

Assessment of Outcomes

Goals of Assessment of Outcomes

Assessment is an ongoing, cyclical effort of identifying goals, developing programs to achieve those goals, evaluating the effectiveness of the programs, analyzing results, redefining goals and improving programs. That cycle is a basic responsibility of all faculty and administrators. Stated goals of outcomes assessment at Missouri Southern are:

1. **Evaluation of institutional effectiveness by research and assessment of:**
 - a. Core Curriculum programs and school departments
 - b. Academic and developmental student outcomes
2. **Improvement of both academic and student affairs programs:**
 - a. To increase student academic and developmental outcomes
 - b. To increase student retention and degree completion
3. **Provision of data needed for long-range planning to fulfill the college mission**
4. **Fulfillment of governmental mandates**

In its mission, Missouri Southern is committed to developing effective programs to fulfill the needs of the students while developing knowledge, skills, and positive attitudes. In order to accomplish that goal, ongoing assessment is conducted not only by professors in the classes offered each semester, but also by faculty and administration in annual program reviews. The Center for Assessment and Institutional Research assists faculty and administration in gathering data for those reviews. In addition, a Faculty Assessment Advisory Committee meets regularly with the administration to study current assessment methods and make recommendations for improvement of the University's assessment program.

Program for Assessment of Outcomes

Importance of assessment for college accountability is underscored by a **Board of Governors policy that requires that students participate in assessment activities when requested.** Information obtained from standardized tests, faculty developed tests, surveys, student research, portfolio review, student interviews and performances is used to develop both quantitative and qualitative data needed for the analysis phase of our assessment plan. Three identified areas of student outcomes are assessed each year: Core Curriculum, departmental majors, and student development. In addition, follow-up studies of alumni and their employers are conducted periodically.

Core Curriculum: Data for study is gathered each year by administering a standardized test and needed surveys to incoming freshmen and exiting seniors. The AP (Academic Profile) from the Educational Testing Service is a standardized test used to measure the impact of a Core Curriculum on students as they progress through a degree program. Students are called upon to analyze, synthesize, apply and evaluate information within several academic contexts, rather than just to recall or recognize content. Missouri Southern seniors consistently score well above the national average on this test.

Departmental Majors: The faculty and administration of each department are responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of their programs. All departments have developed outcomes assessment programs for graduating seniors. Information gathered from quantitative and qualitative assessment is used by the department to review programs. A variety of assessment methods are used by the various departments.

Departments that offer degrees leading to state or national certifications use the required standardized tests for entrance and certification as their quantitative measures. These departments include computer information science, dental hygiene, education, medical technology, radiologic technology, respiratory therapy, and nursing. Departments that use standardized major field tests offered by the National Testing Services or by their particular professional organization include biology, business administration, chemistry, criminal justice administration, English, environmental health, history, management technology, mathematics, physics, sociology, music, and psychology.



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In major areas where standardized tests are currently unavailable, departmentally developed assessments are used. They utilize one or more of the following methods: faculty developed exams, portfolio review, student interviews, external examiners, capstone projects and simulations, among others. The art, communications, political science, Spanish, and theatre departments have developed such plans.

Student Development: The impact of a college is not limited to the classroom. While Core Curriculum and departmental major assessment is focused on knowledge and skill outcomes, student development assessment focuses on social and personal growth of students both inside and outside of the classroom. Surveys and opinionnaires are the primary methods of gathering data to assess student development. Data are collected from entering and graduating students each year to assess current attitudes and opinions as well as trends in that information.

Results of Assessment of Outcomes Core Curriculum

As our Assessment program matures, we have an ongoing commitment to use the data collected from tests, surveys, etc. to analyze trends and link results to the planning process. Teams of students, faculty, administrators, and staff have studied the data. Assurance of the quality and effectiveness of our Core Curriculum has been the result.

For example, the Core Curriculum study resulted in a consensus that what we teach in our Core fits our mission, but how we teach the Core and major courses and how students learn should be the focus. For that reason, several initiatives on campus are studying new approaches to involve students more effectively in the learning process.

