

3.3.1

Institutional Effectiveness

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 academic and student support services

3.3.1.4 research within its mission, if appropriate

3.3.1.5 community/public service within its mission, if appropriate

Judgment

Compliance Partial Compliance Non-Compliance Not Applicable

Narrative

Tennessee Technological University (TTU) strives to use assessment and the institutional effectiveness process to improve programs and services to meet the University's mission.

Mission

TTU's mission statement reads as follows:

Tennessee Technological University's mission as the state's only technological university is to provide leadership and outstanding programs in engineering, the sciences, and related areas that benefit the people of Tennessee and the nation. The University also provides strong programs in the arts and sciences, business, education, agriculture and human ecology, nursing, music, art and interdisciplinary studies. Tennessee Tech serves students from throughout the state, nation, and many other countries, but it retains a special commitment to enrich the lives of people and communities in the Upper Cumberland region of Tennessee.

The University is committed to the life-long success of students in its undergraduate, master's, specialist, and doctoral degree granting programs through high-quality instruction and learning experiences. The University is engaged in scholarly activity, especially basic and applied research, creative endeavors, and public service, with special emphasis on community and economic development. The University supports student participation in a broad array of extracurricular activities as an integral component of its commitment to student life and success.

Reported in Core Requirement 2.5, the University's processes of institutional effectiveness for University-wide academic programs and student and administrative services relate directly to the strategic Flight Plan. Though this institution has various units and divisions, the University has organized its process of annual institutional effectiveness reporting to be consistent among units and divisions, using the same reporting templates and phases of reporting. For the academic year 2014-2015, appropriate personnel in all divisions and units related to the Institutional Effectiveness Comprehensive Standards 3.3.1 have been trained and will use a reporting system (Campus Labs

Planning module) to report and monitor processes on student learning outcomes, unit goals, and unit objectives. The following narratives address each sub-standard for Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1 Institutional Effectiveness.

TTU has been using the following template for institutional effectiveness reporting since 2011, after receiving feedback from our fifth year interim report in 2010. The purpose of this template is to provide guidelines for developing assessment plans and for reporting to be used annually by TTU departments and units for institutional effectiveness. The document reflects guidelines for designing and tailoring assessment plans aligned with the needs and purposes of various departments and units for program improvement. Below is a specific template, used by all departments and units on the TTU campus, and a description of each section to assist in reviewing institutional effectiveness reports.

TTU Institutional Effectiveness Template with Description of Each Required Section

Academic Year:

Department or Unit:

Submission Date:

Contact (Person submitting this report):

Definition of Support Service Unit. This section describes the mission, vision, and purpose of the department or unit. The mission is a broad statement that reflects the aim of the educational goals and learning outcomes, and the goals and objectives of support services. Mission statements should be concise, linked directly to TTU's and the department's mission statement, and include major functions of the unit. This section also includes a description of the department or unit and its place in the organization chart.

Goals, student learning outcomes, and objectives.

- List each goal
- List each student learning outcome/objective related to the respective goal

The goals of all departments and units are aligned to the goals of the institution. Goals are broader, general assertions that describe the overarching long-term intended objectives of the unit. Goals may or may not be measurable and usually are further developed as separate, distinct learning outcomes or objectives, that, when measured appropriately, provide evidence of how well the area is accomplishing goals. Student learning outcomes and service-related objectives are measurable statements that describe the expected or intended quality relative to timeliness, responsiveness, accuracy, etc. These statements often describe how well a department or unit intends to function or improve its functioning or the services provided. Student support objectives are statements that target the intended knowledge, abilities, values and attitudes students are meant to be able to demonstrate after participating in a given activity and/or after using services within an educational student support unit.

Assessments (Related to Goals and/or Objectives Above).

- Name of the Assessment Tool (List the assessment time frame) –List the related goal and/or objective numbers.

All departments and units use an assortment of well-matched assessment types related to respective goals. Method of assessment refers to the "measures" each department and unit intends to use to reach the objectives (e.g., surveys, focus groups). For TTU it is important that the methods chosen enable the unit to evaluate its effectiveness in terms of services offered. A primary objective of assessment for this institution is to illuminate strengths and weaknesses in each department or unit that can lead to improvement. Each area also includes the time frame that the assessment tool was implemented and data was collected.

Rationale for goals, assessments, and the process of data analysis.

- Describe each assessment tool (Use points 1-4 in the paragraph below)

The TTU template includes an area to describe each assessment tool and the process of periodic review of assessments used. TTU emphasizes that evaluators are looking for use of multiple assessment methods. Description of each assessment tool includes (1) baseline data or information which focuses on the current state of the unit regarding a given objective and where the unit would like to be. It states the methods of assessment and the performance targets. (2) A statement of the method of assessment and performance targets briefly conveys how each area defines success based on the defined goals and performance targets. It is the unit's responsibilities to (3) make a compelling case as to why the sampling and assessment findings are an appropriate representation of the institution's services. In addition each area describes the assessment instrument that was used and why it was selected. (4) Finally, each area shares how the data were disseminated and analyzed throughout the unit to make modifications.

