform our current actions is an important part of "closing the loop" on our assessments.

Timing: *It is recommended that committees set their annual goals at their first meeting of the fall semester.*

3. **Analyzing Results**

At the conclusion of the academic year, committee member should reflect upon their goals for the year and conduct an honest assessment of the committee's work.

Using data or evidence to support the committee's analysis: This does not need to be complicated or scary. In most cases, the evidence or data you need will be fairly straight forward. For example, if the committee's goal is to increase student participation in a given activity, how many students participated this year in comparison to the year prior? If the goal is support a particular action item in the strategic plan, how many meetings did the action champion attend and discuss the action? If the committee is unsure about what data to use to support its analysis or how to obtain the data, the Director of Planning and Accreditation and the research department are available to help support all assessment efforts.

Assessments are not evaluations. Committees may not achieve all of the goals they intend at the start of the year – and that is just fine! The goal of assessment is for committees to learn what is working and what is not working, and to make changes in the coming year based on those results. If we accomplish everything we intend all the time, we will not learn anything new. It's important that we embrace honest assessment so that we can improve.

Timing: *It is recommended that committees analyze their results at the last or second to last meeting of the spring semester.*

4. **Areas of Change/Improvement to Consider for Next Academic Year**

After analyzing the results of the committee's work, use that information to consider what areas the committee should change, improve, or focus on in the next academic year. This brief articulation of ideas is the first step towards "closing the loop" on our committee assessments. This process is later completed when committees use these ideas to help set their annual goals for the coming year.

Timing: *It is recommended that committees articulate potential areas of change/improvement at the last or second to last meeting of the spring semester.*

Documenting Assessment

To maintain evidence of our assessment efforts for our accreditation reviews, the College Council will require each committee to submit written documentation of their annual assessment.

As resources, attached are two documents: a sample assessment and a basic assessment template. Use of the template is not required. It is provided as a resource for committees who wish to use it. Committees may use whatever format they prefer for their assessment record; however, it is strongly encouraged that committees include all four components noted above to ensure proper documentation of meaningful assessment.

College Council Purpose Statement:

The College Council is an advisory body on college-wide initiatives charged with the following responsibilities: advising the President on institutional matters by providing multiple viewpoints; serving as the Steering Committee for both the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Report and for Strategic Planning; monitoring the progress of the Operational Assembly, Academic Senate, and President's Cabinet on the Strategic Plan; providing guidance to the various leadership bodies within the Governance Structure on accreditation matters; facilitating communication on institutional matters across its represented employee groups

What were College Council's Goals for the FY2015 Academic Year?

1. Oversight

In addition to its own participation as outlined in the Shared Governance model, the Council will provide oversight, ensuring the new model is working as planned. The Council will also continue to provide oversight for both the Strategic Plan, and for the completion of monitoring report #1 for the HLC.

2. Communication

The Council will develop an integrated communication plan with the goals of engaging and educating employees about the shared governance process and flow, the new Shared Governance structure, and the activities of the Council.

3. Assessment

The Council will ensure that all groups included in the shared governance structure are assessing their work. In addition, the Council will develop a model to assess its own progress.

What were College Council's Results for the FY2015 Academic Year?

1. Oversight

Shared Governance – College Council oversaw the shared governance model by engaging in frequent discussions regarding the new model and making efforts to remedy problems as they arose during its first year of operation. The Council discussed shared governance and/or the new shared governance model at 75% (9 of 12) College Council meetings in FY2015 fall. Additionally, the Council assessed the model's performance mid-year with a committee chairperson questionnaire and made changes at the start of the spring semester that were designed to address problems identified in the fall. Council members agree that the model is still young and will require continued oversight to ensure that it grows into a strong shared governance committee.

