

UNIVERSITY OF MONTEVALLO  
INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH, PLANNING & ASSESSMENT

**A GUIDE TO PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT**  
**AT THE**  
**UNIVERSITY OF MONTEVALLO**

**3<sup>RD</sup> EDITION**

Issued by the University Planning Committee Fall, 2002



## **THE UNIVERSITY MISSION**

The mission of the University of Montevallo, unique in higher education in Alabama, is to provide to students from throughout the state an affordable, geographically accessible, “small college,” public higher-educational experience of high quality with a strong emphasis on undergraduate liberal studies and with professional programs supported by a broad base of arts and sciences, and designed for their intellectual and personal growth in the pursuit of meaningful employment and responsible, informed citizenship

# A GUIDE TO PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT

3<sup>RD</sup> EDITION

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# A GUIDE TO PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT

## 3<sup>RD</sup> EDITION

### COMPLEMENTARY PROCESSES

Planning and assessment cooperates to maintain both quality and continuing progress. Assessment provides a regular, systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of programs and services, and the data provided by the assessment process provides a source of information and impetus to guide goal-directed change. Planning and assessment have been intentionally integrated within the University planning process to emphasize this important linkage. At the University of Montevallo and across the country, the potential power of assessment as a research tool for planned change is only beginning to be felt. It is the intent of the University planning process to emphasize the powerful, iterative nature of assessment as a form of quality control and internal research and development in improving the effectiveness of academic and service programs across the campus.

This document is designed to clarify the conceptual bases of planning and assessment, to explain how the planning and assessment processes at the University of Montevallo function, and to offer helpful information and resources for improving the processes within offices and departments.

## PLANNING

### *PURPOSES OF THE PROCESS*

At the University of Montevallo, planning provides a comprehensive, participatory, integrated and systematic process for determining, implementing and tracking institutional improvement. The process allows the University to continually monitor its level of institutional effectiveness and assess the quality of its academic and support programs. Specifically, the process results in the following documents:

**The Environmental Scan:** Prepared by the University Planning Committee and updated each year, the scan provides information on the current and future external environment from which the University seeks financial, staffing, and student resources.

**The Institutional Plan:** The Plan describes directions and improvement goals over a five-year period for the University as a whole. It is approved by the Board of Trustees and provides guidance for both institutional function planning and planning at other University levels.

**Unit Plans:** Departmental and office plans describe the existing state of the unit, identify the current and mid-range planning environment, and specify goals in support of the University and unit mission. As a part of these plans, each unit identifies assessments of educational and/or support outcomes for a five-year period designed to indicate the extent to which the basic mission of the unit is being accomplished.

**Updates to Unit Plans:** The unit plans are updated each year between full-cycles to maintain their usefulness and currency.

### **SCOPE OF THE PROCESS**

The University as a whole and each of its divisions, colleges, academic departments, and support offices develop plans. A complete listing of planning units as approved by the University Planning Committee is shown in Appendix A. Each of these units is expected to use planning as an opportunity to assess current effectiveness in accomplishing the University's and the department's or office's mission and as an opportunity to plan and implement improvements in the effective conduct of its activities. The budget is tied to planning by budget administrators at all levels in the allocation and expenditure of resources. All planning, including function planning, is integrated at the level of the University Planning Committee which reports directly to the President.

Each planning period is five years long. Full-cycle plans encompass this period and are updated in each of the intervening years through a regular update process. University monitoring to evaluate the feasibility and extent of progress in planned activities is conducted twice a year in December and April to ensure the adequacy and timeliness of goal implementation.

### **PLANNING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTEVALLO**

Planning is not a new activity at the University. The campus has been developing formal institutional plans since the 1989 Report of the Committee on the Future of the Institution, *Choosing the University's Future*. As the result of the work of this University level group, a Strategic Planning Committee was appointed that developed *Objectives and Strategies for Improved Effectiveness and Efficiency of Operation of The University of Montevallo: A Five Year Plan*. This document guided the University for several years and resulted in a number of changes in the institution. In October 1994, President Robert M. McChesney appointed the Second Century Commission to develop a plan to move the University of Montevallo into the twenty-first century. The Commission completed its work in November 1995. As a part of that plan, a new vision of campus planning was developed. The Second

Century Commission recommended that a “participatory” and “representative” planning process be developed that would bring the entire campus into a dialogue about the University’s future. The planning process described in this *Guide* is the result of that recommendation.

Formal planning in higher educational institutions gained widespread use in the 1970s and 1980s. There have been numerous philosophical and functional changes in planning theory and practice and the various planning systems developed have been identified by a wide variety of names. Most of these systems are distinguishable by their focus on particular tools or on characteristics of the internal or external environment. While each of these planning styles has redirected institutional attention in one way or another, each style also shares a number of important characteristics with the others. These commonalities include: 1) examining the fundamental reasons for an institution’s existence; 2) looking comprehensively and realistically at resources; 3) analyzing what is known or can be deduced about the future; 4) defining a series of outcomes and steps to achievement; and 5) understanding the future impacts of current decisions. It is these common characteristics that the University of Montevallo has incorporated into its planning system.

With these attributes in mind, planning at Montevallo is defined as the process of examining current and future internal and external conditions likely to be pertinent to the activities of the institution, and selecting goals that maximize the institution’s or department’s ability to accomplish its mission. While the definition is straightforward, the process of actually doing planning is far from simple. It requires study, critical thinking, ingenuity and hard work.

**At its most basic level, planning is thinking.** When done well, it produces a clear focus on what needs to be accomplished given the conditions that must be addressed. Planning has no magic formulas. It does not produce resources or simplistic formulations for identifying and implementing important and/or hard to accomplish goals. **Plans do not “work” -- people do. The magic in planning is the ingenuity and ability of those who do the planning.**

### ***PLANNING AS A PROCESS***

Planning is always iterative, with each step bringing new understandings about what has gone before and what needs to be done next. With that understanding in mind, the steps in a planning process begin with identification of the most fundamental reasons for the institution or unit’s existence. Known as a mission or statement of purpose, this set of agreed upon understandings forms the basis for what is to be accomplished.

The next step is to determine what form accomplishment of the mission will take over the next five years. This is known as the development of a **vision**. Five years

is the **planning period**, the length for which a plan is being developed. Developing a vision of the future for a particular unit is often the most difficult part of planning. The vision is more than a set of goals. It is a description of a particular state to be achieved. One way to think of a vision for a particular unit, whether the University or a department, is to describe the unit as you see it now, then describe the same unit as it would like to see itself five years later. The difference between the two descriptions defines the **planning gap** and sets the stage for the kinds of goals that need to be devised.

The anticipated activities for any unit are informed and shaped by the environment in which they will be carried forward. Every unit has both internal strengths and challenges. Strengths are the resources available to move in the desired directions while challenges must either be overcome or worked around in order to accomplish a goal. As a general rule, planning works better when units understand and work from their strengths.

The external context that surrounds a unit must also be examined to see how it will affect the goals to be accomplished. Every unit exists as part of a larger system. Some parts of that larger context are within the University and some are outside the institution. Many are beyond the unit's direct or indirect control. If those elements are likely to affect goal accomplishment, then some estimate of their future state is necessary to understand their impact. Those elements that can be controlled by the unit must be identified and necessary action taken to promote goal attainment. Identifying the elements in the external environment likely to have an impact on the unit or its goals is usually referred to as **environmental scanning**. Since external forces trigger many of the changes experienced by universities and their departments/offices, the importance of this step cannot be overemphasized. These forces might be demographic, political, economic, occupational, or attitudinal. A listing of the strengths and challenges internal to a unit and the opportunities and threats external to the unit is usually referred to as a **SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis**. A SWOT analysis is one way of looking at what the resources and difficulties are likely to be as institution or department seeks to accomplish its vision.

It should now be possible to make **specific, results oriented statements** that will move the unit toward its vision of the future and a higher level of attainment of its mission. These statements of results are known as **goals**. While goals do not necessarily need to be quantified, they **should be stated in such a way that it is possible to determine whether or not they have been attained within the time period specified**. It is also necessary to state the steps to be taken in order to accomplish a particular goal. If a goal is a simple and straightforward activity to be conducted, it may not be necessary to plan for it. The unit may just need to do it. **Planning should be used for gaining results when two or more steps must be undertaken in order to accomplish a particular goal**. It should be directed toward significant changes to current activities or development of new activities or directions. **Maintaining day-to-day operations in a unit need only be a part of the**

planning process if significant changes, requiring multiple steps are to be undertaken.

Once goals have been established, it is necessary to ascertain whether resources beyond those currently allocated to the unit are needed to implement the required steps. Resources may be identified from at least four sources: resources currently available within the unit, resources that could be made available in the unit by changes in the way the unit operates, resources requested from within institutional resource channels, and resources from external sources. Given the paucity of state funds, all other sources of funding need to be examined prior to requesting additional institutional funding.

**Implementation** is the process by which the steps necessary to achieve goal attainment are put into motion. Goals are of little value; it is only through the process of turning goals into action that planned changes become reality. Identifying the level of progress toward goal attainment is called **monitoring**. Monitoring helps units to remain focused on goal-related activities and provides a checkpoint to examine progress toward goal attainment.

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROCESS**

At the institutional level and throughout the University, a number of important characteristics need to be incorporated into planning processes. Each planning process at every level needs to incorporate the following attributes:

### **PARTICIPATION**

There must be broad-based involvement by faculty, staff and, in some cases students, alumni or others whose input would enhance the design and implementation of planning activities. The success of planned efforts is rarely the result of faculty members, chairs, deans or directors acting alone. Successful processes are inclusive. All individuals whose commitment is necessary to implement planned changes need to be involved from the beginning of the planning process when the goals and action steps are being developed.

### **REGULAR AND SYSTEMATIC OPERATION**

Planning efforts should be orderly, scheduled and recurrent. Planning is a continuous process and one of the regular activities of any University unit. The *Guide* provides the documentation and forms necessary to document and track goals and progress. Planning efforts should be routinely undertaken at a time that is convenient to the department or office. While a calendar establishes when and to whom documents must be submitted, the documents themselves can be developed at anytime. What is important is that planning be conducted on a regular schedule that functions effectively to elicit the best quality of thinking about the department or office's future.

## **INTEGRATION**

Planning is never isolated from the rest of the operation of the department or institution. At all levels, planning must be integrated with institutional mission, institutional goals, assessment activities, other programs, disciplinary accreditation, services offered, policies, budgets, and procedures. Planning often serves a coordinating function providing a system for organizing activities in diverse operational areas.

