

Fall 2018

## A Meta-Assessment of an Institution's Administrative Assessment Processes

Cynthia Groover

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# A META-ASSESSMENT OF AN INSTITUTION'S ADMINISTRATIVE ASSESSMENT PROCESSES

by

CYNTHIA GROOVER

(Under the Direction of Juliann Sergi McBrayer)

## ABSTRACT

Many institutions establish assessment teams to assist faculty in developing their knowledge of and confidence in conducting academic program assessment, and some extend these teams to address administrative and student affairs assessment as well. These teams may function as more formal distributed leadership models, as described by Spillane (2006), or they may be less formal groups with little or no leadership roles. Regardless of their level of formality, these teams are often used to implement other resources such as rubrics, peer review, and feedback, but the effectiveness of these resources and processes is not commonly reviewed through an intentionally designed programmatic assessment process. Programmatic assessment allows institutions to look at the impact of multiple resources and processes in place to determine which most positively impact assessment practices at institutions of higher education.

This study implemented a programmatic assessment to help one large, public southeastern institution answer questions about the effectiveness of the processes and resources in place in support of administrative and student affairs assessment. Determining the most appropriate processes and resources is especially important in case of institutional consolidation or merger. Study findings corroborate the positive effects of peer review, rubrics, and feedback and provide baseline data for the institution to begin a decision making

process and determine, based on evidence collected, which resources and processes should be continued or modified as it proceeds with a consolidation.

INDEX WORDS: Distributed leadership, Programmatic assessment, Student affairs assessment, Institutional consolidation, Institutional merger, Assessment team

A META-ASSESSMENT OF AN INSTITUTION'S ADMINISTRATIVE ASSESSMENT  
PROCESSES

by

CYNTHIA GROOVER

B.A., Troy University, 1990

M.A., Auburn University 1993

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty at Georgia Southern University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

STATESBORO, GEORGIA

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CYNTHIA GROOVER

Major Professor: Juliann Sergi McBrayer  
Committee: Richard Cleveland  
Amy Jo Riggs

Electronic Version Approved:  
December 2018

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I gratefully acknowledge the support and contributions of my committee, my colleagues, and my family in bringing this study from conception to reality. Each of you has played a role in ensuring I stayed the course, and for that, I thank you.

To my committee, Dr. Juliann Sergi McBrayer, Dr. Richard Cleveland, and Dr. Amy Jo Riggs, I am truly thankful for your willingness to commit your time to my success. Your interest in and enthusiasm for this study has been invaluable, and I have thoroughly enjoyed our collaboration. Dr. Juliann Sergi McBrayer, you constantly encouraged me to keep the bar high and have never been afraid to tell me when that bar was starting to slip. We have come far.

Additional thanks are due to my colleague, Dr. Xiaomei Song, who listened to my initial ideas and offered advice from start to finish. Your guidance and your friendship were, and are, invaluable.

Finally, to my family, Randy, Jacob, Joseph, and Joshua, we have seen this to the finish, and I could not have done so without your support. Your encouragement was constant. You are my gift. You are my joy.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

From 1974 to 2014, the Federal Pell Grant program, the “bedrock of the federal financial aid system,” grew from \$251 million serving 176,000 students to almost \$34 billion, serving just over nine million students (Baum, 2015, pp. 23-24). This program has increased access to post-secondary education to a substantial number of students who otherwise may have been unable to attain a degree. Can institutions of higher education accurately predict the number of these students who will graduate and move directly into the workplace? Can these same institutions accurately predict the amount of student loans these students might have accumulated, or the salaries they will likely receive during their first years of employment? These are the kinds of questions institutions of higher education are facing regarding all students, regardless of financial aid status, as the Federal government works its way through reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (Higher Education Opportunity Act, 2008).

Government officials argue that institutions should be able to account for the quality of the education they provide, and although the metrics the government proposes may be in flux, the idea of accountability is not new in higher education (Mathewson, 2015). For the past century, regional accreditation has been the mechanism through which many institutions account for the quality of the education provided to their students, as well as the quality of the environment within which this education is provided. With the growing move toward accountability in higher education (Martin, Goulet, Martin, & Owens, 2015), institutions have found themselves facing more rigorous assessment demands from their regional accreditors (Eaton, 2013). Institutions continue to address basic issues of student learning, financial stability, and the educational environment. However, additional proposed metrics include

retention and graduation rates, student loan default rates, and student loan repayment rates. These proposed metrics extend the scope of institution's responsibility, expanding the focus from students' learning and lives while on campus to students' success beyond graduation, and addressing this entire picture of assessment will be necessary to maintain accreditation.

In 2005, institutions within the southeastern region of the United States (US) who hold accreditation through the Southern Association of Schools and Colleges Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) were required to submit evidence of engagement only in student learning outcomes assessment. Responding every five years to SACSCOC Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1.1, each institution was required to “[identify] expected outcomes, [assess] the extent to which students achieve these outcomes, and [provide] evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results” (SACSCOC, 2012, p. 27). Less than 10 years later, this same level of scrutiny was required beyond academic outcomes to encompass administrative support services, educational support services, and research and community/public service units (as appropriate to the mission of each institution). In each of these additional areas, institutions were asked to follow the same process of identifying outcomes, assessing the extent to which units achieve these outcomes, and providing evidence of improvement based on results. Adequately addressing each of these areas requires an institutional assessment process, but while “assessment is frequently conducted, the quality of its implementation is seldom investigated” (Rodgers, Grays, Fulcher, & Jurich, 2013, p. 384).

Federal financial aid is one funding source for students who seek access to higher education. Without regional accreditation, institutions are unable to offer this resource, limiting access to a post-secondary degree to substantial numbers of potential students. For example, Pell Grants specifically target “low- and moderate-income students,” and according

to Baum, Ma, Pender, Welch, and College (2016), although the “number of Pell Grant recipients declined in 2015-16 for the fourth consecutive year” (p. 4), this number represents an increase in the number of students served from 5.2 million only a decade earlier to 7.6 million today. Institutions without effective assessment practices can neither achieve nor maintain regional accreditation, which means those students who need financial assistance the most may not have access to federal funds.

### **Background**

This background describes processes and resources higher education institutions commonly implement to promote effective assessment practices, as well as their motivation for doing so. Many institutions establish assessment teams to assist faculty in developing their knowledge of and applied skill in academic program assessment, and some extend these teams to address administrative and student affairs assessment as well. These teams may function as more formal distributed leadership models, as described by Spillane (2006), or they may be less formal groups with little or no leadership roles. Regardless of their level of formality, these teams are often used to implement other resources such as rubrics, peer review, and feedback, but the effectiveness of these resources and processes is not commonly reviewed through an intentionally designed programmatic assessment process. This background concludes with the benefit of using programmatic assessment to determine strengths of and potential areas for improvement in assessment resources and processes, particularly during cases of institutional consolidation or merger.

Given the trend toward increased accountability both during and after students' time on campus, investigating the quality of an institutional assessment process is vital to both student and institutional success. According to Blimling (2013):



The current climate of assessment demands that institutions explain why college costs as much as it does; that they quantify how much students learn, what percentage of students graduate, and what the cost-to-benefit ratio of education is in the labor market after graduation...It also demands that institutions are using this information to make performance-based management decisions that improve quality and reduce costs. (p. 8)

This demand to address college cost can only be met by institutions being actively and effectively engaged in a comprehensive assessment process encompassing all aspects of its academic and administrative and student affairs functions.

Considering the breadth of activities represented across institutions, effectively promoting and sustaining effective institution-wide assessment can be overwhelming for those officially charged with the tasks. The number of faculty and staff in need of training and support in this critical institutional function is often disproportionately large compared to the number of assessment professionals available. One large, public southeastern university, for example, at the time of its last reaffirmation of accreditation in 2015, had 134 academic programs and more than 75 units falling into the categories of administrative and student affairs units, but a staff of only three full-time employees in the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) directly involved in oversight of institutional assessment processes. Without some mechanism in place to extend the reach of the OIE, limited staff members would be responsible for assisting over 200 faculty and staff who are actively engaged in these assessment processes.

This large, public southeastern university's situation is not unique; the number of faculty and staff in need of training and support in this critical institutional function is often disproportionately large compared to the number of assessment professionals available. In

response, many assessment offices have implemented assessment teams to assist faculty and staff across campuses in promoting and sustaining effective assessment practices (Fishman 2017; Slager & Oaks, 2013). These assessment teams are designed to provide proof of evidence-based decision making in all areas of institutional practice, from academic programs, to Business and Finance, to Facilities, and to Student Affairs.

Assessment teams can assist assessment staff by informally leading assessment efforts across institutions. This “interaction of leaders, followers, and their situation....stretched over individuals who have responsibility for leadership routines” may define the work of these teams as distributed leadership models (Spillane, 2006, p. 14). Those formally charged with implementing assessment practices can often benefit from the assistance of professionals from other areas of campus, such as Student Affairs or Business and Finance. The perception of leadership, however, must be carefully monitored.

According to Corrigan (2013), in an era where accountability is becoming more and more prominent, real distribution of leadership is a challenge. Corrigan believed that those who claimed to implement distributed leadership had, in reality, little more than the image of distributed leadership, designed to give participants the sense they contribute to an organization goal. The model, in this case, is a “means of securing professional engagement within a strict hierarchical model of accountability” (Corrigan, 2013, p. 70). There is a foundation of shared leadership, but only the work itself is distributed.

Distributed leadership is just one component institutions may use to promote effective institutional assessment processes. Common practices also include the use of rubrics, peer review, and feedback (Fulcher, Coleman, & Sundre, 2016; Jonsson, 2013; Kahlon, Delgado-Angulo, & Bernabe, 2015; Panadero & Romero, 2014). Assessment teams often apply

institutional rubrics to annual assessment reports, supplementing their quantitative evaluation with qualitative feedback. Any relationship between these practices, assessment teams, and successful assessment practices, however, “is only speculative until systematically evaluated” (Fulcher & Bashkov, 2012, p. 7).

Systematic evaluation of an institution’s assessment processes can be accomplished through program assessment. Shutt, Garrett, Lynch, and Dean (2012) suggested any programmatic assessment process “should continue to undergo evaluation where it can be modified to ensure that every element contributes to the program’s outcomes” (p. 78). In the case of administrative and student affairs assessment, particularly when efforts are distributed across campuses, assessment professionals and other staff and administrators may devote significant effort to applying rubrics and providing feedback. Impact of these efforts is difficult to gauge, but programmatic evaluation allows institutions to look at the impact of *multiple* resources and processes in place to determine if they have the “right set of activities” in place to positively impact assessment practices across campus (Fink, 2013, p. 47). This focus on specific resources and processes is especially important because often institutions focus their assessment on satisfaction of participants instead of impact of resources and processes (Chalmers & Gardiner, 2015).

Determining the most appropriate processes and resources is especially important in case of institutional consolidation or merger. Puusa and Kekäle (2015) noted that the early years of the merger in which they participated tended to be framed within the context of “us and them,” and both institutions had “long traditions and established ways of doing things” (pp. 441-442). Merging institutional processes, such as assessment processes, possibly can be best achieved by combining the best of both institutions’ practices, not because they have

always been in place, but because they are worth carrying forward. This worth can be established through a programmatic assessment process aimed specifically at identifying those best practices.

In summary, effective assessment practices are essential if institutions are to maintain regional accreditation and access to federal financial aid. To accomplish this, many institutions implement assessment teams, often in the form of distributed leadership models, but few assess the impact of these teams and other resources on their assessment practices. Particularly during a consolidation, programmatic assessment can help institutions gather the data needed to help make informed decisions regarding the impact of specific resources and activities to ensure “every element contributes to” effective assessment practices (Shutt et al., 2012, p. 78).

### **Statement of the Problem**

While it is clear that the Institutional Effectiveness (IE) Review Team at this large, public southeastern university has distributed assessment work across campus, as with many studies involving a distributed leadership model, the actual impact of the IE Review Team has only been investigated anecdotally. While studies have been conducted that attempt to fill this gap in the literature, many are based in secondary school settings or fail to report actual data; other studies may be set in a postsecondary setting, but they are limited to institutions outside the US.

Furthermore, beyond numerical data collected to approximate units’ success in assessment *reporting*, the OIE at this large, public southeastern university has only limited data to support strengths of or potential areas for improvement in the processes and resources it has employed in support of administrative and student affairs assessment.

Resources posted to the OIE website, consultation with the OIE staff or IE Review Team, and division-specific examples are optional resources the OIE promotes, but the extent to which assessment coordinators take advantage of them has not been documented. As a newly consolidated institution that has been expanded to include administrators and staff unfamiliar with existing processes, it is important that the OIE determine which processes should be promoted in the new institution. This study will extend application of the distributed leadership model into a postsecondary setting in the US and collect more systematic evidence of its impact. This study also seeks to collect more concrete evidence that the OIE needs to determine which assessment resources and processes should be continued, modified, or even abandoned, particularly when implementing a consolidation.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study was to better understand participant perceptions of their own knowledge of and confidence in the assessment process and how those perceptions are impacted by the peer review process facilitated by the IE Review Team, by optional resources provided by the OIE, and by the number of assessment cycles in which participants have engaged. In addition to the peer review coordinated by the OIE, the office provides workshops tailored to individual divisions, general workshops addressing specific components of the assessment cycle, and various assessment resources. No data have been collected to date to address the impact of resources and peer review on an individual's developing knowledge of or confidence in assessment. The OIE provides a rubric to guide those who write reports, but actual utilization of this rubric is in question. In 2016, the OIE developed multiple new examples of strong assessment reports, specific to each administrative and student affairs division on campus, and the usefulness of these are in question as well.

Because separate data collected prior to this study are specific to only one piece of the overall process (interaction with the IE Review Team as a distributed leadership model), the OIE has only limited data to support or refute the effectiveness of the assessment processes and resources in place to support the administrative and student affairs assessment processes in place at a large, public southeastern university. According to Meyer and Murrell (2014), it is important to “ask the tough questions and to get the news that something is not working (or working as assumed) and should therefore be revised or eliminated” (p. 4). The OIE has assumed resources are used, that training is effective, and feedback is applied, but without actual data, it is impossible to support the effectiveness of any of the practices or resources in place.

This study examined the “process of interaction” between IE Review Team members and administrative and student affairs professionals, relying on the “participants’ views” of the process to construct a clearer picture of strengths of and potential areas for improvement in mechanisms in place (Creswell, 2014, p. 8). During implementation of the consolidation, it is important for assessment coordinators and staff who will be engaging in existing processes to understand that these processes have administrative support and are not continuing simply because “it’s always been done like this and it’s worked” (Puusa & Kekäle, 2015, p. 442). Furthermore, it is important that both present and future assessment coordinators and staff see administrators “articulate the value and meaning of assessment activities beyond meeting external stakeholder standards and mandates” (Emil & Cress, 2014, p. 548).

### **Research Questions**

The equally weighted research questions guiding this study were as follows:

1. What are the perceived strengths of and potential areas for improvement in the resources in place to develop knowledge of confidence in assessment and how does perceived utility differ among divisions of the institution?
2. How do assessment coordinators perceive their own knowledge of and confidence in assessment?
3. What is the relationship between knowledge of and confidence in assessment and the utility of resources in place?
4. What is the relationship between knowledge of and confidence in assessment and number of assessment cycles in which participants have engaged?

The main hypothesis for this study is that there will be a positive relationship between perceived knowledge of and confidence in assessment and both utility of resources and the number of assessment cycles in which participants have engaged.

### **Significance of the Study**

The majority of the literature related to distributed leadership provides anecdotal evidence of improvement as a result of implementing a distributed leadership model, but most is based in elementary or secondary school settings, and few studies include any evidence beyond anecdotal accounts to support the improvement claimed. This study extended the use of a research-based distributed leadership model that is applicable to higher education. More importantly, and of significance to this large, public southeastern university, this study utilized archival quantitative data to determine if participants in past assessment cycles have been impacted by resources and training provided. The distributed leadership model in

practice in the form of the IE Review Team was examined as well. This information is intended to be used by the OIE to plan future adjustments to existing processes, which may lead to improved utility for the units served and in turn improve assessment practices at a large, public southeastern university.

At the institutional level, a strong assessment process contributes to continuation of regional accreditation, and the IE Review Team as a distributed leadership model serves a critical role in maintaining the strength of this large, public southeastern university's assessment processes. By moving beyond the anecdotal support past studies have typically provided, this study may provide the institution with more concrete evidence that can be used in support of continuing, modifying, or even abandoning mechanisms in place designed to positively affect assessment processes, particularly as these processes expand during implementation of a consolidation.

### **Procedures**

This study was a non-experimental quantitative study utilizing statistical measures. Archival data was collected by the OIE at a large, public southeastern university at the end of the 2016-2017 assessment cycle, before consolidation was effective. Data were collected via voluntary, anonymous participation; no personally identifying information was collected from participants. Anonymous surveying was chosen over personal interviews or focus groups for this study to reduce the possibility of social desirability bias, in which participants feel inclined to give the *correct* answer. Sue and Ritter (2012) suggested participants “generally give more honest answers when faced with a computer screen than when faced with an interviewer” (p. 53).

According to Creswell (2014), because this study sought to “identify factors that influence an outcome”...and because it sought to understand “the utility of” specific



interventions, a quantitative approach was warranted (p. 20). Using quantitative methods, this study examined the “process of interaction” between IE Review Team members and administrative and student affairs professionals, relying on the “participants’ views” of the process to construct a clearer picture of strengths of and potential areas for improvement in the mechanisms in place (Creswell, 2014, p. 8). Because of consolidation, it is important for all new staff and administrators who will be engaged in the existing processes understand that these processes have documented impact on assessment coordinators’ knowledge of and confidence in assessment.

Data regarding utility of resources and perceived knowledge of and confidence in assessment activities were gathered through responses to a specific series of Likert-scaled items, and results were presented using descriptive statistical measures. The utility of individual resources and years of experience in assessment were treated as independent variables, and regression and correlation methods were used to determine if relationships existed between each of these independent variables and the dependent variable, knowledge of and confidence in assessment.

### **Population, Sample, and Sampling**

Participants for this study were current and former employees of administrative and student affairs units at a large, public southeastern university at the end of the 2016-2017 assessment cycle, and, therefore, constitute the population most qualified to provide the information this study seeks (Sue & Ritter, 2007). At the time of initial survey distribution, each of the 85 potential participants in this study was responsible for, contributed to, or had contributed to the preparation of his or her unit’s annual assessment report during one or more of the past six assessment cycles at this large, public southeastern university. Because the

researcher had provided direct support to many of the participants surveyed, no personally identifying information was collected; participants identified only the division in which they engaged in assessment activities. Of 85 possible participants surveyed, 61 provided data, yielding a response rate of 71.7%.

### **Instrumentation**

The Assessment Resources and Environment survey instrument was adapted by the OIE, with permission, from an instrument published by Rodgers et al. (2013). This instrument was chosen by the OIE because the resources and processes identified in the original instrument closely mirror those provided by the OIE at this large, public southeastern university; therefore, little adaption was necessary. The survey addressed two main areas: Use of Assessment Resources and Assessment Environment, using six- and five-point Likert-scaled items respectively. Each item in the Use of Assessment Resources section described a unique resource available to assessment coordinators, such as face-to-face feedback from an IE Review Team member or general information on the OIE website. Items in the Assessment Environment section were designed to collect data regarding participants' perception of their ability to conduct and report appropriate assessment activities. Rodgers et al. (2013) did not publish reliability or validity data regarding the original instrument, but the OIE conducted testing for face validity by pilot testing the draft survey with members of the IE Review Team and the Associate Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness (AVP for OIE). The original and adapted survey instruments are included in Appendices A and B.

### **Data Collection**

The quantitative approach to this study relied on archival data. Data were collected by the OIE at a large, public southeastern university at the end of the 2016-2017 assessment cycle,

before consolidation was effective in January 2018. No personally identifying information was collected through the survey instrument; participants identified only the division in which they engaged in assessment. The researcher was, therefore, unable to re-identify participants, making this study exempt from Institutional Review Board review, under Category Four of the exemption guidelines and according to the New Common Rule for Human Subjects Research. The researcher obtained permission to analyze the data for this study from the AVP for OIE. All data collected for this study were stored on a common drive that is password protected and shared by all administrators and staff in the OIE, but the specific folder in which the de-identified data are stored was accessible only by the researcher and the AVP for OIE.

