

Educational Program Self-Study Manual

Addressing NWCCU Accreditation Standards 1-4

Standard 1: Institutional Mission & Goals, Planning & Effectiveness

Standard 2: Educational Program & Its Effectiveness; Standard 3: Students; Standard 4: Faculty

Prepared by the Center for Teaching, Learning & Assessment (CTLA) in consultation with the Accreditation Steering Committee, the Faculty Senate Assessment Committee, and the Office of Academic Affairs.

NOTE: “Program” in this document is used synonymously for academic departments, programs, and stand-alone minors.

Introduction

At the conclusion of the AY 2006-2007, SOU will submit a university-wide self-study report to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU). This report will document the status of the University at that time, based on our analysis of nine standards established by the NWCCU.

SOU has created nine interlinking taskforces composed of teaching faculty and administrative staff. Each team will focus on one standard and produce a written report that will be compiled into a final report that will be submitted to the NWCCU. An accreditation steering committee (ASC) has been appointed by the Provost and has been meeting since January 2006. The ASC is establishing procedures for compiling these self-studies and has been assembling the self-study teams.

Systematic Approach

Four of the standards concern educational programs (1-4). Since the information assembled by the educational programs needs to be shared among these four self-study teams, we need methods (a) to identify what data should be collected and shared, and (b) to document this information systematically, in order for it be shared rationally.

To ensure this task is completed in a well-organized manner, the CTLA has assembled an *Educational Program Self-Study Manual* to simplify and rationalize this process. In addition to offering an organized approach, the manual aims – despite the complexity of this task – to be readable, simple, and useful. And the processes it sets forth aim to be achievable within the time and resources available.

To create the manual, the CTLA, the ASC and the University Assessment Committee (UAC) combed through the NWCCU Accreditation Handbook, identified the key questions raised by the multiple (sometimes over-lapping) standards, reviewed self studies created by other NWCCU schools, and consulted with the NWCCU about the best methods to address this task. The result is a step-by-step manual that each program can follow to assemble the information needed.

Who Must Conduct A Self Study

Each department, graduate program, and “stand alone” undergraduate program will complete its own self-study using this manual as a guide. The information gathered by the programs will be assembled and collated following the standardized format laid out in the manual.

At completion, each program self-study will be submitted to the appropriate Dean for review and then forwarded to the Institutional Research Committee (IRC). The IRC will post each program’s self-study on an internal website. The website design will allow relevant standard teams to delve into diverse university data, as needed, to prepare their reports.

In the case of “stand alone” undergraduate programs, the self-studies will be submitted as follows:

Program

University Seminar
Honors
Native American Studies
Shakespeare Studies
Women’s Studies
Philosophy
Environmental Studies

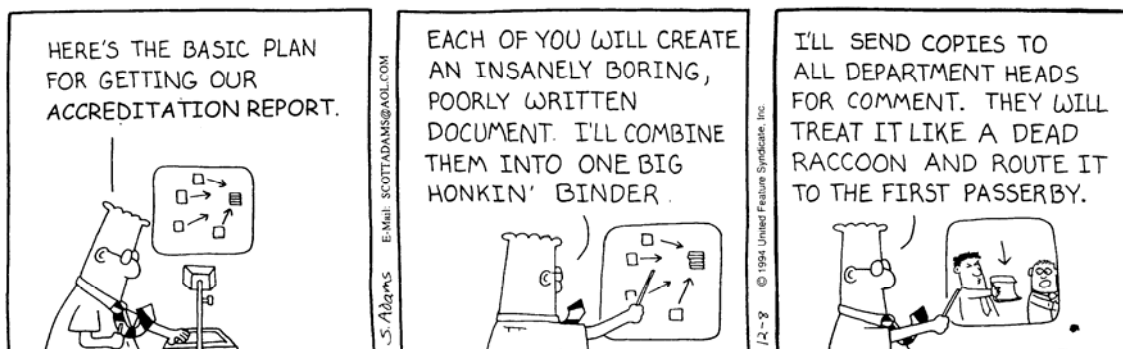
Reviewer

Office of Academic Affairs
Office of Academic Affairs
Dean Wilson
Dean of School of Arts & Letters
Dean of School of Arts & Letters
Dean of School of Arts & Letters
Dean Graf

