Delta State University
Cleveland, Mississippi

Monitoring Report to the Committee
on Compliance and Reports

March 22-24, 2004 Visit

For the
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
Commission on Colleges

Contact for additional information or documentation:

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(1) Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1

Reaffirmation Committee Report: “The institution provided insufficient evidence that it identifies expected outcomes for its educational programs and its administrative and educational support services; assesses whether or not outcomes are achieved; and provides evidence of improvement in the following areas: the College of Arts and Sciences with the exception of the departments of Physical Science and Social Sciences, the division of Financial Affairs, Athletics, the Office of Alumni and Foundation, the Counseling Center, and the Office of Enrollment Services. Recommendation 2: The Committee recommends that the institution document that it identifies expected outcomes for its educational programs and its administrative and educational support services; assesses whether it achieves these outcomes; and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of those results.”

(2) Brief History of Response Report submitted on March 22-24, 2004

The concern of the Reaffirmation Committee was that it was not able to locate annual reports for the six University departments/divisions identified above. In response to its concern, the evaluation and planning calendar as well as the inventory list of annual reports was updated to ensure all planning reports are submitted and reviewed each year.

(3) The current request of the Commission to address the visiting committee’s recommendations applicable to the following referenced Principle per notification letter from the Executive Director of the Commission sent to Dr. John Hilpert on March 8, 2005

“CS 3.3.1 (Institutional Effectiveness), Recommendation 2. The institution is requested to demonstrate that it has completed at least one cycle of its assessment plan and used the results of its evaluation of that cycle as a basis for continued improvements within the programs and services.”

(4) Response to the Recommendation

Additional observations:
3.3.1.E.1. Assessment could be considerably enhanced in all areas of the university, but especially in administrative and support areas, through the implementation of a systematic institution-wide training program that includes information on writing student and user outcomes statements, using different assessment techniques, analyzing results, and using results to enhance program and services.
As a result of the above stated recommendation and the additional observations the University did engage in a systematic effort to provide a comprehensive means for linking assessment and planning and providing training for members of the organization at all levels to allow them to implement these tools. This effort included the following elements: (1) The formation of a representative committee to provide input from all facets of the campus, (2) engaging external expertise to assist in the development of the assessment, reporting, and planning system, (3) the development of reporting mechanisms that incorporate student learning and user outcomes, and the training of faculty, staff and administrators across the institution on the use and implementation of the newly developed system and tools. Each of these elements is discussed in greater detail in the following passages.

(1) The University Assessment Committee was formed to help lead the University’s assessment process by implementing an institution-wide assessment training program. The training program was an integral element of the University Evaluation and Planning Calendar for 2004-2005. This document was submitted in Response Report to the Visiting Committee submitted to SACS on September 17, 2004. An additional copy of the Planning Calendar can be found in Appendix A of this document. The University Assessment Committee is composed of representatives of each administrative division and college/school. A list of committee members is found in Appendix B of this document. Through this program, departments would learn new and enhanced ways to write student-based outcome statements, develop various assessment techniques, and utilize results to enhance programs and services.

(2) University administration contracted with Dr. Barbara Jones as a consultant with knowledge and expertise of working with colleges in planning and assessment to lead the University Assessment Committee in this training program. Dr. Jones has served as a SACS Peer Team Evaluator since 1987 and has presented professional workshops on planning and assessment at the SACS Annual Meeting, Southern Association for Institutional Research, and other organizations. Appendix C to this document contains her vita. Dr. Jones worked with University administration on determining assessment needs of campus, forming goals of the University Assessment Committee, and establishing effective ways of presenting to departments and divisions.

University administration utilized Dr. Barbara Jones’ knowledge and experience of learning outcomes in the development of the annual report format. She reviewed the format used for the 2003-04 reports and then drafted the added learning outcomes section. The format was then presented to the University Assessment Committee for comments. The UAC requested to establish a separate report for academics and non-academics due to the fact that students of academic departments are different from students in non-academics. The definition of students was modified to include faculty, staff, students, and community. Students were dependent on the focus of the department. For example, learners of Purchasing are primarily faculty and staff whereas learners of the History department are primarily students in the classroom. Once the UAC finalized the formats, it was presented to Cabinet for approval.
Goals of this committee followed from the University Evaluation and Planning document and were to increase university-wide awareness of assessment at Delta State University, to assist the campus in the implementation of an institution-wide assessment training program, and to assist the campus in the continued development of its assessment program. These goals were achieved through the Institutional Effectiveness Training Program, which enhanced assessment in all areas of the University through implementation of an institution-wide training program on writing student and user outcome statements, utilized various assessment techniques, analyzed results, and used results to enhance programs and services.

In February 2005, the University Assessment Committee attended a workshop that Dr. Barbara Jones led to discuss student learning outcomes, assessment models, and training techniques. The PowerPoint presentation that Dr. Jones used in the workshop can be found on the SACS website at http://www.deltastate.edu/pages/1847.asp. Committee members learned how to explain the shift to learning outcomes and developed PowerPoint presentations and other handouts to assist department administrators understand the process. To conclude the workshop, the committee members, with Dr. Jones’ guidance, developed the PowerPoint presentation as well as handouts to use when training all University departments. These handouts included a worksheet to assist in writing the learning outcomes and Bloom’s Classification of Cognitive Skills. Both of these tools along with the PowerPoint presentation used can be found on the website at http://www.deltastate.edu/pages/1847.asp.

