JACKSONVILLE STATE UNIVERSITY
Manual of Policies and Procedures

POLICY NUMBER: I:01:14   **DATE: May 2013**
REVISION DATES: May 2015
SUBJECT: JSU Continuous Improvement Process
APPROVED: John M. Beehler, President

PURPOSE

JSU's system of continuous improvement unites institutional research, strategic planning, operational planning, program review, and assessment of student learning. It's driven from JSU's institutional values that create a mission focused on improved learning opportunities and an improved learning environment for our students. It is a framework of operation that makes our strengths visible, provides for informed decision-making, and fuels efficiency.

Students, faculty, staff, and administrators all play a role in evaluating and improving JSU. This policy describes the systems, roles, and purposes of JSU's comprehensive system for continuous improvement.

POLICY

JSU Mission and Goals

The institutional mission and goals are developed during the Strategic Planning process. All of our work in planning, evaluation, decision-making, and operations is driven by the mission and goals.

Strategic Planning

Strategic planning is a complex, ongoing process JSU uses to identify and maintain alignment with the most important elements in our environment. The strategic planning process is future oriented and consists of visioning, reviewing or creating a mission statement, gap analysis, environmental scans, trend analysis, strategy development, and implementation. All sectors of the university have an opportunity to contribute to the strategic plan through peer representation or by directly responding to online surveys or participating in university discussion groups.

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Institutional Research

Institutional research involves the gathering, analysis, and reporting of information related to university accountability and effectiveness. JSU reports to state (Alabama Commission on Higher Education), federal, and private entities about student enrollment, tuition, budgets, and use of resources. Much of this research is conducted in the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA); however, this office also coordinates with many other departments to provide external stakeholders the information they require. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) works with OIRA to produce the JSU Fact Book in hard copy and online.

Assessment of Student Learning Institution-Wide

Institutional assessment focuses on student learning outcomes and is facilitated by university-wide initiatives that test student knowledge, engagement, and success. These activities are coordinated in the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment and Office of Institutional Effectiveness and administered throughout university academic and service-providing departments. OIRA and OIE also provide support to departments in developing or choosing student learning outcomes and measures in their departmental assessment initiatives. OIRA also conducts studies on student retention and grade point average that support understanding outcomes of different student groups.

Operational Planning

Operational plans are developed by academic, administrative, and student support units to focus on the budget and administrative functions of each unit. Planning occurs each fall, with units developing their goals, objectives, evaluation measures, and new funding requests by the end of December. Vice presidents review the plans and budget requests in order to make budget recommendations to the Strategic Planning Committee and the University Budget Committee. Units document the results of objectives and use of results in PRISM by mid-October each year.

Assessment of Student Learning Program-Level

Assessment of student learning is conducted at JSU for the purpose of improving student learning and student success. Following the same timeframe as operational planning, it involves developing learning outcomes, determining how outcomes will be measured, conducting the assessment, reporting the results, and using the results to impact changes that will improve student learning and services. Results may also be used to share the successes of the

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program in meeting student learning needs. Assessment is conducted at the program level. It does not focus on individual student outcomes, but the combined outcomes of students engaged in a program of study or receiving certain services.

