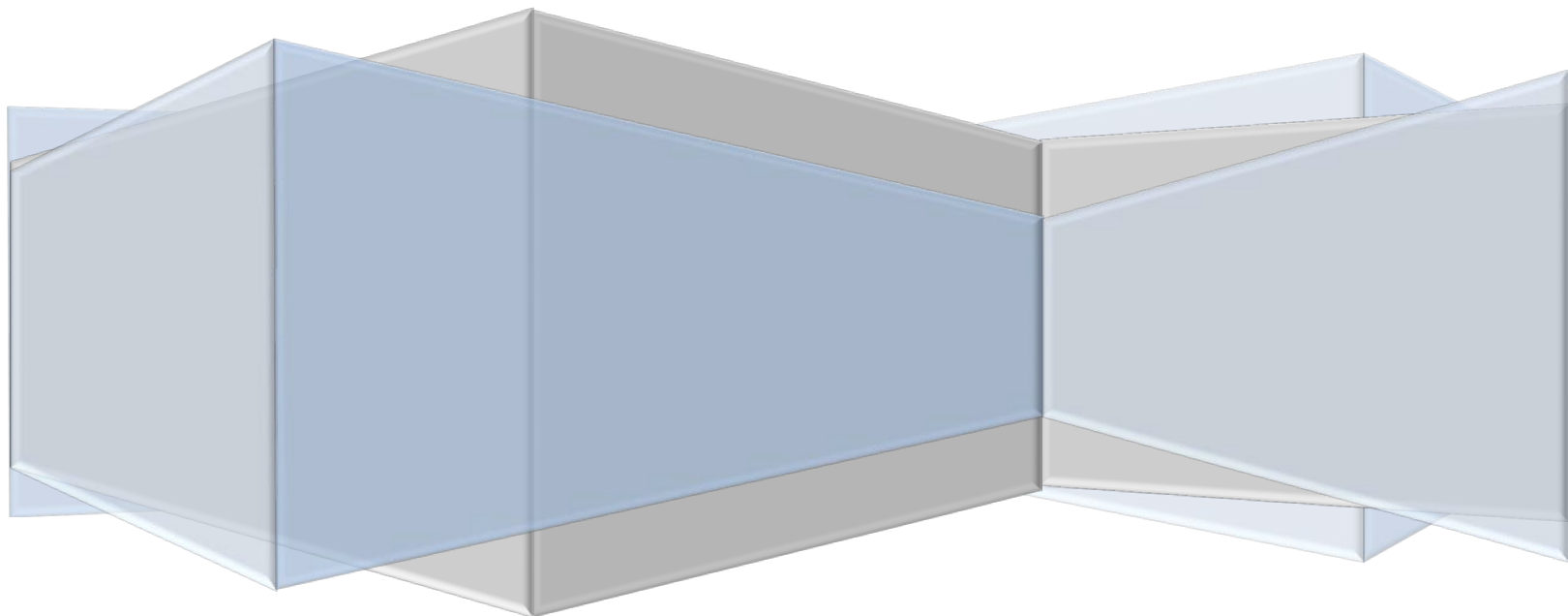


# Southeastern Illinois College



## Assessment Plan

Revised Fall 2017



## I. History

Assessment at Southeastern Illinois College is not a new phenomenon; the history of assessment is full of accomplishments and challenges. The College has “learned by doing.” Assessment at Southeastern is ongoing. It is honest, and it serves as a catalyst for change and improvement.

Southeastern Illinois College is proud of its efforts in assessment. It is continuous and focal. The initial Assessment Committee began its work in 1992, with the Institutional Plan for the Assessment of Student Academic Achievement approved in 1994 and revised in 1996, and the Plan for the Assessment of Institutional Effectiveness approved in 1997. Despite the detailed nature of the approved plans, the new assessment effort floundered at the start. While assessment was accomplished in some functional areas, the institution did not fully engage in the processes identified in these two documents. Several functional areas indicated confusion about implementation of the plans. Other areas, particularly outside academic programs, did not implement the plans at all. The institution seemed comfortable with an effort that can best be described as uneven. Through the institutional review process, the gaps in the assessment process became apparent and steps were taken to improve the institutional commitment to assessment. Today the plans have been revised and integrated to reflect a more meaningful assessment process. A culture of assessment has been established and is an ongoing part of our daily processes and activities.