## **MONITORING**

Oversight provides an opportunity to make sure that planned activities are initiated and carried to completion. Responsibility for the steps in goal implementation must be assigned at the time the goals are developed and regular discussion of implementation needs to be a routine feature of the system. Tracking the progress of goals provides an opportunity for reality checks in the implementation process and allows for necessary mid-course corrections in strategy and design. Monitoring needs to include more than the submission of forms. Discussions of goals and actions steps among departments and with deans and division heads must be a routine element of University life.

## **CENTERED IN ACHIEVING THE INSTITUTIONAL MISSION**

The University mission defines the fundamental reason why the institution exists. At its most basic level, every unit exists to accomplish the University mission. The division, college, departmental and office missions need to be clearly related to the University mission and the process of planning for accomplishing each of those missions needs to make a contribution to the institution as a whole. The mission of the University of Montevallo is shown on the back of the front cover of the *Guide*.

## ***THE STRUCTURE OF PLANNING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTEVALLO***

### **THE SYSTEM**

The University planning process provides for a broadly based, participatory structure that elicits input from throughout the University. Current plans are grounded in the University's Mission as adopted by the Board of Trustees on February 16, 1996.

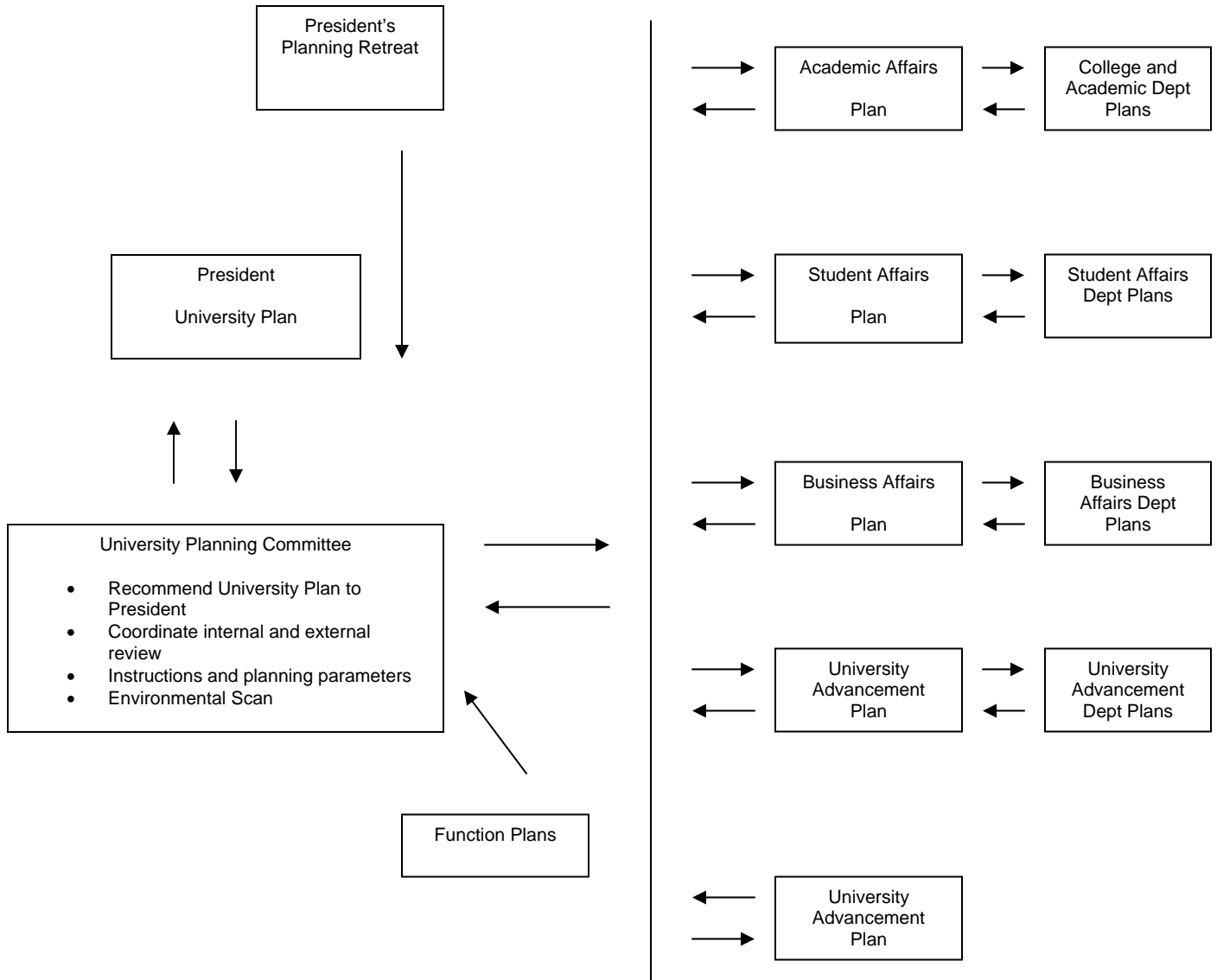
The University as a whole and each academic, administrative and support unit develops plans and uses the planning process for improvement of programs, policies, procedures and activities. An intensive rethinking of the University's and each of its unit's current state and likely future initiates a full-planning cycle. The process results in the development of goals at every institutional level for a five-year period designed to accomplish the University mission and enhance the University's future. The plans are reviewed and updated each year for the next four years during

the update cycle to maintain their relevance and currency. Each planning and update cycle results in a five-year rolling plan.

University level planning begins with the President's Planning Retreat to which all regular faculty and staff members are invited. The retreat is designed to encourage input from a variety of groups and individuals, and it initiates each full-planning cycle. After development of the draft plan based on the input from the Retreat, the University Planning Committee finalizes a plan that is distributed to the University community for further review. Any proposed changes are evaluated and a final draft plan is presented to the President for his review. The plan is presented to the Board of Trustees at its November meeting. At least two different types of planning are initiated once the Board has approved the University plan. Each part of the University, including divisions, colleges, academic departments and support offices construct plans. These action plans implement the University goals and address issues unique to particular units.

A second form of planning is also initiated. Function plans cross administrative lines of authority and concentrate on goals related to specific institutional activities such as enrollment management, facilities master planning, general education enhancement or public relations planning. Function plans have unique formats and schedules and report to the President through the appropriate vice president and the University Planning Committee. Each of these planning processes must also demonstrate the planning characteristics enumerated in this *Guide* and be responsive to University goals. The chart on page 8 graphically depicts the planning process.

# PLANNING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTEVALLO



→ **LEGEND**  
Path of plans, assessments and information

## **THE UNIVERSITY PLANNING COMMITTEE**

The University Planning Committee reports to the President. The Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs chairs the Committee and holds line authority for the operation of the planning and assessment system. Meetings of the Committee are open. While all members of the Committee must demonstrate a commitment to the interests of the University as whole, at each step in the process members are expected to maintain a continuing dialogue with those they represent. The committee has the following members:

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Chair  
Vice President for Student Affairs  
Vice President for Business Affairs and Treasurer  
Vice President for University Advancement  
Director of Physical Plant  
Academic Dean (Elected by the Deans Council for a one year term)  
Chair, Council of Department Chairs  
Chair, Faculty Senate  
Minority Student Advisor  
President, Student Government Association  
Alumni Representative (President of the National Alumni Association or designee)  
General Education Committee (GEC) Representative (Elected for a one-year term)  
Faculty Member elected at-large from each college (4-year terms)  
Director of Institutional Research, Planning and Assessment (non-voting).

The Committee serves a number of important functions, including:

- developing and updating the University's environmental scan,
- establishing the annual planning calendar,
- drafting the University Plan,
- organizing the campus-wide review of the Plan,
- finalizing the plan,
- recommending the University Plan to the President,
- developing planning instructions and forms, and
- recommending changes to the planning process.

## **THE ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN**

The environmental scan attempts to identify major trends and changes beyond the boundaries of the university that are likely to affect its functioning in important ways. A significant review of the environmental scan is developed by a subcommittee of the University Planning Committee every five years prior to the President's Planning Retreat and updated as needed throughout the five years of the planning cycle.

The process for developing the environmental scan is overseen by the Subcommittee on the Environmental Scan. Scanners are recruited from across the

University and they submit items from journals, books, newspapers and other sources of information within their area of expertise. The scanners within a college or division are coordinated by a faculty or staff member within the division. The scanning takes place from October through April of the year prior to President's Retreat and update scanning takes place from October through April of each update year. Faculty and staff scanners record significant information on a form and submit the form to Institutional Research, Planning and Assessment for inclusion in the environmental scan. The Subcommittee on Environmental Scanning examines each item submitted, decides on its significance for the University and reports on the most critical trends identified to the University Planning Committee.

## **THE SCHEDULE**

The planning cycle is divided into two components each with its own schedule of activity. Every five years the University undertakes a full planning cycle with a calendar appropriate for a complete re-evaluation of the institution and its plan. In years between full-cycles, the University updates plans with a somewhat briefer calendar of activities. The planning calendar for a full planning cycle is shown in Appendix B. A generic schedule for an update cycle is shown in Appendix C. Each planning unit is expected to follow the calendar and complete its planning in a timely fashion.

## **REVIEW OF THE UNIVERSITY MISSION**

Every five years, in the spring prior to the President's Planning Retreat, the University Planning Committee initiates a review of the University mission. The process for review is broadly participatory and results in a written recommendation(s) to the President that the mission either be retained in its then current form or suggesting specific changes to the then current legislatively mandated statement.

The President reviews the University Planning Committee's recommendation(s), and if s/he concurs, sends the recommendation to the Board of Trustees for their review and action. If the Board approves the modification to the mission, the modification is submitted to the state legislature in a manner and during a time when the President and the Board believe that successful passage of legislation to amend the mission statement seems most advantageous for the institution.

## **THE UNIVERSITY PLAN**

Planning at the University level is conducted with the assistance of the University Planning Committee. Institutional goals are developed through the combined efforts of all members of the University community. All faculty and staff are invited to the President's Planning Retreat, which takes place in August prior to the beginning of the fall semester. Participants at that retreat are given the most current information

available on the state of the University and the environment in which it exists. With that information the participants identify the most important and appropriate directions in which the institution needs to move during the next five years.

