

*Institutional  
Effectiveness*



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## **Section III**

### **Institutional Effectiveness**

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# Institutional Effectiveness

The following is an overview of program evaluation and improvement at Auburn University since the last SACS Self Study.

## Accreditation

Over the past 10 years, program evaluation at Auburn University has been accomplished through several relatively independent processes. The most enduring have been the periodic accreditation reviews undertaken by the external accrediting agencies of various academic and professional disciplines. In the Colleges of Business, Education, Engineering, Human Sciences, and Veterinary Medicine and in the Schools of Nursing and Pharmacy, all programs are subjected to periodic external review by a single, discipline-wide accrediting agency. In the College of Education and the College of Human Sciences, several programs are independently accredited, with those programs maintaining two and, in some cases, three levels of external accreditation review. In the College of Architecture, Design, and Construction, all programs are externally reviewed, but each program has a different accrediting agency. In the College of Agriculture, only Biosystems Engineering is accredited. In the College of Liberal Arts, seven of more than a dozen programs are subjected to periodic external review by accrediting agencies. In the College of Sciences and Mathematics, only Chemistry is accredited. In the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, only Forestry is accredited. The nature of the accrediting process varies by program, but in general the focus has shifted from the input side of the educational process to assessing the impact of programs on student learning outcomes. Auburn University's Office of Assessment and Program Improvement (API) has adopted this "output" emphasis as one of its guiding principles. The Institutional Effectiveness Committee compiled a table with more detail relating to accredited programs at the University after contacting all of the appropriate Associate Deans. This table is included in the SACS Library.

## University Senate Program Review Committee

In fall 1985, the University Senate established an ad hoc Committee on Program Review. That Committee was charged with reviewing the University's instructional programs on a five-year rotating basis. In its initial year of operation (1985-86) this Committee reviewed 38 programs, and it continued to conduct new program reviews through spring 1992. At that time, as a part of the University's self study process for its 1993 SACS Reaffirmation visit, the members of the Committee on Program Review were appointed to serve as the Principal Study committee on Institutional Effectiveness. The 1993 Self Study cited the work of the Committee on Program Review as primary evidence of institutional effectiveness. When the 1993 Self Study was completed, the Committee on Program Review discontinued its work. About four years later, as the University Senate was updating the *Faculty Handbook*, notice was taken of this prolonged inactivity and the Committee on Program Review was eliminated.

Within a few months, events led the University Senate to reconsider its action. For some years the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) had set advisory standards for degree program viability, couched in the terms of a minimum number of graduates, on average, per year. In 1996, by an act of the Alabama Legislature, these previously advisory viability standards became legal requirements for all public colleges and universities in the state. In August 1997, Paul F. Parks, then Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, identified 41 academic degree programs as potential candidates to be phased out. These programs were those for which the average number of graduates in the period 1991-92 through 1995-96 was less than 75% of the viability standards proposed by ACHE and established by law. The purpose for these phase-outs was twofold: to comply with the law and, more importantly, to make possible reallocation of the University's scarce resources so that the general quality of its academic programs could be maintained and enhanced. Provost Parks asked the



Deans of the affected Colleges and Schools to justify the continuation of any of these programs that, in their judgment, should not be phased out.

In response to these events and with the concurrence of the Provost, the University Senate re-established an ad hoc Committee on Program Review and Assessment in January 1998. The reconstituted Committee's initial charge was to examine carefully each of the 41 academic degree programs identified as candidates for phase-out, to review the justifications submitted by the Deans and other pertinent information, and in each case to recommend to the President retention, elimination, merger, or strengthening of the programs. The Committee reported to the President in March 1998, recommending the elimination of 10 degree programs, the retention of 11 more, and the consolidation of 17 non-viable programs with various closely related and viable degree programs. The recommendations were subsequently endorsed by the President and approved by the Board of Trustees.

In 1998-99, as a part of the same internal process of resource reallocation, the President and Provost directed academic Deans to identify "low-priority" degree programs in their Colleges or Schools. In spring 1999, at the request of the President, the Committee on Program Review examined 10 "low priority" degree programs or program options identified by the Deans. The Committee recommended to the President that six of these programs or options be eliminated, that three be retained (despite their identification as low priorities by their respective Deans), and that one be merged with a similar degree program. With the exception of one program, the President also endorsed these recommendations. (Instead of recommending the elimination of the bachelors degree in Aviation Management, a low priority in the College of Engineering, the President negotiated its transfer to the College of Business.) Again with one exception, the President's recommendations were approved by the Board of Trustees. Against the President's recommendation, the Board chose to eliminate the "low-priority" Department of Economics program option in the interdepartmental PhD program in Economics (also comprising options in Agricultural and Forestry Economics).

