Division of Student Life

Annual Report How-To Guide

ASSESSMENT & DIVISIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Student Life

Contents

Annual Report FAQ

Why was there a change in the reporting timeline?
The timeline changed so the Division's Annual Report could be completed by August.

What if I have additional data that won't be available by May 31?
If you have significant data for the Annual Report that is not available by May 31, simply note the anticipated completion date and re-submit the section once data is available.

What do I include in the appendices?
This year you'll notice that the formal Appendix portion of the Annual Report is missing. Since appendix information can now be submitted to your folder in the I-Drive, there is no need for the document to be submitted. Please submit these appendices with your Annual Report, and record the document titles in the table of contents section.
- Diversity Plan for 2013-2014
- Complete updated Strategic Plan
- Relevant data sets such as quantitative data collected from surveys or qualitative data from focus groups or student interviews.
- Any pertinent information that provides perspective to your Annual Report
- Any additional information that does not fit into the template
- Photographs! Please name files based on the event and date. Ex. "Family Weekend, Fall 2012" or "UC Student Employee completes leadership training, Fall 2012"

Do I report on this year or last year's activities?
Unless specified otherwise, report on the current year. In some sections, you will be asked to include plans for the upcoming year (Diversity Plan) or for complete multi-year plans (Strategic Plan) in the appendices.

Why do we have to submit documents twice (Diversity Plan, Strategic Plan)?
You are not submitting documents twice. The Annual Report should only address portions of the Diversity and Strategic Plans that you worked on during the reporting cycle. The Diversity and Strategic Plans submitted as appendices are the complete plans for next year (Diversity) or five years (Strategic). Think of the Annual Report portion as a snapshot (or update), and the appendices as past accomplishments or future plans.

What if I have an assessment goal that is similar or the same as last years?
Generally speaking, this should not happen. New assessments should inform goals or solve challenges; they should be unique. Ongoing, satisfaction-type projects likely do not change significantly year-to-year, and therefore should not be part of the Assessment Plan.

There are two boxes for assessment. Do I have to report on two projects?
No, either one or two projects are acceptable. Departments are encouraged to collaborate. If two departments work on a project together the same project would appear in both departments' assessment plans.

Whom should I ask if I have any questions while writing my annual report?
Please contact your Assessment Team liaison or Dr. Melissa Shivers at mshivers@utk.edu,
Amy Anderson at amy@utk.edu, or Kate Abernathy at kbrownl1@utk.edu.

Please help me with the SACS reporting section!
- The "Improvement Made" section should contain all of the following:
  o The program name
  o The assessment that indicated an improvement was needed
  o The improvement made
  o The date the improvement was made
  o EXAMPLE: A (year) assessment of (program) revealed students wanted more programming about finding a job after graduation. We added a session on this topic in fall of 2013.
- Program Outcomes: These should be based on Divisional Program Goals and should use this structure: As a result of the improvement/change/etc. what programmatic or service outcomes are evident?
- Student Learning Outcomes: Must be based on Divisional Student Learning Goals, and utilize this or similar language: Upon completion of participation in [insert program name], students will be able to: _____
- Results of Improvements: Thirty students attended the session and…
- Evidence of What Students Learned: This should be backed by data. Ex. 97% of students learned…

"It's Your Story: Tell it Like You Mean it!"

Writing your annual report may seem like that last big mountain to climb before the next academic year begins, but it is your one opportunity to really celebrate your successes and show how your department is going to build and grow in the upcoming year.

Top 15 Ways to "Tell Your Story"