Administrative staff changes also affected the College’s implementation of the assessment plans. In 2000 the College’s third president retired, and the Vice President for Instruction was employed as the new President. The new Vice President employed in July 2000 brought to the College a knowledge and understanding of assessment. The Vice President determined that beyond the program review process, assessment activities with an annual focus were not occurring within all instructional programs. Action was taken to address this situation. Committed to a faculty-staff driven process, the Assessment Committee was re-organized in 2003-04 to align with administrative initiatives concerning an institution-wide assessment process. At this point assessment activities throughout the College were made the responsibility of the Vice President for Instruction. The Committee was restructured to include representatives from all functional areas of the College. In 2004 the fourth President of the College retired and a new President was employed. Confirming the need for an emphasis on institutional assessment and effectiveness, this President renewed the institutional commitment in this area. An Assessment Team was formed in the spring of 2005 to provide peer leadership and support for the Assessment Committee and the institutional assessment process in general. A further refinement of the process and a more active, dynamic committee structure which subdivided the Assessment Committee into instructional, general education and non-instructional subcommittees came in 2005-06.

From 2006 forward, assessment quality improved and the process thrived. Further institutional commitment to assessment was made in November of 2006 when Southeastern’s Board of Trustees approved the creation of a full-time Coordinator of Institutional Assessment position. This position provided further assistance to faculty and staff with assessment plans, activities and reports. When the Higher Learning Commission’s peer review team made its re-accreditation

visit in the spring of 2008, they found a strong and excellent assessment program in place. In their Final Team Report, they concluded that, “assessment at SIC is an effective, systematized, ongoing process.” They further described Southeastern’s assessment program as, “An exemplar assessment program which is faculty driven and not only documents student academic achievement, but also identifies areas for improvement and links to the planning processes, resulting in improving institutional effectiveness and student learning.”

Since that 2008 visit and report, SIC has continued to refine the process and make improvements. Due to extremely difficult financial circumstances created by the dire financial status of the state, the position of Coordinator of Institutional Assessment was eliminated in 2010, as a part of a reduction in force that affected numerous areas. However, the process has continued seamlessly with the Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs assuming direction for assessment responsibilities at that time. Assessment work continued as outlined in the plan and the Assessment Process Manual, guided by the Assessment Team. As confirmation of continued quality assessment work, the Illinois Community College Board, in its 2010 Recognition Visit Report, stated the following regarding assessment at the College:

*“Southeastern Illinois College has an assessment plan that demonstrates that quality teaching and learning are valued. The College utilized data from the assessment of student learning for the improvement of curriculum, teaching and student learning. The College demonstrates that there has been thinking in advance about the use of assessment information. Assessment is integrated into the College’s planning discussions.”*

In 2012, the Assessment Team worked to update online assessment information as the institution moved to a newly designed website. During the 2012-13 academic year, the Institutional Assessment Plan is being reviewed and updated. While the process continued to work well, a slight change in the structure and responsibilities of the A-Team was made during that time. While the Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs served in the leadership role for the Assessment Team, the Dean of Academic Services served as the Co-Chair for assessment of instructional programs, and the Dean of Career and Technical Education served as Co-Chair for assessment of non-instructional units. This new structure provided improved oversight and insures that quality standards are being maintained.

In June 2016, the retirement of the Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs presented an opportunity to re-structure the A-Team even further. With the re-engineering and re-structuring of administrative duties, the freezing of a Dean position and the promotion of the Dean of Career and Technical Education to Vice President for Academic Affairs, new opportunities in assessment leadership emerged. Knowing the importance of having a faculty-driven assessment process, Southeastern appointed a faculty member and long-term A-Team member to chair the committee, lead the A-Team and provide leadership of assessment activity for the institution as a whole. The Executive Dean of Academic Services (a title change that occurred at the same time as other administrative re-structuring) remained serving as the Co-Chair for assessment of instructional programs and the Vice President of Academic Affairs serves as an advisor for the A-Team, committee and chair of Assessment. The A-Team is also comprised of two additional faculty members, the division chair of Humanities and the division chair of Math, Science & Technology.

The Assessment Committee continues to drive the process. Assessment is more personalized for each functional area of the College. Peer feedback is provided with a focus on development of outcomes and subsequent reporting and use of results, which lead to successful achievement of assessment goals and objectives. Thus, the evolution and maturation of the process has become a significantly refined, continuous cycle of improvement.

