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## The Forgotten Library Standard: SACSCOC Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1.3


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## **Cover Page Footnote**

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## PEER REVIEWED

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### The Forgotten Library Standard: SACSCOC Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1.3

By Charles L. Brown and Cara S. Marco

Title IV of the Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965 authorizes participating higher education institutions to provide financial assistance to students in obtaining a postsecondary degree. To ensure their quality control, institutions wishing to participate in Title IV federal student aid (FSA) programs must be accredited by an agency recognized by the Department of Education (DOE) (Hegji 2014, 2). As Kuh (2015, 149) explains, six U.S. regional accreditors— together with state government higher education agencies—oversee their constituent public, private not-for-profit, and for-profit higher education institutions' accreditation compliance within their respective regions. Accreditation from these regional accreditors endorses quality academic programs for institutions and eligibility for Title IV funds. One of these six regional accreditors, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), accredits more than 800 member institutions of higher education throughout eleven southern states.

Since it became effective in 2004, the SACSCOC *Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement* (2012a) have divided those requirements into three categories: Core Requirement (CR); Comprehensive Standard (CS); and, Federal Requirement (FR). To gain compliance, member institutions are required to submit reaffirmation Compliance Certification reports addressing this range of requirements every ten years. These reports encompass all aspects of their operations including quality assurance, which is often referred to as institutional effectiveness (IE). An institution's library administrators may be asked

to contribute narrative and supporting evidence to a centralized IR/IE or compliance project manager for a SACSCOC review.

In 1984, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools introduced the expectation that institutions demonstrate their effectiveness (Djeukeng 2014, 23). The emphasis on effectiveness developed as a result of "public demands for higher education accountability [that] went beyond financial accountability to encompass expectations for results and effective performance in the late 1970s" (2014, 41). In advance of the current national public policy "value movement," which focuses on the gainful-employment-resulting work produced in courses and programs rather than on standardized tests (Sullivan, 2015), SACSCOC defined institutional effectiveness as "the systematic, explicit, and documented process of measuring performance against mission in all aspects of an institution" (2012b, 115). As the first regional accreditor to mandate institutional effectiveness as part of its accreditation process, SACSCOC's institutional effectiveness mandate predated Secretary Bennett's 1988 DOE executive order, "focus on educational effectiveness," which emphasized institutional effectiveness as an integral part of higher education accreditation review processes (Kuh 2015, 149).

Determining institutional effectiveness is a multi-part process that includes determining measurable outcomes, measuring those outcomes, making improvements, and measuring again to determine the value of the improvements. In his NILOA occasional paper,

Keston H. Fulcher of the James Madison University's Center for Assessment and Research Studies summarizes the SACSCOC algorithmic learning improvement model into a formula: "weigh pig, feed pig, weigh pig." Fulcher goes on to explain that assessment, by itself, does not automatically lead to improvements; the pig will not gain weight simply because it is measured (2014).

SACSCOC, 3.3.1, the standard that covers institutional effectiveness, includes the following five sub-standards:

3.3.1 The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results in each of the following areas (Institutional Effectiveness):

3.3.1.1 educational programs, to include student learning outcomes...

3.3.1.2 administrative support services...

3.3.1.3 academic and student support services...

3.3.1.4 research within its educational mission, if appropriate...

3.3.1.5 community/public service within its educational mission, if appropriate...

(Southern Association of Colleges and Schools 2011, 83-84).

More immediately relevant to librarians, however, are the following four standards: CR 2.9 (Learning resources and services), CS 3.8.1 (Learning/information resources), CS 3.8.2 (Instruction of library use), and, CS 3.8.3 (Qualified staff). Librarians would be the most obvious content specialists to provide their requisite compliance input, but these four standards do not encompass library institutional effectiveness assessment. The SACSCOC *Resource Manual for the Principles of Accreditation* specifically notes that assessment of learning resources' institutional effectiveness

is controlled by the guidance in Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1.3:

CR 2.9 NOTE: The determination of an institution's effectiveness in providing sufficient collections, services, and resources within its mission should be addressed in CS 3.3.1.3 (2012b, 25).

Notes to 3.3.1 also indicate that "Academic and student support services normally include such activities as living/learning resources, tutoring, financial aid, residence life, student activities, dean of students' office, etc." (2012b, 51). "Living/learning resources" further shows the connection to library activities. Nonetheless, even librarians who are familiar with SACSCOC standards may only be familiar with the CR 2.9 and the constellation of three CS 3.8 standards. They often have limited or no input on the five oft-found-noncompliant CS 3.3.1 institutional effectiveness (IE) standards illustrated in SACSCOC's "Preliminary Data: Top 10 Most Frequently Cited *Principles* in Reaffirmation Reviews: 2013 Reaffirmation Class Institutions (Matveev, July 2015)," particularly the most relevantly applicable CS 3.3.1.3. At many institutions, responsibility for compiling compliance narrative and evidence for these 3.3.1 may well default to centralized institutional research departments, to which libraries may provide only token input, if any.