Finally, in 2000, at the request of the President, the Committee on Program Review participated in a review of the proposed administrative merger of the Departments of Journalism and Communication in the College of Liberal Arts.

During its review of low-viability and low-priority degree programs, the Committee developed a set of draft guidelines for a more systematic review of all degree programs on a rotating basis, returning to the model of the mid-1980s. Although an outline of this process was presented to the University Senate in May 1999, guidelines for such a system of program review were not subsequently presented to the Senate for its review. Having a charge but lacking an approved procedure, the Committee on Program Review continues to exist but has not initiated any routine academic program reviews since 1992.

### **Auburn University Comprehensive University Planning System (AUCUPS)**

In response to recommendations from the previous SACS Self Study, Auburn began to develop an ongoing planning system and to link the system to the budgeting process. The Assistant Provost for Assessment and Quality Improvement worked with Colleges and Schools on the initial format for linking planning to budgeting and identified University goals for assessment from the 21st Century Commission Report. Each unit was required to write goals and objectives that tied back to the 21st Century goals. Each unit was also asked to state whether new money was needed or whether existing funds could be used to achieve each objective. Later, the Provost assigned the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs to the continued development of the planning system. After several cycles, the units updated plans and gave progress reports.

In 1999, the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs worked with the Director of Assessment to develop an automated system to facilitate the process. That system, called AUCUPS, was put in place in January 2001. AUCUPS was primarily set up as a strategic planning document. It did not address learning outcomes assessment by degree program.

As described in the *AUCUPS Instruction Manual*, January 10, 2001, these are Definitions and a Chronology of how plans are submitted through the AUCUPS system:

## Definitions

**Mission Statement** – An assertion of the basic principles or purposes of the University or its units.

**Goal** – A desired end. It is not necessarily attainable or quantifiable.

**Objective** – A means of achieving or moving towards a goal.

**Level 1** – University Level Unit, which includes a mission statement and institutional goals.

**Level 2** – College, School, or Vice President-level units responsible for administering subunits.

**Level 3** – Departments and units subordinate to Level 2 units.

## Chronology

Each Fall Semester, Comprehensive Plans from the previous year are loaded into AUCUPS to provide a foundation for the development of the new four-year plan. This action is followed by 10 steps that comprise the comprehensive planning process. These steps allow each unit to examine its own mission in relation to the University mission and to formulate goals and objectives in support of its mission. Goals and objectives are based on existing conditions, constraints, opportunities, and resources. These in turn become the focus of a unit's activities during the planning year and the budgeting foundation for future years. At the end of the planning year, each unit produces a progress report to assess its performance in achieving or moving toward its goals.

**Step 1.** Commencing September 1, Departments and units (Level 3) will review assessment activities and begin entering Progress Reports in AUCUPS based on the previous year's plan currently in AUCUPS. According to these progress assessments, Departments and units will also begin developing and entering Comprehensive Plans for the next four-year planning cycle.

**Step 2.** On October 30, all Department and unit plans must be completed for Level 2 review.

**Step 3.** Commencing November 1, Level 2 units will review Level 3 Plans and Progress Reports. Level 3 units will revise Plans as necessary and receive final approval from the appropriate Level 2 unit.

**Step 4.** On November 30, Level 3 Comprehensive Plans will be locked and not subject to change.

**Step 5.** From November 1 to November 30, Level 2 units will review assessment activities and begin entering Progress Reports in AUCUPS based on the previous year's Plan currently in AUCUPS. Based on these progress assessments, Level 2 units will also begin developing and entering Comprehensive Plans for the next four-year planning cycle.

**Step 6.** Level 2 Progress Reports must be completed by December 1.

**Step 7.** Level 2 Comprehensive Plans for the next four-year planning cycle must be completed by December 15.

**Step 8.** From January 1 to 15, Level 1 will review Level 2 comprehensive plans.

**Step 9.** From January 16 to 31, Level 2 plans will be modified if necessary based on recommendations from Level 1.

**Step 10.** On February 1, all Level 2 Plans must be completed. AUCUPS will be locked and no changes can be made. AUCUPS will be opened for public access.