The Institutional Assessment Plan incorporates the Higher Learning Commission's new criteria for accreditation:

- Mission
- Integrity: ethical and responsible conduct
- Teaching and learning: quality, resources, and support
- Teaching and learning: evaluation and improvement
- Resources, planning and institutional effectiveness.

The plan includes a description of assessment procedures, assessment links to the institutional budgeting process, roles in implementation, human resources and budget allocation, timeline for submission of assessment documents, assessment evaluation, and appendix. This plan serves to build on the longstanding history, accomplishments, and experiences in the assessment arena. In all aspects, the College capitalizes on a rich resource: a matured and future-focused total institutional commitment. All assessment activities, whether they focus on student learning, program outcomes, or institutional effectiveness, are embedded in the daily activities of Southeastern Illinois College.

## II. DESCRIPTION OF ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES

**A**ll means of assessment at Southeastern Illinois College relate to its mission: *Southeastern enhances lifelong learning by providing quality accessible educational programs, cultural enrichment opportunities, and support for economic development.*

More specifically, assessment stems from the goals of that mission statement:

1. Provide a general education program that creates a foundation for further study and enlightened citizenship.
2. Empower students to achieve their educational goals, enabling them to successfully live and work in a culturally diverse global society.
3. Provide students access to quality transferable courses.
4. Prepare students to succeed in a highly competitive workforce through career and technical education.
5. Provide opportunities in developmental and adult basic/secondary education.
6. Enhance learning by integrating educational opportunities in and out of the classroom.
7. Utilize existing and emerging technologies to equip students, enhance learning and provide services.
8. Sponsor award-winning, competitive, and service oriented activities.
9. Offer lifelong learning opportunities to explore potentials, abilities, and interests.
10. Enrich and enhance the community through cultural and general interest events.

11. Provide resources, training and leadership for economic development of business and industry.
12. Provide a wide range of student and administrative services to support achievement of student learning and personal development.
13. Create a culture where assessment of student learning outcomes and college services are valued and used across the institution.
14. Responsibly manage the resources entrusted to the college on behalf of the community.
15. Establish and maintain mutually beneficial educational, corporate and community partnerships.

Areas listed in these goals are subdivided into specific programs or units for specific assessment. In terms of instruction and learning, general education is assessed at multiple levels through course-specific assessments, survey research, graduate testimonials, and annual assessment results reports. Career and technical education programs cover a wide range of content areas. A variety of assessment means are employed including industry-specific standards and employer surveys, as well as NOCTI (National Occupational Competency Testing Institute) tests.

Baccalaureate education parallels general education but also includes specific measures at many levels including annual program assessment results reports. In summer 2016, the A-Team met and decided to change the general education target areas since the general education goals were modified in spring 2016. The new general education target areas, implemented in the 2016-2017 academic year, are aesthetic creativity, environmental impact, problem solving, and social awareness. Teaching faculty are encouraged to implement two of the four target areas into the assessment plans each year, striving to include all four target areas in a two-year period.

Also implemented in the 2016-2017 academic year was a small, but significant component to the assessment reporting process. "Closing the loop" is a concept shared by higher education scholars on the need to turn assessment findings into effective educational change. With the addition of a "closing the loop" section on the assessment forms, all areas of the college are required to provide evidence on how assessment activity resulted in advancing student learning. Southeastern Illinois College understands that assessment is ongoing and is cyclical. "Closing the loop" will not only complete the process of assessment activity, but from evidence used within the assessment process itself, new projects will emerge to advance student learning leading to student success.

All instructional areas are assessed annually, as well as being assessed through the intensive program review process. While program review has its own independent five-year review cycle set by the Illinois Community College Board, this intense review of each program provides data to the assessment process. Components of the program review process analyze course outlines, level of community engagement, instructional support, teaching strategies, assessment practices, human resources, enrollment patterns, and program outreach. Follow-up analysis is conducted the following year. Program review provides crucial data to determine program vitality and areas for improvement. Non-academic units also conduct assessment of their services via varied and multiple measures, such as student surveys and testimonials, and internal audits. These

support units are included in the five-year program review cycle, as well. Program review reports are available on Intrinsic for college employees to review.