Dr. Megan Oakleaf, associate professor of library and information science in the iSchool at Syracuse University, in her 2010 comprehensive research report entitled *The Value of Academic Libraries*, has stated, "Academic librarians, in general, do not participate on a broad scale in higher education assessment activities" (98). Relatedly, the Primary Research Group (PRG), Inc.'s 2016 *Survey of Best Practices in Student Assessment* "Level of Involvement of the Academic Library in Assessment" queried various academic departments and offices regarding their level of student assessment effort involvement, i.e.: uninvolved, only modestly involved, involved, and very involved.

PRG's collaterally supportive data indicated that "close to 36% of respondents thought their library involved or very involved in assessment efforts; academic libraries of 4-year colleges were to be the most involved." Also, almost all academic libraries thought to be "very involved" in assessment efforts were in private colleges, of which 27.27% were "very involved vs. only 2.7% of public college libraries, an astounding differential" (2015, 32-33).

Nonetheless, librarians' professional standards reflect that library services and collections should be assessed for effectiveness. The Association of College and Research Libraries Academic Library Outcomes Assessment Task Force Committee's "Task Force on Academic Library Outcomes Assessment Report" asserts that the "purpose of outcomes assessment of academic libraries is to measure their quality and effectiveness...and the contributions they make to accomplishing the purposes of the university or college of which they are a part" (1998, para. 21). To address these issues, this paper will illustrate Sullivan University Libraries' integrative assessment strategies, which may serve as both a peer-to-peer praxis assessment model for other libraries, as well as for those other academic or student support institutional areas whose IE prerogatives also fall within the purview of this standard.

To confirm the validity of the authors' belief that librarians are often not involved in developing narratives for 3.3.1, the authors initially conducted an informal live survey using the site <http://www.polleverywhere.com> as

part of their concurrent session PowerPoint presentation at the 2015 SACSCOC Annual Meeting. The following three questions were asked of the approximately forty attendees:

- "Are you a librarian?" 11 responses, YES – 73 percent, NO-27 percent;
- "Have you contributed compliance NARRATIVE or EVIDENCE to one of the SACSCOC "big 4" library standards, i.e.: CR 2.9 and CS 3.8.1, 3.8.2 or 3.8.3?" NARRATIVE-13 percent, EVIDENCE-0 percent, BOTH-56 percent, NEITHER-31 percent;
- "Have you contributed compliance NARRATIVE or EVIDENCE to SACSCOC comprehensive standard 3.3.1.3?" 17 responses, NARRATIVE-0 percent, EVIDENCE-6 percent, BOTH-47 percent, NEITHER-47 percent.

These data, though the sample size was small, seem to reflect Oakleaf's contention that many librarians are not involved in assessment activities to a significant degree.

The authors developed a formal follow-up survey to further query librarians at institutions in the SACSCOC region. The survey, which is included in the appendix, was distributed anonymously to 793 library directors using SurveyMonkey® with IP recognition disabled. One hundred thirty-two (16.6 percent response rate) library directors responded to the survey. The following table compiles the specific results to the key question:

**As a library administrator for your institution, have you contributed compliance narrative to the SACSCOC institutional-effectiveness (IE) standard 3.3.1.3?**

**Table 1:** Responses to Question 6

| <b>Question: Your professional contribution to this standard consists of:</b> | <b>Percentage / (n)</b> |
|---|-------------------------|
| You wrote the narrative and supplied the evidence.                            | 36.36% / 40             |
| You provided limited input to the lead writer.                                | 26.36% / 29             |
| Someone else wrote the narrative.   | 31.82% / 35             |
| Other (please specify)  | 22.73% / 25             |

Total Respondents: 129 - some skipped this question

The twenty five respondents who chose the “Other (please specify)” in response to Question 6, “Your professional contribution to the standard consists of,” provided additional comments. Many of the comments closely resembled the other three possible responses to the question, so the researchers divided the responses into categories aligned with the other three possible responses to find additional insights into the practices at other institutions.

| <b>You wrote the narrative and supplied the evidence.</b>  | <b>You provided limited input to the lead writer.</b>  | <b>Someone else wrote the narrative.</b>                        |
|--|--|---|
| Wrote the narrative and provided the evidence to the lead writer, that was revised but not extensively   | Previous Dean assisted the Dean of General Education   | No contribution was made to this narrative.                     |
| Librarian wrote the referenced documentation.  | The narrative provided by the library was given to an institutional writer who may or may not use the provided narrative. The writer certainly used the statistics, but the narrative could be changed without the library being told. | The Associate Provost for Academic Affairs wrote the narrative. |
| I wrote the library narrative and supplied the evidence and this section was incorporated in to the whole 3.3.1.3 narrative. The library response was used to illustrate how assessment is used to improve services. |  |   |

Responses that did not align with the available question responses were coded into additional categories.

