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Part I: Assessing Mission Fulfillment

1. **Describe/explain the process of assessing mission fulfillment. Who is involved in the assessment? Is the Board of Trustees involved?**

Establishing a Strategic Framework

Since Idaho State University’s 2014 Year-7 Self-Evaluation, the Institution’s leadership has focused on effectively aligning planning and assessment. A primary emphasis that assisted with the transition was the creation and evolution of the Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment Council (IEAC), which is led by a Steering Committee and eight subcommittees. The IEAC Steering Committee and the eight subcommittees are comprised of diverse groups of university stakeholders represented by academic and non-academic staff, faculty and students who are charged with overseeing the organizational framework for integrating institutional effectiveness into the fabric of the University. Between September 2015 and March 2017, the IEAC facilitated the revision of ISU’s mission, vision, four core themes, and created a new strategic plan and assessment plan. As part of that comprehensive, inclusive, and transparent process, the Steering Committee also adopted a new methodology for evaluating ISU’s mission fulfillment.

Defining Mission Fulfillment

Establishing the Process

An institution’s ultimate measure of success is mission fulfillment. Mission fulfillment focuses on the accomplishment of its mission and core themes. Mission fulfillment continually evolves and is never truly achieved because as core theme objectives are reached, they are either replaced, or their benchmarks are reset at higher a level. This contrasts the strategic plan’s goals that are relatively short-term achievements and vision oriented. Mission fulfillment and the strategic plan drive decision making at all levels at ISU and are the basis that the academic and non-academic units use to align their planning efforts.

The IEAC is responsible for measuring the effectiveness of the implementation of ISU’s four core themes and their overall alignment to the University’s mission, which demonstrates mission fulfillment. To measure mission fulfillment, the IEAC evaluates multiple core theme objectives using performance measures.

Between September 2015 and March 2016, besides revising each core theme, the four core theme subcommittees identified two-to-four supporting objectives that quantified the level of fulfillment of their team’s core theme. The objectives are composed of essential elements of the core themes, and each objective has two-to-six performance measures that link directly to their accomplishment. The performance measures are clearly defined, realistic, and have verifiable data sources. Changes to the core themes caused some core themes subcommittees to have to establish new indicators. As a result, some of the new indicators have only one year of data collected thus far. After establishing the baseline and as a means of fully realizing mission fulfillment, the groups set appropriate benchmarks that support the Institution’s continual growth over a five-year period or
maintaining the desired standard. The core theme subcommittees accomplished this task by working with Institutional Research (IR) to develop the appropriate indicators.

When establishing the performance measures, the subcommittees evaluated the use of both quantitative and qualitative indicators, but at this time, the group chose to focus on measuring only quantitative data. As the process further matures, the use of qualitative performance measures is expected to become part of the evaluation process.

**Figure 1. Mission Fulfillment Assessment**

![Diagram](image)

*Figure 1- Mission Fulfillment Assessment. This diagram explains the process used to assess mission fulfillment and the strategic plan at ISU.*

Assessing and Updating the Core Themes, Objectives, and Measures

Idaho State University has a created an annual, mature, and systematic process to evaluate its core themes, their objectives, and performance measures. Each January, Institutional Research coordinates with multiple units throughout the University to collect and analyze the core themes’ performance data. The performance data is made up of indicators and benchmarks that support the achievement of the core themes’ subordinate objectives. The core theme subcommittees use the analyzed data to establish conclusions about organization’s quality, effectiveness, and mission fulfillment.
As a means of supporting the dissemination of the analyzed data to the core theme subcommittees and the University’s stakeholders, IR produced a web application that provides a visual illustration of each of the core themes and their associated objectives’ accomplishments. The achievement of each of the measures of effectiveness are presented using the colors Gray/Red/Yellow/Green. Each color represents a percentage of the benchmark’s accomplishment from one to 100 percent; gray equates to below 85%, red 85-89%, yellow 90-96%, and green 97-100%. The final score that determines the overall assessment of ISU’s mission fulfillment is calculated by averaging the individual scores of each core theme, which is based on the scores of the objectives.

