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1. Introduction

In this Ad Hoc report, Idaho State University (ISU) is responding to Recommendations 3 & 4 as identified in and requested by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and University’s Fall 2014 Year Seven Mission Fulfillment and Sustainability Report dated January 26, 2016.

Since the 2014 evaluation, ISU has focused its efforts to align its planning processes and identify methods of successfully assessing student learning outcomes University-wide. This report captures only a handful of those efforts. Additionally, it demonstrates how changes by the senior administration are operationalizing the new processes and ideas, which have fundamentally changed the University’s decision-making system and increased the involvement of the faculty, staff, students and community members.

2. Recommendation #3.
Recommendation #3: The evaluation committee recommends that the institution integrates all campus plans into a comprehensive planning process (Standard 3.A.1).

Overview.

Idaho State University has established a purposeful, integrated, and comprehensive planning system to achieve efforts that support its mission fulfillment and its strategic plan. The administration has created multiple internal organizations, policies, and processes throughout the academic and non-academic structure to accomplish alignment. This document will discuss how ISU has made clear delineations between mission fulfillment and the strategic plan; how the Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment Council (IEAC) has aligned ISU’s planning processes to focus them on strategic goals and mission fulfillment; and provide three examples of planning alignment that achieves results.


Idaho State University has worked diligently over the last 18 months to define the differences between achieving mission fulfillment and its strategic planning goals. An institution’s ultimate measure of success is mission fulfillment. Mission fulfillment focuses on the accomplishment of its mission and the four core themes. Mission fulfillment continually evolves and is never truly achieved because as core theme objectives are reached, they are replaced, or their benchmarks are reset at higher a level. This contrasts the strategic plan’s goals that are relatively short-term achievements and vision oriented.

The IEAC is responsible for measuring the effectiveness of the implementation of ISU’s four core themes and their overall alignment to the University mission, as well as demonstrating mission fulfillment. To measure mission fulfillment, the IEAC evaluates multiple core theme objectives and indicators against established long-term benchmarks.

In the past, ISU’s core themes have served as the goals of the strategic plan. To assist in differentiating between mission fulfillment and the strategic plan, ISU completed a new, five-year strategic plan with five goals that are unique, singular in nature, and stand on their own. Each of the new strategic goals aligns with the core themes to support achieving mission fulfillment, but they concentrate on specific, relatively short-term issues that ISU needs to address. By clearly defining the difference between mission fulfillment and the strategic goals, the IEAC Steering and Subcommittees are
effectively aligning the outcomes of their planning endeavors, directing resources appropriately, and are focused on achieving operational, strategic, or visionary goals that shape ISU’s future. After providing multiple training sessions and having discussions at all levels throughout the University, there is a sense that the faculty and staff are beginning to achieve a level of clarity between the two.

**Figure 3.1. Mission Fulfillment Assessment**

![Diagram of Mission Fulfillment Assessment]

*Figure 3.1. Mission Fulfillment Assessment. This diagram explains the process used to assess mission fulfillment and the strategic plan at ISU.*

Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment Council.

The most significant step toward accomplishing the goal of aligning ISU’s plans and planning processes was its creation of the IEAC. The establishment of the IEAC transformed ISU because unlike the previous planning system that allowed for silos, plans are created utilizing various IEAC subcommittees and groups then those plans are elevated through the Steering Committee for discussion and approval or forwarded to the president with a recommendation. This ensures the alignment of campus planning efforts. The IEAC serves as a coordinated, sustainable system to pursue institutional efficiency and effectiveness.
Additionally, the composition of the IEAC structure was designed to include senior administrators, faculty, a Faculty Senate co-chair, staff, the Staff Council president, and student representation, so there is an increase in collaboration, inclusion, and transparency. It consists of a Steering Committee, eight subcommittees, and the Strategic Planning Working Group (SPWG).

