

# Assessment Cycle 2021-2022

## Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Human Resources

### Division or Department: Institutional Effectiveness

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**Northwestern Mission.** Northwestern State University is a responsive, student-oriented institution that is committed to the creation, dissemination, and acquisition of knowledge through teaching, research, and service. The University maintains as its highest priority excellence in teaching in graduate and undergraduate programs. Northwestern State University prepares its students to become productive members of society and promotes economic development and improvements in the quality of life of the citizens in its region.

**The Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Human Resources** is a responsive administrative service and support unit that provides University leaders with information to be used in strategic planning and evidence-based decision-making and human resource programs and services. The Office assesses, collects, analyzes, reports, and disseminates data on behalf of the University and supports all University units in assessment-based improvement efforts. Reporting of information is in accordance with Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) and federal and state regulations. The Office develops and delivers innovative human resource programs and services designed to support the mission of the University, including its core services and competencies such as staffing, employee relations, organizational and employee development, risk management, compensation and benefits, human resource information management, and regulatory compliance.

**The Office of Institutional Effectiveness** assists university leaders with strategic planning, assessment, and evidence-based decision-making. The office assesses, collects, analyzes, reports, and disseminates data on behalf of the University and supports all university units in assessment-based improvement efforts. Assists in the reporting of information per the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), federal and state regulations.

**Methodology:** The assessment process includes:

- (1) Data from assessment tools (direct & indirect and quantitative & qualitative) are collected and returned to the executive director;
- (2) The executive director will analyze the data to determine whether the applicable outcomes are met:
- (3) Results from the assessment will be discussed with the appropriate staff;

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- (4) Individual meetings will be held with staff as required (show cause);
- (5) The executive director, in consultation with the staff and senior leadership, will determine proposed changes to measurable outcomes, assessment tools for the next assessment period and, where needed, service changes.

**Note.** During Assessment Cycle 2020-2021, the COVID-19 virus forced Northwestern State University to reevaluate how to execute its mission. Through deliberate planning, Northwestern substantially modified academic programs, facilities, services, and resources to enhance learning and the health and safety of students, faculty, staff, and the public.

Assignments and student learning assessments were modified to maximize the principles of equitable evaluation and assure the highest quality in-person classes, online delivery of courses, and hybrid face-to-face and virtual studies. Technological equipment and resources were updated and expanded to provide high academic quality and flexibility while using lower bandwidth.

Student learning outcomes guide the design and delivery of instruction to ensure student learning. While the assessment process continues, it would be naïve to assume academic program assessments have not been affected – the degree of which is based on individual programs. Because of the tireless efforts of Northwestern's highly accomplished and respected leadership, faculty, and staff, the trust of current and future students in the University's commitment to extraordinary academic and experiential student learning opportunities is evident through steady enrollment, even during these trying times.

### **Institutional Effectiveness**

#### **Service Outcomes:**

**SO 1.** Ensures the institution engages in ongoing, integrated, and institution-wide research-based planning and evaluation processes that (1) incorporate a systematic review of institutional mission, goals, and outcomes; (2) result in continuing improvement in institutional quality; and (3) demonstrate the institution is effectively accomplishing its mission.

#### **Measure 1.1.**

The University compiles and publicizes its documented institutional effectiveness process. The target is to have a publicized process with 100% of the 155 academic and administrative units completing the process annually per the published timelines for annual assessments submission while also meeting the assessment element (s) requirements per rubric 2 (with enclosure). Once complete, the assessments are made available for public view on the Director of Institutional Effectiveness website <https://www.nsula.edu/institutionaleffectiveness/>.

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### **Finding. Target Met**

**Analysis.** In 2020-2021 the target was met. Based on the analysis of the AC 2020-2021 results, in 2021-2022, the Director of Institutional Effectiveness developed a more visible tracker/process for senior administrators as an incentive for timely submissions, provided direct assistance to programs and units having issues in completing their reports and developed tools to help streamline report construction. As a result, in 2021-2022, the target was met.