The IEAC has determined that the demonstration of mission fulfillment, requires the University to make progress toward meeting or exceeding an 80% overall score for each core theme. One of the goals of ISU’s leadership was the continual improvement of the University to support the communities within its service regions and to achieve ISU’s mission throughout the state. To accomplish that challenge, they directed the Core Theme Subcommittees to establish the performance measures’ benchmarks at a level that requires the programs and units to stretch themselves. Therefore, when ISU began this process of evaluating its core themes, very few of the indicators had attained a green status. The indicators that scored lower demonstrated to the units the need for an increased emphasis in supporting programs in order to achieve a higher level of accomplishment.
The mission fulfillment web application provides the University leadership, decision-makers, and the State Board of Education (SBOE) with a visual representation of each core theme and its associated objectives, as well as an overall demonstration of mission fulfillment. The IEAC can quickly evaluate the core themes by spotting trends then use this measuring system as a way to prioritize resources when certain indicators are underperforming. ISU’s leadership can immediately reference the institution’s overall effectiveness in each of the core themes, its strategic objectives, and its mission fulfillment. Currently, the overall performance for the indicators used to assess each core theme is:

- Core Theme 1 indicators are 91.8% overall
- Core Theme 2 indicators are 90.3% overall
- Core Theme 3 indicators are 92.7% overall
- Core Theme 4 indicators are 86.5% overall

Upon completion of IR’s analysis and posting of the data to the website application in January, each core theme subcommittee meets to review the indicators to ensure they measure the desired outcome for their respective core theme. Additionally, the subcommittees review the indicators’ benchmarks to validate that they continue to challenge ISU’s ability to achieve the goal within the specified period while remaining realistic. The subcommittees recommend adjustments to the IEAC Steering Committee who oversees and makes recommendations to the President for the overall mission fulfillment system. An example of the evaluation and adjustment process working occurred in 2017 when the [Core Theme 3 Subcommittee](#) came together three times to evaluate the effectiveness of their objectives and indicators. That series of meetings resulted in the subcommittee validating the objectives, adjusting some of the indicators, and establishing new benchmarks.

While ISU uses the same technology to manage its strategic plan, its leadership utilizes mission fulfillment and the strategic plan in different aspects of university planning. Both help aligns planning efforts using the mission and core themes, but mission fulfillment shapes ISU’s long-term future 10-to-20 years out by focusing on continuous improvement. The strategic plan concentrates on goals within the next five years.
Figure 3- ISU’s Mission Fulfillment Web Application. The Mission Fulfillment web application allows decision makers to quickly visualize the status of each core theme and ISU’s overall mission fulfillment accomplishment.

State Board of Education Oversite

The SBOE approved ISU’s mission and core themes in April 2016 and ISU’s strategic plan in June 2017. The SBOE’s primary concerns regarding ISU’s mission and core themes are their alignment with one another, their alignment the SBOE Strategic Plan, and if they meet SBOE policy. Alignment is very important to the SBOE because each public postsecondary institution has geographic, institutional service regions and designated missions that emphasize their areas of academic concentrations. ISU’s
primary statewide mission is to provide specialized health care programs such as pharmacy, physical therapy, and other specialty programs taught in Pocatello, Idaho Falls, Twin Falls, and Meridian.

2. Are our core themes and objectives still valid?

Validity of ISU’s Core Themes/Objectives

Year Seven Evaluation Recommendation

At ISU’s Year Seven Evaluation in 2014, the evaluation’s committee did not feel that the mission and core themes aligned and recommended that the university review and revise its mission statement, core themes, as well as the supporting indicators and benchmarks. To validate ISU’s mission and core themes, in 2015-2016 the University underwent a five-month process that included faculty, staff, student, and community engagement to revise and update the mission and core themes to ensure they properly aligned as well also defining what ISU stands for as an institution.

The Process: Aligning the Mission and Core Themes

Idaho State University’s leadership undertook an inclusive and transparent process to accomplish the revision of the mission and core themes. The first step in this process was to ensure the mission statement aligned with the SBOE’s guidance. This alignment centered on key Board policies like III.2. “Planning and Delivery of Postsecondary Programs and Courses,” which specifies ISU’s responsibility for health care programs, career technical education, and the designation of our service regions.