1. *Be intentional and strategic!*
   a. Write about significant things with data-backed results.
   b. Remember: You have a strategic plan – let it guide your future!
2. *Keep your Annual Report in the forefront of your mind.*
   a. Using the template provided record all of your departmental wins, ideas for future assessments, programs or services, outcome of assessment projects, community service projects, collaborations, and areas of opportunity.
3. *The more the merrier.*
   a. The more detail, data, and demographics you can add the better!
4. *This is not the time to be modest.*
   a. If your unit did something interesting, creative, out-of-the-box, or impactful, write it down and let us know about the process that got you there.
5. *Use your Annual Report as a planning tool.*
   a. Use staff meetings to ensure you meet goals identified in the last annual report.
6. *Identify solutions when addressing challenges and obstacles.*
7. *Take lots of pictures.*
   a. Photos help us showcase your work. Please send high-resolution photos to us for inclusion in an upcoming annual report by dropping them in the folder with your annual report. Ask the students' permission to use the photos in publications.
8. *Ask your students and other constituents (at every opportunity) what they are learning and how you can support them.*
9. *Do not leave analyzing your assessment data to the last minute.*
   a. Analyze it when it is fresh in your mind.
   b. Close the loop! The best reporting is concise, clear, and showcases results!
10. *Be specific!*
    a. Demonstrate tangible ways in which you moved diversity initiatives forward in your department or supported the university's commitment to student learning. Great reading comes from action-based reporting.
11. *Erase what was written from last year – always start fresh!*
12. *Your Annual Report is reviewed by staff that may not have intimate knowledge of your unit.*
    a. Avoid jargon and acronyms, and explain programs and services as if you are telling someone who is unfamiliar with our work or departments.
13. *Edit your work!*
    a. Make sure you've checked and double checked your report. Remember this document speaks for your department. Submit your best work!
14. *Always make sure that your annual report flows and is easy to read.*
15. *Do not leave any sections blank.*

<u>Adapted from "APA 6th Edition: An Overview of the Basics" by John Dugan</u>

How you "tell your story" is as important as the story! Below are some basic elements of mechanics, structure, and style that may assist you in writing your departmental reports.

Punctuation Spacing: Place two spaces after sentence terminators (e.g., periods, question marks, exclamation marks). Place one space after commas, colons, and semicolons; periods as part of a reference citation; periods of initials in personal names. EXCEPTION: No spaces are used in abbreviations such as i.e., e.g., a.m., and colons used in ratios.

Biased Language: APA 6th Edition calls for the reduction of biased language in writing. This section of the book also provides substantial information on language issues. In general, avoid use of "loaded" terms (e.g., at risk) as they are not specific and open to misinterpretation.
- **Gender:** Never use *he* as a generic pronoun. Writing should be done in such a way that gender-specific pronouns are not needed. Avoid use of *he or she* or *he/ she* as it becomes distracting to the reader. Additionally, authors are advised that gender is cultural and sex is biological. Accurate use of these terms in writing is encouraged.
- **Racial/ Ethnic Groups:** Capitalize names of racial/ ethnic groups, including *Black* and *White.* Do not use hyphens in designations such as *Asian American* or *African American.* Avoid language that reifies race or situates one group as normative (e.g., "minority" when meaning "non-White").
- **Sexual Orientation:** Do *not* use the term homosexual. Instead, use the terms *lesbian, gay* or *gay man, bisexual. ** NOTE: APA 6th Edition does not call for these terms to be capitalized. However, many authors do so in publication as a means to advocate for the legitimacy of the population.
- **Disabilities:** Use the term *handicap* only to refer to the source of limitation. When referring to people, use the terms: *person with*; *person living with*; *person who has*
- **Age:** As a general reference, *boy* and *girl* are used for people of high school age and younger, while man and woman are used for people 18 and older. The term *older person* is preferable to *elderly.*

AND versus &: Only use the ampersand (&) in the reference list and in parentheses. Otherwise you should always use the word 'and' spelled out.

Commas in Series: Although it is grammatically correct to either use or omit a comma before the words *and/or* in a series of three or more, APA requires use of the comma to increase readability.

Semicolon: Use a semicolon to separate two independent clauses that are not joined by a conjunction. It is also appropriate to use semicolons to separate elements in a series that already contain commas.

Parentheses: Do *not* use back to back parentheses. Include everything in a single set of parentheses separated by a semicolon.
- *Incorrect: ...* various leadership theories (e.g., chaos, relational) (Northouse, 2006).
- *Correct:...* various leadership theories (e.g., chaos, relational; Northouse, 2006).

Numbers: You should spell out the word for numbers between one and nine. Numbers 10 and up can be typed in their numerical form. If a number begins a sentence, title, or heading it should be capitalized. However, it is better to reword the sentence and avoid using a number as the first word. Always use numerals for: representation of percentages (e.g., 7%), grouped comparison (e.g., 3 of 9 students completed the survey), statistical functions (e.g., multiplied by 7, 5 times as many), or denoting a specific place (e.g., chapter 5, row 9, page 196).