The University Planning Committee considers the directions identified through the discussions at the Retreat and all other available information in developing a draft five-year plan for the University. This draft plan is circulated to all members of the faculty and staff for comment and suggestion. The University Planning Committee also hosts an open forum for discussion of the draft plan in an effort to elicit as much comment as possible and to make sure that all comments are received. At the conclusion of the review period, the University Planning Committee revises the draft as necessary and finalizes it for presentation to the President. The President reviews the plan, makes changes as appropriate and takes the plan to the Board of Trustees for review and approval at their regular November meeting. Once approved, the University Plan becomes the basis for continued planning at the institution throughout the five-year period.

## **FUNCTION PLANNING**

Planning conducted to determine appropriate goals and action steps for defined functions also takes place at the University level. The plans are developed under the guidance of the appropriate vice president, but meet all the characteristics of planning previously enumerated in this *Guide*. The plans are function specific, and cross-administrative lines to encompass the activities and efforts of multiple units. In those cases in which two or more divisions are responsible for a function, the President's Staff with the concurrence of the President assigns administrative responsibility for the plan to a vice president or other appropriate institutional officer.

The plans are distinguished from unit plans by their focus on a function (i.e., enrollment management, facilities, public relations, general education, etc.) rather than a component of the University's structure such as a department or office. The plans have formats and reporting structures that are unique and tailored to the requirements of the function. Development of the plan involves input from individuals whose activities are associated with the function wherever they are located in the institutional structure. The requirement for broad-based participation remains an important element of the process. The broad base of participation provides coordination in important areas of University action. Function plans are brought to the University Planning Committee as an information item by the responsible vice president or officer. A chart showing how functional plans are integrated into the overall planning structure is contained in Appendix E.

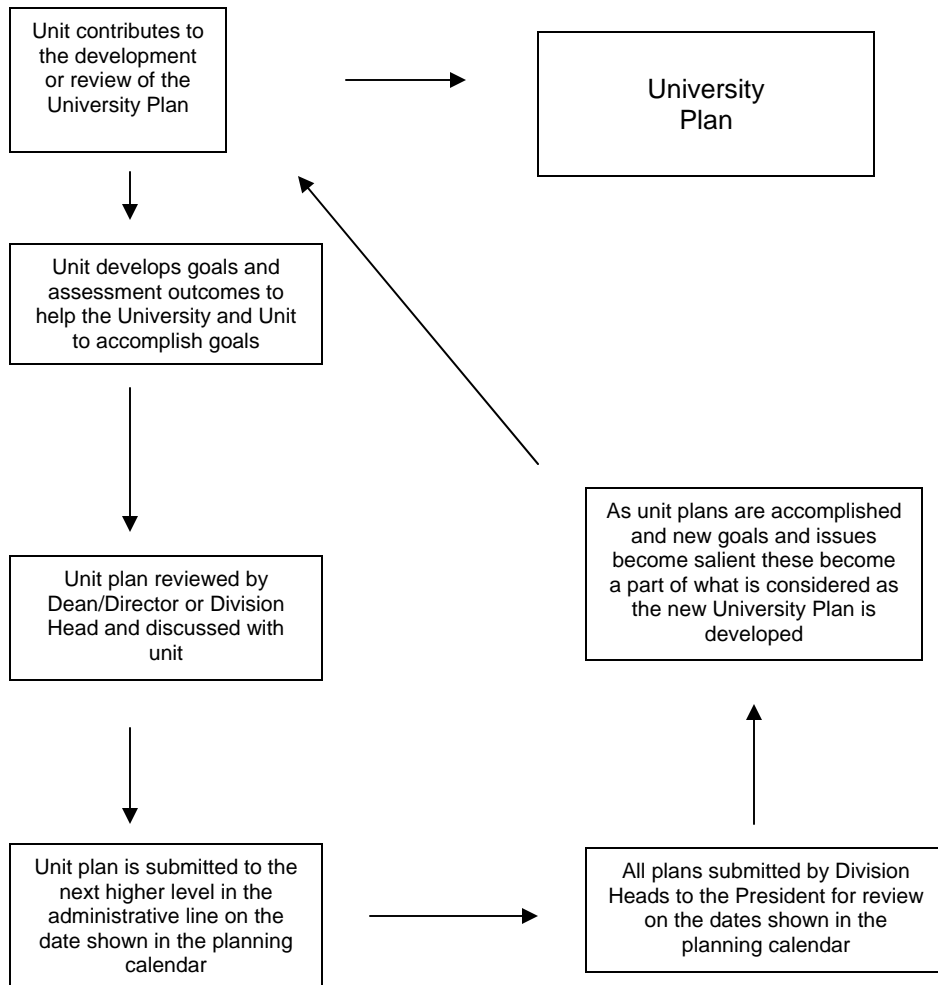
## UNIT PLANNING

Departments and offices at every level of the University are required to develop a plan to enhance their ability to meet the University's and their own mission. The process by which plans are developed varies from unit to unit, but all must conform to the planning characteristics in this *Guide* and be clearly understood by the members of the unit. Departments and offices may involve students, alumni, advisory board members or other individuals who would enhance the process. While processes differ from unit to unit, reporting formats and schedules are consistent across the institution. Planning within a unit may take place at any time during the year that is convenient for the unit as long as the planning is complete prior to the time that the plan is due to the next higher administrative level. Plans may also be amended as needed during the year by submitting the amendment through the appropriate administrative channels. Once approved, a copy of the amendment must be sent to the Office of Institutional Research, Planning and Assessment.

The format shown on pages 13-17 is completed in its entirety during **full planning cycles**. For **update planning cycles**, departments are strongly encouraged to update all sections of the plan in order to keep it current. However, only sections VII A and B, (Assessment Plan) and X, (Goals) must be updated. **In order to update plans, departments must resubmit the complete unit plan containing all sections with asterisks placed next to those section headings in which changes have been made.** All plan submissions, whether in full or update planning cycles, must be submitted in accordance with the most current planning calendar.

**All goals identified in a unit plan must be specifically linked to either a University, division, or college goal or to a specifically identified issue within the unit. If a goal is linked to a departmental issue that issue must be identified in either the external analysis section of the planning format (Section VIII) or in the internal analysis section of the planning format (Section IX).**

## STEPS IN THE UNIT PLANNING PROCESS



## **UNIT PLANNING FORMAT**

### **I. THE MISSION**

The mission is the fundamental statement of a unit's reason for existence. The section also includes a statement of how the unit mission relates to the University mission. Reviews of the mission statement should encompass its relationship to the University mission and its relationship to current and future trends within the discipline(s)/major(s) or area of responsibility within a department. The review will, therefore, require an analysis of the status of the discipline(s) or area of responsibility in view of current and anticipated changes.

### **II. COLLEGE/DEPARTMENT DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS**

Section II provides a brief narrative description of the unit, including its current internal organization, its organizational position within the wider structure of the University and any service/support relationships with other units. The descriptive analysis should also include enrollment and/or service patterns, program completions, programmatic offerings, planning and assessment processes and budgets covering at least a three-year period. All academic and service areas need to address relevant requirements of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS).

### **III. FACULTY/STAFF**

In Section III examine current staffing levels, qualifications, workload, evaluation and development. The analysis for academic areas should be divided into undergraduate and graduate levels in all appropriate categories including staffing and staff qualifications. All academic and service areas need to address relevant requirements of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS).

### **IV. CURRICULAR REVIEW /SERVICES REVIEW**

Review all curricula or services offered within the department. In academic department/college reports, this should include a review of advising including any general studies advising with particular attention to the effectiveness of the process and the advising loads of faculty (undergraduate and graduate advising loads need to be examined separately); a review of the design of the curriculum; and a review of course offerings to assure each course and the curriculum as a whole is current and supports the overall direction of the department or unit. College reports should provide an overview of curricula across the college. In support departments, the review of services should include services offered and the contribution each service makes to the overall direction of the unit. All academic and service areas need to address relevant SACS requirements.

### **V. TEACHING METHODS AND STRATEGIES/SERVICE DELIVERY**

Review all teaching methods and strategies used within academic departments and colleges. Examine the currency, relevance, and evaluation of the methods. Support units need to review how services are delivered including the use of relevant assessment results. Teaching methods and the delivery of services should be considered in light of current trends in the discipline/area. All academic and service areas need to address relevant SACS requirements.

## **VI. PHYSICAL FACILITIES**

Review all space and equipment used by the department in terms of adequacy. Address faculty and staff offices, departmental/office space, additional office work areas, study rooms, laboratories, dedicated classrooms, storage areas, and any other facilities assigned to the unit. All academic and support areas need to address relevant SACS requirements.

## **VII. ASSESSMENT**

### **ASSESSMENT OUTCOMES BY YEAR**

List outcomes for each of the plan years with the descriptive sections shown. Each year should be shown separately. Each outcome for each year should contain all of the sections below.

YEAR \_\_\_\_\_

OUTCOME (number each outcome consecutively within each year of the five years shown)

A statement of a specific student outcome or other form of outcome to be assessed containing any constraints and the criteria for success. Student outcome statements answer the questions: what should students know, believe, or be able to do as a result of participation in the program of study.

### **ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE**

This is a description of the type of assessment methodology to be used.

### **ADMINISTRATION OF ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE**

A description of how the assessment will be carried out, who is responsible for conducting the assessment procedure and analyzing the results, when results will be available and the frequency with which the assessment will be conducted.

### **USE OF RESULTS**

A description of how the results are to be used, including the names of persons who are responsible for specific activities associated with the results, specific times the results will be reviewed, any groups who will review the results and recommend changes, and any other implementation information.

## USE OF PREVIOUSLY ASSESSED OUTCOMES

**It is very important that this section be completed.** Indicate the year and number of the outcome in prior assessment plans, the content of the outcome statement and how the results were used during the current academic year. List only those outcomes in which activities associated with assessment results took place in the current year or since the last unit plan was submitted.

## VIII. EXTERNAL ANALYSIS

Include information on external trends (those outside the unit or University), including trends in academic disciplines that represent either opportunities or threats for the college/department.

## IX. INTERNAL ANALYSIS

Considering the information previously included in this document, identify departmental strengths that are particularly relevant to identified external opportunities or that represent areas of excellence. Weaknesses need to be addressed in terms of the college/unit's ability to address specific opportunities.

## X. GOALS FOR THE PLANNING PERIOD

Identify three to five goals in order of priority for the upcoming academic year and for each of the next two years using all the information included in this report. Years four and five of the current planning period will be difficult to bring into focus with goals and action statements. However, planning is accomplished most effectively when a particular end state is envisioned and goals are identified to help the unit reach that end condition. Therefore, write a narrative describing the goals that the department or office intends to attain in years four and five of the five-year planning period. The narrative will include goals or objectives to be attained during the time period and a description of how the department or office will be different as the result of goal attainment or initiation of effort to attain new goals. Each goal in both years 1-3 and in the narrative encompassing years 4 and 5 of the planning period must be relevant to one or more of the goals in the University plan or to a departmental issue specifically identified within this report. **Goals should be stated in such a way that it is possible to ascertain when they have been accomplished.** The format for this section of the plan is shown on page 17 and is available in UM forms on the University's computer system.