Once the IEAC completed this analysis, the Core Theme Subcommittees wrote their respective core themes using the mission statement’s key elements as the basis of emphasis. By selecting the mission’s key elements, this ensured alignment at all levels.

The resulting core themes individually manifest essential elements of the mission while collectively encompassing it. As described above, as a means of supporting the mission and core themes’ implementation and measuring mission fulfillment, the IEAC created a set of objectives, indicators, and benchmarks for each core theme. The objectives focus on the essential elements within each of the core themes and help maintain the University’s focus. Upon completion, the IEAC sought input from university stakeholders and incorporated their feedback into the final products.

Acceptance and Adoption

For the most part, ISU’s faculty and staff have incorporated the new mission statement and core themes down to the program level and within the units. They had accepted them to the point that when the strategic plan was under development, it required an education campaign to explain how mission fulfillment and strategic objective accomplishments, while aligned, were different. These conversations demonstrated the keen awareness of the groups’ regard for the core themes and how widely they have been accepted.

3. Is the institution satisfied that the core themes and indicators selected are providing sufficient evidence to assess mission fulfillment and sustainability? If not, what changes are contemplated?
As explained above, ISU received approval of its revised mission and core themes 18-months ago. The University’s five-month revision process in the fall of 2016 included participation by faculty, staff, students, and community members. The outcome of that process was the alignment of ISU’s mission and core themes with the SBOE’s guidance: provide educational, research, and community engagement opportunities within ISU’s service regions and the statewide requirement to deliver health care education.

ISU’s process for assessing and updating its core themes (Figure 1) occurs annually. Every January the Core Theme Subcommittees evaluates the effectiveness of the core themes, their associated objectives and performance measures. Upon completion of the review, the Core Theme Subcommittee chairs request that the IEAC Steering Committee approve the updates. This process ensures that the core themes remain valid and that the performance measures assess the proper elements of the core themes.

In 2017, the IEAC did not change the mission or core themes but adopted the new mission fulfillment process described above. However, as part of the 2017 review, Core Theme 2 and Core Theme 3 Subcommittees made minor adjustments to their performance measures. Both of the groups reduced the number of indicators they use to measure their objectives’ accomplishments, they defined new benchmarks, and refocused on their data collection responsibilities.

Part II: Representative Examples of Assessment Process from Beginning to End

Introduction

The College of Pharmacy (COP) and the General Education (Gen Ed) program will be used as examples of assessment processes and measuring student learning at ISU. These two programs span the spectrum of assessment maturity, as the College of Pharmacy has a long history of comprehensive assessment as a part of its specialized accreditation process, while the General Education program is in an earlier stage of developing and refining its processes.

The COT is accredited by ACPE (Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education) and successfully completed its most recent accreditation review in 2016. Pharmacy was selected as an example of assessment within specialized accreditation as all of the programs in the Kasiska Division of Health Sciences are accredited. In addition, programs in the College of Science and Engineering, the College of Technology, the College of Education, and the College of Arts and Letters hold specialized accreditation. Over 3,700 students are estimated to be enrolled in programs holding specialized accreditation, based on the five-year average of majors in various programs.

General Education in Idaho follows the Governing Policies and Procedures III.N. Statewide General Education of the Idaho State Board of Education. SBOE policy mandates six objectives: written communication; oral communication; mathematical ways of knowing; scientific ways of knowing; humanistic and artistic ways of knowing; and social and behavioral ways of knowing. In addition, each Idaho institution must have six credits of general education in “institutionally designated credits.” ISU
students take one course in cultural diversity, and one course in either critical thinking or information literacy. The nine objectives encompass 48 student learning competencies.

