OVERVIEW OF ACCREDITATION AND ASSESSMENT AT VIRGINIA TECH

Institutional Effectiveness

Office of Analytics and Institutional Effectiveness

Presentation Outline

- Accreditation Overview: Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC)

- State Requirements: State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV)

- Introduction to Assessment

- VT Assessment Reporting and Alignment of Requirements

- Responsibilities

- Today's Events and Resources

SACSCOC AND SCHEV

Accreditation Overview

- SACSCOC is the regional accrediting body for Virginia Tech
- There are over 800 institutions of higher education represented in the SACSCOC region
- To achieve or maintain accreditation, institutions must demonstrate compliance on standards outlined in the "Principles of Accreditation"
- The most recent revision of standards was passed December 2017
- The new resource manual was published in spring 2018

Accreditation Process

- VT submits a compliance certification approximately six months prior to the on-site visit
- The compliance certification contains VT's responses to each of the standards as well as supporting documentation
- The off-site committee reviews the documents and makes a judgment regarding the institution's compliance with each standard
- The university provides a focused report on the standards the off-site team finds VT non-compliant
- The SACSCOC on-site visit is conducted in the spring semester and the team:
  - Reviews the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)
  - Conducts interviews with the authors of the focused report and certain required standards
  - Produces a final report for the institution
- Final reaffirmation approval is made by the Commission in December

What does SACSCOC require regarding assessment and institutional effectiveness?

- Two main sections of the "Principles of Accreditation" discuss assessment and institutional effectiveness
  - Section 7: Institutional Planning and Effectiveness covers areas pertaining to:
    - Overall institutional planning
    - The QEP and assessment of the plan
    - Administrative effectiveness
  - Section 8: Student Achievement covers areas related to:
    - Student achievement appropriate to mission, students, and programs
    - Assessment related to educational programs, general education, and academic and student support services

Section 7: Institutional Planning and Effectiveness

- "7.1: The institution engages in ongoing, comprehensive, and integrated research-based planning and evaluation processes that (a) focus on institutional quality and effectiveness and (b) incorporate a systematic review of institutional goals and outcomes consistent with its mission. (Institutional Planning) [CR]

- 7.2: The institution has a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) that (a) has a topic identified through its ongoing, comprehensive planning and evaluation processes; (b) has broad-based support of institutional constituencies; (c) focuses on improving specific student learning outcomes and/or student success; (d) commits resources to initiate, implement, and complete the QEP; and (e) includes a plan to assess achievement. (Quality Enhancement Plan)

- 7.3: The institution identifies expected outcomes of its administrative support services and demonstrates the extent to which the outcomes are achieved. (Administrative effectiveness)"

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. (2018). The principles of accreditation: Foundations for quality enhancement. The 2018 Edition. Retrieved from: https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/08/2018PrinciplesOfAcreditation.pdf

Section 8: Student Achievement

- "8.1: The institution identifies, evaluates, and publishes goals and outcomes for student achievement appropriate to the institution's mission, the nature of the students it serves, and the kinds of programs offered. The institution uses multiple measures to document student success. (Student achievement) [CR]
- 8.2: The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of seeking improvement based on analysis of the results in the areas below:
  - a. Student learning outcomes for each of its educational programs. (Student outcomes: educational programs)
  - b. Student learning outcomes for collegiate-level general education competencies of its undergraduate degree programs. (Student outcomes: general education)
  - c. Academic and student services that support student success. (Student outcomes: academic and student services)"

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. (2018). The principles of accreditation: Foundations for quality enhancement. The 2018 Edition. Retrieved from: https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/08/2018PrinciplesOfAcreditation.pdf

What units and programs are covered in these standards?

- Each institution creates a rationale explaining which units and programs they included in its response to each standard
- For administrative units and academic & student services that support student success, VT includes:
  - Academic deans' offices
  - Vice President/Provost areas
  - Units reporting directly to Vice President/Provost areas
- For academic program assessment, VT includes:
  - Undergraduate and graduate degree-granting programs
  - Professional programs
  - Post-baccalaureate certificate programs

How does SACSCOC examine these standards?

