

**EXPANDING THE USE OF EVIDENCE ON STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES
 TO IMPROVE PROGRAMS AND PRACTICES**

Institution: St. Petersburg College

Address: P.O. Box 13489, St. Petersburg, FL 33733

Date: 09/15/2011

Institution Liaison: Kay Burniston

Title: Vice President, Baccalaureate Programs, Academic Effectiveness & University Partnerships

E-mail: burniston.kay@spcollege.edu

Phone: 727-341-3118

Institution Website: <http://www.spcollege.edu>

Student Learning Outcomes Website:
<http://it.spcollege.edu/edoutcomes/>

CURRENT INITIATIVES:

Institutional Effectiveness at St. Petersburg College

Given that student learning is the core of St. Petersburg College, developing and measuring effective student learning outcomes are the corner stone of the Institutional Effectiveness (IE) processes. Institutional Effectiveness is the integrated, systematic, explicit, and documented process of measuring performance against the SPC mission for the purposes of continuous improvement of academic programs, administrative services, and educational support services offered by the College. Operationally, the institutional effectiveness process ensures that the stated purposes of the college are accomplished. In other words, did the institution successfully execute its mission, goals, and objectives?

The overarching goal of SPC's institutional effectiveness process is improvement in student outcomes. The defined straightforward assessment process ensures a realistic consideration of the intended outcomes that the institution has set and an explicit evaluation of the evidence to determine to what extent the institution is achieving that intent.



While there are a number of SACS and state requirements related to assessment and evaluation, SPC as a highly functioning educational institution seeks to exceed accreditation and state requirements by adopting a philosophy of performance improvement throughout the college.

Evaluation and Assessment Processes

St. Petersburg College employs a variety of evaluation/assessment methods to improve the effectiveness of academic and co-curricular programs. Assessment and evaluation measures are used at various levels throughout the institution to provide the college community with vital information on how successful their efforts have been. The Evaluation and Assessment Processes are centered in the following areas:

- 29 organizational units comprising 39 academic programs (lower division),
- 9 Colleges and Schools comprising 24 baccalaureate programs (upper division), and
- Key administrative and educational support services.

Program Assessments include internally and externally developed direct measures for General Education (e.g., *Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress-MAPP*), AAS/AS Program Assessments, BAS/BS Program Assessments, Program Reviews). Academic/Services Assessments include indirect measures for [Entering Students](#), [Enrolled Students](#), [Graduating Students](#), [Recent Alumni](#), [Employer surveys](#), and [Community College Survey of Student Engagement \(CCSSE\)](#).

Assessing Student Learning Outcomes

While the focus of a particular assessment area may change, the assessment strategies remain consistent and integrated to the fullest extent possible. The General Education based assessments focus on the general learning outcomes from all degree programs, while [Program Review](#) looks at the viability of the specific academic programs. Each of the individual reports, while unique in their individual nature, is nevertheless written to address how the assessments and their associated action plans have improved learning in their program.

The [Educational Outcomes Assessment Reporting](#) process was initiated college-wide in 1999 and is centered on mission-driven outcomes. Academic effectiveness at SPC currently assesses all degree programs, as well as all student services to ensure students are provided the best support possible to ensure student success. Currently, the co-curricular programs are being integrated into the academic effectiveness assessment schedule. Analysis of outcome results is on-going and captured in various assessment reports. It is the intent of St. Petersburg College to incorporate continuous improvement practices in all areas. [Assessment reports](#) provide comparisons of present and past results which are used to identify topics where improvement is possible. SPC has used assessment reports as a vital tool in achieving its commitment to continuous improvement.

Using Evidence to Improve Student Learning

Academic and co-curricular programs are evaluated on a three-year cycle. Administrative and educational support services are evaluated annually. Results of college wide student surveys are further refined and augmented through additional departmental-specific assessments. These various college wide assessment results are then aggregated and presented to one of the four domain-specific oversight committees at the start of the planning year, closing the loop with the planning and budgeting processes. Analysis of outcome results is on-going and captured through various assessment reports.

Results from the Academic Program Assessment reports are aggregated each year and presented to the [Educational Oversight Group](#) for review ([2010 Educational Oversight Group Report](#)). The Educational Oversight Group develops action items in the annual [oversight group report](#) to address areas for improvement in the area of student learning outcomes. The complete reports (with the action items) are presented to the President's Cabinet. These recommendations are evaluated and are routinely summarized in the form of the [Institutional Initiatives](#) which are available on the [strategic direction website](#).

2010-2012 INITIATIVES:

The Student Life Plan Project

St. Petersburg College has developed the Student Life Plan Project. This project is intended to be a year-long institutional review of the steps that can be taken to promote student success through the following: 1) improve graduation rates; 2) reduce the number of unsuccessful grades awarded to students, specifically "W" grades; 3) develop strong support systems to guide students toward successful academic performance and behaviors that will translate into additional success after graduation; 4) Refine the college's many support initiatives to better align the available resources with student needs; 5) Develop engagements and interactions that are much more timely in their

delivery to students; and 6) Develop strong systems that require students to take more responsibility for their success, in close partnership with the college.

St. Petersburg College is focused on improving student outcomes and increasing successful completions. Other colleges dealing with the same troubling pattern of students failing to successfully complete courses have adopted policies to confront the problem. Many of these policies entail the establishment of a maximum number of withdrawals that a student can obtain while seeking a degree. One potential downside of such policies is that withdrawals beyond the maximum permissible are converted to “F” grades with a long-term punitive impact. The Life Plan Project will be designed to proactively address this issue without a punitive impact for students.

The Life Plan Project is premised on the college strengthening a number of existing support features:

1. Out of class learning support – ensuring that the college has a full range of strong out of class learning support and also that faculty are infusing the support into the course pedagogy;
2. Early warning systems that faculty can employ when they perceive non-successful behaviors in their students; these interventions need to count on the faculty as the “eyes and ears” and the learning support and student development staff as the quick respondents;
3. Online, robust individualized student learning plans – this tool needs to be the core vehicle for students
 - a. to develop a plan for going through the college,
 - b. to access the full range of needed support to assist in the execution of that plan,
 - c. to communicate with the college;
 - d. to monitor their progress in proceeding to their desired goal;
 - e. for modeling the impact of changes in the goals or the enrollment patterns to achieve the goal;
 - f. to become the repository of all information and guidance provided by the college through its representatives
4. Improved student support systems that encourage, allow and support much higher levels of student self-direction.