

Applying Institutional Effectiveness to Support Services

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Abstract

Lee College of Baytown, Texas has developed an approach for applying Institutional Effectiveness (IE) to support services. The need to apply IE to support services is important, because it is a requirement for accreditation by the College's accrediting agency, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). The methodology Lee College follows involves analytical decomposition from the College's mission, to its goals, to indicators of effectiveness for each goal. The indicators each have working targets (expected outcomes). Targets are evaluated as having been met, partially met, or not met. The idea is that if the various indicator targets are met, we can assume that a particular goal is being met. If the College goals are met, then we can assume that the mission is being accomplished. This methodology has survived the rigors of two SACS visits – 1995 and 2006 – without a single suggestion or recommendation.

The document produced as a result of the process noted above is called an Institutional Effectiveness Report Card (IERC). Accordingly, the focus of this best practice submittal is on the Lee College Administrative Services Division's IERC.

The Administrative Services division includes the following support functions: Physical Plant, Information Technology and Telecommunications, Shipping and Receiving, the Rebel Roost Snack Bar, the Bookstore, Security Services, and Event Management. These branches, in turn, support College goals 7 and 8. Goal 7 states, "We will maintain a safe and inviting physical environment." Goal 8 states, "We will provide a cost-effective utilization of human, physical, and fiscal resources." The indicators of effectiveness used for each of these two goals for the divisional report card total 16 for Goal 7 and 18 for Goal 8. In addition to satisfying accreditation requirements, the 34 various indicators provide the data needed to justify the development and funding of continuous improvement initiatives for crucial support services that impact the entire college. In the past, these initiatives have run a large gamut and have included among many others increasing the size of the bookstore, installation of security cameras, purchase of a new truckster for Shipping and Receiving, modernization of the snack bar, and purchase of enterprise software. The report card also illuminates for the rest of the College the far-reaching nature and importance of its support services.

Lee College is proud of its application of IE to support services. We believe that other institutions will find our approach both readily applicable and eminently helpful.

Introduction to the Organization

The institution that has benefited from this “best practice” is Lee College, which is a comprehensive community college in Baytown, Texas. Established in 1934 to provide high quality education at a minimal cost, Lee College has continued that tradition for over 70 years with nearly 16,000 students annually attending. The College mission is: “The primary purpose of Lee College is to provide quality instruction to students. Through a variety of programs and services, Lee College prepares students for success in higher education or employment. Lee College also provides a broad-based program of extension courses, distance education, adult education, continuing education, and community service.” Towards accomplishment of its mission, the College offers Associate of Arts degrees in thirteen (13) disciplines, Associate of Science degrees in eleven (11) areas, Associate of Applied Science degrees in 22 majors, and Associate Arts Teaching degrees in five (5) concentrations. Students can choose from 41 different certificates of study. The College is organized into five divisions: Academic Studies, Student Services for Development and Success, Strategic and Economic Development, Financial Services, and Administrative Services, which is the focus of this “best practice” submittal.

The Administrative Services Division mission is one of support: “The mission of the Lee College Administrative Services Division is to effectively and efficiently support student learning and success.” The Division accomplishes its mission through the teamwork among its seven (7) branches which are: the Physical Plant, Information Technology and Telecommunications, Shipping and Receiving, Security Services, the Bookstore, the Rebel Roost Snack Bar, and Event Management.

Statement of the Problem

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) is the accrediting agency for Lee College. A key component of accreditation is a College's application of institutional effectiveness (IE) as indicated by accreditation criterion 3.3.1, Institutional Effectiveness, which states, "The institution identifies expected outcomes for its educational programs and its administrative and educational support services; assesses whether it achieves these outcomes; and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of those results." Noteworthy in this item is the need for "administrative and educational support services" to comply and not just the educational programs. So, the problem was for the Division to develop a way to implement IE.

Design

The methodology that the Administrative Services Division elected to use is called analytical decomposition. Simply put, this methodology allowed the Division to address the complex problem noted above by breaking it up into its component elements. In this case, the topmost element was the aforementioned College mission statement. The College "decomposed" the mission statement into goals that, if successfully met, would conclusively demonstrate that the mission was being accomplished. The Division noted that it supported the following goals: Goal 7 which states, "We will maintain a safe and inviting physical environment" and Goal 8 which states, "We will provide a cost-effective utilization of human, physical, and fiscal resources." Next, we in the division needed to "decompose" the two supported goals. To establish whether or not the goals were being supported, the Division devised 16 indicators of effectiveness for Goal 7 and 18 indicators of effectiveness for Goal 8. The indicators chosen for Goal 7 are shown in Table 1. The indicators chosen for Goal 8 are shown in Table 2. Indicators had to meet two criteria. They had to be 1) related to the accomplishment of the goal and 2) measurable. Each branch chief selected the indicators she/he wanted to use. The bases for the

selection of the indicators included past experience; information from professional affiliations, such as the American Society of Physical Plant Administrators; available reports from other agencies on campus, such as the Annual Financial Report; and reports from the College's Office of Institutional Research. We were unable to find any other colleges with a similar assessment document. Accordingly, we had no way to collaborate with another institution. The Dean of Administrative Services reviewed and approved all indicators before they were included in the IERC.

