Guide to Submitting Administrative Assessment Reports

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Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE)

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Overview of Administrative Assessment

Administrative assessment is a systematic examination of division efficacy in achieving mission and goals. It is an ongoing process of self-improvement whereby units evaluate their work and use outcome data to improve services and operations over time. Paired with academic assessment which focuses on academic outcomes, administrative assessment contributes to a comprehensive understanding of Siena College's overall effectiveness in achieving its goals. This allows the institution's financial, physical, and personnel resources to be allocated responsibly and to the greatest effect. Finally, the assessment of both administrative and academic functions demonstrates Siena's compliance with accreditation standards and ensures quality across all aspects of the college.

Measuring performance among administrative units helps administrators and staff determine what strategies are or are not working as the units strive to achieve their goals. This process ultimately establishes a direction for improving quality and effectiveness of the unit's functions, as well as stakeholder satisfaction. Assessment benefits administrative units in the following aspects:

- Providing the administrative divisions and units a coherent and structured direction for work

- Providing administrators and staff a tool to document progress or challenges of projects and to communicate outcomes within and across units

- Helping leaders to make evidence-based decisions about resource allocation, program development, and other important issues

- Allowing administrative units to demonstrate accountability to the college community and therefore, help to build trust and credibility

- Helping administrators and staff communicate project outcomes and secure support from the college administration and other stakeholders

At Siena College, administrative units are encouraged to use a "self-regulation" approach to ensure program quality and effectiveness. That means administrative units set up their own missions and goals, continually assess and reflect on performance, identify areas for improvement, and take proactive actions to enhance effectiveness. This approach is consistent with Middle States Commission on Higher Education's requirement of self-study, which asks institutions to engage in an "in-depth, comprehensive, and reflective process" (MSCHE, Module 1, 2024).

Annual Assessment at Siena

While administrative units at Siena engage in an ongoing self-monitored assessment, they are also required to submit an annual assessment report which allows units to document project milestones and future plans. The completion of yearly reports not only provides accountability to external stakeholders, but provides the unit a means to self-reflect upon unit functionality, to the ultimate benefit of internal stakeholders. The unit receives formative feedback on this report

from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE). When combined, this reflection and feedback arms the unit with actionable steps they can take to further improve their efforts.