Its primary functions are to:

1. provide the organizational framework for integrating institutional effectiveness into the fabric of the university.
2. provide integrative and coordinated academic, facilities, technology, and financial planning and implementation.
3. reduce redundancy and increase efficiency, transparency, and accountability among mission fulfillment, strategic planning, institutional management, university accreditation, state and federal reporting requirements.
4. optimize data and reports system wide.
5. develop an assessment plan that supports the implementation of the strategic plan and mission fulfillment.
6. enhance consistent and coordinated communication between schools, colleges, departments and administration regarding assessment and institutional effectiveness.
7. provide a forum to share best practices, and generate ideas for process improvement.
8. incorporate into the decision-making process a number of planning organizations.

Figure 3.2. IEAC Steering and Subcommittees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IEAC Organization</th>
<th>Chair</th>
<th>Duty Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Steering Committee</td>
<td>Dr. Laura Woodworth-Ney</td>
<td>Executive Vice President &amp; Provost (EVPP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core Theme 1 Subcommittee</td>
<td>Dr. Cornelis Van der Schyf</td>
<td>Vice President of Research/Dean of the Graduate School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core Theme 2 Subcommittee</td>
<td>Dr. Patricia Terrell</td>
<td>Vice President of Student Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core Theme 3 Subcommittee</td>
<td>Dr. Rex Force</td>
<td>Vice President of the Kasiska Division of Health Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core Theme 4 Subcommittee</td>
<td>Dr. Kent Tingey</td>
<td>Vice President of Advancement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance Subcommittee</td>
<td>Mr. Brian Hickenlooper</td>
<td>Chief Financial Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities Subcommittee</td>
<td>Ms. Cheryl Hanson</td>
<td>Associate Vice President of Facilities Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Technology Subcommittee</td>
<td>Mr. Randy Gaines</td>
<td>Chief Information Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accreditation, Assessment, and Academic Program Review Subcommittee</td>
<td>Ms. Selena Grace</td>
<td>Vice Provost for Academic Strategy and Institutional Effectiveness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.2. IEAC Steering and Subcommittees. ISU’s IEAC is composed of a Steering Committee and eight subcommittees guide the University’s planning requirements.
The Steering Committee meets at a minimum of once a month during the regular school year and sometimes more as required. Each subcommittee has their own meetings as needed but assemble at least one time a year. In many ways, the IEAC is still evolving and defining the roles and responsibilities of the Steering Committee and the subcommittees, but over the past two years, the IEAC has made significant achievements in fully aligning ISU’s planning efforts.

Examples of Aligning Planning.

Since its inception, a primary focus of the IEAC has been to align planning processes across the university that drive decision making as a means of attaining mission fulfillment and accomplishing the strategic plan’s goals. Upon completion of the new core themes, the Steering Committee and subcommittees began focusing on those processes that have the highest impact. ISU’s budget process; facilities’ and information technology’s project prioritization lists; and academic program assessment and health are the three areas that affect every student, faculty and staff member, and stakeholder. The following are examples of the changes that occurred to the processes.

New Budget Process

In 2017, ISU’s Administration transitioned away from the University’s existing budget model and began implementing a new budget process that utilizes the IEAC Steering Committee as the executive budget council to the President. Unlike the previous budget committee, the IEAC is composed of executive administrators, staff, faculty, Faculty Senate, Staff Council, and student representation. This committee is more diverse regarding each person’s level of understanding and responsibility regarding the budget, and as a result, that lent itself to more discussion within the group on key elements of the budget and a greater depth of explanation. At the end of the IEAC’s budget review, the group unanimously approved the budget recommendations.

The new process lent itself to other significant changes. In previous years, the Vice President for Finance and Administration allocated funding based on the previous year’s allotment. For the Fiscal Year 2018 (FY18) budget, both the academic and non-academic units received funding targets from the Executive Vice President and Provost (EVPP) /IEAC Steering Committee Chair at the beginning of the budget cycle that aligned with accreditation requirements, the strategic plan’s priorities, the mission fulfillment objectives, and the Idaho Legislature’s requirement to attain a balanced budget.