**COLLEGE/DEPARTMENT PLANNING FORMAT  
FOR THE YEAR: \_\_\_\_\_ TO YEAR: \_\_\_\_\_**

Unit Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Person Preparing Plan: \_\_\_\_\_

**Year 1-3 of the current planning period (List each academic year separately)**

**Goal 1 (- 5):** \_\_\_\_\_

University, division or college goal this unit goal will help to accomplish (or departmental issue identified in section VIII or IX that this goal will address):  
\_\_\_\_\_

Responsible Office/Individual: \_\_\_\_\_

Estimated Completion Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Estimated Annual Cost (if additional budgeted funds are required): \_\_\_\_\_

Action Step 1- x (List each action step planned for the year separately) \_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Responsible Office/Individual \_\_\_\_\_

Completion Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description of Goals for Years 4 and 5** Describe the goals that the department/office intends to attain in years four and five of this five-year planning period and how the department or office will be different as the result of goal attainment or the initiation of efforts to attain new goals. Department/office goals described must be relevant to one or more of the University's goals identified in the University plan or to a specifically identified departmental issue that appears in the external analysis (Section VII) or the internal analysis (Section IX) of the unit plan.

## MONITORING

Progress on goals is checked twice yearly in December and April. In December a brief monitoring report is submitted through administrative channels. The report covers all goals and action steps for the current academic year listed in Section X of the Unit Planning Format in the most current unit plan. The December monitoring information is submitted using the format on page 19 or the form contained in UM forms on the University's computer system. The "Annual Report" which indicates progress on current academic year goals is the second review each year of the progress on departmental/office goals listed in Section X of the Unit Planning Format in the current plan. The "Annual Report" may also list other departmental or office accomplishments.

The University Planning Committee monitors the plan annually, and in October a report of progress is submitted to the President. Function plans are monitored regularly on a schedule described within each plan.

## DOCUMENTATION

*Both the goals and the progress toward goals must be documented.* Documentation should include all planning documents and any materials that demonstrate progress toward goal attainment. Documentation of progress may be in the form of formal reports, minutes of meetings, memoranda, curriculum changes, revised procedures, changed policies or other written information.

Documentation must be filed in a readily accessible format that may include a series of closely related files or a notebook. It should be filed in close proximity to documentation on assessment and use of assessment results. **The maintenance of documentation on goals and progress toward goals is a required part of the planning process.**

## PLANNING AND BUDGETING

The connection between planning and budgeting is an important link in any planning process. Budgets are submitted in April along with "Annual Reports" and the unit plans. Goals need to be considered in terms of cost. If expenditures are predicted to exceed the regular budgeted resources likely to be available to the unit, additional budgeted funds may be requested to cover the cost if no other source of funding is available. Such costs must appear both in the plan and in the budget requests for the year that the costs will be incurred. Approval of increases in budgeted funds for goal implementation is at the discretion of the President, appropriate vice president and the dean (where appropriate). Managers at all levels use planned activities as an important budgetary input and fund planned activities where such funding is available and appropriate. Budget heads receiving funds for the implementation of goals must expend such funds for the purposes for which they were allocated.

**MID-YEAR MONITORING FORMAT  
FOR YEAR: \_\_\_\_\_**

Unit Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Person Preparing Monitoring Report: \_\_\_\_\_

Fill out information for the current year goals in the most recent unit plan. If the unit has fewer than 5 goals for the current year, fill in information on only the appropriate number of goals (i.e., if the unit has 3 goals, fill out the information for Goal 1, Goal 2 and Goal 3). If the unit plan contains more than 5 goals, go to a second form and indicate that it is form 2. The most recent unit plan was submitted with the budget documents last spring semester.

**Goal 1** \_\_\_\_\_

Responsible Office/Individual: \_\_\_\_\_

Estimated Completion Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Progress to Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Goal 2:** \_\_\_\_\_

Responsible Office/Individual: \_\_\_\_\_

Estimated Completion Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Progress to Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Goal 3:** \_\_\_\_\_

Responsible Office/Individual: \_\_\_\_\_

Estimated Completion Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Progress to Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Goal 4:** \_\_\_\_\_

Responsible Office/Individual: \_\_\_\_\_

Estimated Completion Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Progress to Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Goal 5:** \_\_\_\_\_

Responsible Office/Individual: \_\_\_\_\_

Estimated Completion Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Progress to Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Note: Maintain all planning materials in a single location along with all records documenting goals and outcomes and the actions taken as a result of their implementation.**

## ASSESSMENT

Assessment has been a part of the activities of the University of Montevallo since at least 1977, when the “Institutional Goals Inventory” and “Institutional Functioning Inventory” were first administered on the campus. It was systematized and refined with the publication of *A Proposal for the Measurement of Institutional Effectiveness at the University of Montevallo* in September 1990. The literature and techniques of assessment have expanded rapidly since 1977 making the task of staying current ever more challenging. The information shown here is designed to clarify the processes and procedures associated with assessment at Montevallo.

### **WHAT IS ASSESSMENT**

Despite wide coverage in the literature and inclusion in the standards of all regional accrediting organizations, assessment has remained subject to different emphases and definitions. Erwin (1991:15) has characterized assessment as,

. . . the systematic basis for making inferences about the learning and development of students. More specifically, assessment is the process of defining, selecting, designing, collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and using information to increase students’ learning and development.

As this definition makes clear, assessment is a process whose objective is improvement. The process encompasses the entire spectrum of activities involved from defining the topics and terms to making changes in programs and activities. While Erwin’s definition is an excellent one for describing assessment in academic areas, it fails to capture the importance of assessment for administrative and support offices.

The University System of Georgia (1992:1.2) defined assessment as,

The process of determining the degree to which expected results have been achieved in the actual outcomes of institutional programs and activities, and the performance of those programs and activities has been improved as a consequence. Assessment is accomplished through formal, systematic observation, measurement, statistical analysis, testing or equivalent means.

Both definitions contain similar elements. Assessment is systematic and formal, designed to gain information about the actual outcomes of programs and activities of an institution, and used to make improvements to those programs and services.

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), in its *Resource Manual on Institutional Effectiveness* (1996a:2) states, “The assessment of institutional effectiveness essentially involves a systematic, explicit, and documented

comparison of institutional performance to institutional purpose.” The Southern Association adds three additional elements to the concept of assessment that are worthy of note: 1) assessment is part of a larger concept, institutional effectiveness, that also includes planning; 2) assessment and planning are directly associated with an institution’s performance of its mission, and 3) assessment is documented. In the terminology of the *Criteria* (SACS, 1996b:20), descriptions of academic outcomes to be attained by a program and, therefore, to be assessed are “expected educational results.” For both academic and administrative and support services, the *Criteria* (SACS, 1996b: 20-21) classifies assessment outcomes along with intended planning outcomes as “goals” that are designed to support the department’s and institution’s statement of purpose.

Discussions of outcomes for a program or service encompass both the statement of intended outcomes and the actual outcomes. The University System of Georgia (1992:1.2) has defined intended outcomes as,

The intended output, impact or other demonstrable consequences of the primary function(s) of a particular program or activity, i.e., for major area assessment, the specific, assessable learning outcomes (i.e., knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and behaviors) which students are expected to acquire through completion of a program of study.

Actual outcomes are the existing, observable, measurable results of the operation of the program or service. The difference between the intended outcomes and the actual outcomes constitutes a planning gap, the area subject to planned change to bring the two elements into congruence.

### **GOOD PRACTICE FOR ASSESSING STUDENT LEARNING**

In 1992, the American Association for Higher Education published nine principles for good practice in assessing student learning. The principles provide valuable assistance to individuals and departments in developing assessment programs. They are reproduced below.

#### **The assessment of student learning begins with educational values.**

Assessment is not an end in itself but a vehicle for educational improvement. Its effective practice, then, begins with and enacts a vision of the kinds of learning we most value for students and strive to help them achieve. Educational values should drive not only **what** we choose to assess but also **how** we do so. Where questions about educational mission and values are skipped over, assessment threatens to be an exercise in measuring what’s easy, rather than a process of improving what we really care about.

**Assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated, and revealed in performance over time.** Learning

is a complex process. It entails not only what students know but what they can do with what they know; it involves not only knowledge and abilities but values, attitudes, and habits of mind that affect both academic success and performance beyond the classroom. Assessment should reflect these understandings by employing a diverse array of methods, including those that call for actual performance, using them over time so as to reveal change, growth, and increasing degrees of integration. Such an approach aims for a more complete and accurate picture of learning, and therefore firmer bases for improving our students' educational experience.

**Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly stated purposes.** Assessment is a goal-oriented process. It entails comparing educational performance with educational purposes and expectations derived from the institution's mission, from faculty intentions in program and course design, and from knowledge of students' own goals. Where program purposes lack specificity or agreement, assessment as a process pushes a campus toward clarity about where to aim and what standards to apply; assessment also prompts attention to where and how program goals will be taught and learned. Clear, shared, implementable goals are the cornerstone for assessment that is focused and useful.

**Assessment requires attention to outcomes but also and equally to the experiences that lead to those outcomes.** Information about outcomes is of high importance; where students "end up" matters greatly. But to improve outcomes, we need to know about student experience along the way; about the curricula, teaching, and kind of student effort that lead to particular outcomes. Assessment can help us understand which students learn best under what conditions; with such knowledge comes the capacity to improve the whole of their learning.

**Assessment works best when it is ongoing, not episodic.** Assessment is a process whose power is cumulative. Though isolated, "one-shot" assessment can be better than none, improvement over time is best fostered when assessment entails a linked series of cohorts of students; it may mean collecting the same examples of student performance or using the same instrument semester after semester. The point is to monitor progress toward intended goals in a spirit of continuous improvement. Along the way, the assessment process itself should be evaluated and refined in light of emerging insights.

**Assessment fosters wider improvement when representatives from across the educational community are involved.** Student learning is a campus-wide responsibility, and assessment is a way of enacting that responsibility. Thus, while assessment efforts may start small, the aim over time is to involve people from across the educational community. Faculty play an especially important role, but assessment's questions can't be fully addressed without participation by student-affairs educators, librarians, administrators, and students. Assessment may also involve individuals from beyond the campus (alumni/ae, trustees, employers) whose experience can enrich the sense of appropriate aims and standards for learning.

