INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS
PLANNING, BUDGETING AND EVALUATION

PLANNING FUNCTION AND CYCLE

Up until April 2009 the Planning Council was chartered with the responsibility of providing future direction to the University. The Vice President of Academic Affairs served as the planning coordinator and chair. A broad based membership included the vice presidents of Financial Affairs, Student Affairs, and University Advancement, faculty representatives from each of the three colleges and the Faculty Senate, staff representatives from administrative and support units, and representatives from the Student Government Association (SGA). Planning cycles spread over 1, 3, and 5-year planning periods to accommodate both internal and external requirements. Specific planning periods are stated in the Institutional Effectiveness Cycle.

<u>NOTE</u>*: In March 2009, the Planning Council suspended its role as the planning body for the institution to give way to the* Vision 2020 *Committee, appointed by the President and charged with the responsibility of developing the new 10-year Master Plan for Athens State University. The Master Plan will be presented to the President in October 2010. Accordingly, components and steps in the planning, budgeting, and evaluation processes (as presented below) as well as the Institutional Effectiveness Matrix may change accordingly to reflect the new vision and goals.*

Components and Steps in the Planning Process

<u>The Long Range Plan (LRP)</u>

The planning process begins with the development of the Long Range Plan, the 5-year master plan of the University and the foundation for the Institutional Management Plan and Short Range Plan. Emanating from the University mission, the LRP compiles ASU goals and objectives, identifies means of assessment, assigns responsibility for implementation, sets timelines for completion/review tasks, formulates budget requests, and provides status and intended use of results.

The LRP is “locked” for the 5-year period, to allow for a more focused approach toward the successful execution of institutional priorities as stated in the plan. Revision of ASU goals, takes place during the development of the next 5-year LRP. However, in 2008 the Planning Council approved a change in language for Goal 1 to better reflect the learning expectations of our graduates as a result of having gone through our curricula.

During the year prior (4th year) to the last year covered by the current plan, the Planning Council reviews and approves the institutional goals and priorities that will guide decision making for the next 5 years. Based on those goals and priorities, faculty and staff from all academic and administrative/support units develop long-term goals and objectives for their organizations and prepare their LRP. Adjustments to changing circumstances, if needed, are addressed through the Short Range Plan and corresponding budgeting process.

The Short-Range Plan (SRP)

The Short Range Plan is a one-year plan based on the goals and objectives stipulated in the LRP that must be accomplished during the current academic year. The SRP contains itemized budget requests from each academic and major organizational unit and serves as the working document upon which the Budget Advisory Committee, evaluates funding priorities and begins preparing the overall budget request for the University.

Following guidelines and instructions from the Office of Institutional Planning, Research, and Assessment, distributed in January, academic and administrative organizational units begin the development of their SRP for the next academic year. Development of the SRP is a two-phase process. First, the SRP for the next academic year is developed based on new and/or on-going program priorities or adjustments to the Long Range Plan as a consequence of changing circumstances. Secondly, the SRP-End of Year closes the planning activities for the year by reporting assessment information and consequent use of results.

Academic and administrative organizational units submit their SRP to the Office of Institutional Planning, Research, and Assessment in February. Plans are evaluated for completeness and submitted to the Vice President of Financial Affairs in March to initiate the budgeting process. As part of the planning function, an open budget hearing is conducted in May. At this time, program officers present their priorities for the upcoming year and provide a justification for their budget requests. All members of the University are invited to attend and are encouraged to ask questions and/or provide comments regarding the different SRPs and on ways to further improve the process.

The Institutional Management Plan (IMP)

The Institutional Management Plan is the cornerstone of the State Board of Education and the Alabama Community College System's planning and evaluation process. Submitted to the Department of Postsecondary Education (DPE) in November, this 3-year planning document presents, among other things, the budgetary priorities as agreed upon by the Deans and the President. The first year of the Institutional Management Plan primarily involves planning and the second and third years emphasize evaluation of progress and use of results for improvement. Currently, DPE is conducting a major revision of the IMP with completion expected by August 2009.

