Administrative and Educational Support (AES) Unit Review Guide

The AES Unit review process has been designed to allow the College's units to examine past assessments and practices, current structure, historical context and the potential impact of the strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats on future operations. This process is based on good institutional practices, influenced by the College's academic program review process, and conforms to the expectations of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) assessment and planning standards. Suffolk County Community College is committed to the process and, as such, all AES units undergo a thorough evaluation of operations every seven years. Additional information on AES unit reviews including the College review schedule, template, and details about review and communication are included in the Comprehensive Assessment Plan for Institutional Effectiveness (CAPIE) which can be found on the Suffolk County Community College website (http://www.sunysuffolk.edu/About/2541.asp).

I.   The Committee Structure

A. Unit Review Chairperson

One individual will be appointed to serve as the AES Unit Review Chairperson. This individual may be a unit director or staff member. While this person is responsible for the overall review, this review represents a team effort and it is expected that assignments and activities will be completed by the chairperson and other members of the committee. In this role, the chair is responsible for:

1. In coordination with senior leadership and following posted guideline, recommending a representative committee membership
2. Identifying and confirming external reviewers
3. Completing the AES Unit Review template located with the CAPIE
4. Planning the external reviewers site visit
5. Reviewing the reviewers report and integrating the information into the template

6. Establishing a plan of action based on internal and external recommendations
7. Responding to recommendations from the Assessment Advisory Council (AAC)

B. Unit Review Committee Members

Although there is no required committee size, it is suggested that each committee is staffed by at least 5 individuals. Specific membership should include the following:

1. Each unit director (all three campuses and where applicable, central administration)
2. At least one staff member from each of the campuses and where applicable, central administration
3. Optional: One director or staff member from outside the unit (ideally from a unit that the unit under review collaborates with)
4. Optional: Where appropriate, one student representative
5. Optional: An outside member, perhaps a board member or external partner

In their role as committee members, individuals on the team are responsible for:

1. Supporting the completion of the template
2. Participating in the site visit
3. Providing input on the reviewers' report
4. Assisting the chair in responding to the Assessment Advisory Council

C. Ex-Officio Committee Members

To support the efforts of the committee, three additional committee members will be available to discuss findings, act as resources, and provide answers to questions. These members include a senior administrator affiliated with the unit and appropriate staff from the Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness (OPIE).

D. Selection of Membership

Unit Review Committee Chairperson:
The senior administrator responsible for the unit, in collaboration with OPIE staff, the Executive Deans, and where appropriate, the Associate Deans for Student Services, will appoint the unit review chairperson.

Unit Review Committee Members:

The chairperson will select committee members in consultation with the OPIE staff and, where appropriate, the Associate Deans for Student Services. These names will then be sent to the unit's senior administrator for approval.

II.   Outcomes Assessment

Each AES unit has an established mission as well as goals and student learning outcomes (SLOs) and/or support outcomes (SOs). The annual assessment of these outcomes provides the bulk of data that units will use during the review, however, the outcomes also act as anchors for other activities conducted and reports generated between reviews. The annual assessments are housed both in TracDat as well as on the College's AES unit assessment webpage. As a part of the process, OPIE is available to collect and analyze additional data, assist with instrument development/ modification, and answer any research questions.

III.   Report Format and Guidelines

The report is a unit driven document and should reflect the thoughtfulness, expertise, and experiences of the staff. While substantial support exists to assist with the effort, the final report and recommendations should reflect majority opinion, and ideally consensus, of the entire committee.

Section 1: History

The unit is asked to consider historical circumstances that have impacted the unit. This should include major staffing, budgetary, or mission/function modifications over the past 7 years. Any information that will give outsiders a greater understanding of what events have helped shape the direction of the unit should be included.

Section 2: Unit Overview

This section is important for providing answers to the basic questions about how the unit connects to the institutional mission. In addition to speaking to the unit's mission, goals, and outcomes and connection to the institutional goals and Measurable Institutional Objectives (MIOs), the unit is asked to describe the basic functions, illustrate the reporting structure and conduct a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis. Additionally, the committee should consider the adequacy of equipment and facilities and where there are concerns, provide compelling data.

Section 3: Staffing

The instructions in this section were left intentionally broad to allow the unit to discuss its staffing. This may include credentials and qualifications of current staff, comparisons of staffing in comparable colleges, illustrations of how the current staffing levels impact service, or other information deemed important by the committee.

Section 4: Planning and Assessment

This section was developed to allow the unit to report both on the findings from official assessments, but also to allow for the inclusion of data gathering efforts, information gathering, and reports over the last 7 years. What is important is that units anchor any information within the unit's goals and outcomes.