## Office of Assessment and Program Improvement (API)

In recent years the University administration has established the Office of Assessment and Program Improvement, whose functions appear to overlap considerably with those of the University Committee on Program Review. In 1993, our most recent SACS peer reaffirmation committee recommended "that Auburn University implement systematic planning processes including provisions for the availability and use of assessment results at all levels to improve University programs." In January 1994, President Muse established this office by appointing Bettye Burkhalter as Assistant Provost for Assessment and Quality Improvement. Assistant Provost Burkhalter operated under a then-popular approach to organizational change known as "total quality management" or TQM. Much of the efforts of her Office were directed toward improving student services rather than evaluating and improving academic programs. Assistant Provost Burkhalter served in this position until August 1998, when she was appointed Acting Vice President for Student Affairs. No one served in her place until

October of 1999, when James Golson was named Director of Assessment. Under the leadership of Director of Assessment Golson, the focus shifted from TQM and the assessment of non-academic programs to a focus on academic programs and a review process more consistent with SACS *Criteria*. In spring 2000, the University decided to hire an outside consultant to review the status of its institutional effectiveness activities. After receiving three recommendations from the SACS Consulting Network, President Muse selected James Nichols of Institutional Effectiveness Associates. Following the departure of James Golson in fall 2000, Drew Clark was appointed Director of Assessment in January 2001. Director of Assessment Clark's charge was to implement recommendations from the Nichols report, and he changed the name of the office to its present name, Office of Assessment and Program Improvement, to better reflect its purposes. Director of Assessment Clark has subsequently developed and directed assessment methods for all academic and non-academic programs at the University. API is now a unit within the Provost's office and occupies office space in Samford Hall, the University's central administration building.

The University Assessment Committee (UAC) was formed in January 2001 to monitor and facilitate the implementation of the new assessment reporting procedures. The Committee has been charged by the Provost with four responsibilities:

- Reviewing and commenting on assessment plans and reports submitted by units
- Monitoring the implementation of assessment strategies campus-wide
- Serving as a communication channel concerning assessment policy and planning between the Provost and the University's major organizational units
- Reviewing periodically the University's assessment policies and procedures and recommending improvements in them

In its first two years of existence, the major function of the Committee has been to provide formative feedback to all units submitting assessment reports, using standardized feedback forms. The Committee is currently composed of 20 members. About half are faculty members appointed by the Rules Committee of the University Senate; the other half are staff members, administrators, or others who help to coordinate assessment activities in their Schools, Colleges, or Divisions. The Director of Assessment serves as a non-voting, ex officio member.

The assessment process requires each degree program to identify a small number of intended student learning outcomes or educational results for study each year and to link these outcomes to the University's Mission Statement and, as appropriate, to University goals. Assessment reports also identify methods for assessing student achievement of those outcomes, summarize the results attained when these methods were used, and report how those results have been used to improve the program. The first cycle of this assessment process was completed in October 2001.

Currently, the Office of Assessment and Program Improvement coordinates a parallel reporting process for non-instructional units. Instead of identifying student learning outcomes, these units declare a small number of administrative objectives for assessment in a given cycle. They also write a brief unit mission statement or function description and link it to the University's Mission Statement and, sometimes, to particular institutional goals. Otherwise, the reporting procedure for these units mirrors that for degree programs.

In October 2002, the second year of this process will have been completed, with two-person review teams (members of the UAC) comparing results for each program over the two-year period. The effectiveness of these first two years of program reviews and resulting program changes is being assessed by the API and UAC. During the first year, compliance for submitting the required documents was 96.3% for educational programs and 64% for administrative and educational support service units. The compliance rate for year two, ending in October 2002, will be determined later this year. Much education by UAC members and the API staff has been necessary to inform unit personnel of the philosophy and appropriate formats for required materials. API has created documents to assist program directors in conducting meaningful assessments of effectiveness (see "Five Most Common Problems and What to do About Them") and also constructed an extensive database for monitoring the entire process across the University (see "Guide to the Assessment Database").

## Sources of Information

### Documents

“Five Most Common Problems and What to do About Them”

“Guide to Assessment Database”

Memoranda from Provost Parks about Low Viability and Low Priority Programs

Minutes of the Board of Trustees, November 20, 1998, April 9, 1999,  
and September 22, 1999

Program Viability Act

*Report of the Program Review Committee on Low-Viability Programs*, March 1998

*Report of the Program Review Committee on Low-Priority Programs*, March 1999

### Websites

“Auburn Identifies Programs as Candidates for Elimination,” *AU Report* update,  
August 18, 1987

<http://www.auburn.edu/administration/univrel/news/archive/8-18update.html>

*AUCUPS Instruction Manual*, January 10, 2001

[http://frontpage.auburn.edu/gradschl/public\\_html/AUCUPsv2/Manual/](http://frontpage.auburn.edu/gradschl/public_html/AUCUPsv2/Manual/)

## 3.1 Planning and Evaluation: Educational Programs

3.1

Educational services of an institution include teaching, research and public service. Planning and evaluation for those activities **must** be systematic, broad based, interrelated and appropriate to the institution.

