

Chapter Five: Assessment Processes & Plans

Orange County Community College has made significant progress in establishing a comprehensive assessment structure and cycle. This chapter describes the accomplishments the College has made in the assessment of student learning outcomes and institutional effectiveness. Additionally, the chapter outlines next steps the College will take to improve and expand its assessment plans, activities and improvement initiatives.

Culture of Assessment: Support and Resources

Institutional Planning, Assessment & Research Office - In response to Middle States Team recommendations and as reported in the 2006 Monitoring Report, a Coordinator of Assessment was hired in February 2005 to facilitate the College's assessment initiatives and report to the Vice President for Academic Affairs. In Fall 2007, the Coordinator was hired as the Institutional Planning and Research Officer resulting in the Office assuming the facilitation of the College's assessment activities. To reflect the changes, the Office was renamed, the Institutional Planning, Assessment and Research (IPAR) Office with the Officer reporting directly to the Vice President for Administration.

- ***Collaboration*** - The IPAR Officer meets regularly with the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Student Services and the College's Associate Vice Presidents, is an Academic Affairs Leadership Team member and is an ex-officio member of both the Assessment Advisory Committee and the Planning and Budgeting for Institutional Effectiveness Committee.
- ***Budget*** - The budget of the Institutional Planning, Assessment and Research Office adequately supports the College's assessment activities. The assessment budget has been used to provide stipends to faculty for participation in inter-rater reliability activities, provide honorariums for external reviewers, allow for faculty to attend assessment conferences and workshops and support academic departments' accreditation activities.
- ***Website: Assessment at SUNY Orange*** - The IPAR Office has developed a comprehensive assessment website for faculty and staff. The website provides an overview of assessment, glossary of terms and a description of assessment requirements for Middle States and SUNY including assessment schedules and plans. To support the SUNY Assessment Initiative, forms and instructions and tips and tools are also available on the website at www.sunyorange.edu/assessment/.

State University of New York - It should be noted that the State University of New York funds many campus assessment activities including participation in the Student Opinion Survey, the Community College Survey of Student Engagement as well as the National Community College Benchmarking Project. Additionally, as part of SUNY's Strengthened Campus Based Assessment initiative, faculty are reimbursed for inter-rater reliability activities.

Assessment Advisory Committee – The Assessment Advisory Committee is the College’s standing governance committee that supports the implementation of assessment initiatives college-wide. The Committee, representing both faculty and staff, collaborates with the IPAR Officer to create and maintain a culture of assessment. Recent accomplishments of the Assessment Advisory Committee include:

- Developed instrument to assess prioritized initiatives in collaboration with the Planning and Budgeting for Institutional Effectiveness Committee
- Planned and implemented General Education assessment of Critical Thinking in Spring 2008 and Information Management in Spring 2009
- Developed in collaboration with English and Mathematics Departments the Strengthened Campus Based Assessment plans for Written Communication and Mathematics
- Disseminated and utilized results of Critical Thinking assessment by presenting findings at Assembly, facilitating workshops through Center for Teaching and Learning for faculty and recommending to College that critical thinking skills be infused across the curriculum
- Reviewing and recommending contents on Assessment at SUNY Orange website
- Attended several workshops on student learning outcome assessment in region
- Reviewed Online Student Course Evaluation instrument and process and forwarded recommendations for modifications to Executive Committee

Since the decennial visit, the College has experienced a remarkable but difficult to measure shift in the *culture of assessment*. Much effort has been taken to educate the campus on the benefits of assessment, manageable assessment methods as well as the importance of utilizing assessment findings for improvement efforts. Understanding the benefits of assessments has resulted in an increase in college-wide assessment activities. Recent assessment activities include:

- Information Technology needs survey conducted in collaboration with IT Governance Committee, Human Resources and IPAR Office in order to identify equipment, software and training needs of faculty and staff
- Marketing Survey of students’ media habits conducted by Marketing Department; findings used to enhance student information on College webpage
- Employee Survey on Workplace Violence and Hazard Assessment administered by Human Resources Office in partnership with the Emergency Management Team; findings used in development of Emergency Management Plan
- Survey of assessment plans, methods and use of findings administered by IPAR Office to collect updated information from academic departments. Appendix Q is a chart highlighting academic assessment methods used and modifications made by academic departments
- Online college-wide Student Course Evaluations administered every semester to all students in all credit courses
- Alumni, graduate and employer surveys administered in Health Professions Division and Accounting, Business and Office Technologies department

Assessment activities have become integral to the operations of every College area. Collecting information consistently and comprehensively has provided the College the evidence to make effective and efficient decisions.

Student Learning Outcomes Assessment & SUNY Assessment Initiative

The State University of New York Assessment Initiative began in Fall 1999 when Provost [Salins] established an Advisory Task Force on the Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes to develop a process to assess student learning outcomes in both General Education and in academic programs. The SUNY Assessment Initiative has three components:

1. Assessment of *student learning outcomes in the Major* every 5-7 years or on a specialized accreditation schedule
2. Assessment of *student learning outcomes in the 12 General Education areas* every 3 years
 - o Written Communication, Mathematics and Critical Thinking are part of SUNY's Strengthened Campus-Based Assessment Initiative which requires these areas to be assessed using externally referenced measures.
3. Assessment of *student engagement* in academic activities every three years in order to provide context for learning outcomes. The Community College Survey of Student Engagement will be administered by all community colleges in Spring 2009.

Orange County Community College effectively implements the SUNY Assessment Initiative. More information about the SUNY Assessment Initiative can be accessed at www.suny.edu/provost/Assessmentinit.cfm. Below is a brief summary of the progress the College has made in implementing the assessment initiative.

Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes in the Major

The College's academic programs conduct a comprehensive program review including assessing the student learning outcomes in the major every 5 to 7 years. The assessment schedule for each academic division is included in Appendix I as well as online at www.sunyorange.edu/assessmentapa/schedule.shtml. An external review of each program is a required component of the assessment initiative. External reviewers provide programs an independent and objective evaluation of strengths and weaknesses as well as recommendations for improvement. The accreditation responsibilities of programs are sufficient to meet SUNY's assessment requirements since accreditation standards are generally more rigorous. Appendix P summarizes the College's recent accreditation activity and award.

Additional assessment components of the comprehensive program review include, aligning student learning outcomes of courses with programs as well as to college goals through curriculum mapping, collecting and analyzing course, student and faculty data as well as addressing the Academic Master Plan themes of technology, curriculum change, professional development, collaboration and partnerships and student services. A ranking of currently used assessment methods is included in Appendix O.

As part of the assessment process, programs are required to review previous assessment findings and document what resulting changes were made. The annual Progress

Reports submitted to the VPAA document assessment activities, findings and improvement efforts. Progress Reports for the past three academic years can be viewed at www.sunyorange.edu/academic_affairs/annualreports.shtml. The SUNY Assessment Initiative requires programs to complete and submit a Summary Report highlighting changes made as a result of assessment activities. The template of the Summary Report for the Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes in the Major is included in Appendix R. It can also be accessed online at www.sunyorange.edu/assessmentapa/forms.shtml. As requested by Middle States in response to the Monitoring Reports, a summary of modifications and improvements made by academic departments as a result of assessment findings is included in Appendix Q.

Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes in General Education

An assessment plan for each General Education area was developed and submitted to SUNY's General Education Assessment Review (GEAR) Group for review and approval. The plans were collaboratively developed between academic departments and the College's former General Education Committee. Preceding each assessment cycle, assessment plans are reviewed and revised if necessary. Current General Education plans can be accessed at www.sunyorange.edu/assessmentgea/plansresults.shtml.

