



**Institutional Effectiveness Plan**

**With User Guidelines (AY 2019-2020)**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction: What is IE and Why is It Important?.....	p. 1
Chapter I: Understanding the Relationship Between IE, Planning, & Assessment....	p. 2
The IE Cycle.....	p. 2
Step 1: Establishment of Mission and Goals.....	p. 3
Step 2: Development of Unit Assessment Plans.....	p. 4
Step 3: Assessment Activities.....	p. 5
Step 4: Use of Results and Closing the Loop.....	p. 8
Chapter II: Implementing and Monitoring IE.....	p. 10
Advancing Change: Moving from Siloed to Integrated.....	p. 10
Ramapo’s Model of IE.....	p. 11
Institutional Effectiveness Council (IEC).....	p. 12
General Education Committee (GECCo).....	p. 13
College-Wide Academic Assessment Committee (CWAAC).....	p. 14
Administrative Assessment Committee (AAC).....	p. 15
Strategic Resources Allocation Board (SRAB).....	p. 16
Closing:.....	p. 17
Appendices: User Guidelines	
A. Mission, Vision, Values.....	p. A – 1
B. Roles and Calendar for Various Assessment Units.....	p. B – 1
C. Academic Assessment Tips and Resources.....	p. C – 1
D. Administrative Assessment Tips and Resources.....	p. D – 1

## INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

### **What is Institutional Effectiveness?**

Institutional Effectiveness (IE) is defined as the extent to which an institution achieves its mission and goals. At Ramapo College of New Jersey, Institutional Effectiveness manifests as a systematic, cyclical, and documented process of:

- strategic planning;
- assessment of administrative and academic outcomes at the Institutional, Unit, and Program levels; and
- data-informed decision making.

Further, campus-wide implementation and awareness of IE ensures that the College's organizational activities are mission-driven and contribute to its success.

### **Why is the Institutional Effectiveness Plan important?**

The purpose of an Institutional Effectiveness Plan is to articulate the systematic, cyclical, and documented processes that contribute to the College's institutional effectiveness. A well-designed and fully implemented IE Plan is important because it facilitates the prioritized allocation of and the efficient and effective use of resources in furtherance of the College's Mission. To this end, this IE Plan describes:

- the College's strategic planning processes;
- the methods employed to establish clear and measureable outcomes;
- the essential ingredients of meaningful and effective assessment; and
- the manners in which academic and administrative Units and the College-at-large should use assessment results to inform decision making, contribute to continuous improvement and greater learning, and advance the College's overall operational efficiencies and effectiveness.

## CHAPTER I: UNDERSTANDING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN IE, PLANNING & ASSESSMENT

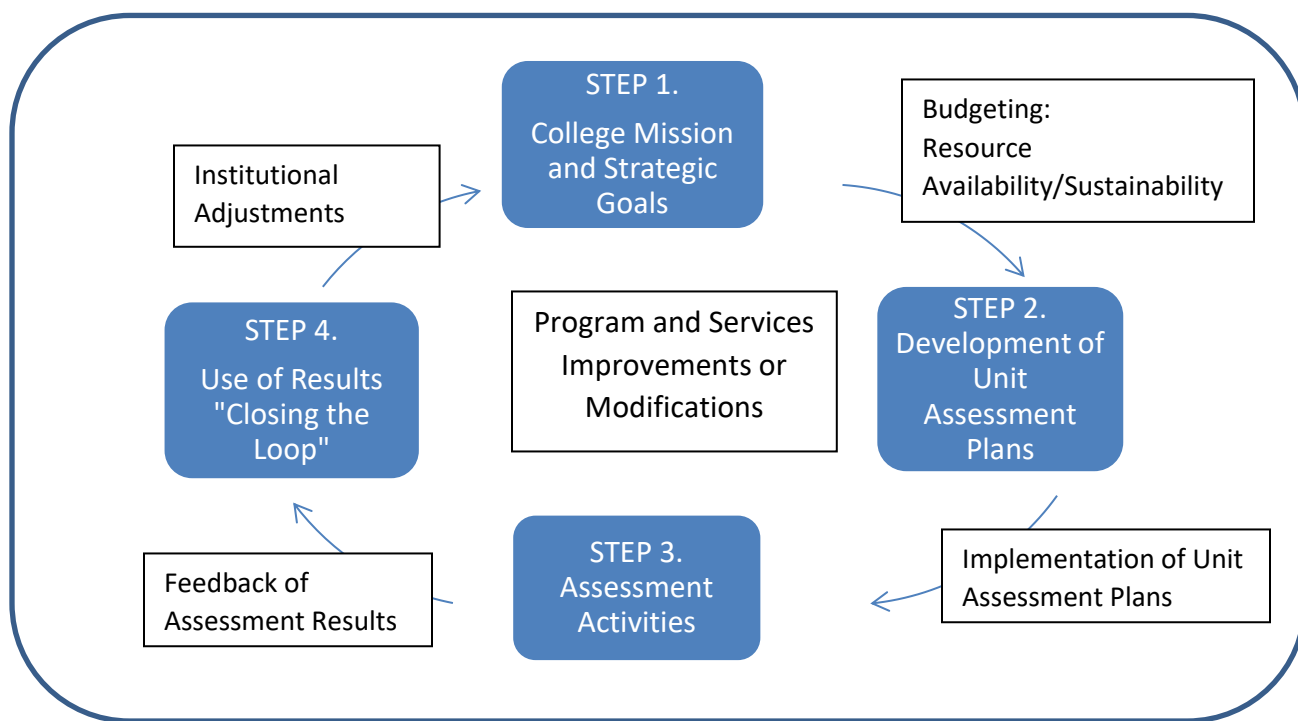
Institutional Effectiveness (IE) is broadly defined as the extent to which Ramapo College achieves its mission and goals. More specifically, IE provides context to answer and/or reaffirm the following:

- Who are we as a College?
- What are we trying to accomplish?
- How well we are doing?
- How can we improve and continuously learn from what we are doing?

The College is able to answer these questions by demonstrating its effectiveness, which requires sharing actual evidence of continuous improvement and learning with the campus. The College obtains this evidence by executing its comprehensive IE Plan, one component of which is meaningful assessment.

### The Institutional Effectiveness Cycle

The Nichols' Model<sup>1</sup> of Institutional Effectiveness has been adopted by Ramapo to establish an "effectiveness cycle," which is a continuous, looped process of goal setting, planning, assessment, and use of results as depicted in the graphic below.



