Planning and Analysis as Essential Components of Institutional and Programmatic Accreditation

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From the Perspective of the Accrediting Agency…

Beth Sibolski
Executive Associate Director
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“The nicest thing about not planning is that failure comes as a complete surprise and is not preceded by a period of worry and depression.”

John Preston, Boston College

“Whatever failures I have known, whatever errors I have committed, whatever follies I have witnessed in private and public life have been the consequence of action without thought.”

Bernard M. Baruch
Regional and professional accreditation agencies across the United States are explicitly requiring demonstrable evidence of planning processes that are systematic, and that are rooted in quantitative and qualitative information.
Middle States Accreditation Standards Expectations: Assessment & Planning

“It is the Commission’s intent, through the self-study process, to prompt institutions to reflect on those assessment activities currently in place (both for institutional effectiveness and student learning), to consider how these assessment activities inform institutional planning, and to determine how to improve the effectiveness and integration of planning and assessment.”

From: *Designs for Excellence in Higher Education*
MSCHE Linked Accreditation Standards: Standard 14: Student Learning Outcomes

Assessment of student learning demonstrates that the institution’s students have knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with institutional goals and that students at graduation have achieved appropriate higher education goals.
Selected Fundamental Elements for MSCHE Standard 14

- Articulated expectations for student learning (at institutional, program, and course levels)
- Plan describing learning activities undertaken by the institution, including methods used to validate learning goals
- Evidence that student learning assessment is used to improve teaching and learning
- Documented use of student learning assessment information as part of institutional assessment
MSCHE Linked Accreditation Standards: Standard 7: Institutional Assessment

The institution has developed and implemented an assessment plan and process that evaluates its overall effectiveness in: achieving its mission and goals; implementing planning, resource allocation, and institutional renewal processes; using institutional resources efficiently; providing leadership and governance; providing administrative structures and services; demonstrating institutional integrity; and assuring that institutional processes and resources support appropriate learning and other outcomes for its students and graduates.
Selected Fundamental Elements for MSCHE Standard 7

- Written assessment plan and process that meets certain criteria
- Use of assessment results to improve and gain efficiencies in administrative services and processes
- Written institutional strategic plan that reflects consideration of data from assessment
MSCHE Linked Accreditation Standards: Standard 2: Planning, Resource Allocation and Institutional Renewal

An institution conducts ongoing planning and resource allocation based on its mission and utilizes the results of its assessment activities for institutional renewal. Implementation and subsequent evaluation of the success of the strategic plan and resource allocation support the development and change necessary to improve and to maintain quality.
Selected Fundamental Elements for MSCHE Standard 2

- Clearly stated goals and objectives…used for planning and resource allocation at the institutional and unit levels
- Planning and improvement processes that are clearly communicated, provide for constituent participation, and incorporate the use of assessment results
- Objectives for improvement that are clearly stated, reflect conclusions drawn from assessment results, and are linked to mission and goal achievement
- Assignment of responsibility for improvement and assurance of accountability
The Higher Learning Commission
Selected Criteria for Accreditation

- Criterion One – Mission and Integrity: The organization operates with integrity to ensure the fulfillment of its mission through structures and processes that involve the board, administration, faculty, staff, and students.
  
  - Core Component 1a: The organization’s mission documents are clear and articulate publicly the organization’s commitments.
Criterion Two – Preparing for the Future: The organization’s allocation of resources and its processes for evaluation and planning demonstrate its capacity to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its education, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

– Core Component 2b: The organization’s resource base supports its educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future
• **Criterion Two** Continued

  - **Core Component 2c:** The organization’s ongoing evaluation and assessment processes provide reliable evidence of institutional effectiveness that clearly informs strategies for continuous improvement.

  - **Core Component 2d:** All levels of planning align with the organization’s mission, thereby enhancing its capacity to fulfill that mission.
• Criterion Three – Student Learning and Effective Teaching: The organization provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission.

  – Core Component 3a: The organization’s goals for student learning outcomes are clearly stated for each educational program and make effective assessment possible.
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
Selected Core Requirements

• 2.4 …a clearly defined and published mission statement specific to the institution and appropriate to an institution of higher education, addressing teaching and learning and, where applicable, research and public service.