Also under the new model, academic and non-academic units’ leadership received significantly more freedom to determine how they would allocate their proposed funding and thus where they would adjust spending. They balanced their operational needs against personnel requirements.

As a means of increasing transparency and inclusion, this was also the first year that the EVPP, the Vice Provost for Academic Strategies and Institutional Effectiveness and, and the new Chief Financial Officer presented a proposed academic budget to the Faculty Senate for their review and feedback.

Implementing a new budget model is complicated, but it was made even more difficult for those involved when it came to developing FY18’s budget. ISU is experiencing a significant drop in international enrollment because of the economic strains felt by multiple Middle Eastern countries. In FY18, ISU is expecting to have approximately a $9 million tuition shortfall.
ISU’s leaders at all levels came together throughout the process to identify areas within their areas of responsibility where they could reduce expenditures or generate income. As a result, the IEAC proposed to President Vailas a budget cut of approximately $6.3 million, an increase in income of approximately $1 million, and to use approximately $2 million of its reserve fund to cover the difference.

In June 2017, the State Board of Education (SBOE) approved ISU’s FY18 budget. While further refinements will occur to the process this fall, the changes that were already undertaken proved that the University could align the distribution of funding to academic and non-academic units based on program prioritization, strategic initiatives, and mission fulfillment activities. The new process broke down the silos not only between the units but also within the process itself. Finally, by making the IEAC Steering Committee the executive level budget council, the level of participation and diversity in the process increased significantly, as did the level of transparency when the CFO presented the academic budget to the Faculty Senate.
Facilities’ and Information Technology’s Project Prioritization

As an example of increased efficiency and alignment occurring at ISU in FY17, the IEAC Steering Committee implemented two new processes to support aligning the budget planning process more closely with the strategic plan and mission fulfillment.

Facilities Services and Information Technology Services (ITS) requested that units complete and submit a rubric with all new project requests. The rubric scores are tied to the strategic goals and core theme objectives as well as with accreditation, administrative, and legal requirements. The IEAC Facilities and IT Subcommittees, consisting of mid-level administrators and faculty members, reviewed then ranked the projects by the rubric score, thus prioritizing them. Upon completion, the committees provided them back to Facilities and ITS who evaluated the cost of the prioritized projects against their designated budgets to determine how many of the units’ projects they could accomplish given their current funding levels. Facilities Services and ITS then submitted their recommendations to the IEAC Steering Committee. The IEAC Steering Committee reviewed the prioritization and were provided three choices. 1. The Steering Committee could approve the list and request the President reprioritize funds.
from another area of the University to cover unfunded projects; 2. reprioritize the projects based on operational requirements; or 3. approve the existing prioritized lists using existing designated funding. In 2017, the IEAC approved the prioritized list as is list as submitted it to the President who approved it.

This process has worked well for both Facilities Services and ITS. The groups have already met to reevaluate the process to determine if any changes to the rubric or the prioritization process need to occur. One change already underway is the creation of a supporting document to better describe the project. This need became apparent during the evaluation process. Both units had to seek information from the requesting units in order to evaluate the time and funding requirements.

The new process resulted in two significant outcomes. First, it gave ISU’s leadership a clear understanding of what projects will and will not be funded in the upcoming fiscal year. If a project is important to the University’s success and falls below the funding line, then the decision-makers can manage the distribution of funds to ensure the needs are met. Second, it provided predictability to the units submitting the requests. Units can see where their project falls on the funded list which is updated regularly so they can plan accordingly.

Academic Program Assessment/Health

ISU has transitioned its Program Prioritization Process into an annual Program Assessment/Health Process that supports growth and demonstrates the need for increased, reallocated, or new resources. Academic Affairs completes an annual review of all programs that is primarily outcomes based using the program prioritization metrics and dashboard. Included in this process is a review of each college’s three-year employee hiring plan, as well as ensuring program goals align with the strategic plan and mission fulfillment objectives.