<sup>1</sup> James O. Nichols and Karen W. Nichols. *The Department Head's Guide to Assessment Implementation in Administrative and Educational Support Units*. New York: Agathon Press.

As defined earlier and demonstrated in the graphic above, the IE cycle is an ongoing looped process of monitoring and assessing performance in order to continuously improve and learn. At its broadest conception, the cycle reveals how well the College is doing in delivering on its mission. More specifically, it reveals to what extent and how well a Unit is contributing to the College's capacity to deliver on its mission.

### STEP 1. Establishment of College Mission and Strategic Goals

Historically, the College's Mission has been assessed as part of its major strategic planning exercises, and that assessment has shaped the content of recent Strategic Plans. Recent Strategic Plans have adhered to the following six characteristics:

1. developed and advanced by a representative body;
2. encompassing periods covering 3 to 5 years;
3. reflective of mission assessment at the outset of development;
4. considerate of internal and external influences;
5. inclusive of measurable goals and outcomes; and
6. assessed, minimally, on an annual basis.

#### *Strategic Plan 2014-2018*

The Strategic Plan 2014-2018 was completed by a Task Force of twenty-five members including students, faculty, staff, administrators and members of the Board of Trustees. The planning process was characterized by thoughtful deliberation, iterative communication and revision, and input from a broad array of community members. Taking almost two years to complete, the starting point of Plan development was to rewrite the College's Mission Statement with the newly revised version serving as the focus of the Plan's goals and objectives. This living document guided the work of the College over the past five years, and annual assessments of the Plan helped shape and prioritize decisions about programming, planning, and resource allocation across all Divisions.

#### *Strategic Plan 2018-2021: Fulfilling Our Promise*

In Spring 2018, the Cabinet evaluated the progress made by the College in achieving the goals outlined in its 2018 Strategic Plan and concluded, with support and input of the Board of Trustees, the President

of the Faculty Assembly, and the President of the Student Government Association, that substantial progress continue under a revitalization of the 2014-2018 Plan.

Following the College's shared governance protocols, a representative Task Force on Extending the 2014-2018 Strategic Plan was charged with making recommendations on adding, continuing, modifying, or closing out individual objectives and outcomes within the then-current Strategic Plan in order to extend work toward modified goals for an additional three years. The findings and recommendations of the Task Force were furnished in Summer 2018. Additional decisions were thereafter made to strengthen the revitalized Plan; these largely included recognizing "innovation" as an institutional priority and, in turn, establishing a new goal to advance innovation. In addition, a visual mapping of the Plan's associated key performance indicators was developed in a supplemental document entitled *Dashboard 2021*.

Future strategic planning exercises at the College should continue to reflect the six characteristics described above. The College recognizes that doing so promotes consistency and clarity in operationalizing Strategic Plan goals and outcomes at the Unit level.

## STEP 2. Development of Unit/Program Assessment Plans

Unit planning at Ramapo College is strategic and process-oriented, and it flows from the College's Mission and Strategic Plan. Unit planning serves to identify what actions must be taken to ensure a Unit is delivering on its own mission and advancing the College's broader goals. Academic and administrative Units contribute to Institutional Effectiveness by developing and aligning their Unit/Program plans, with considered attention given to their Unit-/Program-level outcomes, to the College's broad institutional outcomes, which are specified in the Strategic Plan.

The Unit/Program planning process flows as follows:

**1. Units/Programs establish/review their mission, purpose, and outcomes to ensure congruency with the College's Mission and Strategic Plan.**



**2. Units/Programs develop an annual plan which details the necessary human, financial, technological, and space resources to achieve the desired outcomes therein.**



**3. Implemented Unit/Program plans guide the allocation of resources and priorities to assess the effectiveness of the Unit/Program and to gauge the extent to which a Unit/Program is delivering on its mission, clear in its purpose, achieving its outcomes, and contributing to the success of the College.**



**4. Units/Programs apply what they have learned to inform their Unit/Program plans in the next cycle.**



Plans are captured in SPOL (i.e., Strategic Planning Online software). The seven essential elements of Unit plans are:

- 1) Unit/Program purpose/mission: Why does the Unit/Program fundamentally exist?
- 2) outcomes: What is the Unit/Program trying to achieve?
- 3) tasks: How will the Unit/Program achieve the outcome?
- 4) measures: What evidence will characterize the Unit's/Program's work?
- 5) targets: How will the Unit/Program know it is performing in a sufficiently effective manner?
- 6) findings: To what degree is the Unit/Program effective?
- 7) use of results: What did the Unit/Program learn? How will the Unit/Program use the findings to improve its effectiveness or efficiency?

### STEP 3. Assessment Activities

Assessment, whether academic or administrative, is the systematic and on-going process of collecting, interpreting, and acting on information related to the goals and outcomes developed to support the College's Mission<sup>2</sup>.

---

<sup>2</sup> Trudy W. Banta, Elizabeth A. Jones and Karen E. Black. *Designing Effective Assessment*. San Francisco: Josey- Bass.

The four main purposes of assessment are:

1. *To Improve* – The assessment process should provide feedback to determine how the institution can continuously improve and learn.
2. *To Inform* – The assessment process should inform decision makers of the Unit's contributions in advancing the College's Mission and should highlight, when applicable, the efficient and effective use of resources in doing so.
3. *To Prove* – The assessment process should demonstrate exactly what the Unit is accomplishing for students, faculty, staff or external community members.
4. *To Support* – The assessment process should support and provide information for campus internal decision-making activities such as Unit review and strategic planning, as well as external accountability activities such as accreditation processes.

As the third step of the IE Model, assessment includes:

- defining clearly articulated institutional, learning, and Unit/Program-level outcomes;
- implementing tasks and strategies to advance the achievement of those clearly-defined outcomes; and
- assessing extent of achievement of outcomes through the identification and implementation of measures and the establishment of associated targets to yield formative and/or summative findings.

The benefits of academic and administrative assessment are well-founded, and a few examples of such benefits are presented in the table below.

Benefits of Academic Assessment	Benefits of Administrative Assessment
<b><i>Targeted Instruction</i></b> Because assessment can provide information about the knowledge and skills students already have as they enter a course, faculty can design and implement instruction and curricular opportunities to support development and achievement of the level-appropriate knowledge and skills students should have upon successful completion of the course.	<b><i>Targeted Service Delivery and Stewardship</i></b> Because assessment can provide information about the knowledge, skills, abilities, etc. students have as they enter the College, Units can design and deliver appropriate services and programs to address the needs of students in a manner that optimally advances achievement.



