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Preface

There is a story set in medieval times that tells of a traveler who comes upon three stonemasons. He asks each in turn: 'What are you doing?' The first answers, without hesitation, 'I am cutting this stone.' The second, who appears to be doing the identical job, makes a gesture with his hand and says, 'I am completing the wall.' The third, who again seems to be doing the same job, slowly raises his eyes to the sky and says, 'I am building a cathedral.'

This story highlights the power of vision, of seeing situations as opportunities for greatness. The Institutional Effectiveness (IE) process at Lamar State College Orange (LSCO) provides the platform for LSCO leaders to build the synergy and work in unison to advance our shared mission for students and our community.

To support the IE process, we have weaved resources together in this IE Handbook. The purpose of the handbook is threefold: First, the handbook provides a common understanding and set of expectations regarding the IE process at Lamar State College Orange. Second, it serves as a resource to aid the campus in their IE unit planning efforts. Finally, it acts as a communication piece for our internal and external stakeholders, updating them about our assessment process and accomplishments. As such, it is a living document that will be updated on a regular basis.

Additionally, the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness provides online resources and regular professional development workshops. We want to support you in any way we can as we work toward achieving our mission of transforming lives.

Introduction

What is IE?

A. Definition

IE, an acronym for Institutional Effectiveness, refers to "the systematic, explicit, and documented process of measuring performance against mission in all aspect of an institution." (SACSCOC Resource Manual, 2024, p. 171). It is a continuous process of planning, assessing, reviewing results, and using results for ongoing improvement.

At Lamar State College Orange (LSCO), the IE process consists of the assessment of both operational effectiveness and learning effectiveness. To assess the operational effectiveness, all LSCO departments are engaged in the Administrative Unit Planning process, which consists of developing the assessment plans, implementing the plans, and collecting data to gauge the extent to which the expected outcomes are achieved, and then using the assessment results for continuous improvement.

To assess learning effectiveness, all LSCO educational and technical programs measure student learning outcomes at both the course level and the program level. "Effective institutions focus on the design and improvement of educational experiences to enhance student learning and support appropriate student outcomes for its educational programs and related academic and student support services that support student success." (SACSCOC Resource Manual, 2024, p. 68).

To further clarify what IE is, let's debunk some myths about assessment.

B. Myths and Facts about Assessment

Myths	Facts
Assessment is something required by the external agencies; it is disconnected with what we do daily.	Assessment is an integral part of what we do daily. We carry out action steps, implement initiatives, provide services, and tackle projects to support our institution's mission. Without assessment, we won't know what we do daily is effective or not. We wouldn't know how we can improve what we do daily. If we want to achieve the highest level of excellence, assessment is the means to that end.
Assessment is not worth the time.	Clearly, assessment of a program should not commandeer the actual services; however, assessment offers insight into what is working and what is not, and in a time of limited resources, assessment can yield information that helps you save time and resources.

Assessment will go away.	SACSCOC mandates the use of assessment data to continuously improve institutional effectiveness. It is part of the institutional practices, so it is not optional and not going away. It is up to us to make assessment meaningful and useful so that we can use assessment data to improve our services to our students and our community.
Assessment data will be used as evidence against us.	The focus of assessment is on improving our units and our institution so that we can serve our students and our community better. It is not used to negatively impact any individual faculty or staff member's job.

Why Do We Assess?

A. The Benefits of Assessment

Simply put, we assess ourselves in an effort to become better. The benefits of assessment are numerous:

- Assessment helps to **improve** programs and services through results that indicate areas where change is necessary.
- It **informs** students, faculty, staff and other stakeholders of the contributions our programs and services have and their impact on students and the community at large.
- It **validates** that a program or service is accomplishing what it was planned to accomplish through a demonstration of assessment results.
- It **supports** campus-decision making activities, for example, strategic planning, program reviews, and additional accountability activities such as reaffirmation and re-accreditation of academic programs by professional accrediting bodies.

In sum, assessment helps us achieve our mission and promotes a better workplace for employees, greater value to our students, and a more productive organization for our community.

B. Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) Expectations

A well-documented IE process is mandated by our accrediting body, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) under standards 7.1, 7.3, 8.1, 8.2.a, 8.2.b, and 8.2.c.

➤ CR 7.1 (Institutional planning)

“The institution engages in ongoing, comprehensive, and integrated research-based planning and evaluation processes that (a) focus on institutional quality and effectiveness and (b) incorporate a systematic review of institutional goals and outcomes consistent with its mission.” (SACSCOC Resource Manual, 2024, p. 57-58).