### **Data Analysis**

After exporting the data to Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), the researcher utilized descriptive statistical measures to evaluate utility of resources and perceived knowledge of and confidence in assessment. The researcher calculated mean scores based on overall survey responses and by division to determine any variance in utility amongst the divisions represented, following Thompson's (2006) recommendation to use the standard deviation to "help characterize dynamics within [the] data" (p. 41). These findings were presented in tabular form, in the aggregate and by division represented. The utility of individual resources and years of experience in assessment were treated as independent variables, and regression and correlation methods were used to determine if relationships existed between each of these independent variables and the dependent variable, knowledge of confidence in assessment. These data were presented using tables and correlation matrices, as appropriate.

### **Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions**

At the time data were collected, this large, public southeastern university was divided into six different administrative divisions, including the President; the Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs; Business and Finance; Student Affairs and Enrollment Management; and External Affairs; and a Chief Information Officer. Because the researcher had served as an IE Review Team member assigned to many of the units associated with this study, data for this study were collected via anonymous survey rather than personal interviews or focus groups to reduce the possibility of social desirability bias, in which participants feel inclined to give the “right answer” (Sue & Ritter, 2012, p. 53).

Furthermore, data were collected to study the impact of specific resources in place needed to support of administrative and student affairs assessment activities at one large, public southeastern university. Although this limits generalizability, the processes in question are common practice in many institutions (Fishman, 2017; Slager & Oaks, 2013), and the results could still be of use to assessment practitioners beyond the study setting.

### **Definitions of Key Terms**

The following key terms were identified for the purposes of this study:

*Administrative and Student Affairs Institutional Effectiveness Rubric* – The rubric used by the Institutional Effectiveness Review Team to assess the quality of assessment reports submitted for review.

*Administrative and Student Affairs Units* – These units encompass any office that serves an administrative function, such as the Business and Finance division and its related entities, or an academic and student services function, such as the Academic Success Center or Campus Recreation and Intramurals, both under the Student Affairs division. A complete

list of units included in this study is located in Appendix C.

*Assessment Coordinator* – An administrator or staff member who is directly responsible for or has contributed to assessment activities for his or her division.

### **Chapter Summary**

Engagement in assessment is critical to this large, public southeastern university, first for maintaining regional accreditation, but also to ensure its students have access to Federal financial aid. Each year, the OIE and the IE Review Team work with all administrative and student affairs units on campus to ensure each is engaging in assessment by identifying objectives for the coming year, outlining strategies for achieving those objectives, and collecting data that will allow them to identify strengths of and potential areas for improvement in these assessment processes. In carefully studying its internal assessment processes, the OIE has discovered potential areas for improvement in their data collection processes, and these areas warrant being addressed to ensure that all assessment coordinators, administrators, and staff have the resources and support they need to continually engage in assessment and respond to the data they collect.

This study addressed the identified areas in need of improvement by analyzing de-identified archival quantitative data intended to clearly determine the utility of its existing processes and resources. In doing so, it may add to the existing literature addressing distributed leadership in higher education and address the call of Spillane (2006) and others to go beyond anecdotal impact of distributed leadership models. Furthermore, this study may provide the institution with more concrete evidence that can be used in support of continuing, modifying, or even abandoning mechanisms in place designed to positively affect assessment processes, particularly as these processes expand during implementation of a consolidation.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

With increased calls for accountability at the Federal level shaping the requirements of regional accreditors and the connection between regional accreditation and Federal financial aid, it is vital that institutions of higher education have effective assessment practices in place. Failure to do so endangers an institution's ability to maintain regional accreditation, and maintaining this accreditation is paramount. Without regional accreditation, institutions are unable to offer Federal financial aid, limiting access to a post-secondary degree to substantial numbers of potential students.

Access is just one metric the Federal government is currently promoting as a factor of an institution's worth. Humphreys and Gaston (2015) reported that federally suggested indicators also include "affordability, completion and attainment rates, and, more recently, average salaries" once students enter the workforce (p. 16). This represents a shift away from factors of student learning and the quality of the environment in which that learning takes place. Regardless of which factors are ultimately agreed upon, institutions must respond with evidence-based indicators of success, commonly produced through institutional effectiveness and assessment practices.

It is most common for these practices to be overseen by offices of institutional effectiveness and/or institutional assessment, often relying on assistance from assessment teams comprised of faculty and staff from throughout the institution to promote and sustain effective assessment practices (Krzykowski & Kinser, 2014; Slager & Oaks, 2013). The effectiveness of this team approach, distributing the reach of institutional effectiveness or assessment offices throughout an institution, cannot be assumed. Assessment teams encourage

decisions regarding curriculum and operations to be based in evidence. Similarly, maintenance, alteration, or expansion of this team approach to institutional assessment practices should have the same foundation, but literature in the field of assessment has been lacking in terms of data-driven processes to assess the effectiveness of institutional assessment practices, particularly related to administrative and student affairs units.

This chapter begins with the external factors that may drive assessment efforts and the internal practices institutions may implement to respond to those factors without privileging them over more internally based motivators. Internal practices are based on Spillane's (2006) distributed leadership model, the framework used in this study to implement processes designed to encourage effective assessment practices. Review of related literature builds a case for evaluation of this particular distributed leadership model to provide evidence in support of maintaining, revising, or expanding the model during a process of institutional consolidation. The search for related literature focused primarily on the ERIC and Education databases in ProQuest Central, using the following keywords: distributed leadership in education, distributed leadership in higher education, distributed leadership models in higher education, distributed leadership in postsecondary education, program assessment in higher education, faculty development in higher education, higher education consolidation and mergers, and higher education assessment. To ensure relevance, results focused primarily on empirically based studies and other literature published since 2012.

### **Accountability in Higher Education**

With the growing move toward accountability in higher education, institutions have found themselves facing more rigorous assessment demands from their regional accreditors because the accreditors are facing greater demands from the Federal government (Eaton, 2013,

2017). Not only must institutions continue to address basic issues of student learning, financial stability, and educational environment, but they must also consider additionally proposed metrics such as retention and graduation rates, student loan default rates, and student loan repayment rates. Blimling (2013) noted the focus of assessment has gone far beyond traditional student learning outcomes, demanding increased attention to more administrative factors such as costs of attendance and rates of graduation, and other factors such as value of degrees awarded. This expansion of factors has positioned regional accreditors squarely between the federal government and the institutions that receive federal funding through the federal financial aid program, confusing their position as either an enforcer of federal requirements or an ally in institutional improvement (Mathewson, 2015).

This focus on more administrative measures of institutional effectiveness can discourage participation in meaningful assessment activities. In a quantitative study using both t-tests and multiple regression analysis, Trullen and Rodriguez (2013) examined the relationship between faculty perception of the reasons for assessment and their participation in the assessment process over a four-year period. The researchers surveyed over 300 faculty from 20 academic programs in four different Catalan universities undergoing programmatic assessment, correctly hypothesizing that faculty find assessment more legitimate when the process focuses on programmatic improvement rather than “instrumental reasons” related to “political justifications of government decisions” (p. 681). The study also considered faculty engagement with the program, again correctly hypothesizing that faculty who do actively engage in the assessment process feel a stronger sense of connection with their programs. Researchers distributed surveys to all faculty teaching in each of the 20 programs, regardless of their participation in programmatic assessment from 2000 and 2004. The ultimate response rates varied from the four



institutions surveyed, but the 375 responses represent an average response rate of 41%, which contributes to generalizability of the results. Although faculty found assessment more legitimate when the process was improvement-focused, results showed this does not necessarily indicate faculty discount the less favorable external motivations. Furthermore, faculty may believe the process is externally motivated and still identify significantly with their programs. While this study focused on academic program assessment, the current study focused on administrative assessment processes as a program and the impact of a distributed leadership model on these processes. Like faculty, staff often focus on the external motivators behind assessment.

Emil and Cress (2014) used a qualitative approach to investigate the factors that influence faculty participation in the assessment activities of a professional school located in a North American institution of higher education. Researchers focused on the “intrinsic values” underlying the “extrinsic actions...influencing faculty engagement in assessment” (p. 547). Although participants in the study were faculty members within a specific department, the organizational structure relevant to the current study is similar. Instead of faculty in departments, the current study focuses on professional staff within divisions, and the relationship between intrinsic value and extrinsic action should be similar.

Emil and Cress(2014) recruited participants from four different schools within the professional school identified, and any faculty with no direct experience with assessment were excluded, as were those faculty who were hired after the schools most recent accreditation visit. This ensured participation of faculty most recently and deeply involved in the assessment activities of the school, even though the final number of participants was relatively small (n=7). Researchers invited participants via e-mail to participate voluntarily and confidentially in interviews conducted by colleagues from their same schools, but from different departments

(Emil & Cress, 2014, p. 537).

Researchers noted within academic departments the presence of “commonly shared perspectives about organizational aspects that encourage or discourage faculty participation in assessment” (Emil & Cress, 2014, p. 542). Such common perspectives could be common to institutional divisions like Business and Finance or Student Affairs as well, and identifying these perceptions, or even misperceptions, could be critical in advancing assessment efforts across the institution. Researchers also noted the importance of organizational leadership and collaborative learning communities to promoting engagement in assessment. The necessity of leadership commitment is echoed throughout the relevant literature, but equally important is the tone with which that commitment is verbalized. Emil and Cress (2014) noted the commitment must be “sensitively conveyed in order to encourage constructive participation, rather than negative reaction and resistance” (p. 543). In a time when external forces are often seen as the motivation for assessment, this message is perhaps even more important. Finally, the researchers found faculty member engagement was affected by their perceived skill in assessment, a finding that assessment professionals should constantly keep in mind. Faculty and staff who seem to resist assessment may not be resisting out of defiance. Lack of applied experience and absence of practical training most likely results in confusion and frustration. It may very well be that faculty *would* engage if they felt they knew *how* to engage.

### **Structures to Promote Engagement in Assessment**

Considering the breadth of activities represented across institutions, effectively leading, promoting and sustaining effective institution-wide assessment, and ensuring faculty and staff know how to engage in the process, can be overwhelming for those officially charged with the tasks. The number of faculty and staff in need of training and support in this critical institutional

function is often disproportionately large compared to the number of assessment professionals available. In response, many assessment offices have implemented assessment teams to assist faculty and staff across campuses in promoting and sustaining effective assessment practices (Slager & Oaks, 2013). These assessment teams are designed to provide proof of evidence-based decision making in all areas of institutional practice, from academic programs, to Business and Finance, to Facilities, and to Student Affairs. Assessment is then led through a model of distributed leadership (Spillane 2006), in which not only those filling formally identified institutional effectiveness and assessment roles guide the work. Rather, the “interaction of leaders, followers, and their situation...stretched over individuals who have responsibility for leadership routines” (Spillane, 2006, p. 14) defines the work. As Harris and Spillane (2008) noted, however, there is a need for more “systematic evidence” to support the “effects and influences” of the distributed leadership model (p. 33).

### **Need for Leadership**

In a 2016 mixed methods study, Guetterman and Mitchell focused on the role of leadership at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, specifically as it impacted a culture of assessment on that campus. As in the current study, the researchers pointed to external forces driving the necessity for effective assessment practices, even though internal forces focused on improvement should be paramount.

Situated within the context of Nebraska-Lincoln’s general education “ACE (Achievement-Centered Education) 10 Faculty Inquiry Project,” researchers recruited a total of 26 faculty members from diverse disciplines, spanning all eight undergraduate colleges, ensuring diverse representation of the total faculty population. Participants met monthly over the course of a full academic year to share best assessment practices for the ACE 10 courses. Researchers did

not limit their focus to best practices in assessment, but rather drawing on the work of Rodgers et al. (2012), they sought to determine connections between specific faculty development practices and their resulting impact on a culture of assessment within the institution. A specific sub-question, “What are the best practices that encourage faculty members to use assessment data?” addressed this connection (Guetterman and Mitchell, 2016, p. 47).

The mixed methods design employed three separate online surveys, administered at their first and final meetings as pre- and post-workshop surveys designed to gather quantitative data. The first two surveys addressed organizational characteristics and assessment attitudes and knowledge. The third survey addressed information, such as the quality of the information gathered and the extent to which that information could be practically applied. The response rate for both pre- and post- survey administrations was 70%. Qualitative data were collected through open-ended survey items and narrative responses, as well as posters created by participants to share assessment processes and lessons learned in the ACE 10 Faculty Inquiry Project that year.

Although Guetterman and Mitchell (2016) did not identify it as such, their concept of developing faculty leaders who could then share their knowledge with other faculty in their colleges fits well within the context of distributed leadership. This is the same connection the current study attempted to make with the IE Review Team and assessment work at one large, public southeastern university. Guetterman and Mitchell (2016) focused on faculty and student learning outcomes assessment, but findings regarding the assessment process itself were relevant, pointing to the benefit of using teams to assess student work, much like the IE Review team assesses administrative and student affairs work in the current study. Participants valued the opportunity to work with peers in conducting assessment, sharing processes, and learning from lessons their peers have learned. Recommended best practices included distributing leadership

roles beyond the ranks of administrators, again, lending support for distributed leadership.

The work of assessment leaders, even when shared, is not without challenges. Lock and Kraska's (2015) quantitative study focused on the work experiences and challenges of assessment administrators in a college of education. Specifically, the researchers sought to determine which tasks were most challenging and which tasks were most time consuming. The effect of years of assessment work experience was also investigated. Participants were recruited from colleges and school of education with graduate programs, identified by *US News and World Report* as Best Education Schools 2011. The survey instrument included 14 variables, to which participants responded using a seven-point Likert-scale to indicate time spent time on task (ranging from a high of *very extensively* to a low of *hardly* at all) and challenges experienced (ranging from a high of *definitively challenging* to a low of *minimally challenging*). Of the schools, 251 were invited to participate, and 89 completed the survey. According to survey results, administrators spent the most time collecting and managing assessment data and writing up assessment results, and the least time analyzing the "technical characteristics of the assessment instruments" and professional development opportunities (Lock & Kraska, 2015, p. 859). They were least challenged by opportunities to engage in professional development and most challenged by "working with faculty to facilitate their engagement in the assessment process" (Lock & Kraska, 2014, p. 859). Researchers noted that actually engaging in professional development opportunities may provide a means for administrators to develop innovative ways to increase faculty engagement in the assessment process.

Overall, the findings of Lock and Kraska (2014) supported related findings in the assessment literature related to faculty engagement in the assessment process, which seems to be a perpetual challenge for assessment administrators, regardless of their years of experience. In

fact, researchers found “no significant moderating effect” of “years of assessment work experience...on mean time spent on tasks or mean challenges values” (Lock and Kraska, 2014, p. 863). Results reinforced the premise that assessment is often seen as work best left to assessment professionals, and it is often difficult to engage faculty or, in the case of the current study, administrative and student affairs professionals. The data collected for the current study are intended to facilitate better collaboration between assessment professionals at this large, public southeastern university and the professional staff with whom they interact to conduct assessment throughout the institution.

Faculty and staff engagement in assessment may also be promoted through processes of participatory decision-making. Metheny, West, Winston, and Wood (2015) used a set of quantitative instruments to collect data relative to participatory decision-making and faculty in faith-based institutions and the impact participation had on job satisfaction. Participatory decision-making and distributed leadership are similar in that both, in the context of education, spread the responsibility for decision-making across groups of individuals, as opposed to having every decision made at the top levels of an institution.

Researchers used two well-established instruments to collect study data, relying on the “most frequently used and widely researched measures of job satisfaction,” the JDI (Job Description Index) and JIG (Job in General) scales (Metheny et al., 2015, p. 151). Validity and reliability were well documented for each instrument, adding credibility to the study’s results. Targeted participants were all full-time faculty members who teach at faith-based institutions and who had attended the Christian Scholars Conference at the same time. Of the participants, 145 responded to the survey, which, the researchers noted, affects generalizability. Delimitations noted include no consideration for which institutions had faculty senates (which should, in

theory, affect participation in decision-making) and the exclusion of part-time and adjunct faculty. The researchers hypothesized that there would be no relationship between participation in the decision-making process and job satisfaction. Satisfaction with work was further subdivided into seven additional hypotheses that predicted no relationship between decision-making and satisfaction with work, supervision, pay, opportunity for promotion, satisfaction with coworkers, job in general, and demographic variables. A second hypothesis predicted no relationship between satisfaction with work, pay, promotions, supervision, and coworkers and gender, group age, years of teaching, group degree, group rank, and salary. T-tests, ANOVA, and regression analyses revealed no significant results. While this study does not “support what the literature implies” (Metheny et al., 2015, p. 163), there is direction for further research and application to the theory of distributed leadership.

Metheny et al. (2015) made several recommendations for further research, including conducting comparative studies between faculty at faith-based institutions and faculty at state-funded public institutions, for example, or among faculty from institutions within a particular state. They also suggested adding qualitative research to capture more fully the “how and why of participation in decision making” (p. 164). This could be useful when studying participation in distributed leadership settings as well. In some cases, it may be that leadership *could* be more distributed throughout an institution, but finding people willing to accept leadership roles might be difficult. People may agree with the concept of distributed leadership as a theory, as long as they are not the ones being asked to lead.

Willingness to participate in assessment, whether as a leader or not, can depend on a positive culture of assessment. Fuller, Henderson, and Bustamante (2015) used a qualitative Delphi method to explore 10 assessment professional’s perceptions of what constitutes both

positive and negative cultures of assessment at institutions of higher education. In this qualitative approach, researchers employed a three-round series of questions, each time further refining participant responses to arrive at a final list of the factors that determine the state of assessment on their individual campuses. Although the researchers focused on student learning outcomes assessment, as opposed to administrative and student affairs assessment as the current study did, the findings are still applicable to the larger field of assessment in higher education. Like the current study, the researchers pointed to the unavoidable link between assessment and funding, and the importance of positive leadership to initiate progress.

To gather study participants, researchers first appealed to a national listserv of assessment professionals, drawing from a bank of over 1,500 professionals who subscribed to the Assessment in Higher Education (ASSESS) listserv, maintained by the Association for the Assessment of Learning in Higher Education (AALHE). Their call for participants yielded 10 willing professionals, and while the final number of participants was admittedly small, a fact recognized by the researchers, all participants were respected in their field for leadership of and influence on assessment practices within their institutions. Males and females were equally represented, and there was a wide range in responsibility and experience represented. Participant roles ranged from program coordinator to President, and experience ranged from two years to over 30 years. All researchers participated in the coding process for this study, and although participants were not directly involved in the coding process, the Delphi method itself allowed direct participation in development of study themes and their final rankings in terms of importance in determining a negative or positive culture of assessment.

The researchers noted the ability to “facilitate dialog and collaboration” as a necessary skill for assessment professionals, “perhaps even more so than methodological prowess” (Fuller,



et al., 2015, p. 348). This supports the distributed leadership model used to frame the current study. Within the context of the current study, the distributed leadership model is used to extend the reach of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE), the unit with formal responsibility for assessment at this large, public southeastern university. If assessment is going to be accepted as a positive function of daily operations, there must be dialog and collaboration throughout the institution. The distributed leadership model allows the OIE to draw on the expertise of professionals from varying capacities to develop viable processes for administrative and student affairs assessment that may benefit departments, divisions, and the university as a whole.

### **Distributed Leadership Applied**

Hall, Gunter, and Bragg (2012) used interviews supplemented by a “Q methodology” in their qualitative study based on implementing distributed leadership practices into lower schools in England as a means of educational reform. The Q methodology is focused on gathering participant viewpoints through a series of questions, and provides “detailed comparison of the differences/similarities in perception,” using “factor analysis [to identify] shared ways of thinking about particular topics” (Hall et al., 2012, p. 474). The researchers’ overall study included five subject schools of differing types, but this article addressed the results from only one of the five. While additional information from all subject schools would have been more revealing, the experiences and perceptions reported from this single case support existing literature related to the strengths and weaknesses of distributed leadership in practice.

Researchers reported participants of *at least 10* from each school in the study. Participants represented a range of leaders within each school, and the participant quotations supported the study findings clearly. Researchers described their study as the *strange case* of distributed leadership within the subject schools, but what they labeled as strange actually

supported existing literature. Even in a school where distributed leadership was promoted, not everyone who participated in the process could define what is meant by the term. One participant “had looked up the term prior to the interview,” and another “did not know what it meant” (Hall et al., 2012, p. 483) when the Principal referenced it in a meeting. This is perhaps because, in this same school where distribution of leadership is espoused, the Principal, by his own admission, was a dominant force, and researchers noted a “clear sense of fear of the potential consequences of dissent” (Hall et al., 2012, p. 479). Existing literature, however, supports the notion that, even in situations where leadership is distributed, there remains a need for a final level of authority, someone willing and able to take responsibility for the actions, including the successes and failures, of the team as a whole.