Section 5: External Evaluation

The unit should cut and paste the text from the external reviewer reports into this section of the report. This information is critical for the next step, which is to identify recommendations from the internal and external teams.

Section 6: Conclusion and Recommendations

The template was designed to encourage the AES Unit review team to consider conclusions and recommendations after each section of the report. This section allows the team to take all of this information, in addition to the recommendations from the external team, and begin to consider how to move forward in the next year.

Section 7: Action Plans

Based on the internal and external conclusions and recommendations, the Unit Review team is charged with establishing a series of activities that it will engage in over the next year. While the official action planning period is one year, the unit should reflect on this information each year and integrate the findings into the annual assessments to strengthen the assessment and planning activities.

Appendices:

Evidence to support information in the report should be in the appendices of the document. The appendices should be incorporated into the report so that all information is available in one location.

It is important to note that the review is not just about completing a template. Rather, it is about effectively telling the story of the unit. This process represents an opportunity for self-reflection that takes into account positive and negative experiences, triumphs and challenges, and allows the team to stop and consider how

all of the data and evidence can be used to plan for improvements. While building on historical information, reports, and personal accounts, the final product, which is the action plan, is all about moving forward. To that end, the team should consider the following when completing this process:

1. Be factual, explicit, and don't avoid examining and documenting the negative. Often, when things did not go well, there is an opportunity for learning and growth.

2. Although there will be some negative information placed into the report, maintain a solutions based approach and the report will provide a great resource for improving the unit.

3. Where possible, look for and document explicit connections to the College mission and strategic plan.

4. Where possible, consider how the activities, reports, and data connect back to the unit's mission, goals, and outcomes – especially the outcomes.

5. Consider the totality of the functions of the unit rather than focusing on a few core activities, functions, or initiatives.

6. Consider who the unit is charged with serving and whether their needs, requirements, and expectations have been met.

7. Consider how opportunities for professional development have been offered and whether it has made a difference.

IV. Support Services for the Committee

A. Secretarial/Computing Services
Secretarial/computing services will be provided by the unit that is under review. Division of work should be divided across the campuses to reduce the burden on any individual staff member.

B. Data Support Services
The Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness will assign a specialist to each Program Review Committee as an ex-officio member. That specialist will assist in gathering data necessary for the review and in interpreting its significance. A standard student data package will be provided, which contains information about student demographics, persistence and retention rates, and other helpful information. Other OPIE staff, who will also serve as ex-officio, will be available to support the AES Unit Review committee in planning the review and organizing the site visit.

C. Orientation Meeting
OPIE will introduce the Unit Review process at the first meeting of the Unit Review Committee, and will provide the AES Unit Review Template, this Guide, and will be available to answer any questions. Staff members in OPIE will be

available for the duration of the review to assist in answering questions and providing support as necessary.

V. External Review

In addition to the Unit Review report and the subsequent action plans, the external review represents the other critical aspect of the AES Unit review process. Without an evaluation from an objective, external evaluator, the review lacks the credibility necessary for the College to fully accept the recommendations. The Guidelines for External Reviewer Reports are sent to all external reviewers with their appointment letter from the senior administrator responsible for the unit. The guidelines specify the topics and questions that need to be addressed by the external reviewers. This document is available on the SCCC AES assessment webpage.

Organizing the External Review Team:

1. A team of two external reviewers should be used. According to SUNY Guidelines, "external review teams should consist of not less than two (2) persons who have no academic, professional or other significant relationship to full-time [staff] in the [unit], no previous significant or formal affiliation with the institution, and who come from academic or professional institutions.[1]" Additional information on reviewer qualifications can be found in the Guidelines for External Reviewers on the SCCC AES assessment webpage.

2. The committee recommends reviewers to the unit's senior administrator who approves the candidates and sends appointment letters.

3. The committee arranges the dates and the agenda for the on-site visit after consultation with OPIE staff

4. The committee chair sends copies of the review, additional background material, and the Guidelines for External Reviewers to external review team members.

5. External review team conducts the site visit which includes examination of facilities and conducting meetings with, as appropriate, students, faculty, and administration.

6. Evaluators meet with the committee, including ex-officio members and other individuals as appropriate, for a verbal exit report at the conclusion of the site visit.

7. Evaluators submit their final reports, either co-written or 2 separate reports to the committee chair who forwards copies to the unit's senior administrator and the unit as well as to OPIE

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[1] The brackets indicate that staff and unit were not part of the SUNY language. These words replaced faculty and department so that the information is better aligned with AES units.

VI.   Timeline

Given that AES Units operate on a 12-month schedule, there is more time and greater flexibility built into the timeline. Additionally, with the approval of the unit's senior leadership and consultation with OPIE, these timeframes can be adjusted. While it is important for the College to stay on schedule with these reviews, the major concern is that the information gathered provides the unit with the information necessary to plan for improvement.

