

SCKY Academic Assessment Manual

Approved by vote of The Faculty Senate, 11/10/19

Methodology

The basic method of SCKY's academic assessment is rooted partly in the American Association of Higher Education's "Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning." As such it is rooted in student learning, not professorial performance. Further, assessment for us:

1. Begins with the values and mission of SCKY.
2. Takes into account the varieties of ways students learn and grow over time.
3. Is tied to stated outcomes and goals.
4. Is not only concerned with ultimate outcomes but with the nature of progress along the way, as it seeks to understand what best fosters dispositions and attitudes within our students that lead to success.
5. Is an ongoing process.
6. Factors in the perspectives of students and professors, but also of other stakeholders who are a part of the broader Simmons community.
7. Strives to assist decision-makers in making relevant decisions.
8. Fosters a culture of healthy openness to change and improvement.
9. Reaches out to stakeholders beyond the campus for feedback and insights. (Doing this in a formal way is in some ways a new concept to Simmons and a growing edge for us.)

Academic Assessment at SCKY is also rooted in our mission and in our student centered approach. While we recognize the importance of looking to accepted outside criteria to measure success and the achievement of outcomes, we do not seek to limit ourselves to a positivist approach that applies accepted norms alone. It is a truism to say that every school is unique and that assessment must take this into account, but as professors at a Christian HBCU, we feel these two distinctives must be taken into account. The measures employed by the University of Louisville, for example, a secular and predominantly white university two miles away, cannot and should not be used as a primary standard for us. Will our standards and theirs overlap? Yes, to be sure. But as a Christian school we are committed to cultivating a particular worldview and a particular type of citizen and agent of change. We must know how we are doing in these areas or our assessment will be found wanting. As an HBCU we also have before us the challenge of passing along two traditions: the academic traditions and knowledge of the dominant culture, and the academic traditions and knowledge of black culture. As DuBois put it, our school must have a "double consciousness."

Our method, then, leans in the direction of what Fitzpatrick et al term a "transformative paradigm." (Fitzpatrick et al, *Program Evaluation: Alternative Approaches and Practical Guidelines*, 4th Ed.. Boston: Pearson, 2011, p. 116.) A transformative paradigm bears in mind measuring against what is, but also against what should be. As a Christian college we keep in

sight the higher calling to a greater realization of God's reign; as an HBCU we keep in sight the racism our students have already endured as we help them to comprehend how injustice works and as we equip them to overcome the racism we know will lie in their paths ahead.

Mission

The transformational institutional learning outcomes (ILOs) of our college reflect this same sort of philosophy:

Institutional Learning Outcomes 1.0, as approved by SCKY trustees, August, 2018

The Institutional Learning Outcomes below grew out of the revised college goals (bold items 1-4 in the chart) adopted unanimously by the college's trustee in their summer 2018 meeting. They are labeled "1.0," which reflects the fact that they are new and that they may require some clarification or refinement as the college's departments further hone the outcomes in their departments and classrooms.

As a Historic Black College with a Christian foundation, our college's primary goals are:

1. To equip each student with strong writing, research, and critical thinking skills.
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Institutional Learning Outcomes. Simmons students will:

- Write clearly.
- Research thoroughly.
- Think openly and rigorously.
- SHORTHAND EXPRESSION: CRITICAL WRITERS AND THINKERS

2. To cultivate students committed to personal and professional excellence, the holistic development of the self, and lifelong learning.

Institutional Learning Outcomes. Simmons students will:

- Know and draw upon their cultural heritage.
- Mature personally and professionally inside and outside the classroom.
- Have the skills to continue building upon their college education.
- SHORTHAND EXPRESSION: MATURE AND GROWING AFRICAN AMERICANS

3. To develop in every student a view of life, vocation, and the world rooted in biblical interpretation and the Kingdom of God.

Institutional Learning Outcomes. Simmons students will:

- Know essential information about the Bible and religious scholarship.
- Apply these ideas to their own life of faith.
- Create ways to move the world toward the Kingdom of God.
- SHORTHAND EXPRESSION: INFORMED ACTIVIST CHRISTIANS

4. To produce distinguished agents of change committed to community development, social justice, and civic duty, particularly in urban churches and urban communities.

Institutional Learning Outcomes. Simmons students will:

- Recognize systems of injustice.
- Create solutions for urban problems.
- Engage in organizations that are changing urban communities.
- SHORTHAND EXPRESSION: AGENTS OF CHANGE

Note, the following ILO was adopted by the college's trustees on September 16, 2019.