• 2.5 …ongoing, integrated, and institution-wide research-based planning and evaluation processes that incorporate a systematic review of programs and services that (a) results in continuing improvement, and (b) demonstrates that the institution is effectively accomplishing its mission.
2.12 The institution has developed an acceptable Quality Enhancement Plan and demonstrates that the plan is part of an ongoing planning and evaluation process.
Western Association of Schools and Colleges
Selected Accreditation Standards and Criteria

• Standard 1: Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives
  – Criteria 1.1: …formally approved statements of purpose and operational practices are appropriate…and clearly define its essential values and character.
  – Criteria 1.2: Educational objectives are clearly recognized throughout the institution and are consistent with stated purposes. The institution has developed indicators and evidence to ascertain the level of attainment of its purposes and educational objectives.
• Standard 2: Achieving Educational Objectives Through Core Functions
  – Criteria 2.7: In order to improve program currency and effectiveness, all programs offered by the institution are subject to review, including analyses of the achievement of the program’s learning objectives and outcomes…
  – Criteria 2.10: …the institution regularly identifies the characteristics of its students and assesses their needs, experiences, and levels of satisfaction.
• **Standard 4: Creating an Organization Committed to Learning and Improvement**
  
  – **Criteria 4.1:** The institution periodically engages…in institutional reflection and planning processes which assess its strategic position, articulate priorities, examine the alignment of its purposes, core functions and resources, and define the future direction of the institution. The institution monitors the effectiveness of the implementation of its plans and revises them as appropriate.
Western Association of Schools and Colleges
Selected Accreditation Standards and Criteria

• **Standard 4** Continued
  – Criteria 4.3: Planning processes are informed by appropriately defined and analyzed quantitative and qualitative data, and include consideration of evidence of educational effectiveness, including student learning.
  – Criteria 4.5: Institutional research addresses strategic data needs, is disseminated in a timely manner, and is incorporated in institutional review and decision-making processes...
Standards for All Regions Have Similarities

• Middle States Commission on Higher Education
  www.msche.org
• New England Association of Schools and Colleges
  www.neasc.org
• North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
  www.ncahigherlearningcommission.org
• Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities
  www.nwccu.org
• Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
  www.sacscoc.org
• Western Association of Colleges and Schools
  www.wascweb.org
Central Threads Running Through All Accreditation Requirements:

- Planning must be systematic
- Planning must be rooted in an institution’s mission
- Planning must be predicated on analytical and evaluative information
- Planning must be used for institutional decisions, including resource allocation
End Result

- Institutions must plan effectively in order to be effective.

- Where that is the case, the accreditation process is an affirmation of the evidence of that effectiveness.
In thinking about what good planning is, it is useful to begin the discussion by describing what it is *not:*


**Strategic Planning is not:**

- The production of a blueprint.

- A set of platitudes.

- The personal vision of a president or board of trustees.

- A collection of departmental plans, compiled and edited.
Strategic Planning is not:

- Done by planners.
- A substitution of numbers for important intangibles.
- A form of surrender to market conditions and trends.
- Something done on an annual retreat.
- A way of eliminating risks.
- An attempt to read tea leaves and outwit the future.
Strategic Planning IS

• Academic strategic decision-making means that a college or university and its leaders are active rather than passive about their position in history.

• Strategic planning looks outward and is focused on keeping the institution in step with the changing environment.

• Academic strategy making is competitive, recognizing that higher education is subject to economic market conditions and to incredibly strong competition.

• Strategic planning concentrates on decisions, not on documented plans, analyses, forecasts, and goals.
Strategic Planning IS

- Strategy making is a blend of rational and economic analysis, political maneuvering, and psychological interplay. It is therefore participatory and highly tolerant of controversy.

- Strategic planning concentrates on the fate of the institution above everything else.
Cornerstones of the Planning Process

Institutional Mission

- Action-Oriented Goals
  - Measurable Objectives
Mission Statements

• A good mission statement is a carefully reasoned analysis of what an institution aspires to be, and the core values that it embraces.