Culture of Assessment

Answering the questions raised in the manual is also the first step in creating a “culture of assessment” at SOU. Rather than engaging the programs in a process of collecting data for an accreditation self-study that will lie dormant after the final “i” is dotted, the manual, with the advice of the University Assessment Committee, outlines practices that will be used for institutional program assessment in the years to come.

We are seeking to avoid the “dead raccoon” report syndrome described by Dilbert.



We have higher aspirations for accreditation. The methods used in assembling each program’s self-study for accreditation are the same methods that will be used for the ongoing evaluation of institutional academic effectiveness. In this way, we hope to initiate a university-wide culture of

assessment at SOU leading to a cycle of continuous improvement: implement program; collect data; analyze and evaluate teaching effectiveness, course design, and most importantly, student achievement; revise program; implement program... etc.

Process Overview

Overall, the accreditation self-study process has several aspects as depicted in the flow chart provided on page 1.4:

1. A self-study will be produced by each academic program as a means of documenting its status for internal analysis.
2. These self-studies will be forwarded to the School Deans for their consultation and review. Revisions and additions may be requested by the Deans.
3. Final versions of program self-studies will be forwarded by the Deans to the internal IRC website where they will become accessible to the taskforce teams. These teams will review the collected data and will draft the University's report for their standards for NWCCU accreditation.
4. Beyond the accreditation report, program self-studies also mirror the University's institutional program assessment requirements, so the data collected and the insights documented by each program will be used internally to assess program effectiveness.

