AQIP Category Seven: Measuring Effectiveness

PROCESSES (P)

7P1 - Selection, Management and Distribution of Data to Support Instructional and Non-Instructional Programs and Services

Instructional

• The university assessment process for instructional programs was developed by the Assessment Council, composed of representatives from each college, in consultation with the University Curriculum Committee, the college deans, the vice president for academic affairs, and the president. Each college is responsible for monitoring the assessment process at the college and department level. Assessment of instructional outcomes is the responsibility of each college and department. Colleges present assessment results annually to the Assessment Council, who submits a university-wide assessment report to the Provost and President at the end of the year (see AQIP Category 1—Helping Students Learn) Under the direction of the University Curriculum Committee and the Assessment Council, departments also undergo a systematic Program Review every five years. Distribution of data is accomplished via USF Portal, Class Lists, Grades and Advising to faculty for decision making and planning purposes.

• The assessment process of instructional services offered by the university’s Academic Resource Center was developed by the department. The assessment process includes using both internal and external measures of the mission and goals of the department, focusing on supporting student academic success and keeping with best practices in the field. Data and information are collected and analyzed annually, and are shared with the divisional vice president and the department’s advisory council in order to evaluate and increase the program’s effectiveness.

• In 2008, an academic program review committee developed a standardized template to collect data and performance information on all instructional programs. Each academic program was requested to complete the review which includes questions related to how the program fulfills the University’s mission, its importance and contribution to the university, and assessment of the demand and outcomes of the program.

Non-instructional

• The university’s non-instructional data and performance information is divided into five general functional areas: Finance, Financial Aid, Human Resource, Development, Non-Instructional Student (Enrollment and Retention). Selection of data and performance information from these areas for use in supporting non-instructional programs is managed by leadership in each of the functional areas in response to needs of their constituents and the advancement of the strategic plan objectives relating to their area.

• The university manages non-instructional data through the use of the Sungard Banner administrative computing system, which provides a centralized, integrated, relational database system. The university’s Administrative Information Services department, along with input and guidance of functional areas of the institution, manage the information in this system.
In 2008, an institutional Program Review Committee developed a standardized template to collect data and performance information on all non-instructional departments. Each department head was requested to complete the review which includes questions related to how they fulfill the University’s mission, their importance to the university, how they demonstrate cost effectiveness, how they measure performance, and ideas they have to improve their departmental operation (i.e., developed standardized data for each program to use in their analysis).

The university has several tools to help with the distribution of both instructional and non-instructional, data including:

- A portal for access to financial (budget & purchasing), academic (schedules, academic standing) and logistic (room availability) information.
- Electronic collaboration tools including Adobe Connect to facilitate virtual meetings and our Groupwise E-Mail system.
- TaskStream Accountability Management System (AMS) that serves as an effective, efficient way for educational institutions to document, analyze, and manage performance results across an entire campus. This system will assist in the management of both instructional and non-instructional assessment plans, instruments, data and results, as well as information on how these measures support the university’s Strategic Plan, AQIP Systems Portfolio and Action Projects.
- Custom reports developed in various toolsets designed to aggregate data for analysis.

7P2 - Selection, Management and Distribution of Data to Support Planning and Improvement Efforts

Data and performance information to support planning and improvement levels is typically managed at two major levels: an overall organizational level, and at the departmental level. The organizational level is addressed in this section, while 7P3 describes details of the data and performance information managed at the departmental level. Overall, the data flows freely between departments, and organizational level data is filtered into the appropriate departments.

Organizational Level

- A strategic plan is created with broad input from the university community and is derived primarily from the mission, vision and values of the University.
- The AQIP Quality Initiatives and the Strategic Plan are connected to help develop direction, objectives, and planning towards prioritizing, funding, and implementing projects to achieve the vision of the University priorities, which go to the budget and planning committee to fund priorities.
- The University Board of Trustees, President, and Vice Presidents agreed on specific measurements to reflect progress on the strategic plan which became
the Board of Trustees dashboard. Data is collected, updated, and evaluated quarterly on these measurements. The Board of Trustees also has sub-committees which each have their own more detailed dashboards that reflect more specific and detailed information and progress on key performance indicators.

- The action items of the strategic plan are reviewed monthly by the Vice Presidents to ensure that strategic initiatives are accomplished.

**7P3 - Determining Departmental and Units Needs Related to Collection, Storage and Accessibility of Data**

At a departmental level there are both internal and external demands that drive the data and performance information collected and managed.

