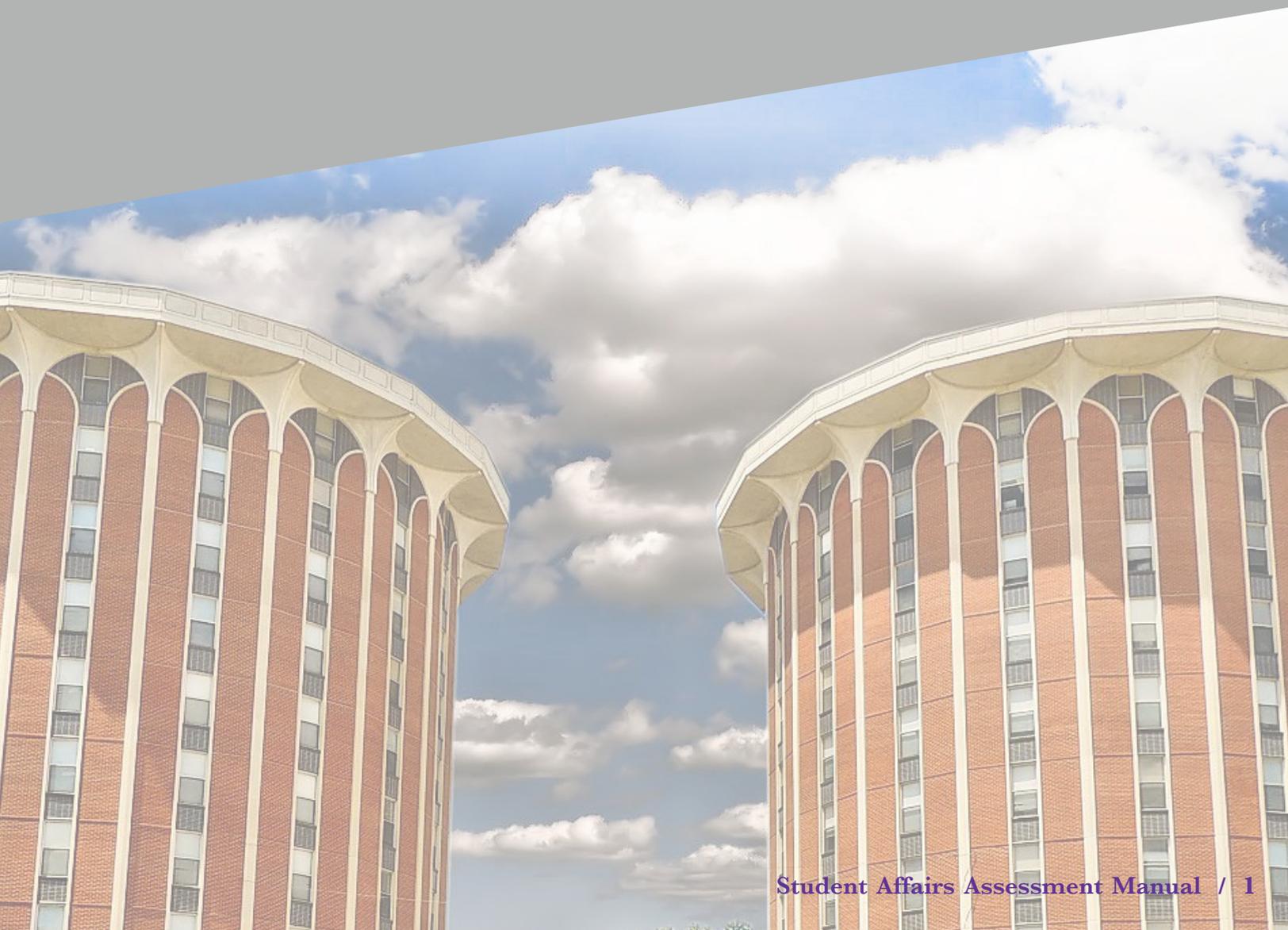




Division of  
Student Affairs  
Assessment Manual  
Revised Jan. 2024

# TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Introduction	/ 2
Committee Charge	/ 3
KEY TERMS: Operational Definitions	/ 5
KEY TERMS: Assessment Methods	/ 6
Action Verbs	/ 8
Student Learning Assessment	/ 9
Program Assessment	/ 10
Departmental Review Cycle	/ 11
Functional Areas	/ 12
Communicating Results	/ 13
Sharing The Data	/ 14
Our Final Thoughts	/ 15
Additional Resources	/ 16





*“Assessment begins with simply wondering whether what you are doing all day is contributing to what you hope your efforts can accomplish.”*  
(Bresciani, 2011)

Assessment practices are significant tools used by the Division of Student Affairs to connect our goals and outcomes and help determine our effectiveness within the division’s programs, policies, facilities and services. This assessment manual will assist staff members in analyzing and interpreting our departmental strengths and weaknesses; program successes and improvements; and, more importantly, insights and feedback concerning our students’ wants and needs.