Means of assessment include both course-level and programmatic approaches. These means initially were formed using a five-column model. Currently, the College utilizes the administrative, education, and support services (AES) intended outcomes and results reporting format, which is more user-friendly. As the assessment program matured, reporting forms were modified to reflect a stronger focus on outcomes and their uses.

Students are also actively involved with assessment through both traditional and online course/instructor evaluations and the College's annual student satisfaction survey.

Assessment results have important implications for academic programs. As an ongoing, dynamic, and multi-leveled approach, all assessment results are analyzed, with action plans designed to bring improvement where needed. For example, the English department provided an assessment project that would demonstrate an increase in critical thinking and diversity awareness regarding contemporary social issues. Using SIC's computer lab, students in freshman college English (ENG 121) researched a marginalized community of their choice, such as racial and/or sexual minorities, refugees and political prisoners. Students then engaged five or more sources in their research. Based on this research, students completed a Marginalized Community Questionnaire, which asked for background information involving the community and reasons for its oppression. The results demonstrated a cultural awareness, research skills involving MLA format, and writing about a community far from their own. From this project, a meaningful connection was made between the student and the group studied.

The Practical Nursing program tackled cultural diversity by offering nine (9) NCLEX style questions, as multiple choice format, regarding the delivery of nursing care to a culturally diverse population. The questions were retrieved from the ATI testing center which helps to prepare nursing students for success on NCLEX. The students will be given the initial assessment during the fall Assessment Day in October. Students will be given the same nine (9) NCLEX style questions, as multiple choice format, regarding the delivery of nursing care to a culturally diverse population at the end of the program in June/July. It was noted that the questions missed the most were primarily the same between the pre and post-tests. In addition, it must be noted that the post-test results included returning students who had covered the content in prior courses with a time span of 1-2 years previously. After analysis of the results, it was evident to the faculty in the Practical Nursing program that the topics of Cultural Diversity and Competency remain areas of weakness. The test questions addressed the topics in all areas of nursing and therefore, all courses in the PN program require improvement in delivery and mastery of the content. Because of this, more integration of cultural diversity will be embedded in teaching and testing for future PN students.

As for support areas, the IT department implemented an IT Help Desk service order tracking and customer service installation, configuration and setup, using the Flowan Help Desk System. Using a satisfaction survey with the new help desk procedures, the IT department found that users liked receiving notifications and updates as the department worked through case resolution. In fact, 89% of help desk users reported overall satisfaction with the new help desk services and

the department will continue to improve from the constructive feedback they received from the survey.

In Fall 2017, a more detailed account of assessment activity was established and compiled for the 2016-2017 academic year. This report will be annually submitted to the Board of Trustees every fall semester chronicling the previous academic year's assessment activity as a highlight and review of the work SIC employees did that specific year in assessment to improve student learning.

To learn more about intricate changes as a result of assessment, SIC faculty and staff may visit the Assessment section available on Intrinsic for a full inventory of assessment results reports from all institutional programs and support units.

### **III. LINKS TO THE INSTITUTIONAL BUDGETING PROCESS**

**T**he budgeting process, strategic planning, and assessment are interrelated to carry out the mission of Southeastern Illinois College. Assessment results can drive planning decisions, which in turn, become budgetary requests. Of course, some planning is done because of environmental scanning not captured by a particular assessment outcome and can still drive the budget. As well, external fiscal constraints can drive the budget against certain plans, even those based on assessment results, if the action step is beyond the fiscal capacity of required resources. However, assessment is certainly a factor in these processes.

To ensure that faculty and staff consider budget implications as they consider their assessment activities and the needed actions as a result of assessment data and results, the assessment process form contains a section for budget implications to be recorded. The same is true for the strategic planning form used by the College. Every strategic plan activity must include budget implication information for planning purposes. The assessment form can be found on the assessment web page, which is located under the "Accountability" link on the footer of the home page. Select the "Resources" link on the assessment web page grid. The strategic planning forms used for operational planning are located on the strategic planning web page, also under "Accountability" on the footer of the home page. Select the "Forms" link from the strategic planning web page grid.