Hall et al. (2012) suggested this “elastic” quality of the term “distributed leadership” can actually benefit organizations working to implement such a model, but, at the very same time, distributed leadership “can be seen as operating to legitimise existing leadership practices in ways that serve to distract from the reality” (p. 484) of what is, in fact, anything but distributed. As seen in existing literature, opponents of distributed leadership will be quick to question truly distributed leadership as little more than “a semantic elegance that the term delegation lacks” (p. 475). Corrigan (2013) believed that those who claimed to implement distributed leadership had, in reality, little more than the image of distributed leadership, designed to give participants the sense that they contribute to an organizational goal. In this case of the IE Review Team, the original perception was that *tasks of review* were distributed to respond to accreditation requirements; the extent to which IE Review Team members *led* rather than *facilitated* the process remains in question. Corrigan (2013) noted distributed leadership as “a means of securing professional engagement within a strict

hierarchical model of accountability” (p. 70). It is important to guard against the illusion of shared leadership, if, in reality, only the work itself is distributed.

A qualitative study conducted by McKenzie and Locke (2014) examined factors prohibiting successful implementation of a distributed leadership model in an urban elementary school located in the southwestern US. Participants included six leaders who also served as teachers, literary coaches, and professional development professionals within the subject school. Each leader was responsible for mentoring either two or three teachers identified as new or struggling in the profession in the same school, primarily through observation and response journals. Data were collected using focus groups and semi-structured interviews, which were recorded and transcribed by the researchers. Both researchers also took detailed notes during these sessions, in addition to the monthly in-service meetings and classroom observations included in their data collection. Using content analysis and a constant comparative method, researchers revealed three challenges in implementing a successful distributed leadership model to include the ways in which leaders dealt with conflict; the impact of competing agendas and outside distractions; and the leaders’ perceived lack of impact.

Researchers supported their findings with detailed responses from study participants that revealed their frustrations with the distributed leadership model the study describes. Following survey participants through an entire year provided ample opportunity for data collection, and collecting data through a variety of means enhances the validity of the study. While the semi-structured interviews, for example, could begin to gather *specific* information about the leaders’ perceptions of the success of the distributed leadership model, a less formal focus group permitted participants to perhaps speak more freely and reveal themes that otherwise might have been overlooked. Even though this study is not situated within higher education, the challenges

the researchers identified are similar to those who participated in the distributed leadership models in higher education. Because these leadership roles are often in addition to participants' regularly assigned duties, competing agendas and outside distractions have an impact on their service as leaders. In addition, not all leaders have been positively received in their roles, though perhaps this is more a result of reaction to the process than the person.

### **Distributed Leadership and Institutional Consolidation**

The distributed leadership model for this study will be challenged by external factors beyond accreditation. Due to institutional consolidation mandated by the institution's governing body, the University System of Georgia Board of Regents, the distributed leadership model will be faced with one of two options: to extend the work of the current distributed leadership team to encourage newly consolidated faculty and staff to engage in established practices, or to extend the membership of the existing team to include these newly consolidated faculty and staff. Existing literature suggests that both strategies be applied (Puusa & Kekäle, 2015; Ribando & Evans, 2015)

While not directly related to concepts of distributed leadership or assessment, the qualitative study conducted by Puusa and Kekäle (2015) focused on the merger of two institutions of higher education in Finland has implications for the current study due to this large, public southeastern university's ongoing consolidation. Researchers used a qualitative method to gather data from 42 faculty members representing each of the two institutions affected by the merger; faculty were representative of various faculty ranks and disciplines and were randomly sampled with consideration for the size of each faculty to ensure fair representation in the final analysis.

As data were gathered for the current study, relative to the strengths of and potential areas for improvement in the assessment resources and processes in place in support of administrative and student affairs assessment, the themes that emerged from Puusa and Kekäle's (2015) largely unstructured interviews were examined to determine if they might be helpful in structuring the means by which assessment processes are merged at this large, public southeastern university. Researchers noted that the early years of their merger tended to be framed within the context of *us and them*, so it seems critical for this large, public southeastern university to base its assessment processes moving forward on empirical factors, rather than reverting to a claim echoed in the Puusa and Kekäle (2015) study, "[It's] always been done like this and it's worked" (p. 442).

Similar to the consolidation at this large, public southeastern university, participants in the Puusa and Kekäle (2015) voiced a feeling that, while *some* may have understood the need for change, there remained a prevalent and powerful sense that the process of change was "managed in an entirely top-down manner" (p. 439). As a result, those affected, in this case, faculty from both institutions, felt powerless in the face of uncertainty, and, consequently, even undervalued.

Puusa and Kekäle's (2015) findings were relevant to the current study, because as with the two Finnish institutions featured, this large, public southeastern university is faced with two "long traditions and established ways of doing things" (p. 441). Merging institutional processes, in this case, institutional assessment processes may be best achieved through combining the best of both practices, not necessarily the practices that have always been in place, but those practices whose origins lie in data that show their worth to the entire institution.

Ribando and Evans (2015) assessed the impact of the consolidation of two public institutions within the University of Georgia (USG), specifically as it affected faculty's: "Person

Organization Fit” (POF); level of job-related stress, affective commitment to the new institution, level of continuance commitment, and level of turnover intention. This study is based on similar research usually conducted in more corporate settings. The researchers noted that existing research on institutional consolidation and mergers usually focuses more on issues of finance or strategic planning and does not “directly address the human impact” (Ribando & Evans, 2015, p. 103). The researchers adapted established instruments typically used in industrial settings, substituting, for example, *institution* in place of *industry* to collect data used to test a series of eight hypotheses. Of most interest to the current study was the hypothesis addressing stress and POF (the measure of the extent to which an individual feels a sense of connection to the organization). The researchers invited all full-time faculty of a newly consolidated institution, Georgia Regents University, resulting in a pool of 1,177 possible participants. Faculty new to the institution less than one year prior to the merger were excluded, and a total of 258 usable responses were collected, for a response rate of 22%. Of note for the current study, the researchers noted some faculty were hesitant to participate, for fear of retaliation, which negatively impacted the analysis possible. Researchers planned to conduct analysis at the college level, but were unable to do so due to low response rates. This underscores the sensitivity and uncertainty that pervades consolidation.

Researchers found lower levels of POF and higher levels of stress in the faculty who were from what was considered the subordinate institution in the merger they studied. As a direction for future research, responses from administrators and staff representing each of this large, public southeastern university’s three campuses could be compared, and data collected could be used to determine possible directions for improvement, if warranted.

## Program Assessment

The OIE at one large, public southeastern university has implemented a distributed leadership model in support of effective assessment processes, but thus far, the OIE has collected only limited data to assess the effectiveness of their own internal processes. This is a common shortcoming in the field of institutional assessment. Rodgers et al. (2013) noted “while assessment is frequently conducted, the quality of its implementation is seldom investigated” (p. 384). It is important, however, to look at the impact of *multiple* resources and processes in place to determine if institutions have the “right set of activities” in place to positively impact assessment practices in all administrative units on campus (Fink, 2013, p. 47). Shutt et al. (2012) suggested any programmatic assessment process “should continue to undergo evaluation where it can be modified to ensure that every element contributes to the program’s outcomes” (p. 78). The literature on programmatic assessment offers useful models to consider.

In an example of a programmatic assessment, Yarber, Brownson, Baker, Jones, Baumann, and Brownson (2015) used a mixed methods survey to evaluate the effectiveness of a train-the-trainer model to extend the reach of an evidence-based decision model among public health professionals in Indiana, Colorado, Nebraska, and Kansas. Traditionally, training in the use of the evidence-based decision model was provided by a Missouri-based trainer, but a more localized program was developed to more broadly disseminate evidence-based decision practices, allowing practitioners to focus on issues of importance to their communities and reduce professional development costs in the process. By moving the training to the state level, rather than the regional level, it was hoped that newly trained professionals within each state would develop into a pool of trainers who would then go out in their own states and spread knowledge and application of evidence-based decision-making processes.

Researchers noted, however, that “literature on the effectiveness of [this] train-the-trainer” approach is “limited” (p. 3). Similar to the current study, Yarber et al. (2015) were interested in the utility of resources provided and skills developed in the evidence-based decision-making courses facilitated by in-state professionals, as well as the perceived benefits of course attendance. The researchers also collected data addressing the *frequency* with which participants consulted the resources provided and applied the skills they learned, as well as participants’ reasons for *not* using the resources provided or applying the skills taught (Yarber et al., 2015). Collecting these data specific to the utility and application of the resources and skills of the evidence-based decision-making program would allow program developers to address more systematically any weaknesses or shortcomings participants revealed.

Researchers began with a participant pool of 317 past evidence-based decision-making courses and e-mailed participants a short survey, which took less than ten minutes to complete. To encourage participation, researchers followed up with phone and email reminders and left the survey open for three months, allowing ample time for collection of responses and resulting in a final response rate of 50.9%. Survey items included five-point Likert scale items, as well as open-ended items designed to collect information regarding the most useful aspects of the training and recommendations for future improvements. Limitations included self-reported perceptions, which could inflate or minimize actual skills and knowledge and the amount of time elapsed between completion of course and survey administration, which reduced the number of possible participants.

Of most relevance to the current study was the suggestion that this train-the-trainer model, if implemented on a larger scale, could provide “more rapid spread of [evidence-based decision-making processes] through enhanced communication and ongoing collaboration”



(Yarber et al., 2015, p.7). Similarly, the distributed leadership model upon which the current study is based could promote similar diffusion of effective assessment practices, were expansion of the pool of potential leaders possible.

Earlier, in 2012, Trigwell, Cabellero Rodriguez, and Han conducted a long-term evaluation of a teaching development program from an Australian post-secondary institution, using four different indicators to assess program impact. Like Blackwell, Miller, and Lawrance (2016), Trigwell et al. (2012) supported the necessity of addressing factors other than program satisfaction to build a clearer picture of programmatic impact beyond the program participants and their immediate reactions to the program itself.

Researchers used a teaching development program focused, among other things, on developing the “scholarship of teaching and learning and changing the conceptions of teaching in the enhancement of student learning” (Trigwell et al., 2012, p. 500). The study had four hypotheses, two related to faculty who completed the program versus those who had not and two related to students enrolled in the courses of faculty who had completed the program versus those who had not. Researchers hypothesized that faculty who had completed the program would be awarded more teaching awards and investigative teaching grants; that students enrolled in the courses of faculty who had completed the program would report greater satisfaction with the quality of the course; and that students in degree programs where a greater percentage of the program faculty had completed the development course would report greater satisfaction with their degree program than students in degree programs with a lesser percentage of faculty who had completed the development program.

Researchers used existing data over a ten-year period to test their hypotheses. Findings related to addressing teaching awards and grants supported the hypothesis that faculty who

attended the development program did receive more teaching awards and investigative teaching grants. Researchers analyzed these data one step further to determine if voluntary versus mandatory participation had any effect on results, recognizing that an argument could be made that those who attended the program are naturally motivated and therefore more likely to succeed. Results showed that even when participation was mandated, the percentage of overall faculty who received teaching grants is proportionally similar to proportions for the entire university (Trigwell et al., 2012, p. 505).

The hypothesis related to student satisfaction was also supported by the data, though the researchers admit that findings should be interpreted cautiously due to the small number of cases and possible influence of “contemporaneous factors that might confound the results” (Trigwell et al., 2012, p. 508). Overall, the study findings supported the use of a framework for program assessment that looks at much more than satisfaction, particularly when direct connections between program outcomes and inputs are difficult to make. This provides a model for collection and interpretation of data in the current study because satisfaction with the processes and resources in place does not, in itself, guarantee impact.

Meyer and Murrell (2014) conducted a quantitative study using very basic descriptive statistics to examine how a variety of institutions evaluated their faculty development programs in online learning. Targeting all participants subscribed to an online learning consortium, the researchers solicited feedback from a total of 407 institutions representing all Carnegie classifications. Participants were asked to respond *yes* or *no* to a series of items from two primary categories: Outcome Measures Used in Evaluations and Timing of Evaluations. Outcome measures included such items as “Faculty satisfaction with training,” “Faculty assessment of improvement in teaching,” and “Student evaluations of faculty teaching” (Myer &

Murrell, 2014, p. 9). Timing of evaluations addressed how evaluations were conducted (online versus paper) and if evaluations were administered at the end of the entire development session or at the end of sections and if evaluations were conducted immediately after the training concluded or after time had passed. Researchers found that 95% of responding institutions focused outcome measures on faculty satisfaction with the training, and 90% focused outcome measures on faculty perception of the usefulness of the training. Only 22% reported including outcome measures focused on faculty assessment of improvement in their teaching (Meyer & Murrell, 2014, p. 9). In addition, the majority of study participants (75%) conducted evaluations at the conclusion of the entire training. Online evaluations were far more common than paper (79% versus 34%).

The researchers sought to determine the most common outcome measures institutions use in evaluating faculty development for online teaching and when and how institutions ask faculty to evaluate this development. They were further interested in whether or not results were significantly impacted by an institution's Carnegie classification. Out of the 407 institutions invited to participate in this study, only 39 institutions responded. The authors further admitted that, since these 407 institutions are all members of the Online Learning Consortium, "results cannot be generalized to all higher education institutions" (Meyer & Murrell, 2014, p. 8), an admitted weakness of the study. The analysis of data by Carnegie classification was perhaps intended to promote generalizability across institution type, for example, but with so few respondents, including this analysis seemed to raise more questions than to provide reliable results. This study supports the claim of Blackwell et al. (2016) that faculty development programs often focus on satisfaction with the development program itself, rather than the effect of the program (Meyer & Murrell, 2014). Because the current study focuses on administrative

assessment processes as a program and the impact of a distributed leadership model on these processes, this study lends support that when evaluating the impact of the distributed leadership model, it is important to include measures that address more than staff satisfaction with the training and tools provided. Impact can address satisfaction, but it should also address results.

### **Needs-Based Professional Development**

In order to ensure that all elements that comprise a particular program contribute to the success of the program, needs-based assessments may also be useful. Behar-Horenstein, Garvan, Catalanotto, and Hudson-Vassell (2014) conducted a mixed methods study at the University of Florida to determine faculty development needs specific to faculty in the College of Dentistry. The premise of the study complements the work of Rodgers et al. (2014), from which the survey instrument for the current study was developed. Using a simple on-line survey of 37 Likert-scale items and one open-ended question, the researchers asked faculty to self-assess their knowledge of topics necessary to succeed in their role as faculty, to indicate the level of importance of each topic as it pertained to their professional development, and to list the “top three current needs that they believe could advance their career” (Behar-Horenstein et al, 2014, p. 77). Using the survey results, the researchers were better able to plan development opportunities most likely to meet the actual needs faculty themselves perceived, rather than those more randomly predicted by others. This recommendation for needs assessment *before* development opportunities supports the premise of the current study. In order to determine the best approach for further developing assessment practices at one large, public southeastern university, this study will serve as a needs assessment for the OIE. Particularly as consolidation proceeds, the OIE will be able to examine the data to determine the strengths of and potential areas for improvement in the processes and

resources currently in place as the office plans development opportunities for new staff and administrators not familiar with assessment at this university.

In an earlier mixed methods study, Hahn and Lester (2012) used a combination of Likert-scale, multiple choice, and open-ended items to determine the professional development needs and preferences of Canadian and US faculty from schools of library and information studies. The institutions with whom participants were affiliated were limited to those who are members of the Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE), the organization that facilitates the ALISE Academy, which provides professional development opportunities to library and information science faculty. Researchers helped develop the academy and recognized that although past activities had not been evaluated positively, they had little direction as to how to improve. Literature in the field offered no best practices, and they had no data on which to base suggested improvements. This lack of direction grounded in empirical research is mirrored in the current study.

Researchers identified six questions to frame their study, addressing professional development activities currently offered, the importance of the topics covered, the provider of the opportunities and the respective modes of delivery, and “inhibitors preventing” (Hahn & Lester, 2012, p. 83) participation in professional development opportunities. Surveys were distributed to 1,022 full-time faculty members, and these 1,022 potential participants were divided into three groups, according to affiliations with ALISE, the American Library Association (ALA), and the *i*Schools caucus.

Of particular relevance to the current study was the finding that the “most widely available” professional development topic is “assessment of teaching and learning” (Hahn & Lester, 2012, p. 88), highlighting the focus on assessment throughout higher education. Results

suggested that mentors, similar to the IE Review Team in the current study, could be helpful in meeting this and other professional development needs, but more than 40% of the respondents indicated mentors were not available, or, if they were, faculty were not aware of the institutional process for requesting and collaborating with such a resource. As the researchers indicated, these partnerships require “initiative and follow-through on both sides if they are to be sustained and productive” (Hahn & Lester, 2012, p. 92).

Once needs have been identified and programs have been implemented, it is also useful to determine long-term effects of program implementation. Chalmers and Gardiner’s (2015) study presented the results of a project funded by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) through which the Academic Professional Development Effectiveness Framework was developed. This assessment tool was designed to collect data to determine the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs. Researchers affirmed the tendency for assessment of programs such as the teacher preparation program to focus on things like satisfaction with the program itself, without ever attempting to capture data regarding the impact of the program. They understand the reluctance in that before one can measure impact, one must define impact. Determining what to measure and how to measure it are the complexities that have “inhibited evaluation initiatives” (Hahn & Lester, 2012, p. 81).

Chalmers and Gardiner’s (2015) study was guided by the question examining how academic developers provide evidence of the effectiveness of their teacher development programs. The researchers followed Crane and Richardson’s (2000) action research cycle of Observe, Plan, Act, and Reflect. The end goal was an evaluation framework that would allow its developers to demonstrate programmatic effectiveness based on more than self-reports of participant satisfaction. Effectiveness needed to address program outcomes and “indicate sources

of data related to both long and short term effects of the program” (Chalmers & Gardiner, 2015, pp. 82-84).

The resulting framework was a “matrix of indicators related to the intended outcomes of formal or informal teacher development programmes...and the institutional context within which these occur” (Chalmers & Gardiner, 2015 p. 85). Both short and long term collection of quantitative and qualitative data were encouraged to address *input indicators*, which included relevant resources needed; *output indicators*, which referred to the program’s measurable outcomes, such as the number of program participants; *process indicators*, which described the strategies used to deploy the program within the context of the institution; and *outcome indicators*, which “[focused] on the quality of provision, satisfaction levels and the value added from learning experiences” (Chalmers & Gardiner, 2015, p. 86). Nine university teams, representing a range of institutions, participated in the trial process of applying the framework. Each team was comprised of two to five members who were asked to assess the “reliability and validity of the Framework in evidencing the achievement of the intended outcomes of teacher development programs and the consequential changes in teaching and learning” (Chalmers & Gardiner, 2015, p. 88). Findings revealed that the Framework did, in fact, encourage participants to think more critically about the kinds of data they could collect in support of program effectiveness, thus moving “beyond the anecdotal,” which is the case in much of the assessment practice literature (Chalmers & Gardiner, 2015, p. 88).

### **Assessing Programmatic Components**

The work of the IE Review Team is grounded in common practices in institutional assessment, including the use of rubrics, peer review, and feedback (Jonsson, 2013; Fulcher et al., 2016). As Fulcher and Bashkov (2012) noted, any relationship between these practices,

the IE Review Team, and success in assessment practices “is only speculative until systematically evaluated” (p. 7) and support evaluation of each of the programmatic components as they contributed to the current study.

Nicol, Thomson, and Breslin (2014) used a series of 13 Likert-scale items and eight open-ended items to capture student perceptions of the utility of peer feedback process, as well as a description of the processes students employed to engage in peer review. The study setting was a first-year engineering design class wherein 82 students completed a Product Design Specification (PDS) task. Participants used the online software PeerMark to produce two reviews of two other student drafts, as well as one review of their own drafts. A total of 62 students completed all three reviews, 15 omitted the self-review, and five completed only one review.

Researchers were interested in general student experiences and attitudes about the peer review process, as well as student perceptions of the “learning benefits associated with the different components of the peer review process” (Nichol et al., 2014, p. 105). Although the study did not include details of the coding process applied in analyzing data collected from the open-ended questions, the researchers supplemented these data with three focus groups which were directly developed from the open-ended responses and designed to “gain deeper insight into the mental processes involved in reviewing and constructing feedback” (Nichol et al., 2014, p. 108).