- **Decimal Fractions:** Use a zero before the decimal point with numbers that are less than 1 when the statistic can exceed 1 (e.g., Cohen's *d*, centimeters, inches).
- **Plural of Numbers**: When writing the plural of numbers you should not add apostrophes. The correct format would be: 1950s, sixes.

Latin Abbreviations:
- **e.g**.,: This translates to "for example." It is always written in the lower case with a period after each letter and followed by a comma, and it is used only in parentheses:
  - The comparison sample will be used to examine specific student populations (e.g., athletes, resident assistants, orientation leaders) on campus.
- **i.e**.,: This translates to "that is." It is always written in the lower case with a period after each letter and followed by a comma, and it is used only in parentheses:
  - Researchers found that involvement in a positional leadership role (i.e., election to a particular office) was the strongest co-curricular predictor.
- **et al**.,: This translates to "and others." It is always written in the lower case and there is no period after "et."

Statistical Abbreviations and Symbols: Most statistical symbols are written in italics.

Models, Theories, and Instruments: The names of models and theories should not be capitalized in papers. However, the names of instrument, tests, or scales, which are often named after models or theories, are capitalized. The words "test" or "scale" are not capitalized when referring to subscales of tests of an overall instrument. See examples below:
- social change model of leadership
- Astin' s theory of involvement
- social learning theory
- Socially Responsible Leadership Scale
- MMPI Depression scale
- Leadership Practices Inventory

When describing "anchors" in scales (i.e., the naming conventions describing opposite ends of a coding spectrum) do *not* use quotation marks. Instead, put the names of the anchors in italics.
- Response options ranged from 1 *(strongly disagree)* to 5 *(strongly agree).*

Passive Voice: Avoid using the passive voice in your writing. For more information on how to reduce use of passive voice and for a more detailed explanation of what it is see: http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/passive.htm

Word Choices: Be careful in your word choices and avoid some of the common errors below:

- **Affect versus Effect:** *Affect* as a noun is emotion and feeling; as a verb it means to influence (e.g., color affects your impression of a painting). *Effect* as a noun is an outcome or consequence; as a verb it means to cause to happen (e.g., effect the results of the study).
- **While versus Although:** *While* should only be used when you are referring to events that are happening at the same time (e.g., John cleaned the dishes while Erin put the food away). *Although* is often the word you should be using.
- **Impacted:** The noun impact is appropriate, but use of the verb impacted is often incorrect. Only a tooth can be impacted. Switch to "influenced" or another word.
- **Data:** The word *data* is typically plural. As such, you need to make sure you have subject verb agreement. "Data are representative of..."
- **That versus Who:** *That* should never be used to describe a person. For example, it is "The researcher who guided," NOT, "The researcher that guided."
- **Paragraph Length:** As a general rule, paragraphs should be a minimum of three sentences long. No paragraph should be only one sentence. On the flip side of this, be aware of run-on paragraphs. Paragraphs should generally not fill entire pages. Divide the information into organized sub-sections.
- **Anthropomorphism:** Anthropomorphism is the assignment of human forms, qualities, or actions to non-human things. In social science writing it is easy to do this (e.g., the research indicates, the data suggest). Reduce this as much as possible in your writing.
- **Prepositions:** Do not end sentences with prepositions. For a list of prepositions, see: http://www.uazone.org/friends/esl4rus/prepositions.html.

Contractions: Avoid using contractions (e.g., can't, won't, doesn't) in formal writing.

Etcetera: Avoid using the term. It is the written equivalent of blah, blah, blah.

Redundancy: Redundancy in writing is a common problem. Attempt to remove overuse of the same words or redundant language such as the following:
- They were **both** alike
- **A total of** 68 participants
- Instructions, which were **exactly** the same as those used
- **Absolutely** essential
- Has been **previously** found
- Small **in size**
- **Period of** time

Student Learning Outcomes

It is the objective of The Division of Student Life to facilitate student learning and development in the following eight areas, identified as our Divisional Student Learning Outcomes. This is accomplished through our programs, services, co-curricular programming and overall student support as well as through intentional interaction and collaboration with members of the UT community including faculty, staff, alumni, parents and community representatives.

