

A.T. Still University Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment Overview

Introduction

ATSU is committed to quality improvement throughout the university. Therefore, assessment activities occur at various levels across the institution and include mechanisms for gathering and reviewing data related to the university strategic plan, individual schools and colleges, the discipline-based programs within the schools and colleges, the core professional attributes and other student learning outcomes. This document provides an overview of the institution's current structures and processes related to assessment.

University Level

ATSU Strategic Plan

Following best practices, ATSU develops its Strategic Plans on five-year cycles, establishing broadly representative Strategic Planning Committees of administrators, faculty, staff, students and alumni. Throughout the planning process the committee seeks input and invites review from a variety of stakeholders including the Board of Trustees. Following approval of the plan by the President, the University-wide Assessment Committee monitors progress, tracks and evaluates data and makes recommendations. The 2016-2020 Strategic Plan is structured around 6 major themes: *I. Education Excellence, II. Continued Commitment to Scholarly Activity, III. Cultural Proficiency, Diversity and Inclusion, IV. New and Expanded Partnerships, V. Effective Branding and Marketing, and VI. Fiscal Health, Affordability and Compliance*, establishing the basis for university-level assessment. Each theme has one or more goals and each goal has one or more objectives. In total there are 38 objectives, each with designated measures used to gauge progress.

The University-Wide Assessment Committee (UWAC) is tasked with reviewing and analyzing the results of the various strategic plan measures. The 19-member committee is widely representative and includes administrators, faculty, staff and students. Two UWAC sub-committees are responsible for the initial analysis of the results for each measure: UWAC-A (Academic) for academic matters (themes I, II and IV) and UWAC-R (Resources) for all non-academic institutional resources (themes III, V, and VI). Reports and recommendations emerging from initial reviews by the subcommittees are forwarded for consideration by the parent committee. UWAC members review all reports and recommendations as they are forwarded, followed by an annual comprehensive look at all assessments together during an extended meeting. The committee then makes formal recommendations for modifications, adjustments or changes aimed at achieving quality improvement in academic outcomes and institutional effectiveness. Easily implemented recommendations with zero or minor budget implications are directed to the responsible administrator for action. Recommendations requiring significant changes to programming or budget are prioritized and forwarded to the President's cabinet by the Senior Vice Presidents for Academic Affairs (SVPAA) and Strategic Initiatives and Planning (SVPSIP) who are ex-officio members of UWAC.

University-Wide Assessment Committee

Although the objectives of the Strategic Plan broadly cover areas appropriate to university-level quality improvement efforts, a few additional assessments at the university level are also the responsibility of UWAC. Again, the parent committee relies on initial review by one of the two subcommittees.

UWAC-A conducts academic program reviews including discipline-specific accreditation results where applicable. Reports on the aggregated results of the Course Evaluation Core Instrument and the Core Professional Attributes are also initially reviewed by UWAC-A. Results of these reviews are forwarded to UWAC with any recommendations for improvements. UWAC-R conducts an annual environmental scan to assure continued relevance of Strategic Plan goals and objectives, anticipating any Strategic Plan modifications made necessary in a changing external environment. Recommendations for adjustment to the Strategic Plan goals or objectives are forwarded to UWAC for consideration. As is the case with review of the strategic plan objectives, subcommittee reports and recommendations are considered by UWAC. Easily implemented recommendations are forwarded to the responsible administrators for immediate action. Recommendations with significant programming or budget implications are forwarded to the ATSU leadership team.

Finally, UWAC also fosters a culture of assessment by sponsoring annual assessment events such as presentations and workshops designed to engage and inform university faculty and staff.

School and College Level

Dean's Annual Report

Each year the Deans review a collection of school/college-level assessment data including but not limited to:

- applicant pool numbers and demographics;
- matriculant numbers and demographics;
- persistence and graduation rates;
- board and/or licensing exam results;
- post-graduation employment/residency data;
- faculty headcounts and demographics;
- faculty scholarship activity;
- faculty service participation and leadership endeavors;
- tuition and fees;
- capital expenditures;
- community outreach activity; and
- curricular additions, deletions and modifications.

This data, combined with analysis, commentary and recommendations, is assembled by each Dean into an annual report and submitted to the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs (SVPAA). The SVPAA reviews all annual reports and discusses each report in detail with the respective Dean. The report and subsequent discussions guide decisions on allocation of resources and plans for the coming year.

Program Level within Schools/Colleges

Program Review

Program review provides a systematic way to evaluate the effectiveness of ATSU's academic programs, promote academic excellence and assure consistency with the University's mission.