The Division of Student Affairs at Stephen F. Austin State University is committed to engaging the university community in programs and services that improve and make learning possible. In addition, one of my goals for this manual is to assist with onboarding our new employees. We designed it to offer overall guidance on the division’s assessment and reporting processes.

SFA Division of Student Affairs vision: *“We will be an innovative team that drives student success by enhancing the Lumberjack experience.”*

Student Affairs staff members focus on the division’s mission: *“holistically developing Lumberjacks that engage, lead, thrive and succeed.”*

Understanding our division’s assessment process will help us to clarify what our programs are trying to accomplish and, based on our findings, how we can implement the change needed to be successful.

*Dr. Hollie Smith*  
*Chair, Student Affairs Assessment Committee*

The Division of Student Affairs strives to improve student access and success by reflecting 10 key values in its assessment and program evaluation data to make a positive impact on SFA. **Our 10 key values are:**

ACCOUNTABILITY	INTEGRITY	
COLLABORATION	RESPECT	TEAMWORK
INCLUSION	STEWARDSHIP	TRUST
INNOVATION	SUPPORT	

## INTRODUCTION

What is most important to the assessment process is the collection of quality information that will inform and guide decision-making, learning and action plans.

## COMMITTEE CHARGE:

The **charge** of the Division of Student Affairs Assessment Committee is to develop a comprehensive divisional plan to assess student learning and evaluate programs and services. The committee designed a comprehensive assessment model based on a literature review and advice from professional associations and SFA's Office of Institutional Effectiveness.

Please reference the committee's goals and objectives below:

### GOAL I

#### **Review the annual timeline for the implementation of the assessment plan**

**Objective 1:** Establish timeline for Nuventive Improve assessment data entry

**Objective 2:** Establish timeline and process for CAS reviews

**Objective 3:** Establish timeline for other annual assessment practices

### GOAL II

#### **Review departmental assessment reports**

**Objective 1:** Serve as a resource for the division for reviewing departmental assessment plans and processes and recommending methods for improvement

**Objective 2:** Coordinate with Marketing and Communications Committee to share divisional assessment findings with key stakeholders

**Objective 3:** Establish a revised plan for divisional reports

### GOAL III

#### **Develop a greater understanding of assessment best practices within the Division of Student Affairs**

**Objective 1:** Provide education and resources to the division

Offer semester trainings / Trainings may include, but are not limited to, Nuventive Improve, Qualtrics and/or individual assessment webinars.

Research trends in assessment tools, practices and guidelines to share with the division.

**Objective 2:** Create a divisional assessment resource manual

**Objective 3:** Coordinate with the Professional Development Committee to offer onboarding training about divisional assessment practices to new employees

## COMMITTEE CHARGE

A collaboration to establish the divisional goals and objectives needed to provide student access and success.

The Division of Student Affairs mission is to holistically develop Lumberjacks that *engage, lead, thrive* and *succeed*.



## KEY TERMS: Operational Definitions

*The following operational definitions will serve as the foundation for student-learning assessment. To enhance educational experiences and outcomes for all students, these terms will help guide the process and procedures required to measure and report student success.*