Thus understood, assessment is not a task for small groups of experts but a collaborative activity; its aim is wider, better-informed attention to student learning by all parties with a stake in its improvement.

**Assessment makes a difference when it begins with issues of use and illuminates questions that people really care about.** Assessment recognizes the value of information in the process of improvement. But to be useful, information must be connected to issues or questions that people really care about. This implies assessment approaches that produce evidence that relevant parties will find credible, suggestive, and applicable to decisions that need to be made. It means thinking in advance about how the information will be used, and by whom. The point of assessment is not to gather data and return “results”; it is a process that starts with the questions of decision-makers, that involves them in the gathering and interpreting of data, and that informs and helps guide continuous improvement.

**Assessment is most likely to lead to improvement when it is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change.** Assessment alone changes little. Its greatest contribution comes on campuses where the quality of teaching and learning is visibly valued and worked at. On such campuses, the push to improve educational performance is a visible and primary goal of leadership; improving the quality of undergraduate education is central to the institution’s planning, budgeting, and personnel decisions. On such campuses, information about learning outcomes is seen as an integral part of decision-making, and avidly sought.

**Through assessment, educators meet responsibilities to students and to the public.** There is a compelling public stake in education. As educators, we have a responsibility to the publics that support or depend on us to provide information about the ways in which our students meet goals and expectations. But that responsibility goes beyond the reporting of such information; our deeper obligation to ourselves, our students, and society is to improve. Those to whom educators are accountable have a corresponding obligation to support such attempts at improvement.

## ***CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS***

Planning and assessment share a number of common characteristics in terms of how processes are designed at the departmental, office, college, division or institutional level. Processes must include:

### **PARTICIPATION**

As indicated in the principles and guidelines, the best process for developing assessments involves the broad-based participation of those individuals who are most involved in the programs and activities being evaluated. All members of departments and offices should be a part of the design and implementation of

assessments and any changes resulting from the findings of assessments. Involvement builds trust, interest, and ownership and diminishes the belief that assessment is intrusive and dangerous. Assessment is a positive tool for improvement, not a threat to faculty or staff well being.

## REGULAR AND SYSTEMATIC ASSESSMENT, ANALYSIS, AND IMPROVEMENT

Assessment efforts need to be scheduled for regular, predictable and recurrent review. No assessment plan was ever cast in stone, although, paradoxically, it sometimes seems that paper has the staying power of solid rock. By their nature, assessments need to be carried out consistently and changes made on the basis of changing conditions, issues, and mission adjustments. Regular, systematic review and analysis of the assessment program, methods of assessment and results is a responsibility of every department and office.

## INTEGRATION WITH OTHER PROCESSES

Assessment is not an isolated activity; it is always a part of the on-going planning and review of the department. At Montevallo, the assessment plan is included in the regular departmental planning activities and is further integrated, as results become the basis for planned changes.

## MONITORING OF RESULTS

Monitoring involves the regular, scheduled, deliberate analysis of assessment results and their comparison to intended outcomes. Use of results is much more likely to take place if routine, scheduled monitoring exists.

## FOCUS ON INSTITUTIONAL MISSION

Assessment is one of the ways in which departments, offices and the institution as a whole examine the actual accomplishment of the University's mission. The University of Montevallo has a clearly defined mission and, like all organizations, is responsible for the successful achievement of its mission.

## ***ASSESSMENT AS A PROCESS***

The process of assessment consists of a series of decisions and evaluations designed to enhance departmental and institutional functioning. The essential elements of the process are described in the sections that follow.

## DEFINING INTENDED OUTCOMES

The development of meaningful intended outcomes is the first step in the assessment process. Outcomes are always related to the mission of the department and that mission is directly related to the mission of the University. It should be possible to articulate clearly how each outcome is related to the unit and the University mission.

Intended outcomes are the standards against which the effectiveness of a program or service is measured. According to Nichols (1991: 17),

Statements of intended student (educational) outcomes are descriptions of what departments intend for students to know (cognitive), think (attitudinal), or do (behavioral) when they have completed their degree programs.

In non-instructional areas, statements of intended outcomes are likely to be both process and results oriented. They encompass what offices intend that processes, services, and activities should accomplish for students or other clientele groups. Whenever possible, non-instructional offices need to focus on results-oriented intended outcome statements that directly contribute to accomplishment of the departmental and institutional mission.

It is not necessary or worthwhile to attempt to develop a set of intended outcomes that encompasses every possible result for a program or office. Rather departments and offices need to use the most important outcomes as the focus for their assessment activities. As a rule of thumb, outcomes that are a direct result of the departmental or office mission need to be thoroughly evaluated on a regular basis. Other areas that may be the focus of assessment are problem areas; new or revised activities, processes or knowledge base; or outcomes viewed as essential to the operation of the unit. It is important to remember that assessment is a tool and needs to be used to gain meaningful information that will be used to make real improvements in programs and services.

**Expected outcomes contain a reference to time or other constraints (if any), a description of the knowledge, skill, or attitude desired, and a level of attainment.** The level of attainment does not have to be a number or percentage, but it should be specific enough that it can serve as a triggering mechanism to signal when a change to the program or service should be put into motion. Expected results are dynamic. They are often revised as the exact nature of what is to be measured or observed is decided upon. They may be revised again after data are collected, and should be changed over time to maintain their relevance.

Some examples of expected outcomes found in various sources are shown below. **These are examples only and are not expected to define the expected outcomes of any on-campus unit.**

## Academic Student Outcomes:

### *For History majors:*

The student will have ready recall of enough general historical knowledge to be able to put more detailed historical information in general context. (University System of Georgia, 1992: 3.15)

Majors will be able to accurately identify historical interpretation(s) put forward by historians and to identify and evaluate the contextual and chronological evidence used by the historian to support the interpretation. (University System of Georgia, 1992: 3.16 B 3.17)

### *For English majors:*

Graduates will be able to critique a brief draft essay, pointing out the grammatical, spelling and punctuation errors and offering appropriate suggestions for correction of the deficiencies. (Nichols, 1989: 99)

Students completing the baccalaureate program in English will compare very favorably in their knowledge of literature with those students applying for graduate work in the field nationally. (Nichols, 1989: 99)

[Students will be able to] appraise the implied and non-literal meanings of words and phrases within a given context through metaphorical use of language and through irony, understatement, and deliberate incongruity. (Erwin, 1991: 46)

### *For Theater majors:*

The student [major] is expected to know the basic elements in at least one area of technical theater. Areas of possible exploration include lighting, set design and construction, costuming, makeup, properties and sound. Specifically:

The student should know how to construct a soft covered flat, a standard ridged platform, and a simple step unit.

The student should know the difference between the various theater spaces: proscenium, thrust, arena, etc.

The student should know the basic principles of rigged flying scenery.  
The student should know the basic principles of scenic, lighting, and costume design.

The student should know how to research properties.

The student should know the duties of a production team.

The student should know how to operate power and hand tools safely.

The student should know basic safety procedures of a scene shop and theater space.

The student should know the basic materials commonly used in theater production. (Erwin, 1991: 38)

*For Accounting majors:*

Seventy percent of accounting program graduates sitting for the CPA examination within one year of graduation will successfully complete all parts of the examination. (University System of Georgia, 1992: 3.46)

[The student will be able to] Classify government activities into one of the five categories recommended by the national Council on Government Accounting B that is, general funds, special revenue funds, capital projects funds, debt service funds, and special assessment funds. (Erwin, 1991: 37)

Graduates will be experienced in the use of microcomputers for accounting procedures. (Nichols, 1989: 178)

*For Speech Pathology and Audiology majors:*

The student will phonemically transcribe all standard English phonemes in nonsense syllables, words, and connected speech. (Erwin, 1991: 38)

The student will identify the anatomy and physiology of the speech mechanism, audio-vestibular system, and relevant neurological structures. (Erwin, 1991: 38)

The student will be conceptually and clinically able to differentiate among the following articulation rehabilitation approaches: Van Riper, speech sound discrimination, paired stimulus, modified paired stimulus, and linguistic contrasts. (Erwin, 1991: 46)

*For Chemistry majors:*

The graduate will be familiar with modern methods of chemical analysis and will exhibit competence in the laboratory. (University System of Georgia, 1992: 3.57)

The graduate will be able to engage in meaningful speculation about the causes and results of chemical phenomena and reach conclusions, which are reasonable within the framework of the information available. (University System of Georgia, 1992: 3.58)

*For the Sociology major:*

The graduate will possess the ability to design, implement, and summarize a basic research project. (University System of Georgia, 1992: 3.66)

Eighty percent of students will be able to read a selection from a basic sociology reader and identify the sociological perspective used by the writer. (University System of Georgia, 1992: 3.66)

*For the Interior Design major:*

The graduate will possess an awareness of the structural components of building systems and the relationship of systems to interior design solutions, as well as professional skills in drafting, rendering, and visual/verbal presentation. (University System of Georgia, 1992: 3.90)

The graduate will recognize the basic characteristics of contemporary and historical design. (University System of Georgia, 1992: 3.90)

*For the Mathematics major:*

Graduates of the baccalaureate program in mathematics will demonstrate mastery of the following skills: the ability to write a proof; the ability to apply a theorem; and the ability to determine whether a theorem is applicable in a given situation. (University System of Georgia, 1992: 3.72)

Program graduates will have a positive opinion of their undergraduate mathematics education and its impact on their lives after college. (University System of Georgia, 1992: 3.74)

Support and Administrative Area Outcomes:

*Physical Plant:*

Utility expenditures per square foot in existing structures (excluding the impact of rate increases and structural changes) will decline each year. (Nichols, 1991: 68)

On campus residents will be satisfied with the timeliness of requested maintenance in residence halls.

*Food Service:*

State Health Department inspections of campus food service facilities will indicate an average score at least 10 points (on a scale of 100) above the average for the commercial establishments in the city. (Nichols, 1991: 68)

The number of cases of food poisoning (possibly resulting from the student dining hall) reported to the Student Health Center will not exceed two per year. (Nichols, 1991: 68)

*Library:*

Students will be satisfied with the services offered by the reference staff.

Eighty-five percent of faculty will find the collection satisfactory for use in their undergraduate student assignments.

*Computer Center:*

At any time during the fall and spring semester, ninety percent of the hardware (PCS and printers) in the student computer laboratories operated by the Computer Center will be fully functional.

Seventy percent of administrative and academic offices will be satisfied with the software assistance offered by the Help Desk.

*Records:*

Faculty members will be satisfied with the student registration system.

