EAB

How to Design a Sustainable Unit Evaluation Process

Academic Vital Signs, Part VII

Academic Affairs Forum

Finding the Right Frequency

Principle 1: Review Departmental Performance and Set Goals Annually

Once Every Year
Holistic Departmental Review

Once Every 5-8 Years

- Periodic program review process lacks regular check-ins and follow-up to ensure progress and relevance
- No consistency through department chair turnover or other transitions on campus

- Informs (but doesn't determine) day-to-day departmental decisions that impact institutional goals and strategy
- Conversation including key decision makers connects resource, curricular, and personnel concerns
- Regular opportunity to adjust goals prevents transition-driven disruption
- Requires common data set to prevent unproductive accuracy debates

Once Every Day

- One-off decisions (scheduling, hiring, promotion, teaching assignments, etc.) made as-needed without a unifying strategy
- Ad-hoc data reporting has no clear connection to departmental mission and priorities

Avoiding Administrivia

3

Principle 2: Minimize Self-Reporting Burden on Departments

Stop the Paperwork

"There are more pages in our departmental assessment report than students in my major."

Department Chair, Communication
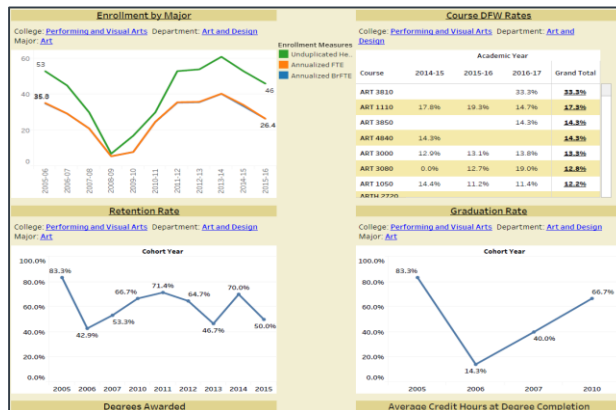*Liberal Arts College*

Answering to Many Masters

"All the chairs know what's going on. The administrators are each asking for individual reports from the chairs, and they don't know that the other administrators are also asking for reports."

Department Chair, Philosophy
Private Master's University

Standardized Unit Effectiveness Plan Metrics

- Performance shown over time
- Shared before annual planning process
- Departmental self-analysis must map to performance on provided indicators
- Used to prevent excessive and uncoordinated requests from institutional research offices and administration

Knowing Where You Stand

Principle 3: Make Unit Performance Data Accessible Campus-wide

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Strategic Accountability Matrix

Department	Student Credit Hours lost to DFW			Intersession Undergraduate SCH		
	Goal	*Actual*	*Score*	*Goal*	*Actual*	*Score*
Dept. A	471	1,086	**2.31**	122	198	**1.62**
Dept. B	401	134	**0.33**	113	400	**3.54**
Dept. C	193	724	**3.76**	78	87	**1.11**
Dept. D	205	715	**3.49**	80	219	**2.72**
Dept. E	1,879	1,384	**0.74**	244	103	**0.42**

(header: Student Success Metric)

Transparency around actual values **encourages healthy competition** between departments

Transparency around data definitions and expected values clarify **how departments and deans collaborate to set goals**

Transparent scores help departments understand **resource allocation decisions**

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Make it Matter

Principle 4: Tie Unit Planning and Improvement to Discretionary Resources

Sample Metrics

Internship participation

Credit hours lost to DFW

% of first-year students with a degree plan

Midterm grade reports

Customize Goals to Department Mission
Weighting goals ensures departments can concentrate on a few strategic areas

Set Realistic Targets
Using departments' past performance as a baseline helps ensure goals are achievable

Control for Department Size
Weighting for size avoids unintentional disparities in per-faculty funding

| *Departmental metrics* | ✖ | *Weighting determined by chair/dean* | ✖ | *Ratio of actual to expected performance* | ✖ | *Adjustment for department size* |

= Departmental Discretionary Budget
Departments may use funds for conference expenses, travel, support staff, supplies, minor facilities renovations, etc.