Each unit will not necessarily meet each Student Learning Outcome each year; however, as a Division we are committed to collaboratively reaching each of these goals through the creation of student learning outcomes. To create your unit's student learning outcomes, consider the goals below. Your unit's learning outcomes should be specific and measurable statements.

Self-Knowledge
explore and clarify interests, skills, preferences and values • appraise oneself accurately • set personal, educational and career goals • exhibit self-confidence • define purpose • achieve sense of identity

Social Responsibility and Service
engage in active citizenship • demonstrate issues awareness, understanding and advocacy • challenge unjust or uncivil behaviors and standards • participate in service activities • make ethical decisions • identify as a member of global community

Communication
communicate effectively, verbally and non-verbally, in and out of the classroom • speak confidently in public • relay messages efficiently and suitably to the situation and audience • exhibit diplomacy, tact and negotiation skills • uphold a standard of confidentiality

Student Engagement
develop a sense of belonging, loyalty and institutional affinity • participate in campus and community groups • display responsibility to/for student organizations and relationships built on campus • possess dedication to the institution beyond graduation evidenced through gifts and campus contributions

Leadership
define leadership style or philosophy • work well in a team • delegate • serve as a role model • lead with integrity • develop meaningful interpersonal relationships • resolve conflict with civility • set and measure individual and group goals

Healthy Living
maintain or achieve emotional, personal and physical wellness • understand the consequences of risky behavior on health and academic success • make decisions that promote safe, healthy behaviors and reduce risk • contribute to a healthy, sustainable campus and community

Intercultural Competence
demonstrate awareness, knowledge and skills to understand the impact of diversity on campus and in the community • seek involvement with people different than oneself • practice fairness and equity • respect and appreciate diverse viewpoints and backgrounds

Practical Competence
identify and utilize campus resources • understand rights and responsibilities • strengthen problem solving, critical thinking and life skills • manage time and finances • adapt to changing situations • apply gained knowledge

Program Goals

It is the objective of The Division of Student Life to facilitate achievement and efficiency in the following six areas, identified as our Divisional Program Goals. These goals are accomplished through our staff and programs as well as through intentional interaction and collaboration with members of the UT community including faculty, staff, alumni, parents and community representatives. Program goals relate specifically to the operational and process side of each department's purpose and should be aligned with the unit's mission and address the overall impact that occurs on campus and in the community as a result of the unit's activities.

Each unit will not necessarily meet each Program Goal each year; however, as a Division we are committed to collaboratively reaching each of these goals through the creation of program outcomes. To create the unit's program outcomes, consider critical work processes and how these should function. The statements should be specific and measurable.

Service Delivery
participation numbers • number of students and/or community members served • access figures

Revenue Generation
general revenue • external funding and sponsorships • development initiatives • grants

Facility Operation
major aspects of facilities and operations • capital projects • occupancy • registration data

Community Outreach
outreach • community service • volunteer hours

Staff Engagement
membership and involvement in professional associations • community service • conference participation • membership in local agencies • presentation and publication experience

Assessment & Accreditation
departmental assessment projects • program reviews • accreditation projects

<u>Demographic Data & Reporting Standards</u>
Throughout your report, please make sure that all demographic references
are consistent with the information provided below.

The following questions have been compiled upon referencing various resources including, but not limited to, The University of Tennessee's application for admission, The University of Tennessee's Equal Employment Opportunity Self-identification Form, NSSE and with input from Student Voice, the LGBT Commission and the Division of Student Affairs Assessment Committee.

In order to maintain reporting consistency, the first three items are required on all future Division of Student Affairs assessments. Item four is strongly recommended. The remaining questions are considered common format and are to be used as needed.