This process begins in Academic Affairs and then folds into the institutional planning processes through the Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment Council (IEAC), which is responsible for overseeing the University planning process, coordinating and assessing strategic directions, ensuring that the University meets NWCCU accreditation standards, and implementing the University’s strategic planning agenda. When evaluating full degree programs and certificates, Academic Affairs has determined that programs will be flagged and must prepare an appropriate plan to address low enrollment if they have a five-year average number of graduates:

- ≤5 at the associate and certificate level
- ≤10 at the undergraduate level
- ≤5 at the master’s level
- ≤3 at the doctoral level

When programs fail to demonstrate progress towards or meet the minimum thresholds, they are required to develop a plan that must address program needs and sustainability, as well as identify if the program should be restructured, consolidated, or closed. The academic unit is expected to monitor these numbers annually and keep Academic Affairs apprised of declines or failure to show progress towards meeting the goals.

Conclusion.
ISU’s leadership takes great pride in the system it has created to align planning throughout the University. The leadership can state with certainty that ISU has undertaken a considerable amount of effort and made significant strides to establish a planning system that uses the IEAC Steering and Subcommittees for planning development and oversight. Also as a result of this new system, the level of inclusion and transparency continues to grow and flourish.


Recommendation #4: The evaluation committee recommends that the institution continue to work to clarify the ways in which it will use assessment results to inform and strengthen programs and services, and to demonstrate institutional improvement, mission fulfillment, and sustainability (Standards 4.A, 4.B, 5.A and 5.B.)

Overview.

Over the past ten years, like other universities in Idaho and many across the United States, ISU has experienced a decrease in state provided resources, which has had a dramatic effect on programs and services. To increase efficiency, effectiveness, and support the Institution’s efforts to attain strategic goals and mission fulfillment, ISU created a comprehensive, university-wide assessment program that evaluates both academic and non-academic programs and services. Using student learning outcomes and service evaluations to achieve continuous improvement is critical for the viability of the Institution, and that cannot happen without an established assessment program. Recognizing that some academic programs and non-academic units already use assessment as part of their quality control and decision-making process ISU’s assessment plan supports those programs and units without assessment plans.

Creating an Assessment Framework

In 2015, ISU established the Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment Council (IEAC) with its purposes being to set university priorities and to coordinate planning efforts between units as a means of eliminating planning silos. The IEAC is also charged to develop a university-wide assessment program. This charge falls directly to IEAC’s Accreditation, Assessment, Academic Program Review (AAAPR) Subcommittee. The AAAPR coordinates efforts between permanent and ADHOC organizations. The General Education Review Committee (GERC), University Assessment Review Committee (UARC) and the Non-Academic Assessment Review Committee (NAARC) all have responsibility for portions of the academic and non-academic assessment planning processes. The Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs, who serves as the University assessment coordinator, attends all three organizations’ meetings as a way to maintain alignment and consistency. This structure ensures alignment throughout the organizational chart.
Another example of the institution’s commitment to assessment is the UARC. The Committee provides support for faculty involved in assessment processes and is the process of making a recommendation to Academic Affairs later this summer. It has been reviewing assessment software and will make recommendations to Academic Unit Leadership concerning appropriate methods and venues for communicating results. Once this recommendation is made, the University will purchase assessment software that will be available to all academic programs. The UARC will also recommend changes to program review that will streamline and improve the process, and will establish standards for student learning outcomes, and a structure for an annual university assessment report.