➤ CS 7.3 (Administrative)

“The institution identifies expected outcomes of its administrative support services and demonstrates the extent to which the outcomes are achieved.” (SACSCOC Resource Manual, 2024, p. 62-64).

➤ **CR 8.1 (Student achievement)**

“The institution identifies, evaluates, and publishes goals and outcomes for student achievement appropriate to the institution’s mission, the nature of the students it serves, and the kinds of programs offered. The institution uses multiple measures to document student success.” (SACSCOC Resource Manual, 2024, p. 65-67).

➤ **8.2.a (Educational Programs)**

“The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of seeking improvement based on analysis of the results for student learning outcomes for each of its educational programs.” (SACSCOC Resource Manual, 2024, p. 71-72).

➤ **8.2.b (General Education)**

“The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of seeking improvement based on analysis of the results for student learning outcomes for collegiate-level general education competencies of its undergraduate degree programs.” (SACSCOC Resource Manual, 2024, p. 72-74).

➤ **8.2.c (Academic and Student Services)**

“The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of seeking improvement based on analysis of the results for academic and student services that support student success.” (SACSCOC Resource Manual, 2024, p 75-76).

C. Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) Expectations

As a public postsecondary institution of higher education located in the state of Texas, LSC-O is underneath the purview of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board’s Strategic Plan titled “Building a Talent Strong Texas” which was previously named “60x30TX”, both of which focus on increasing postsecondary completions that result in “Credentials of Value.”

D. Texas State University System (TSUS) Expectations

To help ensure the success of the THECB’s “Building a Talent Strong Texas” initiative and the alignment of THECB goals and targets with the strategic planning and assessment of Texas State University System (TSUS) component institutions, TSUS established the Vision 2020 Initiative and now Vision 2025. In addition to Vision 2025 being a collaborative strategic planning initiative of the TSUS administration and component institutions, it is used to identify student success goals, set outcomes and their associated measures, and establish Student Achievement Targets. The TSUS Vision 2025 Strategic Plan is divided between “Key” and “Contextual” Measures in four (4) major areas: Access/Enrollment, Student Success, Excellence, and Affordability. Both Key and Contextual Measures have varied and multiple KPI’s to provide comprehensive assessment outcomes in the four major areas. An annual “Report Card” is produced by TSUS and the component institutions must provide analysis of their respective progress or submit action plans for improvement where progress is lacking. The annual “Report Card” is also an integral part of the component presidential evaluation process.

E. Creating a Culture of Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)

Obviously, Lamar State College Orange must follow the mandates of its accrediting body;

however, SACSCOC should not be the sole reason we undertake this endeavor. Rather, LSCO pushes forward with its IE process from a desire to achieve our mission of transforming lives by improving student learning, supporting institutional improvement, and advancing our faculty's commitment to academic assessment.

Institutional Effectiveness (IE) Process at Lamar State College Orange

Committee Structure, Purpose, Review, and Approval Process

The Institutional Effectiveness Committee (IEC) partners with faculty and staff across all divisions and departments on the development and assessment of student learning outcomes (SLO's), as well as the assessment of administrative, educational, and student support units. The IEC reviews the institution's assessment processes with specific attention to how effectively units are achieving the College's mission and goals and how results from the assessment of institutional goals and priorities inform planning and resource allocations. The IEC also facilitates the process by which departments and programs report progress on institutional initiatives that have received additional funding. The IEC is additionally responsible for maintaining and monitoring the relevant criteria related to SACSCOC standards.

The IEC reports annually to the President and provides an annual IEC Assessment Report to the to the President's Cabinet for final review and approval, before being disseminated to all campus stakeholders.

Standing members of the IEC include the Assistant Vice President, Operations & Institutional Services, Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, Accreditation and Assessment Specialist, Dean of Transfer and Public Service Programs, Dean of Industry and Manufacturing Programs, Dean of Nursing and Health Professions, Dean of Student Services, Assistant Vice President of Financial Services, Dean of Dual Credit Partnerships, Executive Director of Workforce Programs, Associate Dean of Academic Support and Instructional Services, Division Directors, and Department Chairs.

The Planning Phase

Each Lamar State College Orange (LSCO) department and program develops an annual IE Unit Plan (Plan) to support [LSCO's Mission and the Strategic Plan](#), which is reviewed and updated every five years.

Administrative and Academic/Student Services Plans will have a minimum of two Program Learning Outcome (PLO) goals that must demonstrate support of an LSCO Institutional Goal. Academic Program Plans will have a minimum of two Student Learning Outcome (SLO) goals, a minimum of two Program Learning Outcome (PLO) goals, and at least one goal associated with one of the following: Programmatic Accreditation; Faculty Qualifications; Equipment & Professional Development; Enrollment/Degrees Awarded/Licensure; or Placement.