1. Which best describes your gender identity? *
Male
Female
Transgendered
Other
I prefer not to respond

2. Which best describes your race/ethnicity?*
Alaskan Native
American Indian
Asian
Black or African American
Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
Hispanic
Middle Eastern
Multiracial/ Multiethnic
Other
White or Caucasian
I prefer not to respond

3. Class level:*
First-year student
Second-year student
Third-year student
Fourth-year student
Master's student
Doctoral student
Professional program student

4. Did you transfer to UT from another college or university?**
Yes
No

5. Which best describes your student status?
Part-time undergraduate student (1-11 credit hours)
Full-time undergraduate student (12 or more credit hours)

Part-time graduate student (1-8 credit hours)
Full-time graduate student (9 or more credit hours)

6. Which of the following best describes where you are living now while attending college? (NSSE)
Residence hall or other campus housing (not fraternity/sorority housing)
Residence (house, apartment, etc.) within **walking distance** of the institution
Residence (house, apartment, etc.) within **driving distance** of the institution
Fraternity housing
Sorority housing
None of the above

7. Which best describes your sexual identity?
Asexual
Bisexual
Gay
Heterosexual
Intersex
Lesbian
Questioning
Other
I prefer not to respond

8. Are you an international student or foreign national?
Yes
No

9. Birth date:
Year

10. Which best describes your religion?
Buddhist/Taoist
Christian/Catholic
Christian/Protestant
Christian/LDS/The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints
Christian/Other
Hindu
Jewish
Muslim
Spiritual but not religious
Not religious
Other
I prefer not to respond

11. Are you a member of a social sorority or fraternity?
Yes
No

Assessment and Research Glossary

- **Accountability** – The demand by a community (public officials, employers, and taxpayers) for school officials to prove that money invested in education has led to measurable learning.
- **Accreditation –** A certification awarded by an external, recognized organization, that the institution or program meets certain requirements overall, or in a particular discipline.
- **Achievement Test –** A standardized test designed to efficiently measure the amount of knowledge and/or skill a person has acquired, usually as a result of classroom instruction. Such testing produces a statistical profile used as a measurement to evaluate student learning in comparison with a standard or norm.
- **Action Plans** – The statement that indicates the specific changes that a given area plans to implement in the next cycle based on assessment results.
- **Affective** – Outcomes of education that reflect feelings more than understanding; likes, pleasures, ideals, dislikes, annoyances, values.
- **Annual Report** – A report from each unit based on its goals and accomplishments as well as an assessment plan that is submitted annually. The report outlines how evidence was used to improve student learning outcomes and program outcomes through changes or to document that no changes were needed.
- **Assessment** – The systematic collection, review, and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and development.
- **Assessment Cycle** – The assessment cycle in higher education is generally annual and fits within the academic year. Outcomes, targets and assessment tools are established before the fall semester begins; data is collected by the end of spring semester; results are analyzed during the summer and early fall.
- **Assessment of Student Learning –** Measures, both direct and indirect, used to evaluate student learning in order to change, improve and enhance student learning and the college experience. In doing so, the College provides accountability measures to serve the internal need of the College and in meeting requirements of external agencies.
- **Assessment tools (Methods)** -instruments used to gather data on student learning or program outcomes; either quantitative or qualitative selected in relation to the specific outcome(s) to be assessed; evidence available; learning to be observed and agreed-upon procedures for engaging in the assessment.
- **Backload –** Amount of effort after the data collection.
- **Benchmark –** A criterion-referenced objective, "Performance data that are used for comparative purposes. A program can use its own data as a baseline benchmark against which to compare future performance. It can also use data from another program as a benchmark. In the latter case, the other program often is chosen because it is exemplary and its data are used as a target to strive for rather than as a baseline." (p. xv) Hatry, H., van Houten, T , Plantz, M., & Greenway, M.T. (1996)
- **Bias –** A situation that occurs in testing when items systematically measure differently for different ethnic, gender or age groups. Test developers reduce bias by analyzing

item data separately for each group, then identifying and discarding items that appear to be biased.