<b>Accountability</b>	Involves data collection for internal audiences (i.e. administrators, faculty, students) and demonstrates the effectiveness of programs and services to stakeholders (Iowa State University)
<b>Assessment Methods</b>	The various ways student-learning outcomes are measured (Using multiple methods will produce stronger data.)
<b>Assessment Opportunity</b>	An occasion or effort to observe, gather or analyze data reflective of institutional, divisional, departmental or program effectiveness for the purpose of improving overall student learning and development
<b>Assessment Plan</b>	A clearly defined document containing an overall, integrated framework of the division that communicates all planned assessment activities and areas of importance for each unit outcome (Includes timeframes, evaluation/results, methods, etc.)
<b>Council on the Advancement for Standards</b>	The council that oversees and promotes high standards in student affairs, student services and student development programs (CAS creates and delivers dynamic, credible standards, guidelines and self-assessment guides designed to develop quality programs and services.)
<b>Departmental Assessment</b>	The systematic collection, evaluation and usage of information obtained about a divisional department for the purpose of improving student-learning outcomes set forth in the department's mission and goals (Data must be entered into Nuventive Improve by May 31 each year)
<b>Divisional Goals</b>	Goals imply intended results, in general terms and should be a general expectation, written in clear and concise statements, of an outcome aligned with the Division of Student Affairs' mission. Divisional goals can have multiple divisional outcomes. <i>(Refer to Divisional Business Plan, in resources)</i>
<b>Divisional Mission</b>	A broad and meaningful statement reflecting the purpose and values of the Division of Student Affairs (The mission statement reflects the services and support provided to students by the division.)
<b>Divisional Outcomes</b>	Measurable statements defining how a divisional goal will be achieved (Outcomes can be operational, supportive and/or student-centered.)
<b>Evaluation</b>	The use of assessment data to determine organizational effectiveness (Schuh, 2016)
<b>External Assessment</b>	The systematic collection, evaluation and usage of information obtained through an evaluation or instrument developed for an external audience only (i.e. Career Fair vendors); Assessment that enhances the overall production of a student-driven event
<b>Improvement</b>	Involves data collection for internal and external audiences (i.e. donors, legislators, parents) and aims to improve the quality of the programs and services <i>(Refer to Nuventive Improve User Guide and Assistance, in resources.)</i> (Iowa State University)
<b>Institutional Effectiveness</b>	The measure or outcome of what an institution effectively achieves in relation to its mission
<b>Institutional Review Board</b>	The IRB reviews and approves all research at SFA in accordance with the Department of Health and Human Services regulations.
<b>Learning Outcome</b>	Outcomes of what students should know, think and be able to do as a result of an experience
<b>Nuventive Improve</b>	The institutional database/platform SFA uses to plan assessment and report outcomes related to divisional goals. (Data must be entered by May 31 each year.)
<b>Pillar / Portfolio Head</b>	A leader of one of the division's three pillars (i.e. Campus Living, Dining and Auxiliary Enterprises; Dean of Students; and Student Life) responsible for ensuring the submission of relevant and timely assessment based on annual data collection by a deadline set forth by the vice president of student affairs and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness
<b>Program Assessment</b>	Systematic collection, evaluation and use of information obtained to help improve students' overall college experience and divisional effectiveness by achieving its mission and goals; Can include evaluation of facilities, technology, services, etc. within individual programs
<b>SACS</b>	The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) is the body for the accreditation of degree-granting higher education institutions in the Southern states.
<b>Stakeholder</b>	Any business, company or individual who has a vested interest in or concern about our institution and its initiatives
<b>Unit</b>	An office, department or program designated by the vice president of student affairs to submit an annual assessment report (Reports are due by May 31 each year.)



## KEY TERMS: Assessment Methods

*Once the outcome has been determined, an assessment method must be chosen. The information below is designed to help staff members compare various assessment methods. When selecting your method, consider which option measures the outcome most effectively and efficiently. Select a method that provides useful and usable data, reflects the best response from your audience and truly captures how the audience demonstrates what they actually learned instead of their perception of what they learned.*