Auburn University is in compliance.

As noted in James Nichols' report *Implementation of Institutional Effectiveness* (6), Auburn has done an excellent job of strategic planning in recent years. It has a comprehensive planning process, and that process has established the institutional mission and goals, set priorities, realigned academic programs, and made several moves to improve the financial footing of the University. Planning of the University's activities is systematic, broad-based, interrelated, and appropriate. However, the University has done a poorer job in ensuring that its broader missions and goals are linked to unit and program plans and goals and these in turn to the systematic evaluation of unit and program educational results. The problem is that the two systems—AUCUPS and API—are not connected. AUCUPS focuses on unit goals, while API focuses on program goals. Although some attempts have been made to link unit and program goals to broader institutional goals within the AUCUPS system, inspection suggests that the linkages made are in some cases entirely ad hoc. Little or no coordination between unit goals articulated in the AUCUPS system and the particular “intended educational outcomes” specified by programs in the API assessment reports has taken place.

This problem is not serious, and it has not appeared to affect negatively the quality of the assessment and improvement efforts that are taking place. However, this lack of coordination makes it difficult to match program and unit achievements with the desired improvements at the University level. A comparison of the AUCUPS unit reports with the same unit's program Assessment Reports submitted October 2001 and 2002 indicates this lack of coordination. Another problem is the lack of relationship between program accreditation in the various Colleges, Schools, Departments and other units and the activities of AUCUPS and API. Many programs are subjected to multiple and duplicative systems for program accreditation. For example, the School Counseling program, housed in the Department of Counseling and Counseling Psychology in the College of Education, is reviewed

externally by the Alabama Department of Education, by the Council on Counseling and Counseling Related Programs (CACREP), and by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). Internally, it is reviewed by the College of Education Curriculum Design Assurance Seminars (an internal, College-wide system) and by API, and program faculty make input into Departmental planning for AUCUPS. In addition, the Department Head and other faculty review the program's effectiveness on an ongoing basis. It has also been reviewed in the past by the now dormant Senate program review system.

In conclusion, because at present the University Senate Committee on Program Review is not conducting periodic reviews of academic programs and has no formal charge, it does not coordinate with the API. Although systematic, broad-based, and appropriate evaluations of units and programs are occurring, the evaluations need to be more interrelated. There is also a need for less duplication of assessment activities and better alignment of external and internal review processes.

**Suggestion 3-1:**

*The Steering Committee suggests that the University Senate examine the role of its Committee on Program Review in light of the ongoing work of the API so that duplication can be avoided and synergy achieved. The guidelines proposed by the Senate committee in May 1999, but never adopted by the Senate, do not appear to achieve this aim and should be reevaluated.*

**Suggestion 3-2:**

*The Steering Committee suggests that better coordination between AUCUPS and API be achieved.*

**Suggestion 3-3:**

*The Steering Committee suggests that the University take steps to incorporate activities engaged in by units and programs for external accreditation into its two internal systems, AUCUPS and API. Further, steps should be taken to minimize duplicate, and in many cases excessive, assessment activities by units and programs in conducting multiple and overlapping reviews.*

**Sources of Information**

**Documents**

*Implementation of Institutional Effectiveness at Auburn University: Status, Plans, and Recommendations*, James Nichols, July 28, 2000

*Program Review Committee Recommendations*, April 16, 1999

*Role Commission Recommendations*, November 6, 1999

**Websites**

Assessment and Program Improvement (API)

<http://www.auburn.edu/academic/provost/assessment>

Auburn University Comprehensive University Planning System (AUCUPS)

[http://frontpage.auburn.edu/gradschl/public\\_html/aucupsv2/](http://frontpage.auburn.edu/gradschl/public_html/aucupsv2/)