Study results showed that 86% of participants believed the peer review process was a positive one, recognizing the benefit of feedback from others. Focus groups revealed some dissatisfaction with the quality of feedback received, and this applies to the current study as well (Nichol et al., 2014). In addition, regardless of whether peer reviewers are student peers or



professional peers, training and experience is needed to develop skill and proficiency in providing feedback that is useful to those to whom it is directed.

Students in Nicol et al.'s (2014) study conducted peer review guided by a series of review questions, and the ways in which they applied those questions highlighted an important component of any peer review process. In this case, students tended to compare the work they were reviewing to the work they had produced themselves. In some cases, they used their own work as the standard against which they reviewed the work of others. In other cases, this comparative process suggested ways in which they might improve their own work. Rather than a series of guiding questions, it is possible that students would have focused more on the work they were evaluating if they were given actual evaluation guidelines, in the form of a rubric that clearly identified different achievement levels for different components of the PDS. Researchers noted students with a poor understanding of rubric assessment often have problems producing quality results (Nicol et al., 2014, p. 117). This premise had implications for the importance of rubric-guided peer review in the current study as well.

A mixed methods study conducted by Panadero and Romero (2014) explored the use of rubrics in self-assessments conducted by 218 pre-service teachers assigned a conceptual map activity. Researchers were particularly interested in the effect use of a rubric might have on "self-regulation, performance, accuracy, and task stress" (Panadero & Romero, p. 136). The implication is that giving students (in this case, faculty in the role of students) clear guidance as to how their work will be evaluated will improve performance and decrease task stress.

In the study, participants were separated into four groups, two of which were given a rubric (N=111), and two of which were not (N=107). Group assignments were random, and there were 189 women and 29 men, representative of the population of pre-service teacher programs in

the study location. Using a quasi-experimental design, researchers administered the “Emotion and Motivation Self-Regulation Questionnaire,” consisting of 20 Likert-scale items addressing learning self-regulation, defined as “regulatory actions oriented to learning goals,” and performance/avoidance self-regulation, referring to “actions guided by goals centered on performing or avoiding the task” (Panadero & Romero, 2014, p. 137). A separate Likert-scale item addressed task stress, and an open-ended item asked participants to describe strategies used to complete the assigned task. Open-ended responses were coded and discussed by three evaluators. Before beginning the concept map design, participants in the rubric group were given the rubric, with explanation regarding its use. The non-rubric group was given a verbal summary of the evaluation criteria. Following completion of the concept map task, the participants’ work was evaluated by three independent scorers. Of relevance to the current study is the finding that those participants who were able to refer to the rubric scored higher than those who were given the verbal summary of evaluation criteria. Researchers concluded that “when rubrics are well-designed, they can have a positive impact on performance because they set clear standards of how the final product of the task should look” (Panadero & Romero, 2014, p. 142).

Surprisingly, researchers found that, contrary to their hypothesis and existing research, participants who used the rubric did *not* experience lower levels of stress. Participants had only one hour to complete the task, and the final product had an impact on their final grade for the course. In a less time-sensitive situation, it is likely that the results would have fallen more in line with existing research supporting the positive effects of rubric use. This is the final recommendation with which the researchers end the study, clarifying that “if basic conditions are followed” (Panadero & Romero, 2014, p. 143), rubrics are clearly appropriate in higher education.

Though not set squarely within the context of higher education, a 2014 study on team feedback and reflexivity conducted by Gebelica, Van den Bossche, De Maeyer, Segers, and Gijsselaers has implications for higher education as well, particularly with groups such as the IE Review Team in the current study. Researchers noted teams ought to critically process feedback, such as that the current study aims to collect, “to collectively attend to and discuss its content...to *reflect upon* feedback” (Gebelica et al., 2014, p. 87) and make changes based on what was learned. It is not enough to collect data relative to strengths of and potential areas for improvement in the assessment processes at this large, public southeastern university; those providing the support upon which the data are based must all be involved in reviewing those data and making decisions for improvement going forward.

To collect data for this study, researchers recruited 211 undergraduate volunteers to participate in a series of four computer-based flight simulator exercises in which each volunteer was paired with one other volunteer to comprise pilot and co-pilot pairs (Gebelica et al., 2014, p. 87). Teams were randomly assigned to one of three groups: 1) a group who received feedback on task performance only; 2) a group who received feedback and were given time to reflect on that feedback; and 3) a group who were given no feedback. In a two-and-a-half-hour period, teams completed each of the four tasks. Teams in Group 1 received feedback via a standardized feedback form between each exercise; teams in Group 2 received feedback and were given time to collectively reflect before moving to the next exercise; and teams in Group 3 moved from exercise to exercise, with no feedback in between. Data were collected relative to team success in completing the flight simulation exercises and were analyzed to determine changes in performance over the series of four exercises, as well as effects of feedback and time for reflection on changes in performance. Teams who were given no feedback and teams who were

given only feedback on performance underperformed those teams who were given feedback *and* time to reflect on that feedback before beginning the next exercise (Gebelica et al., 2014, p. 87).

Researchers admitted “generalization to applied settings must be made with appropriate caution and that more comparative field studies with rigorous designs” (Gebelica et al., 2014, p. 93) should be conducted to confirm their results, but the concept applies to both the IE Review Team in the current study and the overall process in which they participate. Simply providing feedback is not sufficient to produce change over time. There must be time to reflect on that feedback, discuss its implications, and decide future direction based on that reflection (Gebelica et al., 2014, p. 87).

A quantitative online survey was designed by Kahlon et al. (2015) to collect data addressing graduate satisfaction with and attitudes towards a master’s program and its individual components in dental public health. Participants were graduates of the program between 1981 and 2012 with at least two years of work experience after graduation. In addition, participants had to have a valid e-mail address and had to have provided consent to for voluntary participation. These parameters resulted in 57 potential participants and 44 actual participants, the majority of whom were female (54.5%), under age 35 (45.4%) and from South Asian countries (45.4%) (Kahlon et al., 2015). The survey instrument used to collect data included a series of five-point Likert-scale items, and the resulting tables included both numerical and graphical data that revealed graduate motivation for enrolling in the graduate program, as well as their satisfaction with the program. The researchers detailed the survey development process, including specific steps taken to pilot the survey items and to ensure validity of the instrument. Researchers also recognized limitations of their study, including a relatively small sample size and non-random sample, limiting generalizability of their findings. In addition to statistical

analysis addressing distribution of satisfaction scores, the researchers used multiple linear regression to compare results by other factors such as age, sex, and nationality. They followed a similar process to compare attitude scores according to these same factors. Looking at the program in terms of relationships between factors, rather than just the average scores for each factor gave researchers a better view of strengths of and potential areas for improvement in the program they are trying to improve. The current study examined the impact of individual resources and processes in support of administrative and student affairs assessment at one large, public southeastern university, following a similar process to see which resources and processes have the most utility for specific populations and make recommendations for improvements in the overall assessment process (Kahlon et al., 2015).

Also of use to the current study was the fact that the program component that rated the lowest in terms of satisfaction in the Kahlon et al. (2015) study was assessment and feedback. Students recognized the benefit of formative feedback, particularly in a face-to-face setting, but they reported dissatisfaction with timeliness of feedback and its utility in clarifying their understanding.

As data were gathered for the current study, it was important to determine what kinds of data would provide the most useful information. In a 2014 case study conducted by Gustafson, Daniels, and Smulski, researchers focused on one small private institution accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and argued the importance of both quantitative *and* qualitative data in an effective institutional assessment program. This research was important in supporting assessment practices currently in place at one large, public southeastern university, a public university accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, its regional accreditor. Without effective assessment processes, the institution

cannot achieve and maintain regional accreditation, and without regional accreditation, institutions are unable to award their students federal financial aid. Because of increased demands for accountability at the federal level, regional accreditors have increased requests for quantitative data, which can be used for institutional performance comparisons. Gustafson et al. (2014) argued, however, that it is the qualitative data that can best provide insight into unique institutional contexts that cannot be revealed by numbers alone.

Gustafson et al. (2014) gathered qualitative data for their study by conducting focus groups at the divisional and departmental levels, during which faculty and staff discussed annual assessment results. Divisional outcomes, for example, focused on increasing the number of students who meet with their assigned advisors. Divisions set their own standards for success and self-scored their progress each year using an institution-wide rubric, thus providing quantitative data in support of progress toward or achievement of an objective. In the focus groups, multiple staff met to discuss the reasons why success was achieved or prohibited and the changes they may need to make in the coming year. On a larger scale, this process tied the work of every division and department back to the institutional mission so that the work of the individual unit and department is connected to the overall work of the institution (Gustafson et al., 2014)

### **Instruments**

Deciding what kinds of data will provide the most useful information determines the kinds of instruments needed to collect that data. Fuller and Skidmore (2014) used a quantitative approach to study the factors that influence institutional cultures of assessment, defined for the purposes of their study as “the institutional contexts supporting or hindering the integration of professional wisdom with best available assessment data to inform decisions that lead to improved student learning outcomes for decision making purposes” (p. 10).

Researchers used a stratified random sample of directors of institutional research and assessment from institutions in the US. The researchers began with more than 2,000 institutions, reducing the number through a very detailed process of stratification sampling, ultimately include a sample representative of the total population in terms of FTE, regional accreditor, and Carnegie Classification Enrollment Profile. The survey instrument was electronically distributed to 917 assessment professionals. The final response rate was 23.7% (n=236). The survey instrument consisted of five separate phases, possibly contributing to the difference between potential and actual participants. Survey sections were designed to gather data relative to participants' roles in assessment; participant perceptions of their institution's commitment to assessment; and "rank" of institutional leadership's "resistance, support, or indifference to assessment" (Fuller & Skidmore, 2014, p. 15). All survey sections included both quantitative Likert-type items and qualitative questions.

In the results, Fuller and Skidmore (2014) detailed the processes through which the quantitative data were analyzed. To those assessment professionals well versed in more complex statistical procedures, this most would likely be seen as a strength of the study. Many assessment professionals, however, have a more basic knowledge of statistical procedures and may be less informed by the quantitative detail included. Most helpful was the final discussion that clarified the resulting three-factor structure as an "adequate measure of an institution's assessment culture:" 1) Clear Commitment; 2) Connection to Change; and 3) Vital to Institution Fuller and Skidmore, 2014, p. 18). Researchers admitted the limitations of sample size and a newly developed instrument; however, the instrument is being continually refined, and due to the rigor with which it has been developed, the instrument offers an encouraging means of adding to the existing body of assessment literature with data-driven research.

Martin et al. (2015) connected the drive for their quantitative study investigating the impact of a student leadership program to public outcry for increased accountability in higher education. Specific to their case, while there has been an increase in the connection between student leadership programs and fulfillment of institutional missions in higher education, there has not been a corresponding increase in “rigorous and systematic assessment of student leader development” (Martin et al., 2015, p. 56). Researchers used a formative assessment instrument to provide data useful in meeting accountability requirements, but perhaps even more useful in assessing development of student leadership skills. Using a formative, as opposed to a summative method, was important because it provided participants the opportunity to reflect on feedback, time to apply feedback, and the opportunity to improve leadership skills, echoing Gebelica et al.’s (2014) argument about the importance of reflexivity.

Participants in the Martin et al. (2015) study included 124 sophomore students attending a small military college in the Northeast US, enrolled in an Organizational Behavior and Leadership (OBL) course (p. 58). There were three sections of the same course, dividing participants into groups of 22, 82, and 20. Researchers administered the Leader Development Feedback Assessment survey, consisting of 13 Likert-scale items related to leading self and leading others. Broadly applied, students in the leadership course would “assess their current leader development performance” as a freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior, as appropriate, but for this study, only sophomore participants were included (Martin et al., 2015, p. 60).

Researchers used a simple pre- and post-test model with a paired sample t-test. Results showed significance at the  $p < .01$  level between first and second iterations on all competency scores. Participants showed the most gains in Mentoring, Followership, and Influencing Others, and the least gains in Team Building, Taking Care of People, and Health and Well Being.



Analyzing leadership behaviors at this component level provided valuable information to program developers, as it enables them to make specific adjustments to program delivery going forward to address those areas where students were weakest. Lowest mean scores, for example, were in Technical Proficiency and Effective Communication, suggesting additional attention to developing these skills is warranted. Using a one-way ANOVA, the researchers determined there were mean differences across first and second iterations with regard to the three different instructors, and they did find significance at the  $p < 0.05$  level for some of the traits (Martin et al., 2015, p. 62). While such data could be used punitively, it would be better used to encourage collaboration among the three instructors to determine best practices for the program. This study has implications for the current study because it showed how program effectiveness can be dissected to the component level to show strengths and weaknesses, without a great deal of sophisticated statistics. This provides the opportunity to make changes where weaknesses are noted and adjustments as needed, driven by data, as opposed to whim or anecdote.

Rodgers et al. (2013) conducted a mixed-methods study to determine the factors contributing to the improvement of academic assessment program reporting at a small, public four-year institution. This institution has approximately 100 degree programs and engages in a well-established annual programmatic assessment process. Researchers first collected two years of quantitative data focused on the quality of academic programmatic assessment reports prepared by each program's assessment coordinator. Data were collected using a 14-trait institutional rubric targeting programmatic objectives, curriculum mapping, data collection and analysis, and use and dissemination of results (Rodgers et al., 2013). Each report was reviewed by two trained raters, and for each report, an average of the two rater's scores was calculated for each of the 14 traits to arrive at a Quality-of-Assessment (QA) score for each academic program.

Researchers compared data collected in 2009 and 2010 and selected 19 programs whose QA score had increased by an average of one point between the two cycles. The 19 assessment coordinators were invited to participate in face-to-face interviews designed to collect data focusing on the factors they identified as contributors to assessment improvement; 11 ultimately participated (Rodgers et al., 2013, p. 388). Following a four-question interview protocol to collect qualitative data relative to assessment experience and perceived factors contributing to successful assessment practices, participants were given five minutes to complete a four-point Likert scale survey focusing on two dominant themes: the environment in which assessment was conducted and the use of resources by the assessment coordinators. Open coding content analysis of the qualitative data showed ten of the 11 coordinators identified the institution's assessment resources, such as consultation with assessment professionals, feedback on their assessment reports, and use of available reporting exemplars, as notable contributors to improved assessment practices (Rodgers et al., 2013). Analysis of the quantitative data corroborated the qualitative results with similar results for utility of resources.

Using a modified version of the instrument presented in the Rodgers et al. (2013) study, the current study focused on the impact of a similar process, but the process centered around administrative and student affairs assessment, rather than program assessment. Many of the resources provided and many of the processes in place to encourage effective assessment practices, however, are similar, making modifications minimal.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter provided an overview of the external motivations for assessment and introduced the broad concepts of distributed leadership and participatory decision-making models as possible means of responding to those motivations, both to encourage more internal

motivation for improvement and to extend the reach of assessment professionals throughout institutions. Distributed leadership models, particularly in higher education, often take the form of assessment teams or assessment leaders who assist formally charged assessment offices in developing institutional assessment practices and processes. Particularly with administrative and student affairs assessment, however, literature has been lacking in data-driven processes to assess the effectiveness or impact of the assessment practices these models promote. This chapter discussed the challenges common to implementing distributed leadership and participatory decision-making models, as well as the challenges common to determining their impact and effectiveness.

Data to assess the effectiveness or impact of administrative and student affairs assessment models may be collected through programmatic assessment processes, which can be particularly helpful during a time of institutional consolidation. This chapter further discussed common elements of institutional assessment processes, such as rubrics, peer review, and feedback, and the importance of gathering data relative to each element in order to make informed decisions regarding programmatic impact. Also discussed was the importance of focusing on the effectiveness of individual components of a program, such as an institutional assessment program, rather than participant satisfaction with the program itself, though the latter is far easier to address.

The chapter concluded with a discussion of program assessment models focusing on individual programmatic components. Of particular importance to this study, the discussion included meta-assessment models designed to assess the impact of institutional assessment practices and environments. Building on the models outlined, this proposed study intended to contribute to the body of existing literature with an empirically based study focused on the

strengths of and potential areas for improvement in a distributed leadership model supporting administrative and student affairs assessment in higher education, particularly as it may affect a process of institutional consolidation.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

Engagement in assessment is critical to this large, public southeastern university, first for maintaining regional accreditation, but also to ensure its students have access to Federal financial aid. Each year, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) is responsible for supporting all administrative and student affairs units on campus to ensure each is engaging in assessment. This engagement includes identifying objectives for the coming year, outlining strategies for achieving those objectives, and collecting data that will allow each unit to identify strengths of and potential areas for improvement in these assessment processes. Because the number of assessment coordinators in need of training and support in this critical institutional function is disproportionately large compared to the number of OIE staff, like many assessment offices, the OIE has implemented an assessment team, in the form of the Institutional Effectiveness (IE) Review Team.

Members of the IE Review Team represent professionals from other areas of campus, such as Student Affairs and Business and Academic Affairs. This “interaction of leaders, followers, and their situation...stretched over individuals who have responsibility for leadership routines” suggests this team functions as a distributed leadership model (Spillane, 2006, p. 14). The IE Review Team helps the OIE ensure evidence-based decision-making in all areas of institutional practice, from academic programs, to Business and Finance, to Facilities, and to Student Affairs.

However, in studying its internal assessment processes, the OIE has identified areas in need of improvement in its internal data collection processes. These areas warrant being addressed to ensure that all assessment coordinators have the resources and support they need to

engage continually in assessment and respond to the data they collect. This is particularly important in the face of an institutional consolidation and the resulting expansion of the OIE's responsibility in coordinating assessment efforts across multiple campuses and throughout an expanded number of units.

This study identified strengths of and potential areas for improvement in the assessment process by collecting quantitative data to determine the utility of the OIE's existing processes. In doing so, it was intended to add to the existing literature addressing distributed leadership in higher education and address the call of Spillane (2006) and others to go beyond anecdotal impact of distributed leadership models and actually employ this model.

The equally weighted research questions guiding this study were as follows:

1. What are the perceived strengths of and potential areas for improvement in the resources in place to develop knowledge of confidence in assessment and how does perceived utility differ among divisions of the institution?
2. How do assessment coordinators perceive their own knowledge of and confidence in assessment?
3. What is the relationship between knowledge of and confidence in assessment and the utility of resources in place?
4. What is the relationship between knowledge of and confidence in assessment and the number of assessment cycles in which participants have engaged?

This chapter details the methodology applied to this study, including descriptions of the study population and sample, the research instrument, and the data collection and analysis procedures.

### **Research Design**

The purpose of this non-experimental quantitative study utilizing statistical measures was to better understand participant perceptions of their own knowledge of and confidence in the assessment process. Specifically, this study examined how those perceptions are impacted by the peer review process facilitated by the IE Review Team, by resources provided by the OIE, and by the number of assessment cycles in which participants have engaged. According to Creswell (2014), because this sought to “identify factors that influence an outcome...and because it sought to understand “the utility of” specific interventions, a quantitative approach was warranted (p. 20). This study examined the “process of interaction” between IE Review Team members and administrative and student affairs professionals, relying on the “participants’ views” of the process to construct a clearer picture of strengths of and potential areas of improvement in the mechanisms in place (Creswell, 2014, p. 8). Because of consolidation, the OIE’s responsibilities will expand to include units from two additional campuses where assessment processes have been markedly different. It is important for all staff and administrators who will be added to existing processes understand that the processes the OIE will introduce have been beneficial and are not continuing simply because “it’s always been done like this and it’s worked” (Puusa & Kekäle, 2015, p. 442).

This study relied on de-identified archival data, made available to the researcher due to the nature of the researcher’s role at the institution studied. The archival data were quantitative in

nature and were collected by the OIE through an electronic survey administered at the conclusion of the 2016-2017 assessment cycle. The survey was distributed to administrative and student affairs assessment coordinators, administrators, and staff who were responsible for, contributed to, or had contributed to the preparation of their units' annual assessment reports or plans during any previous assessment cycle. Sue and Ritter (2012) stated that this form of surveying works "well in closed populations," such as this group of assessment coordinators, administrators, and staff at this large, public southeastern university, "where the potential respondents are known to have e-mail or Internet access." Access by the OIE to this appropriate population "[made] an e-mail...survey a reasonable choice" (Sue & Ritter, 2012, pp. 10-11). Anonymous surveying was chosen over personal interviews or focus groups for this study to reduce the possibility of participants supplying the answers they expected the researcher to anticipate and to encourage more honest responses (Sue & Ritter, 2012).

