Non-Academic Unit Assessment Program Proposal

1. Background.

All non-academic units at Idaho State University (ISU) should engage in an ongoing process of assessment of their programs and services as part of the accreditation requirements for the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU). Assessment activities are intended to demonstrate institutional effectiveness and inform strategies for continuous improvement as outlined in the NWCCU’s Standard #4. The NWCCU states on page 21 of its Accreditation Handbook (2015 Edition):

The institution systematically applies clearly defined evaluation and planning procedures, assesses the extent to which it achieves its mission and core themes, uses the results of assessment to effect institutional improvement, and periodically publishes the results to its constituencies. Through these processes it regularly monitors its internal and external environments to determine how and to what degree changing circumstances may impact the institution and its ability to ensure its viability and sustainability.

At a minimum, the non-academic unit assessments should focus on the following essential components:

- The unit’s Mission Statement, which should be aligned with ISU’s mission and mission fulfillment priorities
- The unit’s Objectives, which are aligned with the mission statement and should reflect the essential functions or activities of the unit
- The Expected Outcomes, which may be learning and/or process outcomes
- Measurable Performance Criteria, which describe the desired end result
- Program Activities/Strategies, the services, supports, interventions, and programs provided
- Assessment, the collection, and analysis of evidence
- Evaluation, the interpretation of evidence
- Planned Improvements, developed in response to assessment evidence and including an implementation timeline

2. Problem Statement.

Idaho State University has not adopted a standardized non-academic unit assessment program to measure effectiveness, efficiency, and validate processes. Thus, ISU is out of compliance with the NWCCU’s requirements listed in Standard #4, which was also a previous finding in 2014 and could become a continued recommendation.

3. Recommendation.

ISU’s Accreditation, Assessment, and Academic Program Review (AAAPR) Subcommittee will utilize the national standards established by the Council for Advancement of Standards (CAS) in Higher Education (9th edition) to develop a model for the University, that once approved by the IEAC, the non-academic units will be responsible for adhering to. Additionally, the AAAPR Subcommittee will create a non-academic unit assessment document for units that do not have a CAS Professional Standard associated
with it. The AAAPR will propose to the IEAC Steering Committee the non-academic assessment model at the July meeting, and if approved, the program will be implemented beginning in fall 2017.

4. Conclusion.

By ISU’s Year Seven Self-Evaluation, the University will have in place a comprehensive, mature process that not only achieves the NWCCU’s accreditation standards but that will enhance the non-academic units’ ability to provide more effective and efficient service to students and their other customers.