- 8.2.a. Student learning outcomes for each of its educational programs
  - "Are expected student learning outcomes clearly defined in measurable terms for each educational program?
  - What types of assessment activities occur to determine whether learning outcomes are met?
  - How are results from periodic assessment activities analyzed?
  - How has the institution's use of assessment results improved educational programs?"
- 8.2.b. Student learning outcomes for collegiate-level general education competencies
  - "What expected learning outcomes capture the intended college-level general education competencies the institution envisions for its undergraduate students?
  - How will the institution maintain consistency in its measurements across different programs of study?
  - If weaknesses are found, what process is there to seek improvements in the delivery of general education learning experiences?"

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. (2018). Resource manual for the principles of accreditation: Foundations for quality enhancement. Retrieved from: https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/08/2018-POA-Resource-Manual.pdf

State Council of Higher Education for Virginia

- SCHEV is the coordinating body for higher education in the state of Virginia
- Some of SCHEV's responsibilities include:
  - Approving new degree programs, instructional sites, degree escalations, and mission statements for Virginia's public institutions
  - Making recommendations regarding state support for public higher education to Governor and General Assembly
  - Overseeing of state financial aid programs
  - Collecting and disseminating data on Virginia's colleges and universities and their students

State Council of Higher Education for Virginia

- Policy on Student Learning Assessment and Quality in Undergraduate Education
- SCHEV, in collaboration with institutions, identified four main competency areas:
  - Critical thinking
  - Written communication
  - Quantitative reasoning
  - Civic engagement
- Institutions are required to:
  - Select two additional competency areas
  - Provide one or more outcomes within each competency area
  - Submit assessment plans containing:
    - Specific outcomes
    - Measures
    - Assessment schedule (all outcomes must be measured within a six year-cycle)

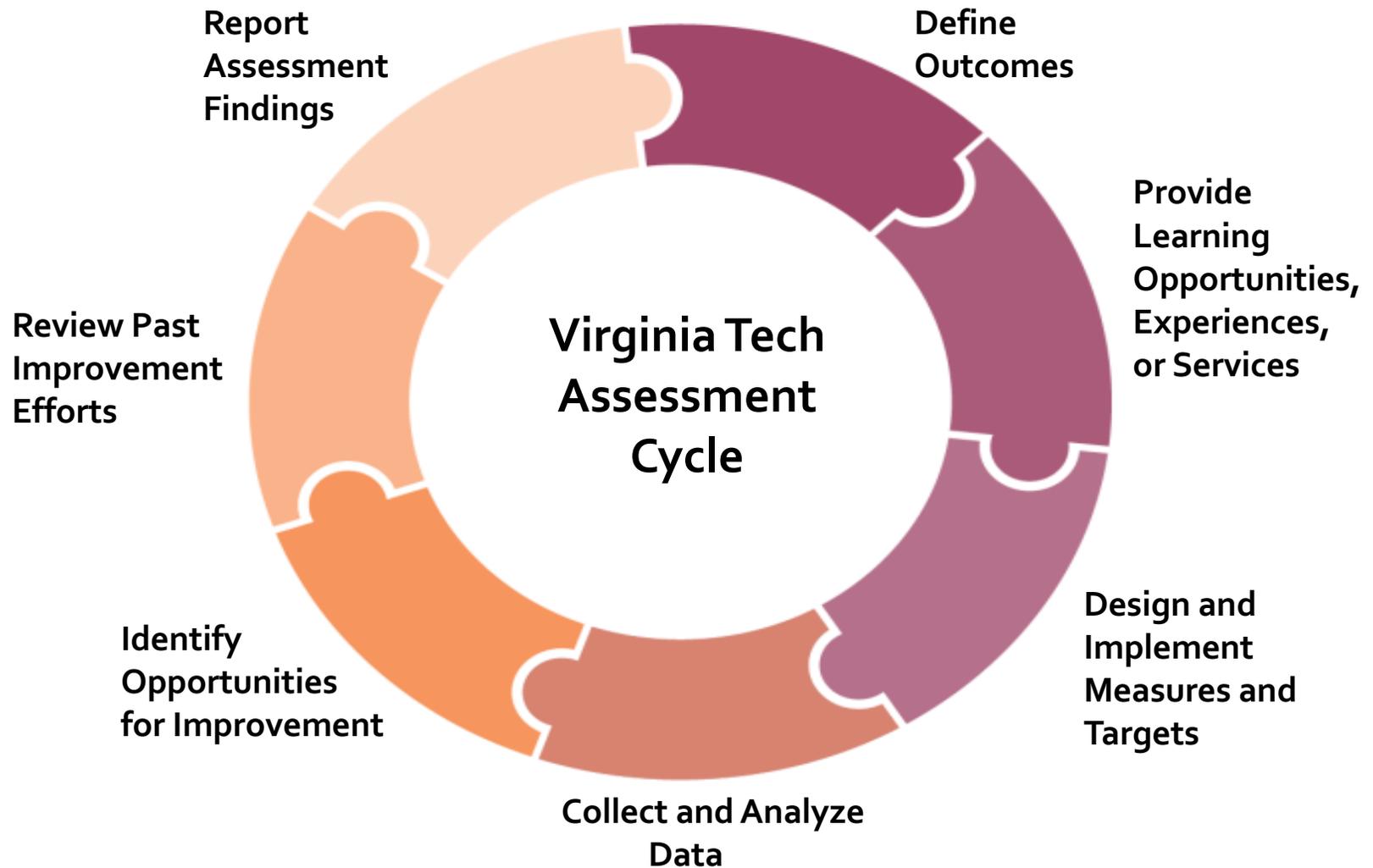# State Council of Higher Education for Virginia