Research questions one and two were addressed using descriptive statistics, particularly by applying measures of central tendency to each survey item. Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2009) described such indices as "a convenient way of describing a set of data with a single number that represents a value generally in the middle of...the data set" (p. 307). This will provide the OIE with a clear snapshot of self-perceptions of assessment coordinators' knowledge of and confidence in assessment, as well as the perceived strengths of and potential areas for improvement in the resources the OIE provides in support of assessment. Descriptive statistical measures will provide an overall picture of the utility of the administrative assessment resources supported by the OIE and of the participations perceptions of their own knowledge of and confidence in assessment.



Addressing research question three, correlation and regression provided more detailed support of the specific strengths of and potential areas for improvement in these individual processes. According to de Vaus (2014), regression coefficients provide the means of determining “how much impact one variable has on another; [correlation] coefficients provide a way of assessing the accuracy of those estimates” (p. 284). Partial regression coefficients “[indicate] the effect of one independent variable on the dependent variable,” which is an appropriate means of examining the effects of individual resources provided, such as face-to-face feedback and written feedback, and knowledge of and confidence in assessment (de Vaus, 2014, p. 319). The dependent variable for this study, knowledge of and confidence in assessment, was constructed based on participant responses to the three knowledge and confidence questions in the Assessment Environment section of the survey. This construct was treated as a mediating independent variable to “explore and quantify the indirect versus the direct effects of an independent variable [the resources the OIE provides] upon a dependent variable” (Thompson, 2006, p. 11). The analysis was intended to help the OIE determine if any of the individual resources the OIE provides has an impact on participant knowledge of and confidence in assessment.

Finally, to address research question four, the number of assessment cycles in which participants have engaged was treated as a second moderating independent variable because it would likely affect the direction and strength of the relationship between the dependent and independent variables and will “inform judgment about when and for whom effects or relationships operate” (Thompson, 2006, p. 11). Here, too, correlation and regression coefficients were appropriate for determining the relationship between variables, in this case, knowledge of

and confidence in assessment (the dependent variable) and the number of assessment cycles in which participants have engaged (the independent variable).

While the OIE offers a variety of resources to assessment coordinators in support of their assessment efforts, only one is mandated. Assessment coordinators are required to attend a one-on-one meeting with IE Review Team members at the conclusion of each assessment cycle. Because this requirement has traditionally been supported by upper administration, participation has been near 100% each year. Resources posted to the OIE website, consultation with the OIE staff or IE Review Team members, and division-specific examples are optional resources the OIE promotes, but the extent to which assessment coordinators take advantage of them has not been documented. As a result, greater utility was predicted for one-on-one meetings with IE Review Team Members than any of the other, optional factors. Because division-specific examples were developed at the request of assessment coordinators, this resource was predicted to be at least moderately useful.

### **Population, Sample, and Sampling**

Participants for this study were current and former employees of administrative and student affairs units at one large, public southeastern university at the end of the 2016-2017 assessment cycle. This population was identified as being the most qualified to provide the information this study seeks as depicted by the OIE (Sue & Ritter, 2007). At the time of initial survey distribution, participants included administrative and student affairs assessment coordinators, administrators, and staff who were responsible for, contributed to, or had contributed to the preparation of their units' annual assessment reports or plans during any of the past six previous assessment cycles.

The OIE constructed contact lists from each of the past cycles to develop the sampling frame (Sue & Ritter, 2007) and used saturation sampling to invite every assessment coordinator, administrator, and staff member who had been involved in at least one assessment cycle to participate in the survey. This resulted in a final study population of 85 assessment coordinators, administrators, and staff. Of 85 possible participants surveyed, 61 provided data, yielding a response rate of 71.7%.

The consolidation schedule resulted in personnel changes across the institution. Reassignments and attrition resulted in changes to many of the identified assessment coordinator, administrator, and staff positions, effective January 01, 2018. In order to capture data from as many potential participants as possible, at the end of the 2016-2017 assessment cycle and after assessment plans for the new fiscal year were submitted, the OIE contacted each identified potential participant via e-mail to request voluntary participation in an electronic survey. To encourage participation, the OIE ensured participant anonymity by explaining in the introductory e-mail that no personally identifying information would be collected (de Vaus, 2014). Following the advice of Sue and Ritter (2007), the OIE designed the survey to permit no more than one response from each participant. To preserve anonymity, data regarding utility of resource provided were collected by division represented, rather than unit. No personally identifying data were collected. Any subsequent correlations were made at the divisional level, to determine if specific resources are more helpful to some divisions than others.

To achieve a 5% margin of error and a 95% confidence level, the recommended sample size is 70 participants. If the confidence level is reduced to 90%, the recommended sample size is 65 participants (<http://www.raosoft.com/samplesize.html>).

## Instrumentation

The OIE adapted the survey instrument from an instrument published by Rodgers et al. (2013). The OIE requested and received permission from the authors to adapt the survey to accurately reflect resources and processes specific to one large, public southeastern university. The adapted survey instrument is included in Appendix A, and the original survey items as published are included in Appendix B.

The survey addressed two main areas: Use of Assessment Resources and Assessment Environment; the survey utilized six- and five-point Likert-scaled items respectively. Each item in the Use of Assessment Resources section described a unique resource available to assessment coordinators, such as face-to-face feedback from an IE Review Team member or general information on the OIE website. Responses included *I did not know about this resource; I knew about this resource but did not use it; This resource was not at all helpful; This resource was a little helpful; This resource was quite helpful; and This resource was very helpful*. The Assessment Environment section addressed assessment coordinators' confidence in their understanding of good assessment practice, their ability to conduct assessment activities, and their ability to successfully report assessment activities. Responses for all questions included *Very Untrue, Somewhat Untrue, Neither True nor Untrue, Somewhat True, and Very True*. The final survey item asked participants to identify the number of assessment cycles in which they have participated during their employment. Responses included one, two, three, or four years, or five or more years.

To establish face and content validity for the survey items, the OIE pilot tested the complete survey with the Associate Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness (AVP for OIE) and all seven members of the IE Review Team (Chantler & Durand, 2014). The AVP for OIE

and four members of the IE Review Team provided feedback regarding item clarity and arrangement of scale items. Based on feedback, the OIE adjusted wording on one question regarding Use of Assessment Resources. The order of the Likert-scale items was also reversed from the piloted version such that level of utility increased from left to right in the survey's final version.

Creswell (2014) stated that “[when] one modifies an instrument...the original validity and reliability may not hold for the new instrument, and it becomes important to reestablish validity and reliability during data analysis” (p. 160). The AVP for OIE and the IE Review Team helped establish the instrument's content and face validity. The researcher established survey reliability using Cronbach's alpha. Gay et al. (2009) stated that “if numbers are used to represent the response choices,” as with the series of Likert-scaled items that make up the research instrument for this study, “analysis for internal consistency can be accomplished using Cronbach's alpha” (p. 161).

### **Data Collection**

The quantitative approach to this study utilized archival data. The AVP for OIE signed a letter of cooperation granting the researcher access to the data, which were collected by the OIE at the end of the 2016-2017 assessment cycle, before consolidation was effective. To encourage participation from all identified assessment coordinators, administrators, and staff, and especially to secure responses from those who were leaving the institution or moving into other roles in the new institution, the OIE first distributed the survey November 30, 2017, just after the Thanksgiving break. Reminders were sent to the full participant list December 11, 2017 and again February 01, 2018. In January 2018, the researcher sent follow-up e-mails specifically to the top administrators of divisions with less than 50% participation rate, to encourage

representation from all divisions (de Vaus, 2014). Final reminders were made during face-to-face meetings with individual assessment coordinators in February and March of 2018. The decision to extend the timeframe for survey completion was intentional, designed to maximize response rate (Sue & Ritter, 2012).

No personally identifying information was collected through the survey instrument; participants identified only the division in which they engaged in assessment activities. The OIE is, therefore, unable to re-identify participants, making this study exempt from Institutional Review Board review, under Category Four of the exemption guidelines and according to the New Common Rule for Human Subjects Research.

### **Data Analysis**

The OIE exported all data to Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis. Descriptive statistical measures were utilized to evaluate perceived knowledge of and confidence in assessment and utility of individual resources. Mean scores were calculated based on overall survey responses and by division to determine any variance in utility amongst the divisions represented, following Thompson's (2006) recommendation to use the standard deviation to "help characterize dynamics within [the] data" (p. 41).

The impact of individual resources was treated as an independent variable, and the researcher applied regression and correlation methods to determine if relationships existed between each of these independent variables and the dependent variable, knowledge of and confidence in assessment. For regression and correlation purposes, the researcher created a single composite score based on the responses to the individual items addressing knowledge of and confidence in assessment. Furthermore, the number of assessment cycles in which participants have engaged was treated as a second moderating independent variable because it was likely to

affect the direction and strength of the relationship between the dependent and independent variables and may “inform judgment about when and for whom effects or relationships operate” (Thompson, 2006, p. 11). Here, too, correlation and regression coefficients were appropriate for determining the relationship between variables, in this case, knowledge of and confidence in assessment and the number of assessment cycles in which participants have engaged.

All data collected for this study were stored on a common drive, shared by all administrators and staff in the OIE, but the specific folder in which the data for this study were stored is password protected and accessible only by the researcher due to the researchers’ role at the institution and the AVP for OIE.

### **Reporting the Findings**

Findings were presented in two primary categories. The first category addressed perception of knowledge of and confidence in assessment, perceived utility of resources, and the relationship between the two. The second category addressed the relationship between knowledge of and confidence in assessment and number of assessment cycles in which participants have engaged. The data were presented using tables and correlation matrices, as appropriate.

Knowledge of and Confidence in Assessment were addressed with participant responses to three survey items, each consisting of a five-point Likert scale. Results corresponding to this research question were presented in tabular form, and mean scores were provided by division and in the aggregate. Next, eight survey items addressed the utility of individual resources and processes in place to develop participant knowledge of and confidence in assessment. Mean scores for utility of each resource were presented in tabular form, again by division and in the aggregate. The researcher created a single composite score based on the responses to the

individual items addressing knowledge of and confidence in assessment, and a correlation matrix followed, displaying results of the correlation between the knowledge of and confidence in assessment composite score and the utility of individual resources and processes. The knowledge of and confidence in assessment composite score was used to determine the relationship between knowledge of and confidence in assessment and the number of assessment cycles in which participants have engaged, which is a single survey item.

### **Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions**

The immediate results of this study are limited to one large, public southeastern university, but the results can extend the body of literature that exists relative to administrative and student affairs assessment in higher education. Existing literature often fails to go beyond anecdotal evidence in support of actual concrete quantitative data. This study provided quantitative data to support which resources were deemed more helpful than others, albeit from a limited study setting.

Within this large, public southeastern university, the results have immediate implications for the OIE in terms of current resources provided. Although the OIE has in the past also relied primarily on anecdotal evidence in support of resources in place, the office acquired actual concrete quantitative data on which to base its decisions for continuing, modifying, or even abandoning the resources it provides. This has important implications in light of the recently announced consolidation. As part of the consolidation process, assessment practices between the two institutions must be standardized, and the OIE can draw on the data collected from this study as it makes decisions about how they can best integrate new assessment coordinators, administrators, and staff into existing assessment practices, focusing on those resources that have best correlated with success in assessment reporting and



perception of knowledge and confidence. Future studies can then be conducted with an extended population, further contributing to existing literature set within a distributed leadership framework.

Furthermore, data were collected to study the impact of administrative and student affairs assessment processes. While this limits generalizability, because the processes in question are common practice in many institutions (Fishman, 2017; Slager & Oaks, 2013), the results should still be of use to assessment practitioners beyond the study setting. When examining the relationship between number of assessment cycles in which participants have engaged and knowledge of and confidence in assessment, it was expected that there be at least moderate correlation.

### **Chapter Summary**

Engagement in assessment is critical to this large, public southeastern university, first for maintaining regional accreditation, but also to ensure its students have access to Federal financial aid. Each year, the OIE and the IE Review Team works with all administrative and academic and student affairs units on campus to ensure each is engaging in assessment by identifying objectives for the coming year, outlining strategies for achieving those objectives, and collecting data that will allow them to identify strengths of and potential areas for improvement in these assessment processes. In carefully studying its internal assessment processes, however, OIE has discovered potential areas for improvement in its own data collection processes, and these areas warrant being addressed to ensure that all assessment coordinators have the resources and support they need to continually engage in assessment and respond to the data they collect.

The OIE has collected limited data to assess the effectiveness of its internal processes. It is important, however, to look at the impact of multiple resources and processes in place to

determine if each is positively impacting assessment practices in all administrative and student affairs units on campus. By systematically gathering data relative to utility of the resources it provides and the environment in which that support is provided, the OIE will be better able to ensure that each resource it provides does, in fact, further effective assessment of administrative and student affairs units, in an environment where assessment processes are valued.

Overall, this study addressed the strengths and potential areas for improvement identified by collecting quantitative data that will more clearly determine the utility of existing processes and resources. In doing so, it may add to the existing literature addressing distributed leadership in higher education and address the call of Spillane (2006) and others to go beyond anecdotal impact of distributed leadership models.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

This chapter includes an overview of the purpose of the study, a reiteration of the research questions, which guide the study, and an overview of the research methodology applied by the researcher. Each of the four equally weighted research questions is addressed through data tables and narrative discussion of the findings. The chapter concludes with a summary of results and findings, providing the basis for further discussion and implications for future research in Chapter 5.

Effective assessment practices are essential if institutions are to maintain regional accreditation and access to federal financial aid. To ensure assessment practices are effective, many institutions implement assessment teams, often in the form of distributed leadership models. These teams implement similar practices, including peer review and the use of rubrics and feedback to support these assessment practices. Few models, however, include assessment of the impact of these teams and the processes they employ in support of effective assessment practices. Particularly during an institutional consolidation, implementing a programmatic assessment process can help institutions gather the data needed to help make informed decisions regarding the impact of specific assessment resources and activities and make any modifications needed, as suggested by the data collected, to aid in the adaptation of a streamlined process for both institutions.

This study sought to better understand participant perceptions of their own knowledge of and confidence in the assessment process and how these perceptions are impacted by the peer review process facilitated by the Institutional Effectiveness Review Team (IE Review Team), by optional resources provided by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE), and by the number

of assessment cycles in which participants have engaged. This non-experimental quantitative study, based on de-identified archival data, sought to “identify factors that influence an outcome” and to understand “the utility of” specific interventions (Creswell, 2014, p. 20). The study examined “the process of interaction” between IE Review Team members and administrative and student affairs professionals, relying on the “participants’ views” of the process to construct a clear picture of the strengths of and potential areas for improvement in the mechanisms in place (Creswell, 2014, p. 8).

The equally weighted research questions guiding this study were as follows:

1. What are the perceived strengths of and potential areas for improvement in the resources in place to develop knowledge of and confidence in assessment and how does perceived utility differ among divisions of the institution?
2. How do assessment coordinators perceive their own knowledge of and confidence in assessment?
3. What is the relationship between knowledge of and confidence in assessment and the utility of resources in place?
4. What is the relationship between knowledge of and confidence in assessment and number of assessment cycles in which participants have engaged?

The survey protocol addressed these questions and contained three sections. Section one asked participants to select their reporting division and the number of assessment cycles in which they have engaged. Section two, which addressed research question one, asked participants to rate the utility of various resources and processes provided and facilitated by the OIE using Likert scale responses ranging from one to six. Finally, section three, which addressed research

question two, asked participants to rate their perceptions of their own knowledge of and confidence in assessment using Likert scale responses ranging from scores of one to five.

### **Division Representation**

The overall sampling of divisions represented consisted of  $n = 61$ , representing a response rate of 71.8%. Table 1 below presents how divisions were represented in the sampling

Table 1

#### *Participant Representation by Division*

Division	<i>n</i>	% of Total Sample
Vice President Academic Affairs (VPAA)	14	23.0%
Vice President Business and Finance (VPBF)	12	19.7%
CIO/Information Technology (IT)	6	9.8%
President	11	18.0%
Vice President Student Affairs and Enrollment Management (VPSAEM)	18	29.5%

*Note.*  $n = 61$

Participant number of assessment cycles ranged from one year to five or more years, with an average of 3.82 cycles. Descriptive statistics are presented below in Table 2. One participant did not provide the number of assessment cycles in which he or she had participated, resulting in a different  $n$  for this research question.

Table 2

#### *Participant Number of Assessment Cycles*

	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	Range
Number of Assessment Cycles	3.82	4.50	5.00	1.42	4.00

*Note.*  $n = 60$

Reliability of the instrument, excluding the demographic information related to division and number of assessment cycles was assessed reviewing Cronbach's Alpha. Separate analyses were conducted for survey instrument sections two, utility of resources, and three, knowledge of and confidence in applied skill in assessment. Results are presented in Tables 3 and 4 below and show moderate reliability for utility of resources and high reliability for knowledge of and confidence in applied skill in assessment (Field, 2009).

Table 3

*Reliability Statistics for Utility of Resources*

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0.64	0.65	8

Table 4

*Reliability Statistics for Knowledge of and Confidence in Applied Skill in Assessment*

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0.92	0.92	3

**Resources and Processes**

Section two of the instrument addressed research question one, designed to determine the perceived strengths of and potential areas for improvement in the resources in place to develop knowledge of and confidence in assessment, as well as how perceived utility differs among divisions of the institution. Participants rated the utility of each resource or process using a five-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating *I did not know about this resource*, 2 indicating *I knew about this resource but did not use it*, and 3 through 6 indicating levels of utility, including *This resource was not at all helpful* (3); *This resource was a little helpful* (4); *This resource was quite*

*helpful (5); and This resource was very helpful (6). Individual items addressed the utility of General information about assessment from OIE’s website (OIE Website), General information about assessment from sources other than the OIE website, such as assessment books or conference workshops (External Resources), Face to Face feedback from IE Review Team Members during the annual review (Face to Face Feedback), Electronic feedback from OIE and IE Review Team Members outside the annual review (Electronic Feedback), Consultation with IE Review Team Members outside the annual review (Review Team Off Cycle), Consultation with OIE staff outside the annual review (OIE Off Cycle), Administrative, Academic, and Student Support Services Rubric (OIE Rubric), and the Rubric and example specific to each division (Divisional Example). Table 5 presents descriptive statistics for these items.*

Table 5

*Descriptive Statistics for Utility of Resources*

	OIE Website	External Resources	Face to Face Feedback	Electronic Feedback	Review Team Off Cycle	OIE Off Cycle	OIE Rubric	Divisional Example
Mean	3.21	3.00	5.11	4.92	4.05	4.21	3.54	3.70
Median	4.00	3.00	5.00	5.00	4.00	5.00	4.00	4.00
Mode	1.00	1.00	6.00	5.00	6.00	6.00	4.00	5.00
Std. Deviation	1.77	1.81	0.92	1.01	1.72	1.77	1.76	1.80
Variance	3.14	3.27	0.84	1.01	2.95	3.14	3.09	3.25
Skewness	-0.02	0.07	-0.91	-1.16	-0.43	-0.54	-0.27	-0.39
Kurtosis	-1.52	-1.66	0.78	2.45	-1.23	-1.20	-1.19	-1.24
Range	4.00	5.00	5.00	4.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00

*Note. n = 61*

In the aggregate, participants reported the least useful resources to be the OIE Website and External Resources that participants seek or experience outside their interaction with the

OIE, with means of 3.21 and 3.00 respectively, indicating these resources were not at all helpful. The highest means were reported for Face to Face Feedback during the annual review process and Electronic Feedback outside the annual review process, with means of 5.11 and 4.92 respectively, indicating these resources were quite or very helpful.

Review of utility of resources by divisions revealed some variation in which specific resources have the highest and lowest reported utility. Tables 6 through 10 below present descriptive statistics for each division and reported utility of each of the eight resources identified.

#### **Vice President of Academic Affairs (VPAA)**

For units reporting to the VPAA, results mirror aggregate results for the most useful resources and process, as shown in Table 6 below. Face to Face Feedback during the annual review process and Electronic Feedback outside the annual review process reported a mean utility score of 5.07 each. The resource reported least useful was the divisional rubric, with a mean score of 3.00 for VPAA. Of the five remaining resources, only one, resources other than those provided by the OIE, reported a mean score above 4, indicating this resource was a little helpful.