Students will be satisfied with the contents and layout of the Schedule of Classes.

*Athletics:*

At least 90 percent of all athletes will be academically eligible each fall semester.

*Financial Aid:*

Eighty-five percent of the students using Financial Aid services will “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” that Financial Aid personnel are courteous and helpful.

Eighty percent of participants in Financial Aid workshops will rate the workshops as “Helpful” or “Very Helpful.”

## SELECTING AN EVALUATION METHOD

Once the list of intended outcomes has been developed, the next step is to select or devise evaluation methods for each of the outcomes. As Nichols (1991: 36) has pointed out,

Assessment activities don't take a 'rocket scientist' to implement. They require careful review of the assessment options (means) available, and consideration of the statements of intended student outcomes and resources available (usually small), as well as the specific requirements placed upon the department.

Assessment techniques can be either qualitative or quantitative. Qualitative methods are holistic and require a judgment concerning the subject under review. Higher education has a long history of using qualitative methods to judge student performance. Among the more common qualitative methods are portfolio reviews, juried performances, oral examinations, and thesis/dissertation defenses. While such methods provide rich information, there are some issues that must be resolved

if qualitative methods are to be used. Criteria against which the performance of a student is judged must be written and agreed upon within the department. Criteria must be explicit and the standards for success must be thoroughly described. Since the judgments are basically subjective, defining criteria and standards for judgments may be difficult, but it is necessary.

A second issue concerns the consistency with which evaluators apply the standards and criteria of judgment. In order to improve the ability of evaluators to make consistent judgments, evaluator training in the meanings, identification and levels of the criteria and standards is very important.

Finally, there is the question of the objectivity of evaluators. Most evaluators are the same faculty who conduct the programs in which students are enrolled. It is therefore important that documents and other evaluation products not be identified with particular students during the evaluation process. When maintaining student anonymity is impossible, the problem can often be resolved by using outside evaluators who have no vested interest in the success of the student work being reviewed.

A wide variety of assessment techniques are available. Some of the more popular techniques are described below:

Benchmarking. Benchmarking is the use of a standard to evaluate performance. The concept was made popular in assessment by the continuous quality improvement movement in which activities; products or services are measured against “best” practice. The most challenging aspect of benchmarking is the identification of the standard against which internal activities or practices will be measured. The National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO) has a continuing project in which financial practices in colleges and universities are used to set benchmarks against which performance can be measured. Documentation for benchmarking assessments are usually charts that track internal performance against the benchmark or narrative reports that describe the institution’s performance in relationship to the standard.

Reference: Camp, Robert C. (1989) *Benchmarking: The Search for Industry Best Practices that Lead to Superior Performance*. Milwaukee, WI: American Society for Quality Control Press.

Classroom Assessment Techniques. These techniques are usually brief in-class activities designed to allow instructors to identify what students are learning and how well they are learning it. The purpose of classroom assessment is to directly impact the type and quality of classroom instruction. A large number of methods with instructions are identified in Angelo and Cross’ book, *Classroom Assessment Techniques*. Documentation usually consists of tabulated results and summaries of classroom assessment techniques used by the instructor.

Reference: Angelo, Thomas A. and K. Patricia Cross. (1993) *Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Demonstration (Performance). Performance evaluations are judgments of demonstrations of skill or learning by students or others. Performance evaluation has a long and distinguished career in higher education, but is subject to the limitations previously described for qualitative assessments. Examples are familiar and include juried art exhibits and musical performances, dance performances, theater performances, speeches, oral examinations in foreign languages, and physical skill performances (i.e., swimming, CPR, golf, American Sign Language, etc.). Documentation of performance assessments is usually in the form of rating forms, rubrics, video recordings, audiotapes or written summaries.

Exit Examination. Used at the completion of a course of study or program, the exit examination is used to determine the level of knowledge and skill acquired by students. Exit examinations may be either locally developed or externally developed. Externally developed examinations usually have the advantage of being normed and the questions fully tested for reliability, but must be used carefully, as they are not always responsive to programmatic goals. Documentation usually consists of scores or summaries of score reports.

Focus Group. Also known as the focused group interview, a focus group usually consists of 8 to 12 individuals who discuss a particular topic under the direction of a moderator who facilitates interactions and help to limit the group's discussion to previously designated topics. Typical groups last for an hour and a half to two and a half hours. The two key elements of successful focus groups are a well-trained moderator and the use of the group in such a way that it is consistent with the objectives of the research. The technique yields rich qualitative data, but may be subject to reliability concerns. Documentation of focus group sessions usually consists of the audio or videotape transcripts and/or summaries of the comments generated.

Interview. Interviews are a type of survey research. They involve direct interaction with a student or other person from whom particular information is sought. Interviews may be structured in the sense that each individual interviewed is asked exactly the same questions in the same way or unstructured in which information is sought about particular topics, but questions are not necessary standardized across all interviews. Common examples of interviews include departmental exit interviews, withdrawing student interviews and admission interviews.

Licensure. Licensure refers to the award of a credential to practice a trade or profession that is the result of a demonstration of particular competencies. A state agency or state-recognized certification board usually administers licensure examinations. Some licensing agencies send lists of students who pass the examinations back to instructional programs at the institutions where students

received their instruction, while other agencies must be contacted and a request made to obtain information. Documentation usually consists of the list obtained from the licensing agency.

Questionnaires. A form of survey research, questionnaires are data collection tools consisting of a set of written questions used to elicit responses from students or other audiences about topics of interest. Questionnaires may be administered to a respondent directly, through the mail, through e-mail, or over the telephone. Responses are recorded either electronically or in writing. While useful, questionnaires have limitations and care must be taken in phrasing and organizing the instrument. Most social science research texts cover the basics of survey research. Documentation consists of statistical summaries of responses.

Standardized Tests. Standardized test instruments have been constructed in accordance with detailed specifications and contain questions that have been determined to be reliable and free of discriminatory bias. They are available from external testing agencies and are accompanied by a manual with directions for uniform administration and scoring. Standardized tests need to be used with care to ensure that they actually measure the desired attributes of a program or course of study. It is also necessary to make sure that any normative groups used for comparison are indeed comparable. A final concern is the relatively high cost of purchasing and scoring the instruments. Examples include the Major Field Achievement Tests (MFAT) from the Educational Testing Service and Project Area Concentration Achievement Tests (PACAT) from Austin Peay State University. Documentation consists of scores, score distributions and summaries.

## USE OF RESULTS

Once an assessment technique has been selected and administered, it is important that results be analyzed. The analysis may be as simple as a count or may include sophisticated statistical manipulation. The University of Montevallo has the SAS statistical package available on the mainframe and individual departments have a number of other statistical analysis programs on stand-alone systems. Whatever the type of analysis selected, some form of documentation of the results must be prepared.

Once the results of the assessment are available they need to be considered by the individuals or groups entrusted with the program, service or activity. If the analysis indicates that action is needed to improve the functioning of the program, service, or activity, changes need to be recommended to appropriate on- and off-campus groups or undertaken by the department or office in a timely manner. The assessment is of little use, if it is not used to make improvements in the operation of the institution. Documentation showing the result of the assessment and the changes implemented, if any, need to be maintained in a readily accessible form in the office of the chair or director of the department or office.

## **THE STRUCTURE OF ASSESSMENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTEVALLO**

Assessment activities are coordinated at the University-level through the Institutional Effectiveness Committee and the Office of Institutional Research, Planning and Assessment (IRPA). Institution-level activities include the administration and analysis of the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) for entering freshmen and the administration and analysis of the Senior Survey and College Student Experience Questionnaire (CSEQ) for graduating seniors. When resources permit, IRPA also administers and analyzes an alumni survey for alumni at one year from graduation and at three years from graduation. Copies of current reports of the CIRP, Senior Survey, CSEQ, and alumni surveys are available in the Carmichael Library, on the World Wide Web through the IRPA web page, or from the Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment.

Assessment planning is conducted each year as a part of the University planning cycle and is contained in the overall department or office's unit plan (see pages 15-16 for the assessment planning format). All academic, administrative and support departments and offices are responsible for the development and implementation of five-year rolling assessment plans. The assessment plan consists of two parts: Part A contains the outcomes to be examined, the procedures to be used, a description of the administration of the procedures and an explanation of the way in which it is anticipated that results will be used. Part B of the assessment-planning format consists of a description of how the results of outcomes assessed in previous years have been used to improve the functioning of programs, procedures, processes or policies within the department or office. The plans are a part of the regular April submission of departmental plans, annual reports and budget requests. Departmental plans and assessment plans are published and distributed by the Office of Institutional Research, Planning and Assessment annually. The format of the plans can be found on page 14 of this *Guide* and include a report of how assessment results have been used for departmental/office improvements.

Assessment belongs to departments. Departments and offices are responsible for designing, gathering, analyzing, and using assessments for improvement. The analyses and results, as well as documentation showing how the results of assessment were used, are maintained in departmental offices. Department and office heads are responsible for maintaining and retaining the information in their offices. There is no central repository of assessment results.

### **INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT**

The University of Montevallo has made a commitment to building a strong assessment program. The *University Bulletin* (2000-2001:8) states:

The University-wide assessment program measures progress toward educational outcome goals, promotes improvements in teaching and learning, evaluates the accomplishment of educational and administrative goals, and

facilitates continuing review of institutional effectiveness. Students participate in a variety of evaluative activities, beginning during the freshman year and continuing beyond graduation. Students may be required to take national and locally developed tests and surveys, contribute to portfolios, share ideas in focus groups, respond to interviews, or participate in other ways to improve the education and services provided by the University. Assessments of other aspects of institutional effectiveness are regularly conducted by and through academic and administrative departments.

## **PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES**

The statement of principles and guidelines found in the *Proposal for the Measurement of Institutional Effectiveness at the University of Montevallo* (1990) and paraphrased below continues to guide institutional assessment efforts.

The purpose of assessment is continuing improvement of all University functioning. Assessment is a means to an end, not an end in itself.

Assessment of all outcomes is not essential. The objective is to assess the most significant elements of a unit's mission, so that ultimately, it is possible to present clear evidence that the institutional mission is being accomplished.

Assessment is best when done specifically to local goals.

Assessment for improvement is best when designed by those most directly involved.

Programs are urged to be creative in looking for indicators of effectiveness. Performance measures such as senior projects, portfolios, critiques of internship and/or practicum work, and feedback from employers and graduate schools can be especially valuable. Interviews with students, surveys of students and alumni, and student self-evaluations have all proved to be of great value in assessing effectiveness. The use of existing or readily available data is also encouraged.