Benefits of Academic Assessment	Benefits of Administrative Assessment
<p><b><i>Shared Learning</i></b> Because assessment can make available richer data related to the effects of the curriculum or of particular pedagogical methods, faculty can engage in productive data-informed conversations about the extent of student achievement and make better decisions about how to realize greater student learning and/or performance.</p>	<p><b><i>Shared Learning</i></b> Because assessment can make available richer data about the effects of particular student retention and development initiatives and efforts, Units can engage in productive data-informed conversations about the extent of student achievement and make better decisions about how to improve student engagement, retention and success.</p>
<p><b><i>Thinking Differently</i></b> Because assessment can provide reliable data related to instruction, faculty can make data-informed decisions about innovations or pilot projects in instruction and share positive outcomes and/or scale successful initiatives more easily.</p>	<p><b><i>Thinking Differently</i></b> Because assessment can provide reliable data related to student satisfaction, achievement, and campus climate, Units can make data-informed decisions about innovations, staffing, services, and programming, and share positive outcomes and/or scale successful initiatives more easily.</p>
<p><b><i>Professional Fulfillment</i></b> Because assessment can provide evidence of the extent to which faculty make a difference in student learning, faculty can enjoy greater satisfaction in their work as educators and can reflect on their level of effectiveness.</p>	<p><b><i>Professional Fulfillment</i></b> Because assessment can provide evidence of the extent to which all campus employees contribute to the College's capacity to advance student achievement and success, employees can enjoy greater satisfaction in their work as higher education professionals and can reflect on their level of effectiveness.</p>
<p><b><i>Informed Pedagogy</i></b> Because assessment can offer a more encompassing view of student needs and accomplishments, faculty can identify directions for future instructional and curricular development.</p>	<p><b><i>Informed Planning</i></b> Because assessment can offer a more encompassing view of student and institutional needs and accomplishments, all campus employees can identify directions for future improvements in the delivery and stewardship of services, programs, and institutional resources.</p>

### *Markers of Meaningful and Effective Assessment*

The benefits described in the table above are only gleaned when assessment is meaningful and, in turn, effective.

Assessment is meaningful when:

- It reflects an understanding of improvement and learning as multi-dimensional, integrated, and revealed in performance over time;
- The Unit/Program genuinely strives to improve and learn and has clearly and explicitly stated objectives;
- It is ongoing and not episodic;
- Perspectives from a representative sample of constituents across the institution are involved;
- It is one component of a larger institutional culture that promotes and demystifies change;
- Education professionals are better enabled to meet their responsibilities to students, colleagues, and the public; and
- It is shared.

Assessment is effective when:

- It is meaningful;
- A group of individuals from the Division, Unit, School, or Convening Group participate in and collaborate on creating measures and objectives;
- Divisions, Units, Schools, and Convening Groups, throughout the planning cycle, remain focused on their effectiveness measures; and
- The findings (i.e., what is learned from or improved upon from assessment) are broadly shared, embraced, and even celebrated.

### **STEP 4. Use of Results and Closing the Loop**

The “Use of Results,” as step four in the IE cycle, is when the “loop is closed.” The use of results step captures what was learned from the findings, and how the findings were used to achieve, maintain, modify, or discontinue the outcome. Closing the loop advances the College’s ability to improve programs, learning, and services and to inform planning and resource allocation decisions.

Results are of most use when they are:

- presented simply (e.g., charts and graphs);
- show trends over time;
- distinguish between statistically or substantively significant and insignificant differences;
- are considered along with other relevant data; and
- are shared among diverse stakeholders and used as a tool for facilitating discussion about continuous improvement of and learning in curriculum, programs, services, etc.

When applicable, use of results may lead to the creation of a purposeful action plan for the next planning cycle.

## CHAPTER II: IMPLEMENTING & MONITORING INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

The process of monitoring effectiveness requires the College to re-conceptualize its often “silo-ed” operations. Like Ramapo, most colleges are made up of individual Units operating relatively independently of one another. Each Unit has its own responsibilities and may compete with other Units for its share of resources.<sup>3</sup>

### Advancing Change: Moving from “Silo-ed” to Integrated

In September 2005, the Commission on the Future of Higher Education, published *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education*. This publication proposed several solutions to the problems facing higher education, which corresponded to the four primary concerns of the Commission: access, affordability, quality and accountability. Demands for accountability were a focus of President Obama’s 2012 State of the Union Address, in which he stated, “We can’t just keep subsidizing skyrocketing tuition; we’ll run out of money. States need to do their part by making higher education a higher priority in their budgets...and colleges and universities have to do their part by working to keep costs down. So let me put colleges and universities on notice: If you can’t stop tuition from going up, the funding you get from taxpayers will go down.” In response to these warnings, higher education is engaged in developing processes and policies that demonstrate accountability, which include:

- strategic planning and measuring institutional effectiveness;
- determining the value of a college education through assessment of student learning outcomes; and
- evaluating the efficiencies of administrative operations.

It became apparent through the College’s major strategic planning exercises that Ramapo College, too, must be responsive to calls for heightened accountability and affordability, and the only way to succeed in this regard has involved systemic college-wide operational change. To this end, advancing change at Ramapo requires recognizing that nearly all institutional change must be:

- demystified and embraced;
- informed by data; and
- integrated into planning and assessment processes and cycles.