Table 1. Lee College Administrative Services Indicators of Effectiveness for Goal 7: We will maintain a safe and inviting physical environment.

INDICATOR 7.1 - Annual Campus Security Incidents INDICATOR 7.2 - Percent of Computer Center Customer Quality

Control Reports Rated as "Satisfactory" or "Better"

INDICATOR 7.3 - Computer Center Preventive Maintenance Work Order Completion Rate

INDICATOR 7.4 - Computer Related Training Sessions Conducted

INDICATOR 7.5 - Completion of Computer Center Inventory

INDICATOR 7.6 - Percent of Registrants Using Web Registration

INDICATOR 7.7 - Student Lab Availability Rate

INDICATOR 7.8 - Preventive Maintenance Program Work Order Completion Rate for the Maintenance Department

INDICATOR 7.9 - Percent of Fund Expenditures Towards Operation and Maintenance of Plant

INDICATOR 7.10 - Gross Square Feet Maintained per Custodian

INDICATOR 7.11 - Percent of Plant Maintenance Customer Quality Assurance Forms Rated as "Satisfactory" or Better

INDICATOR 7.12 - Percent of Emergency Plant Maintenance Work Orders

Indicator 7.13 - Number of Infrastructure Upgrade Program Projects Completed

INDICATOR 7.14 - Review and Update of the Facility Master Plan

INDICATOR 7.15 - Review and Update of the Emergency Procedures Manual

INDICATOR 7.16 - ITT Demand Work Order Completion Rate

Table 2. Lee College Administrative Services Indicators of Effectiveness for Goal 8: We will provide a cost-effective utilization of human, physical, and fiscal resources.

INDICATOR 8.1 – Sales and Profits for the Rebel Roost and the Bookstore

INDICATOR 8.2 – Percent of Rebel Roost Quality Assurance Forms Rated as “Satisfactory” or better

INDICATOR 8.3 – Percent of Customers Served in Rebel Roost in Comparison to

Previous Years

- INDICATOR 8.4 – Snack Bar Special Event Services
- INDICATOR 8.5 – Number of Meal Tickets Purchased
- INDICATOR 8.6 – Number of Items Sold in the Bookstore
- INDICATOR 8.7 – Bookstore Income as a Percent of Net Sales
- INDICATOR 8.8 – Bookstore Gross Margin as a Percent of Net Sales
- INDICATOR 8.9 – Bookstore Sales Growth
- INDICATOR 8.10 – Bookstore Sales Per Square Foot of Selling Space
- INDICATOR 8.11 – Bookstore Operating Expenses as a Percent of Net Sales
- INDICATOR 8.12 – Bookstore Sales Per Full-Time Employee Equivalents
- INDICATOR 8.13 – Percent of Shipping and Receiving Customer Quality Assurance Forms Rated “Satisfactory” or Better
- INDICATOR 8.14 – Satisfactory Update of the Fixed Asset Database
- INDICATOR 8.15 – Shipping and Receiving Daily Delivery Completion Rate
- INDICATOR 8.16 – Maintenance Department Set-Ups for Campus Events
- INDICATOR 8.17 – Revenue Generated by Arena Marketing & Events
- INDICATOR 8.18 – Trend of Positive Partnerships

After the Administrative Services Division selected the indicators, the next step in the design was to assign the working targets (expected outcomes) to the indicators. The targets in some cases are based on comparisons to regional or national data. In other cases the targets are chosen by the consensus of the Division. Sometimes in the case of a new indicator, the Division will elect to not establish a target for a period of time to review the efficacy of the indicator and establish a benchmark for comparison.

After the establishment of the indicators and their respective working targets, the Division was ready to implement the process. Other than the development time spent no cost has been incurred for this best practice nominee.

Implementation

This part of the process involved the annual collection of the data, publication of the data, and the use of the data to continuously improve. Collection is left to the individual branches, which provide the data on their various indicators to the Dean of Administrative Services. The indicators are captured in the Microsoft Excel format and transmitted to the College's Webmaster for uploading to the College's web site. The Webmaster translates the files into a PDF format. So, access to a computer, software, and the Internet is recommended.

The data is then published in an Administrative Services Institutional Effectiveness Report Card (IERC), which is issued in October of each year. This timing is on purpose in order to be in advance of the College's planning and budgeting cycle, which commences in November. By following this sequence, the Administrative Services Division uses the report card as the basis for its Planning Proposals for funding in the next fiscal year. The initiatives that are funded are then tracked in following year's report card to monitor the continuous improvement of the Division in its support to the College's mission. This implementation cycle is repeated each year.