An essential component of the annual assessment is the unit mission statement. An administrative mission statement identifies the purpose, values, and essential characteristics of the functional area. It also describes how the unit contributes to the college mission and what primary functions it provides to benefit its constituents. The constituents which administrative offices serve vary, but they may include any combination of the following, or more: students, faculty, staff, families, alumni, or other Siena community members. Each administrative unit/office should develop a mission statement. The mission statement of a larger unit encompasses all of the functions within that unit. While the mission statements of the subunits are naturally derived from this broader mission, they are narrower and more focused in scope. A direct report area's mission and goals encompass the spirit of their reporting units' mission and goals. (Figure 1.)
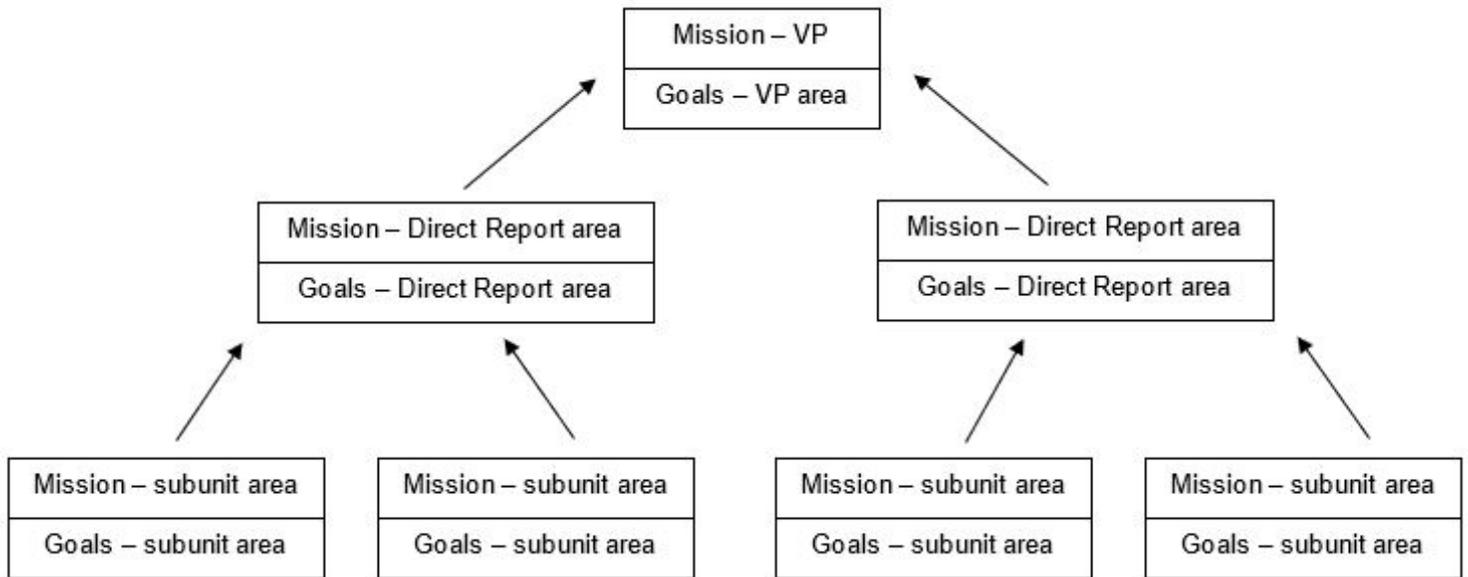

Figure 1. Structure of administrative unit mission and goals

Unit/office goals are also presented in the section of mission statement. Where the mission statement is broader and aspirational, the goals are directly related to the mission statement and describe in more specific language what the unit intends to achieve. Having a set of written goals helps to define the unit's direction and scope of operations. These goals generally remain the same over many years because they are developed from the unit's mission and mission tends to be stable. Like the unit mission, goals of the office should be developed collaboratively.

Units are required to identify at least one project in the annual report and describe how it supports their goals, but they can also report on more than one project. Note that these projects might address one specific piece of a goal, rather than the whole goal. Projects may vary in duration or scope. They could be small, short, and specific projects, or larger multi-year ones. Step-by-step instruction on report writing is provided in the next section of this handbook.

At Siena College, each administrative unit or sub-unit is encouraged to submit the annual assessment report (see the list of unit and sub-units in Appendix A) in December or July, depending on the office schedule. An administrator of the unit/office will submit the report via Etrieve. When submitted, the Etrieve form is routed to the supervisor. The report author and supervisor meet to discuss the results and information, after which the supervisor approves the form and it is automatically sent to OIE.

Once the report is delivered to OIE, OIE will review the report and meet with the authoring administrator to discuss it. They receive feedback from OIE which they can apply to their upcoming work. Final reports are posted on the college assessment website in the assessment repository. OIE administrators are available at any time of the year to consult with administrative units on all aspects of the assessment process. Depending on the stakeholder needs, OIE may also host assessment trainings for administrative units to share and discuss assessment ideas and their experiences.
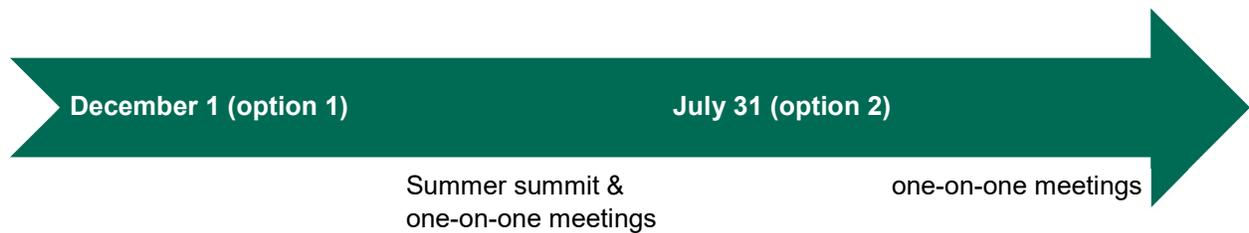
Figure 2. Units choose one of the two deadlines for submission depending on the office schedule, and OIE sets up follow-up meetings accordingly.