| <b>Respondent wrote the narrative as part of a team or committee. (Not included as a question option).</b>   | <b>Narrative is incomplete or has not yet received a response. (Not included as a question option).</b> |
|--|---|
| I worked with the committee who collected evidence to shape their response; I was the editor for the narrative, helped create the documentation, and approved it for submission to SACS [I was the editor of the entire SACSCOC Compliance Certification for our campus.]. | Currently in process.   |
| Our staff wrote the narrative and the final product was condensed by the SACS narrative writer.  |   |
| The head librarian and staff wrote the narrative. I further discussed it with the head librarian before including in our report.   |   |
| The library director works with the Assessment Committee   |   |
| Someone else wrote the narrative based on our assessment reports, and then the Library Director reviewed the narrative and provided documentation and edits as needed.   |   |
| other departments assisted by providing information and documentation from their departments   |   |
| I worked closely with the team   |   |
| Our Institutional Research was the lead writer but worked closely with library staff.  |   |
| I was responsible for the final version of the college's self-report. Therefore, I brainstormed with the lead writer and collaborated with the editor and the SACS Steering Committee in reviewing the narrative and evidence.   |   |

Some of the “Other” responses, listed below, formed no particular pattern:

- Information was pulled from 2.9 standard.
- I am the current Director to Library Services (since July 2016). I am working to stay compliant within these standards.
- In regards to the evidence supplied... This College uses SPOL. Documentation for the library from SPOL and from Program Reviews was provided to document the planning, assessment and improvement cycle evidence for the library in 3.3.1.3
- Our Program Review process has built in requirements that make writing/giving input to this standard easier.
- Not certain if I will provide input on this principle.
- Surveys were very helpful. Our databases were a great asset.
- I was not employed by this institution during reaffirmation process.
- See above.

### CS 3.3.1.3 Compliance

To comply with 3.3.1—as noted previously in the *Principles of Accreditation*—an institution’s academic or student support institutional area “identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results” (2012a, 27). At the base level, this assessment algorithm would seem pretty straightforward. Yet, as the following SACSCOC research data in figure 1 will attest, successful application of the CR 3.3.1.3 standard is sometimes difficult to achieve.