Non-Academic Assessment Review Committee (NAARC)
The NAARC has responsibility for assisting the non-academic units with developing their objectives and measures, establishing training for the units and evaluation teams, and providing oversight over the evaluation process to include establishing and maintaining the schedule and creating evaluation teams. The NAARC is composed of members from each of the Institution’s non-academic units: Advancement, Athletics, General Counsel, Finance, Academic Affairs, Facilities, Student Affairs, Research, and Information Technology Services. Each member represents their area of responsibility and provides information to their subordinate organizations.

General Education and Review Committee (GERC)

The purpose of the General Education Requirements Committee (GERC) is to consider all courses and policies that relate to the University’s general education requirements; to evaluate, on a regular basis, the University’s general education courses for appropriateness, rigor, and assessment; and to make general education curricular recommendations based on these evaluations to the UCC. The general education objectives are to be reviewed on a staged 5-year cycle; not all of the objectives need be evaluated at once.

GERC is a subcommittee of the Undergraduate Curriculum Council (UCC). Although GERC has a direct reporting line to the UCC, the AAAPR has indirect oversight to ensure the state and ISU’s assessment standards are being met. The General Education Requirement Committee includes representatives from all academic units on campus as voting members. Representatives from Academic Advising, the Registrar’s Office, Instructional Technology Services, Academic Affairs, and Curriculum Council attend meetings but do not vote. Minutes from GERC meetings are posted on the University’s website and are reviewed by Associate Deans of the academic units.

A University-Wide Assessment Plan

The Institution established a four-phase methodology to develop and implement the University-wide assessment plan: training: introduction and advanced, creating a framework, developing the plan, and implementation.

Phase 1. In the spring and summer of 2016, Institutional Effectiveness contracted a company specializing in assessment to hold two training workshops for faculty and staff on assessment basics and the technical aspects evaluating student learning outcomes. The initial training provided participants with a basic understanding of why assessment is important; how to identify outcomes versus objectives; targeting learning outcomes at the department and program level; and curriculum mapping. The second session taught participants to use the assessment process to create an assessment plan for their colleges and programs with goals, objectives, and outcomes.

Phase 2. Upon completion of the training, the Provost established a working group to begin developing a University-wide academic assessment plan. The group began by creating an assessment program proposal. Simultaneously, members of the AAAPR also were developing the non-academic assessment unit proposal. The IEAC reviewed both proposals and charged the AAAPR to create ISU’s Comprehensive Assessment Program.

Phase 3. Using the assessment proposals created by the academic and non-academic groups, the AAAPR developed ISU’s Comprehensive Assessment Plan that explains the importance of a
university-wide assessment, the University’s assessment framework, and the academic and non-academic assessment programs. The IEAC approved the plan in July 2017, and its implementation begins in September.

Phase 4. Implementing the plan is taking place in 2017 and 2018. One of the first priorities for ISU is to identify and purchase a cloud-based software program to support standardization and to work with each of the college assessment coordinators to identify the faculties’ requirements and their training requirements. In some ways, the implementation of non-academic assessment will be less challenging because ISU will use the Council for Advancement of Standards (CAS) in Higher Education as an evaluation tool for many of the non-academic units. Those units that CAS does not have evaluation criteria for will use other national professional organizations’ standards that support their particular unit. Units without a national evaluation tool will create their own goals, objectives, and outcomes using a template established by the NAARC. Other elements of ISU’s assessment program are already in place like the General Education and Review Committee (GERC) and the Program Review and Assessment evaluation. Those programs were implemented in 2015 and will continue to evolve.

Internal and External Program Evaluation Tools

General Education assessment, Program Review and Assessment, and Specialized Accreditation provide internal and external evaluations to help faculty and administrators evaluate the effectiveness of both academic programs and non-academic services.

GERC

As described above, evaluating ISU’s general education programs falls under the responsibility of GERC. General Education in Idaho follows the Governing Policies and Procedures III.N. of the Idaho State Board of Education (SBOE). SBOE policy mandates six objectives: written communication; oral communication; mathematical ways of knowing; scientific ways of knowing; humanistic and artistic ways of knowing; and social and behavioral ways of knowing. In addition, each Idaho institution must have six credits of general education in “institutionally designated credits.” ISU students take one course in cultural diversity, and one course in either critical thinking or information literacy. The nine objectives encompass 48 student learning competencies.