List of Accredited Programs

<http://www.panda.auburn.edu/accred.htm>

Minutes of the University Senate,

October 6, 1998

<http://www.auburn.edu/administration/governance/senate/oct61998.html>

April 6, 1999

<http://www.auburn.edu/administration/governance/senate/april61999.html>

April 11, 2000

<http://www.auburn.edu/administration/governance/senate/aprilminutes2000.htm>

May 9, 2000

<http://www.auburn.edu/administration/governance/senate/may92000minutes.htm>



June 13, 2000  
<http://www.auburn.edu/administration/governance/senate/june2000minutes.htm>  
21st Century Commission Recommendations  
<http://www.ag.auburn.edu/commission>  
Vision and Mission Statements  
[http://frontpage.duc.auburn.edu/gradschl/public\\_html/AUCUPsv2/mission.asp](http://frontpage.duc.auburn.edu/gradschl/public_html/AUCUPsv2/mission.asp)

The institution **must** define its expected educational results and describe its methods for analyzing the results

Auburn University is in compliance.

As previously stated, both the AUCUPS and the API systems require that all units and programs define their goals and their expected outcomes. The API additionally requires programs to state methods for assessing those outcomes and present evidence and documentation annually (since 2001) of how those assessment results are used for program improvement.

### Sources of Information

#### Websites

Assessment and Program Improvement

<http://www.auburn.edu/academic/provost/assessment>

Auburn University Comprehensive Planning System

[http://frontpage.auburn.edu/gradschl/public\\_html/aucupsv2/](http://frontpage.auburn.edu/gradschl/public_html/aucupsv2/)

The institution **must**

1. establish a clearly defined purpose appropriate to collegiate education.
2. formulate educational goals consistent with the institution's purpose.
3. develop and implement procedures to evaluate the extent to which these educational goals are being achieved.
4. use the results of these evaluations to improve educational programs, services and operations.

Auburn University is in compliance.

The University has been very slow to put into place a system to address all of the requirements of this **must** statement. The chronology of events shows that although considerable activity has occurred, that activity has proceeded by fits and starts. Several different assessment units have been created, some with overlapping components. Then these assessment units have been modified or abandoned, only to be reinitiated in different forms. Reconstructing the chronology of events is an arduous task.

As previously stated, the University has defined its purpose in the Vision Statement and Mission Statement as approved by the Board of Trustees in 1997. Goals consistent with the institution's purpose are incorporated by most units in the AUCUPS system and by most programs in the API system. API additionally requires programs to describe the means by which they intend to assess the achievement of those goals and document how they intend to use the results for program improvement.

For each of the two preceding years (2000-01 and 2001-02), programs have submitted information and received feedback from API and UAC. Extensive educational efforts have been expended teaching faculty and administrators this new system conducted out of API, so it is still gradually being assimilated into the culture of University program administration at all levels. In the first year, many programs submitted goals, means of achieving those goals, and use of information to improve programs judged by UAC reviewers as weak, unacceptable, and inappropriate. Often, programs selected goals that they knew they were meeting. Only through reviewing a program's submitted materials over a period of several years will the API and UAC be able to determine if a program is using the system to effect genuine program review and improvement or merely completing the forms to satisfy a required administrative edict. The results of the first year of assessments reveal unevenness among academic unit reports, with unconvincing links between expected results and methods and a number of fledgling efforts at defining meaningful learning outcomes. Despite these weaknesses, efforts to redress them by the Director of Assessment, the API staff, and the UAC members are genuine, including one-to-one meetings with unit personnel having problems with implementing appropriate program reviews.

### Sources of Information

#### Websites

Assessment and Program Improvement

<http://www.auburn.edu/academic/provost/assessment>

*Assessment Report 2000 – 2001, Academic Degree Programs*, PowerPoint Presentation by Drew Clark

<http://www.auburn.edu/academic/provost/assessment/reports/discipline0001.ppt>

Auburn University Comprehensive Planning System

[http://frontpage.auburn.edu/gradschl/public\\_html/aucupsv2/](http://frontpage.auburn.edu/gradschl/public_html/aucupsv2/)

Office of Planning and Analysis

<http://www.panda.auburn.edu>

The institution **must** develop guidelines and procedures to evaluate educational effectiveness, including the quality of student learning and of research and service. This evaluation **must** encompass educational goals at all academic levels and research and service functions of the institution. The evaluation of academic programs **should** involve gathering and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data that demonstrate student achievement.

Auburn University is in compliance.

As discussed previously, this function is accomplished internally by the API, UAC, and AUCUPS and externally by program accreditation. Although the majority of Departments and units are participating in both the API and AUCUPS, a few Departments have not submitted reports, particularly to AUCUPS.