Each goal shall have an expected outcome, supported by strategies to achieve the goal and related assessment measures.

The Budgeting Phase

Per SACSCOC Comprehensive Standard 13.2, an institution must develop “an annual budget that is preceded by sound planning. At LSCO, each of the annual IE Unit Plan’s goals and associated outcomes are required to document any “**Budget Impact**” the implementation of the goal will have on LSCO’s fiscal budget. Units are further instructed to utilize the upcoming annual IEUP to request funding for any goals that include personnel, equipment/software, professional development, facilities, programmatic accreditation, or other items that would have a budget impact during the annual budget hearing cycle.

The Implementation Phase

Planning alone will not solve any problem, what is needed is *action* – implementing the plan.

The implementation phase involves carrying out the strategies to achieve the goal laid out in the IE Unit Plan. It also involves collecting assessment data (outputs and feedback) to measure if the strategies are being implemented as desired, and if what is implemented helps the unit move toward its expected outcomes.

The Results (Evaluation) Phase

The results phase includes collecting comprehensive data, engaging faculty or staff members in data analysis and data interpretation—to make sense of the data. Then the unit should make a collective decision on what recommendations to make – what further action should be taken to improve the actual outcomes for the coming year.

LSCO’s IE Process is designed to create ongoing planning, implementation, and assessment to create an institution-wide continuous quality improvement (CQI) process with the goal of achieving our mission in all aspects of the institution.

LSCO’s Institutional Effectiveness Process



Institutional Effectiveness Assessment Timeline

Please note that during the May 1 thru August 31 timeframe, Unit Plan leaders are engaging in two-layers of assessment activities: closing the loop for the current year and reviewing the Plan for the next year.

For more detailed information about the timeline of IE assessment, please refer to the following:

Target Date	Institutional Effectiveness Plan (IEUP)
July 2025	Finalize FY 26 Unit Plans Follow up on FY 25 Unit Plans
August 2025	FY25/26 Unit Plan assessment results due by 8/31
September 2025	New fiscal year begins – Administrative and Educational Outcome Assessment Plans are implemented
January 2026	Review Unit Plan for mid-year progress
March 2026	Budget Preparation for FY27 expenses
May 2026	FY 26/27 8.2a Unit Plans are due by 5/28
July 2026	FY26/27 7.3 and 8.2c Unit Plan assessment results due by 7/31
August 2026	All unit plans should be approved by supervisors by 8/31
September 2026	New fiscal year begins – Administrative and Educational Outcome Assessment Plans are implemented
January 2027	Review Unit Plan for mid-year progress
March 2027	Budget Preparation for FY28 expenses
May 2027	Unit Plans for FY26-27 8.2a are due by 5/27. Plans should be in alignment with the new Campus Strategic Plan
July 2027	FY26-27 7.3 and 8.2c Unit Plan assessment results due by 7/31
August 2027	All unit plans should be approved by supervisors by 8/31
September 2028	New fiscal year begins – Administrative and Educational Outcome Assessment Plans are implemented
January 2029	Review Unit Plan for mid-year progress

Writing the IE Assessment Unit Plan

The following provides guidelines for completing the IE Assessment Unit Plan.

Overview: The Unit Plan is an annual document meant to guide the evaluation and improvement of processes in administrative services, academic and student support services, and educational programs to ensure data-driven decisions are being made for continuous improvement.

Instructions: Develop a yearly plan to assess the effectiveness of your administrative support service.

During the initial planning stage, fill out the Expected Outcome and Assessment Measure sections in Xitracs pertaining to each goal. In May-June of each year, report outcomes in the Results section followed by the Met/Not Met, and the Use of Results section and submit the plan to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness no later than July 31.

1. Support Service Area

The support service area should already be notated in Xitracs.

2. Person(s) Responsible

All plans and/or departments that you or your direct reports are responsible for should be listed under its respective standard.

3. Institutional Mission Reference

Link the core value that the expected outcome references using the linking button in Xitracs.

If any information is listed incorrectly, like title or department name, or you are missing a unit plan in Xitracs, contact the Assessment and Accreditation Specialist or OIRE@lsco.edu.

The most up-to-date LSCO mission statement can be found on the college's website - [Vision, Mission, & Core Values](#).

If your support service area does not currently have a mission statement, please develop one using these guidelines. A mission statement describes WHAT your support service unit is going to do and WHY it is going to do that. Mission statements are action-oriented and should inspire people into action.

To draft a mission statement for your administrative unit, ask yourself each of the below questions:

- What do we do?
- How do we do it?
- Whom do we do it for?
- What value are we bringing?