Results (Use of current results compared to past or benchmark results if applicable).

- Highlight the name of the assessment tool (List goal and or objective numbers) and present results

This section contains highlighted results that include evidence for improvement. Each department or unit inserts graphs, tables, and charts that provide mature data for decisions of revising goals and objectives and for improvement. TTU emphasizes that departments and units provide the data results here and discussion of the results in the next section. This section requires actual data or information based on the previously stated objectives, methods of assessment and performance targets. The data gathered must be analyzed and formatted in a way that provides useful information for identifying strengths and weaknesses and improving processes and services.

Modifications and continuing improvement: Program changes due to assessments.

- For goals and/or objectives #, #, & # describe the changes made.
- Link to assessment data: Describe the link between modifications to strategies and the assessment results reported for each modification/action.

This section, the pinnacle of the report and also commonly referred to as "closing the loop," requires an action plan of the department or unit, based on the achieved results. All departments and units are required to review assessment results with a focus toward uncovering strategies or services that need to be improved. Since the express purpose of assessment is to use what is learned in the process to improve performance of units, it is important that annual assessment reports contain a description of the actions or "steps" that were taken in response to the assessment results to improve the unit's services. Each department and unit must discuss evidence of improvement, based on analysis of assessment results, as opposed to a plan for improvement for each goal/objective mentioned above.

Improvements to assessment plan. TTU emphasizes that departments and units provide improvement of assessment plans as well. This section includes discussion on any changes made to the department's or unit's assessment plan, if applicable, including any new tools or modifications to existing tools.

Review Matrix of All TTU Departments and Units [1]

The Office of University Assessment, along with an institutional effectiveness committee led by the Director, periodically reviews all departments and units to ensure that each area is progressing in the institutional effectiveness process and is making meaningful changes due to actionable results from their individual and University-wide data collections. The attached matrix provides a summary for the reviewers of the assessment plans and goals for each area. In addition, three years of reporting are linked for academic units, and two years of reporting are linked for support and administrative areas using the template that was instituted at TTU in 2011. By September 2015, academic departments will have four years of reporting in the template format, and support and administrative areas will have completed three years of this required TTU annual IE reporting.

Most notable through this extensive review process and the development of new reporting tools, is that all academic and student support service units have identified measurable goals and objectives. They either have assessment tools in place, or added new assessment tools. Many deficiencies were discovered in the use of assessment for program changes. The addition of Section VII "Improvements to Assessment Plan" in the reporting template allowed the units to strategically improve plans for assessment and use of results for modifications.

In 2012, SACSCOC feedback led us to recognize a need to improve our process for institutional effectiveness reporting. A new process, templates and reporting deadlines have been established to monitor institutional effectiveness continually and consistently across campus. Annual Reporting requirements include the submission of these reports at the end of each academic/fiscal year to the Office of Academic Affairs University Assessment. This new process will allow Institutional Effectiveness to be continually monitoring for the improvement of student support services provided. Tools for collecting reporting in a consistent format and timeframe were investigated. A bidding and review process was conducted, and after much deliberation, TTU purchased Campus Labs, a reporting system.

Campus Labs Planning Module for Institutional Effectiveness

Future reporting includes the implementation of a planning platform for reporting Institutional Effectiveness information, and deadlines that are more flexible and synchronized to align with the IE process. IE reports for academic programs, administrative and student support services, and research and service areas are collected regularly and continually monitored by the Office of Academic Affairs and the Office of University Assessment. A program (Campus Labs) with planning tools for submitting reports efficiently and consistently was purchased, and was implemented for collecting IE reports in the 2014-2015 academic year. Modeled on the report guide and template training and reporting from 2011-2014, the Campus Labs Planning Module allowed TTU to significantly improve its reporting and tracking of IE improvement processes in 2014-2015, in addition to making relationships with the TTU Strategic Flight Plan.

IE reporting training took place in the fall semester of 2014. Units were asked to enter sections I-III of the IE reporting template, including the unit definition, goals/outcomes, and assessment information. During the 2014-2015 year, unit leaders updated the results as collected and discussed changes with unit constituents. Changes and modifications were reported during the summer to enable updates and revisions to IE planning. This process allowed for the institutional effectiveness planning to be consistently reported and reviewed for the entire campus. In the future, student support service units will use this system for budget requests as well, in relation to their modification and planning.

Conclusion

TTU uses assessment and the institutional effectiveness process to improve programs and services to meet the University's mission, demonstrating compliance with Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1.

Sources

 [1] TTU Unit Audit Matrix