



## STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

<b>Division/Department:</b> Strategic Planning, Analysis & Institutional Effectiveness (SPAIE), OIRA	<b>SOP No.:</b> SPAIE-OIRA 2025-01
<b>Effective Date:</b> 03/10/2026	<b>Revision(s):</b> N/A
<b>Subject:</b> Peer & Aspirational Institutions Internal Framework	
<b>Authority:</b> IPEDS, National Center for Education Statistics	
<b>Applicability:</b> All University Academic, Administrative, and Support Units	
<b>Signature of Approving Authority</b>	<i>Roddrick D. Jones, Ph.D.</i>
<b>Related References</b>	§ 1001.7065, Florida Statutes

### I. Purpose and Procedural Statement

#### A. Purpose

1. Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU or University), as a leading public Historically Black College and University (HBCU) and 1890 Land-Grant Institution, is committed to excellence in teaching, research, and public service. As part of its institutional accountability and strategic planning processes, the University recognizes the vital importance of establishing and maintaining a clearly defined peer institution framework.
2. Peer institutions serve as benchmarks for assessing performance, setting goals, and identifying opportunities for innovation and improvement. This framework provides a foundation for evidence-based decision-making and supports compliance with external reporting requirements from entities such as the Florida Board of Governors (BOG), the U.S. Department of Education, and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). They reflect institutions that share common challenges and aspirations, providing a meaningful context for benchmarking and analysis.
3. Establishing a formal framework for peer institution selection ensures a transparent, data-driven approach that aligns with FAMU's strategic priorities and mission. By regularly reviewing and updating its peer and aspirational institution lists, FAMU can more efficiently evaluate institutional effectiveness, drive continuous improvement, and advance its status as a national leader in higher education.

#### B. Procedural Statement

1. FAMU identifies its peer institutions through a framework managed by the U.S. Department of Education called the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).
2. IPEDS guidelines establish a strategic, standardized, and transparent structure for identifying and maintaining a set of peer and aspirational institutions that reflect FAMU's strategic goals, mission, vision, and operational context. This peer framework supports data-informed

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decision-making, institutional benchmarking, and continuous improvement across planning, assessment, and accreditation processes.

3. This framework applies to all academic, administrative, institutional research functions, and support units within the University that utilize institutional benchmarking for strategic planning and institutional assessment, academic program review, budgeting and resource allocation, faculty recruitment and compensation, student success and enrollment performance analysis, performance evaluation, procedural development, and reporting to internal and external stakeholders (e.g. accreditation and compliance reporting).

## II. Definitions

- A. **Aspirational Institutions:** Institutions that exemplify a level of excellence, performance, or achievement in specific areas that FAMU aspires to reach.
- B. **Benchmarking:** The systematic use of comparative data from peer institutions to evaluate FAMU's performance, identify best practices, and inform strategic actions.
- C. **Carnegie Classification:** The nation's leading framework for categorizing U.S. higher education institutions.
- D. **Peer Institutions:** Comparable public and/or private institutions identified based on shared institutional characteristics such as size, mission, vision, academic offerings, student demographics, and funding and business models.
- E. **Programmatic Peers:** Institutions selected for discipline-specific or operational benchmarking.

## III. Responsibilities and Procedures/Processes

- A. The University shall identify peer institutions using national data sources such as IPEDS and [Carnegie Classifications of Institutions of Higher Education](#). Relevant factors may include, but are not limited to, the following:
  1. Classification as a public, four-year university.
  2. Institutional mission and HBCU designation.
  3. Similar enrollment size and structure (undergraduate and graduate).
  4. Academic Profile.
  5. Percentage of Pell-eligible students.
  6. Similar research activity level (e.g., R2).
  7. Land-grant status (where applicable).
  8. Comparable student-faculty ratios, graduation and retention rates, degree programs.
  9. Financial characteristics.
  10. Surrounding population/campus geography.

These factors guide the analysis, and peer institutions shall be selected based on the totality of the circumstances.

- B. Aspirational peers may be selected for their performance in areas such as innovation, student success outcomes, research productivity, or national recognition.

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- C. FAMU will maintain a designated set of peer and aspirational institutions to support strategic decision-making, comparative analysis, and performance improvement. The Division of Strategic Planning, Analysis, and Institutional Effectiveness, University leadership and academic and administrative units' duties and responsibilities are outlined below.

<b>Process Responsibilities: From Start to Submission</b>	
<b>Division of Strategic Planning, Analysis, and Institutional Effectiveness:</b>	Leads the peer selection process, identifies peer institutions using clearly defined criteria, conducts data analysis, reviews and updates the peer list at least every five (5) years; ensures data integrity, comparability, and consistency in the application of benchmarking data across institutional reports and planning documents; publishes comparative reports, provides analysis and reports to University leadership; and publishes and maintains the peer and aspirational institution list on SPAIE's website.
<b>University Leadership (President, Provost, Vice Presidents, Deans):</b>	Reviews and endorses proposed peer and aspirational institutions for alignment with FAMU's mission and strategic direction. Approves the official peer institution list.
<b>Academic and Administrative Units:</b>	Incorporates peer comparisons and data into annual planning, accreditation self-studies, performance metrics, and grant proposals.