Introduction

The assessment program at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU), aims to promote a culture of continuous improvement. It is an initiative that is an integral aspect of the university’s commitment to sustaining and enhancing academic quality and positive student experience. Prior to 2004, assessment activities at FAMU occurred in various forms within the individual instructional programs and administrative units, in colleges/schools and divisions respectively. However, there was no uniform, institutional wide assessment system which documented assessment and the use of results for improvement.

The assessment activities permeate all levels of the university and target four primary areas: entry-level knowledge and skills, general education outcomes, program/divisional outcomes, and students, graduates and alumni satisfaction. These efforts span multiple institutional levels - from university-wide assessments to assessments conducted by individual academic programs and administrative and educational support service units. The Provost, who formally oversees the assessment program, instituted the Institutional level Assessment Committee (ILAC) to guide and monitor the assessment efforts and use of assessment results for improvement.

Assessment at FAMU serves three major purposes. The first purpose is program and service improvement aimed at making programs/units (academic majors, general education, certification programs, functional units etc.) more effective. The second purpose is for accountability aimed at demonstrating institutional responsiveness to external constituencies by ensuring that students demonstrate basic academic competencies and skills mandated by state and federal legislators. The third purpose is for institutional effectiveness aimed at meeting requirements of accrediting agencies.

FAMU Assessment Philosophy

At FAMU, assessment is an evolving institutional culture grounded in the institutional values set forth in the mission statement and focused primarily on improving student learning both within and outside the classroom and functional effectiveness. It is an inclusive, participatory, and collaborative process that generates data to be used for multiple purposes that include but are not limited to curricular revision, teaching improvement, accreditation expectations, and public accountability.

Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU) chose to define assessment as “a systematic process of documenting and analyzing the effectiveness of the teaching and learning processes to ensure that the
expectations and standards are met in fulfilling the mission of FAMU. The process includes monitoring and enhancing the administrative and educational support structure that leads to the continuous quality improvement of FAMU's academic programs and administrative and educational support services."

A major goal of assessment at FAMU is to support the university’s mission of “excellence with caring” and accountability to internal and external stakeholders by emphasizing the importance of systematically planning, implementing, analyzing, documenting and reflecting on the results to improve student outcomes and support services effectiveness.

The philosophy of assessment at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University is "fostering a culture of continuous improvement of program offerings and support services to ensure student success and institutional effectiveness.”

Office of University Assessment Mission Statement

The mission of the Office of University Assessment is to promote a culture of evidence-gathering at FAMU through the implementation of a manageable and sustainable assessment process that leads to quality improvement.

The assessment program supports the institutional mission of providing outstanding academic preparation that results in highly qualified graduates. The program provides leadership for the development of a systematic and continuous assessment of the teaching and learning processes. It coordinates and facilitates on-going assessment of outcomes in a learner-centered environment. Primarily, in collaboration with all the instructional programs, administrative offices and educational support units, the office facilitates the planning, data collection, data analysis and documentation of evidence of student achievement and the effectiveness of the functional areas.

Assessment Goals/Objectives

Goal I
Academic Improvement - To assess the provision of a distinctive quality undergraduate and graduate educational experience.

• Objective - To develop student outcome goals and objectives with specific assessment measures for each academic program and use the results of these assessments to improve student learning outcomes and teaching effectiveness.

Goal II
Service and Support Improvement - To assess the improvement of administrative processes and support services.

- Objective - To support the development of strategies that monitors and document effectiveness, client satisfaction with the quality of programs and support services.

Goal III
Accountability - To facilitate the implementation of assessment activities in compliance with accountability goals and measures established by the Florida Legislature and Board of Trustees.

- Objective - To facilitate the implementation of activities that will meet the Accountability requirements mandated by the Florida Legislature and the Board of Trustees.

Goal IV
Enhanced Communication on Assessment - To promote communication related to student learning outcomes among administrators, faculty, staff and students.

- Objective - To facilitate the establishment of assessment committees to promote effective communication related to student learning outcomes among administrators, faculty, staff and students.

The specific Objectives of the Office of University Assessment are:

- To provide training to faculty and staff on assessment design and implementation strategies
- To develop and maintain a system of tracking and monitoring assessment and accreditation activities
- To document the results of assessment with emphasis on evidence of students achievement, program outcomes and institutional effectiveness
- To foster the use of assessment results for continuous program/unit improvement
- To disseminate assessment data as appropriate

FAMU Assessment Documentation

FAMU assessment documentation process is guided by the following six-step F. A.M.O.U.S. Assessment Approach:

Step 1: Formulate statements of outcomes/objectives aligned to the institutional mission/goals;

Step 2: Ascertain criteria for success;

Step 3: Measure student/service performance using direct and indirect methods;
Step 4: Observe and analyze results for congruence between expected and actual outcomes;

Step 5: Use the results to effect improvement of instructional programs and administrative and educational support services; and

Step 6: Strengthen programs and services by continuously evaluating, planning, allocating resources and implementing new approaches to ensure congruence between expected and actual outcomes