The Gen Ed program at ISU is diverse and includes courses from all academic units. While the majority of general education courses are housed in the Colleges of Arts and Letters and Science and Engineering, the other academic units are represented as well. The College of Technology offers RCET 1372 and TGE 1140 (mathematical ways of knowing); TGE 1257 (humanistic and artistic ways of knowing); and TGE 1150 (social and behavioral ways of knowing). The College of Business offers MGT 2216 (mathematical ways of knowing); ECON 1100, 2201, and 2202 (social and behavioral ways of knowing); INFO 1181 (critical thinking); and FIN 1115 and INFO 1101 (information literacy). The College of Education offers EDUC 1110 (social and behavioral ways of knowing), EDUC 2204 (cultural diversity), and SCPY 1101 (cultural diversity); the Library offers LLIB 1115 (information literacy); and the Kasiska Division of Health Sciences offers CSD 2210 and 2256 (cultural diversity) and NTD 2239 (scientific ways of knowing). (http://coursecat.isu.edu/undergraduate/academicinformation/generaleducation/)

Consistent and regular assessment of general education courses is relatively new at ISU. Prior to 2015, some general education courses were assessed by their departments as a part of program review or specialized accreditation assessment but were not part of a university-wide effort to evaluate the general education program as a whole. The General Education Requirements Committee (GERC) at ISU oversees the assessment of general education courses. GERC reviews courses that have applied for inclusion in the general education program and acts on the applications. An assessment plan is included in the application. Consequently, all general education courses submit assessment plans to GERC prior to beginning assessment activities; GERC reviews the assessment plans and either approves them or remands them back to the submitting departments with recommendations for improvement.

The GERC includes representatives from all academic units on campus as voting members. Representatives from Academic Advising, the Registrar’s Office, Instructional Technology Services, Academic Affairs, and Curriculum Council attend meetings but do not vote. Minutes from GERC meetings are posted on the University website and are reviewed by Associate Deans of the academic units.

A plan was developed for departments to design and submit assessment plans to GERC for approval and submit annual assessment reports. This plan, which was approved by the Provost in April 2015, is shown in Appendix A (Gen Ed Assessment Flow Chart). GERC is currently on track to meet the deadlines shown in the plan; the first round of assessment reports was submitted in November 2016. Results for Year 2 of the reporting process are due on November 1, 2017; in addition, Objectives 1 (Written Communication) and 2 (Oral Communication) will be reviewed by Objective Review in Fall 2018 as part of the overall objective review process.

As of April 17, 2017, assessment plans for all but one general education course (which is intended to be withdrawn) had been submitted to GERC for review, for a total of 159 courses. One hundred forty-four plans were approved by April 25, 2017.

Example 1: Pharmacy

1. Are our indicators, for the selected examples, proving to be meaningful? Do you have too many indicators or too few?
The College of Pharmacy (COP) is accredited by ACPE, the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education. ACPE requires participating programs to follow standards for educational outcomes and requires assessment of those standards, and consequently, indicators used by COP are somewhat prescribed and include measures that allow national comparison. COP uses the number of indicators required to demonstrate compliance with accreditation standards.

The multitude of indicators provides COP with a rich base of information for adjusting the curriculum, improving student learning, and assisting individual students, and as such, result in meaningful indicators. Having multiple metrics in place decreases the likelihood of an isolated assessment being misinterpreted. COP identified multiple processes that could be improved based on results of its assessments. For example, it found that molecular cell biology/genetics and medicinal chemistry were not being covered in the curriculum at the depth required for PCOA (Pharmacy Curriculum Outcomes Assessment) (page 11).

The COP uses both formative and summative assessments. It is planning to enhance its formative evaluation methods by incorporating the ExamSoft testing platform to assist in categorizing formative assessments by discipline as well as the level of higher order thinking based on Bloom’s taxonomy.

Summative assessments are administered in several ways: 1) annual knowledge base exams for first and second-year students; 2) PCOA Exam; and 3) PBL (Problem Based Learning) Case Studies Exam. COP also uses standardized and comparative assessments to provide benchmarks of curricular success. These include first-time pass rates on the NAPLEX (North American Pharmacist Licensure Examination); MPJE (Multistate Pharmacy Jurisprudence Examination), and PCOA.

2. What has the institution learned so far and what changes are contemplated? What has been your progress to date using the data? Do the data tell you what you are looking for?

COP has made a number of changes based on assessment results. A few changes are discussed below.