<b>Direct Measure of Student Learning</b>	A measure that directly evaluates student learning (i.e. a survey question asking students to define leadership in their own words) (Walvoord & Anderson, 2013)
<b>Documents</b>	Items such as meeting minutes, reports, records or files that are gathered and analyzed
<b>Focus Groups</b>	In-depth interviews that collect qualitative data from groups of 5 to 10 students who share common characteristics represented by a target population (i.e. Freshmen, Greek Life, etc.); used to gather feedback about experiences, motivation or perspective within a program (Freitas, 1998)
<b>Indirect Measure of Student Learning</b>	A measure that directly evaluates perceived learning, rather than actual learning (i.e. a survey question asking students to rate their understanding of leadership on a scale) (Iowa State University)
<b>Interviews</b>	Formal discussions with individuals, focusing on intentional questions to gather specific information
<b>Observations</b>	Watching, recording and/or analyzing an individual or group in a specific setting to gather authentic information
<b>Participation / Usage</b>	A tool to collect quantitative data (i.e. attendance at an event, participation in a program, etc.) Easily allows the program to assess how many students were reached by a program, whether there were increases/decreases, from semester to semester, year to year, etc.
<b>Performance Reviews</b>	A qualitative tool used to evaluate an employee's performance (Designed to be an interactive process for supervisors and employees to discuss job responsibilities, goals and objectives, achievements, and/or areas for improvement.) (Suffolk University)
<b>Portfolio</b>	A collection of work that showcases a student's experiences, achievements and knowledge gained within a specific timeframe
<b>Presence / The Handle</b>	An online campus engagement and learning platform designed specifically for student affairs divisions in higher education; Collects quantitative/qualitative data through surveys and assessment platforms and tracks student involvement and participation in clubs, organizations and events. (Modern Campus Presence, 2019)
<b>Qualitative Methodology</b>	Involves detailed descriptions of situations, events, people, interactions and observed behaviors; the use of direct quotations from people about their experiences, attitudes, beliefs and thoughts; the analysis of excerpts or entire passages from documents, correspondence, records and case histories (Schuh, 2001)
<b>Quantitative Methodology</b>	Involves the assignment of numbers to objects, events or observations according to some rule (Instruments with established psychometric properties are used to collect data, and statistical methods are used to analyze data and draw conclusions.) (Schuh, 2001)
<b>Reflection Questions</b>	Tools to collect qualitative data, which allow students to describe their learning, how it changed, how it may relate to future learning experiences, etc. (Friend, 2019)
<b>Rubric</b>	A rubric is a scoring guide that evaluates a student's performance based on various criteria rather than a single numerical score. It can include expectations needed for evaluation and clear and direct feedback focused on improvement. It generally comprises specific levels of mastery, understanding and proficiency (i.e. excellent, fair, poor). (Bolton, 2006) (Stevens & Levi, 2011)
<b>Surveys</b>	Indirect measures often used to gather information on the level of satisfaction with an event or experience, attitudes, behaviors and values of an individual or used to assess student learning. Generally comprises multiple choice, Likert-scale or open-ended questions. (Marquette University)
<b>Visual Methods</b>	Capture images (i.e. pictures, videos, artwork, sculptures, etc.) as data



The GOALS are: communicating results, making data-informed decisions and action plans, closing the loop for our stakeholders and engaging with our assessment data.



## Student learning outcomes in detail...

**Student learning outcomes in detail...Intended Learners** are those students who are the focus of your student affairs intervention (i.e. first-year students, transfer students, etc.). **Action Verb 1** describes engagement in the student affairs interaction (see Action Verbs below). **Student Affairs Intervention** is the program, service, process, initiative, experience, etc. provided to the intended learners. An intervention may be broad (i.e. counseling appointments) or specific (i.e. a specific workshop). **Action Verb 2** describes the learning that occurs. **Intended Outcome** is the affective, behavioral, or cognitive change that your program, service, or experience aims to achieve.

## Action verbs to consider:

KNOWLEDGE	COMPREHENSION	APPLICATION	ANALYSIS	SYNTHESIS	EVALUATION
arrange	classify	apply	analyze	anticipate	appraise
describe	describe	choose	appraise	assemble	argue
define	discuss	demonstrate	calculate	collect	assess
label	explain	dramatize	categorize	combine	choose
list	express	employ	compare	compose	compare
memorize	identify	illustrate	contrast	construct	critique
name	indicate	implement	criticize	create	decide
order	locate	interpret	differentiate	design	evaluate
recall	predict	operate	discriminate	formulate	judge
recognize	recognize	practice	distinguish	integrate	justify
relate	report	prepare	examine	manage	predict
repeat	restate	produce	experiment	organize	prove
reproduce	review	schedule	infer	plan	rate
state	select	sketch	prioritize	prepare	score
tell	translate	solve	question	propose	select
write	understand	use	test	revise	support

Bloom, B.S., Englehart, M.D., Furst, E.J., Hill, W.H., & Krathwohl, D.R. (1956). *Taxonomy of educational objectives - Handbook 1: Cognitive domain*. McKay.

