

Institutional Effectiveness at SUNY New Paltz

Institutional effectiveness (IE) at SUNY New Paltz (New Paltz) engages systems and processes to measure the degree to which we are achieving our mission and goals. It also involves systematic collection, analysis, and use of data to inform planning and resource allocation considerations; decisions about students, their learning, and success; and to answer questions about overall institutional performance. Faculty, staff, and administrators—indeed the entire college community—all work toward fulfilling the College’s mission and goals. Everyone also engages in ongoing measurement of the degree to which we are achieving our mission and goals.

Planning at New Paltz

Evidence of our commitment to institutional effectiveness includes a strategic plan. This plan includes Seven Essential (Strategic) Initiatives as themes on which the College is focusing to position itself for continued success in meeting its mission and strategic goals. The themes are: nurturing innovation (including online); creating and sustaining a vibrant, diverse and inclusive living/learning community; strengthening philanthropic relationships; engaging alumni; telling the New Paltz story; improving institutional processes and capacity; and engaging the community and region. The strategic plan and its themes provide a structure for goal-setting, decision-making, and action across the campus about such important questions as:

1. Are we achieving our stated mission and goals?
2. Are students achieving educational success?
3. Are we ensuring efficient and effective use of resources (i.e., fiscal, physical, human, and technological)?

Planning and Assessment at New Paltz

The Strategic Plan and its implementation have set the stage for planning on our campus. Leading our planning efforts is the Cabinet, which is made up of the President and vice presidents representing the five divisions of the institution (i.e., Academic Affairs, Enrollment Management, Administration and Finance, Student Affairs, and Communication and Marketing). Using the lens of the Strategic Plan, the President sets the theme for the year through his State of the College address to the campus at the start of classes in the fall semester. Prior to that, the Cabinet meets weekly. During the summer, the Cabinet meets in a two-day retreat where members set divisional goals for the year based on strategic and operational needs. Each vice president submits and discusses these goals with the President and uses them to set the annual plan for their division. The vice presidents meet with their unit heads/Directors and use the goals established in Cabinet to develop unit goals for the year.

Planning and assessment are inextricably linked. Thus, the College’s wellbeing is measured each year by the President and Cabinet, in conjunction with the Strategic Planning and Assessment Council and the Associate Provost for Strategic Planning and Assessment. The mission and strategic plan goals are evaluated using data from academic and administrative divisions (see information in subsections below) regarding progress in meeting institutional and divisional goals. Aside from these reports and data sources, the Cabinet examines financial reports, IPEDS, NSSE, Graduating Senior Survey, Alumni Survey,

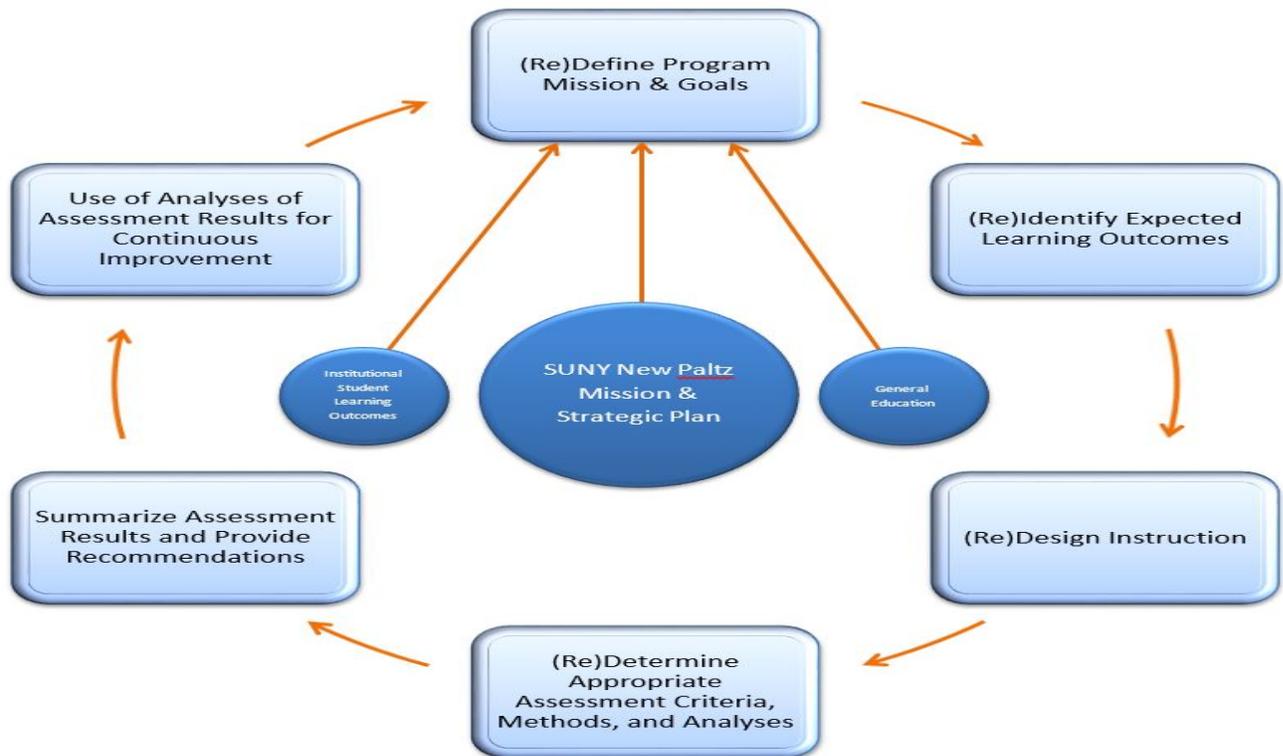
and planning documents (e.g., Academic Plan, Facilities and Master Plan, Instructional Technology Plan, Advancement Plan, and Sustainability Plan) in measuring the College’s health. The President updates the campus on the College’s accomplishments and well-being in his annual State of the College address. Progress reports are also disseminated to the College by the vice presidents and Associate Provost for Strategic Planning and Assessment, in collaboration with the Strategic Planning and Assessment Council.