- Internally, factors from the organizational level feed into departmental operation mandates such as elements of the strategic plan, AQIP Action Projects, and university mission, vision and values.
- Additionally, at the academic level individual program assessment leads into a University wide assessment council which asks for a broad subset of that data to measure program outcomes, successes, and opportunities for improvement. An assessment plan report is updated yearly to measure program results.
- The university community is involved through several committees which help determine the needs of individual departments. These committees are formed on an as needed basis to facilitate departmental needs and are used to request, gather, and analyze information from stakeholders and evaluate the current processes and determine what may be needed both short-term and long-term.
- Externally, the accreditation process for each College, School, or department in general determines what data to collect and analyze. Furthermore IPEDS mandates the collection of certain data, and discussions with industry contacts are used to reinforce or refute course objectives and determine any future needs for new courses or programs.

**7P4 - Analyzing and Sharing Institutional Level Data Regarding Overall Performance**

Given the broad nature of data and information the university collects, there are several areas, committees and processes in place to facilitate the analysis and sharing of this data.

- A dedicated Office of Institutional Effectiveness department which analyzes and publishes student centric data has been established since fall 2008. This department is a master repository of data which allows the department to look internally at historical data and trends, and compare data to our external benchmarks over time. Furthermore, this department has created a comprehensive dashboard which is reflective of strategic plan elements and performance. It is used to look at various benchmarks and performance information across the university across 5 major elements: quality, Catholic Franciscan values, student centered environment, growth and shape of the student body, strategic goals, and our fiscal condition.
• Institutional wide academic and administrative program review committee has been commissioned to review, summarize, and share the benchmarks set and performance information for all of our administrative and academic units. This information will be shared by the Vice Presidents who will develop recommendations based upon the reports. These recommendations will be shared with the President and the Board of Trustees for their approval and/or recommendations.

• Financial data is analyzed by the VP of Finance to see historical and current income and expense trends, as well as through standard financial reports (P&L and balance sheet) which are further reviewed in detail every year by an external auditing firm.

• Information is also broadly shared through University Town Hall meetings to which each employee is invited to attend and through newsletters published by the VP’s of the individual divisions. For example:

• VP of Admissions and enrollment gives regular reports on our marketing efforts and incoming student pool projections.

• VP of Finance gives reports on the overall financial health of the institution and the performance of our investments,

• VP of Advancement sends out monthly university wide bulletin related to the performance of our entire development and alumni division.

7P5 - Determining the Needs and Priorities for Comparative Data and Selection of Sources of Comparative Data

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness and the Business Affairs Department are the two main areas within the University for data collection. The Information and Administrative Service department works closely with these two data collection areas to provide a centralized point of data storage and the mechanisms needed for reporting the information to the appropriate users in a usable format.

Individual units and colleges work with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and the Business Affairs Department to develop their specific informational needs. Again instead of having each unit develop their own data storage processes, whenever possible the data is integrated into the University’s main data systems. An example of this is the migration of student health records that were stored in an Access database within the Student Health Services area to a process of storing all the information within the Banner database. This allows the students shot and immunization records to be accessed by appropriate staff in the College of Nursing to more effectively monitor the required immunization history of our student nurses.

The university is working with faculty in academic majors and other groups such as Deans and Administrators and the Board of Trustees to determine useful comparative groups. By looking at what categories of information is needed, Institutional Effectiveness can develop groups which are similar in nature for benchmarking purposes. For this type of benchmarking, Institutional Research often uses IPEDS data, along with US News and World Report data.

For nationally-normed tests, both departments and the institution may only have an aggregated comparison group, such as “private liberal arts” to benchmark against. In these cases, Institutional Effectiveness will choose the most appropriate group out of the groupings provided.
7P6 – Alignment of Unit Analysis of Data with Organizational Goals for Instructional and Non-Instructional Programs and Services

Traditional means of ensuring that departmental analysis of information and their alignment with the institution’s mission and goals has been the academic department program assessment that is required every five years. Each college aligns their mission and goals to the University’s overall mission and goals. The departments in each college align their mission and goals to the college’s mission and goals. In this way, the department’s goals are aligned with the university’s goals. The department program review is currently reviewed by the college curriculum committee and the dean. Once approved at this level, it is reviewed by the University Curriculum Committee and finally the Provost and Academic Vice President.