## ACTION VERBS

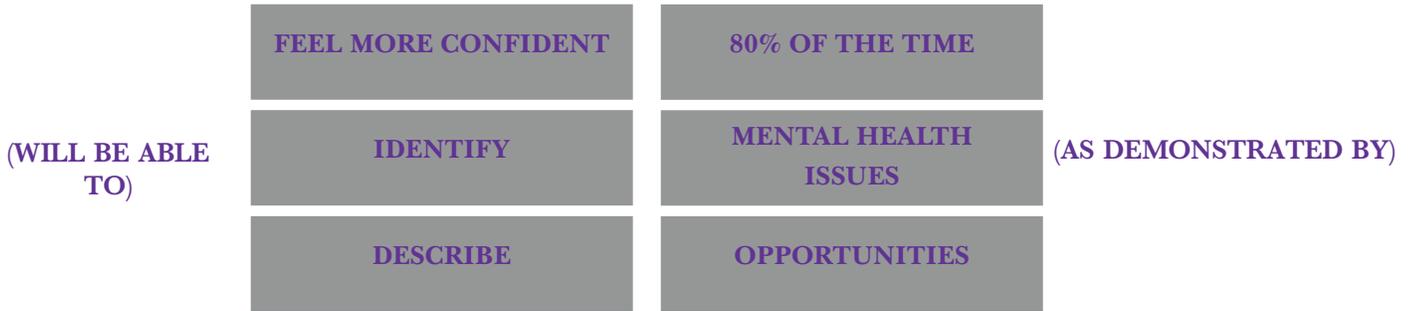
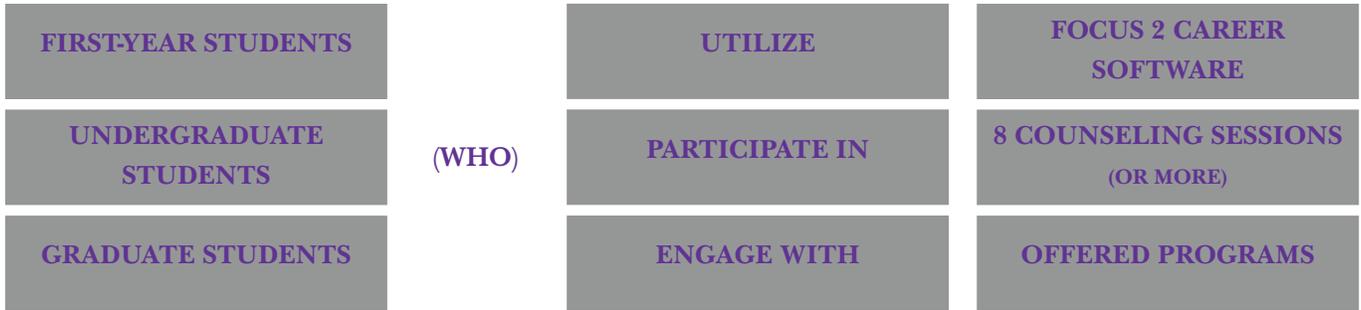
Brainstorming the possibility of utilizing Bloom's Taxonomy (1956) action verbs to show progression in learning complexity from understanding to application and evaluation

# IDENTIFYING LEARNING OUTCOMES:

**Student learning outcomes** allow the Division of Student Affairs staff members to identify and assess the skills and knowledge a student will gain by engaging in a program, process, initiative, etc.

Effective student learning outcomes can be created by following a simple formula:

Intended Learners + Action Verb 1 + Student Affairs Intervention + Action Verb 2 + Intended Outcome.



- BEING ABLE TO PICK A MAJOR
- ENGAGEMENT AND AWARENESS
- JOURNALING
- CAMPUS INVOLVEMENT

## STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT

Results based on the Student Learning Outcomes should be entered into the Annual Report. See Page 13: Communicating Results, for further information.

**Program assessment** often focuses on what programs do, achieve or accomplish for its own improvement, as well as consider the end result of a program or service provided. Some examples of programs to evaluate include, but are not limited to:

*Career Fairs*  
*Counseling Sessions*  
*Customer Service / Communication*  
*Family Weekend*  
*Health Services*  
*InterviewStream software*  
*Jack Camp*

*Lumberjack Wellness Network*  
*Meal Exchange*  
*Orientation*  
*QPR Gatekeeper Training*  
*Student Conduct Analytics*  
*Weeks of Welcome*  
*Yearbook Diversity*

Understanding the mission, goals and objectives of the Division of Student Affairs determines the who, what, how, to whom, when or how often, and the why.

## OPERATIONAL OUTCOME COMPONENTS:

### Unit

Who or what is the unit of measurement?

(ex: revenue, utilization, attendance, satisfaction, retention, interviews, interest)

### Condition

Under what conditions or circumstances will the outcome occur?

