

# **Southwestern University**

## **ADMINISTRATIVE AND EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT UNITS ASSESSMENT HANDBOOK**

**Office of  
Strategic Planning and Assessment**

Second Edition, Fall 2003

**FOR INTERNAL USE ONLY**

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## Acknowledgements

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This guide is to be regarded as a living document, and may be amended in response to comments and insights from the University Community. Please direct any comments to the Office of Strategic Planning and Assessment.

## Preface

Institutions that assess their own effectiveness deliberately and comprehensively will become stronger and more successful. Engaging in systematic self-examination increases the likelihood that members of an institution will share its sense of mission, that programs and departments will work effectively toward meeting the mission, and that academic programs and administrative services will create the most effective learning environment and experiences for students. A sound institutional effectiveness program involves every academic and administrative area of an institution, and becomes part of the institution's ongoing function.

An effective institution of higher learning is one that:

- Develops a clear and meaningful statement of the university's purpose.
- Develops the specific ways in which each academic program and administrative function contributes to achieving the university's purpose.
- Develops specific outcomes or results that each academic program and administrative service is intended to have.
- Establishes and uses a variety of effective means for determining the extent to which intended outcomes are realized.
- Uses the information collected to identify and implement program and service improvements that enhance the institution's ability to achieve its intended outcomes and purpose.

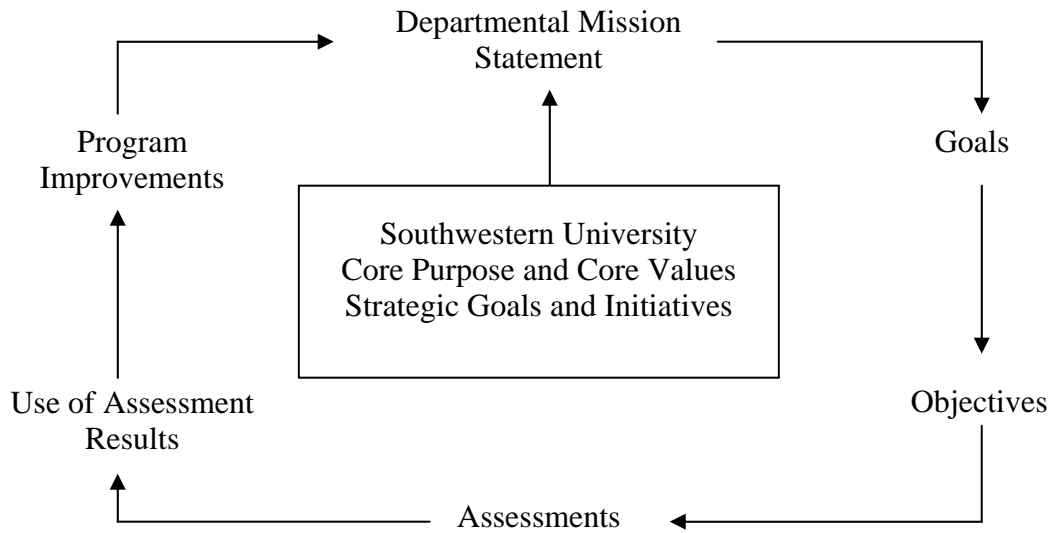
In undertaking a sound effectiveness program, administrative departments must:

- Formulate an Assessment Plan, including a mission statement, goals, objectives, and assessment mechanisms.
- Conduct an Annual Assessment Program.
- Integrate assessment activities into the university's planning and budget processes.

Southwestern University has a strong and well-established record of institutional planning. Assessment of goals and objectives, and using the results of those assessments are becoming increasingly part of the *modus operandi* at the university. The primary purpose of this guide is to assist administrators and staff with the development of Annual Assessment Plans and Reports for their Administrative and Educational Support (AES) Units. Committing ourselves to developing and following through on effective assessment procedures will make the university a stronger, more successful and more effective institution.

A model for continuous Administrative and Educational Support (AES) Unit improvement is depicted in Figure 1 below:

**Figure 1**



## **Southwestern University's Core Purpose and Core Values**

Southwestern University, under the auspices of the United Methodist Church, is committed to undergraduate liberal education involving both the study of and participation in significant aspects of our cultural heritage, expressed primarily through the arts, the sciences, the institutions, and the professions of society. To this end, the Southwestern University community, including faculty, staff, students, alumni, and trustees, has agreed upon a core purpose and a set of core values that serve as the guiding principles for the institution:

### **Southwestern University's Core Purpose:**

- Fostering a liberal arts community whose values and actions encourage contributions toward the well-being of humanity.

### **Southwestern University's Core Values:**

- Promoting lifelong learning and a passion for intellectual and personal growth.
- Fostering diverse perspectives.
- Being true to oneself and others.
- Respecting the worth and dignity of persons.
- Encouraging activism in the pursuit of justice and the common good.

As a teaching-learning community, Southwestern encourages rigorous inquiry and scholarship, creative teaching, and the expression of free human life. The University seeks to involve the student in finding a personal and social direction for life, developing more sensitive methods of communication, cultivating those qualities and skills which make for personal and professional effectiveness, and learning to think clearly and make relevant judgments and discriminations.

(Source: *Southwestern University 2003-2004 catalog*, pp. 5-6)

## Preparing the Annual Assessment Program

Each Academic and Educational Support Unit must conduct an Annual Assessment Program. The Annual Assessment Program used at Southwestern is based on a model constructed by James Nichols of the University of Mississippi. The program involves the annual development of a five-column grid that includes the following components:

- **Header:** Department Mission Statement. This is drawn from the University's Core Purpose and Core Values, and identifies ways in which each department contributes to fulfilling the purpose. The departmental mission statement is not likely to change significantly from year to year, although, it may be amended as the department's role within the university changes.
- **Column 1:** Identification of an important goal clearly derived from the University's Core Purpose, Core Values, Strategic Initiatives, or the Department's own Mission Statement.
- **Column 2:** Identification of one or more objectives that support the goal stated in column 1. The objective states how you plan to accomplish the goal, and will be the focus of the department's assessment activities for the coming year. The objectives may change from year to year.
- **Column 3:** Identification of assessment mechanisms that will be used to examine the selected objectives. Each objective should contain a criterion or threshold of success; this is the level at which the staff would conclude the objective has been reasonably met. The criterion should be set at whatever level is appropriate and meaningful.

Note: The first three columns, which makeup the Assessment Plan, are typically completed in late summer-early fall.

- **Column 4:** Identifies the results of the application of the assessment mechanism. This column describes what has been learned from each assessment mechanism about performance relative to the corresponding objective. It must contain information that allows the department to determine whether or not the criterion level has been reached. This column is completed at whatever time during the year the results from the assessment mechanism are available.
- **Column 5:** ("Closing the Loop") Identifies efforts to make program or service improvements based on what has been learned and reported in column 4. If assessment shows that an objective is being met, and no one has any ideas for doing better, the fifth column simply reports that. When assessment shows that an objective is not being met and/or ideas are suggested for doing better, the fifth column reports the changes designed to enhance performance. This column is usually completed in late spring/early summer.

Where departments undertake programs that may not be measured best on an annual basis (e.g. a five-year fund raising campaign for Institutional Advancement), they may leave some elements of the Annual Assessment Program incomplete. A timetable for assessing pending elements must be noted.

Essentially, the whole purpose of institutional effectiveness and of all assessment activity is contained in the fifth column. Institutional effectiveness is a systematic process for thinking about, studying, and making efforts to improve programs and services.

**All Administrative and Educational Support Units must complete the standard University form for this assessment process. The form is located on the following Web link: [www.southwestern.edu/planning](http://www.southwestern.edu/planning). The Assessment Plans MUST be submitted on this form, using the formatting described in this handbook.**

## Figure 2

**Mission Statement:**

Goals	Objectives	Assessment Mechanisms	Assessment Results	Use of the Results for Improvements

On the following pages of this guide is a description of each component of the AES Unit Assessment Report, along with examples from the Office of Development. At the end, *Figure 10* illustrates an example of a completed assessment report.

## Department Mission

### Issues to Consider:

- How does your department support the University's Core Purpose and Core Values?
- How would you describe your department's contribution to the University's Core Purpose and Core Values?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of your department?
- What would be good indicators of quality for your department?

### Guidelines:

- The Department Mission Statement should be short—no more than three sentences.
- The Department Mission Statement should answer why you do what you do, as well as state what you do.
- The Department Mission Statement should be consistent with the University's Core Purpose and Core Values.
- The Department Mission Statement should unite, inspire, challenge and motivate you and your colleagues.

### Figure 3

Example:

**Mission Statement  
Office of Development  
Division of Institutional Advancement**

**Mission Statement:** To build relationships and encourage constituents to make financial investments toward the purposes and priorities of Southwestern University.

# Department Goals

## Department Goals Should:

- Respond to the questions, “What does the department wish to accomplish?” and “What is the department’s vision for itself?”
- Be challenging but attainable.
- Be linked clearly to the department’s mission statement.
- Be consistent with the university’s educational ideals, philosophy and mission.
- Be useful to the department, as well as to long-range, University-wide planning.
- Be compatible with those of other departments.

## Figure 4

Example:

**Department Goals  
Office of Development  
Division of Institutional Advancement**

1. Increase and broaden Annual Fund support.

## Department Objectives

### Department Objectives Should:

- Respond to the questions, “How will the department accomplish this goal?,” “What service is being provided?” and “What value is being added to the service or program?”
- Be specific enough to allow assessment of progress, but not at the expense of failing to address important issues.
- Be assessable, though not necessarily in easy, quantifiable terms.
- Not include statements of how the measurement of goals will be accomplished. (Leave those for the assessment measures.)

### Figure 5

Example:

**Department Objectives  
Office of Development  
Division of Institutional Advancement**

- 1a. Increase total annual fund contributions by 3%.
- 1b. Increase number of individual donors among friends, and parents by 3%, and increase alumni participation by 4% to 37% overall.
- 1c. Increase number of leadership gifts to the Annual Fund in the \$1000 to \$10,000 range by 4%.
- 1d. Improve overall Pledge Fulfillment rate by 3%.
- 1e. Develop a Volunteer Appreciation Plan.

## Assessment Mechanisms

A successful assessment program will be capable of responding to two questions:

- Is your department accomplishing what it wishes to accomplish?
- How do you know?

Assessments can be any type of qualitative or quantitative measure of achievement of departmental objectives. They should include evaluations already in use, as well as others the department would like to put into place. They should also be tied directly to specific goals, so there is no doubt about what assessments are to be used to measure each goal. Avoid establishing goals and objectives which might be easily assessed, but which are of little value in improving the quality of programs and services.

What are the major types of assessment mechanisms?

- Direct Measures: specific tallies of performance.
- Attitudinal Measures: satisfaction surveys conducted through questionnaires or focus groups.
- Data System Indicators: some helpful data related to objectives may be collected in the university's routine data collection efforts.
- Administrative Practice: administrative departments may collect helpful information in the process of writing annual reports or other required documentation procedures.
- Professional Standards: some administrative areas have corresponding professional associations that offer guidelines and/or external review.

### Figure 6

Example:

**Assessment Mechanisms  
Office of Development  
Division of Institutional Advancement**

- 1a. Track YTD progress toward the goal on monthly gift reports.
- 1b. Compare YTD numbers of donors (alumni, friends, etc.) with last year's totals.
- 1c. Compare the number of gifts in the \$1,000 to \$10,000 range to the Annual Fund with last year's results.
- 1d. Compare YTD pledge fulfillment rate with last year's rate.
- 1e. Schedule and hold a Volunteer Recognition event.

## Figure 7

Other Examples of department assessments:

Library Circulation Statistics  
Computer Usage Statistics  
Number of Admissions Applications  
Admission Yield  
Percent of Alumni Giving  
Annual Fund Receipts  
Net Tuition Revenue  
Lecture Series Attendance  
Number of Safe Work Days  
Questionnaires (Students, Employers, Faculty/Staff, Alumni, etc.)  
Endowment Performance  
Response Time to Requests for Service  
Campus Crime Statistics  
Homecoming Attendance Figures  
Cost-Saving Statistics  
Facility Usage Statistics  
Counts of Students Served

## Assessment Results

This column identifies the results from each assessment mechanism. It must contain information that allows the department to determine whether the criterion level has been reached. This column may be completed whenever the results from a particular assessment mechanism become available. Assessment results should be factored into future planning for the department or unit.

### Figure 8

Example:

**Assessment Results  
Office of Development  
Division of Institutional Advancement**

- 1a. Annual Fund totals increased from \$1.3 million to \$1.35 million, a 3.8% increase.
- 1b. Giving by parents and friends increased by 4%. Alumni giving increased 2%.
- 1c. The number of \$1,000-\$10,000 leadership gifts increased from 573 to 598, a 4.2% increase.
- 1d. The pledge fulfillment rate increased by 1% from 87% to 88%.
- 1e. A Volunteer Recognition even was held on Southwestern's campus on April 29, with 67% of invited area volunteers attending.

## **Using the Results of Assessment: Program and Service Improvement**

Effective assessment should inform decisions leading to improvements in what you're doing. Though evidence of an effective assessment program may satisfy accreditation requirements, its real value lies in its contribution to the improvement of the quality of programs and services. For assessment to take hold, it must be integrated into regular work procedures.