**Decision, action or recommendation.** In 2020-2021, the target was met. Based on the analysis of the 2021-2022 results, additional support material will be developed and provided earlier in the fall semester to maintain the iterative assessment process.

### **Source Map:**

Resources Manual for the Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges  
University of Louisiana System Board of Supervisors  
Louisiana Board of Regents Higher Education Bylaws

### **Measure 1.2.**

The University has established a systematic review of the institutional mission, goals, and outcomes. Target is to conduct at least one comprehensive analysis of the mission, goal, and standards each year. We request revalidation and/or approval of the university mission, vision statement, and core values through our Board of Trustees once every five years in accordance with the Strategic Plan development process.

### **Finding. Target Met (no change)**

**Analysis.** In AC 2020, the target was met. Based on the analysis of the 2020-2021 results, in 2021-2022, the Director of Institutional Effectiveness established July 1, 2020 for the new mission statement to become effective. During the mission analysis process, the University determined it would be better served by extending its current strategic plan from 2016-2021 to 2016-2023. This extension facilitates the nesting of the University Strategic Plan with the Board of Regents' Strategic goals for Northwestern while improving the alignment with their recently published master plan. The drafting of a new updated strategic plan will begin in 2022 to continue to drive organizational improvement. As a result, in 2020-2021, the target was met.

**Decision, action or recommendation.** In 2020-2021, the target was met. Based on the analysis of the 2020-2021 results, the University developed a comprehensive timeline/plan for establishing a new strategic plan spanning 2023-

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2028.

### **Source Map:**

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### **Measure 1.3.**

University senior leaders brief the University President on the findings of the strategic plan assessment cycle to better inform strategic decision making, thereby ensuring the University is accomplishing its mission and maximizing resources for targeted improvement in institutional quality. Target is to conduct and document the annual assessment briefing capturing and actioning areas of concern.

### **Finding. Target Not Met.**

AC 2021-2022 is a year of reflection designed to revalidate the continuation of the University Strategic Plan. Analysis. In AC 2020-2021, the target was met. Based on the analysis of the 2020-2021 results, in 2021-2022, the Director of Institutional Effectiveness in coordination with the Executive Director of Institutional Effectiveness and the University President abbreviated the AC 2021-2022 Assessment Briefing. In September 2020 that was virtual yet more inclusive and addressed additional areas of scholarship, infrastructure, innovation, and potentially budget.

**Decision, action or recommendation.** In 2021-2022, the target was not met. Based on the 2021-2022 results analysis, in 2022-2023, to drive the cycle of improvement in 2022-2023, the Strategic Plan will be updated, and the mid-year and annual briefings will be conducted in person. The briefing will be designed to facilitate the involvement of the new University President to allow the delivery of new guidance concerning the direction of the University.

### **Source Map:**

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Louisiana Board of Regents Higher Education Bylaws

**SO 2.** Assist with the identification of key indicators of performance related to the strategic plan, academic programs, and academic support units.

### **Measure 2.1.**

Each of the 165 academic programs and administrative units has identified expected

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outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results. Target is 100% compliance.

### **Finding. Target Met**

**Analysis.** In 2020-2021 the target was met. Based on the analysis of the 2021-2022 results, in 2021-2022, the Director of Institutional Effectiveness updated the "by the numbers" assessment tool for unit and program coordinators to ensure they write to the requirement in the right format using SACSCOC language thereby driving continuous improvement. As a result, in 2021-2022 the target was met.

**Decision, action or recommendation.** In 2021-2022, the target was met. Based on the analysis of the 2021-2022 results, in 2022-2023 to drive the cycle of improvement the Director of Institutional Effectiveness will develop additional support material to facilitate the development of degree and unit assessments. In addition, support material to facilitate the development of the University Strategic Plan will be developed for use by senior leadership.