Following the workshop, University Assessment Committee members contacted all vice-presidents, deans, and directors/department chairs to schedule training sessions. Directors/department chairs were asked to respond with who they would like to be in the training session and also to identify 3-5 members that would serve on the department assessment committee. Once the University Assessment Committee member heard from the departments that they are representing, they began training. A training schedule is included as Appendix D of this document. All departments/divisions on campus participated in these sessions except for the College of Education and School of Nursing. The College of Education has participated in assessment training through NCATE standards which are aligned with this training program’s goals as well as University goals. The School of Nursing has a history of effectiveness and assessment as evidenced by their accrediting agency’s report. The School of Nursing, like the College of Education, has a substantial record of assessment and planning training and implementation of models much like that employed in this training.

3.3.1.E.2. The process of planning and evaluation would also be strengthened by review and revision, as needed, of the planning and evaluation processes and reporting formats.

As a result of the recommendation, University administration, the University Assessment Committee, and the consultant working with both groups modified the annual report format used during the 2003-04 year in order to enhance assessment reporting. Since learning outcomes are defined differently for administrative and academic areas, as in the
past, two formats were sent to department administrators via email: a non-academic format for all administrative departments to complete and an academic plan for academic units to use. The format used for Non-Academic and Academic units, respectively, in the 2004-05 year is attached as Appendices E and F.

Following the Institutional Effectiveness Training Program, all departments submitted 2004-05 annual plans to their Vice-President or dean and to the Office of Institutional Research and Planning. There were several minor changes from the 2003-04 reports. For instance, the Bursar’s office has been renamed to Student Business Services; therefore, this report is found under Student Business Services. Likewise the units formerly known as Information Technology Services (ITS), Telecommunications, and the Technology Learning Center (TLC) were consolidated in early 2004-2005 to form a single unit now known as the Office of Information Technology (OIT). Also in 2003-04, the auxiliary departments, which include the Bookstore, Food Services, Post Office, Laundry, and Golf Course, submitted separate reports but for 2004-05, a single report was submitted and is labeled Auxiliary Departments. The Annual Report Inventory reflects the units of the University submitting reports. A copy of the inventory is found in Appendix G of this document.

All reports conform to the guidelines established by University administration and the University Assessment Committee. These reports now include elements which align with the mission of the University as well as with department/division goals which were established in July 2004. All reports now use assessment terms such as “learning outcome,” “assessment methods,” “data collection and analysis,” “results of evaluation,” and “use of evaluation results.” The annual plans can be found at http://www.deltastate.edu/pages/1817.asp. These annual plans are not just considered as past action but rather will be used in the next cycle of planning and assessment.

3.3.1.E.3. The planning and evaluation process would also benefit from the provision of clear and accessible documentation of policies, procedures, reporting formats, calendars and access to institutional assistance in planning and assessment.

The DSU Academic Council committed to the adoption of an assessment calendar and annual reporting dates during the 2004-2005 academic year. The assessment calendar has been incorporated in the Academic Reminder Calendar employed by the university. The Academic Reminder Calendar for 2005-2006 can be found in Appendix H of this document. The University Cabinet endorsed this assessment calendar for the entire organization.

Delta State University continues its progress in the implementation of the institution’s Quality Enhancement Plan. This five year plan, endorsed by the visiting committee, enters year two with a detailed timetable for implementation and specific criteria for the evaluation of progress. Appendix I of this document contains the QEP Timeline for implementation. Various assessment methods are employed in the context of the QEP including the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE), both developed and administered by the Indiana University
Center for Postsecondary Research, and the QEP Survey developed in-house by the University. The results of the initial NSSE conducted by DSU lead the Student Engagement Champions (SEC) to recommend participation in FSSE during 2004-2005. The SEC further recommended having Dr. George Kuh, Director of the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research, come to the campus to provide insight on how the results of NSSE can be integrated in planning and enhancement of learning. Dr. Kuh was the keynote speaker at the Opening Convocation for the University’s 2005-2006 academic year.

The University committed to providing greater assistance in planning and assessment in 2004-2005. The institution embarked on the development of an updated strategic plan that will provide organization-wide goals and objectives with which subordinate units can align their respective goals and objectives. The above mentioned training sessions conducted by the University Assessment Committee provided hands-on guidance in the effective use of student learning and end-user outcomes based planning and assessment tools. Lastly, the Office of Institutional Research & Planning was made part of Academic Affairs to provide a more direct relationship for assistance in the development of assessment tools in academic and support programs. This organizational change, made at the conclusion of the 2004-2005 academic year, is a result of the University’s ongoing efforts to provide assessment related expertise and resources to all units of the campus with particular emphasis on those directly involved in academics.