(ex: within one year, after renovation of facility, if funding is increased)

### Behavior

What do you expect to happen or change?

(ex: increased revenue/ attendance, new partnerships, high retention)

### Degree

What is the success criteria?

(ex: percentage increase, number of people, amount of money spent per person)



# PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

Evaluating the quality of a particular aspect of the college experience, focusing on overall experiences, technology, facilities, programs, services, processes and more

## DEPARTMENTAL ASSESSMENT & REVIEWS

The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education is a consortium of professional associations who work collaboratively to develop and promulgate standards and guidelines and to encourage self-assessment. The mission of CAS is to promote the improvement of programs and services to enhance the quality of student learning and development.

CAS cross-functional frameworks:

- \***Advancing Health and Well-Being**
- \***First-Year Experience**
- \***Identifying and Responding to Behavioral Concerns**

## CAS STANDARDS:

- Standards
- Mission Program
- Organization & Leadership
- Human Resources
- Ethics
- Law, Policy & Governance
- Diversity, Equity & Access
- Institutional & External Relations
- Financial Resources
- Technology
- Facilities & Equipment
- Assessment & Evaluation

## CAS REVIEW PROCESS



The CAS review process is internal and should occur every five years, beginning in 2023. The internal report is due to the designated pillar head by Dec. 31 of the respective year. In order to complete the review, a self-assessment guide is available for download on the CAS website. Each SAG includes:

- Contextual Statement(s)**
- Historical & Functional Perspective to the Area**
- Instructions for Conducting the Self-Assessment**
- Self-Assessment Instrument & Evaluation Forms**

## CAS RELEVANT TERMS

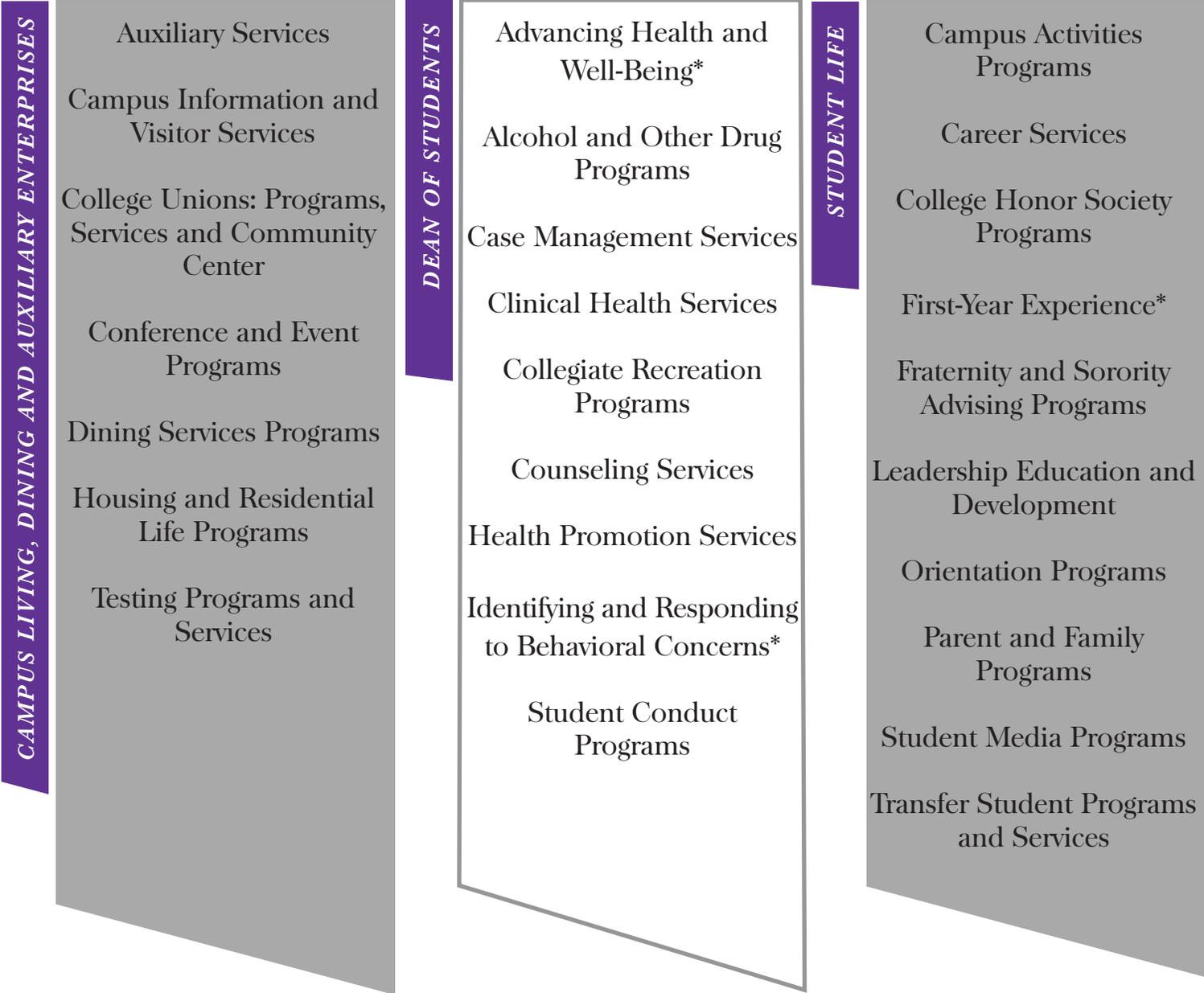
<b>General Standards</b>	The essential level of practice agreed on by the profession, which applies to all functional area programs and services. General Standards are a core, global set of values that articulate common expectations and espouse student learning, development and success as fundamental to the mission and program. Criteria is presented in bold type and uses the auxiliary verb “must.”
<b>Guidelines</b>	Guidelines help programs and services move beyond the essential standards to more fully address the needs of students or the institution. CAS guidelines use the auxiliary verbs “should” and “may” and appear in regular typeface.
<b>Self-Study</b>	An internal process for institutions and programs to evaluate their quality and effectiveness, in reference to CAS standards and guidelines. The process results in a formal report showing internal evaluation/findings applied by institutional employees. For accreditation purposes, the report is validated by an external committee from peer institutions or programs.

