

SECTION 2, CORE REQUIREMENT 2.5

The institution engages in ongoing, integrated, and institution-wide research-based planning and evaluation processes that incorporate a systematic review of programs and services that (a) results in continuing improvement, and (b) demonstrates that the institution is effectively accomplishing its mission. (Institutional Effectiveness)

JUDGMENT OF COMPLIANCE

Compliant

Partially Compliant

Noncompliant

RATIONALE FOR JUDGMENT OF COMPLIANCE

Since its last SACS self-study, North Georgia College & State University has embraced the institutional culture of planning and evaluation that is documented in systematic review of programs and services as well as performance in meeting the mission of the university.

Current Practice of Planning and Evaluation

NGCSU attends to all four aspects of requirement 2.5 as follows:

Planning and evaluation processes are **ongoing**: there is an annually updated schedule [1] tied to the academic year, of collecting data, submitting assessment reports, and receiving and implementing recommendations.

Planning and evaluation processes are **integrated**: all assessment reports pertain to the work performed by an individual department; they are compiled by those who work in these departments and who take pride in delivering the best services possible; they are reviewed at the next level of responsibility; they are reviewed by the Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment (IEA) Committee (2002/2003 [2], 2003/2004 [3], 2004/2005 [4], 2005/2006 [5], and they are communicated across departmental and school boundaries to the entire campus community.

Planning and evaluation processes are **institution-wide**: all academic and administrative departments submit annual assessment reports; as reports

move through the review process, members of both academic and administrative departments participate in the review process; the IEA Committee's annual report, referenced and linked above, is sent not only to the Vice President for Academic Affairs but also to academic and administrative department administrators for use in improving assessment processes in their units.

Planning and evaluation processes are **research-based**: the Executive Director of Institutional Effectiveness and the Director of Institutional Research assist departments in evaluating specific assessment criteria, ensuring that meaningful data are collected, that questions are asked that can truly elicit a department's strengths and areas for improvement, and that a database of findings is maintained (TracDat).

Planning linked to Budgeting

Strategic planning at North Georgia College & State University is an ongoing, institution-wide research-based process, integrated with the operation of the university. Annual budget hearings consider the strategic plan in all decisions. Academic program and administrative departmental assessment is based on, and supports, strategic planning goals.

The University utilizes a comprehensive budgeting process to assure sound planning in the allocation of resources. The budgeting process links planning and assessment with quantitative measures and national comparative indices to assure that resource allocations are responsive to the University's strategic initiatives. These measures include such national and regional comparators as cost per student credit hour per discipline, degree level, and type of institution.

The University's decentralized budget model assigns budget management at the lowest level practical, providing a high level of autonomy and accountability throughout the enterprise.

The link between planning, assessment and budgeting is accomplished within the annual budget cycle following a comprehensive budget calendar (6) and budget handbook guidelines (7). Quantitative analysis, performance measurement and assessment results are prepared annually and provided to senior budget managers to defend, justify and link their annual funding requests. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness maintains a website of data for use by departments in their annual planning and budgeting process, including reports of faculty load and student credit hours generated by discipline.

Final resource allocation requires approval of the University President and the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia.

Strategic Planning Processes

Day-to-day planning occurs at regularly scheduled meetings of the following entities:

Department Heads' Council	Minutes [8]
Deans' Council	Minutes [9]
Academic Activities Committee	Minutes [10]

Longer range planning and evaluation at the executive level are conducted by the President's Cabinet and Deans. Several initiatives (e.g., institutional identity/leadership, enrollment management/retention) were identified and action plans were developed at the spring 2005 Cabinet retreat [[11](#)]. These were incorporated into annual goal planning at the vice presidential level. A status report was issued by the President in November 2005 [[12](#)] and the vice presidents evaluated their own progress in May/June 2006 [[13](#)]. As part of exploring how to become a high performing team, the Cabinet and Deans, at their June 2006 retreat, reflected on their work the previous year and agreed upon efforts to pursue as an institution [[14](#)]. The results of these planning and evaluation endeavors inform the budgeting process so that resources can be allocated and, if necessary, redirected from other areas to institutional priorities.

Periodic university-level reviews are conducted of progress toward meeting the university's mission and highest level goals. Reports from this process are maintained on the Department of Institutional Effectiveness web page. Under the guidance of the President's Cabinet plus the SACS Liaison and the Director of Institutional Research, progress toward meeting the 2003-2008 Strategic Plan was documented through the following:

- A narrative showing the progress on each of the nine University Strategic Directions [[15](#)]; and
- Bullet items under each unit goal and the linkage of unit goals to the Strategic Directions [[16](#)]

In the Fall of 2005, two university-wide, research-based initiatives addressed needs that arose from planning, the Institutional Identity Task Force and the Retention Steering Committee, as described below. Using the work that came out of these two initiatives as a foundation, President Potter articulated his vision for NGCSU in a letter to the North Georgia Community in January 2006 [[17](#)] and listed several strategic elements as a guide.