Poor performance on the capstone oral communication component led to a revision of the grading rubric and incorporation of it into each year of the curriculum, so students have access to a rubric that sets clear expectations early in the program.

PCOA test results suggested that while the general curriculum was satisfactory, specific topic areas needed revision and updating. The basic science curriculum now places a greater emphasis on the application of pharmaceutics, medicinal chemistry, and pharmacogenomics.

Review of NAPLEX results led to several changes, including change of instructor for a key course; addition of a 1-credit self-study NAPLEX board review component in the P3 Capstone Pharmacy course; the addition of two faculty development programs focusing on exam writing guidelines; and incorporation of material to improve individual drug knowledge into a pharmacotherapy module.

Programmatic assessment measures that were recently implemented will require continuing evaluation and revision, and the impact on student learning outcomes is not yet known.

Review of the data has led to a number of insights as to where and how to strengthen curriculum to better support student learning outcomes. The regular reporting practices of the Accreditation and Student Assessment (ASA) database and student portfolios has evolved to a point...
where at-risk students are quickly identified and offered remediation much earlier in their programs. Faculty advisors have complete and current student data for closer oversight of student achievement.

3. How are data being collected, analyzed, and utilized and the findings communicated to constituents?

The COP’s Office of Assessment, with support from the Pharmacy Assessment Committee, is responsible for administering, compiling, and reporting all student performance assessments. (page 165, self-study) Data trends are analyzed and summarized by these entities. An Annual Assessment Report is distributed internally to all faculty, the Administrative Council, and Curricular Affairs Committee, all of which discuss potential areas of concern and make recommendations for improvement. (page 168 self-study) The Administrative Council is generally responsible for implementation of programmatic changes.

COP developed the ASA database to allow for more efficient organization and collection of assessment information, as well as greater comprehensive analysis of student performance. This enabled the college to decentralize advising away from the Associate Dean’s office to faculty advisors, each of whom provides close oversight of 6-8 students using a well-established student advising process.

Example 2: General Education

1. Are our indicators, for the selected examples, proving to be meaningful? Do you have too many indicators or too few?

The first round of annual assessment reports for the General Education (Gen Ed) courses showed that the indicators for many of the learning outcomes proved to be meaningful, and provided departments with useful information that could be used to improve quality. For example, ACAD 1111 (information literacy objective) will be redesigned to improve outcomes for students; new activities and assignments will be developed for MGT 2216 (mathematical ways of knowing objective) based on the assessment results; and the assessment rubrics for FIN 1115 (information literacy objective) will be strengthened to glean better information about student learning. Assessment committees for other courses, like GERM 2202 (cultural diversity objective), were satisfied with the alignment of their indicators and instruments with the learning outcomes. However, the indicators and/or instruments for some learning outcomes will need further refinement in order to provide useful information.

A specific example of how assessment results were used to make improvements is that of ACAD 1111, from the information literacy objective. Faculty applied a rubric to the signature capstone assignment, an annotated bibliography of sources pertaining to each student’s research question, to assess “identify sources and gather information/data effectively and efficiently;” “evaluate credibility of courses and information/data;” and “understand the economics, ethical, legal, and social issues surrounding the creation, collection, and use of information/data.” Results indicated that while students were successful in locating appropriate sources, vetting and preparing citations for those sources, and thinking critically about the content, many still struggled to convey the content of a source text in summary and paraphrase, specifically, without bordering on plagiarizing the original. Faculty will redesign the curriculum to allow more time for the instruction-practice-feedback-revision cycle pertaining to these skills that are essential for reporting source content, and will require submission of a revised annotation in subsequent semesters.
It is difficult to state at this point whether too many or too few indicators are used because it varies by course. Clearly, some learning outcomes are being successfully evaluated with meaningful indicators. Some departments, however, will need to revisit the indicators they have chosen, and may ultimately change their current practice.

2. What has the institution learned so far and what changes are contemplated? What has been your progress to date using the data? Do the data tell you what you are looking for?

The first round of assessment reports revealed several issues to be addressed. First, greater clarity is needed in regard to reporting on cross-listed courses, and on the time period for reporting. This issue will be addressed by GERC beginning fall, 2017.