## DEPARTMENT REVIEW CYCLE

Assessing departmental programs and services in comparison to other higher education associations and through the guidance of the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education



In accordance with CAS, the following **26** functional area standards are distributed within one of three pillars of SFA's Division of Student Affairs.



\*Indicates cross-functional frameworks

*If your department does not have CAS standards, please refer to the professional association associated in your field for the review process.*

## FUNCTIONAL AREAS

CAS has more than 47 sets of functional area standards, with 26 of those chosen areas falling within SFA's Division of Student Affairs.



## COMMUNICATING RESULTS

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges requires higher education institutions to report their plans for “continuous quality improvement.” Each department head/director is responsible for entering departmental improvement plans and results into the institutional database, Nuventive Improve, located under the MySFA Resources tab. When entering the improvement plan, make sure to include one of the following divisional goals, as well as the outcome of the program or service. In addition, the Improvement Objectives section allows the department head/director to provide more details about each goal or outcome.

### DIVISIONAL GOALS:

- GOAL I** Advance the holistic development of students and support their well-being.
- GOAL II** Foster an engaged and connected Lumberjack experience.
- GOAL III** Champion a welcoming, respectful and inclusive campus.
- GOAL IV** Enhance the career readiness of SFA students and empower them to function in a global economy.
- GOAL V** Ensure that Student Affairs employees have the knowledge, competencies, training and support to advance student success.
- GOAL VI** Effective stewardship and cultivation of resources.

## ANNUAL REPORT

The Division’s Annual Report is designed to highlight various departmental and staff accomplishments, campus and community involvement, and other departmental highlights. Directors must work directly with their respective pillar/portfolio head on submitting information and are strongly encouraged to enter updates quarterly.

### IMPORTANT DATES:\*

- JAN. 31** Unit completes internal Nuventive Improve progress review
- MAY 31** Divisional assessment results entered into Nuventive Improve; next year’s improvement plans must be submitted
- JUNE 3** Unit Annual Reports submitted to pillar/portfolio head
- JUNE 24** Pillar/portfolio heads submit their sections to the vice president of student affairs
- JULY 22** Vice president of student affairs completes Annual Report
- AUG. 1** Vice president of student affairs shares Annual Report with stakeholders
- DEC. 31** CAS self-review due (every five years: 2023, 2028, 2033, etc.) *\*Dates contingent on weekend/holiday break*

*For additional Nuventive Improve training, contact the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. Additional resources include the user guide, located in Microsoft Office Teams SALT folder Assessment and Reporting Planning Instructions and information is also available within the Nuventive Improve platform. The Annual Report template can also be accessed in the Assessment and Reporting Planning Teams folder.*

Each department has identified its student learning outcomes, gathered and interpreted the evidence, and is now pressing forward to implement the change. The next step of the assessment process is to communicate the results with all stakeholders. Sharing data allows for our story to be told. This is a crucial and valuable aspect of the process.