The General Education Program at ISU is diverse and includes courses from all academic units. While the majority of general education courses are housed in the Colleges of Arts and Letters and Science and Engineering, the other academic units are represented as well. The College of Technology offers RCET 1372 and TGE 1140 (mathematical ways of knowing); TGE 1257 (humanistic and artistic ways of knowing); and TGE 1150 (social and behavioral ways of knowing). The College of Business offers MGT 2216 (mathematical ways of knowing); ECON 1100, 2201, and 2202 (social and behavioral ways of knowing); INFO 1181 (critical thinking); and FIN 1115 and INFO 1101 (information literacy). The College of Education offers EDUC 1110 (social and behavioral ways of knowing), EDUC 2204 (cultural diversity), and SCPY 1101 (cultural diversity); the Library offers LLIB 1115 (information literacy); and the Kasiska Division of Health Sciences offers CSD 2210 and 2256 (cultural diversity) and NTD 2239 (scientific ways of knowing).

Consistent and regular assessment of general education courses is relatively new at ISU. Before 2015, some general education courses were assessed by their departments as a part of program review
or specialized accreditation assessment but were not part of a university-wide effort to evaluate the general education program as a whole. The General Education Requirements Committee (GERC) at ISU oversees the assessment of general education courses. GERC reviews courses that have applied for inclusion in the general education program and acts on the applications. An assessment plan is included in the application. Consequently, all general education courses submit assessment plans to GERC before beginning assessment activities; GERC reviews the assessment plans and either approves them or remands them back to the submitting departments with recommendations for improvement.

A plan was developed for departments to design and submit assessment plans to GERC for approval and submit annual assessment reports. This plan, which was approved by the Provost in April 2015, is shown in Figure 4.1 (GERC Flow Chart) and the processes and resources are described on the GERC web page. GERC is currently on track to meet the deadlines shown in the plan; the first round of assessment reports were submitted in November 2016. Results for Year 2 of the reporting process are due on November 1, 2017; in addition, Objectives 1 (Written Communication) and 2 (Oral Communication) will be reviewed by Objective Review in Fall 2018 as part of the overall objective review process.

As of April 17, 2017, assessment plans for all but one general education course (which is intended to be withdrawn) was submitted to GERC for review, for a total of 159 courses. As of April 25, 2017 GERC had approved 144 plans.
Figure 4.2. GERC Flowchart. This diagram explains the GERC assessment process.

Program Review and Assessment

Academic Program Review (APR) is an integral part of Idaho State University’s ongoing efforts to ensure that our educational mission is being met through the delivery of programs that are effective in meeting their goals through curricula that are current and relevant. APR provides faculty and academic units the opportunity to reflect upon the content of their programs and delivery of curriculum, assessing its effectiveness and planning for actions to maintain or improve the quality of teaching and scholarship at the institution, and alignment with core themes.
APR is both linked to and driven by the accreditation cycle and the state-mandated responsibility to conduct regular review of all academic programs. The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) specifically addresses course, program, degree review in Standards Two (2.C.1-2), Three (3.B.1-2), and Four (4.A.2-4, 6, 4.B.1-2). NWCCU requires clearly identified learning outcomes for courses, programs, and degrees; program goals/objectives; planning for growth or consolidation, and alignment with institutional Core Themes; regular review and evaluation of assessment results for decision making. Higher education institutions in Idaho are also formally charged by the State Board of Education to “establish and maintain policies and procedures . . . for evaluating existing programs” (SBOE Governing Policies and Procedures, Sec. III, H). The APR formalizes the review process at ISU and ensures our compliance with SBOE policy.