Second, a substantial number of general education courses are offered in local high schools as Early College Program (ECP) courses, and these courses pose a challenge in regard to the inclusion of their instructors and the assessment instruments used. Consequently, the Director of ECP recently updated the “Faculty Liaison Responsibilities,” to include “coordinate with the department chair in guiding high school instructors on assessment of general education learning competencies.” While it was understood that Early College general education courses were included in the assessment, the responsibility for doing so is now explicitly stated, and more resources will be devoted to ensuring quality assessment practices in these courses.

Third, several departments reported issues with assessment instruments. It was expected that some adjustments would be needed to ensure that indicators were being appropriately captured. In spring, 2016, Academic Affairs sponsored two “Assessing Student Learning Workshops,” presented by assessment consultants, in which faculty and assessment coordinators received training that included the selection of signature assignments and assessment instruments. Some of the assessment data was collected prior to this training, and so adjustments were expected afterward.

The above-mentioned issues require several responses. Departmental assessment committees provide the Gen Ed course instructors with more detailed guidance regarding the collection of data and identification of appropriate assessment instruments. The instruments chosen for assessment are inherent in each course’s assessment plan and should be demonstrably aligned with one or more learning outcomes for the objective in question. Some instructors still want to use course grades as a metric and will need assistance in identifying appropriate rubrics to use for evaluating student work. Faculty liaisons of ECP courses will need to provide more guidance on data collection to the high school instructors and get them more involved in the process.

The University Assessment Review Committee (UARC) is discussing how best to provide support for faculty involved in assessment processes and will make a recommendation to Academic Affairs later this summer. Examples of changes that are contemplated by individual departments include:

- POLS 1101 (social and behavioral ways of knowing) instructors need clearer expectations from the assessment committee, and the committee needs to be more proactive in requesting material from the instructors. In the future, the committee will collect direct and indirect assessment instruments at the beginning of the semester and help instructors report results in a more standardized manner.
- TGE 1257’s (humanistic and artistic ways of knowing) Assessment Review Committee will ask instructors to adjust or amend the Final Exam prompt to better evaluate the competencies required for the cultural diversity objective.
CS/INFO 1181 found that the final exam questions used to evaluate the learning outcomes for objective 7 (critical thinking) did not align well with the assessment criteria. They plan to adjust the instrument to attain a more meaningful assessment of the objective.

Data collected as of November 2016 have provided information that confirms the usefulness of the indicators for some outcomes, and the need to refine indicators for other outcomes.

3. **How are data being collected, analyzed, and utilized and the findings communicated to constituents?**

Departments that house the general education courses collect and analyze the data in a variety of ways. Most departments have assessment committees or teams that coordinate assessment activities with instructors. They identify appropriate indicators and instruments for assessing learning outcomes and review student work that instructors have submitted, with student identification removed so results can be stored in an FERPA compliant manner. Finally, they summarize the results and prepare an annual report for GERC.

Annual reports to GERC are required for all general education courses. The reports are submitted by departments via Bengal Web and then processed by Institutional Research, which creates an overall report for GERC. By November 2016, reports for 81 courses had been submitted. All general education courses will submit an annual report by November 2017. Departments use data from the annual reports to make changes to their courses and/or methods of collecting data and choice of assessment instruments and indicators. Objective Review Committees (ORC) will begin meeting in 2018 to review objective courses and make recommendations regarding the overall objectives. Objectives will be analyzed every five years and reports generated at the end of the time period. A comprehensive program assessment based on the ORC reports will be completed every five years.

As an example, the Chemistry department has a committee of 3 faculty members that evaluate the assessment findings at the end of the academic year. They make recommendations to the department as to how to improve student performance in the weaker areas. A template will be developed for the instructors to report their findings. Another example is that of ACAD 1111 (information literacy). Its assessment committee selected a signature capstone assignment and randomly assigned three assignments to each reviewer, who evaluated the assignments independently. The performance was strong except for “use information/data effectively to accomplish a specific purpose.” The committee plans to redesign the curriculum to allow more time for the instruction-practice-feedback-revision cycle.