Southeastern's budgeting process promotes transparency within the process. An open budget hearing is held for every budgeting unit on campus. At these budget hearings, questions about how the budget was impacted by any assessment or strategic planning activities are discussed. Through these various processes, these major institutional elements – assessment, planning and budget – work together as needed and as appropriate to fulfill the mission of the College for the stakeholders we serve.

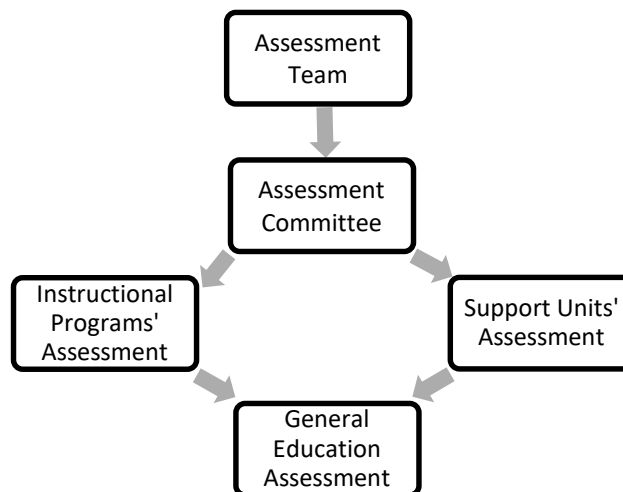
## IV. ROLES IN IMPLEMENTATION

Assessment at Southeastern is college-wide and occurs in instructional as well as administrative and educational support areas. The Board of Trustees, administration, faculty, staff, and students participate in an ongoing process of evaluation and improvement.

As previously discussed in the history section of this document, the campus Assessment Team (A-Team) exists to provide leadership and ensure quality in the college-wide assessment process. The Assessment Committee is led by the "A Team", which is chaired by an Academic Advisor, the Executive Dean of Academic Services, a Math/Science faculty member/Division Chair, and a Humanities faculty member/Division Chair. The Vice President of Academic Affairs serves as an advisor for the "A Team". This group provides direction and leadership for the committee, keeping the assessment process on track and ensuring quality. The Executive Dean of Academic Services serves as co-chair for assessment of academic programs, and the chair of assessment provides oversight of the non-academic units. One faculty member and one student affairs staff member make up the final two positions on the team. In addition to providing leadership for assessment, duties of the A-Team also include improvement in assessment structure and implementation, assessment education for all areas of the College, and the establishment of timetables and goals.

Assisting the A-Team is the larger Assessment Committee, which consists of 17 additional members from all areas of the College as well as student government representative. Duties of this committee include planning assessment activities; assisting divisions/departments with developing and implementing assessment plans; reviewing and critiquing assessment plans; and, establishing goals in conjunction with the A-Team recommendations. A current listing of committee members is available on the assessment web page grid.

Since the Assessment Committee consists of representatives from all major areas and levels of organization within Southeastern Illinois College, assessment at the College is seen as the shared responsibility of all areas. Assessment of student learning, however, is a faculty-driven process that draws upon data from a variety of internal and external sources. Faculty, as content area specialists, create measures for their own areas within basic parameters set by the A-Team and the Assessment Committee faculty. It is conducted and analyzed at multiple levels and results in action steps for ongoing improvement.





## V. HUMAN RESOURCE AND BUDGET ALLOCATION

**S**outheastern demonstrates its commitment to assessment through its investment of human and financial resources in the process. All departments and units are involved in assessment activities. The Assessment Committee represents all areas of the College and is truly a “working committee,” requiring more of its membership than a few meetings each year. Among their responsibilities as described in the previous section, a major task is to serve as peer reviewers of assessment plans from all units in the College.

The members of the A-Team have made an even greater commitment to the College’s assessment process by serving in their respective capacities. They have even greater responsibilities in the oversight and guidance of the institutional assessment process. The team members also act as liaisons for faculty and staff to the administration and Board of Trustees, as they fulfill the following roles:

- Make recommendations to the Administrative Cabinet regarding assessment issues
- Identify assessment needs and deficiencies
- Prepare assessment research and documents
- Deliver staff development assessment activities
- Provide assessment resources to faculty and staff
- Ensure compliance with state, regional and national assessment standards
- Maintain the assessment website with current information

While specific dollar allocations dedicated toward assessment are limited, when the cost of the faculty, staff and administrative time is taken into consideration, the financial commitment is significant.

