3.3.1 The institution identifies expected outcomes for its educational programs and its administrative and educational support services; assesses whether it achieves these outcomes; and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of those results.

___ Compliance ___ Partial Compliance ___ Non-Compliance

Narrative:

The University is engaged in many different kinds of institutional assessments and makes use of their results to improve its performance on an ongoing basis. Information about its assessment-related activities appears in a number of different sections of this compliance report, particularly in the responses to Core Standard 2.5 and Comprehensive Standards 3.4.1, 3.5.1, 3.7.2, and Federal Standard 4.1.

As discussed under Core Standard 2.5, overall institutional performance is measured against performance goals set by the state and by the UH System Board of Regents. While basic enrollment and graduation numbers are not themselves measures of educational outcomes, they are indicators of the University’s success in carrying out its mission of providing “quality academic programs that serve the needs of the multicultural population of Houston and surrounding communities… programs that enable students to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in their chosen fields.” In the Houston area, students have a number of higher education institutions from which to choose. Many factors influence where individuals choose to pursue their education, but chief among them are an institution’s reputation for quality programs that will assist them in achieving their career objectives.

There are several university-wide assessments done for all of the University’s academic units. The Office of Institutional Research prepares an annual Unit Profile Report that provides a four-year summary of key data for each college and department. Unit Profile data were a key factor in the recent decision to eliminate UHD’s major in Applied Physics. This profile data is also a key in decisions about new faculty positions. Institutional Research also distributes grade reports in an electronic format that permits grade distributions to be analyzed in a variety of ways. These grade reports are used in assessments of both instructors and the curriculum. Departments also receive the results of the course evaluations that PS 03.A.26 on Student Course Evaluations requires for all organized sections. They provide valuable student feedback on both the content of the course and the manner in which it was delivered. While this data is generally of greatest value when broken down by course and instructor, the overall results suggest that students find that their UHD course experiences were intellectually challenging, made them more competent in the subject matter, and required them to do their best work.

Because of the emphasis in the University’s mission on providing Houston-area students the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in their chosen professions, many programs rely on outside professional advisory committees to ensure that the curriculum being offered is one that will prepare graduates for success in their careers. Having periodic reviews by outside advisory boards is especially important in rapidly changing areas like Computer Information Systems (CIS). Another way the University evaluates its success in providing students with the knowledge and skills needed for career success is through its internship program. Intern supervisors are surveyed on student performance, and the students themselves are asked to evaluate their own experience. One of the requirements listed in the HUM 4380 (Field Experience) syllabus, for example, is to “consider how (or whether) your previous academic work in the program prepared you for the internship; identify any gaps in your preparation that the program might have fulfilled.”

The University’s urban mission statement also provides the framework for the assessment of its support programs and public service activities. Because of its commitment to providing “educational opportunities for many who might not otherwise be able to pursue a college degree,” the University offers a wide variety of support services and developmental education programs in math, reading, and English composition. The effectiveness of these programs is subject to regular evaluations and the results used to improve their effectiveness. A number of these evaluations are briefly reviewed in the University College FY 2005-2006 Unit Plan. The overall results suggest that students find that their UHD course experiences were intellectually challenging, made them more competent in the subject matter, and required them to do their best work.

The University’s urban mission statement also provides the framework for the assessment of its support programs and public service activities. Because of its commitment to providing “educational opportunities for many who might not otherwise be able to pursue a college degree,” the University offers a wide variety of support services and developmental education programs in math, reading, and English composition. The effectiveness of these programs is subject to regular evaluations and the results used to improve their effectiveness. A number of these evaluations are briefly reviewed in the University College FY 2005-2006 Unit Plan. The annual report and assessment findings included in the Learner’s Community Unit Plan provide a more detailed example of how the particular program is being evaluated. In the area of public service, the UHD Mission Statement gives special emphasis to pre-collegiate programs that support the University's commitment to improving educational access and achievement. These programs are also regularly evaluated and the results used to improve their effectiveness. See, for example, the assessment reports prepared for the Ketelsen Summer Institute, Talent Search and Upward Bound.

The University has institutionalized regular assessments of its educational programs and its administrative and educational support services through the annual unit-planning process. All administrative units with their own budgets are asked to analyze unit-relevant, performance-related data provided by the State, the UHS System, and by the University’s own Office of Institutional Research, along with evaluation data they have generated themselves. According to the unit plan guidelines, each unit must submit an annual report that includes a description of the unit’s mission, major goals, and method for evaluating success in reaching these goals and a summary of the most recent evaluation findings. Academic departments are provided separate forms for reporting the results of their learning-outcomes assessments. Examples of completed unit plans are available online from the University College and from the Department of Natural Sciences and Urban Education. The University’s Academic Assessment Committee was charged with overseeing this assessment reporting process.
For the purposes of this compliance report, all units were asked to prepare brief summary reports on their goals and how they measure the extent to which they are being achieved. Each unit's summary assessment report can be reviewed online by clicking on that unit's name below.