**Top 10 Most Frequently Cited Principles in Reaffirmation Reviews: 2015 Reaffirmation Class Institutions (N=81)**

| Review Stage I: OFF-Site Committee  |   |   | Review Stage II: ON-Site Committee  |   |   | Review Stage III: C&R   Board of Trustees   |  |   |  |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|---|--|
| Rank  | Requirement/Standard                    | % Institutions in Non-Compliance                    | Rank  | Requirement/Standard                    | % Institutions in Non-Compliance                    | Rank  | Requirement/Standard                   | % Institutions in Non-Compliance                    |  |
| 1.  | 3.7.1 (Faculty Competence)              | 90%   | 1.  | 3.3.2 (Quality Enhancement Plan)        | 59%   | 1.  | 3.3.1.1 (IE - Educational Programs)    | 16%   |  |
| 2.  | 3.3.1.1 (IE - Educational Programs)     | 60%   | 2.  | 3.3.1.1 (IE - Educational Programs)     | 31%   | 2.  | 3.10.1 (Financial Stability)           | 7%  |  |
| 3.  | 3.3.1.2 (IE - Administrative Units)     | 49%   | 3.  | 3.7.1 (Faculty Competence)              | 25%   | 3.  | 3.3.1.2 (IE - Administrative Units)    | 6%  |  |
| 4.  | 3.7.2 (Faculty Evaluation)              | 48%   | 4.  | 3.3.1.2 (IE - Administrative Units)     | 19%   | 4.  | 3.3.1.3 (IE - Educational Support)     | 6%  |  |
| 5.  | 3.3.1.3 (IE - Educational Support)      | 47%   | 5.  | 3.5.1 (General Education Competencies)  | 15%   | 5.  | 3.5.1 (General Education Competencies) | 5%  |  |
| 6.  | 2.8 (Faculty)                           | 46%   | 6.  | 3.3.1.3 (IE - Educational Support)      | 14%   | 6.  | 3.3.2 (Quality Enhancement Plan)       | 5%  |  |
| 7.  | 3.3.1.5 (IE - Community/Public Service) | 42%   | 7.  | 3.3.1.5 (IE - Community/Public Service) | 10%   | 7.  | 3.7.1 (Faculty Competence)             | 4%  |  |
| 8.  | 2.11.1 (Financial Resources)            | 40%   | 8.  | 3.10.1 (Financial Stability)            | 9%  | 8.  | 3.3.1.4 (IE - Research)                | 4%  |  |
| 9.  | 3.2.9 (Personnel Appointment)           | 38%   | 9.  | 3.10.3 (Control of Finances)            | 6%  | 9.  | 3.10.3 (Control of Finances)           | ≤2%   |  |
| 10.   | 3.2.14 (Intellectual Property Rights)   |   | 10.   | 3.12.1 (Substantive Change)             |   | ≤2%   |  |   |  |
| Key Descriptive Statistics<br>(Number of Principles Cited Per Institution)  |   |   | Key Descriptive Statistics<br>(Number of Principles Cited Per Institution)  |   |   | Key Descriptive Statistics<br>(Number of Principles Cited Per Institution)  |  |   |  |
| Mean=17.5   SD=9.3  |   | Median=15   | Range=37  |   | Mean=2.8   SD=2.6                                   |   | Median=2                               | Range=13  |  |
| Selected General Areas of Non-Compliance<br>(Selected CR, CS, FR)   |   | % of the Total Number of Findings of Non-Compliance | Selected General Areas of Non-Compliance<br>(Selected CR, CS, FR)   |   | % of the Total Number of Findings of Non-Compliance | Selected General Areas of Non-Compliance<br>(Selected CR, CS, FR)   |  | % of the Total Number of Findings of Non-Compliance |  |
| Policy-Related Principles (3.2.2, 3.2.3, 3.2.5, 3.2.6, 3.2.9, 3.2.14, 3.4.3*, 3.4.4*, 3.4.5*, 3.7.4*, 3.7.5*, 3.9.1*, 3.12.1, 3.13.1-5, 4.3, 4.5*, 4.8.2, 4.8.3, 4.9) |   | 23%   | Educational Programs/Curriculum (2.7, 3.4-6, 4.2, 4.4 + 2.12 and 3.3.2)   |   | 35%   | Institutional Effectiveness (2.4, 2.5, 3.1.1, 3.3.1.1-5, 4.1)   |  | 47%   |  |
| Educational Programs/Curriculum (2.7, 3.4-6, 4.2, 4.4)  |   | 21%   | Faculty (2.8, 3.4.11*, 3.5.4*, 3.7)   |   | 15%   | Financial and Physical Resources (2.11, 3.10, 3.11)   |  | 18%   |  |
| Faculty (2.8, 3.4.11*, 3.5.4*, 3.7)   |   | 16%   | Financial and Physical Resources (2.11, 3.10, 3.11)   |   | 9%  | Faculty (2.8, 3.4.11*, 3.5.4*, 3.7)   |  | 12%   |  |
| Institutional Effectiveness (2.4, 2.5, 3.1.1, 3.3.1.1-5, 4.1)   |   | 16%   | Policy-Related Principles (3.2.2, 3.2.3, 3.2.5, 3.2.6, 3.2.9, 3.2.14, 3.4.3*, 3.4.4*, 3.4.5*, 3.7.4*, 3.7.5*, 3.9.1*, 3.12.1, 3.13.1-5, 4.3, 4.5*, 4.8.2, 4.8.3, 4.9) |   | 8%  | Policy-Related Principles (3.2.2, 3.2.3, 3.2.5, 3.2.6, 3.2.9, 3.2.14, 3.4.3*, 3.4.4*, 3.4.5*, 3.7.4*, 3.7.5*, 3.9.1*, 3.12.1, 3.13.1-5, 4.3, 4.5*, 4.8.2, 4.8.3, 4.9) |  | 5%  |  |
| Student Services/Learning Support (2.9, 2.10, 3.4.9*, 3.8, 3.9, 3.13.3*, 4.5)   |   | 12%   | Student Services/Learning Support (2.9, 2.10, 3.4.9*, 3.8, 3.9, 3.13.3*, 4.5)   |   | 3%  | Student Services/Learning Support (2.9, 2.10, 3.4.9*, 3.8, 3.9, 3.13.3*, 4.5)   |  | 2%  |  |
| Financial and Physical Resources (2.11, 3.10, 3.11)   |   | 10%   |   |   |   |   |  |   |  |

March 2016 || For more information, please contact Dr. Ajensi Matveev, Director of Training and Research, at [amatveev@sacscoc.org](mailto:amatveev@sacscoc.org)

### PRELIMINARY DATA

Figure 1 - Top 10 Most Frequently Cited Principles (Source: Matveev, March 2016).

In addition to the fact that complying with 3.3.1 can be difficult for institutions, academic libraries present their own challenges. How can librarians measure whether their initiatives had their intended effects on an ever-changing group of patrons who are working on a variety of different tasks? In the latest edition of his book, *Library Assessment in Higher Education*, J.R. Matthews (2014) concurs when he says,

“determining the outcomes of an academic library within the context of its university environment is challenging [particularly, as] methodological research choices will affect the generalizability of the assessment results” (3). However, once outcomes, i.e.: what determinants to “gauge and evaluate” are established, the *Resource Manual* reminds us that “expected outcomes [need to be] clearly



defined in measurable terms for each unit” (51). Though assessing library effectiveness can be challenging, it is possible to find appropriate outcomes.

Numerous libraries have successfully developed measurable, meaningful outcomes that reflect the mission of their academic institutions. The University Libraries at the University of Washington, for example, identifies two major “learning goals” and follows them with a list of student learning outcomes. Their first learning goal states, “The University Libraries fosters [*sic*] critical inquiry and thinking skills in students.” One of the outcomes associated with this goal states, “Student uses multiple forms of evidence gathered from various sources and evaluates the credibility and accuracy of each source in order to support research goals” (Libraries Teaching & Learning Group Learning Goals Team 2016). This goal is measurable and specific. In another example, Emory University’s Oxford Library identifies, “Understand the economic, social, and legal issues surrounding the use of information; access and use information ethically and legally,” as an educational goal, and states that, “Differentiate between free and fee-based information,” is an associated outcome (Emory University 2016).