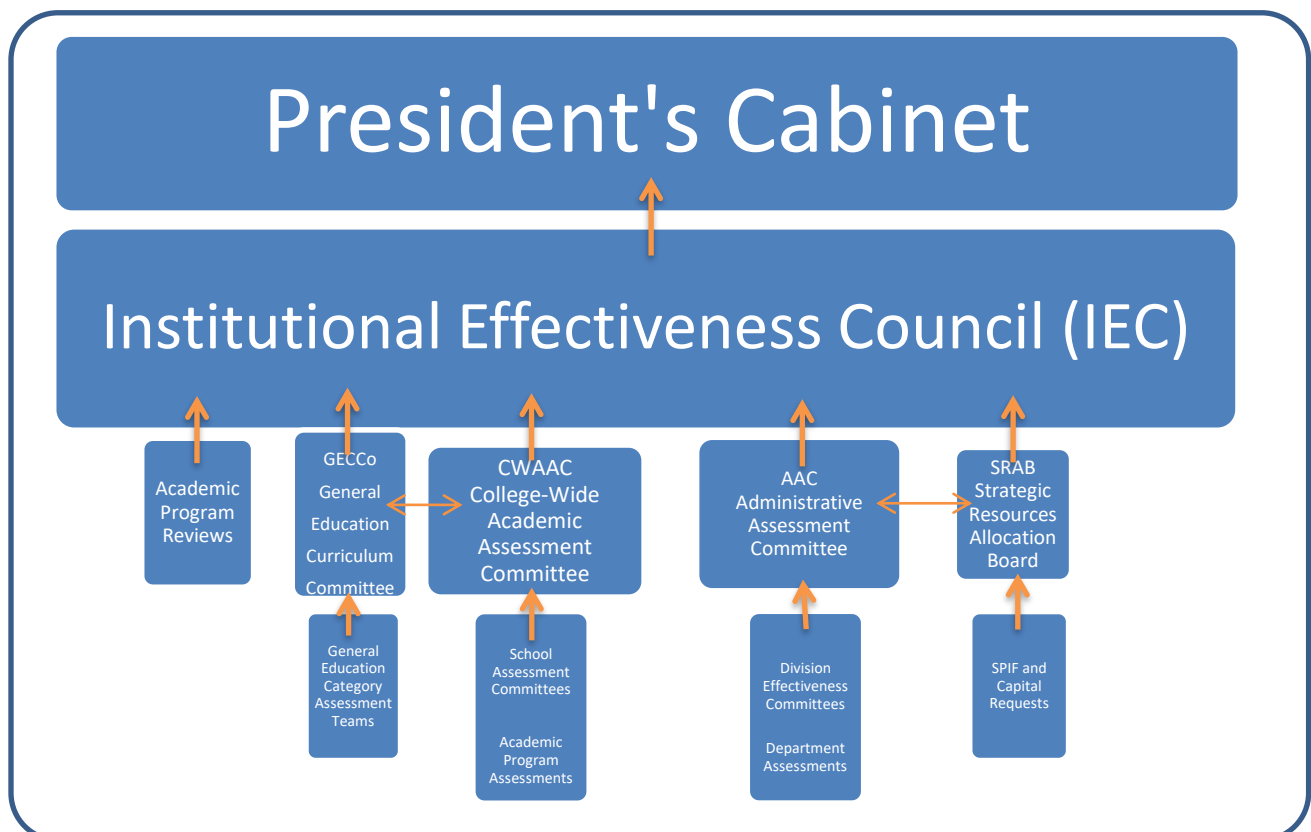
---

<sup>3</sup> Adrianna Kezar (2005) *Moving from I to, reorganizing for collaboration in higher education*, *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 37:6, 50-57, DOI: [10.3200/CHNG.37.6.50-57](https://doi.org/10.3200/CHNG.37.6.50-57).

Carrying these three requisites forward, disparate Units across campus must be connected, working together and, to the degree possible, dependent upon one another<sup>3</sup>. This is where challenges can arise in a frequently silo-ed environment, and this is why a mechanism to integrate planning and assessment efforts across the institution has been created and must be adhered to. While a cogent and broadly advanced Strategic Plan can guide such change, it requires the ballast of an Institutional Effectiveness Plan that steadfastly incorporates and emphasizes meaningful assessment to ensure a sustainable and nimble integration of suitable Units.

### Ramapo's Model of Institutional Effectiveness (IE)

During Fall 2018, the Middle States Steering Committee was charged with reviewing the College's Institutional Effectiveness Plan. Ramapo's [2012 Institutional Effectiveness Plan](#) had served as a guiding document for much of the College's efforts in this regard. A review of the 2012 IE Plan revealed, however, that it merited updating and strengthening and, as a result, this Plan and the refreshed model herein, was developed in academic year 2019-2020. The refreshed model, which is described in detail below, was shared with and supported by the Middle States Steering Committee, the President's Cabinet, and the Mission Fulfillment Committee of the Board of Trustees. This IE model borrows proven elements from Nichols's IE Model and the 2012 IE Plan and introduces a new Institutional Effectiveness Council (IEC) and a new Administrative Assessment Committee (AAC).



### *The Institutional Effectiveness Council (IEC)*

The Institutional Effectiveness Council (IEC) is co-chaired by the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and the Director of Institutional Research. IEC membership includes the Chairpersons of GECCo, CWAAC, SRAB, and the AAC<sup>4</sup>. The IEC monitors and attempts to synthesize the annual activities of GECCo, CWAAC, SRAB, and AAC in order to demonstrate the College's united goal of institutional effectiveness. The formal charge of the IEC is to:

- provide an institution-wide assessment vision for Ramapo College by facilitating and supporting College-wide assessment and institutional effectiveness planning efforts by ensuring the presence of sufficient assessment plans across the College and their alignment with the College's Mission and Strategic Plan;
- review the assessment findings from all College Units to ensure continued adherence to best practices, use of adequate assessment measures, evidence of loop closing, implemented reassessment efforts, and compliance with accreditation requirements;
- organize assessment training and facilitate events, which are primarily designed to foster a sustainable culture of assessment and continuous improvement on campus, including the development, implementation, and review of policies and procedures for college-wide effectiveness and assessment;
- analyze assessment findings and provide institutional leadership with data-informed recommendations on institutional priorities and resource allocation; and
- share exemplary plans, findings, and close-the-loop activities with the college community, inviting the entire campus to celebrate successes and share conclusions especially on innovations and best practices.

The timeline for the work that IEC is responsible for completing includes preparing and sharing with Cabinet no later than November 30<sup>th</sup> a high-level summary that includes actionable recommendations based on the comprehensive review of prior year assessment findings and preparing and sharing with Cabinet no later than December 31<sup>st</sup> a report on how effective the institution is (i.e., the health of the institution from a Strategic Plan assessment point of view). These reports will also contain

---

<sup>4</sup> The Co-Chairs of IEC were intentionally chosen to balance and provide equal weight to academic and administrative assessment efforts. The Vice Provost for Academic Programs is also co-chair of SRAB and regularly attends GECCo and CWAAC meetings, and the Director of Institutional Research is also the co-chair of AAC and is a member of CWAAC.

recommendations on what training is needed and a calendar of all assessment- and effectiveness-related workshops, educational sessions, events, and activities.