- **Case Study –** This term has two definitions: 1) It refers to an in-depth study of a program or service. This technique is often used to understand more fully why a program or service has been successful or unsuccessful. 2) This term also refers to an approach in which practitioners ask students to respond to specific scenarios they may face in a given leadership role. The manner in which the students respond to these scenarios provides assessment data.
- **Checklists –** A list of statements that describe expected performance. Performance may include skills or knowledge. Checklists can be used to analyze reflective essays, observed behavior, or open-ended responses on questionnaires. A checklist is used to simply record the presence of the expected performance. This is in contrast to a rubric, which is used to assign a score to the performance.
- **Closing the Loop –** Also known as "evaluation," this phrase describes any effort to use evidence gathered from assessment to improve programs and services. Closing the loop ensures that information is being used for improvement rather than merely "collecting dust on a shelf."
- **Cluster sampling-** Splitting the population into different groups, randomly selecting a group, and surveying everyone in that group.
- **Cohort** – A group whose progress is followed by means of measurements at different points in time.
- **Competency –** Level at which performance is acceptable.
- **Continuous Variables** – Variables that can assume all values between any two given values i.e. the time it takes for you to do your summer reading.
- **Course Assessment –** Using direct and indirect measures to determine if the student outcomes at the course level have been met and using this data to enhance student learning.
- **Criterion-referenced –** Criterion-referenced tests determine what test takers can do and what they know, not how they compare to others. Criterion-referenced tests report how well students are doing relative to a pre-determined performance level on a specified set of educational goals or outcomes included in the curriculum.
- **Dependent Variable** – The variable on which we examine the impact of the manipulation of the independent variable (i.e., if we change the independent variable, do we see a change in the dependent variable?).
- **Direct Assessment** – Assessment to gauge student achievement of learning outcomes directly from their work.
- **Direct Measurements –** Standardized or non-standardized objective measures demonstrating competency in specific areas.
- **Discrete Variables -** Variables that assume values that can be counted and will assume a succinct value (e.g., number of days it rained in Hawaii in 2009).
- **Document Analysis -** Document analysis is a technique a practitioner can use to make inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages, whether they are written records or communications, physical evidence, or audio, video, or electronic recordings. Document analysis is often used to examine the values espoused by an organization.

- **Efficient-** Performing tasks in the best manner possible, with the least waste of time or effort.
- **Effectiveness –** (results of operations) How well an approach, a process, or a measure addresses its intended purpose.
- **Empirical Data**
  - o Qualitative Data: ways of collecting information that are concerned with understanding or conveying meanings or contexts, rather than making statistical inferences. Common forms: participant observations, focus groups, in-depth interviews, etc.
  - o Quantitative Data: information that is collected or represented numerically; typically focuses on counting occurrences or measuring characteristics or behavior rather than meanings; easy to analyze statistically. Common forms: surveys, experiments, questionnaires, et al., addresses its intended purpose.
- **Existing Data (or Preexisting Data) –** Refers to any previously gathered information. This can include information found in applications for positions, reflective essays, or usage data (e.g. the number of transactions during given time periods or attendance records for a series of events).
- **Existing Data Sets –** Refers to sets of data collected through previous assessment or research efforts. This term includes data gathered by US government agencies, UTK offices, such as the Office of Institutional Research, or by national organizations, such as National Survey of Student Engagement or Educational Benchmarking, Inc.
- **Expedited review-** When seeking IRB approval, if the project involves minimal risk or if you are simply seeking approval for small changes to an already approved project during the approved time frame, you may receive approval quicker and with less effort.
- **Formative assessment** – The assessment of student or program achievement at different stages. The focus of formative assessment is on the documentation of student development or program improvement over time. It can be used to provide feedback, to modify, shape, or improve a program/service and/or student learning.
- **Focus Group –** A group of people are asked about their perceptions, opinions, beliefs and attitudes towards a program, service, or concept. Questions are asked in an interactive group setting in which participants are free to talk with other group members.
- **Forced-choice –** The respondent only has a choice among given responses (e.g., very poor, poor, fair, good, and very good).
- **Frontload –** Amount of effort required in the early stage of assessment method development of data collection.
- **Human Subjects Office –** The Human Subjects Office provides administrative and secretarial support for the IRB, and assists researchers through the application and approval process. The administrator acts on behalf of the IRB and the University when providing assurance of human subject approval to sponsoring agencies, or when dealing with regulatory agencies. The Human Subjects Office staff is responsible for regularly monitoring IRB compliance, and updating IRB procedures with current and/or new relevant federal or state regulations.
- **Incentive-** A reward offered to participants to give them encouragement to complete the survey.
- **Independent Variable** – A variable that is manipulated by an experimenter.