Assessing Student Learning Outcomes

An important aspect of institutional effectiveness at New Paltz is our assessment of student learning outcomes at the institutional, general education (GE), academic program, and student support levels. These multiple levels of assessment foster examination of trends across students’ academic performance and their experiences, allow inferences to be drawn about students’ achievement and experiences, and enable departments to act on the information collected. By embracing an approach of overlapping SLOs at the institutional and program levels, and by centering assessment on student learning, the College is able to establish whether students are achieving learning goals. Students who engage in and achieve institutional learning outcomes are involved in intellectual explorations within general education (GE) and their majors. They also embrace opportunities encountered outside the classroom (e.g., through programming and activities promoted by Student Affairs and Residence Life).

Assessment of student learning takes place cyclically and follows an academic planning and assessment framework (APAF) that includes the components outlined in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Academic Planning & Assessment Framework



Taken together, the framework demonstrates a commitment to ongoing inquiry, growth, renewal, and continuous improvement. It conveys that, viewed as a channel for improvement, the **process** of assessment is as important as the **product**. Central to the APAF is the linking of assessment activities to programmatic mission and goals and to the College’s mission and Strategic Plan. Tying academic planning and assessment to the College’s mission and strategic initiatives conveys our commitment to creating, sustaining, and demonstrating an organized and visible culture of assessment. Assessment information is used as a medium for marshaling evidence to demonstrate the continuous improvement of the College and its students, programs, and support services.

Assessment in Administrative and Academic Support Areas

Institutional effectiveness entails continuous evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of administrative and academic support areas. In accordance, these divisions are expected to engage in planning and to assess their performance on an annual basis, following processes outlined in Figure 2. Divisions collect, analyze, use, and report results of their planning and assessment activities on an annual basis. The process is designed to benefit the unit, allowing for identification of outcomes and measures that are most useful to the unit. As data are collected and reviewed, the unit develops strategies for improvement based on unit level requirements. Making improvements that are necessary is what signifies an effective planning and assessment process.

Figure 2: Planning & Assessment Processes in Administrative & Academic Support Areas



Planning, Assessment, and Resource Allocation

Institutional effectiveness at New Paltz places fulfillment of the College's mission and Strategic Plan Essential Initiatives at the center of the three interrelated dimensions of planning, assessment, and resource allocation. Engagement in careful planning and use of reliable information to answer questions regarding institutional mission and strategic goals and priorities are important to institutional success. Likewise, careful planning entails appropriate allocation of resources in fulfillment of the College's mission and strategic goals. Planning and resource allocation are informed by examination and use of sound data.

Conclusion

Institutional effectiveness demands that we provide students the best education possible. At New Paltz, this involves the entire college collaborating to improve students' learning and their experiences. It entails a strong commitment to the goals and ideals of the College and performing daily work with excellence. It also means holding ourselves and each other accountable to accomplish institutional mission and strategic goals.