### *The General Education Curriculum Committee (GECCo)*

The General Education Curriculum Committee (GECCo) is a Faculty Assembly Standing Committee that:

- provides faculty-driven, holistic oversight of the General Education (GE) curriculum;
- develops and implements and ongoing GE assessment plan on a multi-year cycle; and
- advocates for the GE Program.

GECCo makes recommendations about changes to the GE curriculum to the Academic Review Committee (ARC) and reports to the Faculty Assembly via the Faculty Assembly Executive Council.

GECCo consists of the Directors of Critical Reading and Writing, Studies in the Arts and Humanities, First-Year Seminar, and Social Science and Inquiry (i.e., GE courses), as well as the Coordinators for Historical Perspectives, Quantitative Reasoning, Scientific Reasoning, Global Awareness, Culture and Creativity, Values and Ethics, and Systems, Sustainability, and Society (i.e., GE categories), and the Vice Provost for Academic Programs. For balance, each academic School has no fewer than two members on GECCo, and the Library has no fewer than one GECCo member. If the Coordinators/Directors above do not reflect this distribution, at-large representatives are elected by the Units in order to meet the School/Library minimums. Each School cannot have more than three members amongst the Coordinators.

Each Director or Coordinator may form a Curriculum Assessment Team (CAT), composed of faculty (full-time or adjunct) who teach the course or teach in the category. The CAT will be responsible for helping to develop the assessment plan and assisting in the production of an assessment report. These reports are posted on the GECCo website and presented in an appropriate setting (e.g., Faculty Assembly meeting, Unit Council meeting, Faculty Development Day) by the GECCo Chairperson, Director, or Coordinator. Further details related to GECCo may be found at <https://www.ramapo.edu/fa/gecco/>.

### *The College-Wide Academic Assessment Committee (CWAAC)*

Originally established in 2010 as the College-Wide Assessment Committee (CWAC), the College-Wide Academic Assessment Committee's (CWAAC's) current charge is to oversee all non-GE academic assessment performed at the College, as well as to provide assessment-related feedback to GECCo.

CWAAC committee members include the Chairperson of GECCo (which assesses the GE Program at Ramapo), a representative from the Library (which assesses information literacy), the Director of Institutional Research, and the School Assessment Coordinators who chair School Assessment Committees (which coordinate assessment conducted by Convening Groups). Convening Groups assess student learning in the undergraduate academic majors and minors and in the graduate programs on an annual basis. Further CWAAC-related information including Committee membership information, documents that depict or describe the assessment process at Ramapo College, assessment resources, and more are accessible via the CWAAC homepage, <https://www.ramapo.edu/assessment/committee/>.

### **School Assessment Committees**

Each School Assessment Committee (SAC), comprised of faculty from the School, oversees and coordinates assessment activities conducted within the School. The Chairperson of each SAC, who is also the School Assessment Coordinator, serves on the College-Wide Academic Assessment Committee (CWAAC). Specific SAC activities include, but are not limited to, the following:

- work with Convening Groups to ensure alignment of Program goals and outcomes with institutional (i.e., general education) learning goals;
- organize and/or facilitate School assessment activities such as course syllabi audits, assessment measure selection or creation, and assessment retreats; and
- review Program-level assessment plans and findings reports to provide peer feedback, to promote collaboration, and to determine overall progress made towards achieving School goals.

In addition, SAC members distribute themselves among the Convening Groups in the School so that individual SAC members can work closely with one or more Convening Groups to establish and/or revise Program learning goals and outcomes, to map Program goals and outcomes to Program-required courses, and to plan, implement, and evaluate Program Reviews. The



Chairperson of each SAC works regularly with all Convening Groups in the School on all assessment-related activities. Further information on SAC including responsibilities and membership information is accessible via the CWAAC homepage, <https://www.ramapo.edu/assessment/committee/>.

### *Administrative Assessment Committee*

The Administrative Assessment Committee (AAC) was established in 2019. Under the leadership of the Director of Institutional Research and the Chief of Staff, the AAC includes members from various College Divisions whose functions lend themselves to enterprise-wide perspectives, systems knowledge, assessment, and/or data analysis. Somewhat mirroring the successful CWAAC model, AAC members convene Division Effectiveness Committees (DECs) which coordinate assessment across Divisions at the Unit level. AAC's charge is to:

- work with administrative Units to identify and implement meaningful, efficient, effective, and sustainable assessment practices that contribute to a culture of continuous improvement and learning; and
- review institutional data (including surveys) to coordinate or to implement, as necessary, efforts that advance institutional effectiveness.

Further information on the AAC is as follows:

- AAC membership may be found on the AAC homepage, <https://www.ramapo.edu/assessment-committee/>; and
- the AAC rubric and other resources may be found at <https://www.ramapo.edu/assessment-committee/resources-for-aac-dec/>.

### **Division Effectiveness Committees**

Division Effectiveness Committees (DECs) were established in 2019 and are convened and led by AAC members. Specific activities of DECs include, but are not limited to:

- coordinating the assessment activities for various administrative Units across Divisions;
- reviewing institutional goals and ensuring Units align their goals and outcomes with institutional goals and outcomes;
- reviewing assessment plans and findings from various Units and providing peer feedback, promoting collaboration, identifying resources to support assessment

activities/efforts, and determining overall progress made towards achieving institutional goals;

- reviewing institutional assessment data and collaborating with AAC members to coordinate or to implement, as necessary, assessments of Unit goals; and
- contributing to periodic Assessment Briefs and to the College's assessment webpages and suggesting other assessment-related resources.

Further information on DEC's is as follows:

- DEC membership may be found at <https://www.ramapo.edu/assessment-committee/membership/>; and
- the DEC rubric and other resources may be found at <https://www.ramapo.edu/assessment-committee/resources-for-aac-dec/>.

#### *The Strategic Resources Allocation Board (SRAB)*

The Strategic Resources Allocation Board (SRAB) was established in 2017. SRAB members include representatives from across the College whose functions generally have an institution-wide presence and impact. SRAB maintains a Frequently Asked Questions section on its webpage (i.e., <https://www.ramapo.edu/iep/strategic-resources-allocations-committee/>) to guide Ramapo employees who wish to request Strategic Priority Initiative Fund (SPIF) monies and/or Capital funding through its processes. SRAB's charge is to:

- review Strategic Priority Initiative Fund (SPIF) and Capital funding requests and make prioritized recommendations based on alignment with the College's Mission and Strategic Plan, as well as other important criteria;
- consider metrics, measures, and outcomes in making strategic SPIF and Capital funding allocation recommendations; and
- share recommendations in order of priority with Cabinet for approval and action.