APR is also linked to the institutional mission fulfillment through Core Theme 1 (Learning and Discovery). APR provides an important mechanism by which the institution can measure alignment with and achievement of the goals of the ISU Mission Fulfillment Matrix and, vice versa, the Mission Fulfillment Matrix provides an institutional context and framework within which the APRs are conducted.

The review process is scheduled on a five-year cycle, and takes 18-24 months to complete the series of stages, which are: 1) Planning and data collection; 2) Unit self-study; 3) Site visit by the review team; 4) Reports to the college leadership; and 5) Development of an Action Plan. The APR schedule is posted on the ISU website.

The guiding principles of an effective APR are that such critical self-study and analysis ensures linkage to the long-term institutional mission and priorities, and all relevant plans and policies. It is essential that the self-study is driven by faculty so that the reflection, and subsequent responses and plans, are authentic. The academic units (comprised of faculty – are in a position to determine their own goals, identified student learning outcomes, and measures within the context of the institutional mission and core themes, and are expected to describe their programs with respect to both regional and national peers and norms. The descriptions and recommendations that emerge from unit self-studies are expected to be outcome-based to ensure the measurability of goals and quality of academic programming. Fiscal responsibility is also a necessary component of the review, connected to institutional budget processes. Library resources are also a necessary component of each unit’s reflection, and the self-study will make use of the knowledge and expertise of library faculty in describing and assessing the holdings and databases relevant to the program’s needs.

A review cycle is initiated by the college leadership who will have established, in consultation with the college dean, a program review schedule for all units within the college. Further, the college leadership will develop this schedule in consultation with the Associate Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness to maximize the impact of each APR and ensure sound linkage between program review and accreditation needs.

The most recent programs to go through this process was Arts and Letter’s Psychology Programs (undergraduate program and the Experimental Ph.D. Program) in 2015-2016. Two evaluators, the Psychology Department Chair from Montana State University and the Department Chair of ISU’s Department of Sociology evaluated the programs. The depth of knowledge and experience of the evaluators showed in the quality of the report. They provided the department a comprehensive assessment that discussed non-assessment overview, curriculum mapping, communication of program
objectives to students, and an evaluation of the assessment programs. The evaluation team wrote recommendations to improve for each of the areas; for example, adding more objective measures that tied to psychology knowledge and include a yearly subjective measure of graduate students’ impressions of the Ph.D. program. From the evaluation, the Provost, Arts and Letters Dean, and Department Chair received an accurate accounting of the Psychology Programs’ that demonstrated the strengths, weaknesses, and capabilities.


Specialized Accreditation

Currently, ISU has over 80 programs that have specialized accreditation requirements. Evaluated by external organizations using national standards specialized accreditation plays a key role in assessment. ISU has an average of 10 specialized accreditation evaluations annually; some reporting requirements occur annually, but most evaluations happen approximately every seven years. The specialized accreditation schedule outlines the programs and specializations occurring from 2013-2022. The most recent specialized accreditations and modified reviews to occur were Communication Sciences and Disorders, Business, Theatre/Dance, Teacher Education, and Pharmacy. Assessment planning is a key element of a self-study. To see an example of a specialized accreditation assessment plan follow the link to view Pharmacy’s self-evaluation. Over the past three years, the ISU’s programs that have undergone specialized accreditation evaluation have been found in compliance or exceed standards in regards to their assessment programs. Specialized accreditation requirements fulfill the assessment needs for many of ISU’s programs and units.

Conclusion.

ISU has made great strides since its Year Seven evaluation and has taken a holistic approach to assessment. Whether assessing general education, specialized accreditation, or non-academic units, the Institution has adopted the mindset across the campus of achieving continuous improvement. While the implementation of some plans may still be in their infancy, it is clear to see by others, that the faculty, staff, and administration are dedicated to following through with working toward increasing student learning and creating efficient and effective support services, which will result in ISU’s ultimate goal of achieving mission fulfillment.