

# ASSESSMENT OF INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS (IE)

---

Swarthmore College  
Spring 2016

## Purpose: to help you get started

- Understand what “assessment” of Institutional Effectiveness means and WHY we are doing it
- Clarify the College’s new process and reporting expectations
- Introduce terms and framework

## Assessment

- studying whether a particular activity is achieving its goals, and
- changing that activity as necessary

Don't we already do  
this?!

## Reporting on Assessment of Institutional Effectiveness

- the formal articulation of that process

### Middle States says:

#### **Standard VI: Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement**

The institution's planning processes, resources, and structures are aligned with each other and are sufficient to fulfill its mission and goals, to continuously assess and improve its programs and services, and to respond effectively to opportunities and challenges.

#### **Criteria**

An accredited institution possesses and demonstrates the following attributes or activities:

1. institutional objectives, both institution-wide and for individual units, that are clearly stated, assessed appropriately, linked to mission and goal achievement, reflect conclusions drawn from assessment results, and are used for planning and resource allocation;

*There are now seven standards for accreditation. **Each one** ends with "periodic assessment of the effectiveness of" {whatever standard focuses on}*

## Swarthmore reporting

- Annual cycle
- Keep full records internally of your activities
- Use TEMPLATE for reporting outside of unit: questions provide a SUMMARY of your work.

**Swarthmore College**  
**Template for Reporting on Assessment of Institutional Effectiveness**

This report provides an opportunity to summarize assessment results, the department's conditions, and any needs or issues that arise from your work. It need not include all of the detailed evidence collected, but any supportive material should be maintained by the department for possible follow-up or for review during evaluations (eg. by accreditors or other evaluation teams). Please respond to each item below.

The following items should be addressed in the report:

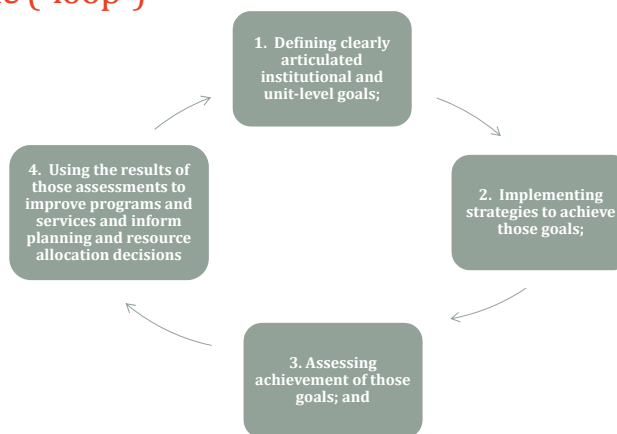
**End of the Report (about 3 pages)**

- 1) What goals/objectives have you assessed this cycle? (Be sure to attach the full set of goals and objectives as an appendix.)
- 2) How did you do it? Be sure to describe at least one example of [direct assessment](#). Include any materials (for example, data templates or other instruments) used in collecting or analyzing evidence. (Attach as appendix, if lengthy.)
- 3) What did you find? (Please do not include materials or references that reflect individuals.)
- 4) What changes will you make as a result of this work? Do these changes have resource implications? How will you determine whether changes are effective?
- 5) What plans have you made for the next cycle, either for continuing to evaluate the areas you have been studying or for addressing new areas?
- 6) What other issues arose during the department's work?

**Appendix: (required)**

Attach as an appendix the department's goals and objectives. Include a statement about how they support the College's mission and the goals of your broader department or division. Include a tentative long-term plan for addressing each goal (eg. some goals might be assessed each cycle, others less often).

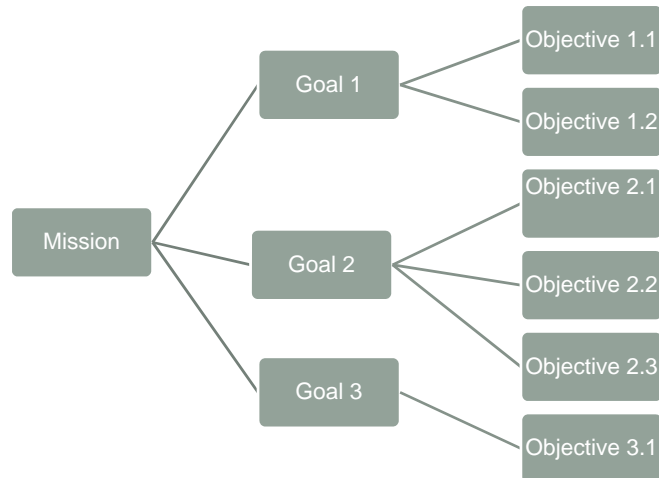
## Assessment of Institutional Effectiveness is a cycle ("loop")



"Assessing Student Learning and Institutional Effectiveness: Understanding Middle States Expectations," Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2005.

## Components of Assessment

Each unit has multiple goals and each goal may have multiple objectives.



***An Assessment Plan avoids the futility of collecting volumes of random data, by clearly defining what it is we are looking for and why.***

## Mission



- Purpose of the function. What is it about, what is it here for, what are its essential values?
- How does it contribute to the mission of the College?
- **Getting started:** Look at catalogue description, job descriptions, annual report, professional associations. Ask yourself, what would the ideal xx function be like?