Responsibility for assessing this ILO falls to the VP for Academic Affairs, close coordination with the Offices of Institutional Effectiveness and Development, not the department chairs. The new ILO reads, "To adequately resource students that they may achieve excellence in their chosen field of study." [Note, 2.8.2021: Significant progress has been made on this fifth ILO with respect to academics, with a significant expansion of the budget and of staff over the past 12 months.]

It is also the responsibility of the VP for Academic Affairs to ensure that the achieving of PLOs is done such that these achievements work together to meet the college's overarching ILOs.

With this background in mind, what then can be said to be the mission of academic assessment at SCKY?

Academic assessment at Simmons College of Kentucky is rooted in our institutional values and focused on student outcomes. It is data driven, ongoing, and serves the cause of improving student performance and ensuring the value of a SCKY education, both for our students and for churches and communities.

Our Partnership with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) has responsibility for overall assessment of the college's effectiveness, and as such is an important partner in what we do. Please be sure to go to the OIE webpage (<https://www.simmonscollegeky.edu/campus/institutional-effectiveness/>), where you will find materials that complement this manual, such as:

- Program review guide
- Action words for student learning outcomes
- Glossary of assessment terms
- Examples of course outcomes
- Rubric examples
- Assessment checklists
- Accreditation standards.

Evaluation of Data

As dictated by best practices, we rely on program areas and their leaders (especially department chairs) to be the fundamental unit in our assessment system. Data is gathered and assessed primarily at the program level. As a result, the role of our department chairs is crucial. This role includes:

1. Ensuring that the department's Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) are aligned with the college's mission and ILOs.
2. Ensuring that course Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) are aligned with departmental PLOs.
3. Mapping SLOs throughout the department's curriculum. This mapping must demonstrate that the PLOs are taught and reinforced within the curriculum, as well as that the PLOs are achieved at increasing levels of mastery as a student moves through the program's curriculum. An important aspect of this are Key Learning Measures, which are embedded in the curriculum at key points, so that the program has measurable data on student progress through the program. An assessment of KLMs is a required part of each department's annual report. KLMs may well be utilized in additional spots within the curriculum, but at a minimum, a stated KLM, along with a rubric for assessing that KLM, is a requirement anytime a stated level of mastery is mapped to a particular course. For example, if Outcome X is designated as being "introduced" in Course Y, then Course Y must have a KLM in that course, and the KLM rubric must state how the KLM will be assessed in terms of whether or not students have shown an introductory attainment of Outcome X. It is the responsibility of department chairs to have KLMs in place and to gather KLM documentation at the end of each semester, and then to assure the results of the KLM are factored into the assessment of the program.
4. Ensuring that, if a new course is developed or a syllabus is modified in an existing course, that any necessary adjustments to the curriculum map are made.
5. Producing an annual departmental assessment from chairs at the end of every academic year, which includes:
 - a. A statement of the department's goals and the chair's assessment of progress toward those goals for the year.

- b. Current PLOs and program mission statement. (Any changes to PLOs or mission statements require approval of the VP for Academic Affairs and the Curriculum Committee.)
- c. Current curriculum map
- d. Summary of meeting with director of library regarding collection in your area, as well as statement of agreed upon plans for development of collection in department's area.
- e. Documentation of any departmental meetings held and of any participation of department members in faculty development events.
- f. An assessment of the performance of all instructors within the department, based in part on observation of the instructor while teaching.
- g. The chair's assessment of the following data, as well as a description of what conclusions the chair draws from the data and initial thoughts on what changes might be made on the basis of these conclusions:
 - i. Results of assessment of Key Learning Measures
 - ii. Value of the KLMs in assessing the effectiveness of the program
 - iii. Results of student course evaluations
 - iv. Results of professors' course evaluations
 - v. Results of any Assessment Days data
 - vi. Data on employment statistics of graduates of your program and a description of what your department is doing to inform students of employment opportunities in your field and to assist them in moving toward graduate study or employment.
 - vii. Census and retention rates within the program. Please provide a comparison of the number of first-year, second-year, third-year, and fourth-year students in your program, as well as information on any students who may have transferred into your program or who have withdrawn from the college. (Note, as of the writing of this document, this data is very hard to pull from GradPro, but we expect that it will be much easier to access in the new Sonis system.)
 - viii. Assessment of performance of capstone students and the quality of their work.
- h. A current SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis of the program, driven by the data you gathered. (See A Brief Guide to SWOT Analysis in the appendix of this document.) Chairs are encouraged to compare this SWOT analysis with preceding SWOT analysis of their program. Also, when sending their program review to their external reviewer, the reviewer is to produce a SWOT analysis stating what they see as program strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.
- i. Your assessment of your program's efforts in the area of information literacy and any advancements or needs in classroom technology in your department. This report needs to include also the supporting data on information literacy, such as