State of Alabama Smart Plan

As an institution of higher learning in Alabama, ASU is mandated by the State to participate in the SMART Governing cycle, designed to improve Alabama Government by requiring organizational planning, linking plans to budget requests and appropriations, and creating meaningful performance measurements. Annually in September, based on its mission and goals, the University formulates yearly outcomes, develops strategies, prepares a *Budget Request*, and identifies critical issues that may hamper its ability to achieve those goals. As part of the process, the University submits an *Operations Plan,* a revised budget request reflecting the funds appropriated in the budget passed by the Legislature and signed by the Governor, and the *Quarterly Performance Report*, which compares actual vs. planned accomplishments and uses this information for future planning.

Annual Assessment Plan (AAP)

Consistent with organizational goals and priorities set forth in the LRP and SRP, and specific to individual functional areas of responsibility, academic programs and administrative support units develop their annual operational assessment plan. The Annual Assessment Plan includes the program's objectives, assessment methodology, expected target outcomes, and the intended use and dissemination of results. Annual Assessment Plans are submitted to the Office of Institutional Planning, Research, and Assessment in April. Further details on the AAP are provided under the Assessment (Evaluation) Process section below.

BUDGETING PROCESS

The Budget Advisory Committee (BAC), chaired by the Vice President of Financial Affairs, is charged with the responsibility of conducting annual open budget hearings and making recommendations to the President's Cabinet. The process usually starts in the spring during the month of April. Since a large portion of the operating budget is comprised of state appropriation, the process may be delayed due to the timing of the legislative session. In addition to the Vice President of Financial Affairs, the BAC consists of the following members: the Business Manager/Treasurer, the presiding officers from the Faculty Senate and the Staff Senate, and three faculty members from each one of the three colleges.

The Chair convenes the BAC to discuss the upcoming budget process. Subsequent to the meeting of the BAC, official notification of the start of the budgeting process is sent to department heads, deans, and vice presidents followed by a budget packet comprised of a series of guidelines and worksheets to formulate their budget requests for the next academic year. Program officers are encouraged to solicit input from their employees regarding operational resources and position needs and to use that information as well as their short and long range plans in formulating their formal budget request.

The budget packet consists of the following documents: 1) A cover sheet memorandum which describes what is enclosed in the budget packet and discusses dates the budget hearings will be held; 2) A Summary sheet which describes each budget form included in the packet and the purpose for each form; 3. The following forms: Employee Budget Worksheet; Operational budget worksheet; and a Critical Need Worksheet. The Vice President of Financial Affairs provides a printout of the current year to date budget and actual for the departments to assist them in their analysis and budget development.

Budget hearings are conducted as scheduled with the respective vice president, college dean, and department/administrative head in attendance. The Chair provides information about the upcoming budget such as known increases in retirement costs and other fixed increases in expenditures that will have an effect on the budget and available funds. Minutes of the hearings are taken by the Executive Assistant to the VP of Financial Affairs.

Budget requests are discussed along with the units' current budget and Short Range Plan and a final budget request for each unit is submitted. Based on all budget requests, the BAC formulates a recommended budget for the University, which is presented by the Chair to the President's Cabinet, along with a list of unfunded positions and critical need items. Following input from Cabinet members, the President makes the ultimate decision on which items to fund.

The Official University Budget is prepared and submitted to the Chancellor of the Department of Post Secondary Education by June 30th. The Chancellor recommends the budget be approved by The State Board of Education at the next regular board meeting. Subsequent to state board approval, the departments are notified of their budget amount for the upcoming fiscal year.

ASSESSMENT (EVALUATION) PROCESS

The current assessment process originated with the implementation of the Athens State University Institutional Outcomes Assessment Policy approved by the President in January 2007. The policy assigns responsibility and timelines for the completion of the cycle and integrates quality assurance measures.

The outcomes assessment process follows programs' goals and objectives as stated in the LRP and SRP, and is guided by the performance indicators as stated in the Institutional Effectiveness Matrix.