The Institutional Identity Task Force (IITF)

The IITF held a series of meetings through the spring and summer of 2005 and engaged a consultant, Fleming Consulting Group, to help NGCSU define its institutional identity. The consultants conducted a series of interviews and conversations among various stakeholder groups within the university, among its alumni, and in the surrounding community, asking pointed questions intended to elicit sharply focused ideas about North Georgia's identity. After presenting the consultant's findings to the university community and evaluating the feedback that was received from the community, the IITF wrote a brief Institutional Identity Statement [[18](#)], capturing what is special about North Georgia and its environment, and what it has to offer to the world. This document is the culmination of the first task assigned to the IITF by President Potter.

The Retention Steering Committee

In August 2005, President Potter appointed an 18-member Retention Steering Committee to work with a consultant from Noel-Levitz to examine student retention and graduation rates and their effect on NGCSU. At the beginning of this process, "The Student Satisfaction Inventory" (SSI) was administered to approximately 450 of our students. The results of the SSI, in conjunction with data provided by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and interviews with various student, faculty, staff and administrative groups, provided insight into institutional strengths and challenges. In November 2005, the Retention Steering Committee established retention and graduation rate goals for the next several years and identified five strategies for achieving these goals. Approximately 40 people were involved in December 2005 in developing action plans for the five strategies (improving quality service, developing an early-alert system for at-risk students, implementing learning communities, enhancing course availability, and improving academic advising). Each strategy was assigned to a workgroup, which has now expanded to include additional people not originally involved. Each workgroup continues to develop and execute action plans so that the five strategies will be at least partially implemented by Fall 2006, with full implementation in the following year [[19](#)].

Historical Changes in Strategic Planning

Prior to FY 2001, North Georgia performed strategic planning on a 2-year cycle, with annual progress updates [[20](#)].

In 2001, the President's Cabinet, upon review of the progress report, decided to extend the FY 2001-2002 strategic plan another year. This plan was actually in effect through the end of calendar year 2003.

Work began on a new plan in Fall 2002 [21]. Effective January 2004, the new five-year (actually 4 ½-year) plan finally went into effect.

The University's current Strategic Planning Process [22] is described in the linked document.

Evaluation Processes

All academic departments and all administrative departments observe an annual plan for submission of their assessment data. The plans are entered to an electronic database system designed to facilitate the annual review process both through comparability of electronic documents across various plan years and through the opportunity to keep the assessment process "live" throughout the year instead of limiting assessment reporting to one specific date per year. An example of "closing the loop" at the university level is the development of a new, locally written, database system for tracking assessment and planning activities, beginning in fall 2006. This new system addresses problems encountered with the previous system that the Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment Committee has documented in its annual reports.

The **Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment Committee (IEA)**, was formed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs in 2002. Composed of representatives from both administrative and academic departments, this committee oversees the assessment process, reviewing assessment reports submitted by all administrative departments and academic programs. The committee's findings are compiled into a year-end recommendatory document sent to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and other administrators and department heads (IEA Committee's first annual report [23]).

Beginning in 2003, the IEA committee added a new level of intermediate review, the Deans' Peer Review. In this process, the four Deans of the University's Schools paired up to review all departmental reports from the departments of another school. Some administrative department heads from within Academic Affairs participated in this exchange and review as well.

During this same year (2003), the IEA Committee tightened the requirements for data submission and imposed upon itself a tighter review schedule; and it sent feedback information to individual departments as soon

as its teams and the entire committee had reviewed them. This process established a "rolling schedule" of feedback to the departments in order to positively influence the then-current year's data collection and to enhance the usefulness of the department's work or services (IEA Committee's second annual report [24]).

In 2004, electronic submission of assessment review reports was fully implemented (IEA Committee's third annual report [25]).

Relationship of Evaluation to Mission

Requirement 2.5 also asks that planning and evaluation processes (a) result in continuing improvement and (b) can demonstrate that the institution is effectively accomplishing its mission.

Every assessment outcome has been linked to University-wide strategic directions that, in turn, are derived from the Mission statement.

Campus culture has changed substantially as a result of the increased attendance to planning processes. One of the most visible results of this change is the development and clarification that NGCSU's mission has undergone (SACS standard 2.4 [26]).

Additional Data in Support of Claims in this Section:

A list of all accomplished Comprehensive Program Review (CPR) reviews and planned CPR reviews (with individual links to completed reports) are available on the NGCSU Institutional Effectiveness web site [27]. CPR provides an additional level of academic program review, considering multiple measures of effectiveness for each degree program. These comprehensive reviews are conducted at least every seven years for each program, and more often if triggered by such measures as low enrollment or graduation.

Examples of unit and program annual assessment results as well as improvements made based on those results for the three-year period from July, 2003, through June, 2005, may be found in a table of 3-Year Assessment Reports [28]. More detailed assessment reports for the academic and fiscal years ending 2000-2003 [29] are provided, as well as assessment reports for years ending 2004-2006 [30].

