

University of South Florida, St. Petersburg  
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Good Cause Report  
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## Good Cause Report

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The January 9, 2008 letter of the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to the University of South Florida St. Petersburg stated that:

*...institutions at the end of their two-year monitoring period should also include a report supporting the conditions of “good cause”...*

We appreciate the opportunity to illustrate the documentation of current compliance with Comprehensive Standards 3.5.1 and Federal Requirement 4.1 in the Monitoring Report submitted concurrent with this Good Cause Report. Further, we take this opportunity to provide additional evidence to support a condition of “good cause” for continuation of accreditation. The University embraces the standards of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to establish best institutional practices in assessment of student learning. We believe USF St. Petersburg has met the conditions of Good Cause as established by SACS:

- 1. The institution has demonstrated significant recent accomplishments in addressing non-compliance.*

USF St. Petersburg has developed a comprehensive institutional assessment plan that encompasses the assessment of General Education and student success along with other SACS requirements. We believe that we demonstrate significant, recent achievements in addressing non-compliance in the areas of student assessment relating to CS 3.5 and FR 4.1. Further, having engaged faculty, staff, and administration directly in this process, the institution has embraced the standards and is now equipped to carry on assessment in an improved and sustainable way.

The University recently hired a new Director of Institutional Research, Planning and Effectiveness adding responsibilities for assessing institutional effectiveness and accreditation compliance to the position. The person hired for this position has superior credentials and nationally recognized experience.

The current Assessment Plan, developed by the Director in consultation with academic leadership and faculty, describes the spectrum of assessment responsibilities and delineates authority for all aspects of the assessment process. The faculty, staff, administration, and students are in the process of producing an institutional strategic plan for the next five year cycle, using data for decision-making which is directly derived from this assessment plan. There is significant involvement by the faculty in general education and student success with a collective aim of fostering a climate of broad responsibility for institutional effectiveness.

2. *The institution has documented that it has the “potential” to remedy all deficiencies within the extended period as defined by the Committee on Compliance and Reports; that is, that the institution provides evidence which makes it reasonable for the Commission to assume it will remedy all deficiencies within the extended time defined by the Committee on Compliance and Reports.*

In the Monitoring Report submitted with this report, we noted writing effectiveness, quantitative reasoning, and the liberal arts dimensions as the most important areas for assessment in General Education. We provide appropriate documentation of current and long term assessment with regard to General Education in the writing effectiveness and quantitative reasoning categories. Although our preliminary findings suggest that we have additional work to do in assessing the liberal arts dimensions, we have learned from the experience of adapting USF System surveys for USF St. Petersburg campus use and will instead continue to develop “St. Petersburg’s way of knowing.”

In the Monitoring Report submitted with this report, we have tapped a data rich environment to provide additional documentation on course completion, job placement, and licensure to demonstrate compliance with Federal Requirement 4.1. We have established mechanisms within all divisions of the university to capture and track data that supports assessment of these standards.

Both of these activities are easily sustainable with regard to current faculty and administrative levels of support. The administration, faculty, and professional staff have devoted much attention during the past year to developing standards and tools that will serve the institution into the future. These tools will assist in defining outcomes, measuring success, interpreting findings, and determining proscriptive actions to improve quality in student learning and success.

The University's Institutional Effectiveness Committee is a standing committee to provide stewardship and direction for assessment activities. As indicated previously, the Institutional Research Office has been re-staffed and responsibilities have been expanded to include institutional effectiveness.

A permanent Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs was appointed in March and will assume the post at the end of this semester. The Vice Chancellor brings extensive experience in academic administration at the university level and understands fully the tenets and obligations of leadership for assessment in areas such as general education and student success.

3. *The institution provides assurance to the Commission that it is not aware of any other reasons, other than those identified by the Commission on Colleges, why the institution could not be continued for "good cause."*

The University of South Florida St. Petersburg is aware of no other reasons why it cannot be continued for "good cause."

The following provides a summary of university activities relating to planning, institutional effectiveness and assessment of student learning.

