

## **SECTION III**

### **INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS**

#### **3.1 Planning and Evaluation: Educational Programs**

The 1992 SACS reaffirmation committee recommended that the University of Kentucky change from its system of seven institutional effectiveness (IE) coordinators and establish an office or officer whose responsibility it would be to work with all units to evaluate whether or not the goals of individual units were being met and to “review and document the use of these ongoing evaluations to improve educational programs, services, and operations.” This action was designed to assure that planning and evaluation for teaching, research, and service would be systematic, broad-based, interrelated and appropriate to the institution. The President assigned campus-wide coordination of IE activities to an office previously known as the Office of Institutional Planning, Budgeting, and Effectiveness (OPBE), and that office is responsible for continuous review of the strategic plan. It appears to the Committee that the strategic plan is at the heart of comprehensive planning and evaluation, which includes yearly assessment of more than 30 “strategic indicators” of the institution’s teaching, research, and service missions.

Planning and evaluation at the level of the academic unit are addressed with each unit’s strategic planning process, periodic program review, and annual reviews. Each educational unit must demonstrate in its evaluation documents how each unit goal relates back to the strategic plan for the University. It is encouraged that unit administrators and faculty receive training in educational effectiveness with periodic workshops on quantifiable measures of student learning. The units also are expected to compile and

evaluate data from licensing and certification examinations and are expected to keep accurate records of job placement. Recently, the former Office of Institutional Planning, Budgeting and Effectiveness has encouraged systematic evaluation by increasing training at the unit level and by providing assessment grants to individual units.

The self-study committee stated that from 1995-1998 there was a loss of focus on a “cohesive institutional effectiveness effort,” and although periodic program review continued, there was inconsistency among academic units with respect to unit-level strategic planning and preparation for the required annual reviews described in Administrative Regulation AR II-1.0-6. The loss of focus was addressed by the development of an Institutional Research and Effectiveness Improvement Plan that the President approved in December 1999. Also in 1999, external consultants were hired to assess IE activities.

The Institutional Research and Effectiveness Improvement Plan contained a number of recommendations that were implemented in 2000 and that included appointing a permanent assessment coordinator for each vice presidential area, implementing a standard reporting format for the annual review reports of each educational and support unit, and appointing a full-time Director of Assessment and Institutional Research on the Lexington campus. It is noteworthy that each objective in the annual review report must be related formally to the University’s strategic plan for the Lexington campus or to the “critical success factors” for the Medical Center.

These kinds of efforts are important steps, supported by Administrative Regulation AR II-1.0-6, that provide details on how to conduct strategic planning, annual reviews, and periodic reviews; however, the self-study committee did report that the

decentralized nature of institutional effectiveness and institutional research continues to present challenges and reportedly causes inconsistent application of strategic planning, annual reviews, and periodic reviews among various units on campus. The University has begun to meet these challenges with two key efforts—the previously mentioned hiring of a full-time Director of Assessment and Institutional Research (Lexington campus) and the initiation of college and departmental workshops to address institutional effectiveness, with particular attention to the annual review process. Also being addressed is the reported perception by a number of faculty and other University personnel that there is a “disconnect” between institutional planning activities and the budgeting process. Given the institution’s ongoing funding problems, it apparently has been difficult in some units to generate enthusiasm for regular strategic planning. Predictably, the level of enthusiasm for planning and evaluation varies among subgroups, with a survey of deans, department chairs, and directors revealing a generally more favorable opinion of the processes than was shown in a similar survey of full-time faculty.

The method of assessment with the highest reported level of support by faculty and administrators alike is periodic program review, whose procedures are detailed in Administrative Regulation AR II-1.0-6, entitled “Review of Educational Units.” Such reviews occur every four to six years for each unit, and the Provost and senior vice presidents annually update the schedule of reviews. The final schedule for reviews is maintained and distributed by the Office of the Vice Provost for Planning and Institutional Effectiveness.

Program reviews include three primary components: (1) unit self-study focusing on indicators of quality; (2) review by a team external to the unit; and (3) revision of the unit's strategic plan based on the findings of the review. To the extent possible, periodic program reviews are coordinated with the review cycles of external accreditation agencies or other external reviews. Review teams gather to analyze data on all aspects of a unit's operations, and the teams are charged specifically to focus the review and recommendations on the following, as listed in AR II-1.0-6: (1) quality of the degree programs and student learning; (2) quality of research and service programs and benchmark comparisons; (3) quality of faculty/staff and unit productivity; (4) quality of recruitment and retention of a diverse faculty, staff, and student body; (5) quality of management, adherence to policies, and collegial environment; and (6) quality of planning, evaluation, and resources maximizing program effectiveness in terms of allocation.

There are a number of examples of how program review recommendations have been used to effect changes. One such example comes from a recent review that resulted in (1) the merger of several foreign language departments to bring about economies of scale and (2) an increased focus on the Japanese program to respond to needs associated with the presence of the Toyota plant in Kentucky. In addition, the directive in AR II-1.0-6 states that the review of educational units must culminate with an implementation plan to identify actions to be taken and a time frame for accomplishment of goals.

The self-study committee offered five suggestions in the area of planning and evaluation of educational programs. Examples include the administration's providing documentation regarding how unit-level strategic plans and both annual and periodic

reviews inform the planning and budgeting process; broadening the input of all units in formulating special reports and initiatives; and establishing compulsory institutional effectiveness workshops for deans, department chairs, and other administrators. The Committee feels that each of the five suggestions is valuable and should be implemented.