Document Reference:

Number	DB Num	Document Title	Resource
1		Planning and Evaluation Annual Schedule	http://www.ngcsu.edu/Resource/IRP/irphome/Annual_Reporting/annual_schedule.shtml
2		IEAC 2002-2003 Report	http://www.ngcsu.edu/sacs/Reference_Room/documents/Institutional_Assess/IEAreport20022003.pdf
3		IEAC 2003-2004 Report	http://www.ngcsu.edu/sacs/Reference_Room/documents/Institutional_Assess/IAEreport20032004.pdf
4		IEAC 2004-2005 Report	http://www.ngcsu.edu/sacs/Reference_Room/documents/Institutional_Assess/IEAreport20042005.pdf
5		IEAC 2005-2006 Report	http://www.ngcsu.edu/sacs/Reference_Room/documents/Institutional_Assess/IEAreport20052006.pdf
6		Budget Calendar	http://www.ngcsu.edu/Bus_Fin/Budget_Office/Handbook_Contents/Budget_Calendar.pdf
7		Budget Handbook	http://www.ngcsu.edu/Bus_Fin/Budget_Office/Handbook.htm
8		Department Heads' Council Minutes	http://www.ngcsu.edu/sacs/Reference_Room/documents/ngcsu_comm_min_6.htm#deptHead
9		Deans' Council Minutes	http://www.ngcsu.edu/sacs/Reference_Room/documents/ngcsu_comm_min_6.htm#deanscouncil
10		Academic Activities Committee Minutes	http://www.ngcsu.edu/sacs/Reference_Room/documents/ngcsu_comm_min_6.htm#academic
11		Cabinet Retreat, Spring 2005	http://www.ngcsu.edu/sacs/Reference_Room/documents/NGCSU_minutes/Presidents_Cabinet/Cabinet_Plng_Retreat_Spr_05.pdf
12		Strategic Initiatives Memorandum from President Potter, Nov. 2005	http://www.ngcsu.edu/sacs/Reference_Room/documents/NGCSU_minutes/Presidents_Cabinet/Pres_Letter_2005-11-01.pdf
13		Vice Presidents – Goals, 2005-2006	http://www.ngcsu.edu/sacs/Reference_Room/documents/NGCSU_documents/VPGoals200506.pdf
14		Cabinet Retreat, Spring 2006	http://www.ngcsu.edu/sacs/Reference_Room/documents/NGCSU_minutes/Presidents_Cabinet/R

Number	DB Num	Document Title	Resource
			etreat_June_2006.pdf
15		Strategic Directions – Summary Narrative	http://www.ngcsu.edu/sacs/Reference_Room/documents/Institutional_Assess/StratPlanSummaryVersion2a.pdf
16		Strategic Planning Unit Goals	http://www.ngcsu.edu/sacs/Reference_Room/documents/Institutional_Assess/Unit_Goals_Strategic_Directions.pdf
17		Presidents Letter to the North Georgia Community	http://www.ngcsu.edu/welcome/Commletter.pdf
18		Institutional Identity Statement	http://www.ngcsu.edu/sacs/Reference_Room/documents/NGCSU_documents/InstIdentTFStatement.pdf
19		Retention/Graduation Rate Project, Status Report, January 2006	http://www.ngcsu.edu/sacs/Reference_Room/documents/Institutional_Assess/RetentionSummary011006.pdf
20		Strategic Planning Web Site	http://www.ngcsu.edu/Resource/IRP/irphome/stratplans.shtml
21		Strategic Plan – January 2004 – FY 2008	http://www.ngcsu.edu/resource/irp/Strategic_Plan_Jan_2004-FY_2008/plan2008.shtml
22		Strategic Planning Process	http://www.ngcsu.edu/resource/irp/Strategic_Plan_Jan_2004-FY_2008/SP_Process.pdf
23		IEAC First Annual Report, 2002-2003	http://www.ngcsu.edu/sacs/Reference_Room/documents/Institutional_Assess/IEAreport20022003.pdf
24		IEAC Second Annual Report, 2003-2004	http://www.ngcsu.edu/sacs/Reference_Room/documents/Institutional_Assess/IAEreport20032004.pdf
25		IEAC Third Annual Report, 2004-2005	http://www.ngcsu.edu/sacs/Reference_Room/documents/Institutional_Assess/IEAreport20042005.pdf
26		SACS Standard 2.4	http://www.ngcsu.edu/sacs/compliance_audit/audit_report/section_2/core_req_2-4_instit_mission.pdf
27		Institutional Research Comprehensive Program Review Timetable	http://www.ngcsu.edu/Resource/IRP/irphome/Institutional_Effectiveness/cpr/CPR_Timetable.shtml

Number	DB Num	Document Title	Resource
28		Table of 3-Year Assessment Reports	http://www.ngcsu.edu/sacs/Reference_Room/documents/Institutional_Assess/Assessment_3yrs_Reports/List_Assessment_Rpts.pdf
29		Assessment reports 2000-2003	http://www.ngcsu.edu/sacs/Reference_Room/documents/inst_assess_7.htm#assessments
30		TracDat Assessment Impact Reports 2004-2006	http://www.ngcsu.edu/sacs/Reference_Room/documents/Institutional_Assess/AssessmentImpactAll.pdf