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### **Measure 2.2.**

The University will produce a holistic University assessment report using the findings from the Strategic Plan AC 2019-2020 assessment and the 155 separate academic programs and administrative unit assessments. The assessment report will highlight key findings for consideration in strategic decision-making and resource allocation. The report and briefing will be completed in June of each Academic Year. Target is to leverage a completed Strategic Plan Assessment and 100% of individual program and unit assessments in the development and presentation of an annual assessment report by August 30 of the academic year.

### **Finding. Target Met.**

**Analysis.** In AC 2020-2021, the target was met. Based on the analysis of the 2020-2021 results, in 2021-2022, the Director of Institutional Effectiveness will refocus the brief on those areas needing improvement instead of those areas of success. By focusing time and resources on areas that need attention, we should be able to drive continuous improvement. As a result, in 2021-2022, the target was met.

**Decision, action or recommendation.** In 2021-2022, the target was met. Based on the analysis of the 2021-2022 results, in 2022-2023, to drive the cycle of

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improvement, more time will be spent on developing strategies to improve Strategic Focus Areas and in the development of a new Strategic Focus area, Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity.

### **Source Map:**

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**SO 3.** Facilitate all aspects related to accreditation, including standards compliance, applications, reviews, and self-evaluation processes and documents.

### **Measure 3.1.**

All SACSCOC Standards are apportioned to the appropriate university office for incorporation and integration into daily operations. The target is to complete the task within three months from the publication new SACSCOC standards.

### **Finding. Target not met.**

**Analysis.** In 2020-2021 the target was met. Based on the analysis of the 2020-2021 results, in 2021-2022, the Director of Institutional Effectiveness had each fifth-year report requirement defined, then drafted, and in a position to only require updating in Fall 2022, allowing for a seamless submission in March 2023. As a result, 15 of 22 standards were drafted in 2021-2022 the target was not met.

**Decision, action or recommendation.** In 2021-2022, the target was not met. Based on the analysis of 2021-2022 in 2022-2023, to drive the cycle of improvement, each SACSCOC Requirement will have a vetted draft of the response complete by Fall 2022.

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### **Measure 3.2.**

All university strategic planning and assessment documents will be stored so that the information remains secure and accessible from any location via the internet.

### **Finding. Target Met**

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**Analysis.** In 2020-2021 the target was met. Based on the analysis of the 2020-2021 results, in 2021-2022, the Director of Institutional Effectiveness redesigned the IE Website to facilitate the submission of the SACSCOC Fifth Year Report, to include all historical documents associated with the COVID-19 Coronavirus. As a result, in 2021-2022, the target was met.

**Decision, action or recommendation.** In 2021-2022, the target was met. Based on the analysis of the 2021-2022 results, in 2022-2023, to drive the cycle of improving, the website continues to develop as a repository of all assessment-related products, from annual assessments to current news and historical documents.

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### **Comprehensive Summary of Key evidence of improvement based on the analysis of results.**

- Updated the University assessment tools.
- Continued to integrate Institutional Research, Registrar, and Director of University Affairs into the Strategic Planning Team.
- Revamped Mid-Year update brief to the President, making the brief more holistic, highlighting areas of success and those needing more focus or decisions to be made.
- Designed a "crawl, walk, run" approach to preparing the University's Fifth-Year SCASCOC Report that deliberately and methodically produces a report ensuring compliance and oversight. The coming year will produce a draft response for each SACSCOC requirement.
- Redesigned the IE Website to facilitate the submission of the SACSCOC Fifth-Year Report and further publicize the University Student Achievement data.

### **Plan of action moving forward.**

The University Leverages the Institutional Effectiveness Model systematically and comprehensively to push closer to its vision. The University's senior leadership remains the forcing function to establish the culture of continuous assessment. The assessment's purpose, reasoning, and value is slowly becoming clear to University administrators, faculty, and staff. The tangible value in this process directly impacts organizational improvement and is being more understood across campus. We must continue to right-size our assessment process. The University has now completed five iterations, and as a result, we have a far better understanding of what we should be

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assessing. Our task is to fine-tune what needs to be evaluated, determine how best to assess it, and leverage the results to drive continuous improvement.