Evidence:

- *College Council Meeting Minutes, FY2015*
- *Committee Chair Questionnaire Results Summary*

Strategic Planning and Higher Learning Commission –College Council engaged in discussion regarding the strategic plan at 100% (12 of 12) of College Council meetings in FY2015. The Council engaged in discussion regarding the HLC at 50% (6 of 12) of College Council meetings in FY2015. Council members agree that its focus on the strategic plan and HLC has supported the institution's

overall planning and governance efforts and focused the College Council on matters of import to the institution. However, College Council survey results also indicate that information regarding the strategic plan and HLC did not always reach the larger college community. Nearly 80% of respondents were not able to identify the year of our next HLC visit, and at least 32% of respondents were unable to identify all three focus areas within the institution's strategic plan. These results indicate that the Council may need to consider targeted communication efforts for information to permeate the college community more broadly.

Evidence:

- *College Council Meeting Minutes, FY2015*
- *College Council Survey Results FY2015*

2. Communication

The Council formed a subcommittee to address the development of a communications plan related to the shared governance structure. The communication plan included targeted communications at the start of the year, including presentations at the faculty and adjunct faculty workshops, chairs and coordinators meetings, departmental meetings, academic senate, and employee orientations and in-services. Additionally, the College Council updated its website to streamline information provided and include information regarding the shared governance structure. The College Council survey demonstrated that these efforts yielded positive results, with 73% of respondents indicating that they had seen the shared governance model, and 50% of those respondents indicating that they had seen the model at a campus event, such as a workshop or an in-service.

Evidence:

- *College Council Meeting Minutes, FY2015*
- *College Council Survey Results FY2015*

3. Assessment

In its first year of requiring a formal assessment, the Council members focused on developing mechanisms for gathering data for its own assessment, including developing the mid-year questionnaire for committee chairs and substantially revising its annual survey. The Council found that the data produced by the questionnaire allowed it to be responsive to concerns raised about the shared governance model and make needed changes at the start of the spring semester. Additionally, Council members felt the data produced by the annual survey tool spoke more directly to the questions it needed to address regarding the achievement of its goals this FY and better informed its goal setting for the coming year.

The Council advised committee chairs to produce an assessment for their committees; however, it did not produce specific guidelines to provide the committees. Consequently, the assessment results received from the committees varied greatly in terms of format and thoroughness. Additionally, while it refined its assessment tools, the Council did not clearly define a formalized assessment process for itself. Council members agreed that it would be beneficial to establish some clear guidelines for the Council and the committees to help inform their assessment for FY2016.

Evidence:

- *College Council Meeting Minutes, FY2015*
- *College Council Survey Results FY2015*

SAMPLE ANNUAL ASSESSMENT: College Council | **FY2015**

- *Committee Chair Questionnaire Results Summary*
- *Academic Senate Committee Assessment Results*
- *Operational Assembly Committee Assessment Results*

What are Areas of Improvement/Changes to Consider for FY2016?

- Focused communication efforts related to the institution's strategic plan
- Changed location and/or increased visibility for the College Council page on the institution's website
- Development of assessment guidelines for the College Council and other shared governance committees
- Increased participation rate in College Council survey
- Improved attendance at Operational Assembly meetings

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT: [Committee Name] | [FY2015]

Committee Purpose Statement:

[Insert purpose statement here]

What were [Committee Name]'s Goals for the [FY2015] Academic Year?

4. [Goal 1]
5. [Goal 2]
6. [Goal 3]

What were [Committee Name]'s Results for the [FY2015] Academic Year?

4. [Goal 1]
[Add analysis here.]

Evidence:

- [List documentation/evidence used to support analysis, e.g. meeting minutes, student participation rates, etc.]

5. [Goal 2]
[Add analysis here.]

Evidence:

- [List documentation/evidence used to support analysis, e.g. meeting minutes, student participation rates, etc.]

6. [Goal 3]
[Add analysis here.]

Evidence:

- [List documentation/evidence used to support analysis, e.g. meeting minutes, student participation rates, etc.]

What are Areas of Improvement/Changes to Consider for [FY2016]?

- [Potential Improvement Area 1]
- [Potential Improvement Area 2]
- [Potential Improvement Area 3]

Date: [Date of Assessment]