

Nicholls State University

Systematic Planning and Evaluation

Nicholls State University has a comprehensive and integrated assessment, planning, and budgeting process in place. Through this process, expected outcomes are identified and assessed, and evidence of improvement is documented, and illustrated in the Assessment, Planning, and Budgeting flowchart. Numerous committees, as specified in the University *Policy and Procedure Manual*, are in place to govern and monitor this process, and responsibility for this process is shared by the Executive Vice President, the Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Executive Director of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness, and the Director of Assessment and Institutional Research. The Director of Assessment and Institutional Research reports directly to the Executive Director of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness, who is responsible for strategic planning and assessment. The Executive Vice President reports directly to the President and serves on the Planning Advisory Group, University Assessment Committee, President's Cabinet, Executive Budget Committee, and the Budget Committee. The Executive Director of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness is responsible for assisting in the development and maintenance of Strategic and Annual Planning processes and serves on the Planning Advisory Group and University Assessment Committee and reports jointly to the Executive Vice President and the Vice President of Academic Affairs.

The major elements of Nicholls' planning and evaluation processes include the following: strategic and annual planning, university-wide assessments through the Office of Assessment and Institutional Research, five-year academic program reviews, external accreditation reviews, performance planning and evaluation of employees, University of Louisiana System Areas of Excellence reports, and state-required planning and performance accountability processes. Descriptions of these University-wide processes follow:

Strategic Plans and Annual Planning, Budgeting, and Assessment Process

Currently, Nicholls incorporates a formal cyclical, hierarchical system for planning and evaluation. The University President and vice presidents continuously monitor and evaluate information from all constituents. At the beginning of each academic year, the Planning Advisory Group (PAG) discusses input from the President and monitors and assesses the direction of Level I Annual Plans in relation to the Strategic Plan. The same process is followed at Level II and Level III in a hierarchical fashion. Currently, departmental Annual Plans and their assessments are used to document this systematic process.

University-Wide Assessments through the Office of Assessment and Institutional Research

The Office of Assessment and Institutional Research provides support for University assessment and is responsible for the administration of most University-wide assessments. As part of the administration, this office selects the sample for each survey and either processes the instrument in-house or coordinates processing by outside entities. Faculty evaluations are distributed and processed by this office each semester. The Office of Assessment and Institutional Research keeps the schedule of University assessments and is responsible for distribution of relevant results to appropriate bodies within the University. An annual meeting is scheduled in January of each year for distribution and discussion of the previous calendar year's assessment results. The Office of Assessment and Institutional Research supports the administration and all departments, academic and non-academic, with valuable data and assessment results to support planning and accreditation efforts. As part of the annual planning process, administrators meet with staff to review University-wide assessment results and to formulate goals for improvement based on these findings.

Five-Year Academic Program Reviews

In 1992, a five-year cycle for academic program reviews was established. The Vice President for Academic Affairs requests heads of academic departments to complete an intensive evaluation of each major program of study. The Program Review Format requires department heads to provide answers to questions related to program objectives, needs, structure, students, faculty, curriculum, informational resources, and facilities. Deans are assigned as primary and secondary readers and conduct intensive evaluations of the reviews, interview department heads, and then compile and report their findings to the Vice President for Academic Affairs. The Vice President submits a report, which may include questions, to the department heads, who then submit follow-up reports (via Form A) to the Vice President. The program reviews have become an integral part of the planning and assessment process since their inception over 10 years ago. Completed Academic Program Review reports and sample Form As are electronically available.

External Accreditation Reviews

Academic Affairs Policy 2.13 of the Louisiana Board of Regents "recognizes accrediting agencies that it considers as mandatory, recommended, or optional for eligible programs" offered by system universities, including Nicholls State University. Colleges and departments seeking accreditations for their academic programs engage in detailed self-studies in order to analyze programs, faculty, students, and resources. The self-studies, follow-up reports, and systematic plans prepared for program evaluations and for accrediting agencies further document improvements and changes. Nicholls currently has 100 percent of mandated programs accredited by their respective agencies. A list of all accredited programs at Nicholls and links to available self-study reports and accreditation review team responses are electronically available.

Performance Planning and Evaluation of Employees

An essential component of evaluation at the University is performance planning and personnel evaluation. Nicholls recognizes that regular evaluation of employees—faculty, unclassified staff, and classified staff—is important for the institution as well as for individuals in reaching their goals. All employees are evaluated in their respective units by appropriate administrators. [Click here](#) for links to employee evaluation processes for each of the major University Divisions.

State-Required Planning and Performance Accountability Process

To be in compliance with Act 1465 of 1997, all state agencies, including the Board of Supervisors for the University of Louisiana System and the eight universities in the University of Louisiana System, are required to submit a five-year performance strategic plan, based on goals set by the Louisiana Office of Planning and Budget.

These plans include prescribed goals, objectives, and projections through 2009. Louisiana's Division of Administration requires that every state agency work with the Office of Planning and Budgeting to develop five-year plans and yearly operational plans and to report quarterly on identified performance indicators. For state institutions of higher education, the Louisiana Performance Accountability System (LaPAS) is also closely monitored by the Louisiana Board of Regents and the respective management board, which in Nicholls' case is the University of Louisiana System. With the development of the University of Louisiana System's revised five-year strategic plan for 2005 to 2010, all institutions must report on headcount enrollment, minority enrollment, retention of first-year freshmen, graduation rates indicators, and number of undergraduate nursing degrees conferred.