- Institutions are expected to:
  - Use direct measures of student learning
  - Measure students across the general population (i.e., not only assessing Math majors for quantitative reasoning)
  - Indirect measures can complement the direct assessments
  - Civic engagement can be measured with participation rates or attitudinal surveys
  - Measurement can be done at the institutional-level (e.g., general education) or at the program-level (e.g., academic degree programs)
- SCHEV reviews and approves plans and subsequent assessment reports
- Reports must be made accessible to the public

OVERVIEW OF ASSESSMENT AND INSTITUTIONAL REQUIREMENTS

What is assessment?

- Suskie (2009, p. 4) defined assessment as an ongoing four-step process:
  - "Establishing clear, measurable expected outcomes of student learning;
  - Ensuring that students have sufficient opportunities to achieve those outcomes;
  - Systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well student learning matches our expectations; and
  - Using the resulting information to understand and improve student learning."

Suskie, L. (2009). Assessing student learning: A common sense guide (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Virginia Tech Assessment Cycle

- Define Outcomes
- Provide Learning Opportunities, Experiences, or Services
- Design and Implement Measures and Targets
- Collect and Analyze Data
- Identify Opportunities for Improvement
- Review Past Improvement Efforts
- Report Assessment Findings

Why should programs do assessment?

- Identify a program's strengths and areas for improvement
- Provide evidence of student learning for stakeholders including discipline-specific and regional accreditors
- Highlight program contributions to stakeholders
- Encourage collaboration among program faculty
- Create a program vision and ideal
- Encourage curriculum review

BUT the PRIMARY REASON is to improve the teaching and learning process!

Assessment Reporting at Virginia Tech

- Reporting template was designed based on best practices and to meet accreditation requirements

- Assessment reports for academic degree and post-baccalaureate certificate programs are required to contain:

  - 5 to 8 student learning outcomes (SLO), unless otherwise specified by a discipline-specific accrediting body; 2 to 4 for post-baccalaureate certificates

  - 2 to 3 program outcomes (PO); 1 to 2 for post-baccalaureate certificates

  - Measures and targets for each SLO and PO

Assessment Reporting at Virginia Tech

- Assessment reports for academic degree and post-baccalaureate certificate programs are required to contain:
  - Findings and comments on findings for each SLO and PO measured during that academic year
    - 2 to 3 SLOs and 1 to 2 POs should be measured each year for academic degree programs
    - At least one SLO and one PO annually for post-baccalaureate certificate programs
  - An action plan for all unmet targets or for at least one student learning outcome if all targets were met (for academic degree programs)
  - Comments on previously implemented action plans
  - Response to a general question at the end of the reporting form

Assessment Reporting at Virginia Tech

- Assessment reports for administrative units and academic & student services that support student success are required to contain:
  - 3 to 5 administrative unit outcomes and, for academic and student support areas, relevant student learning outcomes
  - Measures, targets, and findings for each of the outcomes
  - Action plans developed based on findings and comments regarding previously implemented action plans