Table 6

*Descriptive Statistics for Utility of Resources, VPAA*

	OIE Website	External Resources	Face to Face Feedback	Electronic Feedback	Review Team Off Cycle	OIE Off Cycle	OIE Rubric	Divisional Example
Mean	3.43	4.14	5.07	5.07	3.50	3.86	3.29	3.00
Median	3.50	4.50	5.00	5.00	3.50	4.50	3.50	2.50
Mode	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00 <sup>a</sup>	2.00	2.00 <sup>a</sup>	1.00	1.00
Std. Deviation	1.65	1.56	0.73	0.83	1.70	1.79	2.05	2.08
Variance	2.73	2.44	0.53	0.69	2.89	3.21	4.22	4.31
Skewness	-0.09	-0.56	-0.11	-0.15	0.17	-0.22	-0.01	0.30
Kurtosis	-1.36	-0.52	-0.86	-1.51	-1.52	-1.64	-1.90	-1.81
Range	5.00	5.00	2.00	2.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00

*Note.*  $n = 14$ . <sup>a</sup>Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown.

### **Vice President of Business and Finance (VPBF)**

Results for units reporting to the VPBF are shown in Table 7 below. Here again, the greatest mean score corresponds with Face to Face Feedback during the annual review process, with a reported mean of 5.08. Consultation with OIE office staff outside the annual review cycle shares the same mean of 5.08, which differs considerably than the mean score of 3.86 for VPAA above. For VPBF, resources other than those provided by the OIE have the least reported utility, with a mean score of only 2.0. Four of the remaining resources have mean scores below 4, and a mean score of 2.67 for the OIE website indicates this resource was either not used by VPBF or was reported as not at all helpful to those who used it.

Table 7

*Descriptive Statistics for Utility of Resources, VPBF*

	OIE Website	External Resources	Face to Face Feedback	Electronic Feedback	Review Team Off Cycle	OIE Off Cycle	OIE Rubric	Divisional Example
Mean	2.67	2.00	5.08	4.92	4.92	5.08	3.50	3.58
Median	2.00	1.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.50	3.50	3.50
Mode	1.00 <sup>a</sup>	1.00	6.00	5.00	6.00	6.00	3.00	3.00 <sup>a</sup>
Std. Deviation	1.84	1.48	1.00	1.00	1.31	1.24	1.24	1.31
Variance	3.33	2.18	0.99	0.99	1.72	1.54	1.55	1.72
Skewness	0.81	1.22	-0.85	-1.13	-1.27	-1.56	-0.51	-0.51
Kurtosis	-0.95	-0.06	-0.01	0.95	0.95	2.45	-0.09	-0.44
Range	5.00	4.00	3.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00

*Note.* n = 12. <sup>a</sup>Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown.

### **CIO/Information Technology (IT)**

Results for units in IT are shown in Table 8 below. Again, the greatest mean score corresponds with Face to Face Feedback during the annual review process, with a reported mean of 5.67, followed by Electronic Feedback outside the annual review process, with a reported mean of 4.83. For IT, the OIE website has the least reported utility, with a mean score of 3.00. Of the five remaining resources, only two (consultation with IE Review Team Members or with OIE Office Staff) were reported to be at least a little helpful, with mean scores of 4.67 and 4.33 respectively.

Table 8

*Descriptive Statistics for Utility of Resources, IT*

	OIE Website	External Resources	Face to Face Feedback	Electronic Feedback	Review Team Off Cycle	OIE Off Cycle	OIE Rubric	Divisional Example
Mean	3.00	3.50	5.67	4.83	4.67	4.33	3.83	3.83
Median	2.50	4.50	6.00	5.00	5.00	5.50	4.00	4.50
Mode	1.00	5.00	6.00	5.00	5.00	6.00	4.00	1.00 <sup>a</sup>
Std. Deviation	2.28	1.98	0.52	0.75	1.37	2.25	1.72	2.32
Variance	5.20	3.90	0.27	0.57	1.87	5.07	2.97	5.37
Skewness	0.30	-0.82	-0.97	0.31	-1.94	-0.94	-0.68	-0.57
Kurtosis	-2.47	-1.95	-1.88	-0.10	4.55	-1.44	0.81	-2.00
Range	5.00	4.00	1.00	2.00	4.00	5.00	5.00	5.00

*Note.*  $n = 6$ . <sup>a</sup>Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown.

### **President**

Results for the units reporting to the President are shown in Table 9 below. The greatest mean score continues to be for Face to Face Feedback during the annual review process, with a reported mean of 4.91, again followed by Electronic Feedback outside the annual review process, with a reported mean of 4.73. For these same units, resources other than those provided by the OIE have the least reported utility, with a mean score of 2.09. For this division, all other resources were reported as either not used or not at all helpful. No mean scores for these five other resources reported means above 4, indicating all were either unused or not at all to a little helpful.

Table 9

*Descriptive Statistics for Utility of Resources, President*

	OIE Website	External Resources	Face to Face Feedback	Electronic Feedback	Review Team Off Cycle	OIE Off Cycle	OIE Rubric	Divisional Example
Mean	2.64	2.09	4.91	4.73	3.73	3.73	3.55	3.82
Median	2.00	1.00	5.00	5.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Mode	1.00	1.00	4.00 <sup>a</sup>	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Std. Deviation	1.75	1.51	0.83	0.79	1.74	1.74	1.51	1.33
Variance	3.06	2.29	0.69	0.62	3.02	3.02	2.27	1.76
Skewness	0.27	1.08	0.19	0.57	-0.47	-0.47	-0.53	-0.53
Kurtosis	-2.03	-0.44	-1.49	-0.97	-0.63	-0.63	0.28	1.20
Range	4.00	4.00	2.00	2.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00

*Note.*  $n = 11$ . <sup>a</sup>Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown.

### **Vice President of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management (VPSAEM)**

Results for the units reporting to the VPSAEM are shown in Table 10 below. The greatest mean score continues to be for Face to Face Feedback during the annual review process, with a reported mean of 5.11, again followed by Electronic Feedback during the annual review cycle, with a reported mean of 4.94. As with units reporting to the President, resources other than those provided by the OIE have the least reported utility, with a mean score of 3.17. Only one of the five remaining resources, the divisional rubric, reported a mean score above 4, indicating this resource was a little helpful.

Table 10

*Descriptive Statistics for Utility of Resources, VPSAEM*

	OIE Website	External Resources	Face to Face Feedback	Electronic Feedback	Review Team Off Cycle	OIE Off Cycle	OIE Rubric	Divisional Example
Mean	3.83	3.17	5.11	4.94	3.89	4.17	3.67	4.22
Median	4.00	4.00	5.50	5.00	4.00	5.00	4.00	5.00
Mode	4.00	1.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	1.00	5.00
Std. Deviation	1.62	1.82	1.13	1.35	1.94	1.89	2.09	1.93
Variance	2.62	3.32	1.28	1.82	3.75	3.56	4.35	3.71
Skewness	-0.73	-0.34	-1.33	-1.67	-0.21	-0.39	-0.33	-0.97
Kurtosis	-0.45	-1.91	1.77	3.19	-1.68	-1.67	-1.59	-0.66
Range	5.00	4.00	4.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00

Note.  $n = 18$ .

### Knowledge of and Confidence in Assessment

Section three of the survey instrument addressed research question two and participant perceptions of their own knowledge of assessment and confidence in applying that knowledge. Participants responded to a series of three Likert-scaled questions, with responses ranging from 1 to 5. Response choices included *Very untrue (1)*, *Somewhat untrue (2)*, *Neither true nor untrue (3)*, *Somewhat true (4)*, and *Very true (5)*, with 1 indicating the least positive response and 5 indicating the most positive response. Items addressing knowledge of and confidence in assessment were: 1) *I have a solid understanding of what constitutes good assessment practice*; 2) *I am confident I can successfully conduct assessment activities in my unit*; and 3) *I am confident I can successfully report assessment activities in my unit*. Descriptive statistics for these items are presented in Table 11.

Table 11

*Mean Scores, Knowledge of and Confidence in Assessment*

	I have a solid understanding of what constitutes good assessment practice.	I am confident I can successfully conduct assessment activities in my unit.	I am confident I can successfully report assessment activities in my unit.
Mean	4.05	4.08	4.05
Median	4.00	4.00	4.00
Mode	4.00	4.00	4.00
Std. Deviation	0.85	0.97	0.88
Variance	0.71	0.94	0.78
Skewness	-0.78	-1.18	-0.85
Kurtosis	0.30	1.14	0.26
Range	3.00	4.00	3.00

*Note.*  $n = 61$ .

Review of the aggregate data indicated that, overall, the variables were within tolerable limits of normality warranting further analysis. As a whole, participants reported feeling it is somewhat true that they have a solid understanding of what constitutes good assessment practice and that they are able to conduct and report assessment activities for their respective units.

### **Correlational Analyses**

After review of the descriptive statistics for each item, correlational analyses were utilized to address research questions three and four. Specifically, correlational analyses were implemented to investigate the relationship between knowledge of and confidence in assessment and the utility of resources in place in order to address research question three. Similarly, correlational analyses were conducted to explore the relationship between knowledge of and confidence in assessment activities and number of assessment cycles in which participants have engaged to address research question four. To facilitate these analyses, a composite score for each participant was derived from responses to the three items constituting the third section of

the survey instrument. The Knowledge Confidence Composite (KCC) score was created through a composite of participant responses to the following survey items: 1) *I have a solid understanding of what constitutes good assessment practice*; 2) *I am confident I can successfully conduct assessment activities in my unit*; and 3) *I am confident I can successfully report assessment activities in my unit*. The researcher calculated mean values for each participant's responses in SPSS to arrive at a KCC score for each participant. Correlations between the KCC score, individual resources and processes, and number of assessment cycles in which participants have engaged were then reviewed in SPSS. These results are presented separately in Tables 12 (*Correlational Relationship between Participant KCC Scores and Utility of Individual Resources*) and 13 (*Correlational Relationship between Participant KCC Scores and Number of Assessment Cycles*).

### **Participants' KCC Scores and Utility of Individual Resources**

As shown in Table 12 below, of the eight resources and processes identified for this study, only two were shown to have statistically significant relationships with participants' KCC scores. Using Pearson's correlation, both Electronic Feedback during the annual review cycle and Resources on the OIE Website demonstrated statistically significant relationships with participants' KCC scores at the  $p < 0.05$  level.

Table 12

*Correlational Relationship between Participant KCC Scores and Utility of Individual Resources*

	OIE Website	External Resources	Face to Face Feedback	Electronic Feedback	Review Team Off Cycle	OIE Off Cycle	OIE Rubric	Divisional Example
KCC	0.38*	0.22	0.25	0.32*	0.04	0.18	0.24	0.17

*Note.*  $n = 61$ . \*Denotes significant at the  $p < 0.05$  level

### Participants KCC Scores and Number of Assessment Cycles

Again using Pearson's correlation, no statistically significant relationship was found between participants' KCC scores and the number of assessment cycles in which participants have engaged. Results are shown in Table 13 below.

Table 13

*Correlational Relationship between Participant KCC Scores and Number of Assessment Cycles*

	Assessment Cycles
KCC	0.11

*Note.*  $n = 60$ . \*Denotes significant at the  $p < .05$  level.

### Additional Descriptive and Correlational Analyses

Before conducting regression analyses, the researcher chose to conduct a second set of descriptive and correlational analyses, excluding all responses of (1) *I did not know about this resource* or (2) *I knew about this resource but did not use it* from section two of the survey instrument. This manipulation of the data permitted analyses of the perceived utility of each resource as reported only by participants who actually used each resource. Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 14 below. The sample size varies due to the number of participants who used each resource.



Table 14

*Descriptive Statistics for Utility of Resources Manipulated*

		Review							
		OIE Website	External Resources	Face to Face Feedback	Electronic Feedback	Team Off Cycle	OIE Off Cycle	OIE Rubric	Divisional Example
N	Valid	35	33	60	60	43	44	44	45
	Missing	26	28	1	1	18	17	17	16
Mean		4.60	4.55	5.17	4.98	5.02	5.18	4.48	4.62
Median		5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.00	5.00
Mode		5.00	5.00	6.00	5.00	6.00	6.00	4.00	5.00
Std. Deviation		0.85	0.79	0.83	0.87	0.91	0.92	1.02	1.05
Variance		0.72	0.63	0.68	0.76	0.83	0.85	1.05	1.10
Skewness		-0.03	-0.16	-.051	-0.44	-0.44	-0.75	0.13	-0.28
Kurtosis		-0.50	-0.25	-0.82	-0.58	-0.85	-0.55	-1.67	-1.08
Range		3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00

*Note.* *n* varies from 33 to 60

In the aggregate, participants who have used the resources the OIE provides reported the least useful resources to be the OIE Rubric and the OIE Website, with means of 4.48 and 4.60 respectively. The highest means were reported for Consultation with the OIE outside the annual review cycle and Face to Face Feedback during the annual review cycle, with means of 5.18 and 5.17 respectively.

Further analysis was next conducted to explore the relationship between participants' KCC scores and those resources with statistically significant relationships to the participants' KCC scores. As shown in Table 15 below, of the eight resources and processes identified for this study, when considering only those participants who have used the resources provided, five resources were shown to have statistically significant relationships with participants' KCC scores, as opposed to two when considering all participants. Using Pearson's correlation, Face to Face Feedback during the annual review cycle, Electronic Feedback during the annual review

cycle, Consultation with the IE Review Team outside the annual review cycle, Consultation with the OIE outside the annual review cycle, and the OIE Rubric demonstrated statistically significant relationships with KCC at the  $p < 0.01$  level as depicted in Table 15.

Table 15

*Relationship between participant KCC score and utility of individual resources manipulated*

		OIE Website	External Resources	Face to Face Feedback	Electronic Feedback	Review Team Off Cycle	OIE Off Cycle	OIE Rubric	Divisional Example
KCC Pearson Correlation		0.33	0.29	0.35**	0.34**	0.54**	0.55**	0.42**	0.14
N		35	33	60	60	43	44	44	45

Note.\*\*Denotes significance at the  $p < 0.01$  level (2-tailed)

### Regression Analyses

Finally, the researcher employed linear regression to explore how much variance in participants' KCC score was accounted for by each resource identified as statistically significant using the resources identified in Table 15. Hierarchical regression was applied, using Consultation with the IE Review Team outside the annual assessment cycle and Consultation with the OIE outside the annual assessment cycle as step one of the model and Face to Face Feedback during the annual review cycle, Electronic Feedback during the annual review cycle, and the OIE Rubric as step two of the model. Results are shown in Table 16 below.

Table 16

*Linear regression model summary*

Model	R	Adjusted R Square			Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics			
		R Square	R Square	R Square		R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2
1	.604 <sup>a</sup>	.364	.314	.71328	.364	7.167	2	25	.003
2	.665 <sup>b</sup>	.443	.316	.71207	.078	1.028	3	22	.399

Note. a. Predictors: (Constant), OIE Off Cycle, IE Review Team Off Cycle

b. Predictors: (Constant), OIE Off Cycle, IE Review Team Off Cycle, OIE Rubric, Electronic Feedback, Face to Face Feedback

For both Model 1 and Model 2, the moderating independent variable accounts for approximately 31% of the variance in the dependent variable, the KCC score. This is statistically significant at the  $p < .01$  level for Model 1, but is not statistically significant for Model 2.

### Chapter Summary

The OIE provides eight different processes and resources in support of participants' assessment knowledge of and confidence in assessment, and in the aggregate, Face to Face Feedback had the most utility for participants. Overall, participants felt at least somewhat confident in their understanding of what constitutes good assessment practice, and they are equally confident in their ability to conduct and report assessment activities for their units. When considering all participant responses, correlational analysis in SPSS determined that statistically significant relationships between utility of resources and participant knowledge of and confidence in assessment exist for only two resources, the OIE Website and Electronic Feedback during the annual review process. Considering only those participants who have used the resources, statistically significant relationships were noted between utility of resources and participant knowledge of and confidence in assessment for five resources, including Face to Face Feedback during the annual review cycle, Electronic Feedback during the annual review cycle,

Consultation with the IE Review Team outside the annual review cycle, Consultation with the OIE outside the annual review cycle, and the OIE Rubric. Finally, additional correlational analyses determined no significance between number of assessment cycles and participant knowledge of and confidence in assessment. The following chapter will provide more detailed interpretation of these findings as they relate to existing literature and implications for the OIE going forward.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter begins with an overview of the study, including the problem and purpose statements, research questions, and research methodology that guided the study. A brief summary of the results from Chapter 4 will serve as the basis for more in-depth discussion of each research question, followed by implications for practice and recommendations for future research. The chapter ends with a conclusion summarizing the study.

#### **Introduction**

Many institutions establish assessment teams to assist faculty in developing their knowledge of and applied skill in academic program assessment activities, and some extend these teams to address administrative and student affairs assessment as well (Fishman, 2017; Slager & Oaks, 2013). These teams may function as more formal distributed leadership models, as described by Spillane (2006), or they may be less formal groups with little or no leadership roles. Regardless of their level of formality, these teams are often used to implement other resources such as rubrics, peer review, and feedback, but the effectiveness of these resources and processes is not commonly reviewed through an intentionally designed programmatic assessment process (Fulcher, Coleman, & Sundre, 2016; Jonsson, 2013; Kahlon, Delgado-Angulo, & Bernabe, 2015; Panadero & Romero, 2014). Although impact of these resources can be difficult to gauge, programmatic evaluation allows institutions to look at the impact of *multiple* resources and processes in place to determine if they have the “right set of activities” in place to positively impact assessment practices across campus (Fink, 2013, p. 47). Particularly during a consolidation, programmatic assessment can help institutions gather the data needed to help make informed decisions regarding the impact of specific

resources and activities to ensure “every element contributes to” effective assessment practices (Shutt et al., 2012, p. 78).

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) at this large, public southeastern university has distributed assessment work across campus by implementing a distributed leadership model, in the form of the Institutional Effectiveness Review Team (IE Review Team). This team has helped develop and implement many of the resources developed and supported by the OIE, including rubrics, divisional examples, and peer feedback, but the actual impact of the IE Review Team and the support provided has only been investigated anecdotally. Beyond numerical data collected to approximate units’ success in assessment reporting, the OIE at this large, public southeastern university has very limited data to support strengths of or potential areas for improvement in the processes and resources it has employed in support of administrative and student affairs assessment.

As a newly consolidated institution that has been expanded to include administrators and staff unfamiliar with existing processes, it is important that the OIE determine which processes should be promoted in the new institution. This study collects the more concrete evidence that the OIE needs to determine which assessment resources and processes should be continued, modified, or even abandoned, particularly when implementing a consolidation. Thus, the purpose of this study was to better understand participant perceptions of their own knowledge of and confidence in the assessment process and how those perceptions are impacted by the peer review process facilitated by the IE Review Team, by optional resources provided by the OIE, and by the number of assessment cycles in which participants have engaged.

As the OIE at this large, public southeastern university expands its reach as a result of a consolidation process, it is important that decisions about which resources and processes are

implemented going forward are based more on perceived utility than institutional habit. This study utilized de-identified archival data to construct a clearer picture of the perceived utility of the resources and processes in place in support of administrative and student affairs assessment, using four equally weighted research questions.

### **Summary of Findings**

This study used de-identified archival data collected by the OIE at a large southeastern public university at the conclusion of the 2016-2017 assessment cycle. Data were collected via an electronic, anonymous survey administered to all administrative and student affairs assessment coordinators, administrators, and staff who were responsible for, contributed to, or had contributed to the preparation of their units' annual assessment reports or plans during any of the past six assessment cycles. The survey consisted of three sections, the first of which asked participants to identify their reporting division and the number of assessment cycles in which they had engaged at the subject institution. Section two asked participants to rate the utility of each of eight individual resources and processes supported by the OIE, using Likert scale responses ranging from "1," indicating *I did not know about this resource* to "6," indicating *This resource was very helpful*. Section three asked participants to rate their perception of their confidence in their understanding of good assessment practice, their ability to conduct assessment activities, and their ability to successfully report assessment activities. Likert scale responses ranged from "1," indicating *Very Untrue*, to "5," indicating *Very True*. From the initial population of 85 possible participants, 61 responses were collected, for an overall response rate of 71.8% and better than a 50% response rate from each division represented.

These data provide the first step in determining if all of the resources and processes historically in place are positively impacting assessment practices (Fink 2013; Shutt et al., 2012).