Assessment is the basis of a process of improvement, not a way to punish departments or offices.

Departments and offices need to be selective in the information they collect and results should be disseminated widely, but wisely.

Assessment efforts must be coordinated so that students and alumni are not inundated with an excessive number of surveys, tests, etc.

More than one indicator should be used for any outcome whenever possible. Convergence of information from multiple sources is desirable.

Borrowing ideas from others is not only acceptable, but also desirable. “Reinventing the wheel” is inefficient.

Students should be informed of the purpose and nature of the assessment of institutional effectiveness, and should be actively involved in planning and participating in assessments.

Comparative information is essential, but the comparisons need not be (indeed, often should not be) with other institutions. Rather comparisons across time for the University’s own students can be valuable and comparisons among subgroups at UM can also be instructive.

## **ASSESSMENT THROUGH A STUDENT CAREER**

The assessment program is multi-faceted. It includes all institutional constituencies including faculty, staff, and students; however, students form the focus of much of the assessment activity that is conducted. Students encounter assessment throughout and beyond their college career at Montevallo. As freshmen, students are required to take the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Survey. The CIRP is a national survey sponsored by the American Council on Education (ACE) and administered through the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California at Los Angeles. First-time, full-time freshmen take the survey at Extended Freshman Orientation prior to the beginning of classes. Freshmen who do not take the questionnaire at that time are invited to any of three on-campus administrations conducted during the second week of classes by the Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment. The results of the survey are analyzed and the Office of Institutional Research, Planning and Assessment prepares an annual report. The reports are available from the IRPA web page, which is accessible through the University’s home page.

During a student’s matriculation at the University, he/she may be asked to participate in a variety of academic and administrative assessments. These range from focus groups to interviews, from research papers to questionnaires, from advising surveys to examinations in the major. The departments and offices originating the assessment activity are responsible for analyzing the results, preparing appropriate reports and making improvements based on the findings.

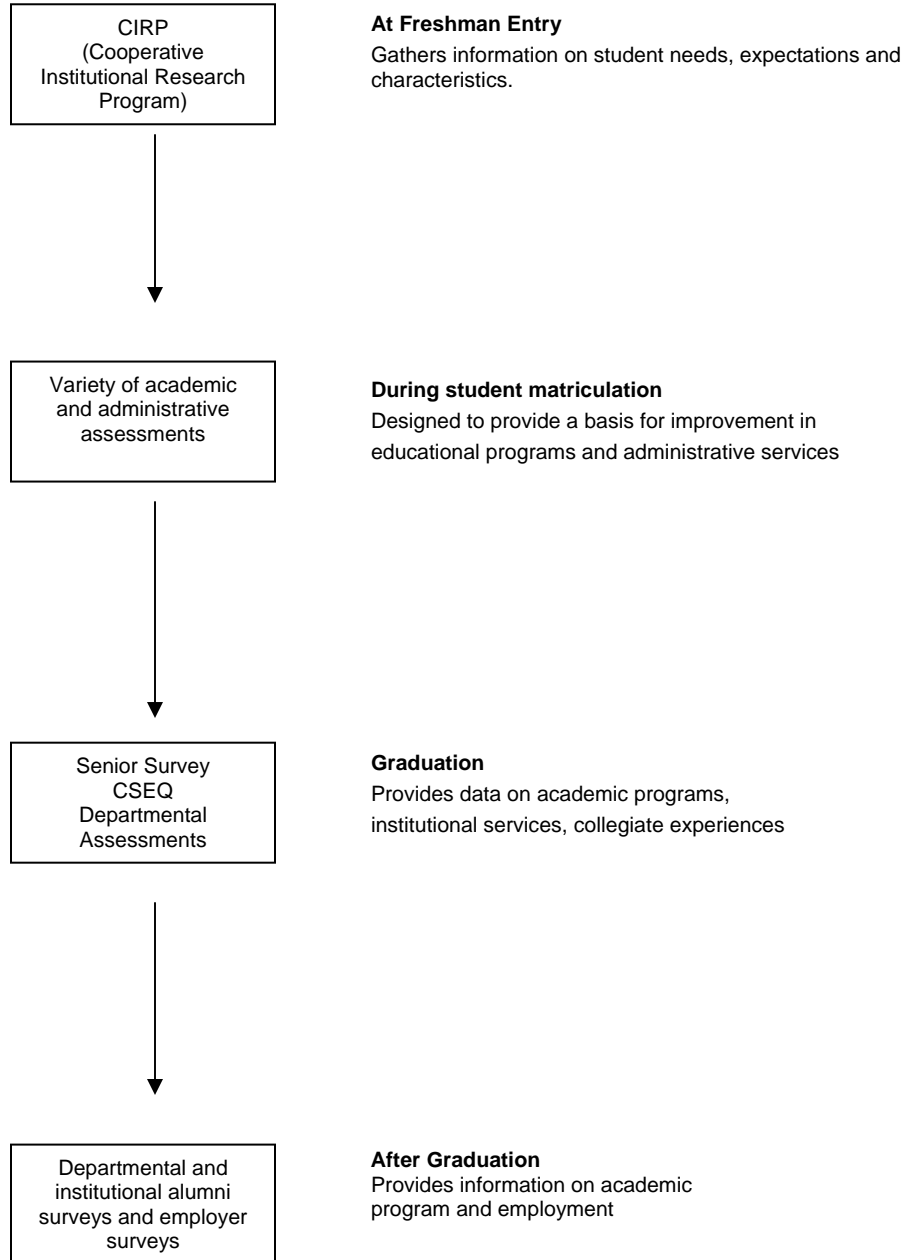
Graduating seniors are asked to complete two surveys administered by the Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment. The College Student Experience Questionnaire (CSEQ) is a nationally normed survey conducted by the Center for Evaluation at the University of California at Los Angeles. The questionnaire focuses on student behaviors and activities. The questionnaire is the primary instrument used for assessment of the general education core curriculum. Results are analyzed, published and distributed by the Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment. The second survey is a locally produced instrument focused on satisfaction with a variety of services, offices, and facets of life at the University of

Montevallo. The instrument is scored, analyzed and results published by the Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment. Departments also conduct a variety of exit assessment activities ranging from major field achievement exams to exit interviews. These instruments are analyzed and results reported by the departments originating the assessment activities.

After graduation, several departments currently conduct surveys of their alumni and some conduct employer surveys. These instruments are originated, analyzed and results reported by academic departments. An alumni survey is administered to alumni through IRPA at one year and at three-years from their graduation.

Graduate students are subject to a variety of assessment activities within their academic departments. The Office of Graduate Studies also conducts an exit survey that covers satisfaction with a variety of topics including instruction, facilities and institutional services. The Office of Graduate Studies analyzes the results. The questionnaire was initiated in 1998 as part of the program review process at the graduate level.

# ASSESSMENT THROUGH AN UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT CAREER



## REVIEW OF SURVEY RESEARCH BY THE HUMAN AND ANIMAL SUBJECTS RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Questionnaires and interviews designed specifically for assessment purposes need not be submitted for review to the University of Montevallo Human and Animal Subjects Research Committee unless all of the following conditions pertain to the research:

1. responses are recorded in such a manner that the human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects;
2. the subject's responses, if they became known outside the research, could reasonably place the subject at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subject's financial standing or employability; and
3. the research deals with sensitive aspects of the subject's own behavior, such as illegal conduct, drug use, sexual behavior, or use of alcohol.

Survey instruments should contain the following statement: "By completing this survey you are giving the assessors permission to use your data in aggregate form. All data obtained will be handled in a confidential manner." Offices and departments are expected to gather, process, report and archive data in ways that are both professionally and ethically sound.

### DOCUMENTATION

**Both the results of assessment and the use of assessment to improve programs, activities, procedures, and policies must be documented.**

Documentation includes all assessment plans and use of results sections; the actual results of assessments; and any records that demonstrate how an assessment result was used. Documentation of results and use of results may be in the form of formal reports, minutes of meetings, curriculum changes, revised procedures, changed policies or other written information.

Documentation must be filed in a readily accessible form that may include a series of closely related files or a notebook. It should be filed in close proximity to documentation on planning and progress on planning goals. **The maintenance of documentation on outcomes, assessment procedures, results and use of results is a required part of the assessment process.**

## BIBLIOGRAPHY AND PARTIAL LIST OF RESOURCES

The bibliography below contains the materials that contributed to the development of this document. Other resources are available in the Carmichael Library. For specific assistance with assessment and assessment procedures or techniques, contact the Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment.

Astin, A.W. et al. (1992). *Nine Principles of Good Practice in Assessment*. Washington, D.C.: American Association for Higher Education.

Erwin, T. D (1991). *Assessing Student Learning and Development*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Nichols, J.O. (1989). *Institutional Effectiveness and Outcomes Assessment Implementation on Campus: A Practitioners Handbook*. New York: Agathon Press.

\_\_\_\_\_ (1991). *The Departmental Guide to Implementation of Student Outcomes Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness*. New York: Agathon Press.

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. (1996). *Criteria for Accreditation*. Decatur, GA: Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. (1996). *Resource Manual on Institutional Effectiveness*. Decatur, GA: Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

Task Force on Institutional Effectiveness. (September, 1990). *A Proposal for the Measurement of Institutional Effectiveness at the University of Montevallo*. Montevallo, AL: University of Montevallo.

University System of Georgia. (1992). *Student Learning Outcomes in the Undergraduate Major*. Atlanta, GA: University System of Georgia.

University of Montevallo. *University of Montevallo Bulletin 2000-2001*. (July, 2000). Vol. 86, No. 1. Montevallo, AL: University of Montevallo.