- the tally you did on outcomes for a particular assignment related to information literacy.
- j. On the basis of the assessment of the academic year that just concluded, what are your initial thoughts on possible changes or goals that could be a part of your plans for the upcoming academic year? *This portion is crucial, for if assessment does not lead to improvement, we have defeated the entire reason for assessment.* At the Department Chairs Retreat, chairs will discuss these possible changes with each other to coordinate planning.
 6. This academic year report is to be turned in to the VP for Academic Affairs within three weeks after the end of the spring semester.
 7. All chairs are required to participate in the annual department chairs retreat, which occurs annually on the Wednesday and Thursday closest to July 15. As an item on the agenda, each chair will present an overview of their departmental report and discuss changes and improvements they will be making.
 8. At the annual retreat, time will be spent discussing the Program Review theme for that year, and each chair will be responsible for producing a Program Action Plan, based on the annual area of focus and on items that grew out of their Program Assessment or out of the Chairs Retreat. This action plan is due to the VP for Academic Affairs by August first.
 9. Department Chairs are also to turn in an interim report after the fall semester, which is due before the end of the first week of classes in the spring semester. This report is to include:
 - a. A statement verifying that all KLM material for the semester has been gathered. Any class mapped to an outcome must have a KLM so we can assess progress toward the outcome.
 - b. A statement of the department's goals and the chair's assessment of progress toward those goals for the summer and fall semesters.
 - c. Current PLOs and program mission statement (Any changes to PLOs or mission statements require approval of the VP for Academic Affairs and the Curriculum Committee.)
 - d. Current curriculum map
 - e. A report on any problems that have emerged during the fall or summer semesters and steps in place to remedy these problems.
 - f. An assessment of the progress of the department toward goals established as a part of the academic thematic emphasis for the academic year.
 10. The interim reports will be presented and discussed in a half-day retreat, which takes place on Friday at the end of the first week of the spring semester.
 11. An interim report is to be turned in by the VP for Academic Affairs to the Provost by the end of the third week of the spring semester.

In addition to reports by department chairs, annual and interim reports are to be turned in by the Library Director, Student Learning Center Director, and the coordinator of the student computer lab. The content of these reports is as follows:

1. Library Director

a. Annual Report

- i. Statement of mission
 - ii. Usage statistics for academic year
 - iii. Acquisitions statistics for academic year
 - iv. Report on annual meetings with department chairs regarding materials in their areas
 - v. Report of any library feedback gained from stakeholders or assessments from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness
 - vi. SWOT assessment of the library
 - vii. Report on compliance with accreditation standards
 - viii. Report on progress toward goals for previous year
 - ix. Analysis of all of the above: Given the library's mission and goals, how would you assess the current state of the library?
 - x. Completion of the assessment cycle by stating changes and revised goals that will be implemented based on assessment.
 - xi. A summary of how your program area has contributed toward progress in our programmatic theme within academic affairs for the most recent academic year.
 - xii. This report is due within three weeks after spring graduation.
- b. Interim library report (due by end of first week of spring semester)
- i. Statement of mission
 - ii. Usage statistics for fall semester
 - iii. Acquisitions statistics for fall semester
 - iv. Update on progress toward goals for the current academic year
- c. Action Report (due by August 1, 2019)
- i. What are the actions that will be undertaken in your area stemming from the assessment of the most recent academic year?

2. Student Learning Center Director

a. Annual Report

- i. Statement of mission
- ii. Center statistics for academic year
- iii. Report on annual meetings with department chairs regarding tutoring needs in their areas
- iv. Report of any feedback gained from stakeholders or assessments from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness
- v. SWOT assessment of the center
- vi. Report on compliance with accreditation standards
- vii. Report on progress toward goals for previous year
- viii. Analysis of all of the above: Given the center's mission and goals, how would you assess the current state of the center?

