JACKSONVILLE STATE UNIVERSITY

Manual of Policies and Procedures

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SUBJECT: JSU Continuous Improvement Process

APPROVED: Dr. Don C. Killingsworth, Jr. President

PURPOSE

JSU's Comprehensive System of Continuous Improvement unites strategic planning, operational planning, assessment planning, program review, the Quality Enhancement Plan, institutional research, institutional effectiveness, and institutional assessment. It is driven by JSU's institutional values that create a mission focused on improved learning opportunities and an improved learning environment for students. It is a framework of operation that shows JSU's systematic, ongoing, comprehensive, and integrated approach to continuous improvement and provides university leadership the needed input for informed decision-making. The process involves all programs and services and provides a sound basis for budgetary decisions and resource allocations. Students, faculty, staff, and administrators play a role in improvement at JSU. This policy describes the planning and evaluation processes and roles of JSU's comprehensive system of continuous improvement.

POLICY

The institutional mission, goals, objectives, and strategies are developed during the Strategic Planning process. All planning, evaluation, and decision making are driven by the mission and strategic plan.

PROCEDURES

Strategic Planning

Jacksonville State University engages in strategic planning in order to evaluate current environmental factors and create strategies that will enable the university to achieve its stated mission, goals, and objectives.

The mission and the strategic plan are the driving force behind JSU's Comprehensive System of Continuous Improvement and decision-making at JSU.

The strategic plan is intended to be dynamic and comprehensive in that it will be periodically updated to reflect the changing environment of higher education and to ensure that it facilitates the direction of the University.

Strategic planning consists of a periodic development process that includes input from students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community, as well as the ongoing implementation, participation, evaluation, and revision processes outlined in JSU's Strategic Planning Policy.

Operational Planning

Operational plans are developed by academic colleges, student support units, and other units providing university support. The plans focus on continuous improvement of each unit, as well as support of the University Strategic Plan. Operational plans are usually developed within the first year that a new unit is created, new unit or division leadership is selected, or reorganization occurs. Reporting and evaluation occur each fall, with units reporting on plan progress and, when necessary, developing new or updating current goals, objectives, and evaluation measures. Units submit new funding requests that are tied to their plans or the strategic plan to division leadership during the budgeting process. When all reports are received by the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (OIRE), the reports are sent to the division leadership who review the plans and progress reports of the units within their division and provide feedback when necessary. Operational plan development and reporting is detailed in a guide located on the OIRE website.

Assessment Planning

Assessment plans are developed for educational programs, academic and student services, and administrative units. As detailed in the corresponding development and reporting guides on the OIRE website, the units identify expected outcomes, assess the extent to which these outcomes are achieved, and provide evidence for seeking improvement based on analysis of the results. Each October, during the reporting and evaluation period, data from the previous academic year are gathered, evaluated, and reported to OIRE.

When all reports are received, OIRE provides the reports to the appropriate dean and or vice president to review and provide feedback when deemed necessary.

Program Review

JSU's program review process functions as JSU's main evaluation process. It encourages improvement through analysis of the quality of the University's academic programs, academic support, and administrative support units.

During JSU's 10-year reaffirmation cycle, at a frequency determined by university leadership, each unit will conduct a self-study to assess its major strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and concerns in the areas of quality, demand, resources, and planning. The unit may also include other unique or significant aspects in the self-study. The self-study will conclude with a plan for continuous improvement. Once completed, the self-study will be reviewed by a peer reviewer that includes a virtual or on-campus site visit. Peer reviewers will provide a final report that provides units with feedback and recommendations about their self-study. Final reports are submitted to the department head/director who will review with faculty or staff. The report is also submitted to the dean/director. The dean/director reviews the report and provides a written response to the report. The dean/director forwards the report and responses to their area Vice President prior to a meeting with the dean/director, department head/area supervisor and other appropriate individuals who will discuss the self-study. The Vice President will prepare and provide a summary memo to the program to be used for program improvement the following year. Action steps identified for the following year will be submitted to the Assistant Vice Provost of OIRE for inclusion in the appropriate plan.

Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)

JSU identifies and develops its QEP through a broad and research-based process derived by institutional planning and evaluation processes and the mission of the University. The selection process involves consideration of stakeholder feedback at various stages, proposed topics, and a thorough proposal. The selected QEP is implemented pending feedback from the SACSCOC on-site review committee during the decennial review. The QEP focuses on an issue that JSU considers important to improving student learning and/or student success and includes a plan to assess achievement that will be included in the subsequent Fifth Year Interim Report.

Continuous Improvement Support

Support for university-wide planning and effectiveness processes is provided by the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness. This support includes institutional research, institutional effectiveness, and institutional assessment functions.

Institutional Research

Institutional research (IR) functions involve the gathering, analysis, and reporting of accurate and reliable data as well as providing systematic departmental and institutional support in research, planning, accreditation, and assessment. JSU's IR data serve as the official source of factual, research-based information about Jacksonville State University's students, faculty, and staff using data collected at each semester's census date. Additionally, data and analysis are provided to internal and external stakeholders such as the federal government, the state of Alabama, and institutional and programmatic accreditors, as well as the executive administration of Jacksonville State University for use in data-driven decision-making. Official university data are also provided for routine and ad-hoc reports and analysis to assist in student success and informed decision-making across the institution.

Institutional Effectiveness

Institutional effectiveness (IE) functions include supporting and coordinating JSU’s operational and assessment planning and reporting processes. The support provided includes developing planning and reporting guides, conducting training sessions and assisting unit leadership with the establishment of expected outcomes for educational programs, academic and student services and administrative support units. After submission, reports are reviewed for completion and are sent to division leads to review and provide feedback to units as they deem necessary.

Institutional Assessment

Institutional Assessment (IA) functions include providing assessment data for outcomes related to student knowledge, engagement, and success throughout the institution. Assessment data and analysis of university wide surveys of students, faculty and staff are also used in assessment planning across the institution.

The administration of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) and ad hoc surveys are part of the IA functions and are used to support continuous improvement efforts.

RESPONSIBILITY

The Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs is responsible for this policy.

EVALUATION

This policy and its procedures will be reviewed at least every five (5) years.