### **Sullivan University Methods and Processes**

The Sullivan Library specifically identifies satisfactory services and collections as its two user-centered, mission-driven “expected outcomes” (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools 2012a, 27). To assess these expected outcomes, the Sullivan Library has used the Ruffalo Noel-Levitz<sup>SM</sup> Student Satisfaction Inventory<sup>TM</sup> (or SSI) (n. d.) for fifteen years as an indirect assessment instrument. The Student Satisfaction Inventory, or SSI, assesses students’ satisfaction with the educational process and product. It includes about seventy survey questions related to difference aspects of the university and the respondents’ experiences. It also asks students two double-barreled questions about libraries:

13. “Library staff are helpful and approachable;”

18. “Library resources and services are adequate.”

At Sullivan University, undergraduate students are required to take FYE 101 Information Literacy, which teaches students to “develop skills in critical thinking, study and testing techniques, time and stress management, and library research” (Sullivan University 2015b, 128). During three weeks of the eleven-week quarter, the FYE 101 class focuses on library skills. The instructional librarian for the Louisville campus and his counterpart in Lexington design activities and assignments, lead activities and class discussions, and develop and help administer a pre-test and post-test. The resultant data are analyzed to aid in determining the effectiveness of the library FYE 101 component. These data also allow librarians to determine what areas of library research cause students the most difficulty so that the library can focus education in those areas.

Additionally, for fourteen years, the library has conducted its own faculty and student satisfaction surveys. To the extent possible, the library cross-validates results across both instruments. The student and faculty surveys are the library’s most comprehensive instruments. Using these surveys, the library collects both demographic information and individualized relational responses. In addition, the library also uses the Integrated Postsecondary Data System (or IPEDS) to benchmark library expenditures and holdings against other libraries, thus ensuring that the library has adequate resources to meet its needs.

In order to better align the library’s in-house student and faculty surveys with Ruffalo Noel-Levitz data collection, student and faculty surveys ask respondents not only for their responses to questions, but also for the degree of importance that respondents place on the

aspects of library services about which they are being queried. If scores on a certain metric are consistently high, but respondents rate that metric as unimportant, this provides possible indications that attention and resources would be better directed elsewhere in order to address areas of weakness.

As previously noted, CS 3.3.1 requires that an institution “provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results...” (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools 2012a, 27). Consequently, librarians, in collaboration with deans and department heads throughout the faculty, develop action plans to identify goals and expected outcomes. The plans also provide a means to develop agreed-upon means for achieving those outcomes. By reviewing the previous year’s action plan, the librarians can assess the extent to which the objectives were met. Comparing subsequent action plans allows librarians to see ongoing progress toward meeting goals.

The library has generated numerous improvements in response to survey feedback. When numerous respondents requested a quiet study space, the librarians dedicated one wing of the library to quiet study and developed signage to indicate required behavior in this popular area for study. Also, when students requested popular paperbacks, the library instituted a paperback book swap and created displays in the front of the library to promote the use of those materials.

As another example, since December 2011, the Sullivan University Library has used LibGuides™ to create collections of suggested sources. LibGuides is a popular content development product that allows librarians to create online collections of resources, such as catalog records, embedded videos, links, and other commonly used content without programming or web design knowledge. In response to a survey comment, the instructional librarian analyzed the usage statistics of the more than one hundred LibGuides for specific classes,

and resources and discovered that usage was lower than expected. Upon discovering that the library had devoted resources to LibGuides that were rarely used, he archived many unused guides in order to highlight the useful ones that remained, upgraded to LibGuides 2.0, and created shared resources between guides that made maintenance faster, easier, and more accurate. In order to further highlight this feature, the electronic resources librarian posted a widget on the default web page that showed the ten most popular LibGuides in real time. As a result of these data-driven improvements, total LibGuides usage has grown overall in spite of the fact that there are far fewer guides.

To further facilitate analysis of the collection, the library also developed quantitative and qualitative collection development matrices, which provide a graphical representation of the collection. Under qualitative data—a collection development category which most libraries collect—the subject areas are divided by Dewey range. Within each category, the matrix shows the publication date of the oldest and newest titles, the responsible faculty member, the number of holdings within that Dewey range, and the percentage of the collection as compared to the percentage of students enrolled in the corresponding programs. Qualitative data are predicated upon the use of quality source tags. These include the number of titles purchased as a result of direct faculty recommendations (a quality source tag indicator), and the number of titles purchased based on positive reviews in *Choice*, *Library Journal*, or other common professional journals. These data allow librarians to judge the degree to which the collection supports the library’s mission, specifically the dictate to select appropriate materials.

Adequately addressing student learning achievement concerns—and, especially, library concerns—cannot be obtained without engaging in the process of institutional effectiveness (Djeukeng 2014, 46). So, after the

library completes the CS 3.3.1.3 requirement, viz.: identifies its expected outcomes, implements plans for achieving outcomes, and assesses the extent to which the outcomes are achieved, the library presents its assessment plan and associated Targeted Issues Checklist (TIC) to the Planning, Evaluating, and Coordinating Council (PECC). The PECC mission states:

To ensure quality assurance, the Sullivan University Planning and Evaluation Coordinating Council (PECC) systematically evaluates and assesses institutional effectiveness (IE) processes and their data- and values-driven results as presented by members of the Sullivan University community. Presenting members are primarily responsible for academic programs, academic support functions, and student support functions (2015a, 1).

