



Southeastern
Illinois
College

Institutional Assessment Plan

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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 continuous and focal. It serves as a catalyst for change and improvement.

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 of the 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 forth 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 used data from the assessment of student learning to improve 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 2012-2013 academic year, the Institutional Assessment Plan was 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 ensured that quality standards were 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 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. 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 served 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.

In September 2018, the Vice President of Academic Affairs along with a co-chair of the assessment committee and an assessment committee team member attended the Higher Learning Commission's training on assessing general education. The members learned about developments in the assessment process and different perspectives on what general education meant to different institutions. The members brought back the information gained from this training and presented it to the Assessment Committee. Together, the Assessment Committee worked to develop a more unified understanding of general education.

During the Spring 2019 term, The Higher Learning Commission completed a reaccreditation visit at Southeastern Illinois College. During this visit, the team noted the college's commitment to the assessment process but found that visualizing the process was difficult. As a result, the Assessment Team worked to rectify the concerns presented by the visiting team. One of the new developments after the visit was the creation of **curriculum mapping**. Through **curriculum mapping**, one can easily reference how the academic programs align with general education and CTE goals.

The 2019-2020 academic year had many developments in assessment. The new curriculum mapping initiative was implemented to provide a visual representation of the student learning via general education goals. The assessment form benefited from a couple of modifications. The form was reformatted to better represent the alignment of instructional plans with general education goals. Additionally, the form was modified in May 2019 to include **CTE goals**. These **CTE goals** are utilized by the CTE instructional units in creating their assessment plans.

The 2020-2021 academic year was a difficult year for many educational institutions. The faculty changed the way assessment projects were designed and executed. To ensure that we remained committed to the assessment process and institutional goals, assessment projects were comprised of pre-test and post-test formats. This allowed instructors to continue their assessment efforts safely and effectively during this challenging time.

For the 2021-2022 academic year, the A-Team updated the **general education target areas** and modified the assessment form. The updated **general education target areas** include ethics and integrity, critical thinking, technology literacy, and social and cultural awareness. Updates to the form include moving the "Closing the Loop" section of the report to the beginning of the form as well as adding important assessment due dates.

Also, during the 2021-2022 academic year members of the Assessment Committee's A-Team attended training on general education and co-curricular assessment. The Assessment Committee met to define and identify cocurricular programs at the college. The committee worked to ensure there was a clear understanding of what was curricular versus co-curricular activities. These meetings resulted in specific definitions, goals, and competencies being identified and codified by the group. A new cocurricular assessment form was created and distributed to all directors of co-curricular programs. The new co-curricular assessment initiative was implemented in the fall of 2022.

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

All means of assessment at Southeastern Illinois College relate to its mission: *Southeastern Illinois College promotes quality, accessible, and accountable learning that is responsive to student and community needs*

More specifically, assessment stems from the [institutional priorities](#):

1. Teaching and Learning
2. Service to the Community
3. Accessibility
4. Accountability

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. Various assessment means are used including industry-specific standards, employer surveys, and 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, were aesthetic creativity, environmental impact, problem solving, and social awareness. Target areas were updated for the 2021-2022 academic year as noted on page 3. 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.

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. *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 and through the intensive program review process. While program review has its own independent five-year review cycle set by the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), 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.

Students are also actively involved with assessment through formative and summative course assessments, 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-level approach, all assessment results are analyzed, with action plans designed to bring improvements where needed. Beginning In Fall 2017, a more detailed account of assessment activity was established and compiled for the 2016-2017 academic year. This report is annually submitted to the Board of Trustees in the fall semester chronicling the previous academic year's assessment activity as a highlight and review of the work SIC employees completed. The Annual Assessment Activity Reports are available on the college's website here: <https://sic.edu/accountability/assessment/>.

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

The 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. Also, 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, located under the *Accountability* link on the home page's footer. Select the *Resources* link on the assessment web page grid. The strategic planning forms used for operational planning are on the strategic planning web page, also under *Accountability* on the home page's footer. 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.

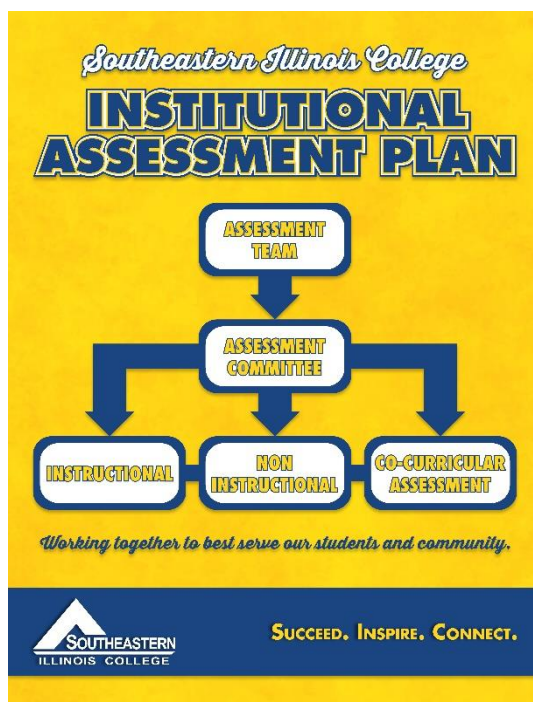
IV. Roles in Implementation

Assessment at Southeastern is college-wide and occurs in instructional, 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 A-Team is a 4-person group co-chaired by the Executive Dean of Academic Services and the Business/Music faculty members. The Executive Dean of Academic Services oversees assessment for non-instructional and co-curricular programs. The Business/Music faculty member oversees the assessment of instructional programs. The remaining two A-Team members are the Science/Mathematics division chair and a Diesel Technology faculty member. This group provides direction and leadership for the committee, keeping the assessment process on track and ensuring quality. 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 15 additional members from all areas of the College as well as a 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.

Assessment at Southeastern Illinois College is a shared responsibility across all areas. The Assessment Committee consists of representatives from all major areas and levels of the college. 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

Southeastern 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 considered, the financial commitment is significant.

VI. Annual Assessment Cycle and Process

The 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 six times, with the most recent revisions being completed in 2024. 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. Through this process we have developed updated forms,

assessment rotations, and an annual assessment report highlighting assessment activities from college departments from the previous academic year.

Another aspect of assessment evaluation is the peer review process in which the Assessment Committee engages as it annually reviews 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 and in the Assessment Process and Procedures Manual, which is on the assessment website. A graphic of our current assessment cycle is included below:



VIII. Conclusion

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 to the Assessment Web Page, which is located under the “Accountability” link at the footer of the SIC home page.