- **Indirect Assessment** – Assessment that deduces results of outcomes through the reported perception of students and other agents.
- **Indirect Measurements –** Opinion surveys, interviews, and other subjective data combined with enrollment analyses, retention rates, graduation rates, employment data, transfer data, and other measures that provide data that can be analyzed as indicators of student learning.
- **Informed consent-** The process of revealing to the participant full details regarding any potential harm to him/her as a result of participating in the assessment project and that he/she may refuse to participate, and then receiving his/her agreement to participate in the study.
- **Institutional Assessment –** Assessment of institutional mission and goal statements including student services, financial stability, business and industry training, adult education, as well as academic programs.
- **Institutional Review Board –** The IRB is charged with the responsibility of protecting the rights and welfare of human subjects involved in research. (See Human Subjects Office)
- **Interview –** Refers to a question and answer session in which a person is asked to share opinions, attitudes, or experiences. Interviews can range from highly structured and formal to unstructured and informal. Responses are usually recorded in the form of notes or transcripts and are then analyzed.
- **Learning outcomes** – Operational statements describing specific student behaviors that evidence the acquisition of desired goals in knowledge, skills, abilities, capacities, attitudes or dispositions. Learning outcomes can be usefully thought of as behavioral criteria for determining whether students are achieving the educational goals of a program, and, ultimately, whether overall program goals are being successfully met. Outcomes are sometimes treated as synonymous with objectives, though objectives are usually more general statements of what students are expected to achieve in an academic program.
- **Longitudinal Studies –** Data collected from the same population at different points in time.
- **Mean** -The most common expression for the mean of a statistical distribution with a discrete random variable is the mathematical average of all the terms. To calculate it, add up the values of all the terms, and then divide by the number of terms. This expression is also called the arithmetic mean.
- **Median** -The median of a distribution with a discrete random variable depends on whether the number of terms in the distribution is even or odd. If the number of terms is odd, then the median is the value of the term in the middle. This is the value such that the number of terms having values greater than or equal to it is the same as the number of terms having values less than or equal to it. If the number of terms is even, then the median is the average of the two terms in the middle, such that the number of terms having values greater than or equal to it is the same as the number of terms having values less than or equal to it.
- **Mixed Methods –** An assessment project that employs more than one strategy for collecting information. The purpose of using mixed methods is to acquire a broader understanding of a service or program being assessed. For example, the Center for Leadership and Service administers online questionnaire to students in a leadership

program and then conducts follow-up interviews with them to gain a richer understanding of the experiences.

- **Mode** -The mode of a distribution with a discrete random variable is the value of the term that occurs the most often. It is not uncommon for a distribution with a discrete random variable to have more than one mode, especially if there are not many terms. This happens when two or more terms occur with equal frequency, and more often than any of the others. A distribution with two modes is called bimodal. A distribution with three modes is called trimodal.
- **Needs assessment-** Used to keep up to date on the needs of the students; not to be confused with wants. Student needs ten years ago are vastly different from the needs of today's students.
- **Norm** – A distribution of scores obtained from a norm group. The norm is the midpoint (or median) of scores or performance of the students in that group. Fifty percent will score above and fifty percent below the norm.
- **Norm-reference –** A norm-referenced test is designed to highlight achievement differences between and among students to produce a dependable rank order of students across a continuum of achievement from high achievers to low achievers.
- **Observer Effect –** The degree to which the assessment results are affected by the presence of an observer.
- **Observations –** An effort to gain familiarity with a given group of individuals and their practices by observing them in their natural environment, usually over an extended period of time. Observations might include: watching how students socialize in public, observing the ways students use furniture in a lounge, or witnessing a college football game from the student section.
- **Open-ended –** Assessment questions that are designed to permit spontaneous and unguided responses.
- **P-value:** "Probability" level. The likelihood that the difference observed between two interventions could have arisen by chance. It does not tell you the importance of the difference. The usual p value is arbitrarily set at 0.05.
- **Performance-Based Assessment** – Direct, systematic observation and rating of student performance of an educational objective, often an ongoing observation over a period of time, and typically involving the creation of products. The assessment may be a continuing interaction and should ideally be part of the learning process. The assessment should be a real-world performance with relevance to the student and learning community. Assessment of the performance is done using a rubric or analytic scoring guide to aid in objectivity. Performance-based assessment is a test of the ability to apply knowledge in a real life setting or performance of exemplary tasks in the demonstration of intellectual ability.
- **Photo Elicitation –** Photo elicitation involves giving students a prompt or question to address by taking photos of objects within their environment. The student photographer is then interviewed about the photos. For example, students may be asked to keep a journal throughout the picture-taking process and discuss its contents during the interview process as well.
- **Pilot testing**- Prior to distributing the survey, the survey is sent to a small group of evaluators whose job is to make sure directions are clear, check for errors, verify that

length is appropriate, and generally make sure it is accurate. It is often helpful to pilot test because others can often detect errors you have missed.