The data also provide a basis for decisions as to which resources and processes should be continued, modified, or even abandoned as the OIE moves forward in an institutional consolidation.

### **Discussion**

Study results will be discussed in the following sections addressing each of the four equally weighted research questions. Utility of resources and knowledge of and confidence in assessment, addressing questions one and two, were both analyzed using descriptive statistics. The relationships between utility of resources and number of assessment cycles in which participants have engaged and knowledge of and confidence in assessment and number of assessment cycles in which participants have engaged were analyzed using correlation and regression methods and address research questions three and four.

#### **Research Question One**

Research question 1 asked participants to rate the utility of eight different resources and processes, including *General information about assessment from OIE's website* (OIE Website), *General information about assessment from sources other than the OIE website, such as assessment books or conference workshops* (External Resources), *Face to Face feedback from IE Review Team Members during the annual review* (Face to Face Feedback), *Electronic feedback from OIE and IE Review Team Members outside the annual review* (Electronic Feedback), *Consultation with IE Review Team Members outside the annual review* (Review Team Off Cycle), *Consultation with OIE staff outside the annual review* (OIE Off Cycle), *Administrative, Academic, and Student Support Services Rubric* (OIE Rubric), and the *Rubric and example specific to each division* (Divisional Example). Participants responded using a six-point Likert scale that ranged from 1-6. Responses included *I did not know about this resource (1)*; *I knew*



*about this resource but did not use it (2); This resource was not at all helpful (3); This resource was a little helpful (4); This resource was quite helpful (5); and This resource was very helpful (6), with 1 indicating the least positive response and 6 indicating the most positive response..*

As shown in Figure 1 in Appendix E, in the aggregate, participants judged the least useful resources to be the OIE Website and External Resources that participants seek or experience outside their interaction with the OIE. The highest means are reported for *Face to Face feedback from IE Review Team Members during the annual review* and *Electronic feedback from OIE and IE Review Team Members*, with means of 5.11 and 4.92 respectively, followed by *Consultation with IE Review Team Members outside the annual review* and *Consultation with IE Review Team Members outside the annual review*, with means of 4.21 and 4.05 respectively. These opportunities for personal attention and feedback corroborate existing literature supporting the use of peer review and feedback (Kahlon et. al., 2015; Gebelica et al., 2014; and Nichol et al., 2014). Means increased when removing responses from participants who either did not know about or chose not to use particular resources and included only active participants. As shown in Figure 2 in Appendix E, means for *Face to Face feedback from IE Review Team Members during the annual review* increased to 5.17, and *Electronic feedback from OIE and IE Review Team Members* increased to 4.98. The highest mean score for active participants was *Consultation with OIE staff outside the annual review process*, with a reported mean of 5.18 for active participants, versus a mean of 4.21 for all participants. These targeted times for interaction with assessment coordinators and the IE Review Team and OIE staff provide the opportunity to encourage needed reflection and engagement in the assessment process as indicated in the literature (Gebelica et al., 2014). Both are needed for participants to see the benefit of assessment beyond external factors and

to develop confidence and skill in the process (Emil & Cress, 2014).

A second part of research question one looked at the variation in utility of resources among the different divisions represented. Figures 3 through 7 in Appendix E show that *Face to Face* and *Electronic* feedback during the annual review cycle are perceived by participants to have the most utility in three of the five divisions represented, which included Vice President Academic Affairs (VPAA), President, and Vice President Student Affairs and Enrollment Management (VPSAEM). The divisions of Vice President Business and Finance (VPSAEM) and CIO/Information Technology (IT) rate *Consultation with OIE Staff* outside the annual review process as the most useful, followed by *Face to Face Feedback* during the annual review cycle. These findings further corroborate the current literature (Kahlon et. al., 2015; Gebelica et al., 2014; and Nichol et al., 2014), again pointing to the value of personal attention and feedback.

## **Research Question Two**

Research question two asked participants to report their perceptions of their own knowledge of assessment and their confidence in applying that knowledge. Participants responded using a three point Likert-scale with responses that ranged from 1 to 5. Response choices included *Very untrue (1)*, *Somewhat untrue (2)*, *Neither true nor untrue (3)*, *Somewhat true (4)*, and *Very true (5)*, with 1 indicating the least positive response and 5 indicating the most positive response. Items addressing knowledge of and confidence in applying assessment skills were: 1) *I have a solid understanding of what constitutes good assessment practice*; 2) *I am confident I can successfully conduct assessment activities in my unit*; and 3) *I am confident I can successfully report assessment activities in my unit*.

In all three cases, mean scores reported were all slightly higher than 4.00, indicating that, in the aggregate, participants feel it is at least *Somewhat true* that they understand what constitutes good assessment practice, they can conduct assessment, and they can report their assessment activities. As with utility of resources, however, there is variation when results were viewed by division. Figure 3 in Appendix E shows that the participants from the divisions of IT and VPBF have comparatively less confidence in all three areas. The aggregate results should be encouraging to the OIE as they consider expanding the IE Review Team model in a consolidated and expanded institution, but the OIE should not overlook these differences. Emil and Cress (2014) noted that perceived skill can affect engagement, so while it may be true in the aggregate these common barriers to engagement in assessment may not apply at this large, public southeastern university, if results are in fact a true reflection of participants' perceptions of their knowledge and confidence, some divisions may be more likely to engage than others.

### **Research Question Three**

Research question three examined the possible relationships between perceived utility of resources and participant's perceptions of their knowledge of and confidence in assessment. To facilitate analyses, the researcher created a composite score for each participant, derived from responses to the following survey items: 1) *I have a solid understanding of what constitutes good assessment practice*; 2) *I am confident I can successfully conduct assessment activities in my unit*; and 3) *I am confident I can successfully report assessment activities in my unit*. Mean values for each participant's responses were calculated in SPSS to arrive at a Knowledge and Confidence Composite (KCC) score for each participant.

Statistically significant results for this question differed when conducting analyses based on the entire *n* for the study versus only those participants who have actively participated by

using a particular resource. In the aggregate, only *Electronic Feedback during the annual review cycle* and *Resources on the OIE Website* demonstrated statistical significance. When removing participants who had not used particular resources from the correlation, *Electronic Feedback during the annual review cycle* continued to produce statistical significance, but *Resources on the OIE Website* did not. Instead, four additional resources including *Face to Face Feedback during the annual review cycle*, *Consultation with the IE Review Team outside the annual review cycle*, *Consultation with the OIE outside the annual review cycle*, and the *OIE Rubric* demonstrated statistically significant relationships with KCC scores. The work of Panadero and Romero (2014) is corroborated in the reported utility of the institutional rubric. At least for some participants, it is helpful to have an idea of what their final products should look like, and the OIE rubric provides that guidance. Overall, however, the opportunities for personal or electronic interaction continued to have the most perceived utility. These findings are similar to those of Rodgers et al. (2013), which also supported consultation with assessment professionals and the use of feedback, and Kahlon et al. (2015), which promoted formative feedback, particularly in a face to face setting.

#### **Research Question Four**

The final research question examined the relationship between participants' KCC scores and number of assessment cycles in which participants have engaged. Number of assessment cycles was determined by the final survey items, which asked participants to identify the number of assessment cycles in which they have participated during their employment at this large, public southeastern university. Responses included one, two, three, or four years, or five or more years. Results showed no significant relationship between participants' KCC scores and years of assessment experience, so the null hypothesis was accepted for this question. More experience

did not predict increased confidence. These findings were similar to those of Lock and Kraska (2015), in which years of experience was found to have “no significant moderating effect” on ...”mean challenges values” (p. 863). Just as participants’ in the current study may not automatically experience increased confidence in their knowledge over time, assessment professionals may not automatically experience fewer challenges in their work.

### **Implications for Practice**

Implementing successful institutional assessment processes are important both in terms of external accountability and internal success, but as happened at one large, public southeastern university, the number of faculty and staff in need of training and support in this critical institutional function is often disproportionately large compared to the number of assessment professionals available. In response, many assessment offices have implemented assessment teams to assist faculty and staff across campuses in promoting and sustaining effective assessment practices (Fishman, 2017; Slager & Oaks, 2013). These practices include rubrics, peer review and feedback, and resources on the OIE website. Thus far, the OIE has collected only limited data to assess the effectiveness these processes, but it is important to look at the impact of multiple resources and processes in place to determine if the OIE has the “right set of activities” in place to positively impact assessment practices in all administrative units on campus (Fink, 2013, p. 47). This is especially important as the OIE considers expanding this particular distributed leadership model and the resources it supports during a process of institutional consolidation.

Shutt et al. (2012) suggested any programmatic assessment process “should continue to undergo evaluation where it can be modified to ensure that every element contributes to the program’s outcomes” (p. 78). The data collected for this study focusing on one large, public

southeastern university has provided the OIE with needs assessment data to begin such an evaluation process. Results regarding utility of resources in the aggregate corroborate existing assessment literature and provide the basis for continuing to facilitate many of the existing resources and processes, though perhaps with modification.

### **Implications for Utility of Resources**

It is clear from this study that participants value the opportunities the OIE provides for indirect and direct interaction with members of the OIE staff and the IE Review Team. Although existing literature regarding the benefits of peer review focus largely on academic assessment (Jonsson, 2013; Kahlon et al., 2015) the premise is very much the same. Like students, participants in this study appreciate both face to face and electronic feedback provided during the institution's annual review process.

The majority of the OIE's and the IE Review Team's contact with assessment coordinators each year is focused on preparing annual assessment plans and reports, in which all units identify goals and objectives for a fiscal year, determine strategies for achieving those goals, and assess the effectiveness of their efforts at the end of each assessment cycle. IE Review Team members review assessment reports at the end of each cycle and provide feedback to administrative assessment coordinators responsible for report preparation. Written feedback is first shared with all assessment coordinators electronically. More importantly, it is shared during an annual face to face review process during which those who write the reports and those who review them discuss opportunities to improve the final report and plan assessment activities for the coming year. IE Review Team members discuss report strengths and weaknesses and assist assessment coordinators in identifying positive attributes, as well as addressing weaknesses. Gebelica et al. (2014) found support for "accurate and timely feedback" in encouraging "active

engagement” and “reflective interactions” (p. 93), which is consistent with the findings of this study. This face to face review process gives assessment coordinators dedicated time to work with IE Review Team members and think critically about the objectives they were trying to accomplish, determine how effective their strategies were in accomplishing those objectives, and identify what they may need to do differently going forward. These established feedback processes have demonstrated value to participants and may continue to promote productive engagement in the institution’s assessment processes if carried forward.

Although the aggregate mean scores for consultation with OIE staff or IE Review Team members varied slightly when considering all participants versus only those participants who used these resources, these consultations outside the annual review process were still perceived to be among the top four most useful resources and further corroborate the benefits of peer feedback (Nicol et al., 2014). Of the participants, 33% were either unaware they have the option of consulting with an OIE staff member outside the annual review process or they chose not to avail themselves of the option. Furthermore of these, 28% were unaware of this same option for consulting with a member of the IE Review Team. Given the fact that for both resources, when considering only those participants who had used them was *This resource was very helpful (6)*, the OIE may benefit from better publicizing both options moving forward.

Both the OIE and the Divisional rubrics present additional publicity possibilities for the OIE. Panadero and Romero (2014) concluded that rubrics, when “well-designed...can have a positive impact on performance because they set clear standards of how the final product of the task should look” (p. 142). As with the opportunities for consultation outside the annual review cycle, 28% of participants were either unaware of the OIE rubric used to evaluate the quality of completed assessment reports or chose not to consult it, and 26% were either not aware of or

chose not to consult the Divisional Rubric designed as an example of strong assessment reporting for each division. For those who did use these resources, mean scores in the aggregate showed that each were almost squarely between *a little helpful (4)* and *quite helpful (5)*. Results by division show that only the VPSAEM participants felt the Divisional Rubric was at least *quite helpful (5)*, while the OIE Rubric was only *a little helpful (3)*, and for all other divisions, reported means for both the OIE and the Divisional Rubrics were also only *a little helpful (3)*. This suggests the OIE may have opportunities for improvement on both of these resources.

Finally, although the OIE Website and Resources Other than Those Provided by the OIE were perceived to be at least *a little helpful (4)*, in the aggregate, results considering only those participants who actually used these resources highlight additional publicity efforts may be in order. Forty-three percent of participants were either unaware of resources posted on the OIE website or chose not to use them, and 46% were either unaware that resources were available beyond those offered by the OIE or chose not to pursue them. While the OIE cannot control the availability of resources beyond what it is able to facilitate and support, it can take steps to be more certain that those resources it does provide via its website are helpful to those who seek them. It may therefore be beneficial for the OIE to examine more closely if resources are recognized but not used or truly are not recognized as available options. This is perhaps even more true when considering the current consolidation process because newly added assessment coordinators located on two different and distant campuses may have delayed or less frequent access to OIE staff or current IE Review Team members than those on the local campus.

### **Implications for Distributed Leadership**

The distributed leadership model may be the OIE's best option to extend its reach to assessment coordinators added through the consolidation process. While one newly hired



professional staff member has been assigned to one of the two newly added campuses, Fuller et al., (2015) noted the ability to “facilitate dialog and collaboration” as a necessary skill for assessment professionals, “perhaps even more so than methodological prowess” (p. 348). The existing distributed leadership model has historically allowed the OIE to draw on the expertise of professionals from varying capacities outside of its formally charged office to support its various processes. The OIE may benefit more from either expanding the team’s reach to include these additional campuses or extending the team’s membership to better represent the new combination of campuses and constituents. Existing literature suggests the latter to be the most promising option, as noted in Puusa and Kekäle (2015) and Ribando and Evans (2015). Ribando and Evans (2015) found lower levels of Person Organization Fit and higher levels of stress in faculty from what was considered the subordinate institution in the institutional merger they studied. Like participants in a Puusa and Kekäle study (2015), participants from the subordinate institution felt powerless in the face of uncertainty, and, consequently, undervalued. Being sure to include professionals from its newly added campuses, the OIE may expand the reach of the IE Review Team and perhaps reduce these feelings of uncertainty and improve feelings of connection to the newly consolidated campuses.

Expanding the distributed leadership model must nevertheless be done with care. It is important for the OIE to keep in mind that leadership roles are often in addition to participants’ regularly assigned duties, and these competing agendas may have an impact on their role as leaders (McKenzie & Locke, 2014). Guetterman and Mitchell (2016) noted that participants valued the opportunity to work with peers in conducting assessment, sharing processes, and learning from lessons their peers have learned, but if the OIE is simply distributing the *work* of assessment, rather than the *leadership* of assessment, they may miss an opportunity to provide

“more rapid spread of [evidence-based decision making processes] through enhanced communication and ongoing collaboration” (Yarber et al., 2015, p. 7).

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Findings from this study are the first step in conducting ongoing programmatic assessment of the effectiveness of administrative and student support services assessment processes at one large, public southeastern university. Data collected provide the baseline assessment data regarding the strengths of and potential areas for improvement in eight specific resources and process supported by the OIE and the distributed leadership model it employs in the form of the IE Review Team. Additional data provide new insight into participant perceptions of their own knowledge of and skill in applying assessment processes. Both data sets suggest areas for additional research moving forward.

In expanding the IE Review Team, the OIE would typically recruit professionals who are comfortable with and have demonstrated some skill in discussing and applying effective assessment practices. Data from this study suggest that, in the aggregate, all participants feel it is at least *somewhat true* that they are able to do so. The OIE may consider revising this section of the survey instrument to better determine those individuals who may be best suited to coach others in conducting and reporting assessment activities. It is possible, for example, that participants feel reasonably certain they can perform these activities themselves, but they are far less certain they could assist others in doing so. Adding additional survey items, such as *I am confident I can successfully coach others in developing their assessment processes*, or *I am confident I can successfully coach others in developing their assessment reports* may provide the OIE with additional useful data.

Gustafson et al. (2014) argued that qualitative data can best provide insight into unique institutional contexts that cannot be revealed by numbers alone. Additional data may be provided by adding a qualitative component to the quantitative instrument used in this study. Particularly as the OIE considers revising resources such as the OIE or Divisional Rubrics, it could be helpful to collect qualitative information from participants regarding ways to improve the utility of both resources. This is especially true with the Divisional Rubrics intended to serve as examples of effective assessment practice and reporting. Utility of the OIE website may also be improved by soliciting the input of those likely to consult the website to determine what kinds of resources they may find most helpful.

Finally, the impact of consolidation should not be overlooked going forward. The OIE has a new population of assessment coordinators who will have access to its resources and processes but no documented knowledge of their current level of confidence in conducting or reporting their assessment activities. This information may be helpful in recruiting additional members of the IE Review Team and in planning development opportunities on the newly added campuses. As the institution moves through future assessment cycles, the OIE may wish to conduct comparative studies to determine utility of resources by campus, as well as by division.

### **Chapter Summary**

Many institutions have specific offices responsible for designing and implementing institutional assessment practices, much like the OIE at this large, public southeastern university. Like other offices of its kind, the OIE has established and developed assessment practices over time, but the impact of these practices has not been routinely and formally investigated. Although this study was limited to a single population of assessment coordinators, administrators, and staff at a single institution, study findings corroborate the positive effects of

peer review, rubrics, and feedback, providing the OIE with support for continuing many of its existing practices and suggestions for expanding the distributed leadership model that helps implement these practices.

### **Impact Statement**

With the growing move toward accountability in higher education (Martin et al., 2015), institutions have found themselves facing more rigorous assessment demands from their regional accreditors (Eaton, 2013), demands which must be met if institutions are to maintain regional accreditation and access to federal financial aid. Given the effort required to develop and maintain effective assessment processes and the frequent disproportion between assessment professionals and those they support, many institutions implement assessment teams, often in the form of distributed leadership models. Most focus on academic assessment processes, and few assess the impact of these teams and the processes and resources they support.

This study implemented a programmatic assessment to help one large, public southeastern institution answer questions about the effectiveness the processes and resources in place in support of administrative and student affairs assessment to help ensure “every element contributes to” effective assessment practices (Shutt et al., 2012, p. 78). It is important to “ask the tough questions and to get the news that something is not working (or working as assumed) and should therefore be revised or eliminated” (Meyer & Murrell, 2014, p. 4). This study, which may serve as a model for other institutions that implement similar processes, provided baseline data for the OIE to begin a decision making process and determine, based on evidence collected, which resources and processes should be continued or modified as it proceeds with a consolidation.

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## APPENDIX A

## Assessment Resources and Environment Survey

## Assessment Resources and Environment

How useful are the resources we have in place to support your engagement in assessment at Georgia Southern University? How confident are you in your own ability to engage effectively in assessment?

Your anonymous responses to the questions below will help our office decide how we can better facilitate and support assessment efforts across campus.

Note that "participation" includes contributing to and/or writing your unit's annual assessment plans and reports, participating in review meetings with OIE staff and/or Review Team members, or consulting with OIE staff and/or Review Team members.

\* Required

Please select your reporting division (pre-consolidation)

- President's Office (Includes Advancement and External/Gov. Affairs)
- Academic Affairs (Provost)
- Student Affairs and Enrollment Management
- Business and Finance
- Information Technology

Number of assessment cycles in which you have participated at Georgia Southern University

Choose ▼



division (e.g.,  
VPBF, VPSAEM,  
etc.)

Thinking about the assessment environment in your particular division (for example, Business and Finance or Academic Affairs), how would you respond to each statement? \*

	Very true	Somewhat true	Neither true nor untrue	Somewhat untrue	Very untrue
I have a solid understanding of what constitutes good assessment practice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am confident I can successfully conduct assessment activities in my unit.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am confident I can successfully report assessment activities in my unit.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Thank you



## APPENDIX B

## Rodgers, Grays, Fulcher, and Jurich (2013) Survey Instrument

<i>Resource Use</i>						
<i>Item</i>	<i>I did not know about this resource</i>	<i>I knew about this resource but did not use it</i>	<i>The resource was not at all helpful</i>	<i>This resource was a little helpful</i>	<i>This resource was quite helpful</i>	<i>This resource was very helpful</i>
General information about assessment from the assessment center's website						
General information about assessment from sources other than the assessment center's website, such as assessment books or conference workshops						
Consultation with graduate students at the assessment center						
Consultation with faculty members at the assessment center						
Consultation with faculty members within your own program						
QA* Rubric						
QA Report Exemplar (available on the assessment center's website)						
The QA feedback report from the previous year						
<i>Assessment Environment</i>						
<i>Item</i>	<i>Very Untrue</i>	<i>Somewhat Untrue</i>	<i>Neither True nor Untrue</i>	<i>Somewhat True</i>	<i>Very True</i>	
I had a solid understanding of what constitutes good assessment practice.						
I was confident I can successfully <b>conduct</b> assessment activities in my program.						
I am confident I can successfully <b>report</b> on assessment activities in my program.						
I heard administrators (e.g., department head, dean) communicate the importance of assessment.						
Administrators directly above my program were interested in the QA* scores we obtained.						
Faculty in my program were interested in assessment.						
Adequate time was committed to assessment in my program.						
I understood the QA rubric.						