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Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Opening the Black Box

Principle 5: Explicitly Connect Metrics to Resource Decisions

Resource Decisions Requiring Provost and Dean Input

Data Points Considered in Mutual Decision

Even Rejected Requests Can Lead to Constructive Change

Assign faculty lines

- Enrollment growth
- SCH production
- Workload capacity
- Etc.

Department does not receive faculty line, but makes plan to increase SCH production

Approve new program proposals

- Market demand data
- Current program size
- Faculty lines required
- Etc.

Department launches program as a minor with plans to grow over time

Allocate research laboratory space

- Indirect cost recovery
- Holistic outputs
- Effort metrics
- Etc.

Department shares new lab space as part of inter-disciplinary project

If Everything's Important, Nothing Is

Principle 6: Focus Improvement Plan on 2-4 Strategic Goals

Targeted Action Plan (Example)

Major Enrollment – Education[1]

Summary	Current enrollment: 25 students Desired enrollment: 30-35 students
Near-Term Goals	• Engage with local high schools to improve major recruitment and create more employment opportunities for graduates • Reduce credit-hour requirements
Analysis of Current Efforts	Previous faculty member charged with recruitment recently retired
Action Steps	Conduct prospective student visits to feeder high schools
Responsible Parties and Timeline	Joan Smith 1 year

SUU
SOUTHERN UTAH UNIVERSITY

Use goal-setting and analysis of current efforts to focus departmental action on priorities where they most need improvement

Departments responsible for determining action steps based on unit and discipline context

Identify 1-3 metrics to evaluate progress on action steps in the next year's review

1) Department name and data are pseudonymous.

Resource: The Departmental Metric Compendium

Departmental Metric Compendium

- "Pick list" of department-appropriate metrics that meet EAB strategic alignment criteria

- Guidance on data collection, definitions and measurement considerations, internal and external benchmarks, time horizons, and key decisions informed by departmental metrics

- Diagnostic analyses to identify root causes of poor departmental performance on metrics

Metric: Junior Graduation Rate			
Description	Data Source	Key Decisions Informed	Measurement Considerations
2-year graduation rate for majors after reaching 60 SCH	Campus information systems	Curricular changes Staff budget	How to count second major Typical junior SCH

Diagnostic Analyses	Implications
Number of degree audit exceptions per student	Problems with major-specific advising and degree planning
Number of multi-course degree sequences required for major	Curriculum is overly complex and causing delays to graduation
Graduation rate or delay by previous major	Requirements are misaligned with common donor majors
DFW rate in upper-division courses in the major	Course repeats causing delays, or DFWs leading to attrition
Average number of credits "lost" during transfer articulation	Transfer articulation policies are misaligned with feeder schools

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

An Ounce of Prevention

Pre-empting the Need for Severe, Top-Down Corrective Measures

Routine preventative practices surface and mitigate health risks

- Diet and Nutrition
- Regular Exercise
- Routine Check-ups
- Diagnostic Exams

When untreated, risk factors lead to costly, aggressive intervention

- Invasive Surgery
- High-Cost Medication
- Urgent Care Treatment
- Hospitalization

Health Care

Preventative Care

Reactive Treatment

- Enrollment Planning
- Outcomes Assessment
- Annual Unit Reviews
- Improvement Incentives

- Program Prioritization
- Draconian Performance Funding Formulas
- Across-the-Board Cuts
- External Audits

Higher Education

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Webconference Recordings and Resources Related to Today's Presentation

Webconferences in This Series

Archived webconferences are available at eab.com.

I. How Departments Make or Break Institutional Strategy

II. 3 Cost Efficiency Metrics Every Department Chair Should Watch

III. 3 Research Metrics Every Department Chair Should Watch

IV. 3 Enrollment Metrics Every Department Chair Should Watch

V. How Departmental Practices Contribute to Faculty Diversity Goals

VI. 3 Student Outcomes Metrics Every Department Chair Should Watch

VII. How to Design a Sustainable Unit Evaluation Process (Nov. 27)

Academic Vital Signs
Aligning Departmental Evaluation with Institutional Priorities

- 14 analyses to guide department-level strategy

- Root-cause diagnostic tools for academic unit leaders

- Guidance for implementing regular departmental review processes

study available at eab.com