A Closer Look at the Administrative Assessment Report

This section provides a description and instruction of the five major sections on the annual report. A figurative representation of an assessment cycle for an administrative unit at Siena is presented. This representation also matches a general assessment cycle of establishing outcomes, planning procedures, collecting and analyzing data, discussing results, and determining impact (Suskie, 2018).

Figure 3. Units provide information about the five sections on the annual report.

Office Mission Statement and Goals. The assessment report starts with an office mission statement. A mission statement is an action-based statement that communicates the purpose, direction, and values of the unit. It serves as the foundation of an assessment plan. It should be concise and clearly aligned with the mission statement and core values of both Siena College and the supervisory unit.

To write a good mission statement, the units/office needs to include five elements. They are: 1) name of the office, 2) the primary purpose of the office, 3) primary functions or activities, 4) the office's stakeholders, and 5) reference to the college mission statement (OIE of Sweet Briar College, 2022). A basic template including these five elements could be: "The mission of (name of the office) is to (primary purpose) by providing (primary functions or activities) to (stakeholders). These activities support Siena's mission to (select phrase(s) from Siena mission statement)". Once you've developed an initial mission statement, you can edit it to sound less formulaic if you so desire. Below is the mission statement of the Office of Financial Aid at Nicholls State University, which serves as a good example:

> *The mission of the Office of Financial Aid is to increase opportunities for student access to and success in higher education by helping students and their families seek, obtain, and make the best use of all financial resources. Through financial literacy and guidance, we support incoming students in making a successful transition to college. Furthermore, we contribute to the University's retention efforts by providing on-going assistance to our continuing students to help make their academic endeavors attainable. While complying with Federal, State, and Institutional regulations and guidelines, we*

ensure equity and consistency in the delivery of funds to students (Nicholls State University, n.d.).

Developing a mission statement should be a collaborative effort involving the unit's leaders, administrators, and staff. Once the statement is finalized, the unit leaders should communicate it with everyone who joins the unit in the future, and otherwise work to infuse it into the unit's culture.

The next step is to identify office goals that are derived from the mission statement and focus on the primary functions, services, and activities of the unit. They are the overarching statements that turn the office mission into desired outcomes. However, goals should not only reflect what the office does, but how it does these things effectively and efficiently. Assessment measures the degree that a unit/office reaches its established goals. Some examples of goals developed from the mission statement displayed above are (Nicholls State University, n.d.):

1. Provide courteous and efficient service and financial aid support to students, faculty, administrative and auxiliary services to foster institutional effectiveness.

2. Assist qualified students in meeting their educational goals through effective utilization of scholarships and dissemination of scholarship retention information.

3. Distribute available financial assistance to as many eligible students as possible; many of whom might otherwise be unable to attend the University.

Annual Project. This section is related to the project for the year. Administrative units can choose to report on one project or several. To develop a project, units can pick a feature of the office goals and ask themselves what questions they most want to answer. Developing a "good" question is often more challenging than people expect. Good questions are specific, focused, and assessable.

With a particular project in mind, units will enter the office goal that the project supports. It is very likely that the project that is reported addresses a portion of the office goal rather than the whole goal, and this is to be expected.

Project Objectives. While goals are the broad and long-term statements that describe what the unit wants to achieve, objectives are the concrete and measurable activities that help to achieve the goals. On the assessment report, administrative units are asked to identify a project objective and describe how it relates to the office goals identified above. The objective will form the basis for the question the unit is attempting to answer with this assessment. These activities could be smaller and short duration projects, or larger, multi-year projects.