Every three years, the General Education Assessment Review (GEAR) Group reviews the campuses' assessment plans to ensure that all standards continue to be met. In Spring 2008, the College submitted to GEAR its Triennial General Education Report which documented changes to the assessment plans as well as a summary of the improvement initiatives resulting from the utilization of assessment findings. The summary of "closing the loop" activities for each General Education area is included in Appendix M. As part of the Assessment Initiative, a Summary Report for the assessment of student learning outcomes in General Education is also submitted to SUNY. A template of the Summary Report is included in Appendix L and is available at www.sunyorange.edu/assessmentgea/forms.shtml.

In 2004, SUNY introduced the Strengthened Campus Based Assessment Initiative which established more rigorous assessment requirements in Mathematics, Written Communication and Critical Thinking. The SCBA initiative also requires community colleges to administer the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE). Orange County Community College's SCBA plans, collaboratively developed between the English and Mathematics Department, the Assessment Advisory Committee and the IPAR Office, were approved by the General Education Assessment Review Group. Each assessment utilizes a standardized rubric developed by discipline panels of SUNY faculty. Assessment plans and rubrics for each SCBA area are available at www.sunyorange.edu/assessmentgea/strengthen.shtml.

- Mathematics was first assessed in Spring 2006 and will be completing its second assessment cycle in Spring 2009
- Written Communication was assessed in Spring 2007 and is scheduled to be assessed in Spring 2010
- Critical Thinking was assessed in Spring 2008. The Assessment Advisory Committee and the IPAR Office are working to disseminate results and develop

recommendations for the College including infusing critical thinking skills across the curriculum.

Institutional Assessment

Institutional assessment activities are conducted in order to determine if the College is accomplishing its mission and goals. Being that student learning is at the core of the College's mission, Academic Affairs has led the College in establishing a comprehensive plan and process to assess student learning outcomes. The College has made significant progress in assessing course, program and General Education student learning outcomes. Additionally, much progress has been in utilizing the assessment results to maintain academic excellence by improving teaching and learning.

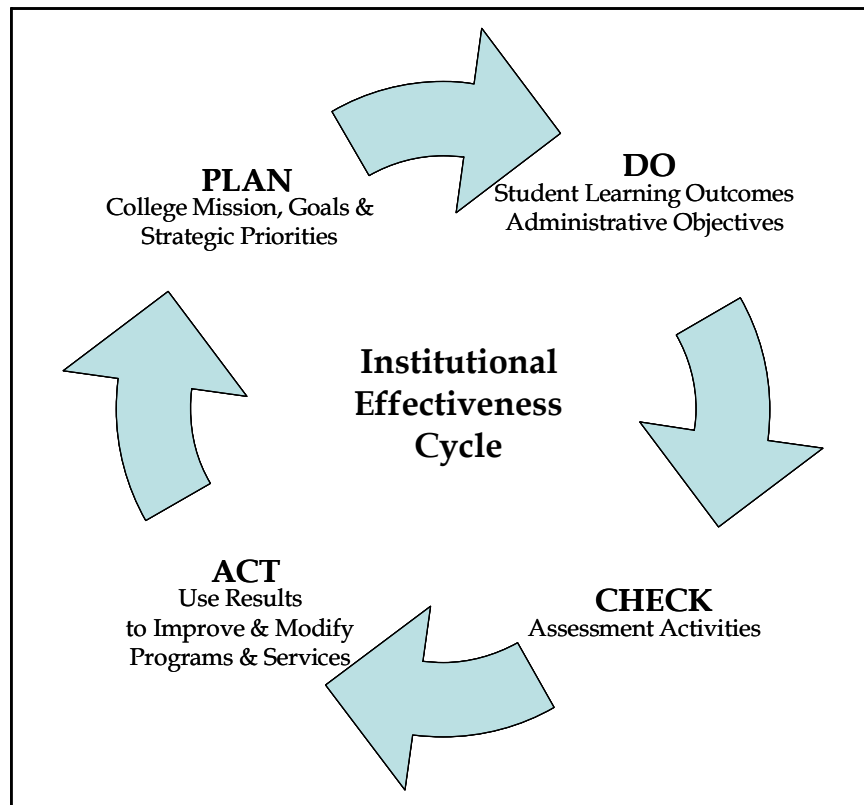
Each academic department is required to submit an Annual Academic Master Plan Progress Report to the Vice President for Academic Affairs at the end of each academic year. Accomplishments and next steps for each of the five Academic Master Plan themes are described in the report as well as the past academic year's assessment activities. Department Chairs articulate what changes have been made and/or what changes are being planned as a result of any assessment findings. The annual Progress Reports, therefore, serve as a continuous feedback loop. Annual progress reports are available for the past three academic years, 2005-2006, 2006-2007, 2007-2008, with the 2008-2009 report due June 2009 at www.sunyorange.edu/academic_affairs/annualreports.shtml.