Program review is the responsibility of the UWAC Academic Subcommittee (UWAC-A).

Comprised of faculty, student, dean, and academic affairs representation from UWAC, plus additional faculty members representing all schools/colleges; UWAC-A follows a formalized process outlined in the program review guidelines document. All ATSU programs undergo program review.

Non-accredited programs must generate a self-study document and follow the process identified in the program review document as Pathway 1. The program review cycle for non-accredited programs is typically between 6 and 8 years. Accredited programs use a modified process for program review identified in the program review document as Pathway 2, with a review cycle that closely follows their external accrediting schedule. The findings of every program review, including any recommendations, are reported to the UWAC for consideration and discussion. Easily implemented recommendations are the acted upon immediately by the responsible administrator. Substantive recommendations with major budget implications emerging from program review are placed in priority order with other quality improvement recommendations arising from other UWAC assessment activities, and are forwarded to the President's cabinet. In this manner, program review results and subsequent recommendations can guide resource allocation during the budget development cycle and influence decision-making at the University level. UWAC also schedules a follow-up for each program based on any recommendations and the action plan timeline developed by the program and approved by the SVPAA.

Discipline-Specific Accreditation

As a health sciences university, nineteen (19) ATSU programs undergo a regularly scheduled professional accreditation process by a discipline-specific external agency. Since the process and goals of external accreditations are strongly similar to the program review process, ATSU's accredited programs submit their discipline-specific accreditation self-study document, along with any additional narrative and evidence necessary to address program review objectives not covered in the accreditation self-study document, such as the CPAs. The accredited programs also share the findings of their accreditation review with UWAC-A in the program review process. It should be noted that the SVPAA, Dean and program chair review the outcomes of accreditation immediately upon receipt, with the intent to address any accreditation findings.

Assessments of student learning

University level – Core Professional Attributes

As a participant in the HLC Assessment Academy, the University Quality Initiative team embarked on a "bottoms-up" project to identify, embed, strengthen and assess a set of important attributes found in all ATSU graduates regardless of the discipline studied. Emblematic of our ATSU mission and values, the Core Professional Attributes (CPAs) emerged as a set of five cross-curricular meta-skills inherent to all A.T. Still graduates; attributes deeply desirable in the health-care professions. These CPAs enable ATSU graduates to adapt and apply their discipline-specific knowledge and skills to varying situations, enhancing competence and improving outcomes across all aspects of their roles as healthcare professionals. The CPAs are: *Critical Thinking, Interpersonal Skills, Cultural Proficiency,*

Interprofessional Collaboration and Social Responsibility. Program goals are mapped for alignment with the CPAs and course syllabi identify alignment of course objectives with any of the CPAs. Mapping is conducted using assessment software to find gaps and track measurements and outcomes. Outcomes surveys administered at program completion ask the graduates to rate how well prepared they are in each of the five CPAs. Similarly, survey items inquiring about preparation in the CPAs are included in periodic alumni surveys. Results of direct and indirect assessments are shared with the UWAC-A as part of their review of the Strategic Plan measurement results.

University Level - Course Evaluation Core Instrument

All courses across the University are subject to routine student evaluation. Nine core items in the student evaluations are identical regardless of discipline. The results for the nine core evaluation items are collected from all schools and colleges for all courses at the end of each term. The results are aggregated into a university-level report for consideration by the Deans, the SVPAA and by UWAC-A and UWAC.

School/College level – board and/or licensing examinations

As a health sciences university, the majority of graduates of the clinical programs must take and pass licensing and/or board examinations. Student performance on these external measures are tracked by the individual programs/schools/colleges and by the UWAC, as the licensing/board examination results are reviewed as part of the deans' annual report, the program review process and are one of the measures used to assess progress on Strategic Plan objectives.

Program level – Discipline-specific knowledge/skills

Assessment of student learning in each discipline is the responsibility of the faculty. A wide array of assessment methods are employed including but not limited to: written exams, reflection and research papers, objective simulated clinical examinations (OSCE), case presentations, standardized patients, laboratory examinations and clinical performance evaluations. The schools and colleges track learning outcomes and make needed curricular changes through their respective assessment and/or curriculum Committees. Curricular changes are included in the annual Dean's Report.

Assessment Support: Office of Assessment and Accreditation

With a focus on continuous quality improvement guided by evidence, the Office of Assessment and Accreditation works to advance ATSU's mission as a learning-centered university by providing facilitation, support and leadership for assessment endeavors and University-Wide Assessment Committee (UWAC) activities, program reviews and accreditations across the university.

Reviewed and ratified by UWAC 02-08-2018