There are three types of objectives used in the administrative assessment. They are operational objectives, strategic objectives, and student learning objectives. Operational objectives focus on the unit's internal processes and functions. Units may report them to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the office. An example of an operational objective for a Human Resource Office could be: "Ensure eligible employees have the information they need to make appropriate decisions regarding employee benefits packages" (OIE of Sweet Briar College, 2022).

The second type is strategic objective and this describes expected results of a project initiated by the unit. Importantly, these strategic objectives are *not* the initiatives reported on the college strategic plan. Instead, the strategic objectives are the specific actions or services which serve

to fulfill the long-range unit goals. For example, a Registrar's Office could set up a strategic objective for the next year, such as "Over the next year, the Registrar's Office will improve student access to services by expanding hours of operation" (OIE of Sweet Briar College, 2022).

For some administrative units that interact with students, student learning objectives could also be documented and assessed. These objectives describe the knowledge, skills or abilities that students obtain through a learning experience. For example, "student will demonstrate understanding of test accommodations that ensure equal access and opportunities." Like other types of objectives, student learning objectives need to be closely tied to unit mission and goals. Administrative offices that have student learning goals will also have administrative goals. These offices should assess at least one administrative goal annually, and may or may not also choose to assess a learning goal.

Once the objective is established, units can go through the checklist below and modify the objective, or question, accordingly:

- Do you have any information that is already collected about this objective?
    - If no, consider forming the objective as a "what" question to gain a better understanding. For example, if the HR Office has not collected any data about employees' understanding of the benefits package, they may want to answer the question "What do employees know about the benefits package?" or "What part of the benefits package do employees report understanding the least?" and develop metrics to assess employee knowledge.
    - If yes, ask a "how" question to measure the effectiveness and change. If the office already has such information (e.g., survey responses, interviews, anecdotes from orientation, etc.), the objective would target to improve effectiveness, and that is improving employees' knowledge to make appropriate decisions in this context. For example, "How does providing in-person training sessions increase employee knowledge about the free career services included in the benefits package?" Assessment can be developed to measure this.

- Is the objective of the project specific and clear enough, such that you can measure with a single method and produce interpretable results?

Project Description. This section asks units/offices to describe the project plan and timeline. They also need to identity a method of measurement to benchmark progress, as well as the desired outcome. It is a good practice to keep the following questions in mind:

- What metrics do you plan to use to evaluate progress? What do those metrics tell you? Do they answer the question you posed in the last section?
- What evidence and data are collected? By whom, how, and how often?
- Are there related indicators/benchmarks in your profession that may be helpful?
- What does successful completion of this project look like?

Administrative units can choose what types of evidence to collect for their project. Evidence (data) can be categorized into four types: direct, indirect, quantitative, and qualitative. Direct evidence is the actual result of measurement from a unit's operations and processes while

indirect evidence is the perception relative to the outcome. Some examples of direct evidence could be service response time, error rates, or documents/policies review and modification, as opposed to indirect evidence like student/faculty feedback or surveys.

Quantitative evidence is the data that can be numerically represented and statistically analyzed (e.g., counts, percentage, means, etc.) while qualitative evidence involves open-ended responses that are generally analyzed into themes (Suskie, 2018). The table below displays some examples of each category of evidence.

Table 1. Examples of different categories of data (OIE of Marymount University, 2007)

	Direct	Indirect
Quantitative	Compile and count the number of errors on transcripts reported by students	Survey students on their perceptions of record accuracy
Qualitative	Review the policies used to maintain and update student records	Conduct a focus group of Registrar Office staff on accuracy issues

What type of data to collect is sometimes decided by the nature of the project objective, but often objectives can be assessed with more than one type of evidence. It is a good practice for the units to incorporate multiple types of evidence into an assessment plan, if applicable, to gain a fuller picture of overall effectiveness. Units should always keep in mind the question they are attempting to answer when considering the use of more than one type of measure, to make sure each measure directly addresses the question.