## Strategic Planning

USF St. Petersburg is in the midst of creating a new Strategic Plan to replace one that expires in September of 2008. We do not anticipate change to the current mission statement:

### Preamble

As USF St. Petersburg assumes greater responsibilities and roles in the next five years, its strategic planning statements set a responsible course for fulfilling our obligations as a state-supported, fiscally and academically autonomous public university dedicated to the highest standards of teaching, research, and service.

### Mission

USF St. Petersburg offers distinctive graduate and undergraduate programs in the arts and sciences, business, and education within a close knit, student-centered learning community that welcomes individuals from the region, state, nation, and world. We conduct wide-ranging, collaborative research to meet society's needs and engage in service projects and partnerships to enhance the university and community's social, economic and intellectual life. As an integral and complementary part of a multi-campus university, USF St. Petersburg retains a separate identity and mission while contributing to and benefiting from the associations, cooperation and shared resources of a premier national research university.

## Strategic Planning Activities

In the fall semester of 2007, the university reactivated its strategic planning activity by appointing a University Strategic Planning Committee chaired by the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. Dr. Eric Eisenberg, a USF Tampa faculty member with expertise in strategic planning led a spirited exercise on February 29<sup>th</sup> that engaged faculty, staff and students.

Among the many issues that will find their way into the final plan—the notion of institutional effectiveness and greater accountability in assessment of student learning are several ideas that were raised at the strategic planning session, and these ideas are already gaining university-wide support in the form of faculty work and institutional support for assessment of student learning.

In the next phase of the process, a series of “Campus Luncheon Discussions” were held beginning in late-March and running through late-April to discuss in detail the issues surrounding emerging themes such as: Resources and Master Planning; Community (Metropolitan) Synergy; Inclusion and Campus Community; The Student Experience: Academic and Student Life; and The USFSP Academic Programs: Present and Future.

The new Strategic Plan for 2008 to 2013 will be completed in the fall term.

## Data driven Decision-Making

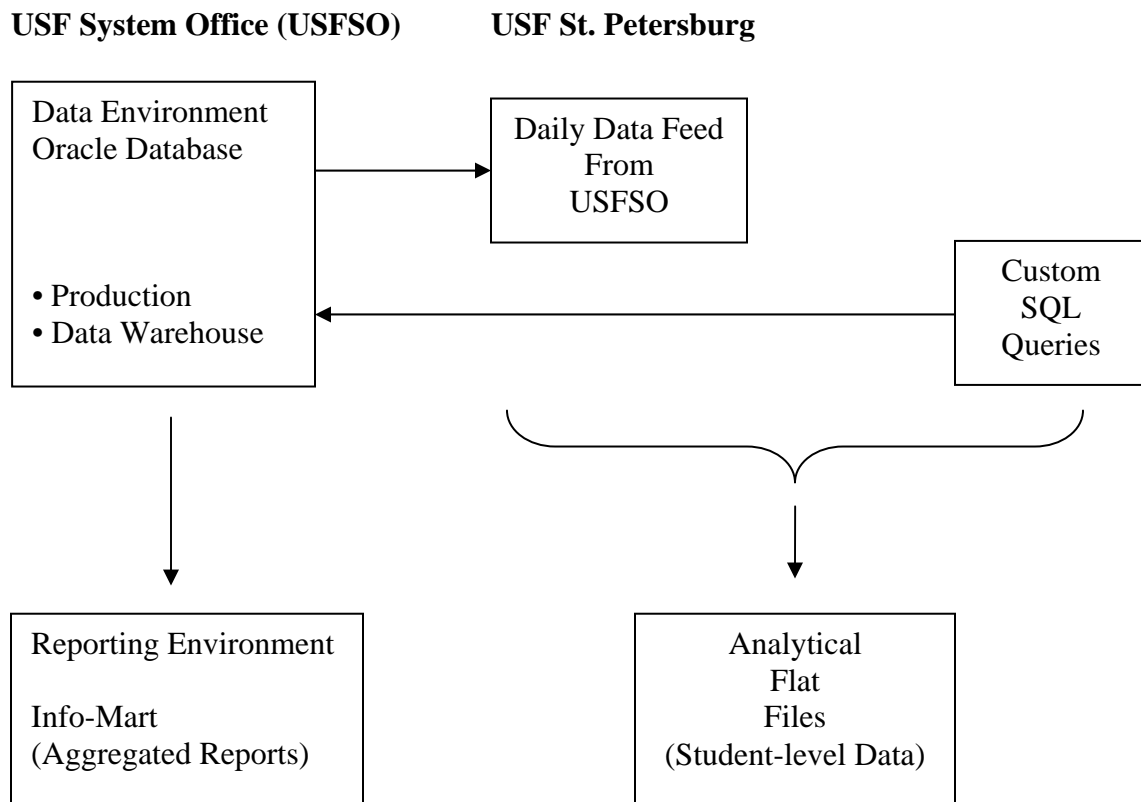
In early 2008, the Office of Institutional Research, Planning & Effectiveness (the IR Office) was re-staffed, and it will play a key role in supporting campus strategic planning efforts. The IR Office will contribute to SWOT analysis by preparing an environmental scan, and as the strategic plan develops, IR will assist with developing university assessment strategies as well as developing and monitoring institutional effectiveness metrics.