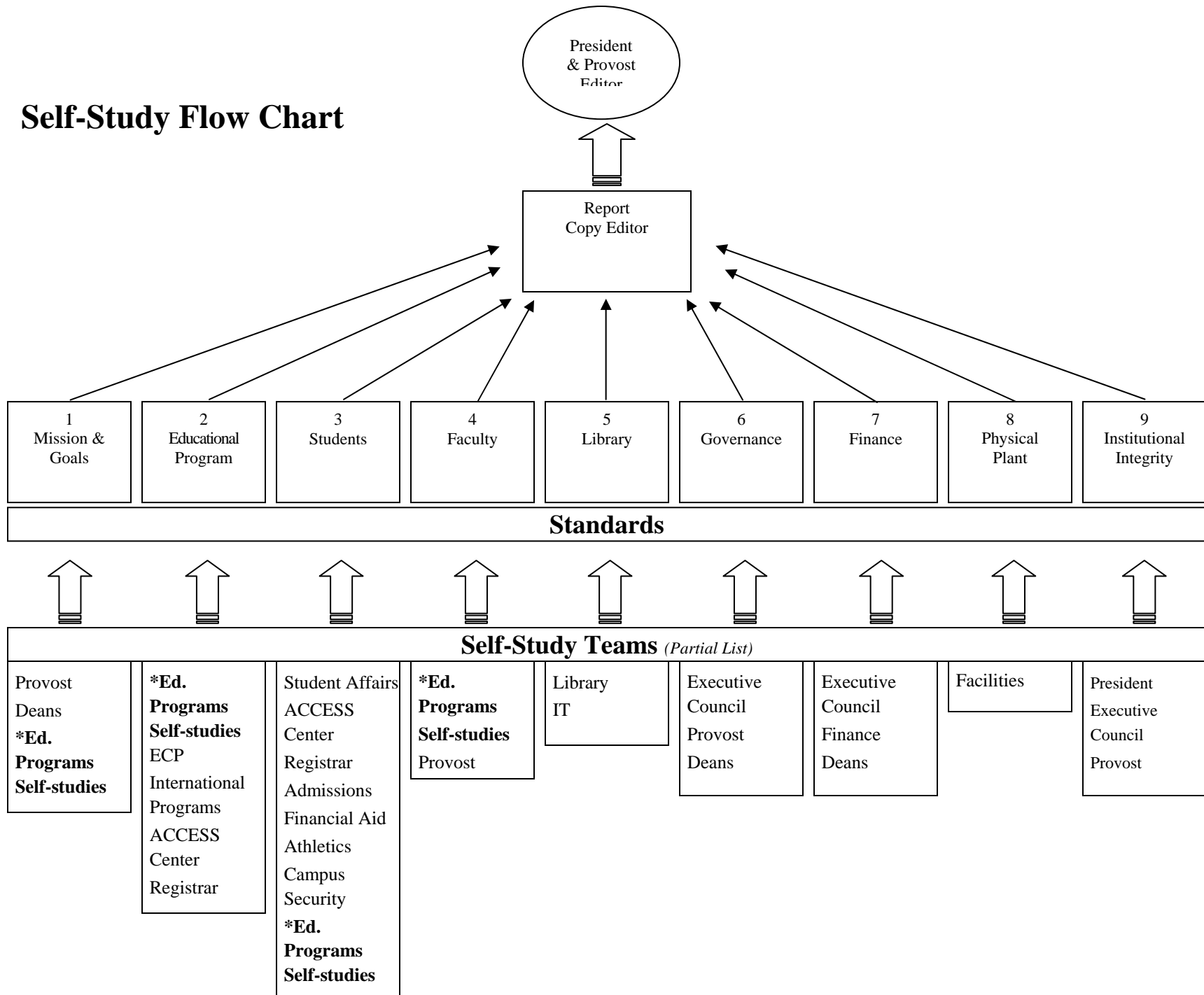
The Benefits

The self-study process represents a lot of hard work, but offers significant benefits to individual programs and to the institution as a whole:

- Faculty members will analyze their programs and will be able to act on this knowledge to improve departmental effectiveness.
- Departments will learn techniques they will use for future internal program assessment led by the University Assessment Committee thereby initiating a "culture of assessment."
- The Deans will analyze the status of their school's strengths and weaknesses so they can act effectively on this knowledge.
- The President and the Provost will be able to ascertain the University's strengths and weaknesses and will be able to act effectively on this knowledge.

Workshops will be offered by the CTLA to assist each program in completing its report. For more information about this process, contact Paul Steinle or Kay Sagmiller.

Self-Study Flow Chart



Conducting a Self-Study

What is a self-study?

A self-study is a systematic investigation of a department's educational program and practices. The purpose of a self-study is to identify how close we are to meeting a set of standards (what are we doing now), and to clarify what is necessary to move towards meeting and exceeding these standards (what we plan to do to continue meeting them and to improve). The self-study process will highlight what the department is doing well and identify needs, problems, and opportunities. Having collected this data, faculty and administrators can make informed decisions about which aspects of a program should be sustained, improved, or eliminated. The self-study process will inspire inquiry and discussion, and will serve as a guide for setting goals to improve teaching and learning.

To complete a self-study, departments and units need to review current practices and collect evidence from a variety of sources. Virtually every department and program on campus will be conducting self-study activities in conjunction with the accreditation review. In most cases, departments will conduct numerous self-studies to develop a comprehensive picture of what they are accomplishing and what they plan to achieve in the future. The overarching view will be submitted in a formal report to the unit's leadership for inclusion in the institutional self-study report.

What are the steps in a self-study?

Step I – Collect Data: What are we doing now?

Step II – Analyze Data: How are we doing? What do we need to know? (worksheet provided)

Step III – Set Goals: What do we want to achieve? (worksheet provided)

Step IV – Draft Report: Write a report that:

- Summarizes findings
- Outlines the plan for monitoring the implementation of the new plan

Step V – (Post Study) Implement Plan and Institute Ongoing Evaluation: How are we doing?

NOTE: Step V is evidence that work on evaluation drives practice and will become a part of the institutional plan for continuous improvement.

What happens to the program's self-study?