\*QA = Quality of Assessment

## APPENDIX C

## Administrative and Student Affairs Units

**Office of the President**

President  
 Legal Affairs-Title IX/Equal Opportunity  
 Athletics  
 Audit and Advisory Services

Legal Affairs

**Vice President for Advancement & External Affairs**

VP for External Affairs  
 Marketing and Communications  
 Office of Development  
 Alumni Relations

Advancement Services - IT and Research  
 Annual Giving  
 Advancement Services Accounting  
 Donor Relations

**Vice President for Academic Affairs**

VP for Academic Affairs  
 International Programs & Services  
 Wildlife Center  
 Zach Henderson Library  
 Garden of the Coastal Plain  
 First-Year Experience  
 Performing Arts Center  
 Continuing Education  
 Honors Program  
 Museum  
 Centers for Teaching and Technology (CT2)  
 Institutional Effectiveness

**Vice President Business & Finance**

VP Business & Finance  
 Public Safety  
 Stores & Shops  
 Dining Services  
 Auxiliary Services  
 Physical Plant (Facilities)  
 Financial and Business Services  
 Licensing  
 Human Resources  
 Parking & Transportation

**Chief Information Officer/IT**

Chief Information Officer  
 Enterprise Technology Solutions  
 Security  
 Executive Technology Services  
 Center for Academic Technology Services (CATS)

Business and Finance Auxiliary  
 Networking and Telecom  
 IT Business Services

Research Integrity  
 Research Services & Sponsored Programs

**Vice President Student Affairs & Enrollment Management**

VP Student Affairs & Enrollment Management  
 Leadership and Community Engagement  
 Dean of Students  
 Counseling Center  
 Alcohol & Other Drugs Programs  
 Strategic Research and Analysis  
 Student Disability Resource Center  
 Campus Recreation and Intramurals  
 Academic Success Center  
 Registrar  
 Student Activities  
 Health Services  
 Military & Veteran Student Center  
 Student Conduct  
 Student Media  
 University Housing  
 Multicultural Student Center  
 Russell Union  
 Admissions  
 Career Services  
 Fraternity & Sorority Life



APPENDIX D

Administrative and Student Affairs Units Institutional Effectiveness Rubric

Mission: Identifies the unit's unique role within the university			
Needs Attention	Approaches Standard	Acceptable	Exemplary Standard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifies only the unit's reporting division</li> <li>Does not specifically identify the unit or its unique purpose (for example, "VP of Business and Finance" instead of "Postal Service")</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifies both the unit and its reporting division but does not clearly distinguish between the missions of the unit and its reporting division</li> <li>Attempts to address:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the unit's unique purpose</li> <li>the audience(s) the unit serves (e.g., faculty, staff, students.)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifies both the unit and its reporting division</li> <li>Clearly distinguishes between the two</li> <li>Clearly addresses:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the unit and its reporting unit</li> <li>the unit's purpose</li> <li>the audience(s) the unit serves (e.g., faculty, staff, students)</li> <li>the unit's connection to the divisional mission and/or the GSU mission</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifies:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the unit and its reporting unit</li> <li>the unit's <b>unique</b> role within the university</li> <li>the unit's purpose</li> <li>the audience(s) the unit serves (e.g., faculty, staff, students)</li> <li>to what disciplinary or professional standards and/or best practices the unit aspires</li> <li>The unit's connection to the divisional mission and/or the GaSou mission</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Guiding Question(s) and Note(s):</b></p> <p>"Does the statement distinguish the unit from other administrative units? If the name was removed, it should not be applicable to another administrative unit." (UCF, 2008)</p>
Goals: Broad, aspirational statements, specific to the unit, that address what the unit hopes to accomplish in the near and more distant future and align with the university strategic goals			
Needs Attention	Approaches Standard	Acceptable	Exemplary Standard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vague statements that do not clearly represent what the unit intends to accomplish</li> <li>All have a maintenance focus, without justification</li> <li>No clear connection to university strategic goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Broad statements specific to the unit, that encompass most functions of the unit but do not clearly articulate what will ultimately be accomplished</li> <li>Some may have an aspirational focus, but most are maintenance focused, without justification for maintenance</li> <li>Seem to align with the university strategic goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clear, broad statements specific to the unit</li> <li>Encompass most functions of the unit</li> <li>Statements may have a maintenance focus (with justification) but most should have an aspirational focus</li> <li>Clearly align with the university strategic goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clear, broad aspirational statements, specific to the unit</li> <li>Address what the unit hopes to accomplish in the near and more distant future (both short- and long-term)</li> <li>Encompass all functions of the unit as defined in the mission statement</li> <li>Statements may have a maintenance focus (with justification) but most should have an aspirational focus</li> <li>Clearly align with the university strategic goals</li> </ul> <p><b>Guiding Question(s) and Note(s):</b></p> <p>Effective with the FY'17 cycle, units should include all Goals in each assessment cycle, even if related <i>Objectives</i> are not assessed in that specific cycle.</p>

Objectives: Specifically defined statements that operationalize the Goal (NOTE: Justification should be included for new Objectives)			
Needs Attention	Approaches Standard	Acceptable	Exemplary Standard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All lack clarity and do not show clear alignment with the Goals or</li> <li>All focus on maintaining or continuing a unit's ongoing responsibilities rather than on improving a function of the unit</li> <li>Collaboration with other units may be mentioned, but not explained</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Statements need greater specificity to determine clear alignment with the goals but appear to be controlled by the unit or include defined collaboration with other units</li> <li>Statements are not focused exclusively on maintenance or continuation of the unit's ongoing responsibilities but also on improving the functions of the unit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All statements clearly align with the Goals and are specifically defined</li> <li>Predominantly focus on improvement rather than maintenance</li> <li>All statements are within the control of the unit or include defined collaboration with other units*</li> </ul> <p>* (Details of collaboration are specified in <i>Implementation Strategies</i>)</p> <p><b>Note:</b> A reduction in resources <b>could</b> make maintenance an acceptable outcome, but justification should be included.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Specifically defined statements that operationalize the unit's Goal</li> <li>Specifically define what aspects of the goal will be addressed</li> <li>Describe desired improvements or enhancements of that aspect of the Goal</li> <li>If not all are specifically addressed in the current assessment cycle, the full assessment cycle with timeline for all Objectives is presented in tabular form</li> <li>May involve collaboration with other units</li> </ul> <p>* (Details of collaboration are specified in <i>Implementation Strategies</i>)</p> <p><b>Guiding Question(s) and Note(s):</b></p> <p><b>Suggested Key Words:</b></p> <p>Increase Enhance Reduce Enhance Minimize Promote</p>

Implementation Strategies: Clear and detailed steps units will take to accomplish the Objective			
Needs Attention	Approaches Standard	Acceptable	Exemplary Standard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Described in such general terms a colleague could not implement in another's absence</li> <li>Cannot determine a clear connection between the Implementation Strategies and Objectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Described in general terms, making it difficult for a colleague to implement in another's absence</li> <li>Show insufficient or vague connection between the Implementation Strategies and Objectives</li> <li>May include general justifications for why some of the Implementation Strategies were developed or selected</li> <li>If collaborating with other units is involved, specifics of the collaboration are not included</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most are clearly described with a level of detail allowing a colleague to implement in another's absence</li> <li>All Implementation Strategies clearly relate to the associated Objective</li> <li>Include general justifications for why most of the Implementation Strategies were developed or selected</li> <li>If collaborating with other units, include details of how that collaboration will occur (Who (title) will do what, when, and how?)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clear and detailed steps the unit will take to accomplish each Objective with a level of detail allowing a colleague to implement in another's absence (Who (title) will do what, when, and how?)</li> <li>All Implementation Strategies clearly relate to the associated Objective</li> <li>If collaborating with other units, include details of how that collaboration will occur (Who (title) will do what, when, and how?)</li> </ul> <p><b>Guiding Question(s) and Note(s):</b></p> <p>Action Plan from previous year should be written such that units can cut and paste from Action Plan at the end of previous cycle to Implementation Strategies for upcoming cycle.</p> <p>May retain strategies from the previous year, but new strategies should be clearly identified.</p>

Measurement Tools: Tools used to determine progress toward/achievement of all aspects of the Objectives			
Needs Attention	Approaches Standard	Acceptable	Exemplary Standard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vaguely described, making it difficult to determine the tools' ability to provide information about progress toward or achievement of all Objectives</li> <li>Do not include discussion of the development or selection of the tools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adequately described to determine the tools' ability to provide information about progress toward or achievement of the Objective for some, but not all, Objectives measured during this year</li> <li>Do not include discussion of the development or selection of the tools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adequately described to determine the tools' ability to provide information about progress toward and/or achievement of the Objective as a whole</li> <li>Can provide the details needed to identify strengths and weaknesses for all Objectives (e.g., measuring ticket sales to faculty, staff, and students rather than ticket sales as a whole)</li> <li>Include a general discussion of their development and selection, including consultation with credible sources (e.g., someone knowledgeable or expert publication) regarding the development of the Tool selected (e.g., survey, focus group, rubric, etc.)</li> <li>Examples of actual Measurement Tools are included as appendices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adequately described to explain the tools' ability to provide detailed information to identify strengths and weaknesses used to determine whether or not units are making progress toward and/or achieving the Objective</li> <li>Include detailed description of their development and selection, including consultation with including consultation with credible sources (e.g., someone knowledgeable or expert publication) regarding the development of the Tool selected (e.g., survey, focus group, rubric, etc.). Who had input, how were tools chosen over other options, or how were tools developed, etc.</li> <li>Examples of actual Measurement Tools are included as appendices</li> <li>Include multiple measures for some Objectives</li> </ul> <p><b>Guiding Question(s) and Note(s):</b></p> <p><b>Possible Measurement Tools:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rubrics</li> <li>Behavioral observations</li> <li>Point-of-Service surveys</li> <li>Nationally available surveys</li> <li>Locally developed surveys</li> <li>Focus groups</li> <li>Interviews</li> <li>BANNER Data</li> <li>Spreadsheets</li> </ul> <p>What do units need to look at to make the determination that they have reached or made progress toward achieving the Objective?</p>

Targets: Clear description of a performance/achievement mark from the measurement tool to establish a meaningful, desired level of achievement for each outcome/objective assessed and a timeframe for doing so			
Needs Attention	Approaches Standard	Acceptable	Exemplary Standard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do not include performance/achievement levels (e.g., funding target/quantity of object/quality improvement) from the <i>Measurement Tool</i> to establish a desired level of achievement for any Objectives.</li> <li>or</li> <li>Do not provide clear and specified information or time frame for completion or reaching milestones by specific dates</li> </ul>	<p>Include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a performance/achievement level (e.g., funding target/quantity of object/quality improvement) from the <i>Measurement Tool</i> to establish a desired level of achievement for some Objectives</li> </ul> <p><b>and/or</b> (when appropriate)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>clear and specified information or time frame for completion or reaching milestones by specific dates for some but not all expectations</li> </ul>	<p>Include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a performance/achievement level (e.g., funding target/quantity of object/quality improvement) from the <i>Measurement Tool</i> to establish a meaningful, desired level of achievement for each outcome/objective assessed</li> </ul> <p><b>and/or</b> (when appropriate)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>clear and specified information or time frame for completion or reaching milestones by specific dates for all expectations</li> <li>a general description of the process of developing the Target and the parties involved</li> </ul>	<p>Include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a detailed description of a performance/achievement level (e.g., funding target/quantity of object/quality improvement) from the <i>Measurement Tool</i> to establish a meaningful, desired level of achievement for each outcome/objective assessed and a timeframe for doing so</li> </ul> <p><b>and/or</b> (when appropriate)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>clear and specified information or time frame for completion or reaching milestones by specific dates for all expectations</li> <li>a detailed description of the process of developing the Target and the parties involved</li> </ul> <p><b>Guiding Question(s) and Note(s):</b></p> <p>This is not a target audience (e.g. "students" or "participating staff").</p> <p>How will units know when they have achieved the Objective? What is the specific mark of achievement (funding target, quantity to increase or decrease, or quality improvement)?</p>

Data Collection Method(s): Thorough description of how the Measurement Tools will be distributed and how the data will be collected			
Needs Attention	Approaches Standard	Acceptable	Exemplary Standard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unclear if the process will provide the information necessary to determine progress toward or achievement of the Objectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include(s) a vague description of how the <i>Measurement Tools</i> will be distributed, how the information will be collected, and from whom</li> <li>Do/does not clearly include sufficient data gathering or tracking opportunities to collect the information necessary to determine progress toward or achievement of the Objectives (timeline, places, conditions, etc.)</li> <li>Not clearly based on any accepted practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generally describes how <i>Measurement Tools</i> will be distributed, how the information will be collected, and from whom*</li> <li>Appear(s) to include sufficient data gathering or tracking opportunities to collect the data necessary to determine progress toward or achievement of the Objectives (timeline, places, conditions, etc.)</li> <li>Based on accepted practice</li> </ul> <p>*When sampling is used, the sample is representative of the population served. Include rationale and seek advice if unsure.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include a thorough description of how the <i>Measurement Tools</i> will be distributed, how the information will be collected, by whom, from whom, and at what point(s) to determine if the Objectives have been reached or if progress has been made toward reaching the Objectives</li> <li>Information should, when appropriate, be gathered at different times throughout the year if a strategy is introduced at multiple times <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For example, Research Accounting collects data relative to effort reporting for grant funded projects. After implementing the same strategies each term, data are collected by semester during fall, summer, and spring terms for comparative purposes and trends.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Guiding Question(s) and Note(s):</b></p> <p>When sampling is used, the sample is representative of the population served. Include rationale and seek advice if unsure.</p> <p>Units should be sure to collect data from subgroups, at different times, or under different conditions, if any could impact results</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For example, the Performing Arts Center collects data relative to ticket sales for each performance and disaggregates the data based on population (faculty/staff, student, patrons, and general public tickets sold.).</li> </ul>

**Findings & Analysis:** Was Objective achieved or was progress made toward achievement of the Objective? Results explained in terms of the Implementation Strategies employed

Needs Attention	Approaches Standard	Acceptable	Exemplary Standard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In all cases, do not indicate progress toward or achievement of the Objectives, but report only basic results (numbers, ratings, etc.)</li> <li>Results are presented and may indicate target met or unmet, but Implementation Strategies are not addressed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do not indicate, in all cases, progress toward or achievement of the Objectives</li> <li>Do not include who interpreted and do not appear to have been discussed with multiple representatives from the unit</li> <li>Seem related to the intended Objective</li> <li>Makes a general connection between results and Implementation Strategies collectively</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indicate, in all cases, progress toward or achievement of the Objectives</li> <li>Include who interpreted and were shared with others</li> <li>Clearly relate to specific measures and Objectives</li> <li>Explain, in some cases, which Implementation Strategies <b>seemed</b> to contribute to success and which did not</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indicate, in all cases, if the strategies collectively resulted in progress toward or achievement of the Objectives</li> <li>Indicate who interpreted the data and were shared and used to facilitate discussions with multiple representatives from the unit</li> <li>Explain which Implementation Strategies <b>seemed</b> to contribute to success and which did not</li> <li>Include relevant data from prior years to demonstrate growth and loss</li> </ul>

**Action Plan/Use of Results:** Based on the Findings and Analysis describe, with detail, next year's Implementation Strategies, with a level of specificity that details how, when, and by whom the strategies are to be implemented

Needs Attention	Approaches Standard	Acceptable	Exemplary Standard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vague and not clearly aligned with Findings and Analysis or Objectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generally aligned with Findings and Analysis, but vaguely stated, such that a colleague could not implement in another's absence</li> <li>If new Objective/assessment strategies introduced, no supporting data are included</li> <li>Are not shared, reviewed, or evaluated with others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developed directly from the Findings and Analysis and clearly align with the Objective</li> <li>While some may be general, most include a level of specificity that details how, when, and by whom the Implementation Strategies are to be implemented, such that a colleague could implement in another's absence</li> <li>May include changes to Objective/assessment strategies (based on evidence presented)</li> <li>Have the input of multiple people, when additional expertise is needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Based on the Findings and Analysis describe, with detail, next year's Implementation Strategies, with a level of specificity that details how, when, and by whom the Implementation Strategies are to be implemented</li> <li>A colleague could implement in another's absence</li> <li>Should have input of multiple people, when additional expertise is needed</li> </ul> <p><b>Guiding Question(s) and Note(s):</b></p> <p>Based on Findings and Analysis or new evidence collected?*</p> <p>Who (title) will do what, when, and how?</p> <p>*If Objective changes or is replaced with a new Objective, should be explained here, with appropriate evidence.</p>

APPENDIX E

Utility of Resources Graphs

Figure 1. Aggregate Means for Utility of Resources – All Participants

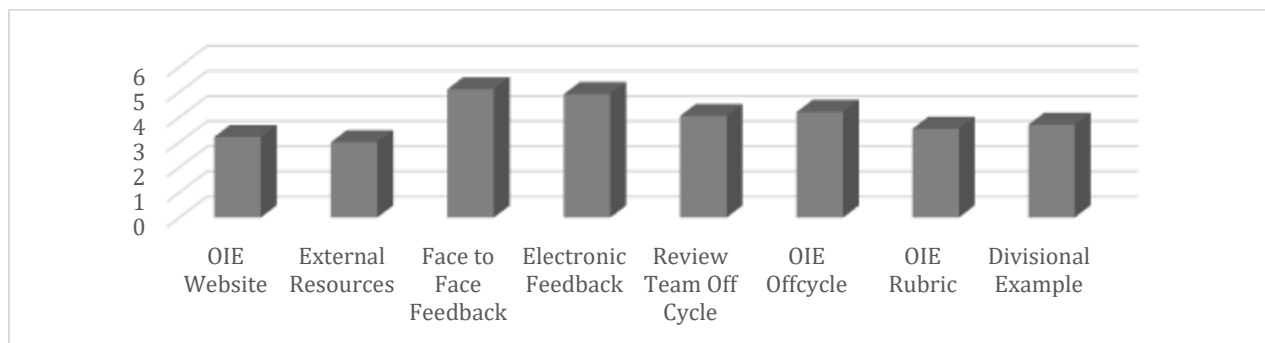


Figure 2. Aggregate Means for Utility of Resources – Active Participants

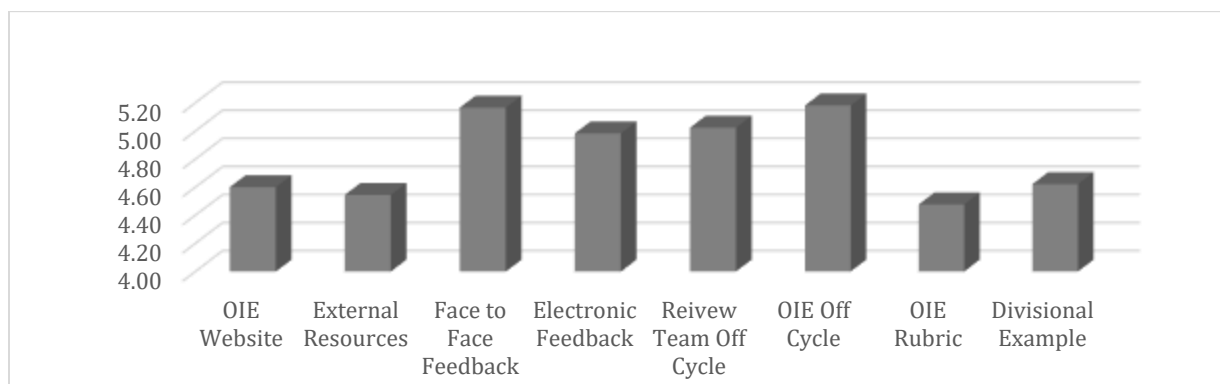


Figure 3. Knowledge of and Confidence in Assessment by Division