Further information on SRAB including the role and function of the Board, its membership, and details related to the process for requesting and being awarded SPIF or Capital funds may be accessed via the SRAB homepage, <https://www.ramapo.edu/iep/strategic-resources-allocations-committee/>.

## CLOSING

Institutional Effectiveness planning is a foundational element of a healthy institution. At Ramapo College, robust implementation of IE activities allow for close monitoring of the extent of achievement of and improvement in the execution of strategic plan goals, provide a high-level overview of campus-wide administrative and academic assessment efforts, and create a solid footing to support a strong culture of data-informed decision making at Ramapo. IEC priorities include holistically reviewing assessment study findings, making actionable recommendations on college-wide priorities to Cabinet, observing progress made toward achieving Strategic Plan goals, determining the degree to which a widespread assessment culture exists on campus, and identifying training and support needs to improve said culture.

## APPENDICES/USER GUIDELINES

### A. MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES

#### *Mission*

Ramapo College is New Jersey's Public Liberal Arts College, dedicated to providing students a strong foundation for a lifetime of achievement. The College is committed to academic excellence through interdisciplinary and experiential learning and international and intercultural understanding. Ramapo College emphasizes teaching and individual attention to all students. We promote diversity, inclusiveness, sustainability, student engagement, and community involvement.

#### *Vision*

As the region's premier public liberal arts college, Ramapo College of New Jersey prepares students to be successful leaders for a changing world through its distinctive commitments to hands-on learning and faculty-student mentoring.

#### *Values*

Ramapo College is the Public Liberal Arts College of the state of New Jersey. The work of the College and its members is conducted with integrity. Our values are:

- Teaching, learning, and mentoring – we are actively engaged in and out of the classroom.
- Developing the whole person – we are scholars, we are creators, we are local and global citizens, and we are individuals.
- Respecting each other and our environment – we are an open, inclusive, supportive, and sustainable community.

## B. ROLES AND CALENDAR FOR VARIOUS ASSESSMENT UNITS

Unit	Fall Semester (September to December)	Spring Semester (January through May)	Summer Term (June through August)
President's Cabinet	Review prior year "Final Institutional Effectiveness Report" submitted by IEC	Approve SPIF funding requests based on SRAB recommendations/rankings and provide information to SRAB Chairperson as to which requests were approved to receive SPIF funding for the fiscal year beginning July 1 <sup>st</sup> Share prior year "Final Institutional Effectiveness Report" with the college community	
Institutional Effectiveness Council (IEC)	Complete Institutional Effectiveness overview on prior year assessment work: 1) review and summarize prior year assessment study findings; 2) determine actionable recommendations on college-wide priorities and progress made toward achieving Strategic Plan goals; and 3) gauge the health of the assessment culture on campus and identify training and support needs  Share with Cabinet a high-level summary that includes actionable recommendations based on the comprehensive review conducted by IEC; share with Cabinet a report on how effective the institution is (i.e., the health of the institution from a Strategic Plan assessment point of view)	Host Institutional Effectiveness activities on campus  Identify and share exemplary plans and findings/results	Receive final reports from AAC, CWAAC, GECCo, and SRAB  Receive report from SRAB on SPIF funding to be dispersed for the fiscal year beginning July 1 <sup>st</sup>

General Education Curriculum Committee (GECCo)	<p>Host GECCo meetings</p> <p>Submit completed general education (GE) SLO assessment plans to CWAAC Chairperson</p>	<p>Host GECCo meetings to review and finalize GE SLO assessment plans and identify/create assessment instruments</p> <p>Communicate plans and assessment instruments to CWAAC</p>	<p><u>JUNE</u><sup>5</sup>:</p> <p>Receive and review all GE assessment reports; submit these to CWAAC</p> <p>Communicate GE findings and close-the-loop information to CWAAC</p>
Curriculum Assessment Teams (CATs)	<p>Meet with GE course/category Director/Coordinator to initiate the GE course/category assessment process</p> <p>Host CAT meetings as necessary to finalize each GE course/category assessment plan</p>	Communicate assessment plans and assessment instruments to GECCo	Communicate findings and close-the-loop information to GECCo
College-Wide Academic Assessment Committee (CWAAC)	<p>Host CWAAC meetings</p> <p>Receive and review program SLO assessment plans</p>	<p>Host CWAAC meetings</p> <p>Collect general education (GE) SLO assessment plans from GECCo</p>	<p><u>JUNE</u><sup>6</sup>:</p> <p>Receive all program SLO assessment reports and conduct SAC-led reports review</p> <p>Receive and provide feedback on GE findings and close-the-loop information</p> <p>Communicate assessment information</p> <p>Share completed CWAAC SLO assessment reports with IEC<sup>7</sup></p>

<sup>5</sup> Since GECCo is a faculty committee and faculty are on contract through June, this work is to be concluded by the end of June.

<sup>6</sup> Since CWAAC is a faculty committee and faculty are on contract through June, this work is to be concluded by the end of June.

<sup>7</sup> NOTE: Often academic assessment findings do not indicate a need for new resources but rather frequently provide evidence of the need for curricular modifications, course content adjustments, or changes to the assessment process.

School Assessment Committees (SACs)	<p>Meet with CWAAC members to initiate the School's assessment process</p> <p>Host SAC meetings to finalize each School's assessment plan</p>	<p>Communicate assessment plans and assessment instruments to CWAAC</p>	<p>Communicate findings and close-the-loop information to CWAAC</p>
Administrative Assessment Committee (AAC)	<p>Initiate the assessment process by guiding Division Effectiveness Committees (DECs) to complete their assessment plans</p>	<p>Review assessment plans and "score" them via a rubric</p> <p>Complete rubrics for Planning and SMART areas</p> <p>Enter Findings and Close-the-Loop information into SPOL</p>	<p>Share completed rubrics with IEC</p>
Division Effectiveness Committees (DECs)	<p>Create assessment plans and enter them into SPOL</p>	<p>Meet with AAC members to receive feedback on proposed assessment plans</p> <p>Communicate finalized assessment plans to AAC</p>	<p>Enter Findings and Close-the-Loop information into SPOL</p> <p>Communicate Findings and Close-the-Loop to AAC</p>
Strategic Resources Allocation Board (SRAB)	<p>Issue call for SPIF and Capital funding requests</p>	<p>Apply the SRAB rubrics to rank and prioritize SPIF and Capital funding requests</p> <p>Submit the ranked SPIF and Capital funding requests to Cabinet</p>	<p>Share assessment findings/results for previous year SPIF-funded initiatives with CWAAC, GECCo, and/or AAC as appropriate</p> <p>Announce Cabinet-approved distribution of resources – send award letters for approved SPIF funding</p> <p>Provide final report of SRAB-completed work to IEC</p>