Program Review

Program Review consists of a series of seven cycles in which academic and non-academic units conduct a self-study to assess major strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and concerns in the areas of quality, demand, and resources. Program Review includes a peer review with peer recommendations integrated into unit operational and assessment plans. Accredited units may coordinate their program review with programmatic accreditation.
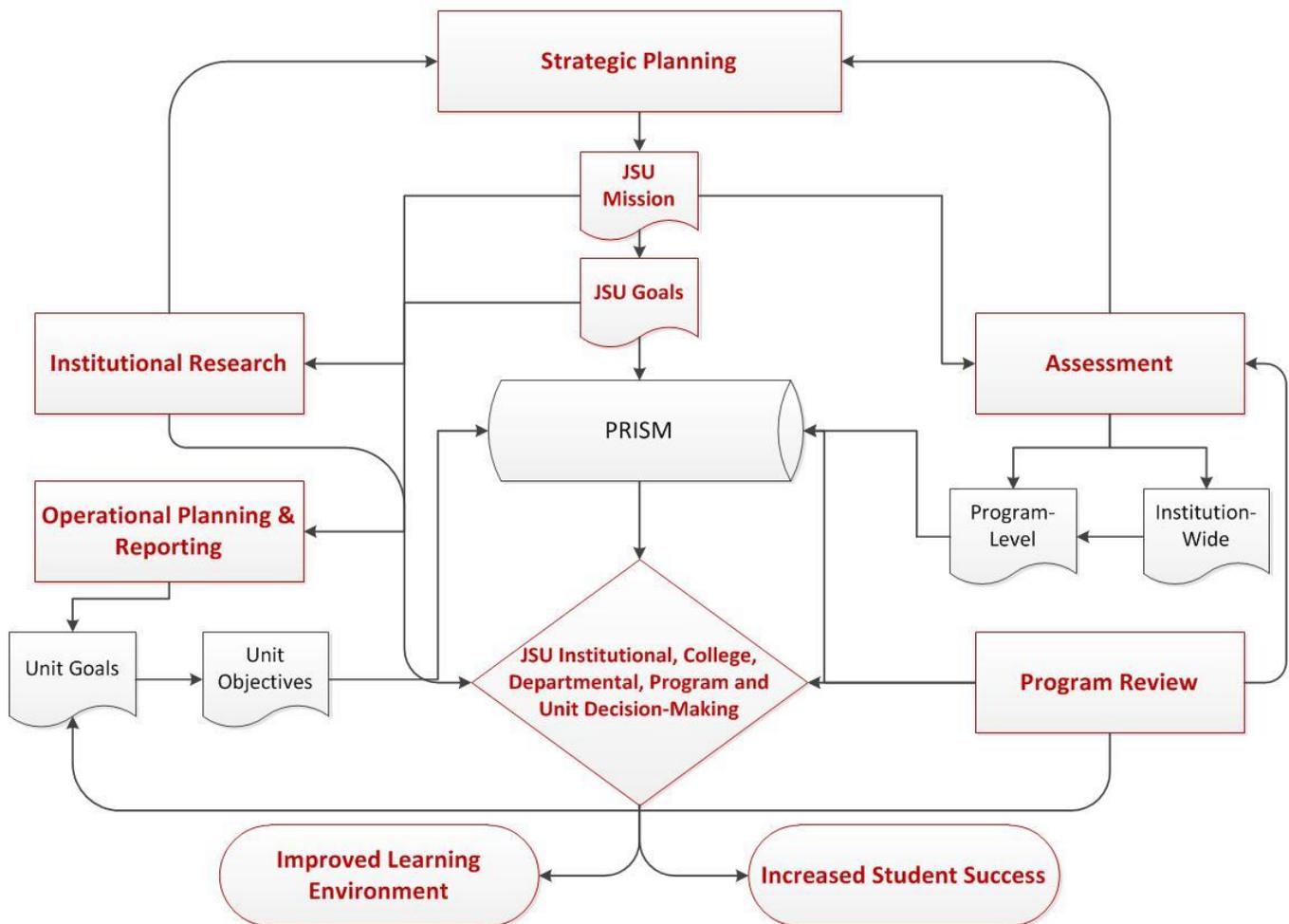
PRISM

PRISM is JSU's information management system that stores and reports operational goals, objectives, budget requests, strategies, methods of assessment/evaluation, and use of results. Student learning outcomes, results and use of results are also entered into this online system. PRISM provides decision-makers with relevant reports, making JSU's comprehensive system of continuous improvement visible, viable, and meaningful. PRISM training is provided periodically for new staff and as a refresher.

At JSU, institutional research, strategic planning, operational planning, program review, and assessment of student learning all fit together to inform decision-making and purposeful improvements across every level of operation. With outcomes of increased student success and an improved learning environment, informed decision-making is powerful when it represents all aspects of the university. Figure 1 is a conceptual model of our comprehensive system for continuous improvement.

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Figure 1.

JSU Comprehensive System of Continuous Improvement

Strategic Planning

JSU Mission

JSU Goals

Institutional Research

Assessment

PRISM

Operational Planning & Reporting

Program-Level

Institution-Wide

Unit Goals

Unit Objectives

JSU Institutional, College, Departmental, Program and Unit Decision-Making

Program Review

Improved Learning Environment

Increased Student Success

RESPONSIBILITY

The Vice-President Research, Planning, and Collaboration is responsible for this policy.

EVALUATION

This policy and its procedures will be reviewed biennially.

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