• It avoids cliché language, e.g., “Students and faculty will interact in a rich intellectual environment in which each individual has the opportunity to achieve their full potential.” Noble sentiment, but says nothing about the institution’s purposes and priorities.

• Mission must speak to central institutional issues, e.g., desired balance between undergraduate and graduate education; relative emphasis on teaching, research, and service, respectively; and so on.
Mission Statements Continued

• Mission statements are characterized by a sense of vision that, while not immutable, nonetheless represents a long-term statement of institutional values and direction around which human and fiscal resource allocation decisions can be made.

• While cognizant of the institution’s ever changing external environment, mission statements are not whimsical, morphing with each new market trend that emerges.

• The mission statement provides a clear sense of direction around which action-oriented goal statements and measurable planning objectives can be developed.
Planning Goals

• Goal statements are derived from the institutional mission, and help to define policy.

• For example, the mission statement might say that “The University affirms its historic mission of providing the highest quality education for its undergraduate students, while maintaining excellence in selected graduate programs.”

• The mission statement is underscoring the primacy of undergraduate instruction in the curriculum. The question for planners is how to provide that high quality undergraduate instruction.
Planning Goals  Continued

• The “how” translates into specific, action-oriented planning goals aimed at moving the institution toward a fuller realization of its mission.

• Possible goal related to the undergraduate education mission statement: “The University will continue to attract and retain the most academically talented and diverse undergraduate students, and support their intellectual, cultural, and ethical development as citizens and scholars.”

• Action verbs such as “attract,” “retain,” and “support” elevate the goal statement to policy level. How do we know that policy is being carried out? Measurable planning objectives.
Planning Objectives

Planning objectives provide empirical evidence of the extent to which planning goals are being achieved. Consider the following planning objectives as they relate to our goal to attract, retain, and support academically talented and diverse students.

- Retain a freshman admissions target of 3200 to 3400 students annually, with an admissions profile for academic year 2007 of 23,000 applications, a 40 percent admit rate, and a yield rate in excess of 35 percent.

- Improve the alignment of undergraduate enrollment distribution and instructional resource distribution across the disciplines, especially with respect to faculty.
Planning Objectives Continued

• *Maintain a freshman-to-sophomore retention rate above the national average for highly selective institutions, and seek to achieve a consistent rate of 90 percent or higher.*

• *Maintain a graduation rate above the national average for highly selective institutions, and seek to achieve a consistent six-year rate of 75 percent or higher.*

• *Increase minority and international enrollment, with retention and graduation rates for those populations consistent with the university-wide averages for all students.*
The defining characteristic for any good planning objective is that it must be **measurable**.

Colleges or universities embarking on any planning process – long range, strategic, tactical – require a systematic institutional research capability.

While smaller institutions may not have an office of institutional research, per se, they must nonetheless have the capability of quantitatively and qualitatively assessing the extent to which planning objectives are being implemented, planning goals are being achieved, and the institutions mission is being realized.
Planning at a college or university is comprehensive process, integrating and synthesizing a broad range of planning goals and objectives that are derived from the overarching umbrella of the institution’s mission. It is not unusual for a campus plan to be an extensive document, with goals and objectives grouped under headings such as:

- Admissions
- Academic Support Services
- Program and Curriculum
- Faculty
- Research and Public Service
- Student Services
- Administration
- Governance
- Physical Plant & Equipment
- Finances
A Little Background Information on What Constitutes Good Planning…

Michael F. Middaugh
Assistant Vice President – Institutional Research & Planning
University of Delaware
In the Final Analysis, Planning is Directed at Answering Four Basic Questions:

1. Who are the markets we are trying to serve?

2. What services must be in place to fully serve those markets?

3. What is the institutional “branding” that will enable our college or university to appeal to those markets?

4. How will we know if we are successful in serving those markets?
Who are the markets we are trying to serve?

Largely Dictated by Mission

- Baccalaureate Colleges: Primarily undergraduate students (what kinds?)