The UARC is in the process of reviewing assessment software and will make a recommendation to Academic Affairs by fall 2017. In most departments, assessment results are communicated to faculty in meetings. Assessment software will enable departments and programs to easily generate reports for review. The UARC will make recommendations to departmental assessment committees as to appropriate methods and venues for communicating results.

**Part III: Evaluative Overview in Light of Parts I and II**

1. **What will we need to do to prepare for the Year-Seven Evaluation?**
Introduction

Since ISU’s 2014 Year Seven evaluation, the Institution has made significant advances. It established the IEAC, which is responsible for emphasizing an inclusive atmosphere as well as aligning planning efforts and dismantling long-standing silos throughout the Institution. The Institution also adopted a new comprehensive assessment plan that emphasizes student learning and services as the central elements of the University’s culture. For any university, implementing and following through with even one of those initiatives is a considerable undertaking, but to successfully implement all of those changes, ISU’s leadership must maintain focus and emphasis, provide resources, and coordinate efforts university-wide to ensure ISU is ready for its next Year Seven evaluation.

Mission Fulfillment, the Strategic Plan, and Aligning Planning

It took ISU time to define what mission fulfillment means to the University as a whole and how to assess it. Now that it is defined, ISU’s administration is having that discussion with faculty and staff to help them define their roles in achieving it, and understand that unlike a strategic goal, the outcome is not static but focused on continuous improvement.

The three key outcomes to accomplish the IEAC’s goal of attaining mission fulfillment are to continue to break down the planning silos within academic and non-academic units, align their planning efforts with the strategic plan’s goals or mission fulfillment objectives. ISU’s administration will focus on education, inclusion, and promote alignment to accomplish these two outcomes.

Education and Communication

For years, the core themes served as the strategic goals, so many at ISU were confused when the IEAC reinterpreted the delineation between mission fulfillment objectives and strategic goals. Based on the stakeholder feedback regarding the strategic plan’s goals it became evident that there was not a clear understanding of the differences between the two. The faculty and staff believe in the new core themes and thought that the strategic goals were replacing them. That evidence made clear the need for an education campaign to explain the differences between mission fulfillment and the strategic plan.

To accomplish this, upon completion of the strategic plan last March, the Executive Vice President and Provost (EVPP) and other senior administrators started using different forums and meetings with administrators, faculty, and staff to explain the differences between the newly created strategic goals and mission fulfillment objectives. This campaign will continue until clarity is achieved.

Communicating the differences between mission fulfillment and the strategic plan is not the only education that needs to occur. The use of the IEAC is a relatively new addition to ISU’s structure, so its scope and processes are not widely known throughout the Institution. That lack of knowledge results in a misunderstanding by many faculty and staff regarding how the Institution’s priorities are set and decisions are being made at the executive and mid-management levels. The EVPP and the Institutional Effectiveness staff will continue focusing their efforts on highlighting the IEAC’s actions and how they directly tie to achieving mission fulfillment and accomplishing the strategic goals.
Inclusion

For the development of the strategic plan and its subsequent action plans, ISU began utilizing project action teams (PAT) composed of diverse groups of faculty, staff, and students with the charge of resolving specific issues using group problem-solving techniques. With over 1,800 employees, many of ISU’s faculty and staff have never met one another, let alone worked together. By using these PATs, it provides an opportunity to expand everyone’s familiarization of one another’s skills, listen to different perspectives, and develop creative results. Some participants on the PATs are subject matter experts while others are selected based on their roles and backgrounds at the Institution. ISU has even included community members on the PATs to assist in developing the strategic action plans. PAT members share perspectives, experiences, and gain appreciation for one another’s abilities and skills.

Inclusion remains an important adjustment to ISU’s culture, and these teams will support the achievement of positive conclusions. The EVPP emphasized the use of PATs at multiple Faculty Assemblies during spring 2017. It is her desire that senior administrators around the Institution utilize PATs so that they become more prevalent and facilitate faculty and staff relationships and collaboration. It is still too soon to say if this initiative will stand the test of time but it puts ISU one-step closer to accomplishing mission fulfillment and meeting accreditation standards. To date, ISU has established five teams.