**STEP I**

**Determine the audience and tailor the message to effectively communicate the results**

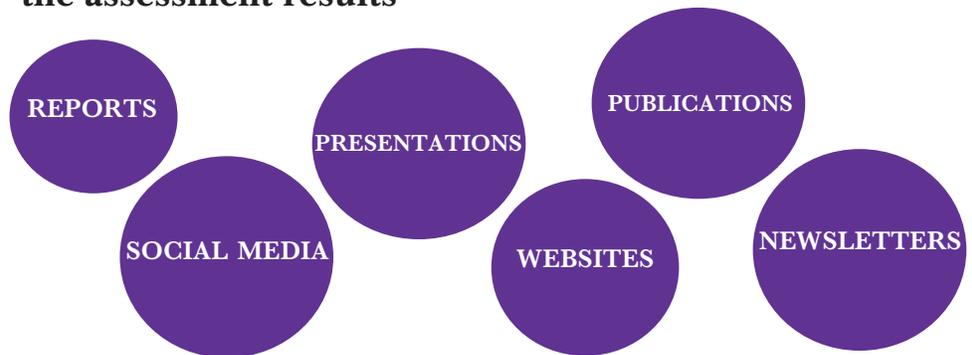
- |                          |                               |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>Administrators</b>    | <b>Parents</b>                |
| <b>Colleagues</b>        | <b>Partners/Collaborators</b> |
| <b>Community Members</b> | <b>SACS</b>                   |
| <b>Donors</b>            | <b>Students</b>               |
| <b>Faculty</b>           |                               |

**STEP II**

**Communicate results, identify important aspects and connection to goals**

**STEP III**

**Select the best communication format to distribute the assessment results**



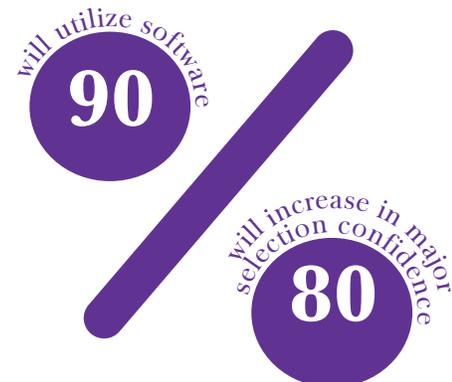
**STEP IV**

**Tell your story, including both quantitative and qualitative data**

**qualitative:**

“...I was so unsure of what major I was going to choose when enrolling at SFA. I knew I was interested in becoming a nurse, but I also thought I might make a good social worker because I feel so passionate about helping people. After completing the self-assessment activity at orientation, I felt confident that I had chosen the right major.”

**quantitative:**



**SHARING THE DATA**

Communicating the results to our stakeholders and engaging with our assessment data



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Congratulations! You are now ready to assess (even if you think otherwise). Be sure to reference the resources below, if needed. The Division of Student Affairs Assessment Committee used these to help create our manual. So, you should too!

[Assessment Methods and Data Collection](#)

CAS Self-Study [Guides](#)

[Learning and Program Outcomes](#)

Microsoft 365 Forms [Assistance](#)

Nuventive Improve [User Guide](#) and Assistance

Qualtrics [Assistance](#)

SFA Campus Recreation Student Employee Evaluation [Form](#)

SFA Division of Student Affairs Annual Report

SFA Division of Student Affairs Assessment [Plan](#)

SFA Division of Student Affairs Business [Plan](#)

SFA Institutional Review Board [Process](#)

[SFA Office of Institutional Effectiveness](#)

The Annual Report [template](#) (can also reference on Microsoft Office SALT Teams)

[The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education](#)

[The Role of Student Affairs in Student Learning Assessment](#)

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“The purpose of assessment is not simply to systematically collect data and report evidence to prove the value of an educational program. The ultimate goal of assessment is to use information to ensure and guide improvement actions.”

- (Schuh, Biddix, Dean, & Kinzie, 2016)