Similar to other non-academic departments, librarians present their assessment processes to the PECC on an annual basis. This annual presentation is a major reason that Sullivan University Library addresses the oft-forgotten standard 3.3.1.3. During a typical PECC presentation, the department representative, usually the dean or director, reviews departmental outcomes and explains how they have been assessed. The representative explains the plan for improving those outcomes and shares the assessment of the steps to achieve the hoped-for improvement. As a result, the annual PECC meeting constitutes a major demonstration of both the library's and the university's commitment to 3.3.1.

While the Planning, Evaluating, and Coordinating Council provides constructive criticism and helps the university maintain a culture of assessment every day, it is not the only audience for outcomes and assessment results. Deans and directors also regularly report outcomes to the university administration, as well as to the Academic Council and to the Board of Directors. The

results are also archived and ultimately included in SACSCOC reports, which allows the university to compile empirical evidence of an ongoing culture of assessment.

## Conclusion

Libraries' missions are the fountainhead for their defined and quantified expected outcomes. Once outcomes are identified, a library has the information it needs to define appropriate assessment instruments and to provide evidence of improvement, thus creating a workflow that supports solid, research-based practices. By using 3.3.1 standards to measure institutional effectiveness, a university will be able to best support the students to whom the university has entrusted its institutional future, just as those same students have placed their trust in the university to educate them in keeping with its mission and institutional purpose.

The results of the authors' survey show that a minority of library directors (36.36 percent) who responded to the survey actually wrote the response to 3.3.1.3, 26.26 percent "provided limited input to the lead writer," and 31.82 percent responded that "someone else wrote the narrative." Thus, about a third of the respondents did not have even "limited input" into this narrative. The authors thus conclude that for a sizable minority of respondents, library directors do not provide input into the 3.3.1.3 narrative, even though 3.3.1.3 covers academic and student support services, which includes libraries.

Since SACSCOC's own research notes that the 3.3.1 institutional effectiveness standards are among those mentioned in SACSCOC's "Preliminary Data: Top 10 Most Frequently Cited *Principles* in Reaffirmation Reviews: 2013 Reaffirmation Class Institutions," these results may suggest that one way to decrease the chance that this principle would be cited would be to increase library director involvement in the development of 3.3.1 narratives.

Alternatively, given that more than half of respondents reported that they did provide at least some input into the 3.3.1.3 narrative, the results can be interpreted to show the importance for library directors of understanding, considering, and documenting institutional effectiveness efforts in the library. While the standard is not as intuitively library-related as 2.9, 3.8.1, 3.8.2, or 3.8.3, the less-obvious 3.3.1.3 demonstrates that library functions are expected to contribute to overall

institutional effectiveness, and the presence of this standard demonstrates that it is essential to ensure that a library's contribution is not undocumented or otherwise forgotten.

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## Glossary of Terms

*SUS*: Sullivan University System. A five campus for-profit educational system in Louisville, Kentucky, encompassing Sullivan campuses in Louisville and Lexington, Spencerian campuses in Louisville and Lexington, and a Louisville campus for Sullivan College of Technology and Design.

*SACSCOC*: Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. The regional accrediting body that accredits Sullivan University.

*PECC*: Planning, Evaluating, and Coordinating Council. A committee formed of university leaders to provide feedback and guidance on assessment activities for academic and non-academic units on an approximately annual basis.

*The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement*: SACSCOC's official publication of the standards used to determine an institution's fitness for accreditation.

## **Appendix 1: Relevant SACSCOC Principles**

2.9 (Learning Resources and Services): The institution, through ownership or formal arrangements or agreements, provides and supports student and faculty access and user privileges to adequate library collections and services and to other learning/information resources consistent with the degrees offered. Collections, resources, and services are sufficient to support all its educational, research, and public service programs.

3.3.1 (Institutional Effectiveness): The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results in each of the following areas:

3.3.1.1 educational programs, to include student learning outcomes

3.3.1.2 administrative support services

3.3.1.3 academic and student support services

3.3.1.4 research within its mission, if appropriate

3.3.1.5 community/public service within its mission, if appropriate

3.8 (Library and Other Learning Resources)

3.8.1 (Learning/information resources) The institution provides facilities and learning/information resources that are appropriated to support its teaching, research, and service mission.

3.8.2 (Instruction of library use) The institution ensures that users have access to regular and timely instruction in the use of the library and other learning/information resources.

3.8.3 (Qualified staff) The institution provides a sufficient number of qualified staff—with appropriate education or experiences in library and/or other learning/information resources—to accomplish the mission of the institution.