Additionally, other processes are in place which help align departmental analysis of information to our university’s mission and goals including:

- Analysis of data is discussed at individual college meetings at the beginning and end of the school year; the discussions ensure that the goals of the college align with the University, and that our course objectives support the college objectives.
- Individual academic programs are required to conduct yearly assessments and make yearly reports that are available to all employees on our computer network.
- A portion of each staff and administrators yearly performance review is related to aligning employee goals with the organizational mission and goals.
- Vice Presidents are responsible for each of their own areas. They interpret and share the data and how it relates to organizational goals with the President, Board of Trustees, and where applicable the University community.

7P7 - Timeliness, Accuracy, Reliability and Security of Information System(s) and Related Processes

Within the Academic and Information Support Services (AISS) division, there are primarily three departments that manage the operation of the university’s information systems:

Network Support Services (NSS) is responsible for the operational aspects of the University network servers and communication channels. For data security, NSS maintains operational benchmarks on all servers and network switches. The University requires network user accounts and passwords to access user software, email and Internet access. NSS maintains a firewall to provide controlled access to the Internet. Finally, NSS is responsible for the maintenance and replacement of all technology hardware including both PC and Apple computers.

The Center for Instructional Delivery (CID) is responsible for the operational aspects of Blackboard (formerly WebCT), the University’s course management system. Student support and help desk is handled through a 24/7 web-based problem report form as well as a toll-free telephone number during the normal operational hours of CID. CID also provides support and training for online faculty. This is accomplished through a combination of personal contact and collaboration software that gives the University the ability to use video conferencing and a remote desktop control system to enhance learning and support.
The Information and Administrative Services Department (IAS) is responsible for the operational aspects of the University’s administrative computing system (Sungard Banner), the web-based portal system, and the underlying systems and databases systems require. Data integrity within the administrative systems is decentralized to the various functional areas that work through both IAS and Institutional Effectiveness. Some departmental managers are provided with “data exception reports” that run weekly through automated processes and notify these departments of data that can be determined as inconsistent, incomplete, or incorrect. Other departmental managers use data mining techniques in applying their own quality assurance processes to look for trends and anomalies in data to ensure correctness.

**RESULTS (R)**

**7R1 - Measures of Performance and Effectiveness of Information Systems and Knowledge Management**

For measuring student centric data, student’s needs and satisfaction, and program outcomes, USF collects and analyzes the following data regularly:

- The Noel Levitz and NSSE surveys are issued every other year to measure and benchmark overall student satisfaction and identify opportunities for improvement within the university.
- Academic programs are assessed every year to ensure they are meeting their objectives.
- Graduates are surveyed 6 months after graduation to determine job placement of USF students, and again 1 year after graduation to indirectly measure departmental program outcomes, and in the future 5 years after graduation to measure general education outcomes.

Furthermore, USF’s Office of Institutional Effectiveness produces detailed dashboards to measure and reflect the overall progress of the university towards strategic plan objectives. These dashboards aggregate the data collected across all of the university information and knowledge management systems and which is then used by the university’s Board of Trustees and upper level administration for strategic decision making. Some items reflected on the dashboards are data collected from Noel Levitz, NSSE, program assessment, financial aid data, financial data and health, employee demographics, employee to student ratios, and alumni, graduation, and job placement data.

**7R2 - System for Measuring Effectiveness Meets Organization’s Needs in Accomplishing Mission and Goal**

Yearly academic assessment plans and reports as well as five-year program reviews require academic units to explain the connection among missions, values and goals. Other evidence is derived from the results of various surveys targeted towards specific groups. These groups were chosen to measure the effectiveness or impact of a procedural change to that targeted group. For example, with regards to student satisfaction we administer a Noel Levitz survey from which the results are analyzed, and processes are adjusted to address findings. The results are then re-evaluated from subsequent surveys to verify improvement. Asking a consistent set of questions allows the University to review the plans and various actions taken over a two year period to ensure we are addressing the needs of our stakeholders and accomplishing our mission and goals. Furthermore, the NSSE survey measures are directly tied to our mission of academics and
student engagement in learning. The NSSE results are further examined by the Quality of Student Life and Learning Committee which is to target unsatisfactory results and develop special plans to rectify areas of concern.

Additionally, the dashboards, as described in 7P4, are used specifically to monitor our progress in accomplishing our mission and goals. As stated previously, these dashboards are updated and reviewed quarterly by upper level management, and adjustments to university processes are made on an as needed basis. Examples of the dashboards used to measure progress on the growth and shape of our student body are provided in Appendix 19.