### **Examples of Simple Mission Statements**

---

- ❑ **Institutional Research:** To collect information and conduct research to support planning and decision-making across the College.
  - ❑ **Career Services:** To counsel students and alumni as they explore career directions and equip them with the information they need to make good decisions.
-

## Mission Statement - Dining Services

---

Swarthmore College Dining Services are owned and operated by the College. We are proud to provide the campus with quality dining experiences in a variety of venues.

Our mission is to offer a diverse menu using the highest-quality ingredients and locally grown and produced products when available. Our prepared food menu always includes a vegetarian and vegan option. We strive to provide nutritious and satisfying food in a welcoming setting each and every day.

We pride ourselves in being service-oriented. We are professionals who keep abreast of market and food trends to provide fresh and nutritional offerings.

---

## Goals

- Given this mission, what are the goals of the unit?
- Goals are more specific than mission, but still somewhat broad and long term.
- They are the MAJOR roles and activities of the unit.
  - Operational Goals – more static, the basic functions of the unit.
  - Strategic Goals – reflect goals directed at a particular initiative. These may change from year to year. *Generally a Strategic Goal is intended to implement a change or improvement aimed at an operational goal.*

### **Examples of Goals for a Residential Life Office**

---

- Match roommates appropriately.
  - Train Resident Assistants and other Residence Life staff who effectively provide for the safety, comfort, and well-being of residents.
  - Provide programming that contributes to student development and enhances student life.
- 

### **Goals for an Institutional Research Office**

---

- Conduct specialized studies in support of campus needs and priorities.
  - Conduct, coordinate, and report on survey research.
  - Collect and disseminate campus data for internal and external reporting purposes.
  - Serve as a resource for units in need of college data or research expertise.
-



## Objectives

- These are more specific activities that are directed toward specific goals.
- Objectives should be realistic, given current levels of resources.
- OUTCOMES – if the department is achieving a goal, what would you expect to see?

## Objectives for

### Academic

vs.

### Non-academic Units

- Student learning objectives and outcomes desired – what will students know and be able to do?
- Process-oriented
- Student (or other client) Outcomes, if direct education is part of unit's role
- May contain satisfaction or other evaluative measures

### Co-curricular Units

- All of the above

**Sample Objectives for a Registrar's Office Goal of  
"Maintain and process student records accurately and  
efficiently."**

---

- Fill transcript requests promptly
  - Process degree audit requests.
  - Maintain student satisfaction with registration functions.
  - Provide resources to enable students to successfully use on-line registration.
- 

**Objectives for an IR Office Goal of  
"Collect and disseminate campus data for internal and  
external reporting purposes."**

---

- A College Factbook is prepared annually
  - Summary data of key information is available on website.
  - Responses to requests from Publishers of guidebooks provide accurate and consistent information, within deadlines.
  - College-wide mandated reports to external agencies are completed with accurate and consistent information, meeting deadlines.
-

## Indicators



## Kinds of measurements

- Counts, rates
- Pre- and post- test measures
- Questionnaire results (use judiciously)
- Can use “primary” (main indicator) and “secondary” measurements (group breakdowns, or further refinement)
- Comparison to standards, benchmarks, best practices, peers
- Focus Groups
- Many, many kinds, limited only by creativity

Sample Indicators for Career Services Objective of  
"Engage students in development early and often  
through various outreach efforts."

---

- ❑ Annual attendance at workshops, by class year.  
Success = 50% of 1st year, 60% of 2nd year, 70%  
of 3rd year, 80% of seniors.
  - ❑ Student ratings of general satisfaction with Career  
Services office on Enrolled Student Survey, by  
class year. Success = average rating of at least 3.2  
for every class.
  - ❑ Drop-in contacts with Career Peer Advisors.  
Success = average of 5 students per afternoon,  
with measurements taken randomly 10 times each  
spring.
- 

Indicators for IR Objective of  
"Respond to requests from publishers of guidebooks  
with accurate & consistent information, by deadlines."

---

- ❑ Percentage of Deadlines met each year. Success =  
98%.
  - ❑ Random data audit conducted of 5 key variables  
(from a master list) each year across all  
guidebooks. Success = 100% accurate.
-

## “Closing the Loop”

- Conduct measurements during the cycle
- Describe the **results** of the measurements
- Discuss what the **implications** are.
- The feedback loop is key → what **actions** result from your assessment?

### Hypothetical:

IR deadline indicator - met only 90% of deadlines for guidebooks.

---

- Return to records to determine why 10% missed.
  - E.g. May find that not enough lead time was given to other offices that must contribute.
  - IR create new policy of distributing survey questions within one day of receiving guidebook survey.
  - Incorporate this step into record-keeping and track to see policy was followed.
  - Continue to monitor deadline hit rate to determine effectiveness of new policy.
-

## Pitfalls

- Taking measurements that are not related to goals
- Waiting for perfection
- Collecting too much - “analysis paralysis”
- Spending more time on measuring things than on doing things



## Tips and hints...

- Inventory your “data”
- Record-keeping: “fast” but hard vs. “slow” and easy

- Use two lists



- Start simply and plan to build.