March – May (Semester before the Unit Review)
The senior leadership (central), executive deans, and unit directors are contacted by OPIE to schedule a preparation meeting. Prior to this meeting, decisions are made about the Unit Review Chairperson and a team is chosen. Also, prior to the meeting, a series of questions is provided to the team to consider. At the meeting, a brainstorming session will occur to flesh out the units functions and goals, consider what data is available to analyze, determine what the standard data package will include, and initialize discussions about potential external reviewers.

May-July
The Unit holds meetings and/or a retreat to finalize a list of data necessary for the review, to review the standard data package provided by OPIE, and to finalize a list of external reviewers.

August-October
In addition to filling out the AES Unit template, the Unit reaches out to the external reviewers to secure their participation and begin preparations for the site visit.

End of October
The external reviewers should be committed to an official date between January and March. In addition, the template, up to the completion of the external reviewers report should be completed and forwarded to the AAC for review

November
The AAC reviews the document utilizing a rubric and submits any recommendations to OPIE. Representatives from OPIE will set up a meeting with the committee to discuss the recommendations. Any changes need to be made quickly, depending on the visit date as a final report, up to the external reviewer response, must be provided to the reviewers no later than two weeks before their visit.

January-March
External reviewers conduct the site visit and meet with important stakeholders, view operations, and observe any activities deemed to be mission critical. While the review team will provide an oral exit report, they are expected to provide a formal written report to the unit within two weeks. The unit should take all of the internal recommendations from the self-study and compare them against those from the external reviewers immediately after receiving the reports.

March
The unit should finalize the report and meet with senior leadership, executive deans, OPIE, and other appropriate stakeholders to discuss the report and action plan(s). Additionally, the report must be sent forward to the AAC subcommittee on AES Unit review prior to the end of the month.

April
At the AAC end of year meeting, the AES subcommittees will be presenting their results and individuals involved with the AES Unit review are invited to attend and provide their own evaluation of the process.

May
Any recommended changes are brought before the Joint Planning and Assessment Council (JPAC). In addition, the final reports from the AAC are sent to JPAC.

July-December[2]
The AES Units work with the senior leadership, executive deans, OPIE, and other appropriate stakeholders to implement the action plans.

VII.   Relationship to the Accreditation Process

Suffolk County Community College operates from the philosophy that the primary reason for conducting AES Unit reviews is for the continual improvement of the units responsible for improving the environment for student learning. MSCHE understands the importance and value of these units and, accordingly, has indicated in its standards that address institutional assessment and integrated planning, that continual assessment and periodic evaluation of these units is central to making an argument for institutional effectiveness. Effective unit reviews not only assist the College in enhancing the student learning environment, but provide evidence to our accreditor that SCCC is serious about continuous improvement.

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[2] Additionally, the units will have an opportunity to present to the President's Executive Cabinet in September of the year following the review. This provides an opportunity for the unit to showcase its work, provide updates on the action plan, and ensure that the information is broadly communicated.

VIII. Guideline Review

Suffolk County Community College is committed to a continual assessment of its assessment, evaluation, and planning activities. As such, the College is committed to both formal and informal assessment of the AES Unit review process. Formally, the AAC is charged with reviewing all aspects of the CAPIE every five years; and, annually, the AAC subcommittee on AES Unit review examines the entire process and provides suggestions to JPAC (the joint meeting of the AAC and Strategic Planning Council). Informally, both the AAC and OPIE regularly receive recommendations from AES units navigating the AES Unit review process. These suggestions are brought forward first to the AES Unit review subcommittee and then to the larger body at the full AAC meetings. Should the suggestions receive the endorsement of the Council, they will be moved ahead to the JPAC for a formal vote.

IX. Suggested Appendices to the Review

While it is up to the discretion of the unit as to what information is included, the following list identifies information that will enhance the Unit Review. This is by no means an exhaustive list and AES Units have the flexibility to provide whatever information tells the most comprehensive story. Additionally, the unit should feel free to contact OPIE throughout the process with questions or requests for additional data.

> College Strategic Plan
> Action plans documented in the College's Operation plan over the last 7 years
> Long-range plans that anchor the activities of the unit
> Organizational chart addressing the unit
> Common data set provided by OPIE
> Major reports generated in the last 7 years
> Cost/Revenue data (at least 5 years)
> External Reviewer reports
> Previous Unit Reviews (if applicable)
> Grant activity in the last 7 years (if applicable)
> Membership and minutes of external advisory groups/meetings (if applicable)
> External accreditation reports (if applicable)
> Additional appendices as needed