#### Suggestion 3- 4:

*The Steering Committee suggests that timely participation in the planning process, including providing a satisfactory mission statement, objectives, and assessment measures for AUCUPS and API be included as a requirement that is appraised on the annual personnel evaluations of all unit heads.*

### Sources of Information

#### Websites

Assessment and Program Improvement

<http://www.auburn.edu/academic/provost/assessment>

Auburn University Comprehensive Planning System

[http://frontpage.auburn.edu/gradschl/public\\_html/aucupsv2/](http://frontpage.auburn.edu/gradschl/public_html/aucupsv2/)

Office of Planning and Analysis

<http://www.panda.auburn.edu/>

The institution **must** evaluate its success with respect to student achievement in relation to purpose, including, as appropriate, consideration of course completion, state licensing examination, and job placement rates.

Auburn University is in compliance.

This federal requirement under the 1992 Higher Education Amendments is consistent with some of the earlier **must** statements, such as “the institution must develop guidelines and procedures to evaluate educational effectiveness, including the quality of student learning and of research and service.” The program assessment reports submitted to API for the past two years clearly indicate that the University is meeting this requirement. Additionally, most external accrediting bodies are now requiring individual programs to document such outcomes for their program graduates.

### Sources of Information

#### Websites

Assessment and Program Improvement

<http://www.auburn.edu/academic/provost/assessment>

List of Accredited Programs

<http://www.panda.auburn.edu/accred.htm>

## 3.2 Planning and Evaluation: Administrative and Educational Support Services

In addition to providing evidence of planning and evaluation in its educational program, the institution **must** demonstrate planning and evaluation in its administrative and educational support services. For each administrative and educational support service unit, the institution **must**

1. establish a clearly defined purpose which supports the institution's purpose and goals.
2. formulate goals which support the purpose of each unit.
3. develop and implement procedures to evaluate the extent to which these goals are being achieved in each unit.
4. use the results of the evaluations to improve administrative and educational support services.

Each unit, in its planning and evaluation processes, **should** consider internal and external factors and develop evaluation methods which will yield information useful to the planning processes of that unit.

Auburn University is in partial compliance.

Below is a discussion of the four listed items.

1. *Establish a clearly defined purpose which supports the institution's purpose and goals.* A planning and assessment process has been developed and is conducted annually by API (created in 2000), as well as by AUCUPS (created in web format in 2001). In the fall of each year, administrative and educational support service units submit plans, which include a mission statement describing the purpose and services of the unit. In addition, each plan designates the institutional goal or component of the University's mission that the unit's mission supports. To date, the University has completed one cycle of this process (2001) and is in the second cycle (2002). On the whole, administrative and educational support service units are effectively participating in this planning process. In 2001 and in 2002 most administrative and educational support service units submitted plans. The Institutional Effectiveness Committee reviewed the plans submitted to API in early March 2002 and determined that, of those submitting plans, 88.3% provided suitable mission statements in 2001 and 95.5% in 2002.

Although participation in the planning process is relatively high and most mission statements are adequate, not every unit is participating fully. There is a particular lack of participation in AUCUPS by the units under the Assistant Vice President for Business and Finance. Only 1 of 10 units under this Assistant Vice President has submitted mission statements or goals to AUCUPS. Some units require assistance in defining their mission statement appropriately, and others are habitually tardy in their submissions. Consequently, acceptable participation in this planning process should be strictly enforced.

2. *Formulate goals which support the purpose of each unit.* In the fall of each year, administrative and educational support service units submit plans, which include objectives relevant to the purpose of the unit to API and to AUCUPS. On the whole, administrative and educational support service units are effectively participating in this planning process. In 2001, the majority of units provided suitable objectives for their plans to API and to AUCUPS. Although participation in the planning process is relatively high and most objectives are adequate, not every unit is participating, as noted above, and some units need assistance in the development of their objectives.

3. *Develop and implement procedures to evaluate the extent to which these goals are being achieved in each unit.* In the fall of each year, administrative and educational support service units submit plans, which include assessment measures for each of the unit's objectives. On the whole, administrative and educational support service units are effectively participating in this aspect of the planning process through API and AUCUPS. In 2001, the majority of units submitted suitable assessment measures as part of their plans. Although participation in the planning process is relatively high, not all units participated or provided adequate assessment measures.