## Appendix 2: Assessment Report Table of Contents



# Sullivan University Library Assessment Report For the 2015-2016 PECC

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December 14, 2015

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### Appendix 3: PECC Targeted Issues Checklist

#### Targeted Issues Checklist for Academic Programs and Support Units

**Name of Program or Unit:** **Insert name of program or unit**

**Review Date:** **Insert date of PECC review**

Mission: To ensure quality assurance, the Sullivan University Planning and Evaluation Coordinating Council (PECC) systematically evaluates and assesses institutional effectiveness processes and their data- and values-driven results as presented by members of the Sullivan University community. Presenting members are primarily responsible for academic programs, academic support functions, student support functions, and administrative support functions. Institutional effectiveness processes focus on:

- (A) alignment with the Sullivan University mission, goals and outcomes;
- (B) consistency with Sullivan University's seven-step continuous improvement circle (CIC), concerning the following:
  1. Through an ongoing, integrated, and institutionwide research-based planning and evaluation process, identify outcomes and goals that coincide with the mission;
  2. Identify appropriate measurement instrument(s);
  3. Through research-based evaluation processes, gather data;
  4. Analyze, evaluate and interpret data;
  5. Make plans for improvement based on analyses of data;
  6. Implement plans for improvement; and,
  7. Evaluate and measure implemented plans to "close the circle."
- (C) achievement or progress toward desired results in accomplishing its mission; and,
- (D) satisfaction of various constituencies with our processes and graduates.

Function: Composed of senior-level university and academic administrators, the PECC evaluates academic and administrative areas with this checklist, which describes all of the activities to be evaluated and helps determine if expected progress or improvement has been demonstrated. The evaluation checklist provides a single document to describe the findings based on PECC reviews of the academic programs, academic support functions, student support functions, and administrative support functions of Sullivan University. Additionally, this checklist is designed to ensure that all planning and evaluation functions are carried out in a timely and effective manner and that academic, academic support, student support, and administrative support areas meet these various requirements ("targeted issues"). This checklist is not a substitute for addressing these issues on a departmental basis but serves as assurance that the academic program or support unit and the PECC have addressed specific issues.

**Part 1. Required of all Academic Programs and Support Units**

**Evaluation of Assessment Plan:** The academic program or support unit has an assessment plan and systematically carries out assessments as proposed in its assessment plan by using an evidence-based approach consistent with the Sullivan University Continuous Improvement Circle (CIC) methodology. In the case of academic programs, the assessment plan includes clearly-defined and measurable student learning outcomes (SLOs) mapped to the content of specific courses.

**Evidence**

Insert statement from the Director of Institutional Research affirming the effective implementation of the program’s assessment plan or commenting on any concerns regarding the assessment plan and its implementation. Also append the assessment report on file with the Director of Institutional Research.

**Alignment of Mission:** The academic program or support unit has a clearly defined mission which is effectively aligned with the mission of Sullivan University.

**Evidence**

Insert academic program or support unit mission and demonstrate alignment with the mission of Sullivan University. If the academic program or support unit mission has not changed since the last appearance before the PECC, begin the narrative with the statement, “No change in mission.”

**Goals or Objectives:** The academic program or support unit has established clearly-defined and measurable goals or objectives that are directed toward the accomplishment of its mission. These goals or objectives are included in its assessment plan. The academic program or support unit is assessing its performance relative to those goals or objectives. For academic programs, these goals or objectives include appropriate program-level student learning outcomes (SLOs). Disaggregate assessment results by campus and division wherever appropriate.

**Evidence**

Insert academic program or support unit goals or objectives and assessment results relevant to those goals or objectives. The following table is offered as a suggested format, but feel free to change this if an alternative format would work better for your program or unit.

| Goal or Objective | How Assessed | Assessment Results |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------------|
|                   |              |                    |
|                   |              |                    |

**Satisfaction of Key Constituencies:** The academic program or support unit has identified key constituencies and is assessing the satisfaction of those key constituencies with its programs, services, or functions. In line with the Sullivan University “I Care” initiative, Sullivan University students will be considered (in almost every case) to be a key constituency. For all programs and units where relevant Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) results are available, this assessment should include an analysis of those results.

**Evidence**

Insert evidence of the satisfaction of key constituencies. The following table is offered as a suggested format, but feel free to change this if an alternative format would work better for your program or unit.

| Key Constituency | How Assessed | Satisfaction Assessment Results |
|------------------|--------------|---------------------------------|
|                  |              |                                 |
|                  |              |                                 |

**Culture of Continuous Improvement:** The academic program or support unit actively and intentionally applies the seven-step Sullivan University Continuous Improvement Circle (CIC) methodology in the review and assessment of its activities and outcomes. This Culture of Continuous Improvement embraces a Culture of Assessment and a Culture of Informed Action whereby activities and outcomes are assessed and evaluated and the resulting empirical evidence leads to data-driven plans for improvement. The Continuous Improvement Circle is simultaneously closed and reinitiated by the subsequent assessment of these new plans for improvement.

**Evidence**

Insert evidence of engagement with the Culture of Continuous Improvement. The table on the next page is offered as a suggested format, but feel free to change this if an alternative format would work better for your program or unit.