**Academic Affairs**

**College of Business**
- Management, Marketing & Business Administration
- Finance, Accounting & Computer Information Systems

**College of Humanities & Social Sciences**
- Arts & Humanities
- English
- Social Sciences

**College of Public Service**
- Urban Education
- Criminal Justice

**College of Sciences & Technology**
- Computer & Mathematical Sciences
- Natural Sciences
- Engineering Technology

**University College**
- Academic Advising Center
- Ketelsen Academic Institute
- Talent Search/Upward Bound
- Learner's Community

**W. I. Dykes Library**
- Applied Business & Technology
- English Language Institute
- Distance Education
- Office of Institutional Planning & Research

**Administration and Finance**
- Business Affairs
- Information Services
- Budget and Procurement
- Police Department
- Facilities Management
- Office of Sponsored Programs

**Student Affairs and Enrollment Management**
- Office of Admissions
- Scholarships and Financial Aid
- Registrar's Office
- Career Services
- Sports and Fitness
- Student Activities and Events
- Student Health Services
- Testing

**Employment Services and Operations**
- Employment Services and Operations

**President's Office**
- Institutional Advancement

**Explanation of Compliance Finding**

The numerous assessments, performance reports, program evaluations, audits, and external reviews being done by the university on a continuous basis demonstrate that it is a self-examining institution committed to continuous improvement. The University recognizes, however, that it has not always identified the expected learning outcomes of its academic programs very clearly, and has not always documented as effectively as it might its assessment activities and how these activities are being used to improve institutional effectiveness. In its response to Standard 3.4.1, the University acknowledges that “greater effort is needed to more clearly and fully articulate its program learning objectives and to develop more effective means of assessment.” In judging its compliance with Standard 3.5.1, the University concluded that “while assessment of the general education core has been taking place, it has lacked cohesion and has not been comprehensive in nature.” Because of these shortcomings, the university finds itself in only partial
compliance with Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1, but believes that it understands what steps must be taken to bring itself into full compliance.

During the preparation of this report, the University recognized that the established process for reporting and documenting its institutional effectiveness efforts needed modification. For more than 12 years, the University has relied on its unit-planning process as the way it would demonstrate that it had established “expected outcomes for its educational programs and its administrative and educational support services” and that it was assessing whether it was achieving these outcomes, and using the results of these assessments to improve performance. The explicit aim of unit planning was to establish a continuous process of assessment, planning, and action that would incorporate all the elements called for in SACS’ original Institutional Effectiveness Model. As a result of a recommendation made during its last reaffirmation review, the University began to require that academic units complete an “Annual Assessment Report of Student Outcomes in Academic Departments” and submit it to their deans along with their plans. The department assessment report along with the annual report, the unit profile data provided by Institutional Research, and the institution’s performance measures and SWOT analysis, serve as the basis for determining where the department should be focusing its efforts for improvement. The care and attention given to the preparation of these assessment reports, and their use in the actual planning process, have not been uniform, however. The University remains committed to its unit-planning process and is making changes in it that will address the shortcomings discussed above.

Action Plan

As its action plan to bring the University into full compliance with Standards 3.3.1, 3.4.1, and 3.5.1, the University will take the following steps.

- Program Oversight: The dean of each college has now been given the responsibility for ensuring that each of the college’s departments completes an acceptable assessment report. The Provost’s Office will provide oversight to ensure uniformity and efficacy of both the assessment activity and the resulting improvement initiatives. The University Academic Assessment Committee will provide the Provost advice on ways to address assessment needs that cut across unit boundaries.

- Report Format: The current outcomes-assessment form permits departments to report on general assessment activities without identifying what specific outcomes are being assessed and what the exact results of those assessments are. Beginning this year, the reporting form will require that at least one assessment tool be linked to each specified outcome goal and that the results of each assessment be reported along with any departmental actions arising from the assessment findings.

- Posting of Department Assessment Reports: Currently, few outside of the department see the department’s assessment report. In the future, after determining that a department’s assessment report is acceptable, the dean will forward it to the Provost’s Office, where it will be posted on the University’s website for review by the entire campus community.

- Separating Assessment Reporting from the Unit Plan: Unit planning attempted to integrate evaluation and planning by having departments combine in a single package their annual plans and assessment reports with their proposed planning initiatives for the next year. An unintended consequence of this effort was often that much more time was spent on identifying future needs than in carefully evaluating past performance. In its FY 2006 planning cycle, the University will require that a department’s annual plan and its assessment report be prepared separately and submitted to the dean’s office for review and approval prior to the submission of any planning initiatives.

- Another crucial action already underway to bring the University into fuller compliance with 3.3.1 is a more thorough integration of data from various mandated assessment reports that have been completed and submitted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), The Texas Education Association (TEA), The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), and the Technology Accreditation Commission of the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET), all of which have historically required the various units at issue to engage in rigorous, ongoing assessment activities.

The University will be able to document action on all of the above items by the time of the on-campus visit in March.

Supporting Documents:

Unit Profile Reports

- UHD Policy Statement 03.A.26 (Student Course Evaluations)
- Computer Information Systems (CIS)
- HUM 4380 (Field Experience)
- University College FY 2005-2006 Unit Plan
- Learner’s Community Unit Plan
- Ketelsen Summer Institute
- Talent Search and Upward Bound
- Unit Plan Guidelines
- Department of Natural Sciences Unit Plan
- Urban Education Unit Plan
- Academic Assessment Committee
- Annual Assessment Report of Student Outcomes in Academic Departments