**APPENDIX A**  
**PLANNING UNITS**

## **PLANNING UNITS**

### **Academic Affairs**

- College of Arts and Sciences
  - Behavioral and Social Sciences
  - Biology, Chemistry and Mathematics
  - Communication Science and Disorders
  - English and Foreign Languages
- College of Business
- College of Education
  - Counseling, Leadership, and Foundations
  - Curriculum and Instruction
  - Family and Consumer Sciences
  - Kinesiology
  - Instructional Support and Technology Integration
  - Malone Curriculum Center
  - Teacher Education Services/Certification, Clinical Experiences and Partnerships
- College of Fine Arts
  - Art
  - Communication Arts
  - Music
- Graduate Studies
- Academic Program Initiatives
- Admissions
- Athletics
- Carmichael Library
- Computer Services
- Continuing Education
- Honors Program
- Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment
- Records

### **Student Affairs**

- Career Center
- Counseling and Health Centers
- Housing and Residence Life
- Student Activity Center
- Student Life

## **Business Affairs**

Business Office  
Student Financial Services  
Personnel Services and Risk Management

## **University Advancement**

Development and Alumni Relations  
Major Gifts and Planned Giving  
Public Relations

## **Physical Plant / University Police / Central Receiving**

Revisions approved by University Planning Committee 9/22/04

**APPENDIX B**  
**EDITORIAL GUIDELINES**

## EDITORIAL GUIDELINES

Prepare your report using Microsoft Word. Use the "Arial" font with the font size set at 12 point. Submit your plan on both a 3.5" diskette and in printed form. In typing the plan, follow the guidelines below:

1. Use one inch margins (top, bottom, left, right).
2. Single space all text.
3. Double space between paragraphs. Do not indent the first lines of paragraphs.
4. Set the automatic page numbering command to place the page numbers in the lower right corner.
5. Place tables and graphs near the parts of the text that they illustrate.
6. Place all section headings flush left in bold face capitals. Double space before and after all section headings and secondary headings. Any secondary headings should be typed flush left in normal print and in capitals. If subordinate headings are used, type them flush left in upper and lower case, underlined and followed by a period. See example as follows:

**I. MISSION**

Text . . .

**II. COLLEGE DEPARTMENT DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS**

Text . . .

.  
. .  
.

**VII. ASSESSMENT**

**VII. A. ASSESSMENT OUTCOMES BY YEAR**

2002

OUTCOME 1

Text . . .

ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE

Text . . .

.  
. .  
.

## **VII. B. USE OF PREVIOUSLY ASSESSED OUTCOMES**

2001 OUTCOME 1

Text. . .

2002 OUTCOME 1

Text. . .

**APPENDIX C**

**GENERIC PLANNING SCHEDULE:  
FULL PLANNING CYCLE**

**GENERIC PLANNING SCHEDULE:  
FULL PLANNING CYCLE**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible</b>
May 15	Environmental scanning report due to President	Univ Plan Comm
August 25	President's Academic and Administrative Retreat	President
September 15	Five-yr University plan sent out for campus-wide review	Univ Plan Comm
October 15	Finalized five-year University plan due to President	Univ Plan Comm
November 1	Finalized five-year University plan due Board of Trustees	President
November 1	Budget proposal for upcoming year due to Board of Trustees and the Legislative Fiscal Office	President
November 1	Facilities Master Plan/Capital Project Request due ACHE	Physical Plt Dir
November 15	Approved five-year University plan & planning instructions issued to planning units	Univ Plan Comm
December 15	Brief monitoring reports on current year dean/director plans due to Division Heads	Dean/ Directors
January 10	Brief monitoring reports on current year division plans due to President	Division Heads
March 15	Five-year department plans and assessment plans due to deans/directors	Dept. Heads
April 25	Five year dean/director plans including assessment plans, annual reports, and budgets due to division heads	Deans/Directors
May 15	Five year division plans and annual reports submitted to President	Division Heads
August 1	Annual budget presented to Board of Trustees	President
Notes:	1) Dates shown are approximate. <u>Specific calendars are issued with planning materials each year.</u> 2) While scheduled every 5 years, full-planning cycles may be conducted at any time conditions warrant a complete planning revision. 3) Planning and monitoring are concurrent activities. Monitoring dates are December 15, January 10 and April 25 (as part of the annual budget package). 4) Plans are always implemented at the beginning of the next academic year.	

**APPENDIX D**

**PLANNING SCHEDULE:  
GENERIC UPDATE CYCLE**

## **PLANNING SCHEDULE: GENERIC UPDATE CYCLE**

*Conducted in the years between full-planning cycles*

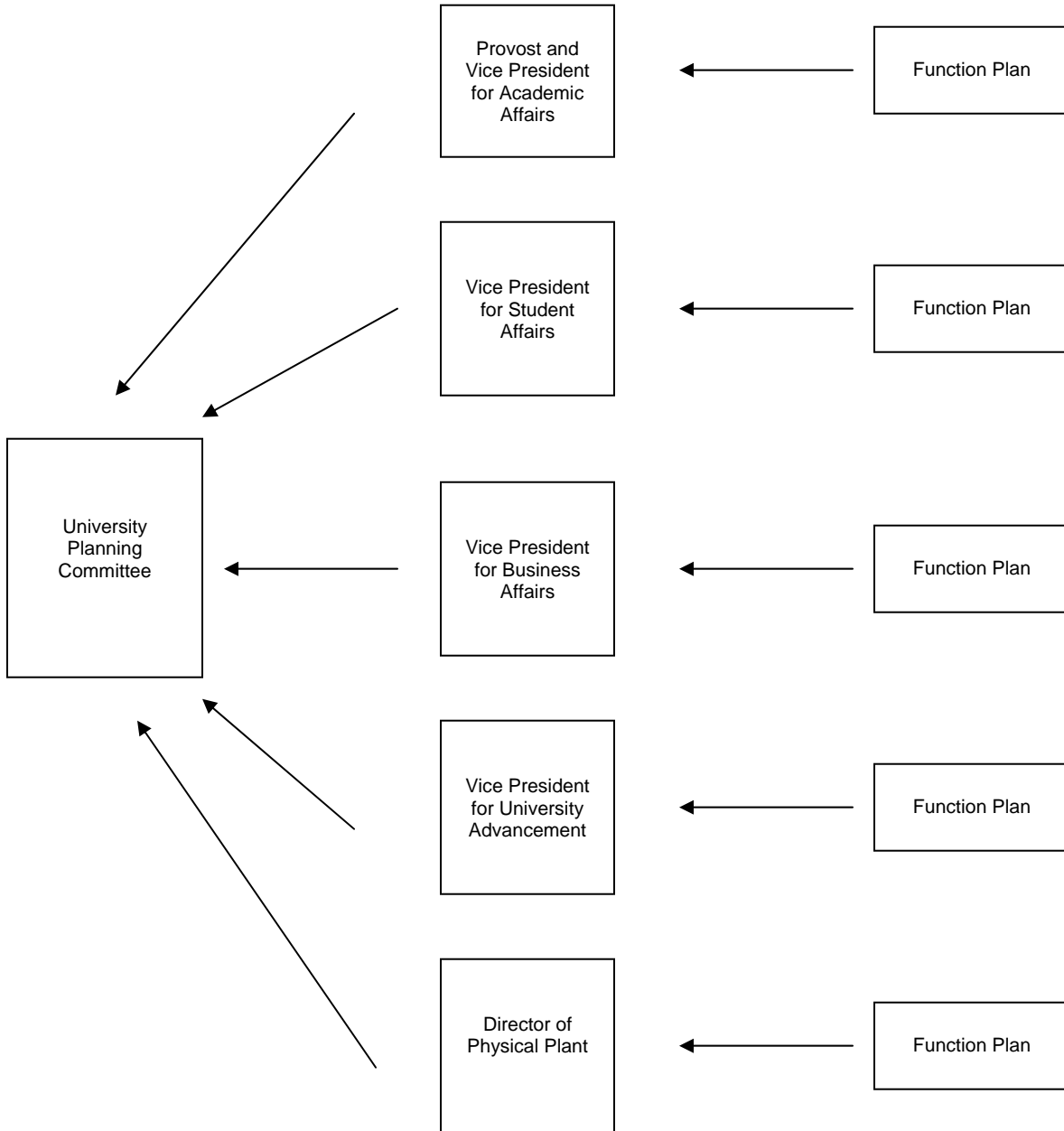
<b>Date</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible</b>
September 15	Five-year University plan campus-wide review	Univ Plan Committee
October 15	Updated five-year University plan due to President	Univ Plan Committee
November 1	Updated five-year University plan due to Board of Trustees	President
November 1	Budget proposal for upcoming year due to Board of Trustees and the Legislative Fiscal Office	President
November 1	Facilities Master Plan/Capital Project Request to ACHE	Physical Plant Dir
November 15	Approved five-year University plan update and planning update instructions issued	Univ Plan Committee
December 15	Brief monitoring rept on current yr dean/director plans due to division heads	Dean/ Directors
January 10	Brief monitoring reports on current year division plans due to President	Division Heads
March 15	Updated five-year department plans and assessment plans due to deans/directors	Department Heads
April 25	Updated five-year dean/director plans including assessment plans, dean/director annual reports, and budgets due to division heads	Deans/ Directors
May 15	Updated five year division plans and annual reports submitted to President	Division Heads
August 1	Annual budget presented to Board of Trustees	President

- Notes: 1) Dates shown are approximate. Specific calendars are issued with planning materials each year.  
 2) Updated plans are always implemented at the beginning of the next academic year.

## **APPENDIX E**

### **PLANNING STRUCTURE FOR FUNCTION PLANS**

## PLANNING STRUCTURE FOR FUNCTION PLANS



**APPENDIX F**  
**CHECKSHEET FOR EVALUATION OF PLANS**

## **CHECKSHEET FOR EVALUATION OF PLANS**

1. Is there evidence of thoughtful consideration of the overall direction of the unit?
2. Is the overall direction of the unit indicated in the plan a desirable one?
3. Are the goals clearly conceptualized?
4. Has responsibility been assigned for each goal?
5. Are the action steps clear?
6. Has responsibility been assigned for each action step?
7. Are the action steps listed likely to result in goal attainment?
8. Is there a high likelihood that the goals identified will support accomplishment of the University, division, or college goals (if applicable)?
9. Will the functioning or delivery of programs or services be improved as the result of goal attainment?
10. Are the goals based on the internal or external scan or other information gathered by the unit?
11. Have the resource implications of the goals been thoroughly considered?
12. Are the goals cost effective?
13. Have the likely impacts of the goals on other units been considered and, where necessary, have the impacts been resolved or coordinated with other affected departments/offices?

**APPENDIX G**  
**EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR OUTCOME STATEMENTS AND ASSESSMENT**  
**PROCEDURES**

## EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR OUTCOME STATEMENTS AND ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES

1. Is the outcome directed toward obtaining information about the programs or operations of the department as opposed to obtaining information about individual students or staff members?
2. Is the outcome statement clear?
3. Is the outcome statement reflective of the mission?
4. Does the outcome statement indicate thoughtful reflection about what can and should be addressed by an assessment?
5. Can the outcome statement be effectively measured in some way, either quantitatively or qualitatively?
6. Is the evaluation methodology reasonable in relation to the outcome statement to be addressed?
7. Can the methodology be used effectively given the time and resources available?
8. Is the information to be learned from the assessment sufficient to provide for an effective decision about changes to be made?