- ix. Completion of the assessment cycle by stating changes and revised goals that will be implemented based on assessment.
 - x. A summary of how your program area has contributed toward progress in our programmatic theme within academic affairs for the most recent academic year.
 - xi. This report is due within three weeks after the summer faculty retreat.
- b. Interim center report (due by end of first week of spring semester)
 - i. Statement of mission
 - ii. Statistics for the fall semester
 - iii. Update on progress toward goals for the current academic year
 - c. Action Report (due by August 1, 2019)
 - i. What are the actions that will be undertaken in your area stemming from the assessment of the most recent academic year?
- 3. Coordinator of the student computer lab
 - a. An annual report, due within three weeks of spring graduations, should assess:
 - b. Usage statistics for the lab
 - c. Expenses for the past year in the lab
 - d. A SWOT analysis of the lab
 - e. Assessment of any data from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness or other sources
 - f. Condition of equipment and any anticipated equipment expenses over the next two years.
 - g. A summary of how your program area has contributed toward progress in our programmatic theme within academic affairs for the most recent academic year.
 - h. Action Report (due by August 1, 2019)
 - i. What are the actions that will be undertaken in your area stemming from the assessment of the most recent academic year?

Guidelines for producing an annual program review for academic departments

1. State the annual theme and describe how that theme relates to the work of your department.
2. Do a SWOT analysis of your department vis-à-vis the annual theme. This analysis should include a SWOT analysis questionnaire produced by three faculty members within your department and three students within your department. (See appendix for SWOT guide.)
3. Send a copy of your syllabi and curriculum map to one professor outside the college and have them respond to the Peer Feedback Questionnaire. (See appendix for questionnaire.) Please tell the VP for Academic Affairs how to send an honorarium to this professor after they have submitted their questionnaire.

4. Your program report grows out of the annual department chairs retreat. At the next year's retreat, we will assess the past academic year's progress vis-a-vis our assessment theme and look forward toward the next year's theme.

Responsibilities of the Office of Academic Affairs

1. The primary responsibility of Academic Affairs, in terms of assessment, is to assure that assessment is done, but especially to assure that the assessment process leads to ongoing improvement. In other words, assessment is not done for its own sake; it is done for the sake of improving the quality of our students' education.
2. Ensuring that all documentation and reports are produced in a timely manner.
3. Preparing an annual report to the faculty, provost, president, and trustees, which will summarize departmental annual reports and program reviews. This report is also to be sent to a qualified academic administrator outside the institution, who will submit a written response back to the VP for Academic Affairs, who will then pass this response along to the other recipients of the report. The Academic Affairs annual report is due by October 1 each year and is to be posted publicly on the college's website.
 - a. In addition to summarizing and synthesizing reports from academic areas of the college, this report should include an assessment of where Academic Affairs stands on ILO #5: "To adequately resource students that they may achieve excellence in their chosen field of study." This includes tracking available educational space and anticipating any possible future changes that might necessitate more space or specialized equipment.
 - b. It should also include an analysis of how the achieving of PLOs is or is not leading to the achieving of the college's broader ILOs.
4. Presenting to the provost, president, and trustee chair an interim Academic Affairs report by the end of the 6th week of the spring semester.
5. Leading department chairs through the assessment cycle and ensuring that assessment leads to meaningful changes and improvements.
6. The collection and retention of data and documentation that could be requested by an accrediting body.
7. In coordination with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, ensuring that SCKY assessment procedures are consistent with the expectations of accrediting bodies and that public reporting of information is appropriately posted.
8. Leading the faculty in the process of continual improvement for the sake of achieving our mission and serving our students.
9. Performance reviews for department chairs and all AA employees.
10. The establishment, assessment, and necessary adaptation of goals and outcomes in all academic areas, which are to be established in cooperation with those in each area.
11. Dissemination of data from sources external to the department, such as data and guidance from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness.
12. Ensuring that the library and its leadership are integrated into academic affairs.

13. Maintaining the cycle of program reviews to ensure that all departments comply and to ensure that the cycle provides a comprehensive view of the college's overall academic program.
14. Coordination with other departments in the college.

Appendix

Guidelines for academic advisement

Advising syllabus:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1zcNX3ZVNFKhbMuzzT55I41mX9ICD0eRnOtRLyhFYckA/edit?usp=sharing>

Academic Advising Script

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1G1GV7Gx91zNZyh_mCq1VsPW0yf7JCfXrfZgdwLNQ0dE/edit?usp=sharing

A brief guide to SWOT analysis:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1xkV6CwdaiMcVqhaNk_5czz85cwqt-ba71qZOjcsbyHE/edit?usp=sharing

To develop:

External Feedback Form

Academic Affairs Calendar

Table of responsibilities with person responsible and deadlines