The Offices of Administration, Institutional Advancement and Student Services consistently develop and implement assessment activities to measure progress in achieving the strategic priorities and the goals and objectives of the supporting master plans. These activities generally include methods to monitor and measure productivity, adherence to timelines and processes, responsiveness to requests, accomplishments of unit goals and satisfaction with services and programs. Apart from Academic Affairs, however, there has not been a standardized approach to developing assessment plans, documenting findings and communicating initiatives for improvement. As recommended by the IPAR Office and the Assessment Advisory Committee, the College's Administration, Student Services, and Advancement Offices will:

- Develop ***annual Progress Reports***. The reports will include a summary of each area's assessment activities, findings and improvement initiatives. The annual reports will document the progress made in accomplishing the College's goals and strategic priorities.
- Form an ***Institutional Assessment Group*** of representatives from the College's administrative areas. The Institutional Assessment Group in collaboration with the Assessment Advisory Committee, the PBIE Committee and IPAR Office will work to:
 - Finalize College's Institutional Assessment Plan. The plan will guide the College in developing institutional assessment activities to best measure the effectiveness of the College in meeting its mission and goals. The information collected will assist the College in identifying needed improvement areas to maintain excellence in programming and services. It will serve as a guide for analysis, decision making and allocation of resources.

- Establish schedule for Institutional Planning and Assessment; a draft of the schedule is included in Appendix S
- Collaborate with PBIE Committee to modify PIP system including, adding assessment fields to collect information on assessment measures, results, improvement initiatives, etc.
- Incorporate indicators of effectiveness and appropriate measures into respective master plans
- Develop standardized Annual Progress Report format that will document assessment plans, methods, findings and next steps for each College area
- Develop Institutional Effectiveness Report in collaboration with IPAR Office and Report Writing Task Force by which data collected on core indicators will be compiled and published to demonstrate and determine institutional effectiveness
- Implement Institutional Effectiveness Cycle [Figure 8] and ensure each College area develops and implements plans, assesses goals and objectives, utilizes findings to modify and improve programs and services and inform planning and budgeting decisions

Figure 8 Orange County Community College's Cycle of Institutional Effectiveness



Indicators of Institutional Effectiveness

After reviewing the American Association of Community College’s (AACC) publication, “Core Indicators of Effectiveness for Community Colleges,” the College’s ad hoc Key Performance Indicators Task Force recommended incorporating the core areas and indicators into the College’s Institutional Assessment Plan as well as the supporting master plans. Indicator data will be collected and reported annually within the Progress Reports as well as in the Institutional Effectiveness Report. The Report Writing Task Force will work with the Institutional Assessment Group and the IPAR Office to identify sources of needed data and create reports.

The College, as previously noted, is becoming more data driven resulting from increased accessibility of Banner information through ODS reports as well as findings from assessment activities. The College will continue to obtain and utilize accurate and appropriate data to increase its ability to measure accomplishments and demonstrate accountability.

The table below outlines the core areas, indicators and the supporting data to be collected and analyzed to determine the College’s institutional effectiveness.

Table 2 Orange County Community College’s Core Areas & Indicators of Institutional Effectiveness & Supporting Data

Core Area	Core Indicator	Supporting Data
Academic Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Goal attainment ▪ Overall completion rates ▪ Student persistence ▪ Degree/ program completion rates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student Opinion Survey ▪ CCSSE (Spring 2009) ▪ SUNY Educational Goal (SIRIS) ▪ ODS Reports – cohort, GPA ▪ SUNY Data warehouse – graduation rates ▪ SUNY Assessment of SLO in academic programs ▪ Student Course Evaluations
Transfer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Successful transfer ▪ Rate & number of transfers ▪ Success at transfer institution (GPA, persistence & completion) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student record data from transfer institution ▪ Transcript request data ▪ SUNY Data warehouse – 1 Year Persistence ▪ National Student Clearinghouse
General Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Successful GE completion ▪ Demonstration of CT, IM & communication skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ODS report ▪ SUNY Assessment of SLO in General Education
Developmental Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Successful subsequent related course work ▪ Improved progress & retention of DE students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ODS Reports (data elements such as placement assessment scores, course grades, developmental course history, etc.) ▪ Developmental Review Board data ▪ Learning Communities data
Workforce Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Degree and certificate completion ▪ Job placement rate ▪ Employer feedback ▪ Licensure/Certification pass 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Employer surveys administered by department ▪ ODS reports - cohort ▪ SUNY Assessment of SLO in Program ▪ Accreditation reviews/studies

	rates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student Course Evaluations ▪ Data from state licensing and certification bodies collected by Department
Student Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student satisfaction with student services and resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student needs assessment/surveys ▪ Student Opinion Survey ▪ Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CSSE)
Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Satisfaction with courses and workshops ▪ Responsiveness to need ▪ Community participation rate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community needs surveys ▪ Satisfaction surveys

Assessment Accomplishments & Next Steps

Below is a summary of some of the many assessment *accomplishments* that the College has implemented since its decennial accreditation visit:

- Reviewed and revised student learning outcomes for every College course and program
- Completed third cycle of SUNY's assessment of student learning outcomes in General Education
- Created and implemented General Education and Academic Program Review Schedule (The schedules are included in Appendix I and J, respectively.)
- Revised existing and created new courses and programs as a result of assessment findings
- Created assessment web presence at www.sunyorange.edu/assessment/
- Formed an ad hoc Key Performance Indicators task force to identify core areas of institutional effectiveness, corresponding indicators and supporting data sources to be embedded in Strategic Plan and supporting Master Plans
- Administered online student course evaluations for every course each semester
- Completed successful accreditation self-studies and visits (Appendix P)
- Administered student satisfaction and engagement surveys including SUNY Student Opinion Survey, Spring 2006 and Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), Spring 2009
- Participate annually in National Community College Benchmarking Project (NCCBP)
- Increased use of rubrics and embedded assessment methods across curriculum
- Submitted SUNY's Mission Review II to ensure compliance with SUNY's mandates and initiatives, including SUNY Assessment Initiative. The Mission Review II can be accessed at www.sunyorange.edu/president/docs/Orange_fully_executed_MOU.pdf
- Formed Institutional Assessment Group to finalize Institutional Assessment Plan and Institutional Effectiveness Report
- Developed and implemented assessment instrument and process to measure effectiveness of PIP system and prioritized initiatives
- Reviewed College's Strategic Plan 2005-2010; developing Strategic Plan 2009-2014
- Documented accomplishments of academic programs and departments in Annual Academic Master Plan Progress Reports

Significant progress in the assessment of academic and administrative outcomes has been accomplished; however, the College is committed to continue to improve its efforts in developing assessment plans with valid and reliable methods that yield useful data for improving programs and services. Below are several next steps that the College plans to implement beginning Fall 2009:

- Develop and implement Institutional Assessment Plan
- Integrate assessment plans into each supporting master plan
- Finalize and adhere to schedule for Institutional Planning and Assessment
- Ensure each Middle States Standard includes assessment component
- Establish benchmarks within Strategic Plan 2009-2014 and supporting master plans
- Further demonstrate utilization of assessment findings to improve student learning and institutional effectiveness
- Develop and disseminate annual Progress Reports for each College area
- Create and disseminate annual Institutional Effectiveness Report
- Continue to develop professional development opportunities for staff and faculty on assessment best practices