## C. ACADEMIC PROGRAM ASSESSMENT TIPS AND RESOURCES

Developing an effective assessment plan begins with being clear and succinct about what you are trying to accomplish. A clear statement of expected Program learning outcomes serves as the foundation for the entire assessment plan. These outcomes shape the kinds of questions you will ask the Program majors and faculty, guide selection of the assessment methods you will employ, and determine how useful your assessment results will be for making programmatic changes.

Program learning outcomes describe learning outcomes and concepts — that is, what exactly you want students to learn. Developing agreed-upon Program learning outcomes is not always a quick and easy task. Programs and Convening Groups vary in the extent to which the faculty share a common disciplinary framework. In Programs where faculty have varying perspectives, agreeing upon Program learning outcomes may prove difficult than in Programs where there is a more unified approach to the discipline.

Before actually writing or revising Program learning outcomes, it is useful for Program faculty to have open discussions on at least one or more of the following topics or similar topics:

- Describe the ideal student in your Program at various phases in the Program. What does this student care about, what knowledge should the student have acquired, and what is this student able to do?

List and briefly describe Program experiences (e.g., curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular experiences) that contribute most to the development of the ideal student. Be concrete and focus on the strengths, skills, and values you feel the student has acquired as a result of successfully progressing through your Program.

- List the achievements you expect of students who are successful in your Program.
- Collect and review instructional materials that you think are important for delivering Program outcomes. You may want to look at:
  - ✓ syllabi and course outlines
  - ✓ course assignments, tests, exams, writing assignments, reports, etc.

### HINT: PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

When writing Program learning outcomes, you should describe realistic, achievable, and measurable outcomes in simple language. Even if a Program learning outcome that is important to you seems difficult to measure, try to word the outcome in a way that focuses on student behavior. Effectively-worded outcomes use action verbs that describe definite, observable actions.

Program learning outcomes should be accepted and supported by members of the Convening Group/Program/or School. Developing appropriate and useful outcomes is an iterative process; it is not unusual to go back a number of times to refine outcomes. In many cases, it is only when you try to develop assessment methods and instruments for Program learning outcomes that the need for refining or editing the wording of the outcomes becomes apparent.



- ✓ textbooks (especially the tables of contents, introductions, and summaries)
- ✓ documents/marketing materials including the catalog that describe your Program
- ✓ accreditation reports
- ✓ curriculum committee reports
- ✓ mission statements/philosophies

- It is generally a good idea to identify between three and five Program learning outcomes. These learning outcomes can be general as well as Program-specific.

A key part of deciding of what assessment methods to use is knowing what you want to assess. Before beginning an assessment study, it is helpful to ask:

- What should students be learning and in what ways should they be academically and professionally growing/developing?
- What are students actually learning and in what ways are they actually growing/developing?

- What should the Program be doing to facilitate student learning and growth/development?

The most effective assessment studies are those that are closely linked to the curriculum and that use readily available information and already-in-place resources to the greatest degree possible.

Be sure to select and develop assessment methods and instruments that are appropriate to measure the extent to which students are achieving Program learning outcomes and that will provide useful and relevant information that can be used to guide Program improvement efforts. Effective Program assessment is generally:

- faculty-designed and implemented, not imposed from the top down
- systematic
- ongoing/formative as well as cumulative
- made up of results measured via direct and indirect assessment

**HINT: TAKE AN INVENTORY OF CURRENT ASSESSMENT PRACTICES; USE A CURRICULUM MAP**

*Inventory*

Even though it may not be called “assessment,” instructors, Programs, and Schools already assess student learning through a variety of methods including assigning grades based on assignments scored by rubrics, competency tests/exams, and performance in Capstone courses.

Before designing an assessment, it is important to identify what assessment information you are already collecting and match these data sources to your Program learning outcomes. Once you have done this, you can pinpoint central questions that are not being answered by your current assessment practices.

*Refer to a Curriculum Map*

Curriculum mapping makes it possible to identify where your student learning outcomes are addressed in the Program [e.g., which course develops which student learning outcome(s)].

## Markers of Effective Program Assessment

a) If possible, use multiple measures to assess each Program learning outcome. Many outcomes will be difficult to assess using only one measure. The advantages to using more than one measure are:

- being able to assess different components of a complex task
- not needing to design a complicated all-purpose assignment or measure
- having greater accuracy and authority when several assessment measures produce similar/consistent findings
- providing an opportunity to pursue further inquiry when findings contradict each other

b) Include *at least* one direct measure and one indirect measure but preferably multiple measures (e.g., two or more direct measures or a combination of direct and indirect measures) as appropriate. Direct measures require students to

explicitly demonstrate their learning or acquired skills while indirect measures provide information that hints at student accomplishments but does not directly measure the level of learning or skill/content mastery. Examples of direct measures include objective tests, essays, presentations, competency activities, and classroom assignments. Examples of indirect measures include surveys, interviews, reflection papers, and general course and Program outcomes (e.g., course pass rates, 4-year Program graduation rates, surveys/assignments require students to reflect on their learning, describe/self-evaluate their Program experiences, etc.).

### **REMEMBER, PROGRAM ASSESSMENT SHOULD:**

- answer questions that are important to you and your Program.
- be efficient and manageable (use available people, assessment measures, and money).