The organization for the IERC includes a summary of the assessment results for each goal. The summary uses colors to depict the assessment results for each indicator. Green means that a target was met; yellow means that a target was partially met; red means that the target was not met. The IERC summary pages for Goals 7 and 8 are too large to fit within the confines of this document. But, these pages may be viewed at the following web addresses:

<http://www.lee.edu/adminservices/AdmnGoalIndicator7.asp>

and

<http://www.lee.edu/adminservices/AdmnGoalIndicator8.asp>

Under the assessment is a listing of recent continuous improvement initiatives undertaken by the Division in support of the goal. The reader will also note that each indicator has a “drill down” feature that contains in PDF format the specifics of a particular indicator’s assessment. A sample of the drill down feature for Indicator 8.10 is shown on the next page.

INDICATOR 8.10 - Bookstore Sales per Square Foot of Selling Space Compared to Other 2-Year College Bookstores

	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
Lee College Bookstore	\$ 660.00	\$ 702.00	\$ 710.00	\$ 856.64	\$ 952.05	\$ 962.72
Other Bookstore Average	\$ 729.00	\$ 695.00	*	\$ 693.00	\$ 738.00	\$ 877.00

*Data Unavailable

Comments:

1. Target was met.
2. Utilization of selling space by our store is critical; this indicator reflects the productivity of selling space in terms of sales volume.
3. This indicator reflects that there is a need to expand the bookstore. There is a plan being considered that would increase the selling space of the Bookstore to a size appropriate to our sales volume. If the college decides to go forward with the expansion then this indicator should align with the national average and the target will continue to be met.

Source: Lee College Annual Financial Reports & National Association of College Stores Financial Survey

Recommended Working Target: Maintain a ratio close to national average. Too high a ratio indicates a need for more space for selling merchandise.

Office of Primary Responsibility: Bookstore Manager

Figure 1

Figure 1 above depicts several features of this best practice nominee. We first show the historical data of the indicator. Then, we add comments. We will always note if the indicator target was met, not met, or partially met. For Indicator 8.10 we elected to leave the target more subjective. For other indicators, we chose to make the targets more specific. Regarding Comment 3, we had believed for many years that our facility was too small for our College. This indicator, which is compared to a nationwide survey, gave us much needed data driven justification to expand the bookstore. Accordingly, we submitted a planning proposal with the justification for the funds needed and received them in the fiscal year 2005-2006 budget. The expansion is now complete. So, we now have an adequately sized bookstore that has allowed us to improve service to our students.

We also include a “Source” for the data and an “Office of Primary Responsibility,” in case we need to review the data used in the indicator. Keep in mind that there are 34 such indicators in the Administrative Services Institutional Effectiveness Report Card. We have not included all 34 in this submittal. Such an inclusion would have made this document over 40 pages long. Instead, we invite the reader to view the entire Report Card on the Internet at <http://www.lee.edu/adminservices/tableofcontents.asp>.

Benefits

This process has allowed the Lee College Administrative Services Division to meet all three aspects of the SACS accreditation criterion 3.3.1, Institutional Effectiveness. First, we identified expected outcomes for our Division’s administrative and educational support services. Second, the report card we developed assesses whether we achieved these outcomes. And, finally we have used the report card to justify the initiatives we have undertaken to continuously improve. In so doing, we have been able to provide strong evidence of improvement based on analysis of our assessment results. As noted, such evidence is a key component of the SACS accreditation review.

In addition, the Division has become more efficient. For example, when Shipping and Receiving failed to meet its working target for customer satisfaction, we used that data to justify the purchase of a new truckster that we now use to deliver goods received. The result is improved service and a target met. We have used the IE process to justify other initiatives including among many others new security cameras, enterprise software, a modernization of the snack bar, and more parking spaces for students. The ability of a sound IE process for support services to justify and receive needed assets cannot be overemphasized.

Finally, our IE process has allowed us to show the entire campus the breadth of our Division's mission, because the various indicators of effectiveness cut across the entire span of the Division. Indeed, before we implemented this process few persons outside of the Division had any idea about what our function involves on campus. Now, when we express the need for a resource we are taken seriously. IE has given us credibility and, to a large extent, greater pride in what we do each and every day.

Retrospect

We have been publishing an Administrative Services IERC since 1993. We have found that the most important aspect of the process is to ensure that the indicators of effectiveness chosen are actually measurable. Initially, we selected a few indicators that on the surface appeared excellent. However, we found that the data either did not exist or could not be efficiently measured. Therefore, we had to delete some indicators in the early years of the process. In 2006, we have refined the methodology to the point that the indicators we use are readily measurable.

Another challenge is finding indicators that can be compared to other institutions. Such comparisons are very helpful in seeing where we stand in relation to our peer community colleges on both the regional and national levels. Documents we have found helpful in such comparisons include the annual financial reports of regional community colleges, publications (such as American School and University magazine), the National Association of College Stores' Financial Survey, and a student survey published as a joint effort of our region's Institutional Research Officers.