Results Analyses, Display, and Interpretation. Assessment data offer little value unless they are meaningfully analyzed and interpreted. Analyses of the collected data is primarily the responsibility of the units who are familiar with the work and services. It usually includes steps of organizing, synthesizing, interrelating, comparing, and interpreting assessment data. The approach taken to analyze the data is directly shaped by the type of data collected. For example, quantitative data could be analyzed using statistical tests, which don't necessarily have to be complicated. It could simply be an average score, percentage, count, or frequencies. Analyses of qualitative data aims to identify the themes or patterns generated from the collected words, comments, or narratives. Table 2 shows examples of methods that could be used to analyze each type of data, who will do the work, and the timeframe. As illustrated, this approach could be used by units as a tool to map out roles, responsibilities, and timeframe of data collection and analyses.

Table 2. Examples of analysis method for different categories of data (revised from OIE of Marymount University, 2007)

Collected Data	Analysis Method	Responsible Person	Timeframe
Compile and count the number of errors on transcripts reported by students	Develop an Excel spreadsheet to enter all errors, date	Associate Registrar will create and monitor spreadsheet. All staff will have	Start in Spring Semester and run through June

	identified, and solution	access to enter data.	
Review the policies used to maintain and update student records	Pull together all office procedures on updating records. Review for inconsistencies, errors, and holes	Registrar will conduct the analysis	Review to be completed in March
Survey students on their perceptions of record accuracy	Distribute student satisfaction survey and summarize themes from responses of open-ended questions	Transfer Credit Coordinator with work with OIE to analyze data	Survey questions due by March 1st Results available by June 1st.
Conduct a focus group of Registrar Office staff on accuracy issues	Transcribe interviewees' words and identify emergent themes	Graduate assistant will conduct focus group Transcript reviewed by Registrar and Associate Registrar	Focus group in March or April depending on other agenda items Review of comments in July

If the project spans multiple years, units can present results of the progress since the last report and describe the desired outcomes and future plans in the next section.

Once the data have been analyzed, the next step for the units is to compare the results to the previously identified benchmarks. These benchmarks could be an established baseline, existing standards or criteria, anticipated progress to date, or previous results.

The purpose of data collection and analyses is to gain a better understanding of the effectiveness of the unit's operations, not to reward or punish. Further, since ongoing self-improvement is not a finite process, meeting/not meeting a benchmark in and of itself is not the singular goal. Often, clear next steps to the project or refinements to the existing goals or methods are necessary. In both cases, the project would continue for another year (or longer) with refined methods, with each cycle of data collection revealing more information about the question.

Applying This Knowledge. A critical but often overlooked part of the assessment cycle is closing the loop. In "applying this knowledge," units answer questions about how they will use the assessment results to improve future performance. Results should be shared with the unit administrators, staff, and other stakeholders, and evidence-based changes should be made in a collaborative way. Each identified issue needs to have a follow-up action to improve effectiveness. For the goals that are met, units may either raise the benchmark or develop a plan for deeper investigation if they decide to set up a similar goal for next year's report.

Conclusion

Administrative units at Siena endeavor to provide quality programs, services, and learning experiences to students. They also face the pressure to demonstrate quality and effectiveness in their functional areas to community members as well as outside accreditors. Therefore, conducting administrative assessment, along with academic assessment, has become a fundamental responsibility of the college to obtain an overarching understanding of the community's effectiveness and service quality.

This guide includes information on administrative assessment and reporting as well as instructions and examples for completing annual administrative assessment reports. Improving the effectiveness of the administrative operations is a continuous process and should not be stopped at the point of report submission. With a reflective approach, the assessment practice will help administrative units to optimize their functions, support the college mission, and make important contributions to the success of Siena College.