Promoting Alignment

As stated in Part 1, the IEAC has multiple subcommittees to support inclusion, process improvement, and alignment. Mission fulfillment is a continuous improvement process, and it is important that the subcommittees have a clear understanding of how their efforts affect the Institution. ISU can boast about some of the successes in aligning planning, but it has been and continues to be, difficult to establish some standard processes. As the IEAC structure matures, leadership throughout the Institution has been challenged because they have not had a clear understanding of what must go through the IEAC system for approval. Without predictable timelines and processes, the subcommittees’ work is done in a vacuum, which can cause confusion. To be successful long-term, the IEAC recognizes that it must set clear requirements for the subcommittees who are trying to establish plans to ensure they achieve effective alignment. Standard policies and timelines regarding new processes still need to be formalized by the IEAC so as more plans that are complicated the IEAC can operate efficiently and effectively attaining alignment throughout the Institution without compromising the system.

Implementing ISU’s Comprehensive Assessment Plan

The implementation of ISU’s comprehensive assessment plan is a priority for the Institution (See Appendix B). Utilizing student learning outcomes and service evaluations is a key to ISU achieving mission fulfillment. Some elements of the plan like GERG began two years ago while other elements are still in the early stages of implementation. The key to achieving a successful implementation is the faculty and staff’s buy-in. To ensure all aspects of the plan are achievable the IEAC will need to create opportunities to seek feedback from the faculty and staff by using the Faculty Senate, UCC, GERG, Staff Council and Vice Presidents to implement the plan. The diverse set of recommendations the will
receive will only strengthen the plan and increase her chances of successfully deploying the plan throughout the institution.

Having a plan in place is just the first step. Additional requirements like continuing to train faculty and staff, establishing a formal assessment policy, and providing oversight by the Departments, Colleges, and Vice Presidents are all considerations that will require future discussions and approval by the IEAC. Based on other institutions’ success stories it is well known that as assessment becomes more and more involved, the IEAC will have to devote additional resources to support its continual evolution.

The purchase and implementation of an assessment enterprise program are additional requirements within the plan that needs to be solidified. The UARC has responsibility for establishing the requirements for the enterprise product and until March 2018 to identify, evaluate, and select a product that meets their standards. Additionally, the group will work with the EVPP and Vice Provost to include funding in ISU’s 2019 budget as a measure to ensure it is ready for implementation in summer 2018. It will take the time to implement the assessment software, but it should be fully functional and providing valuable data by ISU’s Year Seven evaluation.

Another indirect university-wide assessment tool that has received significant attention at ISU for the last year has been the proposal of standardizing the end-of-course survey. Initial research found that faculty members are using various methods like Moodle, Survey Monkey, and other off-the-shelf survey tools to complete end-of-course surveys. After the IEAC approved the project proposal in spring 2016, the EVPP appointed a faculty member to serve as a faculty fellow. One of the projects she selected was to research the need for and capabilities of a standardized end-of-course survey tool. She performed extensive research on this topic and is in the process of identifying multiple vendors whose products would meet the Institution’s needs. It is envisioned that non-academic units can coordinate to include questions on those surveys to evaluate certain services. The end-of-course survey is another assessment tool that will fit into ISU’s comprehensive assessment plan. It will help faculty and staff make quality changes to their courses or support non-academic unit’s quality of services.

Conclusion

Over the past two years, there have been significant changes to the ISU’s culture. These changes have not happened overnight and are still evolving. Communication to faculty and staff and their involvement in institutional planning processes have been the key to the Institution’s accomplishments in the areas of mission fulfillment and assessment.

Based on the successes ISU has already worked hard to achieve, by the Year Seven evaluation the IEAC should be fully integrated into the Institution and have established a set of standards and timelines that facilitates continuous planning alignment. The staff and faculty will have a strong understanding of mission fulfillment and regularly be encouraged to participate in PATs. Additionally, ISU should have fully implemented its comprehensive assessment plan and is using student learning outcomes and service evaluations to instill positive changes that also support achieving accomplishing mission fulfillment.