- Master’s Institutions: Undergraduate students, selected graduate students, targeted state/community partnerships

- Doctoral Universities: Undergraduate students, graduate students, research/public service contractors/grantors, broad range of regional, national, international partnerships

- Community Colleges: Matriculated undergraduate students, occasional students with specific training needs, general interest students, local businesses, county government
Let’s Look at Some Examples

• http://www.amherst.edu/about_amh/philosophy/

• http://www.rhodes.edu/AboutRhodes/RhodesVision/index.cfm

• http://www.wcupa.edu/_INFORMATION/FACTS.WCU/mission.htm

• http://www.iastate.edu/~president/plan/2005/mission.html

• http://www.johnco.cc.ks.us/home/site/welcome/tocaboutjccc/strategic_plan
What services must be in place to fully serve those markets?

**Dictated by Markets**

- Academic Support Services (Library, computing, advising, tutoring, etc.)
- Student Support Services (Residence life, counseling, health services, student center, recreation services, etc.)
- Institutional Support Services (General administrative support, sponsored research, extension office, alumni/governmental relations, etc.)
Let’s Look at Some Examples

- http://www.amherst.edu/~dos/acadsupport.html
- http://www.devalcol.edu/academics/counseling/services_choices.html
- http://www.devalcol.edu/academics/counseling/services_act101.html
- http://life.ugs.udel.edu/
What is the institutional “branding” that will enable our college or university to appeal to those markets?

**Market Specific**

- University of Delaware: “A Teaching University”
- Trenton State College → “The College of New Jersey”
- University of Phoenix: “The University for Working Adults”
What is the institutional “branding” that will enable our college or university to appeal to those markets?

**Market Specific**

- [http://www.udel.edu/admissions/viewbook/explore/teachers.html](http://www.udel.edu/admissions/viewbook/explore/teachers.html)

- [http://www.tcnj.edu/%7Eccr/about/history.html](http://www.tcnj.edu/%7Eccr/about/history.html)

- [http://www.phoenix.edu/](http://www.phoenix.edu/)
How will we know if we are successful in serving those markets?

**Middle States Assessment Standards**

- **Standard 7**: The institution has developed and implemented an assessment plan and process that evaluates its overall effectiveness in: achieving its mission and goals; implementing planning, resource allocation, and institutional renewal processes; enhancing institutional integrity; and assuring that institutional processes and resources support appropriate learning and other outcomes for its students and graduates.

- **Standard 14**: Assessment of student learning demonstrates that the institution’s students have knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with institutional goals and that students at graduation have achieved appropriate higher education goals.
Strategic Planning

• As important as long-range planning is in setting a comprehensive direction for institutional decisions and resource allocations, the very magnitude of a long range plan is limiting.

• Simply put, there are insufficient resources at any one point in time to fund all of the goals and objectives typically articulated in a long range plan.

• Institutions are forced to prioritize those goals and objectives that are of immediate importance, and to allocate resources accordingly. In other words, they must think and behave *strategically*. 
In 1987, the University embarked on a comprehensive, long-range planning process, termed *Project Vision*. Over a period of 18 months, the campus developed a planning document with a broad spectrum of planning goals and measurable objectives embracing all aspects of University operations.

In Fall of 1988, the President who initiated *Project Vision* suddenly resigned. At the same time, the Delaware economy along with that of the entire mid-Atlantic region was plunging into deep recession.
Case Study – University of Delaware

• Rather than let 18 months of planning activity go for naught – even though resources would be scarce for the foreseeable future – a panel of distinguished senior faculty was assembled to review the *Project Vision* planning document and to cull out those goals and objectives that were clearly consistent with, and essential to furthering the University mission.

• The resulting document, *Focused Vision*, was economical when compared with its progenitor, both in terms of words and resource requirements. However, the economy would still clearly preclude anything even remotely approaching implementation.

• In 1990, the University hired its 25th President, David P. Roselle.
Case Study – University of Delaware

• In order to maintain planning momentum, the President consulted with his senior staff, the faculty, and appropriate constituencies across campus to determine those areas that required immediate attention.