## The Data Environment

USF St. Petersburg has an extraordinary opportunity to benefit from the data-rich environment of the USF System. With the re-staffing of the IR Office, USF St. Petersburg is already beginning to access, analyze and convert information into data-driven tools for use by campus decision-makers. Figure 1 below represents the data and reporting environment and the relationship between USFSP and the USF System Office.

**Figure 1**  
**The USF—USFSP Data & Reporting Environment**

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**Other Institutional Data:**  
NSSE, CIRP  
CLA, MAPP, CAAP  
Common Data Set (CDS), VSA

## Assessment of Student Learning

With regard to SACS' concerns about assessment, the University established two ad hoc committees that shared responsibility for developing the responses: the GE Assessment Committee (GEAC) which addressed CS 3.5.1 concerns, and the Student Achievement Assessment Committee (SAAC) which addressed FR 4.1 concerns. The committees will be permanently replaced by a single standing Committee on Institutional Effectiveness, and as further evidence of its commitment, the University has developed and will soon adopt an assessment plan for the overall coordination of assessment activities as an essential university function.

The coordination of assessment efforts will reside in the IR Office. However, of singular importance is the establishment of an Institutional Effectiveness Committee that will serve as an advisory board to the IR Office, but will also be charged with making recommendations to the Regional Chancellor via the Regional Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs based on data-driven findings from University curricular and co-curricular assessment efforts. This committee demonstrates our commitment to institutional effectiveness and guarantees the sustainability of our campus efforts.

The University Assessment Plan is depicted in Figure 2 below. In its final form, the figure will be inverted to show that at the top of the educational enterprise are our students. At USFSP student learning takes place in both curricular and co-curricular activities—and assessment of student learning is driven by our faculty.