7R3 - Comparison of Results for the Performance of Processes for Measuring Effectiveness

Since the NSSE and Noel Levitz surveys are nationally benchmarked we are able to compare the results to other similar institutions. The summary results of St. Francis compared to our benchmark schools on both of these surveys are shown in the Appendices 7 and 8 to this chapter. Some of the primary sources used to obtain external data in order to benchmark ourselves to other organizations both in and outside of higher education are:

- Retention results are compared to data from a private group called the Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange.
- IPEDS (Integrated post secondary education data system) data.
- IBHE data.
- Moody’s for financial data.

Data from many external sources is tabulated, analyzed, and used to benchmark USF depending on the need. One such example is the USF fact book which is an internal publication that shows how USF compares in many measurements to our competitors and other like institutions. Appendix 10 shows an example of data from our fact book comparing the number of applicants and admission rates to many of our peer institutions.

IMPROVEMENTS (I)

7I1 - Improvement of Current Processes and Systems for Measuring Effectiveness

USF has made many improvements over the last few years in its ability to collect, analyze, distribute, and use various data and information to drive performance improvement. Some of the most noteworthy improvements are:

- The Accountability Management System software by Task Stream is being deployed to provide an efficient and effective way for academic and non-academic divisions, departments, and programs to document, analyze, manage and archive outcomes assessment and accountability initiatives. The implementation of this software is currently under way to use this software in our program assessment process as well as to be a centralized management system for AQIP initiatives and the university’s strategic plan.
- Executive level dashboards were implemented in 2008 and are being adjusted on an ongoing basis to better reflect data aggregation to measure overall effectiveness and university wide improvements. Dashboard effectiveness will be re-evaluated in the latter
half of 2009 by the Board of Trustees and Vice Presidents to ensure the correct items are being measured and any changes will be made as necessary.

- An assessment council has been organized which has devised simple assessments for general education. The council has also consistently collected and evaluated departmental assessment rubrics. The actual organization structure of the assessment council is being evaluated to maximize effectiveness and to become a part of the official academic governance system.

- A General Education Task Force has been developed reporting to the Curriculum Committee to work on revision of the general education curriculum.

- The retention committee/QSLL has made significant improvements in processes across the university by creating an organized structure of action teams to solve performance issues identified through our data analysis.

- A Center for Innovation has been created within the university which is designed to be an incubator to fast-track new programs that data analysis shows as potential opportunities for our institution.

- A Center for Teaching and Excellence has been established where faculty can receive consultation and guidance on a variety of instructional areas such as service learning, writing across the curriculum, assessment, tenure, innovative teaching methods, and sharing teaching ideas with others.

- The Information Technology department has deployed a robust, web-based portal system to help aggregate and deliver university data to its various constituents.

**7I2 - Selecting Specific Processes to Improve Performance Results in Measuring Effectiveness**

The culture within our university is very open, innovative, and supportive. It is one that encourages solid research that focuses on a test, analysis of the process, data collection of results, and evaluation of the results for continuous improvement. Because of this culture, faculty are encouraged and supported to "push the envelope" and try new pedagogy especially in regards to the use of technology in the classroom. Additionally, both faculty and administration are supported in finding new and innovative ways of improving the overall effectiveness of the organization based on the results of fact finding and alignment and prioritization of ideas with the strategic plan.

Because of the importance and impact of the strategic plan, it was developed using a broad process that included as many people as possible in order to gather a large set of ideas and initiatives, and to facilitate a university wide buy in. Strategic plan milestone charts are also openly available to all employees for them to see exactly which initiatives are being worked on and where the university is at with the overall progress. Other committees also follow this same model for broad representation and input such as our assessment council and QSLL. We find that involving much of the university helps to ensure buy in across all of our constituencies and with integration of ideas across the community.
Below is an overview of how the various university wide planning, implementation, and assessment processes link together.

**Linkages of Planning**

- **Strategy Formulation**
  - **Mission**: Reason For Existence
  - **Goals**: What is to be accomplished and by when
  - **Strategies**: Plan to achieve mission and goals

- **Strategy Implementation**
  - **Programs/Initiatives**: Activities needed to accomplish a plan (AQIP AABR)
  - **Budgets**: Allocation of resources
  - **Procedures**: Sequencing of events and activities

- **Assessment**
  - **Performance Result or outcomes**

Learning (Feedback)