Assessment Reporting Review Process

- Reports are submitted electronically to Institutional Effectiveness (IE)
  - Deadlines: June 30 for academic programs and September 1 for administrative units
- A first and second reviewer reads each report and provides formative feedback
- Reports are finalized by IE coordinator for each reporting area (either academic or administrative)
- In two to three months of receipt, reports are returned to programs or units
- Reports help Virginia Tech:
  - Demonstrate an ongoing, systematic assessment process
  - Document repeated cycles of assessment, analysis, reflection, and action

Guiding Questions for Assessment Reports

- Outcomes:
  - What did faculty identify as the most important concepts for students in their program to learn?
  - What did faculty identify as potential program development areas?
- Measurement:
  - How was each outcome measured?
  - What achievement target did faculty set for each outcome-measure pair?
  - What was the evidence collected and what did it show?
- Analysis and Improvement:
  - For each outcome-measure pair, was the expected performance level met?
  - If achievement targets were not met, what does the program plan to do to improve?
  - How are the results and improvements communicated to the department and other stakeholders?
  - What are the results of previously implemented action plans?

Assessment Process for General Education

- Determine which concepts and student learning outcomes are addressed in the official course proposal

- Instructors are responsible for assessing all concepts and student learning outcomes identified

- Faculty must use a direct measure to determine student competency on each student learning outcome

- Each time a course is offered, faculty will supply the number and percentage of students who are below competent, competent, and above competent by applying the Pathways Rubric for the given concept area

- IE will summarize data and present the overall percentage of students achieving each competency level for each student learning outcome and concept area

ALIGNMENT OF REQUIREMENTS

Aligning Requirements

- VT assessment reporting requirements have been developed based on best practices and designed to meet SACSCOC and SCHEV standards
- Student learning outcomes assessment:
  - Assists the university in meeting areas contained in SACSCOC Section 8: Student Achievement
    - Part of overall core requirement of Section 8, part 1
    - Part 2 for educational programs and academic and student services
- Assessment process for general education program (i.e., Pathways):
  - Assists the university in meeting requirement for Section 8, part 2 pertaining to "Student learning outcomes for collegiate-level general education competencies of its undergraduate degree programs"
  - Assists the university in meeting SCHEV Learning Assurance requirements

Aligning Requirements

- Program outcome assessment for academic programs and certificates:
  - Assists the university in meeting overall core requirement in Section 8: Student Achievement, part 1
- Administrative unit outcome assessment:
  - Assists the university in meeting Section 7: Institutional Planning and Effectiveness, part 3 on administrative effectiveness
- All together, the information gathered through academic and administrative assessment reporting help the institution meet the core requirement:
  - Section 7: Institutional Planning and Effectiveness: "The institution engages in ongoing, comprehensive, and integrated research-based planning and evaluation processes that (a) focus on institutional quality and effectiveness and (b) incorporate a systematic review of institutional goals and outcomes consistent with its mission. (Institutional Planning)"

Responsibilities

- Faculty are responsible for:
  - Determining what students should be learning as part of their program or within general education
  - Assessing the student learning outcomes that have been identified
  - Making improvements to programs and units based on these findings
- Institutional Effectiveness is here to:
  - Assist in the development of programmatic assessment plans
  - Offer tips for utilizing the results
  - Respond to and document information for SACSCOC and SCHEV

Assessment is not the responsibility of one faculty member or one administrator; it is a collaborative effort

TODAY'S EVENTS AND RESOURCES

Today's Events

- Afternoon Session Topics:
  - Developing Student Learning & Program Outcomes
  - Pathways Course Assessment
  - Developing Appropriate Measures
  - What are students learning? Where are they learning it? Curriculum Mapping 101
  - Designing Effective Assignments
  - Assessing Graduate and Small Programs

- A working room is available throughout the afternoon with IE professionals on-site
- A survey will also be sent to participants in the upcoming week

Institutional Effectiveness is here to help!

- Institutional Effectiveness, part of the Office of Analytics and Institutional Effectiveness, provides leadership and coordination for assessment activities conducted across Virginia Tech. The unit focuses on the continuous improvement of academic degree programs, certificates, administrative units, and other initiatives across campus.

- Other Resources:
  - IE Website: aie.vt.edu/institutional-effectiveness.html
  - PDN Workshop Sessions
  - We are also happy to provide one-on-one consultations

Please don't hesitate to contact the IE unit for additional information or assistance.

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  - The Institutional Effectiveness graduate assistants

QUESTIONS?