Department Annual Reports should include progress reports on assessment of department goals. Each goal should be listed with a brief report on how it was assessed and what improvements or changes should be made as a result of what was learned from the assessments.

Perhaps each department goal relates to providing a particular service to students. An assessment of this goal may consist of a couple of questions at the bottom of a form asking students to rate the quality of the service and to provide suggestions for improvements. An examination of the responses might result in a decision to expand hours or speed turnaround time. On-going assessment would then show whether the changes succeeded in improving perceptions of the quality of the service.

While departments will want to collect their own assessment data, the Institutional Research Office has a number of reports that may be useful for evaluating progress on department goals. These include:

- Freshman Profile (CIRP – conducted annually since 1971)
- Student Satisfaction Survey
- National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE – 2001 and 2003)
- Higher Education Data-Sharing (HEDS) Consortium Reports
  - Admissions
  - Alumni (1992 and 1997)
  - Endowment
  - Faculty
  - Finance
  - Financial Aid
  - Voluntary Support

## Figure 9

Example:

**Use of Results for Improvements  
Office of Development  
Division of Institutional Advancement**

- 1a. The Development Office exceeded its goal for increasing overall fundraising for the Annual Fund. The Reunion Year mailings seem to have been particularly effective.
- 1b. While fundraising among parents and friends reached target, overall alumni giving did not. A review of strategies for reaching young alumni in particular is called for.
- 1c. The campaign for increasing leadership gifts exceeded its goal.
- 1d. Pledge fulfillment rate showed little improvement. Develop new strategies for more effective follow-up.
- 1e. The Volunteer Recognition event was held and was successful. Consider the possibility of holding similar springtime events in key cities outside of Texas with high concentrations of alumni volunteers.

## Figure 10

### Administrative and Educational Support Units Annual Assessment

Example

(Instructions for completing this form are found in the *Administrative and Educational Support Units Assessment Handbook* located at [www.southwestern.edu/planning](http://www.southwestern.edu/planning))

**Administrative/Educational Support Unit Name:** Office of Development

**Individual Completing Form:** \_\_\_\_\_ First Name Last Name

**School Year:** XXXX – XXXX

**Date Submitted:** XX/XX/XX

**University Core Purpose:** Fostering a liberal arts community whose values and actions encourage contributions toward the well-being of humanity.

**Program Mission:** To build relationships and encourage constituents to make financial investments toward the purposes and priorities of Southwestern University.

Goals (Examples)	Objectives (Examples)	Assessment Mechanisms (Examples)	Assessment Results (Examples)	Use of Results for Improvements (Examples)
1. Increase and broaden Annual Fund support	1a. Increase total annual fund contributions by 3%.  1b. Increase number of individual donors among friends, and parents by 3%, and increase alumni participation by 4% to 37% overall.  1c. Increase number of leadership gifts to the Annual Fund in the \$1,000 to \$10,000 range by 4%.  1d. Improve overall pledge fulfillment rate by 3%  1e. Develop a Volunteer Appreciation Plan.	1a. Track YTD progress toward the goal on monthly gifts reports.  1b. Compare YTD numbers of donors (alumni, friends, etc.) with last year's totals.  1c. Compare the number of gifts in the \$1,000 to \$10,000 range to the Annual Fund with last year's results.  1d. Compare YTD pledge fulfillment rate with late year's rate.  1e. Schedule and hold a Volunteer Recognition event.	1a. Annual Fund totals increased from \$1.3 million to \$1.35 million, a 3.8% increase.  1b. Giving by parents and friends increased by 4%. Alumni giving increased by 2%.  1c. The number of \$1,000-\$10,000 leadership gifts increased from 573 to 598, a 4.2% increase.  1d. The pledge fulfillment rate increased by 1%, from 87% to 88%.  1e. A Volunteer Recognition event was held on Southwestern's campus on April 29, with 67% of invited area volunteers attending.	1a. The Development Office exceeded its goal for increasing overall fundraising for the Annual Fund. The Reunion Year mailings seem to have been particularly effective.  1b. While fundraising among parents and friends reached target, overall alumni giving did not. A review of strategies for reaching young alumni in particular is called for.  1c. The campaign for increasing leadership gifts exceeded its goal.  1d. Pledge fulfillment rate showed little improvement. Develop new strategies for more effective follow-up.  1e. The Volunteer Recognition event was held and was successful. Consider the possibility of holding similar springtime events in key cities outside of Texas with high concentrations of alumni volunteers.