Each educational program's self-study will be submitted to the head of the unit (Deans, in the case of academic programs) for review. The information presented in each self-study will be synthesized to provide an overview of the unit's performance and plan for continuous improvement. Each of the unit's reports will then be entered into a web-based data base for reference by the standards self-study teams. Individual self-studies will serve as addenda to the institutional self-study and remain on file for future review.

How do we get started on this self-study?

1. Become familiar with the standard requirements (1-9) that affect your unit. Charts illustrating which standards apply to undergraduate and graduate program levels are located in the corresponding section of this manual.
 - a. Academic programs need to conduct a thorough review of Standards 1 through 4. The data generated by departments and programs through the self-study process will provide key information necessary for the institutional report.
 - b. When conducting the self-study, consistently follow the five steps outlined above: collect data, analyze data, set goals, write a report in required format (page 1.8), and prepare to implement the plan.
 - c. Each **academic department** needs to conduct a self-study of the following standards:
 - i. Standard 1.A and 1.B
 - ii. Standard 2 A-C; Policies 2.1 and 2.2
 - iii. Standard 3.B.1, 3.B.3, 3.C.1-2., 3.D.2-5, 3.D.9-10
 - iv. Standard 4.A.3, 4.A.5; 4.B.1, 4.B.4-7; Policy 4.1
 - d. The following **undergraduate stand alone programs** must also complete a self-study and submit their findings as assigned:
 - University Seminar
 - Honors
 - Native American Studies
 - Shakespeare Studies
 - Women's Studies
 - Philosophy
 - Environmental Studies
 - e. Each **graduate program** must also conduct a self-study and submit the study to its Dean.
 - School of Arts & Letters (3 reports):
 - Master of Arts or Science in Theatre Education
 - Master of Music in Conducting
 - Master of Arts & Letters: Foreign Language
 - School of Business: Master in Management
 - School of Education (4 reports):
 - Master of Arts in Teaching: Initial Licensure
 - Special Education: Initial Licensure
 - Initial Administrator Leadership
 - Master of Arts/Science in Education
 - School of Science (2 reports):
 - Master of Environmental Education
 - Master of Arts or Master of Science in Mathematical and Computer Sciences
 - School of Social Sciences, Health & PE (3 reports):
 - Master of Science in Applied Psychology: Mental Health Counseling
 - Master of Science in Applied Psychology OTD/Human Services
 - Master of Inter-Disciplinary Studies

How do we get started on this self-study? (continued)

2. Review this manual to clarify the self-study requirements for each standard. The following overview will help you know what to expect:
 - a. Standard 1 (Mission and Planning) is straightforward. It is recommended that the leader of the program collect and analyze the data, then engage the faculty in a conversation about the findings and the goal setting process. The final report for this standard will be brief (be sure to follow the required format).
 - b. Educational programs will assist the accreditation committee with only a portion of the entire Standard 2 (Educational Program) requirements, but the program's portion is considerable. In order to collect the data needed to respond to several of the standards an abbreviated **curriculum inventory** must be conducted. The curriculum inventory process is outlined in this handbook and supporting templates are provided. Contact the Center for Teaching, Learning & Assessment if you would like assistance in conducting this inventory.
 - c. Standard 3 (Students) will require assembling departmental and program data for approximately ten factors. A small team can quickly collect, analyze, and summarize the necessary data.
 - d. Standard 4 (Faculty) will require assembling academic departmental and program data for several items. **The collection, analysis of data and reporting process for this standard will vary somewhat from the rest of the standards.** Follow the directions provided for this standard carefully. A small team can assemble this report.

Required Format for the Final Self-Study Report

To facilitate the summarization of data institutionally, a common format must be used by all departments and programs. Data from the self-study reports will be entered into an online data base. Institutional accreditation teams will then be able to access the data and use it effectively.

Once your program's self-study has been approved by the Dean, you will submit it to the institutional accreditation team in both digital and print formats. Reports should be written in Times New Roman 12 point type with standard one inch margins. Instructions for digital submission will be provided at a later date.