The outcomes assessment process follows a parallel approach where programs and organizational units formally plan their assessment activities for the next academic year, collect (measure) and analyze outcome data throughout the academic year, and report and implement changes based on those results. Details of the assessment process and the tools to manage and sustain it are stated in the Athens State University Outcomes Assessment System.

The process consists of three phases, each one requiring official and standardized documentation:

Phase I: Development and Implementation of the Annual Assessment Plan (AAP)

Following the dissemination of the Annual Assessment Plan Guidelines and Instructions by the Office of Institutional Planning, Research, and Assessment (OIPRA) in February, all program officers from academic and administrative units, through their internal committees, begin the development of their AAPs for the next academic year.

The Annual Assessment Plan is submitted by April 15 to OIPRA, which reviews the plans for completeness and basic compliance with assessment quality standards. OIPRA then submits all AAPs to the Institutional Assessment Committee (IAC), which further reviews, evaluates, and approves the AAP. Upon approval by the IAC, programs implement their AAPs in the Fall and begin collecting assessment data throughout the academic year.

Phase II: Development and Submission of the Annual Assessment Report (AAR)

During early August, OIPRA disseminates the Annual Assessment Report/Action Plan Guidelines and submits statistical data results from surveys and other administrative, university-wide instruments to all academic programs and administrative/support units. Data obtained through course-embedded instruments and/or programs' internal records combined with survey data coordinated through OIPRA are further analyzed and measured against expected target outcomes for a final determination of program performance (extent to which outcomes were met). Annual Assessment Reports are submitted to OIPRA by September 15th.

Phase III: Development and Submission of the Action Plan (AP)

Simultaneous with the development and submission of the AAR, and based on assessment data findings, programs develop an Action Plan complete with improvement strategies, tasks and actions; responsible entity; resources; timeframe; and performance indicators (outcomes).

Upon completion of the assessment cycle for the academic year, OIPRA consolidates all three documents into one to present a complete and logical view of outcomes assessment activities and the actions taken by individual programs and organizations to effect continuous improvement. At this time OIPRA certifies individual program's compliance with the assessment cycle, pursuant to University policy.

In addition to the AAP, AAR, and AP, the assessment process involves the development and/or periodic revision of a variety of documents to substantiate the ability of the academic programs and organizational units to conduct their evaluations. These include all assessment instruments (i.e. surveys, forms, exams, scoring rubrics, student portfolios, internal records and/or log systems) used to measure expected outcomes. Academic programs and administrative and support units that rely on and/or include assessment data from external sources (i.e. third party audits, certifications, and/or standardized test scores) must submit the appropriate documentation as part of their records.

Instructional Program Review

Athens State University complies with State Board Policy 903.01, which requires that twenty percent of all programs be formally reviewed each year. Internally, the University has established processes, procedures, and specific criteria for conducting program reviews pursuant to the ASU Program Review Policy 1600-0912. Results from these reviews are used to make changes to improve operations, curriculum, and/or other program areas as needed.

The two most important goals of ASU's program review are: 1) to examine the ways to maximize resources and, 2) to explore additional ways to increase efficiency while maintaining the highest level of quality in all academic programs.

Review Criteria includes: 1) cost-benefit measures including program cost-to-income ratio; 2) qualitative and quantitative metrics regarding faculty and instructional resources, external certifications, student demand, and student achievement; and 3) organizational efficiency of instructional delivery.

USE OF ASSESSMENT RESULTS FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Following implementation of systematic outcomes assessment within the institutional effectiveness process, the Office of Institutional Planning, Research, and Assessment prepares and disseminates the Institutional Effectiveness: Continuous Improvement Report. This document, published in November, provides a status report on improvement of academic and administrative support functions through proposed and/or planned changes made by programs based on the use of results from the assessment process.

Starting in 2007-08, which marks the completion of the first assessment cycle under the new system, the use of results for program improvement are further documented through a set of standardized codes that define specific actions taken by programs based on assessment findings.