• From these consultations, the President articulated four strategic initiatives that would constitute the focus of decision-making and resource allocation activity in the immediate future. Those initiatives were competitive compensation for faculty and staff; enhanced access to the University for undergraduates through expanded availability of financial aid; a more student-centered campus environment; and renovation and rehabilitation of campus facilities.
Case Study – University of Delaware

These priorities were not a “wish list.” They grew out of a careful examination of empirical data provided by the University’s Office of Institutional Research and Planning and other data sources. Consider the following:

• When compared with the 24 Category Doctoral I universities in the states contiguous to Delaware, and the District of Columbia, in 1991 the average salary for all three major faculty ranks at the University of Delaware ranked near the bottom of the list.

• The Student College Selection Survey indicated that students were receiving offers of more aid from admissions competitors, and that the aid packages had more grants and fewer loans than University aid packages. Not surprising, the University was at a competitive disadvantage for academically talented students.
Case Study – University of Delaware

- University scores on the *ACT Student Opinion Survey* suggested that the institution had considerable room for improvement with respect to student satisfaction with programs and services, and with a number of areas in student life.

- The University was looking at in excess of $200 million in deferred maintenance to its buildings and grounds.

- *Note:* The ability to use an institutional research capability to quantitatively and qualitatively assess where a college or university is with respect to all aspects of its operations is the only way to chart where the institution needs to go, and how to get there.
Case Study – University of Delaware

• A critical factor in moving forward with these initiatives was getting the campus to understand that the economy was in recession and that there would be no immediate or massive infusions of new resources.

• Colleges and universities have multiple revenue streams – tuition, state appropriation in the case of public institutions, contracts and grants, gifts, etc. While growing revenue streams is an important strategic initiative, so too is the commitment to not balance budgets on the backs of students through inordinately large tuition increases.

• Resource reallocation would be the primary source of funding the four strategic initiatives, and it was critical that the campus understand from where funds were reallocated, and why.
The University went on public record in 1991:

• Average total compensation for faculty at each academic rank would be at or above the median *within five years* for the 24 Category I Doctoral Universities identified as salary peers.

• Total undergraduate financial aid from all sources would increase by 100 percent *within five years*.

• Student satisfaction with programs and services at the University, as measured through the *ACT Student Opinion Survey* would demonstrate significant gains *within five years*.

• The University would commit itself to a policy of annually setting aside *at least 2 percent* of the replacement value of the physical plant, to be used for facilities renovation and rehabilitation.

### FULL PROFESSOR

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## Results – Financial Aid

### Growth In Undergraduate Financial Aid at the University of Delaware, FY 1990 Compared with FY 2000

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<th>Source</th>
<th>FY 1990</th>
<th>FY 2000</th>
<th>% Increase</th>
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<td>University Administered Funds</td>
<td>$4,458,640</td>
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<td>State Grant Funds</td>
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<td>Other Fund Sources</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>$10,497,242</td>
<td>$39,074,340</td>
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## Results – Student Satisfaction

### Comparison of 1995 University of Delaware Scores on ACT Student Opinion Survey with 1990 Scores and with National Norms

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<td>University is Tied</td>
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<tr>
<td>University is Behind</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
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</table>
Results - Facilities

• By 2000, the University had renovated every classroom in its entire building inventory, retrofitting most with state-of-the-art teaching technology.

• An aggressive program of fundraising enabled not only the aforementioned renovation and rehabilitation, but also the construction of several new classroom and student services buildings.

• The University is now on a cycle of planned maintenance, as opposed to deferred maintenance.
Results – From an Accreditation Perspective

“The University of Delaware has every reason to take enormous pride in what it has accomplished over the past 10 years. A decade ago, it was coming out of a period of considerable turmoil. Today, the University is seen as a national model for the integration of information technology in every aspect of university life: teaching and learning, research and service, academic support, and campus administration. It has created a physical plant that has few, if any, peers among public universities and would be the envy of most private colleges. These substantial achievements could not have happened without extraordinary leadership from the senior administration.”

“Better than almost any university we are familiar with, Delaware has a clear sense of what it wants to be, namely, a university that offers high quality undergraduate education with targeted areas of excellence in graduate education and research.”

" The review team was enormously impressed by the high level of morale that pervades the faculty, staff, and students. Almost without exception, the people we spoke to take great pride in being part of the University.”