Here is how your final report should be organized:

Educational Program Self-Study Report Table of Contents

Executive Overview: Summary Report

- Narrative description of the program (school, number of students and faculty)
- Summary and synthesis of findings in the self-study

Chapter 1: Standard 1 (1.A, 1.B)

- Findings and evidence (template provided)
- Goals (template provided)
- Summary of findings and plan for monitoring improvement goals

Chapter 2: Standard 2 (2.A-C, 2.1 & 2.2)

- Findings and evidence (template provided)
- Goals (template provided)
- Summary of findings and plan for monitoring improvement goals

Chapter 3: Standard 3 (3.B.1, 3.B.3, 3.C.1-2., 3.D.2-5, 3.D. 9-10)

- Findings and evidence (template provided)
- Goals (template provided)
- Summary of findings and plan for monitoring improvement goals

Chapter 4: Standard 4 (4.A.3, 4.A.5; 4.B.1, 4.B.4-7; Policy 4.1)

- Findings and evidence (template provided)
- Goals (template provided)
- Summary of findings and plan for monitoring improvement goals

Appendix

- Required supporting documents and evidence
- Additional supporting evidence

Self-Study Resource List



Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities: www.nwccu.org

SOU Center for Teaching, Learning & Assessment: 552-6447, <http://www.sou.edu/ctla>