References

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Appendix A. Administrative Units That Submit Assessment Reports

Academic Affairs

School of Business: School of Business Administration, Institute for Leadership Development, Stack Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (CIE)

School of Liberal Arts: School of Liberal Arts Administration, Center for the Study of Government and Politics, Franciscan Center for Catholic Studies (FCCS), Kieval Jewish-Christian Institute, McCormick Center for the Study of the American Revolution, WVCR The Saint Radio Station

School of Science: School of Science Administration, High Performance Computing Center, Siena College Institute for Artificial Intelligence, Stewart's Advanced Instrumentation and Technology (SAInT) Center

Student Academic Success and Engagement (SASE): Academic Success Center (ASC), Academic Community Engagement (ACE), Career and Internship Center, Center for International Programs, Center for Undergraduate Research and Scholarship Activity (CURCA), Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP), Siena Enhanced Educational Development (SEED), Writing Center, Standish Honors Program

Institutional Effectiveness: Assessment, Institutional Research

Information Technology Services: Academic Technology, Administrative Systems, Network and Systems, Information Security, User Services

Grants and Sponsored Research, Programs &Events, Library, Registrar's Office, Academic Administration

Athletics

Operations, External Relations, Admission and Advising

Development and Alumni Engagement

Alumni Engagement/Foundation and Corporate Grants, Stewardship and Donor Relations, Annual Fund, Major Gifts, Development Operations and Research

Enrollment and Marketing

Enrollment and Marketing, Financial Aid, Enrollment Management, Admissions

Finance and Administration

Facilities, Campus Space Planner, Human Resources, Finance, Business Services and Procurement, Risk Management

Mission Office

Sr. Thea Bowman Center for Women, College Chaplain, Laudato Si' Center, Damietta Cross-Cultural Center

Office of the President

College Counsel, Title IX Coordinator

Student Life

Dean of Students, Community Living, Student Activities and Leadership Development, Office of Accessibility/Veterans Services, Public Safety, Counseling and Student Development, Health Services

Strategy, Communication and Outreach

Communications and Public Affairs, Strategy Communications and Experience, Siena Research Institute

Administrative Assessment is an ongoing process whereby units evaluate and improve services and unit operations over time. This annual cycle allows units to document assessment plans, set and track progress toward goals, and evaluate the impact of changes they've made.

Report Year (drop down)

Division (drop down)

Vice President (drop down)

Reporting Unit (drop down)

Submitted by (short text box)

Office Mission Statement and Goals: Please enter the mission statement of the office, which serves as the foundation of an assessment plan. Also identify the goals that are derived from the mission statement and describe the primary functions, services, and activities of the office.

(text box)

Project 1: Please answer the questions below with one particular project in mind. (This is project focusing on a sub-goal within a larger office goal.) You can report on additional projects by clicking on the button "Add Project" to generate additional fields. Repeat this as often as necessary to report on all the projects you wish.

Office goal which this project supports: Enter the office goal that this project supports. It is very likely that the project you are reporting on addresses a portion of the office goal rather than the whole goal, and this is to be expected.

(text box)

Project objective: Briefly describe the rationale of the project and how this project helps to achieve the selected office goal.

(text box)

Is this a multi-year project? (drop down) y/n

(if yes) **What year is this?** (text box)

Project description: Briefly describe the project plan and timeline. What measures or benchmarks are being used to evaluate progress? What evidence and data are collected? By whom, how, and how often? What is the endpoint of this project? What does successful completion of this project look like? (If this is a multi-year project, authors may choose to focus only on the progress since the last report.)

 (text box)

Results to date: Present a summary of the most important themes of the data. Place the results in context with your stated benchmarks. (If this project is measuring the success of a previous change made as a result of assessment data, please note that.)

(text box)

Interpretation: Please describe what these data mean to you, what do they tell you about the project's progress? Have you encountered challenges that influenced progress? How have/will you overcome them? Did you select right benchmarks or metrics?

(text box)

Applying this knowledge: How do your findings impact your operational plans going forward? What adjustments will you make either to this project or the work of the office in the upcoming year? What differences do you expect to see as a result of these changes? How will you know if the changes are successful?

(text box)