

THE PLANNING AND INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS PROCESS

The planning process at the unit level at The University of West Alabama can be characterized as a tiered process—beginning at the unit level, then moving to the Dean/Vice President level, and culminating at the level of the Institutional Effectiveness Council. It is a continuous process designed to involve all areas of the institution and maintain comprehensive participation.

The planning process begins and ends at the unit level with all members of a unit involved at every stage. Early in the Fall, academic and non-academic units perform a self-study to analyze the results of assessment activities from the previous year. Based on these findings, the unit develops/reviews/updates objectives that link to a specific University Goal and determines expected results to form a comprehensive assessment plan for the current year. The plan is designed to guide academic units in assessing the quality of academic programs or the operations/services of non-academic units. Drawing upon both the Self-Study and the Assessment Plan, the unit develops Strategic Plans and describes the resources required for implementation. Included in the Strategic Plans are the following forms: (1) Statement of Achievements, (2) Short- and Medium-Range Plans, (3) Resources Required for Plans, (4) Professional and Support Staffing Plan, and (5) Faculty Staffing Plan. **All** planning forms are forwarded to the Dean/Vice President for review by October 31. After the assessment plan and relevant planning documents are revised according to the Dean's recommendations, the Dean convenes the College Academic Council for the purpose of prioritizing planning statements and requests. Once the planning statements and requests are prioritized, the Dean develops an executive summary and forwards the executive summary and all planning documents to the Provost. At this point, the Provost may choose to convene the Deans' Council to aid in the integration of the summaries and planning statements for presentation to the Institutional Effectiveness Council. The Provost and Vice Presidents forward all planning documents to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness for dissemination to the members of the Institutional Effectiveness Council. At this level, the planning documents are reviewed by the Institutional Effectiveness Council, which may recommend modifications to the planning documents and return these to the appropriate unit. Once all the planning documents are approved, the Council then works to integrate the planning statements and establish institutional priorities. At this stage, the planning process intersects the budgeting cycle. The planning priorities established by the Institutional Effectiveness Council serve to guide final budget prioritization and budget recommendations to the President's Council. The President's Council considers the recommendations of the IEC as a University Strategic Plan is developed that determines the direction the University will take, which plans are to be supported and implemented immediately, and available and needed resources. At the conclusion of the cycle, the process begins anew, with units making needed changes in mission statements, objectives, assessment activities, and strategic plans based on the assessment findings, unit/college/university strategic plans, etc.

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness plays a key role in the planning process. This office provides various data requested by the units of the University and serves as a central repository by maintaining copies of all final planning documents. This office also provides assistance to other areas of the institution in the development and revision of planning documents.