**Evidence**

Use this table, or an alternative format, to demonstrate engagement with the Culture of Continuous Improvement.

| Activity or Outcome (or Prior Improvement) | How Assessed | Assessment Results | Plan for Improvement (or Steps Taken to Produce Improvement) | Assessment of Steps Taken to Produce Improvement |
|--|--------------|--------------------|--|--|
|  |              |                    |  |  |

**Notable Initiatives or Accomplishments:** The academic program or support unit has actively and creatively embraced opportunities to demonstrate mission-relevant excellence in settings that expose Sullivan University to a larger external audience or that are significantly above and beyond the previous activities of the program or unit.

**Evidence**

No response is required on this point. If, however, your academic program or service unit has notable initiatives or accomplishments it would like to share with the senior leadership, this is your opportunity.

**Part 2. Required of Academic Programs only**

**Appropriateness of Curriculum:** The academic program maintains a curriculum which is appropriate to the level and purpose of the program and promotes the development of critical thinking, effective verbal and written communication, computer literacy, and team work as well as an appreciation for life-long learning, cultural diversity, and the expression of professionalism in all activities. At the graduate level, the academic program promotes a culture of research.

**Evidence**

Insert evidence of appropriate curriculum. If the curriculum has not changed since the last appearance before the PECC, begin the narrative with the statement, "No change in curriculum."

**Quality of Teaching and Learning Methods:** Faculty of the academic program possess educational, experiential, and distance learning qualifications for the classes they teach and emphasize the process of learning as well as the assimilation of knowledge and skills. Undergraduate faculty understand and use active, collaborative, experiential, and problem-based learning strategies to enhance assimilation of SLOs. Graduate faculty understand and use these learning strategies while also practicing in a scholarly research environment. All faculty engage in appropriate professional development activities.

**Evidence**

Insert evidence of quality of teaching and learning methods. If teaching and learning methods have not changed since the last appearance before the PECC, begin the narrative with the statement, "No change in teaching and learning methods."

**Quality of Technology:** The academic program uses technology (equipment and software) similar to that used in the career for which students are preparing. Technology use enhances student learning and is appropriate for meeting the objectives of the program. Students are afforded access to and training in the use of these technologies.

**Evidence**

Insert evidence of the effective use of appropriate technology. If technology has not changed since the last appearance before the PECC, begin the narrative with the statement, "No change in technology."

**Programmatic Accreditation:** The academic program is accredited by a programmatic accreditation body (if such a body exists).

**Evidence**

Insert name and address of programmatic accreditation body.

## Appendix 4: Fall 2016 Library Standard Survey Instrument

Library Standard survey

*Please indicate your school's degree level:*

- Level I
- Level II
- Level III
- Level IV
- Level V
- Level VI

*As a library administrator for your institution, have you contributed compliance evidence to one of the SACSCOC library-specific standards, i.e.: CR 2.9 and CS 3.8.1, 3.8.2 or 3.8.3?*

- Yes
- No

*As a library administrator for your institution, have you contributed compliance narrative to one of the SACSCOC library-specific standards, i.e.: CR 2.9 and CS 3.8.1, 3.8.2 or 3.8.3?*

- Yes
- No

*As a library administrator for your institution, have you contributed compliance evidence to the SACSCOC institutional-effectiveness (IE) standard 3.3.1.3? Please explain, the nature of your contribution according to the scale below:*

- Significant contribution:** this standard's evidence is largely or entirely determined by library assessment surveys/processes. (I contributed 51-100%.)
- Token contribution:** this standard's evidence is substantially determined by our institution's IE/IR department. (I contributed 26-50%.)
- No contribution:** this standard's evidence is nearly all or completely determined by our institution's IE/IR department. (I contributed 0-25%.)

*As a library administrator for your institution, have you contributed compliance narrative to the SACSCOC institutional-effectiveness (IE) standard 3.3.1.3? Please explain, the nature of your contribution according to the scale below:*

- Significant contribution:** this standard's content is largely or entirely determined by library assessment surveys/processes. (I contributed 51-100%.)

- Token contribution:** this standard's content is substantially determined by our institution's IE/IR department. (I contributed 26-50%.)
- No contribution:** this standard's content is nearly all or completely determined by our institution's IE/IR department. (I contributed 0-25%.)

Do you have any other comments?



Done

#### SACSCOC Library Standard survey

Please indicate your school's degree level:

- Level I
- Level II
- Level III
- Level IV
- Level V
- Level VI

As a library administrator for your institution, have you contributed compliance evidence to one of the SACSCOC library-specific standards, i.e.: CR 2.9 and CS 3.8.1, 3.8.2 or 3.8.3?

- Yes
- No

As a library administrator for your institution, have you contributed compliance narrative to one of the SACSCOC library-specific standards, i.e.: CR 2.9 and CS 3.8.1, 3.8.2 or 3.8.3?

- Yes
- No

As a library administrator for your institution, have you contributed compliance evidence to the SACSCOC institutional-effectiveness (IE) standard 3.3.1.3? Please explain, the nature of your contribution according to the scale below:

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- No contribution:** this standard's content is nearly all or completely determined by our institution's IE/IR department. (I contributed 0-25%.)

*Do you have any other comments?*