## VI. ANNUAL ASSESSMENT CYCLE AND PROCESS

**T**he assessment process at SIC follows a schedule that permits the use of assessment information in the allocation of college resources, as well as feeding the strategic planning process. An annual assessment calendar is created each year for use by the committee, and is placed on the assessment website where anyone may access it. Assessment is also included in the Institutional Effectiveness Cycle Calendar, which is the master calendar for several critical institutional processes, which also includes budgeting, strategic planning, program review, and performance evaluations. The Southeastern Illinois College Institutional Effectiveness Cycle Calendar can be viewed on the SIC website by going to the “Accountability” link on the footer of the home page, and then selecting “Institutional Effectiveness.” However, a summary of the assessment process during the academic year is provided below:

- The Assessment Committee meets during the fall semester in-service day to discuss the calendar and activities for the year.
- The divisions/departments prepare their assessment plans for the current year with the start of the fall semester. They are typically due during the last week of September.

- Once submitted to the appropriate co-chair, they are reviewed, and any needed revisions are made at that time. Additionally, one-third of the plans go through the peer review process each year. All plans are posted to Intrinsic after the review/revision process where they can be viewed by the entire staff.
- Implementation begins in some programs as soon as the fall semester begins, depending on the type of assessment activities they plan to use. However, all assessment activities should be underway by October 1 of each year.
- Results reports are submitted to the appropriate chair or dean at the end of the academic year if all activities are complete and data compiled. The reports may be submitted the following fall semester if additional time is needed for data collection and completion of the activities. All results reports are posted on Intrinsic.
- The Assessment Chair reports to the Leadership Committee once a month regarding assessment activity on campus.
- Assessment Activity is reported throughout the year to the Board of Trustees through administrators' reports.

An *Assessment Process and Procedures Manual* provides detailed information on every aspect of the process and is available on the assessment website located under the “Resources” link on the assessment web page grid. This manual is provided to all new employees during an assessment orientation session that is held at the beginning of each fall semester.

## VII. ASSESSMENT EVALUATION

Assessment, as an institutional process, also needs to be evaluated to ensure that it remains dynamic and effective. To this end, Southeastern’s institutional assessment plan, which was written in 1994, has been revised five times, with the most recent revisions being completed in 2017. With each revision, the plan has become more meaningful and effective. This most recent review and revision was led by the Assessment Team, with input from the Assessment Committee, who received input from their respective divisions and departments. During the fall semester, the A-Team met to review the 2006 Institutional Assessment Plan. Areas for updating and revision were noted. The plan was then revised and shared with the larger Assessment Committee to give them an opportunity to review, share with faculty and staff members, and provide feedback for any further revisions. With those additional revisions made, the document was finalized and provided to the A-Team for a final review at the end of the fall 2012 semester. It will then be presented to Board of Trustees during the spring 2013 semester.

Another aspect of assessment evaluation is the peer review process in which the Assessment Committee engages as it annually reviews one-third of all assessment plans prepared and submitted by the divisions and departments. This process is modeled after the five-year program review cycle. This peer review process is described in the previous section, as well as in the *Assessment Process and Procedures Manual*, which can be found on the assessment website.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

A former student Assessment Committee member sums up Southeastern Illinois College's commitment and current beliefs about assessment in a simple, but eloquent manner. She says that, often in the home of a growing child, a yardstick is attached to a wall or doorway. From time to time, the child will run to that special spot with a parent following behind, marker in hand. Certain that he or she has grown, the child is excited to be measured. Likewise, the faculty, staff, and administration at Southeastern are confident that our institution is growing because of the assessment and evaluation tools that are in place. Assessment measures the success of students, programs, and other aspects of the College in many ways. Southeastern's students, instructors, staff and administrators use the results of these instruments to make informed, educational decisions.

In conclusion, Southeastern Illinois College has invested significant time, energy, and human resources to develop and implement an assessment plan that serves as a catalyst for change and improvement. The College is committed to maintaining an assessment culture that is continually strengthened by its experiences, integrity, sincerity, and forward thinking. The current assessment plan is the road map for success, driving processes that are ongoing, evolving, exciting and stimulating.

**NOTE: No Appendix is provided in this document as was done in the past because all references within the document refer back to the Assessment Web Page, which is located under the "Accountability" link at the footer of the SIC home page.**