Middle States Evaluation Team, 2001
Analytical Tools and Strategies in Support of Planning
It is Useful to Develop a Systematic Program of Institutional Research that is Clearly Designed to Support Planning and Assessment

• Accreditation standards often provide a useful framework for organizing a program of institutional research.

• The institutional research program will embrace tools such as standard production reports, in-house and commercially prepared data collection instrument, internal and externally supported benchmarking studies, and above all a creative approach to developing analytical reports.

• Good institutional research requires imagination and a willingness to take chances.
The institution has developed and implemented an assessment plan and process that evaluates its overall effectiveness in: 1. achieving its mission and goals; 2. implementing planning, resource allocation, and institutional renewal processes; 3. using institutional resources efficiently; 4. providing leadership and governance; 5. providing administrative structures and services; 6. demonstrating institutional integrity; 7. and assuring that institutional processes and resources support appropriate learning and other outcomes for its students and graduates.

<table>
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<th>Assessment Tool</th>
<th>Primary Measure</th>
<th>Secondary Measure</th>
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<td>Academic Program Review Data</td>
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<td>Economic Impact Analysis</td>
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<td>Campus Climate Survey</td>
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<td>College Student Selection Survey (ASQ)</td>
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<td>Delaware Study of Instructional Costs and Productivity</td>
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<td>ACT Survey of Student Opinions</td>
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</table>
The institution has developed and implemented an assessment plan and process that evaluates its overall effectiveness in: 1. achieving its mission and goals; 2. implementing planning, resource allocation, and institutional renewal processes; 3. using institutional resources efficiently; 4. providing leadership and governance; 5. providing administrative structures and services; 6. demonstrating institutional integrity; 7. and assuring that institutional processes and resources support appropriate learning and other outcomes for its students and graduates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Tool</th>
<th>Primary Measure</th>
<th>Secondary Measure</th>
<th>Tertiary Measure</th>
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<tr>
<td>Affirmative Action Analyses</td>
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<td>Commission on Status of Women Analyses</td>
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<td>Alumni Survey</td>
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<td>Career Plans Survey</td>
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<td>Grade Distribution Analysis</td>
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<td>Induced Courseload Matrix</td>
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<td>National Survey of Student Engagement</td>
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<td>NCAA Compliance Analyses</td>
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<td>ACT Survey of Academic Advising</td>
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<td>Affirming Academic Priorities</td>
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<td>Internal Audit/Budget Control</td>
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<td>Professional Accreditation Self Study Analyses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assessment of Student Learning</td>
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</table>
Institutional Research is Essential for Planning and Institutional Self Study

- A good program of Institutional research is systematic, comprehensive, and proactive.

- The institutional research office cannot wait for senior administration to request information concerning a specific issue; by then, the issue is likely a major problem.

- Similarly, institutional research cannot wait for the decennial re-accreditation self-study to provide an introspective analysis of the college and its environment.
Institutional Research in Support of Assessment

- Many of the Analyses Already Discussed Can be Viewed as Supporting Assessment of Student Outcomes and Institutional Effectiveness

- Cognitive Outcomes Assessment at the University of Delaware is Viewed Primarily as a Faculty Domain. We provide technical assistance (survey design, statistical samples, etc.) in support of faculty assessment initiatives.

- Institutional Research Does Conduct On-Going Analyses That Support Assessment at Institutional Level, e.g., Career Plans Analysis, College Student Experiences Survey, National Survey of Student Engagement, Alumni Surveys, etc.
Central Threads Running Through All Accreditation Requirements:

- Planning must be systematic
- Planning must be rooted in an institution’s mission
- Planning must be predicated on analytical and evaluative information
- Planning must be used for institutional decisions, especially resource allocation
End Result

• Institutions must plan effectively in order to be effective.

• Where that is the case, the accreditation process is nothing more than a simple affirmation of the evidence of that effectiveness.
In the Final Analysis, Planning is Directed at Answering Four Basic Questions:

1. Who are the markets we are trying to serve?

2. What services must be in place to fully serve those markets?

3. What is the institutional “branding” that will enable our college or university to appeal to those markets?

4. How will we know if we are successful in serving those markets?
It's QUESTION TIME!!