4. *Use the results of the evaluations to improve administrative and educational support services.* In the fall of each year, administrative and educational support service units submit reports to API and to AUCUPS, which provide an analysis of the data for each assessment measure for each of the objectives stated in the unit's plan from the previous year. In addition, each report includes a description of how these assessment results were put to use to improve the services of the unit. In 2001, fewer than 50% of those submitting reports to API (review by Institutional Effectiveness Committee) made effective use of the results of their assessments. With less than half of those units submitting reports appropriately making use of their assessment results, it is clear that progress must be made with respect to this **must** statement. More participation and a better understanding of assessment must be achieved.

### **Recommendation 3 -1:**

*The Steering Committee recommends that administrative and educational support units make use of their assessment results to improve their services.*



**Suggestion 3-5:**

*The Steering Committee suggests that timely participation in the planning process, including providing a satisfactory mission statement, objectives, and assessment measures for AUCUPS and API be included as a requirement that is appraised on the annual personnel evaluations of all administrative and educational support service unit heads.*

**Suggestion 3-6:**

*The Steering Committee suggests that because of the nature of these units, coordination of the AUCUPS system and the API system should be easier to achieve and should be accomplished.*

**Suggestion 3-7:**

*The Steering Committee suggests in constructing their mission statements, objectives, or assessment measures assistance be made available for units having difficulty.*

**Sources of Information****Documents**

2001 Reports, Office of Assessment and Program Improvement

2002 Plans, Office of Assessment and Program Improvement

Plan/Report Review Survey by the Institutional Effectiveness Committee

**Interview**

Drew Clark, Director, Office of Assessment and Program Improvement, April 22, 2002

**Website**

Planning Form B (unit mission statement)

Planning Form C (unit assessment measures)

Planning Form C (assessment results and use)

[www.auburn.edu/academic/provost/assessment](http://www.auburn.edu/academic/provost/assessment)

## 3.3 Institutional Research

3.3

Institutional research **must** be an integral part of the institution's planning and evaluation process.

Auburn University is in compliance.

The planning and evaluation process for Auburn University is communicated via the web-based AUCUPS. This system first came online in 2001 and is managed by the Provost's Office. The Provost's Office is responsible for the institution's planning and evaluation process. The Office of Planning and Analysis plays a critical role in providing the information that serves as the basis for the planning and evaluation process. Unfortunately the title of the Office does not accurately reflect its role in the planning and evaluation process. The Office provides information for planning and evaluation, but it is not directly responsible for those processes.

**Suggestion 3- 8:**

*The Steering Committee suggests that consideration be given to renaming the Office of Planning and Analysis, perhaps to the Office of Institutional Research.*

## Sources of Information

### Interviews

John Pritchett, Interim Provost, October 2, 2001

Don Large, Executive Vice President, October 11, 2001

It **must** be effective in collecting and analyzing data and disseminating results.

Auburn University is in compliance.

The effectiveness of the Office of Planning and Analysis was verified via both interview and survey data. All administrators at the level of the Dean and above who were interviewed indicated strong satisfaction with the Office. Results from both the survey conducted by the Institutional Effectiveness Committee and that conducted by the Office support this conclusion. Representative comments include “Always prompt, courteous, accurate”; “Appreciative of help provided”; “They do a great job”; “Everyone is extremely helpful and cooperative”; and “Everyone extremely helpful, dependable, knowledgeable.”

However, the breadth of the dissemination of results from the Office of Planning and Analysis is perhaps an area for concern. Although the Office maintains a website containing a variety of institutional data, it is not well-known among faculty and staff. Representative comments from faculty in interviews and the survey include “I have no idea what the office does”; “I’ve just checked with a few colleagues and nobody knows what this office is about”; and “What types of information are available? I am not that familiar with this office.” This lack of awareness by faculty of the Office of Planning and Analysis reflects the information flow process at Auburn University. Requests from faculty go through the Department Heads and Chairs, through the Deans, to the Office of Planning and Analysis. Information flows back through these entities in the opposite direction. This is an effective system, eliminating redundant requests, while making information widely available when and as needed. However, the situation could be improved if faculty and staff were more knowledgeable about the information routinely available from the Office of Planning and Analysis.