- **Population** – All elements that are being studied comprise a population. For example, if we want to study the distribution of IQ scores among politicians in Florida, the population will be all the politicians. In statistics, the way we approach a problem and the formulas we use are completely dependent on whether we are examining an entire population or a sample of the population.
- **Portfolio** – A systematic and organized collection of a student's work that exhibits to others the direct evidence of a student's efforts, achievements, and progress over a period of time. The collection should involve the student in selection of its contents, and should include information about the performance criteria, the rubric or criteria for judging merit, and evidence of student self-refection or evaluation.
- **Program Assessment (Program Review) –** The program outcomes are based on how each part is interacting with the rest if the parts, not on how each part is doing individually. The knowledge, skills and abilities that students achieve at the end of their programs are affected by how well courses and other experiences in the curriculum fit together and build on each other throughout the undergraduate years.
- **Program Effectiveness –** The degree to which a program, service or initiative meets its mission, objectives, and outcomes. Program effectiveness relies on the establishment and assessment of clear outcomes. An administrator must know specifically what the desired effect (outcome) of a program or service is in order to determine the extent to which the program is being effective, i.e. achieving the outcome.
- **Program Objectives –** Reflects student learning outcomes and achievements related to the program as a unit.
- **Questionnaire –** A tool used to gather information through a series of questions. Questionnaires are often referred to as "survey instruments" or mistakenly as "surveys". The use of questionnaires is the most common technique for gathering information due to how quickly and inexpensively they can be administered.
- **Random Sample** – A sample selected so that each group (of equal size) has the same chance of being selected.
- **Reliability** – An assessment tool's consistency of results over time and with different samples of respondents.
- **Rubric** – A set of criteria specifying the characteristics of a learning outcome and the levels of achievement in each characteristic.
- **SACS Goals:** SACS stands for the Southern Association Colleges and Schools. The goals identified in that section of the Annual Report reflect areas in which the Division must provide relevant data and report on in order to pass the reaccreditation process.
- **Sample** – A subset of the population (e.g., a listing the IQ scores of every tenth politician in Florida from an alphabetical listing of politicians).
- **Satisfaction Assessment-** The extent to which students, staff, faculty or other constituencies are satisfied with what you are offering.
- **Stakeholder –** Anyone who has a vested interest in the outcome of the program/project.
- **Statistical Power** -The power of a study is the ability for that study to find a difference between two treatments if the difference *really exists*. Power depends on the number of

individuals in the study and the magnitude of the difference. A power of 0.80 is the standard. For example, a study of only 30 patients might not find a small difference between two drugs, whereas a study of 300 patients might find a difference.

- **Stratified random sample-** Useful when you need to ensure equal representation among groups in a sample. Split a population into desired groups, then randomly sample each group.
- **Summative assessment** – The assessment of student or program achievement at the end point of learning or a process. The focus of summative assessment is on the judgment of a current program, service, student learning, for quality and/or worth, based on previously established standards. It does not reveal the pathway of development to achieve that endpoint.
- **Survey –** Refers to a process by which one gathers information from a number of people. Information gathered by surveys usually used to describe group attitudes, satisfaction, or learning. Surveys can include a number of data gathering techniques, such as questionnaires and interviews.
- **Survey fatigue-** A decline in survey response rates, due to the population being subjected to too many survey requests.
- **Third Party –** Person(s) other than those directly involved in the educational process (e.g. employers, parents, consultants).
- **Triangulation** – The collection of data via multiple methods in order to determine if the results show a consistent outcome.
- **Usage Data –** Information about the extent to which a program or service is used. Usage data can include number of tickets sold, number of people who pass through a turnstile during a given period of time, or number of students who attend an activity.
- **Utility –** The usefulness of assessment results.
- **Validity** – The degree to which an assessment measures (a) what is intended, as opposed to (b) what is not intended, or (c) what is unsystematic or unstable.
- **Variable –** Observable characteristics that vary among individual responses.