The Committee concludes that the University's approach to planning and evaluation for teaching, research and public service activities generally is systematic, broad-based, interrelated and appropriate to the institution. The "major strides" made in research at the University are well documented in Volume 2 of the self-study report and demonstrate success in obtaining extramural grants and contracts, faculty and student research awards and honors, diversity of performances and exhibitions, and the revitalization of research equipment. In the documentation provided, the Committee finds that public service is an integral part of the mission statement and includes the components of an effective program, and it finds evidence of adequate planning and evaluation of public service activities.

Evaluation of various distance learning activities revealed several issues requiring attention. There are a number of examples of inconsistency among educational units in the selection, planning, and evaluation of the educational effectiveness of distance learning programs. (Recommendation 3) The Committee recommends that planning for and evaluation of distance learning programs encompass educational goals at all academic levels and research and service functions of the institution, in order to address the apparent lack of a coherent strategy in the selection of programs and courses to be offered by distance learning, in the systematic evaluation of those programs and courses, and in the coordination of all distance learning programs and courses.

### **3.2 Planning and Evaluation: Administrative and Educational Support Services**

The University's comprehensive planning and evaluation processes appear to incorporate all major divisions of the institution. These include both educational units and administrative and educational support services. As indicated in the self-study report, the expansion of Administrative Regulation AR II-1.5-2 in February 1999 initiated a review process that includes both periodic and annual reviews for administrative and educational support units. Further, each unit is required to have a mission statement directly related to the strategic plan for the University and to formulate goals that support the purpose of the unit. The Committee found evidence that such is the case. In the self-study, it is reported that a number of administrative and educational support units have begun to use the results of assessments such as student satisfaction surveys and customer surveys to improve performance. The self-study provided three suggestions (III-6 through III-8) in the area of planning and evaluation of administrative and educational support services. The Committee agrees that these are valuable suggestions and encourages their implementation.

The Committee agrees with the observation in the self-study that it will take several cycles of assessments resulting in specific improvements to begin to see a pattern of continuous improvement and for the support units to become accustomed to the system, but there is evidence that such assessments are beginning to produce positive changes. For example, the Committee was told that there was a merger of leadership in the admissions and registrar's offices within ten days of the provost's receipt of the review report.

### **3.3 Institutional Research**

Institutional research is an integral part of the University of Kentucky's planning and evaluation process. The self-study committee reported that the Vice President for Administration delegates daily administrative responsibility for institutional research to the office of the Associate Vice President of Institutional Planning, Budgeting, and Effectiveness. With the administrative reorganization of July 2001, the institutional research function now resides with the Office of the Vice Provost for Planning and Institutional Effectiveness. That office regularly collects and evaluates a wide range of data on various aspects of the University's academic and support programs. Examples are provided in the addendum to the self-study and include data such as enrollment, degrees awarded, retention and graduation rates, survey results, teacher and course evaluation results, and faculty and staff data.

Although institutional research activities appear to have supported central administration and planning effectively, the self-study committee reported that a "marginal computing system," a "lack of staff resources," and the current distributed organizational structure of institutional research functions have all resulted in "weak" institutional research services available to individual educational units, particularly on the Lexington campus.

Institutional research activities include internal studies of students, personnel, facilities, equipment, programs, services and fiscal resources. Specific examples include data on new students, transfer students, and graduate students (e.g., application and admission figures); student demographics; financial data (e.g., revenue, expenditures, and student costs); contract and grant awards; student financial aid; faculty salaries; and

donors and endowments. The philosophy of the Office of Institutional Planning, Budgeting, and Effectiveness is to disseminate institutional research data to as broad an audience as possible, and the Committee found that there is wide dissemination of raw data and analyses in several outlets, including the *Fact Booklet, 2001-2002*, published both in hard-copy and on-line formats.

In June 1999 the institutional research function was evaluated by Institutional Effectiveness Associates. The self-study committee indicated that the plan is for future assessment of the efficacy of institutional research activities to be accomplished by the recently begun system of annual and periodic reviews. That method will meet the criterion for regular evaluation of the effectiveness of the University's institutional research process and will permit the use of periodic and annual reviews to improve those processes. However, the Committee feels that, given the importance of effective institutional research operations and given the self-study committee's suggestions about institutional research weaknesses and the need for greater accessibility and volume of research data, regular external evaluation by experts outside the University, such as occurred in 1999, is warranted. Furthermore, the Committee feels that the institution needs to ensure that there is ongoing and timely data collection and that the efforts to analyze and disseminate data make use of external studies and reports. Additionally, the OPBE needs to assure the continuous design and implementation of internal studies related to students, personnel, facilities, equipment, programs, services, and fiscal resources.

The Committee was informed during its visit that in response to Suggestion III-9 of the self-study the institutional research functions had been centralized. Additionally,

the position of Vice Provost for Planning and Institutional Effectiveness had been elevated to the vice presidential level, reporting directly to the Provost and President. The Committee encourages the University also to address the self-study committee's suggestions regarding the establishment of an institution-wide database to document productivity and to continue to facilitate the timely establishment of a data warehouse with the allocation of resources needed for its long-term maintenance and improvement. The Committee was unable to find evidence that a process is in place whereby consumers of institutional research data regularly can provide input on whether or not the information they receive is both useful and timely. (Recommendation 4) The Committee recommends that the institution regularly evaluate the effectiveness of its institutional research process and use its findings for the improvement of its process.