If you have questions regarding Program Assessment you can:

- speak with your CWAAC representative, GECCo representative, the Vice Provost of Academic Programs, or the Director of Academic Assessment
- enlist the assistance of CWAAC, GECCo, Institutional Research, etc. in the planning, creation, adaptation, or revision of assessment measures/instruments. These entities can help you to:
  - identify appropriate assessment measures for specific Program learning outcomes and tasks
  - ensure validity and reliability of both quantitative and qualitative assessment instruments
  - analyze and interpret collected quantitative and qualitative data

- c) Include qualitative as well as quantitative measures, which collectively offer a fully-encompassing way to assess the extent to which students have achieved Program learning outcomes.
- Qualitative measures “rely on descriptions rather than numbers.” Examples include exit interviews, formal recitals, participant observations, writing samples, open-ended questions on surveys, and focus group responses. (Note: If responses to these qualitative assessment instruments are scored via a number-based rubric, then the qualitative measure results become quantified. If, on the other hand, responses are just organized into common themes that emerge, then the results remain qualitative.)
  - Quantitative measures assess learning by collecting and analyzing via appropriate statistical techniques numeric data such as GPAs, grades, rubric scores, and test/exam scores.
- d) Choose assessment measures that allow you to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the Program. Effective assessment provides both positive and negative feedback about the Program. Finding out what is working well is only one goal of Program assessment and will not necessarily lead to Program improvement, which is the ultimate goal of Program assessment.
- e) Be selective about what you choose to observe or measure. Remember:
- comprehensive does not mean assessing everything ;
  - choose assessment measures that are appropriate to the scope of the assessment plan; and
  - complex methods are often not the best choice.
- f) Use established accreditation criteria, if such exists, to design your assessment study. Established criteria will help you:
- respond more effectively to accreditation requirements ; and
  - build on techniques and measures you use as part of the accreditation process.

## D. ADMINISTRATIVE ASSESSMENT TIPS AND RESOURCES

Effective Administrative Assessment should help answer these questions:

- What is your administrative Unit trying to accomplish?
- How well are you doing it?
- How might you improve what you are doing?
- What does the Unit contribute to the delivery of the College's mission and how does it do so?

When developing/reviewing your Unit assessment plans, pay special attention to the required seven plan elements. They are described in detail here.

### 1. UNIT PURPOSE: WHY DOES THE UNIT EXIST?

The Unit mission or purpose statement is succinct and indicates the Unit's primary functions/activities, identifies the stakeholders served by the Unit, and conveys how the Unit advances the mission of the College. A Unit should have one Unit mission or purpose statement.

EXAMPLE: The Office of Admissions works to recruit, admit, and enroll a population of academically prepared and diverse students that reflect the goals outlined in the College's Strategic Plan.

- ✓ succinct
- ✓ indicates Unit's primary function
- ✓ identifies stakeholders served by the Unit
- ✓ conveys how the Unit advances the mission of the College

### 2. UNIT OUTCOME: WHAT IS THE UNIT TRYING TO ACHIEVE?

Most Units will have 3 to 5 Unit outcomes for the fiscal year. A Unit outcome clearly describes what the Unit is trying to accomplish. Each Unit outcome is measurable, connected to tasks, and linked to Strategic Plan objectives.

UNIT OUTCOME "FORMULA": Unit outcome = target/subject + verb/action + object + modifiers

EXAMPLE OF ONE UNIT OUTCOME: The Office of Admissions will continue to geographically diversify the first-year student class.

- ✓ clearly describes what the Unit is trying to accomplish
- ✓ measurable
- ✓ connected to tasks that outline how this outcome will be achieved by the Unit
- ✓ aligned to one or more of the Strategic Plan objectives

### 3. UNIT TASKS: HOW WILL THE UNIT ACHIEVE THE UNIT OUTCOME?

Unit tasks describe actions or strategies that be employed by the Unit to achieve a Unit outcome. One Unit outcome may be accomplished via multiple tasks (i.e., there are usually 1 to 5 tasks required per Unit outcome). Tasks should result in measurable results and, when applicable, the financial cost related to the execution of these tasks should be planned for through SPIF/budget requests.

EXAMPLE: Grow the population of first-year students from outside of New Jersey.

- ✓ clearly connects to a Unit outcome
- ✓ will yield measurable results

### 4. MEASURES: WHAT EVIDENCE WILL SUPPORT THE UNIT'S WORK?

Measures are the sources of evidence that capture the extent to which a Unit outcome is being achieved. Measures should be reliable sources of data that are accessible to Unit members. A Unit's assessment plan should feature a combination of direct and indirect measures that capture quantitative as well as qualitative data.

EXAMPLE: Ramapo College *Fact Book*: place of origin of all first-time degree-seeking students data

- ✓ reliable source
- ✓ accessible source
- ✓ direct (quantitative: % of first-year students from NJ and from outside NJ)

### 5. TARGETS: HOW WILL THE UNIT KNOW IT IS BEING EFFECTIVE?

Targets are yardsticks by which the accomplishment of tasks are measured. Targets are SMART: Specific, Measurable, Aggressive but attainable, Results-oriented, and Time-bound. Targets connect clearly to Unit tasks.

TARGET FORMULA = level + subject + action + object + modifiers + measure

EXAMPLE: 8% of the incoming freshmen class will reside outside of New Jersey as verified by the Ramapo College *Fact Book*: place of origin of all first-time degree-seeking students data.

- |                             |                            |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| ✓ specific                  | ✓ results-oriented         |
| ✓ measurable                | ✓ time-bound               |
| ✓ aggressive but attainable | ✓ connected to a Unit task |

## 6. RESULTS/FINDINGS: WAS THE UNIT EFFECTIVE?

Results/findings reflect the target language and indicate whether the specified target was met, partially met, or not met.

EXAMPLE: Met: 9% of the incoming 2018 freshmen class(i.e., 92 students) were from outside of New Jersey as verified by the Ramapo College *Fact Book*: place of origin of all first-time degree-seeking students data.

- ✓ reflects target language
- ✓ denotes whether the target was met, partially met, or not met

## 7. USE OF RESULTS/FINDINGS: WHAT DID THE UNIT LEARN?

The “Use of Results/Findings” part of an assessment study is where, in the planning cycle, we aim to “close the loop.” Use of results/findings should capture what was learned from the results/findings and how the results/findings were used to achieve, maintain, modify, or discontinue the outcome. When applicable, use of results/findings may include a relevant “action plan” for the next planning cycle.

EXAMPLE: Of the 92 out-of-state students, 30% of them were from Pike County, PA and came from 4 of the high schools there. As a result of this, Admissions will formalize partnerships with these and other high schools in the Pike County area to contribute toward maintaining the Unit outcome of continuing to geographically diversify the first-year student class.

- ✓ builds upon what was learned from the results/findings
- ✓ describes how a result/finding was used to maintain the outcome