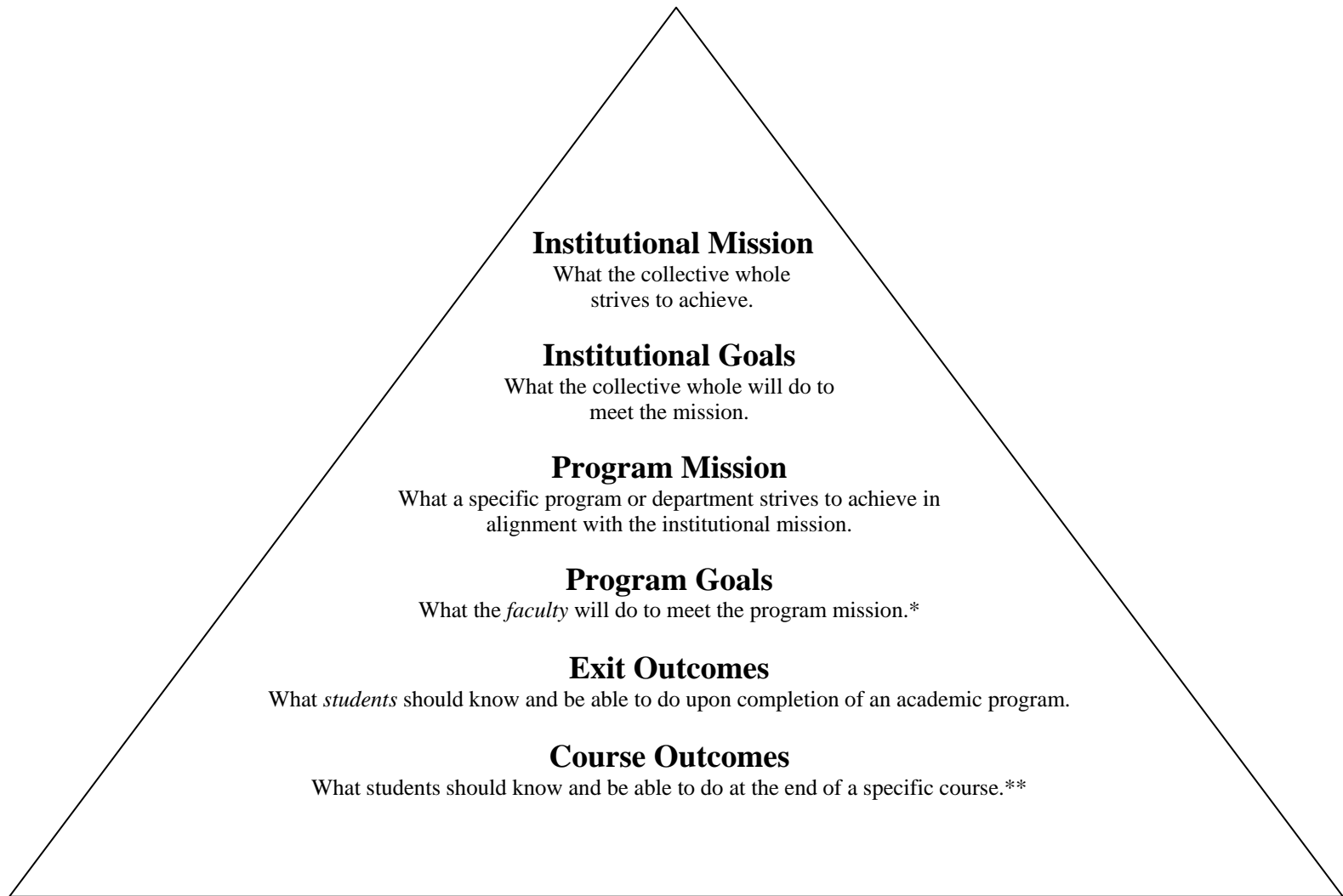
SOU Institutional Self-Study Chairs

For additional assistance on a specific standard, please contact the chair. Their names and numbers are listed below:

Standard 1: Mission and Goals	Earl Potter	2-6114
Standard 2: Educational Program	Paul Steinle	2-6114
Standard 3: Students	Jon Eldridge	2-6223
Standard 4: Faculty	Kemble Yates	2-6578
Standard 5: Library	Teresa Montgomery	2-6837
Standard 6: Governance	Liz Shelby	2-6733
Standard 7: Finance	Craig Morris	2-6585
Standard 8: Physical Plant	Larry Blake	2-6233
Standard 9: Institutional Integrity	Dennis Defa	2-6514

Self-Study Key Terms

- Elements** Academic standards, by their definition, are broad and general in meaning. To further clarify what is needed to “meet” a standard, the authors of the NWCCU Handbook have divided the standards into smaller units, which they refer to as “elements.” SOU colleagues fondly refer to them as “strandlets.”
- Evidence** Evidence refers to the documentation necessary to support claims. The NWCCU requires specific documentation to be provided for each of the standards. Refer to the NWCCU Handbook or your manual to determine what is required and what other types of documentation may be used for accreditation purposes.
- Exit Outcome** A statement of what the student should know, or be able to do, at the end of a course or end of a program. Outcomes vary in their degree of generality: program exit outcomes (academic goals) are more general than course exit outcomes. (See next page for illustration.)
- Formative Assessment** Student achievement data collected at the beginning and/or during a course or program. Formative assessments monitor students’ progress in ‘forming’ and developing knowledge, skills, and/or dispositions. Formative assessments vary in design: observation, paper and pencil tests, homework assignments, performance tasks, etc.
- Proficiency Level** Exit outcomes establish an academic goal for learners. With continued study and practice, students construct deeper understandings and more sophisticated skills. A proficiency level clarifies the degree of expertise a student should have achieved at a specific point in the program or course. Proficiency levels that are “set” and established by a program are often referred to as “benchmarks.”
- Strandlets** See “Elements.”
- Summative Assessment** Student achievement data collected at the end a course or program. Summative assessments measure the students’ cumulative knowledge, skill levels, and current dispositions. Summative assessments are criterion referenced “tests” aligned to the content and skills taught in the course. Commonly referred to as a “Final,” summative assessments may be designed as complex tasks, written exams, research papers, term projects, presentations, etc.



Hierarchy of Outcomes

*Example: “We will increase the use of criterion-referenced testing in our department by realigning our assessment tools to our course content.”

**Course outcomes are sometimes referred to as “Course Objectives.” No matter what you call them, their importance lies in the degree of alignment between:

- The course content and the stated outcomes or objectives of the course
- The alignment of assessment tools with the course content and outcomes