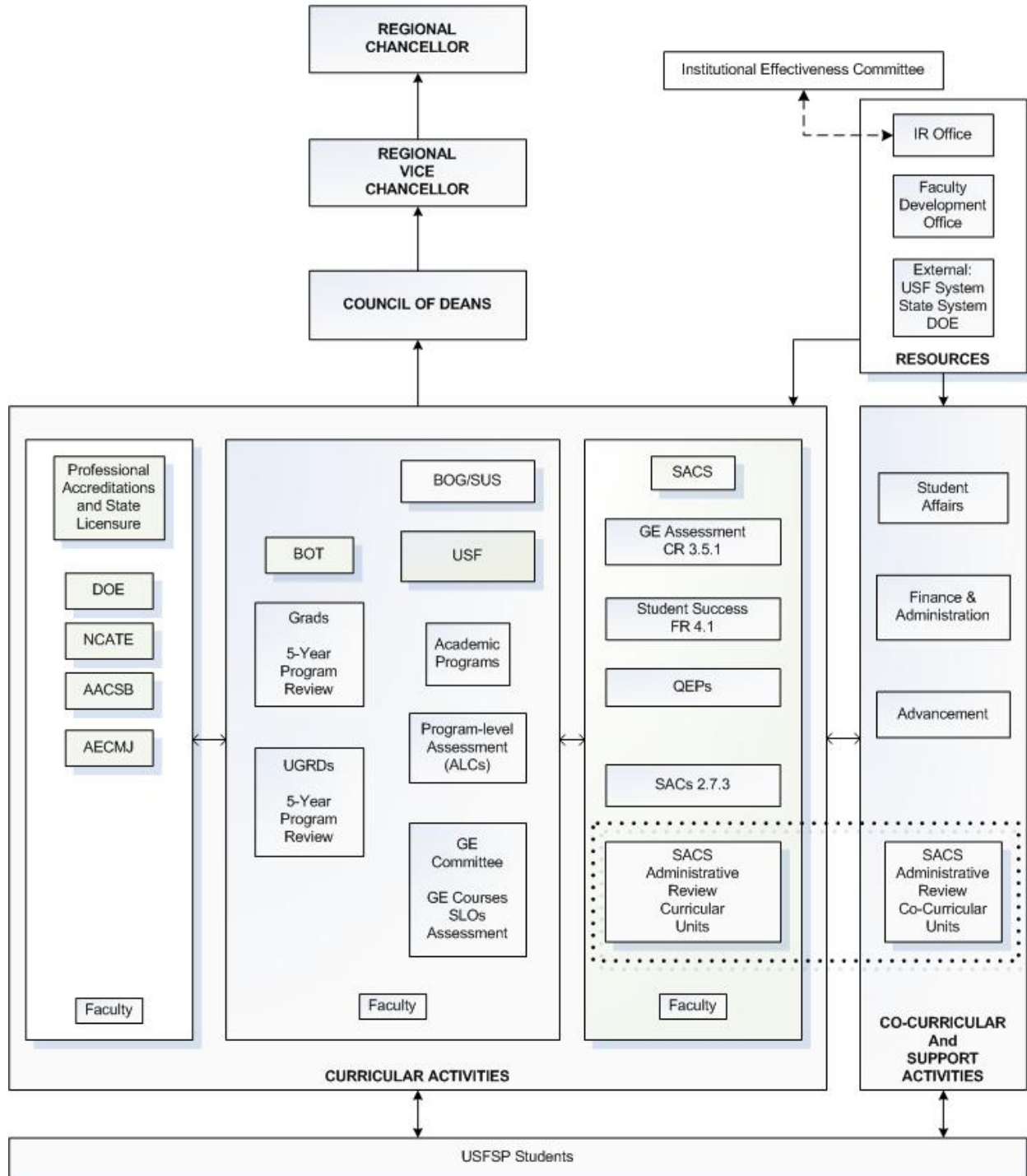
## Sustainable Efforts

As part of ongoing assessment and accreditation campus efforts, it is important to mention that one of our colleges and one of our departments have earned programmatic and national accreditation and one of our colleges is a candidate for national accreditation.

- The USFSP College of Business is accredited by AACSB (International Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business).
- The USFSP Department of Journalism and Media Studies is accredited by ACEJMC (Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications).
- The USFSP College of Education is a candidate for accreditation with NCATE (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education).

Figure 2  
The University Assessment Plan

**USF St. Petersburg's Assessment Plan**  
6/2006 – 6/2011  
**Schematic: Curricular and Co-Curricular Assessment Activity Processes**



## Summary

The University is actively addressing the Assessment of General Education and Student Success. Protracted discussions on the nature and future of General Education at this university and in the USF System are now resolved and USF St. Petersburg is well along in the process of defining our student learning outcomes and developing measurement and assessment practices for evaluating our progress.

The University of South Florida St. Petersburg recognizes and embraces its responsibility to establish clear goals for student success; to collect data to evaluate progress to those goals; to evaluate programs and actions taken to achieve those goals; and to prescribe measures to be taken to enhance student success and better achieve University goals in that area. The last year has seen considerable progress in all of those regards, and this progress brings us into full compliance with SACS Accreditation Requirements.