### Suggestion 3-9:

*The Steering Committee suggests that campuswide effort be undertaken to publicize the Office of Planning and Analysis, its functions, its website, and the information routinely collected.*

## Sources of Information

### Documents

Survey of Planning and Analysis Users, Institutional Effectiveness Committee for  
SACS Self Study

Annual Evaluation Survey Planning and Analysis

Results of the Planning and Analysis Survey, 1994

### Interviews

John Pritchett, Interim Provost, October 2, 2001

Don Large, Executive Vice President, October 11, 2001

Faculty and Administrators Interviewed the Week of September 24, 2001:

Byron Blagburn

Dean Timothy Boosinger

Ed Morrison

Lauren Wolfe (Department Head)

Associate Dean Donna Angarano

Robert Wilson (Department Head)  
Phil Posner (Department Head)  
Associate Dean Joseph Janicki  
Charles Branch  
Stuart Price  
Bill Brawner

An institution **must** regularly evaluate the effectiveness of its institutional research process and use its findings for the improvement of its process.

Auburn University is not in compliance.

The Office of Planning and Analysis is sensitive to user needs and is continually striving to improve its services. It has an evaluation instrument (available in the SACS Library). This survey is well designed, providing both quantitative data describing user satisfaction levels and opportunities for open-ended responses. Disseminating this survey and responding to the results would satisfy the **must** statement if the processes were conducted appropriately. However, the evaluation is conducted only sporadically and response to results is ad hoc. In addition, Planning and Analysis has not participated in the AUCUPS or API systems.

#### **Recommendation 3-2:**

*The Steering Committee recommends that an evaluation survey be conducted annually, with the Executive Director of the Office of Planning and Analysis and the Executive Vice President responsible for reviewing the survey results, agreeing upon a timetable for appropriate responses, and following up on the implementation of those responses. Planning and Analysis should also be participating in the AUCUPS and API systems.*

#### **Sources of Information**

##### **Documents**

Annual Evaluation Survey Planning and Analysis

Results of the Planning and Analysis Survey, 1994

##### **Interviews**

Don Large, Executive Vice President, October 11, 2001

Drew Clark, Director of Assessment, Email Communication September 3, 2002

Institutions **must** assign administrative responsibility for conducting institutional research, allocate adequate resources, and allow access to relevant information.

Auburn University is in compliance.

Administrative responsibility for conducting institutional research is assigned to the Office of Planning and Analysis. The Office has full access to relevant information and is able to meet the demand for its services, as shown in both the results of the Office's survey and the survey conducted by the Institutional Effectiveness Committee. Representative comments from these surveys include "They've always been helpful & prompt in my requests"; "I feel free to contact that office should I have a need for precise information"; and "I am able to get all information that I need through P&A." The generally high level of satisfaction with the Office of Planning and Analysis suggests that

adequate resources are allocated. However, the Office's relative lack of visibility suggests that those resources may well be just minimally adequate, as reflected in the following response by the Director of Planning and Analysis relative to a question about resources:

In recent years, strong support from the Executive Vice President has allowed and encouraged the Office of Planning and Analysis to enhance its technological capabilities and improve productivity. Likewise, recent support from the Provost has provided the resources to recruit more highly qualified graduate assistants. However, the current professional staffing level makes it difficult to respond to extraordinary demands or to undertake new initiatives. These limitations are more pronounced as many data processing tasks are shifted from the Office of Information Technology to the user departments and as a valuable staff member assumes additional duties outside the Office.

These comments are supported by a review of staffing levels at similar institutions. At Auburn the Office of Planning and Analysis consists of the following: Executive Director, Associate Director, Coordinator of Institutional Studies, Coordinator of Institutional Data Analysis, Executive Secretary, and graduate assistants (3). The comparable office staff at the University of Alabama (the other major public institution in our state) includes the following: Director, Associate Director, Assistant Director, Coordinator of Student Assessment, IR Specialists (2), Programmer Analysts (2), and graduate assistants (2). Another appropriate comparison is with Clemson University, a land grant institution with comparable program emphasis to that found at Auburn. The comparable office at Clemson includes the following: Director, Assistant Director, Administrative Assistant, Statisticians and Analysts (4), and graduate assistants (2). Although each of these institutions is smaller than Auburn, their analogous office operates with a larger staff. Office staffing has been obtained for each university from information available via the institutional website.

**Suggestion 3-10:**

*The Steering Committee suggests that consideration be given to increasing staff size in the Office of Planning and Analysis.*

**Sources of Information**

**Documents**

Survey of Planning and Analysis Users, Institutional Effectiveness Committee for SACS  
Self Study

**Interviews**

Sam Lowther, Director of the Office of Planning and Analysis, Email Communication  
September 4, 2002

**Websites**

Clemson  
<http://www.clemson.edu/oir/staff.htm>  
University of Alabama  
<http://www.bama.ua.edu/~oir/personnel.html>