Example: The mission of the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness at Lamar State College Orange is to provide support for institution-wide planning, assessment, evaluation, and evidence-based improvements in order to enhance student learning and ensure the college is accomplishing its mission.

4. Goals

Write two goals for your department.

Goals are a broad, more long-term statement that describes what we want to achieve in order to fulfill the organizational mission.

Goals are generally tied to services that support any of LSCO's constituents (students, faculty, staff, administrators, and/or the general public).

Goals are desired results that provide direction and guide decision-making.

Example: The Office of Institutional Effectiveness will develop and implement a campus-wide process for Institutional Effectiveness.

5. Institutional Goals Supported:

List all institutional goals that relate to each goal.

The institutional goals can be found on the LSCO website under [Vision, Mission, and Core Values](#).

6. Budget Impact

Include any impact the implementation of the goal will have on the fiscal budget. You will need to include your budget request in the annual budget hearing cycle.

7. Expected Outcomes

Identify expected outcomes for each year of the plan. Expected outcomes describe consequences and results of our work and activities. Expected outcomes are statements that describe what we expect to achieve, produce, or change.

Example: Each LSCO unit will develop and utilize an effective assessment plan for annual IE planning. This outcome will not only improve overall performance across the campus, it will also ensure compliance with SACSCOC.

8. Strategies to Achieve Goal and Related assessment Measure(s)

Give short, but concise explanations on what your department will do in order to reach each goal, including measures of assessment for each outcome to increase the validity of results.

Example: The Office of Institutional Effectiveness will support all LSCO departments with training and guidance related to IE planning and development of a unit plan. All IE plans will be reviewed using a locally developed rubric. Rubric criteria will relate to the effectiveness of each unit's Mission Statement, expected outcomes, strategies, assessment measures, and final results.

9. Results

In May-June of each year, the person responsible for the Plan should state the results, demonstrating the extent to which the outcome was achieved. The completed plan should be forwarded to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness no later than July 31.

Glossary of Terms

Assessment Unit Plan – A plan with clearly defined goals, expected outcomes, strategies to achieve the goals, assessment measurement tools, and results; unit goals must be aligned with the campus institutional goals from the [Strategic Plan](#).

Assessment Results – The results of the outcomes measures (i.e.: Was the performance target met? How will you use the results in the Campus Planning process [Academic, Administrative, Budget, Facilities]?).

Expected Outcome – A statement that describes expected results from your intended work and activities; what you want your department, staff, student to achieve.

Goal – A broad, more long-term statement that describes what we want to achieve in order to fulfill the organizational mission.

Institutional Effectiveness – refers to "an ongoing, comprehensive, and integrated research-based planning and evaluation process that (a) focuses on institutional quality and effectiveness and (b) incorporates a systematic review of institutional goals and outcomes consistent with its mission." (SACSCOC Resource Manual, 2024, p. 171).

Institutional Effectiveness Committee – The Institutional Effectiveness Committee (IEC) partners with faculty and staff across all divisions and departments on the development and assessment of student learning outcomes (SLO's), as well as the assessment of administrative, educational, and student support units.

Measure – A clearly definable performance level that can be measured.

Mission – A statement is an action-based statement that describes the purpose of an organization.

Objective – A narrow, short-term statement that describes what, how, and when we will achieve something.

Result - What happened? Was the achievement target accomplished?

Person Responsible – One person who will be charged with facilitating the assessment cycle for the outcome listed (Dean, Director, Program Chair, etc.).

Institutional Goal Supported – LSCO's Strategic Plan Goal(s) to which an IE Unit Plan Goal must be aligned.

Strategic Planning – Long-term, often three-five year, planning at the level of the whole institution that focuses on defining the vision for the institution and identifying the organization's goals, strategies, outcomes, and targets.

Resources

Internal Websites:

- LSCO's [Strategic Plan](#)
- LSCO [Office of Institutional Research \(IR\)](#)
- LSCO [Office of Institutional Effectiveness \(IE\)](#)

External Websites:

- [SACSCOC](#)

Books:

- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (2024). *Resource Manual for the Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement (2024)*, Decatur, GA: Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.

Appendix A: Worksheet for Developing a Mission Statement

Directions: Please use the following worksheet to generate a Mission Statement for your unit. You will need to work with your team to brainstorm for ideas, using questions laid out in the worksheet to prompt discussion. After you have ideas, you can then synthesize these ideas and weave them into a Mission Statement.

What are the primary functions and activities that your unit performs?	Why do you perform these activities/What's the purpose of your unit?	For whom does the unit conduct the activities?

Integrate the above information and compose a Mission Statement: