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Evaluation of the Administrative Program  
Review Process at USC Aiken  
Conducted in 2006

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Prepared By:

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## **University of South Carolina Aiken**

Dr. Thomas L. Hallman  
*Chancellor*

### **University Mission**

Founded in 1961, the University of South Carolina Aiken (USCA) is a comprehensive liberal arts institution committed to active learning through excellence in teaching, faculty and student scholarship, research, creative activities and service. In this stimulating academic community, USCA challenges students to acquire and develop the skills, knowledge, and values necessary for success in a dynamic global environment.

The university offers degrees in the arts and sciences and in the professional disciplines of business, education, and nursing. All courses of study are grounded in a liberal arts and sciences core curriculum. USCA also encourages interdisciplinary studies and collaborative endeavors.

Emphasizing small classes and individual attention, USCA provides students with opportunities to maximize individual achievement in both academic and co-curricular settings. The institution challenges students to think critically and creatively, to communicate effectively, to learn independently, and to acquire depth of knowledge in chosen fields. The university values honesty, integrity, initiative, hard work, accomplishments, responsible citizenship, respect for diversity, and cross-cultural understanding.

USC Aiken attracts students of varying ages and diverse cultural backgrounds who have demonstrated the potential to succeed in a challenging academic environment. In addition to serving the Savannah River area, USCA actively seeks student enrollment from all parts of South Carolina as well as from other states and countries.

As a senior public institution of the University of South Carolina, USCA combines the advantages of a smaller institution with the resources of a major university system. Located in beautiful, historic Aiken, South Carolina, USCA is an institution of moderate size (2,500-5,000 students) that offers baccalaureate degrees in a number of disciplines, completion baccalaureate degrees at University of South Carolina regional campuses, and master's degrees in selected programs.

The USCA World Wide Web Home Page is: <http://www.usca.edu>.

The USCA Office of Institutional Effectiveness World Wide Web Home Page is: <http://ie.usca.edu>.

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## Executive Summary

This report presents findings from a study of the administrative program review process at USC Aiken conducted in 2005-06 by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. The purpose of this study was to identify strengths and weaknesses in the overall program review process, not to evaluate the quality of individual programs. The scope and purpose of the study were presented to the Monday Group in January 2006. The study evaluated two years of program review reports covering the 2003-04 and 2004-05 fiscal years.

## Major Findings

Major findings include:

- **Broad-based Participation.** There is broad-based participation in the program review process, with 36 reports submitted in 2003-04 (31 programs and 5 Divisions) and 37 reports submitted in 2004-05 (32 programs and 5 Divisions). Reports were typically prepared by Directors and submitted to the Vice Chancellor or Executive Vice Chancellor of their Division.
- **Common Book-Ends.** Report structures shared common book-ends, beginning with a mission statement and ending with needs and budgetary requests. The structure and type of material presented in the body of reports varied more widely than might be expected even given the diversity of unit level missions.
- **Varying Levels of Feedback.** In some Divisions, reports were shared among Directors at group meetings for discussion and feedback was provided verbally by the supervising Vice Chancellor in one-on-one meetings. In other Divisions, formative feedback was provided during the drafting process, typically when Vice Chancellors identified areas of reports for revision. In other Divisions, no feedback was provided at all or the Vice Chancellor prepared the entire report.
- **Well-Developed Mission Statements.** With only a few exceptions, reports presented well-developed and appropriately defined mission statements to guide their activities.

- **Under-Developed Accreditation Compliance Items.** The evaluation revealed several areas where the program review process may fall short of satisfying requirements set for reaccreditation in *The Principles of Accreditation* (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, 2004). While the administrative program review process is not mandated by SACS, if the process were altered somewhat, it would seem a logical vehicle by which the institution could fulfill these requirements. Areas for specific attention and improvement related to SACS guidelines are:
  - Outcomes (SACS 3.3.1)
  - Linkages to the University Mission or Strategic Plan (SACS 2.5, 3.4.2)
  - Research-Based Measurements (SACS 3.3.1)
  - Program Changes Based on Assessment Data (SACS 2.5)
  - Resource Allocation Based on Assessment Data (SACS 2.5)
  
- **Uneven Inclusion of Additional Useful Features.** While the following items are not required by SACS or other regulatory bodies, the broad development of the following features could provide information that would significantly improve management and oversight:
  - Key Measures and Performance Indicators
  - Operational Goals
  - Operational Objectives
  - Consistent Use of Trend Data
  - Broader Use of Comparative Data
  - Identification of Major Strengths and Weaknesses

## Recommendations

Based on the overall findings of this report, USC Aiken appears to implement a program review process that informs resource allocation to some extent and features a pervasive acknowledgement of the importance of assessment. The further development of this process, however, will be needed in order to meet SACS guidelines for reaccreditation as well as to sustain excellence or in some cases improve the effectiveness of various areas. Five recommendations follow from this review, and details for each of them appear at the end of this report:

1. Archive all program review reports.
2. Develop and post online the guidelines for program review.
3. Develop a formal feedback mechanism for improvement.
4. Treat Division-level reports as budgetary documents rather than assessment documents.
5. Provide training to managers and directors.

## Methodology

In Spring 2006, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness at USC Aiken undertook a comprehensive evaluation of the program review process for administrative units, offices, and programs and the University to determine its effectiveness in promoting quality and the extent to which the process will meet new SACS accreditation guidelines. A proposal with a timeline was presented to the Monday Group. *It should be underscored that the purpose of this project was not to identify strong or weak programs but rather to identify strengths and weaknesses in the overall program review process.* This proposal listed the following questions to be answered from the evaluation of the program review process:

- How many program review reports are submitted each year?
- Who reads reports and what kinds of feedback do they give?
- To what extent do reports identify goals and objectives for outcomes?
- To what extent do reports document a research-based assessment process?
- To what extent are assessment results used for improvement?
- To what extent are assessment results tied to the budgetary process?

The proposal also listed the intended outcome of the evaluation project, which is to implement a program review process that:

- Produces useful results about outcomes that are used for
  - Program improvement
  - Resource allocation
- Is valued by all stakeholders
- Is manageable and sustainable
- Demonstrates compliance with SACS Principles of Accreditation 2.5. and 3.3.1

Following a discussion of the need for this project, Monday Group members agreed to forward to the IE Office copies of program review reports for 2003-04 and 2004-05 of units housed in their division. These reports were archived in electronic format on a password protected web site (<https://ie.usca.edu/assessment/AdminAssess/index.asp>). This archive is parallel to the one created for academic programs. Forty-two separate units and divisions were represented in the archive. Thirty-six program review reports (five were Division-level summaries) were archived for 2003-04, and 37 program review reports (five were Division-level summaries) were archived for 2004-05, for a total of 73 program review reports in the evaluation study. In all, 33 units or programs had a program review report for both years. Administrative transition, unit creation, and organizational consolidation accounted for some of the reasons why units did not have reviews for both years. In some cases, reports or summaries at the Division level were not prepared (nor is the preparation of such a document necessarily an expectation). In some cases, program reviews were not obtained for programs that probably should have submitted reports. It is likely that with additional effort two of these could have been found and archived, in several other instances, program review reports appear not to have been prepared. It was not deemed necessary to have 100% of the program review reports to develop an accurate picture of the effectiveness of the program review process.

A rubric of 16 items judged to be important elements of program review reports was developed – some of these items were deemed to be minimal requirements for inclusion in a program review report, while others were judged to be elements that would be optimal for directors and senior leaders to monitor program quality and effectiveness in a meaningful way. These items were divided into three broad categories: (1) Mission, Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes, (2) Assessment, and (3) Closing the Loop: Improvements and Resource Allocation. As a way to anchor the rubric, brief descriptions of each item were listed on the evaluation instrument (see Figure 1). The rating scale allowed reviewers to indicate whether specific elements were “Not Present,” “Developing,” “Developed,” or “Exemplary.” A representation of this rubric is provided in Table 1. In addition, the evaluation instrument allowed for reviewers to indicate noteworthy positive and negative features of individual reports as well as any other relevant comments.

Staff members in the IE Office were trained on the use of the rubric and rater responses were normalized through group review of four program review reports from 2003-04 and 2004-05. Reports were divided by unit roughly into thirds so that three staff members were assigned to evaluate both reports of 11-13 units, or about 20-25 reports. The rubric was placed online using the TLT Flashlight web-based survey package in order to capture data electronically without additional data entry. This evaluation process was especially convenient since the program review reports had already been placed in the online program review archive. In practice, because one member of the office was absent for extended periods of time in early 2006, two reviewers read closer to half of the reports. In all cases, a reviewer read a unit’s 2003-04 submission as well as its 2004-05 submission. The Director of Institutional Effectiveness read all 73 program review reports from both years. In some cases, where elements appears difficult to rate, reviewers would consult and determine joint ratings, at times referring to reports from other programs to make ratings consist. This resulted in some reports being read by three reviewers rather than just two. In most cases where questions arose, reviewers found differentiations between elements that were “Developing” or “Developed”; agreement about items that were “Not Present” or “Exemplary” was remarkably consistent. The structure of this process allowed for each report to be read and reviewed at least twice by a member of the IE Staff.

Results from these reviews were gathered electronically using TLT Flashlight and exported into Excel and SPSS for analysis. In coding responses, values were assigned to ratings as follows: 4=Exemplary, 3=Developed, 2=Developing, 1=Not Present. All ratings from both 2003-04 and 2004-05 program review reports were averaged for each program and programs and scores were developed for each area of every program using the following ranges: 3.50-4.00=Exemplary, 2.51-3.49=Developed, 1.51-2.50=Developing, 1.00-1.50=Not Present. It should be underscored that these ratings are most reliable in describing the program review process as a whole and are less reliable in their descriptions of reports from specific programs. However, even in cases where evaluators disagreed, these differences were always just one level apart and typically these disagreements were in the middle ranges, i.e. one evaluator indicated that the element was “developed” while another indicated that it was “developing.”

Finally, members of the Monday Group who receive program review reports for Directors were interviewed to gather a sense for how the reports are used, how feedback is provided and what resources are devoted for improvement.

**Figure 1. Contents of the Evaluation Rubric**

<p><b><i>Mission, Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes</i></b></p> <p><b>Mission Statement</b> A general statement is provided about what the unit or program does and what role it plays in the university</p> <p><b>Key Measures or Performance Indicators</b> Clear, quantifiable, and summarized data that demonstrate the success -- effectiveness, efficiency, or health -- of the unit or program are listed</p> <p><b>Operational Goals</b> Broad statements of what the unit intends to do on an ongoing basis (not goals for a specific year) are listed</p> <p><b>Operational Objectives</b> Measurable subcategories of each goal (not objectives for a specific year) are listed</p> <p><b>Outcomes (Goals and/or Objectives)</b> What clients (students, faculty, staff, or others) do as a result of the program or unit's activities is listed</p> <p><b>Linkage to University Mission or Strategic Plan</b> Unit or program mission, goals, objectives, or outcomes explicitly mention which section of the University mission or strategic plan they address.</p>
<p><b><i>Assessment</i></b></p> <p><b>Assessment Section</b> A section of the report is devoted to assessment</p> <p><b>Measurements are Research-Based</b> Data are provided to demonstrate success</p> <p><b>Trend Data is Provided</b> Data are provided for more than one year</p> <p><b>Comparative Data is Provided</b> Data from comparable institutions or units is provided</p> <p><b>Measurements are Linked to Operational Goals, Objectives, or Outcomes</b> The data provided are explicitly connected to an operational goal, objective or outcome listed in the report to show how effectively it has been implemented</p> <p><b>Major Strengths and Weaknesses are Identified</b> The report shows which goals, objectives, or outcomes are most successfully and least successfully accomplished</p>
<p><b><i>Closing the Loop: Improvements and Resource Allocation</i></b></p> <p><b>Program Changes or Future Plans are Based on Assessment Data</b> Actions taken by the unit are based on findings from the assessment process</p> <p><b>Strategies or Planned Actions for the Upcoming Year</b> Specific courses of action planned by the unit or program for implementation in the next academic year are listed</p> <p><b>Resource Allocation Aligned with Program Goals, Objectives, Outcomes</b> Budgetary requests are linked to program goals, objectives, or outcomes</p> <p><b>Resource Allocation Based on Assessment Data</b> Data are provided to support requests for budgetary increases</p>

## Findings

Overall, program review reports submitted in 2004-05 and 2005-06 were found not to contain several elements that will be required for SACS accreditation, and inclusion of these and several other items in subsequent program review reports may also improve focus and performance. For only three items – Mission Statement, Strategies for the Upcoming Year, and the presence of an Assessment Section – were 70% or more of the ratings in the developing, developed, or exemplary range. For over half of all units or programs (those ranked #7-16), evaluators indicated the element was “not present” in their reports, and importantly, this set of missing elements includes outcomes, resource allocation, identification of program strengths and weaknesses, and making changes based on assessment data. Table 2 provides a summary of all ratings.

**Table 2. Overall Summary of Ratings of Program Review Elements**

Rank	Item	Program Summary							Ratings Summary		
		N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Not Present	Developing	Developed	Exemplary	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	<i>Mission Statement</i>	42	2.91	0.34	0%	5%	90%	5%	149	2.91	0.45
2	<i>Strategies or Planned Actions for the Upcoming Year</i>	42	2.13	0.60	15%	48%	38%	0%	149	2.13	0.82
3	<i>Assessment Section</i>	42	2.07	0.61	15%	55%	30%	0%	150	2.10	0.74
4	<i>Measurements are Research-Based</i>	42	2.03	0.70	25%	43%	33%	0%	148	2.08	0.85
5	<i>Key Measures or Performance Indicators</i>	42	1.79	0.58	28%	48%	25%	0%	149	1.80	0.75
6	<i>Operational Goals</i>	42	1.76	0.69	32%	49%	17%	2%	149	1.73	0.79
7	<i>Trend Data is Provided</i>	42	1.55	0.69	58%	25%	18%	0%	148	1.58	0.81
8	<i>Linkage to University Mission or Strategic Plan</i>	42	1.51	0.62	50%	38%	13%	0%	147	1.53	0.71
9	<i>Outcomes (Goals and/or Objectives)</i>	42	1.34	0.53	66%	27%	5%	2%	148	1.34	0.68
10	<i>Operational Objectives</i>	42	1.26	0.54	76%	17%	5%	2%	149	1.21	0.56
11	<i>Measurements are Linked to Operational Goals, Objectives, or Outcomes</i>	42	1.23	0.50	80%	15%	5%	0%	150	1.19	0.53
12	<i>Resource Allocation Based on Assessment Data</i>	42	1.17	0.39	83%	15%	3%	0%	145	1.19	0.54
13	<i>Major Strengths and Weaknesses are Identified</i>	42	1.19	0.38	85%	13%	3%	0%	148	1.18	0.48
14	<i>Program Changes or Future Plans are Based on Assessment Data</i>	42	1.16	0.35	83%	15%	3%	0%	150	1.15	0.43
15	<i>Resource Allocation Aligned with Program Goals, Objectives, Outcomes</i>	42	1.14	0.27	88%	13%	0%	0%	148	1.14	0.40
16	<i>Comparative Data is Provided</i>	42	1.12	0.43	88%	7%	2%	2%	148	1.14	0.48

**Program summary scale:** Exemplary=3.5+, Developed = 2.5-3.49, Developing=1.5-2.49, Not Present=Below 1.5. Program summary items represent weighted mean ratings for units of all reviews for both years of program review reports evaluated.

**Ratings summary scale:** 4=Exemplary, 3=Developed, 2=Developing, 1=Not Present; Target Mean = 3.00). The ratings summary represents the unweighted aggregate mean of all ratings.

While in most areas, ratings remained constant or increased only slightly from 2003-04 to 2004-05, ratings indicated modest improvement from 2003-04 to 2004-05 program reviews in only two areas at statistically significant levels. These areas were 1) identification of strategies or planned actions for the upcoming year ( $\eta^2 = 0.148$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and 2) the alignment of resource allocation with program goals, objectives, or outcomes ( $\eta^2 = 0.156$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). In both of these cases, however, it is important to observe that the level of improvement was nominal, with only 43% of ratings in the developed or exemplary range in 2004-05 for the former and 12% for the latter.

**Table 3. Improvement from 2003-04 to 2004-05 in Strategies of Planned Actions**

		Year of Program Review		Total
		2003-04	2004-05	
<b>Strategies or Planned Actions for the Upcoming Year</b>	Not Present	38%	18%	28%
	Developing	22%	39%	31%
	Developed or exemplary	40%	43%	41%

**Table 4. Improvement from 2003-04 to 2004-05 in Resource Allocation Based on Assessment Data**

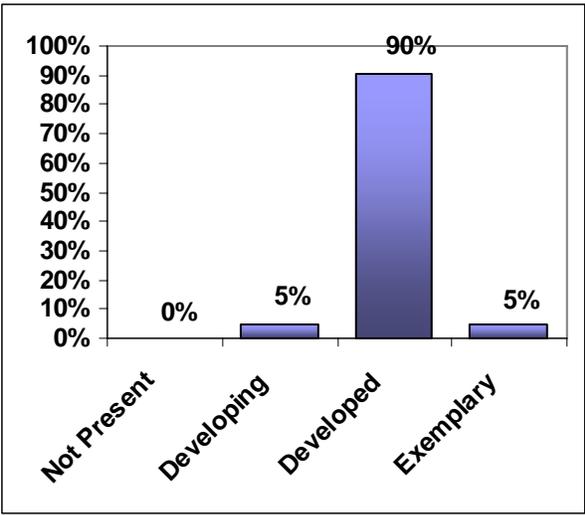
		Year of Program Review		Total
		2003-04	2004-05	
<b>Resource Allocation Based on Assessment Data</b>	Not Present	91%	85%	88%
	Developing	7%	3%	5%
	Developed or exemplary	1%	12%	7%

Given that USC Aiken did not make a concerted effort to adjust program review requirements or processes during this period, it is not surprising that improvements in only two areas were observed, and that these changes over a one-year period were nominal in any case. To the extent that the University takes steps to adjust the program review process, however, these initial evaluations may serve as a baseline from which improvement can be measured.

In the material that follows, findings from the evaluation of each program review element are discussed in some depth. In addition to a chart showing a distribution of ratings, one or two examples are provided which are representative of program review reports in which the particular area was “developed.” Aspects rated as “developing” are also provided to exemplify particular aspects that could be further expanded or solidified. In the instances rated as “developing,” the name of the unit and other identifying material has been redacted in order to preserve the report’s function to identify weaknesses in the program review process rather than weaknesses in specific reports.

## Mission Statement

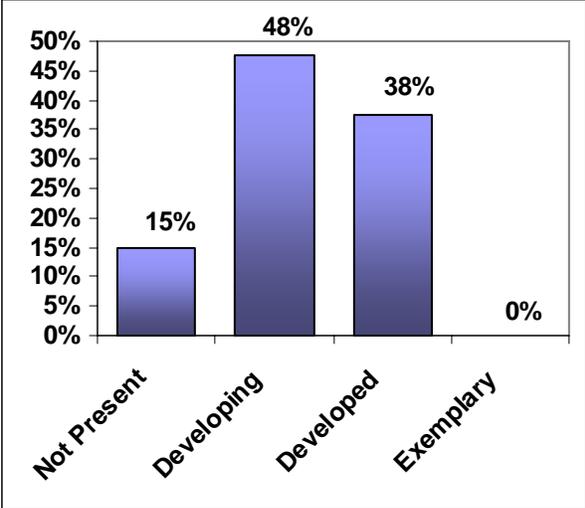
The mission statement was far and away the most developed aspect of the administrative program reviews that were evaluated in this study. A total of 90% of mission statements were rated as “developed” or “exemplary,” with another 7% identified as “developing.” These statements did a good job of describing what the unit or program does and what role it plays in the university. The best statements offered an overview of the major functions of the area and how these functions fit into the university mission as a whole.

Evaluation Results	“Developed” Example:										
<p><i>Exemplary=3.5+, Developed = 2.5-3.49, Developing=1.5-2.49, Not Present=Below 1.5</i></p>  <table border="1"> <caption>Evaluation Results Data</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Not Present</td> <td>0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Developing</td> <td>5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Developed</td> <td>90%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Exemplary</td> <td>5%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Category	Percentage	Not Present	0%	Developing	5%	Developed	90%	Exemplary	5%	<p><b>“Developed” Example:</b></p> <p><b>Office of Student Activities</b>  <i>The primary mission of the Office of Student Activities is to identify and effectively address the social, educational, and recreational needs of students at various stages of their personal development through leadership and citizenship training programs, quality entertainment, community volunteerism, educational programming, and intramural and recreational activities for a diverse student body with a broad set of interests.</i></p> <p><b>University Advancement Division</b>  <i>Our mission is to communicate the University of South Carolina Aiken’s values to our internal and external constituencies. We strive to connect our constituency with the future of the university by building strategic relationships through alumni relations, conferences and continuing education offerings, fundraising and stewardship programs, and special events.</i></p>
Category	Percentage										
Not Present	0%										
Developing	5%										
Developed	90%										
Exemplary	5%										
<p><b>“Developing” Example:</b></p> <p><b>Program 1</b>  <i>The [Name of Unit] supports the mission of USCA by providing the most efficient level of quality, personalized service to all constituents. The [Unit’s Division] is committed to continuous quality, personalized service to all constituents. We are committed to continuous improvement while working within the appropriate federal, state and University system regulations.</i></p>											

The examples above with “developed” mission statements identify in two sentences the primary services or programs offered by the unit as well as some relationship to students and/or the university’s mission. Readers can discern these primary functions and purpose of the unit from this broad overview presented in the mission. By contrast, the removal of the name of the example of the program or unit from the mission statement rated as “developing,” poignantly highlights that the basic functions of the unit are not well-defined, and it is impossible to discern the unit’s identity from the text of the mission itself. The gestures toward quality, customer service, and continuous improvement are important organizational values, but they do not help to define who or what the office or program does.

## Strategies or Planned Actions for the Upcoming Year

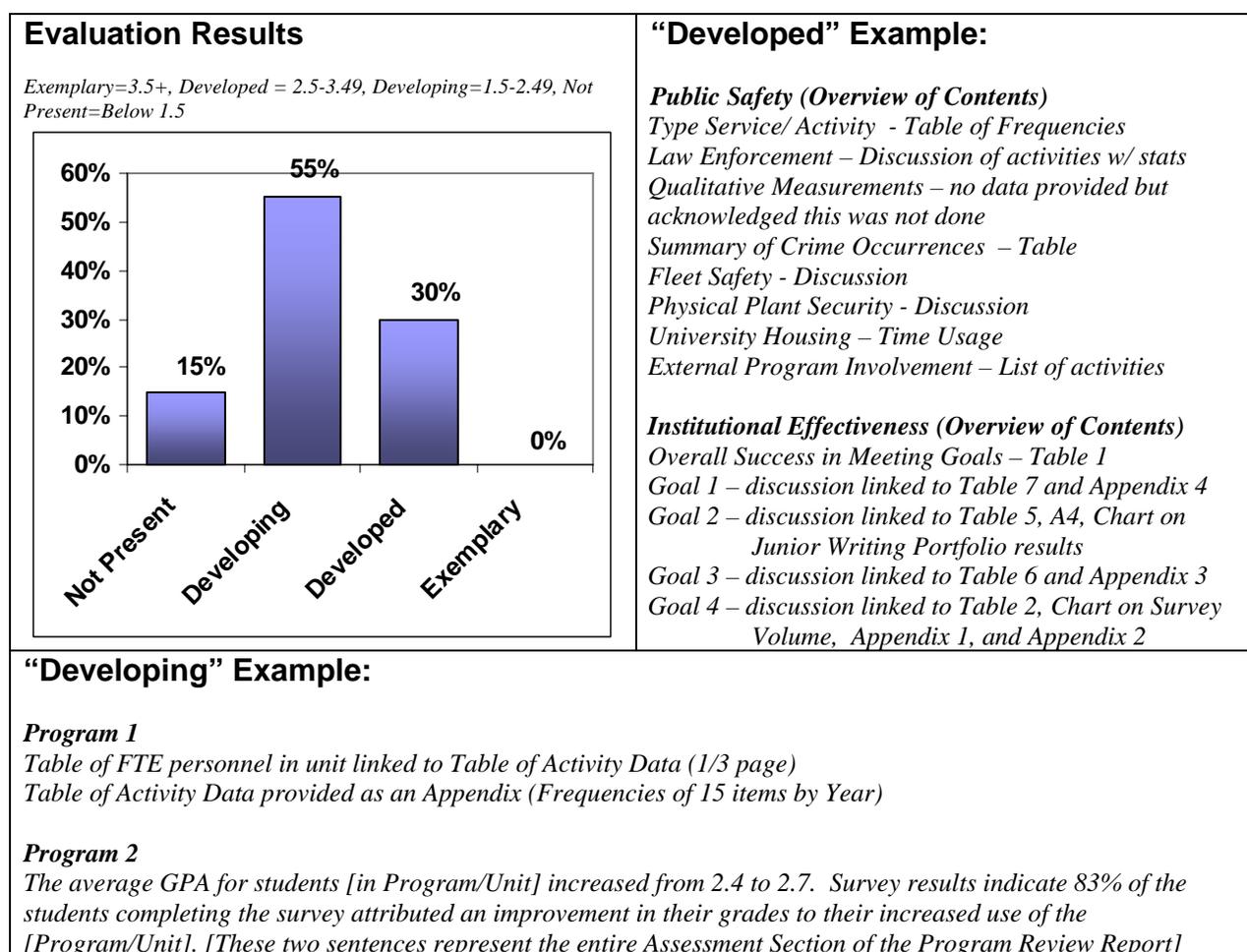
Strategies or planned actions for the upcoming year were rated as “developed” in 38% of the program review reports that were evaluated, “developing” in 48%, and not present in 15%. This category includes future plans, such as specific projects or actions that the unit has planned but is distinct from unit goals, objectives, or outcomes (all discussed below) which should reflect ongoing activities that derive from the unit’s mission.

Evaluation Results	“Developed” Example:										
<p><i>Exemplary=3.5+, Developed = 2.5-3.49, Developing=1.5-2.49, Not Present=Below 1.5</i></p>  <table border="1"> <caption>Evaluation Results Data</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Not Present</td> <td>15%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Developing</td> <td>48%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Developed</td> <td>38%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Exemplary</td> <td>0%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Category	Percentage	Not Present	15%	Developing	48%	Developed	38%	Exemplary	0%	<p><b>“Developed” Example:</b></p> <p><b>Academic Support &amp; the First Year Experience</b>  <i>For 2005-06, the Academic Support Services and the First-Year Experience Office plans to accomplish the following objectives:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Obtain CRLA Level 1 Certification and make that available to tutors during training in Summer 2006.</li> <li>2. Pilot Supplemental Instruction in two courses such as: ABIO 101 and ACHM 101 with the Biology and Chemistry Professional Tutors serving as SI Leaders.</li> <li>3. Identify a comprehensive plan for Learning Communities (to be piloted in Fall 2006).</li> <li>4. Pilot a program for students provisionally admitted to the university (Summer 2006).</li> <li>5. Create remote Academic Success or Academic Excellence Centers in Pacer Downs and Pacer Commons, and identify additional areas for future centers.</li> <li>6. Continue to develop a network of Professional Tutors by hiring tutors for Reading and Political Science.</li> <li>7. Develop a reading resource area within the Writing Room.</li> <li>8. Continue to grow and develop AFYS 101 by adding additional sections of the course and piloting a Peer Leader program (Fall 2006).</li> </ol>
Category	Percentage										
Not Present	15%										
Developing	48%										
Developed	38%										
Exemplary	0%										
<p><b>“Developing” Examples:</b></p>											
<p><b>Program 1</b>  <i>The major goal for this department for 2004-05 is to train necessary administrators in accessing relevant sections of the [internet resource]. Training will also need to be provided to [group of employees] if the [name of item] module is completed during the year. Another goal is to add a web page for the office.</i></p> <p><b>Program 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to work with the One Carolina project to assure that USC Aiken concerns and issues about [Program Area] are incorporated into a system implementation.</li> <li>• Maintain the effort to implement a campus [attitude toward are] and training program through collaboration with [other areas in Division]</li> <li>• Enhance the safety of the [Program/unit]</li> </ul>											

In the “developed” example above, the planned actions for the Office of Academic Support and First Year Experience separately list discrete objectives or activities along with some idea of how the plans will be carried out. The “developing” examples articulate planned actions, although each of these could be developed with additional specificity, such as an indication of method and depth of activity, purpose, and/or time frame. Additionally, the second year reports for most areas often did not address the extent to which these specific plans were executed.

## Assessment Section

The evaluation study indicated that 85% of program review reports had an assessment section of some sort, but this section was rated in the “developed” range in just less than a third (30%) of all reports, while about a sixth (15%) of report ratings for the assessment section were in the “not present” range. It is important to observe that the evaluation rubric for this particular item was perhaps the least well-defined, asking evaluators to judge the extent to which “a section of the report is devoted to assessment.” Thus, this overall evaluation may be more representative of the extent to which an assessment section of any sort was present in the report more so than the quality of these sections. Nevertheless, the common inclusion of an assessment section in most reports indicates a broad recognition that assessment carries importance, even if the execution or communication of these evaluation practices could be improved upon.



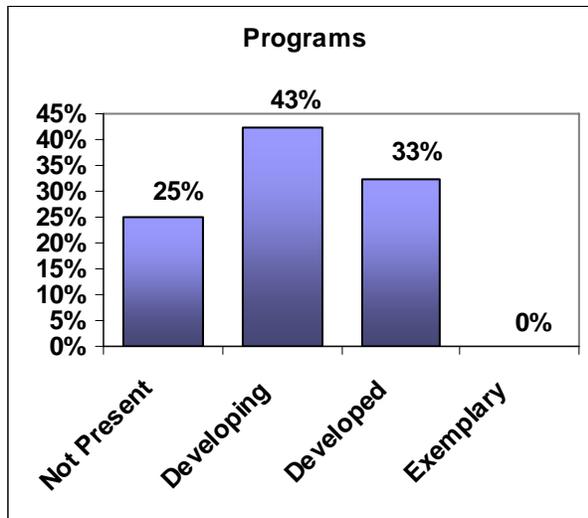
The quality and depth of assessment sections varied widely. While the better examples noted above were typically 3-5 pages long and organized by program goal or outcome with tables and/or charts, the weaker assessment sections were ½ page or less, and data provided often was not connected to goals, objectives, or outcomes. The findings from the evaluation study would tend to reflect the comments of one Vice Chancellor who stated in an interview that report preparers tend to “talk around assessment rather than use it.”

## Research-Based Measurements

In the area of research-based measurements, only about a third of programs presented their findings in a way that demonstrated that research had been conducted in the assessment of the program. In general, reports that provided convincing quantified assessment results or summarized qualitative feedback were considered to have “developed” research-based measurements; this was true in a third (38%) of reports. Under half (43%) of the reports provided some data, but efforts to provide research-based were still developing. In a full quarter of the reports, research-based measurements were not provided at all, and were considered “not present.”

### Evaluation Results

*Exemplary=3.5+, Developed = 2.5-3.49, Developing=1.5-2.49, Not Present=Below 1.5*



### “Developed” Example:

#### Operations (Fleet Management)

*Management of fleet vehicles at USC Aiken has become an increasingly complex task as vehicles spend more time on the road, leaving little downtime for upkeep. Last year our sedans averaged \_\_\_ miles each, and the vans and busses averaged \_\_\_ miles each. Due to increasing fuel costs, the reimbursement rate for vehicle usage by departments increased from 23.5 cents per mile to 28 cents per mile for sedans and 32 cents per mile for the vans and bus. Other fleet developments included an update to the vehicle use policy, and purchase of a new sedan. A new mini-bus has been ordered and is expected to arrive in November. The matrix below provides a general overview of vehicle use and current mileage. [Table of vehicles, use type, and mileage]*

#### Health Center (Number of Fall Visits by Day/Time)

SHC Times	M	T	W	Th	F
# of Days	18	17	16	15	15
12 p.m. – 1 p.m.	44	41	33	26	26
1 p.m. – 2 p.m.	25	21	29	15	16
2 p.m. – 3 p.m.	20	14	19	9	15
3 p.m. – 4 p.m.	14	11	10	13	12
<b>Totals</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>69</b>

### “Developing” Example:

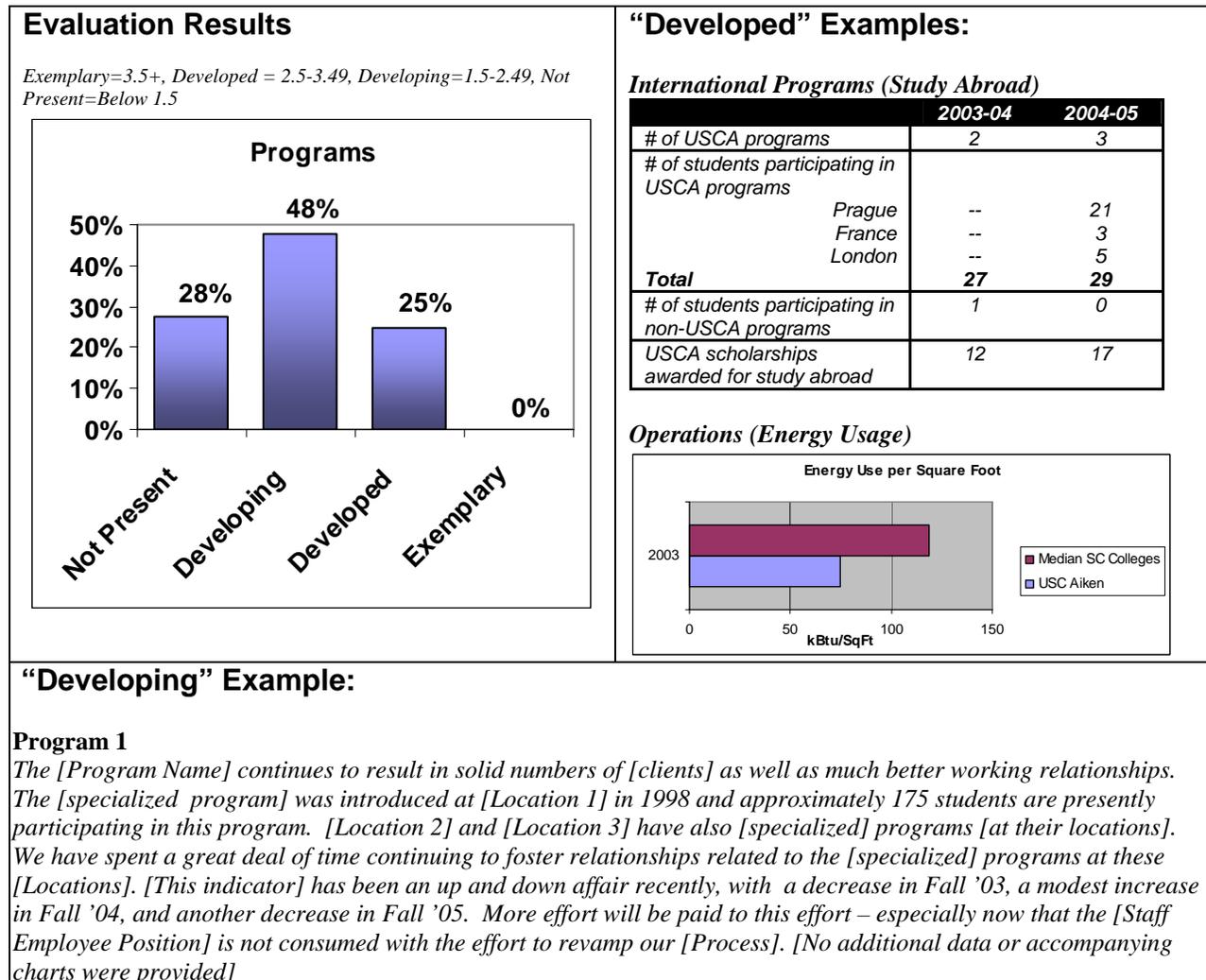
*The [name of survey] was taken by 499 students, the largest number of students to ever complete the survey. It was offered on-line for the first time and prizes were awarded through a drawing for those who provided their names for the drawing. The survey provided up-to-date information on [student behavior in area].*

*[No data or results provided; no appendix for survey findings]*

In the better examples, data were provided in table or chart form. While there is still room for improvement for these measures, such as by providing the actual average miles or by averaging visits per day, the presentation of the data clearly demonstrates the data were collected and to some extent, what they mean. By contrast, in the weaker example, the report importantly notes that research was conducted by means of a survey but offers no picture of the overall findings or what was found that was important.

## Key Measures or Performance Indicators

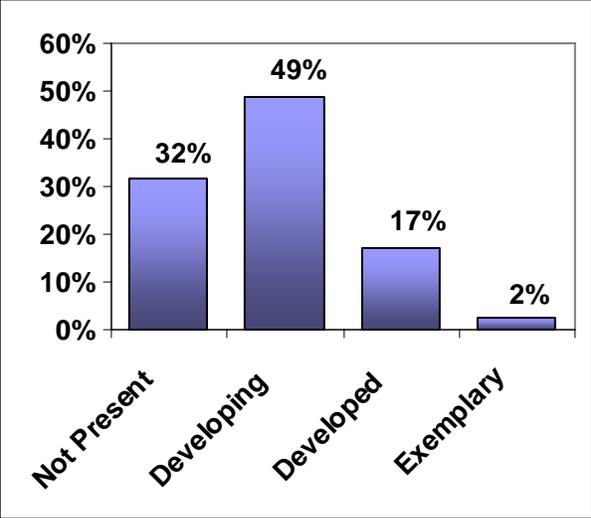
Key measures or performance indicators were defined for evaluators as “clear, quantifiable, and summarized data that demonstrate the success -- effectiveness, efficiency, or health -- of the unit or program are listed.” Essentially, this feature serves to indicate the success of the program or unit at a glance. For about a quarter of programs these key indicators were deemed to be reasonably “developed,” and they were judged to be “developing” for almost another half (48%) of programs, but the remaining quarter (28%) did not provide key measures or performance indicators. Further, this item was weak even in the most advanced program review reports, with the maximum rating awarded at 2.8 out of 4.0.



Reports in which key measures were found to be just developing or not present shared several characteristics: 1) data were buried in prose or not specifically provided, 2) data collected were not linked to important unit goals or objectives, and/or 3) trend data were not provided (see 17 below). Most importantly, a reader could not glance at the example in which key measures or performance results were rated as the “developing” or “not present” and easily discern important performance trends.

## Operational Goals

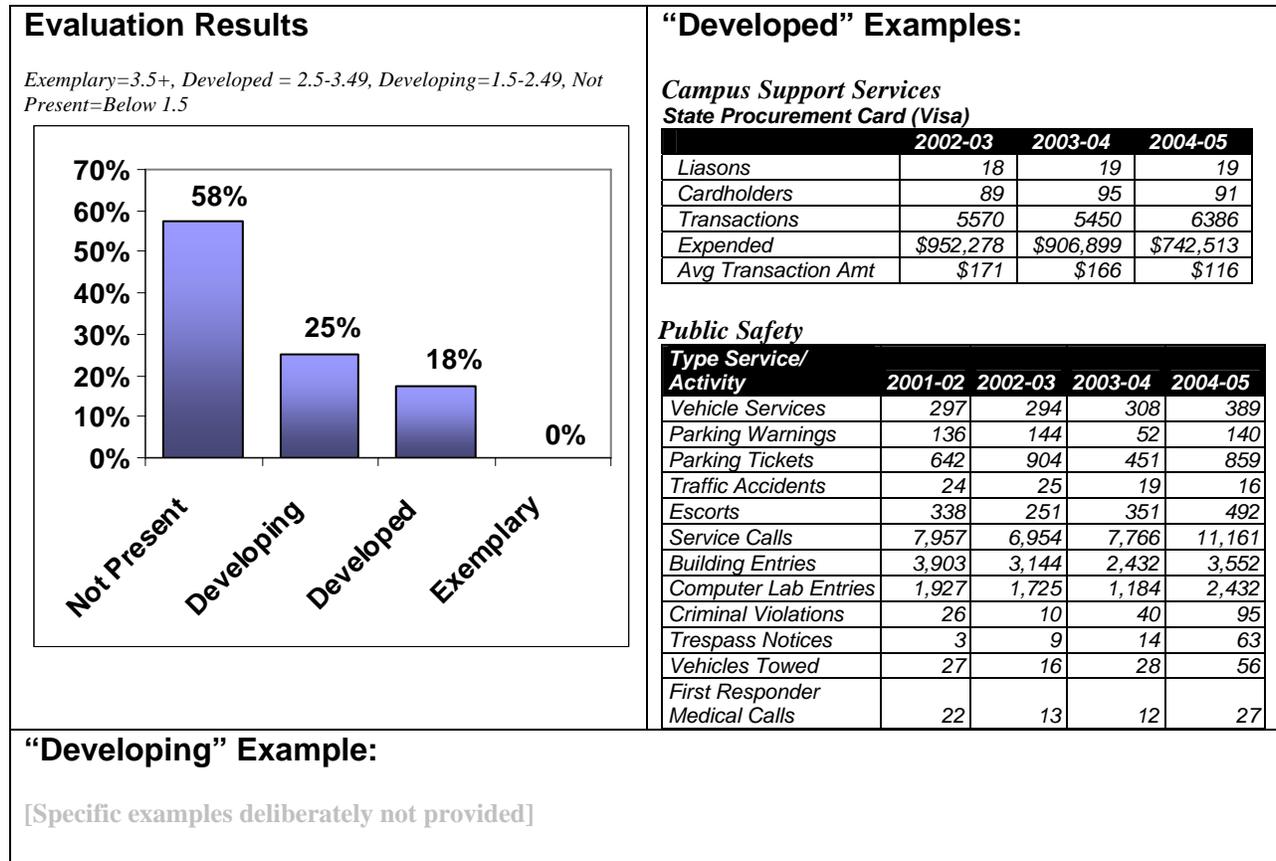
The evaluation rubric defined operational goals as “broad statements of what the unit intends to do on an ongoing basis (not goals for a specific year),” and while about half (49%) of programs were developing these in some way, only about one out of five (19%) were rated as “developed” or “exemplary” in this area, while these operational goals were considered “not present” in about a third (32%) of the reports reviewed.

Evaluation Results	“Developed” Example:										
<p><i>Exemplary=3.5+, Developed = 2.5-3.49, Developing=1.5-2.49, Not Present=Below 1.5</i></p>  <table border="1"> <caption>Evaluation Results Data</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Not Present</td> <td>32%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Developing</td> <td>49%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Developed</td> <td>17%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Exemplary</td> <td>2%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Category	Percentage	Not Present	32%	Developing	49%	Developed	17%	Exemplary	2%	<p><b>Ruth Patrick Science Education Center Goals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. <i>Goal for K-12 Student Programs: Students will experience the richness and excitement of knowing about and understanding the natural world.</i></li> <li>B. <i>Goal for Community Outreach Programs: The CSRA community will actively support initiatives of the RPSEC through volunteerism and sponsorship.</i></li> <li>C. <i>Goal for Teacher Programs: In-service and pre-service teachers will deliver rigorous, standards-based content that challenges students to achieve at high levels in science and mathematics.</i></li> <li>D. <i>Goal for the RPSEC Staff: Fully fund the staff positions needed to carry out the RPSEC mission.</i></li> </ul>
Category	Percentage										
Not Present	32%										
Developing	49%										
Developed	17%										
Exemplary	2%										
<p><b>“Developing” Example:</b></p> <p><b>Program 1</b></p> <p><i>One of our goals is to strengthen the entire [program name] at USC Aiken. We plan to do that by making ourselves available to more professional development opportunities so that we can bring this information back to all of our [constituents]... we have been very vocal regarding the integral role [our staff] play in the development and retention of our students. .... We also plan to present a [program area] training session facilitated by one or two of the most respected [area] “gurus” associated with the [name of the professional association]. We also continue to offer training/information sessions on a variety of topics and explore/investigate the best way to get this information to our [constituents].</i></p>											

The example of developed operational goals valuably divides the general mission of the unit into 3-5 areas and provides verb-driven actions that capture the primary activity associated with the goals. Further, these goals are valuably formulated as outcomes (see p. 19 below), stating what clients will do rather than what the program or program staff intend to do to promote these outcomes. The operational goals presented “developing” represent action items planned for the upcoming year but not an ongoing and sizeable portion of the unit’s purpose. Further, the goal to strengthen the entire program is vague and presumably continuous improvement is an expected result for all units. More typically, developing operation goals were buried in reports, not verb-driven, or not consonantly derived from the unit mission statement.

## Trend Data

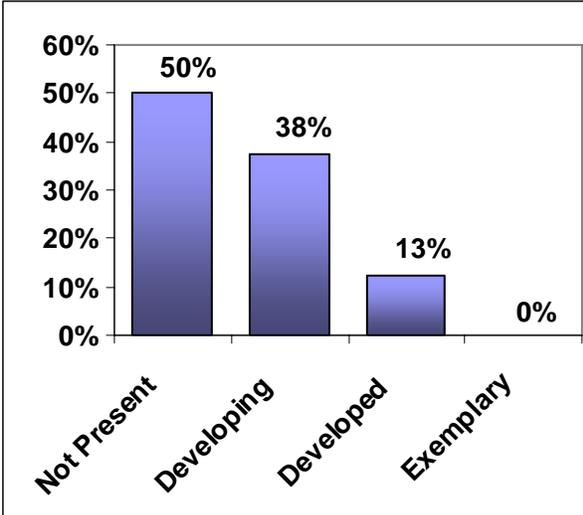
Trend data was identified as a “developed” characteristic of fewer than one out of five (18%) of program review reports, while it was rated as “developing” in another quarter (25%) of them. In many of these cases, however, only two years of data were provided – hardly a trend, but the gesture represents a key recognition on the part of this handful of programs that consistent year-to-year comparisons of performance are important. A clear majority (58%) of report, however, provided no trend data at all, instead offering only an annual snapshot of quantifiable unit activities.



Reports that provided trend data at most offered four years of data, and two or three years was more common. These reports were typically more effective in conveying change over time than reports that simply made claims about change without providing data or by providing data only in prose. Most frequently, however, reports provided only annual snapshots of their performance data and also made readers actively look for these tables or charts. A reader who wished to examine annual change in unit performance would have to assemble multiple years of program review documents for the unit of interest and cull through the reports to assemble trend data, assuming indicators or data collected did not change from year to year. For instance, it is relatively easy to see that the amount of expenditures using credit cards declined between 2002-03 and 2004-05 or that public safety service calls spiked in 2004-05.

## Linkages to University Strategic Plan or Mission

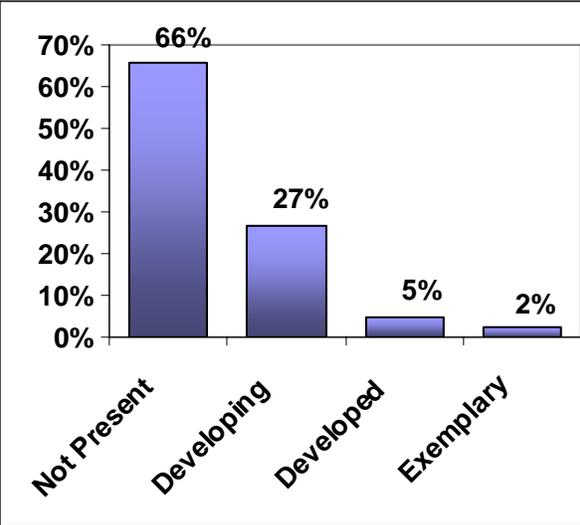
Only a few reports provided specific links between their program review reports and the University's strategic plan or mission, even though explicit articulation of unit- or program-level outcomes is now a requirement for reaccreditation through SACS (3.3.1). Only 13% of programs had linkages to the strategic plan that were considered "developed, while 38% of reports were considered "developing: in this area. In half (50%) of the reports, linkages to the strategic plan or the university mission statement were considered "not present."

Evaluation Results	"Developed" Examples:										
<p><i>Exemplary=3.5+, Developed = 2.5-3.49, Developing=1.5-2.49, Not Present=Below 1.5</i></p>  <table border="1"> <caption>Evaluation Results Data</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Not Present</td> <td>50%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Developing</td> <td>38%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Developed</td> <td>13%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Exemplary</td> <td>0%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Category	Percentage	Not Present	50%	Developing	38%	Developed	13%	Exemplary	0%	<p><b>Marketing &amp; Community Relations</b></p> <p><b>Publications</b> - During the 2004-2005 year, the office added several new publications including a multicultural campus life brochure, an honors program brochure, and the alumni newsletter, which directly correlates with strategy 6.g.6.b. of the strategic plan.</p> <p><b>Marketing</b> - The office also develops an annual university-wide marketing plan. This plan is based on the strategic plan and is an encompassing plan for the entire university. Included is a marketing plan for the Continuing Education program, including the design and distribution of a bi-annual comprehensive catalog. This effort relates directly back to objective 5.e. of the strategic plan.</p> <p><i>[This is not an exhaustive list from the report]</i></p>
Category	Percentage										
Not Present	50%										
Developing	38%										
Developed	13%										
Exemplary	0%										
<p><b>"Developing" Examples:</b></p> <p><b>Program 1</b>  <i>The overarching charge of the [Unit Name] at USCA is to provide internal and external constituencies with an accurate and complete understanding of how the institution is advancing its mission to "challenge students to acquire and develop the skills, knowledge and values necessary for success in a dynamic global environment." [No other mention or connection to mission statement]</i></p> <p><b>Program 2</b>  <i>Our efforts remain directed by Strategic Plan objectives. Specifically</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>3i 6 Enhance customer service skills</i></li> <li><i>7f Foster cooperation, civility and collegiality to enhance the sense of community among faculty and staff</i></li> <li><i>9a Improve communications</i></li> <li><i>9j Engage in a security plan to protect [type of] resources</i></li> </ul> <p><i>[No metrics nor discussion of performance in these areas was provided in the report]</i></p>											

In the best cases, such as in the example above, the reports specifically mentioned a goal and strategy listed in the 2003 Strategic Planning document but did not reference material in the annual updates of the Strategic Plan. Connections to the university mission statement were somewhat less concrete, with occasional mentions that the unit supports the university mission, but it was often unclear from the report how this support was provided or accomplished. It should be observed that "linkage" can be a particularly ephemeral quality to measure, although a matrix of goals, objectives, and/or outcomes could have been provided to show connections.

## Outcomes

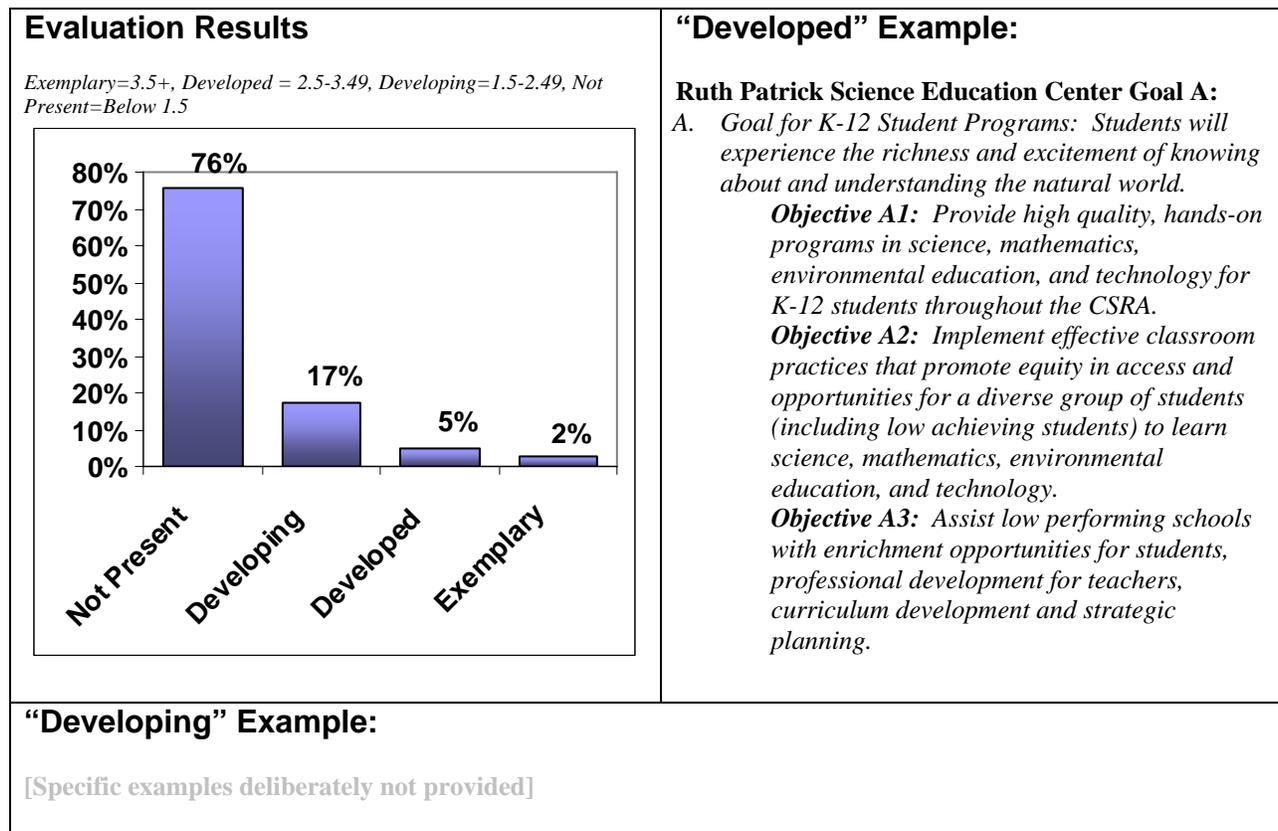
Outcomes represent what clients, such as students, faculty, staff, or others (but not unit staff) do as a result of the unit’s efforts, programs, or activities. Explicit statement of unit- or program-level outcomes is now a requirement for re-accreditation through SACS (3.3.1). Fully two-thirds of reports did not present outcomes of their unit or program activities. In just over a quarter (27%), outcomes were considered developing, and in just 7% were outcomes considered developed or exemplary.

Evaluation Results	“Developed/Exemplary” Examples:										
<p><i>Exemplary=3.5+, Developed = 2.5-3.49, Developing=1.5-2.49, Not Present=Below 1.5</i></p>  <table border="1"> <caption>Evaluation Results Data</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Not Present</td> <td>66%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Developing</td> <td>27%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Developed</td> <td>5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Exemplary</td> <td>2%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Category	Percentage	Not Present	66%	Developing	27%	Developed	5%	Exemplary	2%	<p><b>“Developed/Exemplary” Examples:</b></p> <p><b>Ruth Patrick Science Education Center Goals</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Goal for K-12 Student Programs: Students will experience the richness and excitement of knowing about and understanding the natural world.</i></li> <li><i>Goal for Community Outreach Programs: The CSRA community will actively support initiatives of the RPSEC through volunteerism and sponsorship.</i></li> <li><i>Goal for Teacher Programs: In-service and pre-service teachers will deliver rigorous, standards-based content that challenges students to achieve at high levels in science and mathematics.</i></li> <li><i>Goal for the RPSEC Staff: Fully fund the staff positions needed to carry out the RPSEC mission.</i></li> </ol> <p><b>International Programs</b></p> <p><b>Goal 1.</b> <i>Students will have access to information about study abroad opportunities. USCA faculty will have guidance, coordination and administrative support for faculty-led study abroad programs.</i></p> <p><b>Goal 2.</b> <i>International students at USCA will have thorough knowledge of federal regulations governing international students; students will be able to achieve their educational goals and feel connected to the institution and the community.</i></p> <p><b>Goal 3.</b> <i>Students will strive to understand the impact of globalization and diversity on society. Students will seek involvement with people from other countries and cultures. Students will gain better knowledge and appreciation for diverse cultures through international and multicultural programs.</i></p>
Category	Percentage										
Not Present	66%										
Developing	27%										
Developed	5%										
Exemplary	2%										
<p><b>“Developing” Example:</b></p> <p><b>Program 1 – [One example selected]</b>  <i>To encourage and facilitate a greater connection between [program clients], their mentors and the campus community. Initiate earlier first contacts with [program clients], increase program presence and increase retention of [program clients].</i></p> <p><b>Program 2 [Goals]</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>External Reporting. Complete on time all required reporting to federal and state agencies as well as national publications and organizations with accurate data.</i></li> <li><i>Internal Reporting. Identify, generate, and communicate regular reports to campus units and constituencies.</i></li> <li><i>Assessment. Coordinate, communicate, and strengthen assessment processes and practices to focus on outcomes assessment as a means for improvement.</i></li> <li><i>Identify, develop, and conduct ongoing research projects to advance collective knowledge about USCA, student performance, and institutional effectiveness to support campus initiatives.</i></li> </ol>											

In the developed examples, outcomes significantly begin with phrases like “students will” or “teachers will.” The developing examples identify program actions or strategies but do not mention the outcomes. In cases, where program strategies are identified with some specificity, the transformation to outcomes requires only a grammatical shift, e.g. “strengthen assessment processes and practices to focus on outcomes assessment” → “campus units will use assessment practices and process that focus on outcomes.” Measures of success thus become not activity (what the unit staff do) but results (what the students, constituents, or clients do).

## Operational Objectives

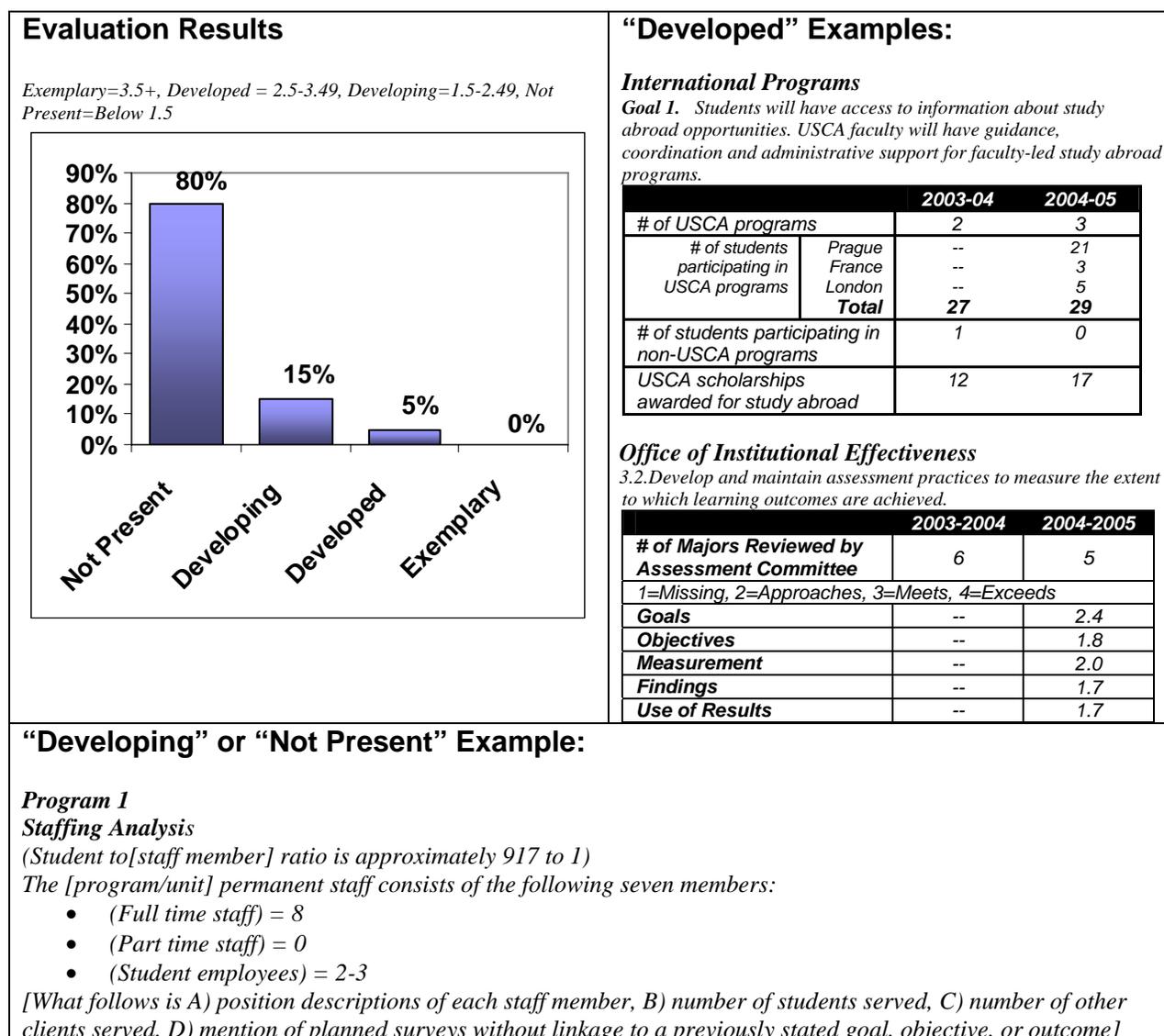
For the purposes of this study, operational objectives were considered to be measurable subcategories of each ongoing unit or program goal, not specific activities or objectives for a specific year. Only 7% of reports were rated as “developed” or “exemplary” in this area, and these reports were also rated highly in the area of operational goals, since the articulation of goals was a prerequisite for objectives to represent subcategories of each goal. Another fifth (17%) of the reports were rated as “developing” in the area of operational objectives, and the operational objectives of the remaining three quarters (76%) of the reports were considered “not present.”



Reports that most effectively conveyed operational objectives broke operational goals down into component parts, such as in the example for the Ruth Patrick Center above. In this case, the goal for the desired student experience is accomplished through an ongoing provision of programs, the implementation of effective classroom practices, and assistance to low performing schools. Most importantly, these areas are articulated in a more specific manner than is the overarching goal, the program deems these specific objectives to be measurable in some way. While it was not possible to provide “developing” examples of operational objectives without identifying the program which had adopted them, often these objectives exhibited shortcomings such as 1) being too focused on a specific, not ongoing action, e.g. offer this workshop in 2004-05, 2) not being linked to overarching goals, 3) not being verb-driven, or 4) not being measurable.

## Measurements Linked to Goals, Objectives, or Outcomes

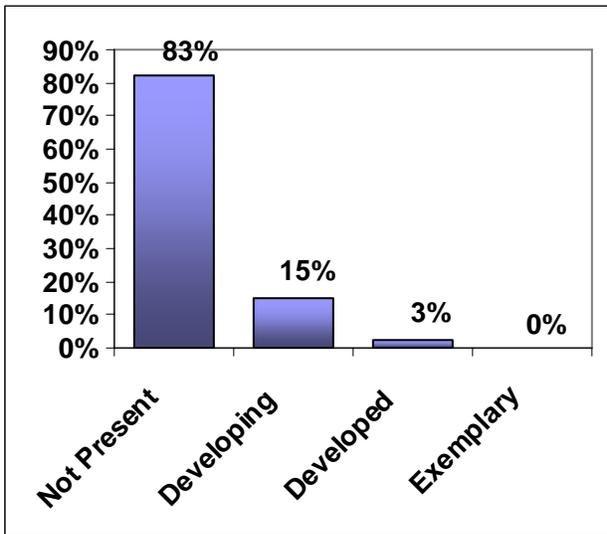
Linking measurements to goals, objectives, or outcomes is a valuable practice because it helps ensure that what is measured is important by relating what is measured to the stated aims of the program or unit. Nevertheless, only about one out of twenty (5%) of reports were rated as developed in this category, while another 15% of reports were deemed to be developing. By contrast, in four out of five reports (80%), this linkage was not found to be present. Units and programs may make choices to report available data rather than important data, and in this respect, current assessment practices may not be serving units well in providing data that is useful in determining how well major functions are performed.



In the developed examples above, the reports provide specific data linked to a stated goal or objective, allowing readers to determine the extent to which goals have been met. The developing example, on the other hand, gestures toward a work load analysis, not an evaluation of how goals or objectives have been met.

## Resource Allocation Based on Assessment Data

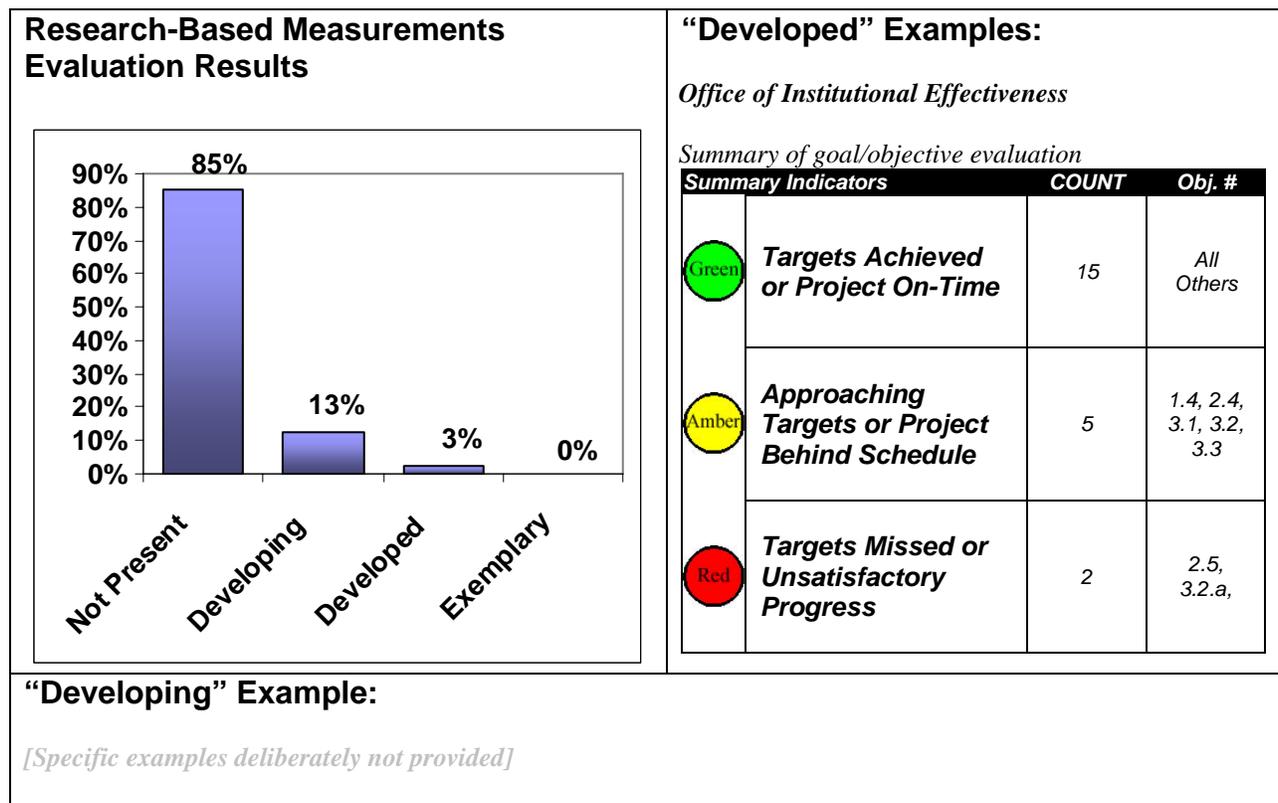
Since program review reports serve as vehicles to transmit budget requests, the linkage of such requests to assessment data would provide compelling evidence for the need for resources to be allocated to a given area. Indeed, the SACS Resource Manual specifically indicates that continuous improvement processes should be “strongly linked to the decision-making process at levels, including the institution’s budgeting process” (SACS, 2005, p. 9). Nevertheless, more than four out of five program review reports (83%) did not make a case for budgetary needs with the assessment data provided. In instances where budget requests were supplemented with assessment data, those linkages were “developing” in 15% of cases and “developed” in just 3% of them.

<p><b>Research-Based Measurements Evaluation Results</b></p>  <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Evaluation Category</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Not Present</td> <td>83%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Developing</td> <td>15%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Developed</td> <td>3%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Exemplary</td> <td>0%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Evaluation Category	Percentage	Not Present	83%	Developing	15%	Developed	3%	Exemplary	0%	<p><b>“Developed” Example:</b></p> <p><b>Human Resources</b></p> <p><i>Needs: Human Resources Specialist who focuses on technology and benefits.</i></p> <p><i>The total number of employees for Fall 2004 is 501. This includes 346 permanent employees and 155 temporary employees. This does not include student employees, which number in the 200’s. We need additional help with benefits administration and we need to revamp, and then maintain, an USCA database necessary for various HR information requests. We need to continue to support ITAMS and the on-line application process. We need someone with strong technological skills. The salary for a full time person would be \$23,222. While I believe we need a full-time person, a 20 hour per week person would still be of great help. That salary would be \$11,611. The HR Office at USC Upstate has 4 full time positions, with only a slightly higher number of permanent employees (475). They do not handle Affirmative Action, training or payroll issues with students.</i></p>
Evaluation Category	Percentage										
Not Present	83%										
Developing	15%										
Developed	3%										
Exemplary	0%										
<p><b>“Developing” or “Not Present” Example:</b></p> <p><b>Program 1</b>  <i>Carpeting for [program area]</i>  <i>New carpeting is badly needed in [rooms] and the hallways adjacent to the [program area]. The carpet is worn out and cleaning it no longer makes a difference. The wear and tear on the facilities is showing and we sometimes get negative comments on this issue.</i></p> <p><b>Program 2</b>  <i>Addition of a new office laptop. [No intended use provided; no linkage to intended outcomes provided]</i></p>											

The “developed” example provides evidence from a comparable institution to justify its request for an additional position. The first “developing” or “not present” example establishes a need to replace worn carpet but only tangentially links this need to assessment data. The second example mentions only the budget request with no supplementary information or data about what indicator or area the requested laptop is intended to improve.

## Major Strengths and Weaknesses Identified

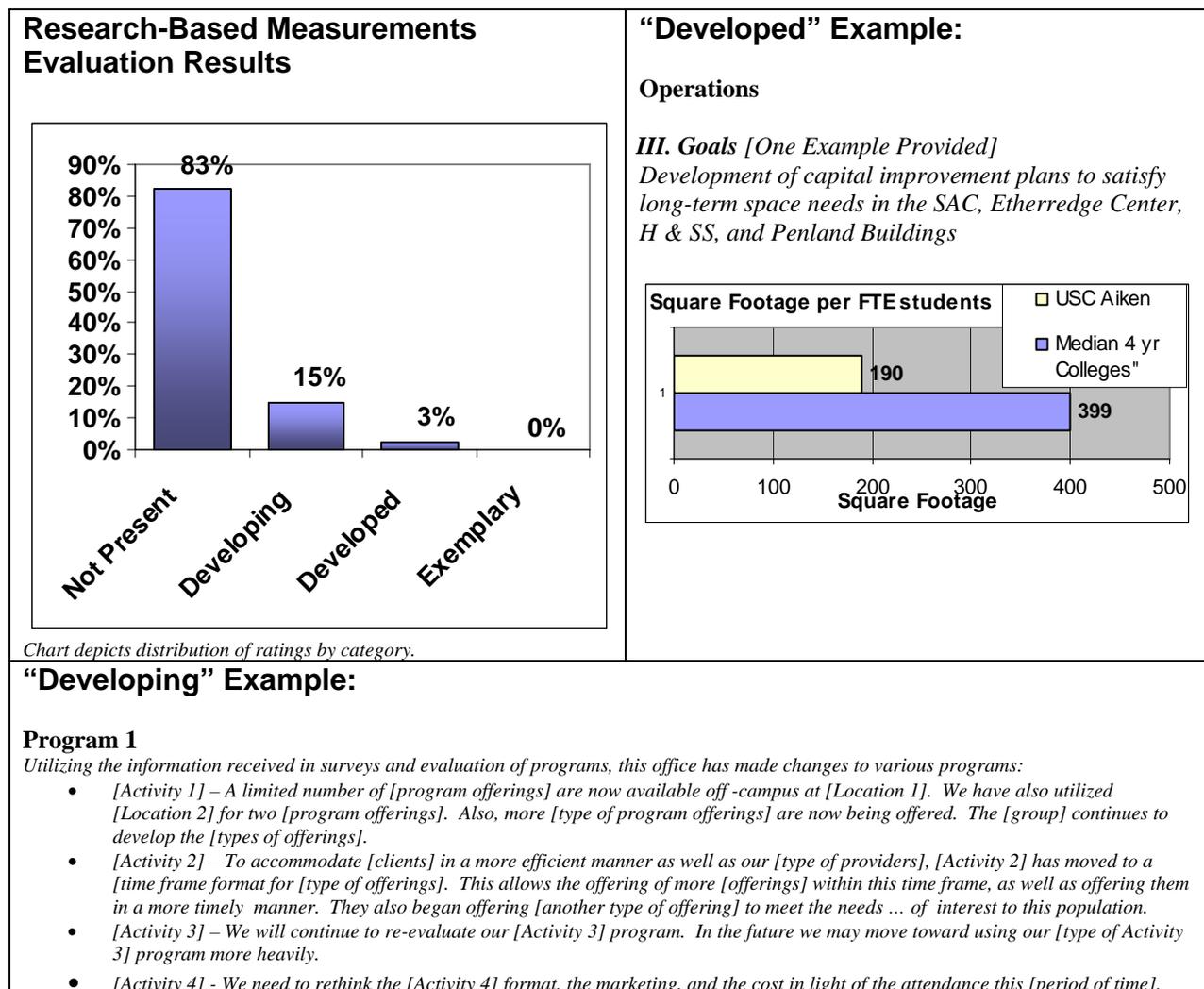
The identification of major strengths and weaknesses in the unit or program as identified by collected data is one of the most significant and valuable outcomes of assessment. Nevertheless, in most program review reports, this feature was rated as “not present” in five out of six instances (85%) and developing in 13% of reports. In just 3% was the identification of major strengths and weaknesses rated as “developed.” The general absence of this feature of program review reports is indicative of the relative use-value of the assessment data collected and its deployment in program improvement, suggesting that additional training in the ends of assessment as well as assessment methods may greatly improve the utility of program review reports to advance programs.



Even in the “developed” example above, some additional summary and work on the reader’s part would be required to identify that the unit had been most successful in Goal 4 - Research, and least successful in accomplishing Goal 3 - Assessment. “Developing” examples were largely unavailable in a meaningful way. These findings about the administrative program review process would seem to indicate a broad acknowledgement that assessment is important but a failure to conduct assessment in such a way that the data provide useful information to direct resources toward targeted areas that need improvement. Additionally, these findings may suggest that administrators preparing the reports could be hesitant to admit programmatic weaknesses. Alternatively, they may not recognize how the end result of assessment activities should result in an identification of both strengths – many of which were noted – as well as areas for improvement, which in general were not discussed.

## Program Changes/Plans Based on Assessment Results

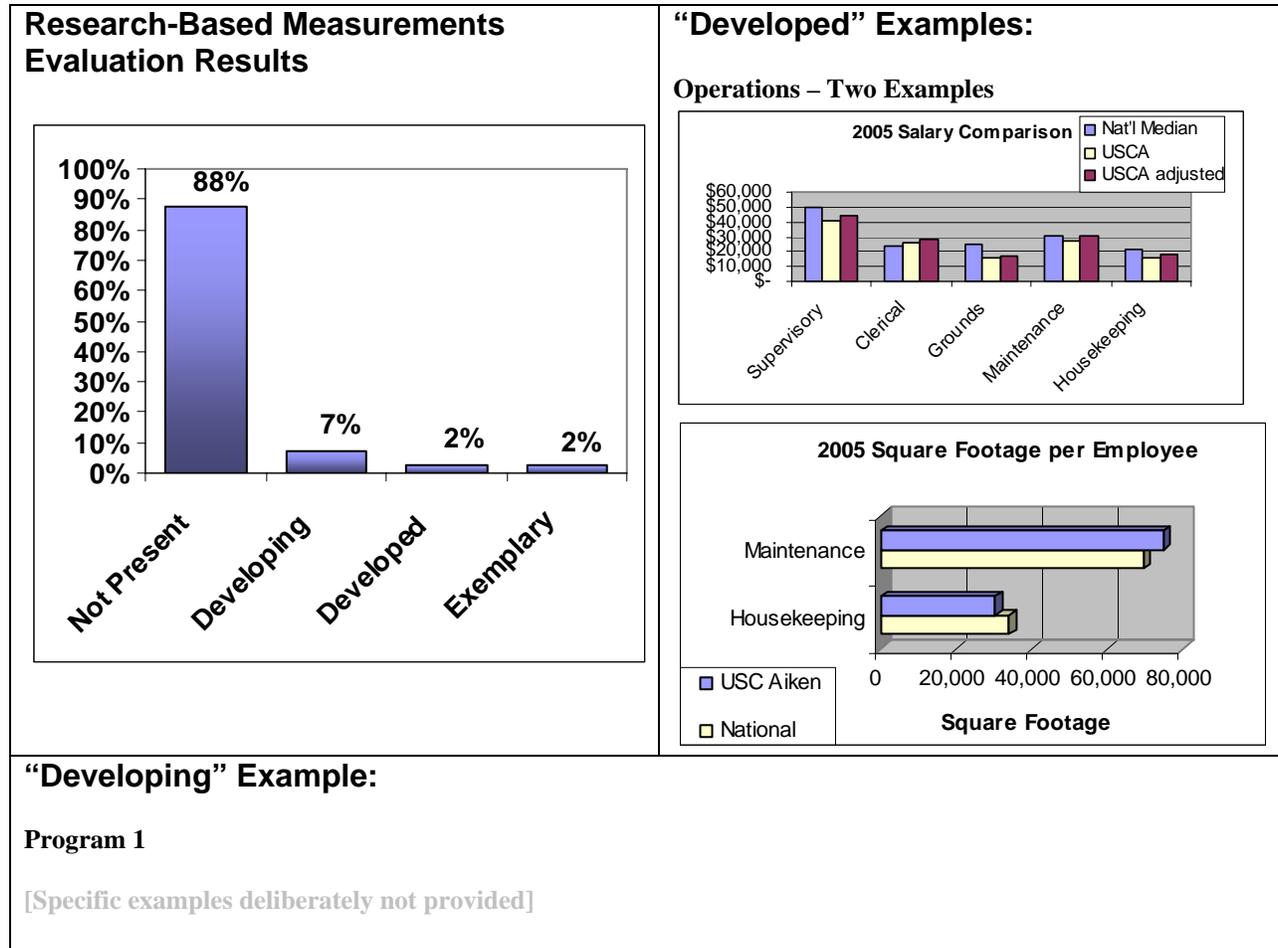
Basing programmatic changes on assessment results follows from the SACS requirement that “administrative and educational support services ... provid[e] evidence of improvement based on the analysis of those results” from outcomes assessment (3.3.1). The overwhelming majority (83%) of administrative program review reports, however, did not base their future plans upon evidence gathered in the assessment process, and only in about one out of five reports (18%) were the linkages between plans detailed in the reports and the results assessment rated as “developing” or “developed.” These results suggest that data gathered from assessment practices and plans for future actions or programmatic changes are not as firmly connected as they should be and that 1) assessment data currently collected may not be useful for developing future plans, and/or 2) future plans may not be developing in the context of assessment data.



While the “developed” example provides an indicator to show a disparity between USC Aiken and other institutions, it would be more convincing if a by-building breakdown were provided. The “developing” example gestures toward use of assessment data in formulating plans, but a more concrete linkage between plans and data is desirable.

## Comparative Data Provided

Comparative data for administrative units can be particularly difficult to come by, and many are hampered by the absence of an effective professional organization that can assist in the development of benchmarks across institutions. In almost nine out of ten (88%) program review reports, raters indicated that comparative data were “not present.” In the few reports where such data were provided, however, the measures appeared quite convincing and also useful in terms of making the case for changes or for demonstrating efficient or effective operation.



In some areas comparative data are available through state agencies, such as CHE, and in others, a unit’s professional organization may provide some assistance, such as through a national survey of clients or data sharing service. It should be emphasized that in the short term the use of comparative data in program review reports for many units will likely be a best-practices ideal and may serve as an aspirational model for developing meaningful assessment metrics.

**Resource Allocation Aligned with Goals, Objectives, or Outcomes**

Alignment of a program’s goals, objectives, and/or outcomes with its budgetary requests represents a desirable feature of program review reports for administrative units. Such alignment could assist with prioritization of how resources are allocated in the development of the annual budget and would provide a useful method to monitor the effectiveness of budgetary decisions. In the reports reviewed for this study, no raters indicated that the alignment between needs and program goals, objectives, or outcomes was “developed” or “exemplary,” and fewer than one out of six (13%) were rated as “developing.”

<p><b>Evaluation Results</b></p> <table border="1"> <caption>Evaluation Results Data</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Not Present</td> <td>88%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Developing</td> <td>13%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Developed</td> <td>0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Exemplary</td> <td>0%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Category	Percentage	Not Present	88%	Developing	13%	Developed	0%	Exemplary	0%	<p><b>“Developed” Example:</b></p> <p>[Specific examples are unavailable.]</p>
Category	Percentage										
Not Present	88%										
Developing	13%										
Developed	0%										
Exemplary	0%										
<p><b>“Developing” Example:</b></p> <p>[Specific examples deliberately not provided]</p>											

As a result of the general absence of this feature in program review reports for 2003-04 and 2004-05, there are no examples provided above although a model of a hypothetical request appears on page 27. It is important to observe, however that reports that did not explicitly articulate goals, objectives, or outcomes elsewhere in the report could not be considered to have developed alignment of requests for resources with goals, objectives, or outcomes.

## Division-Level Reports

Reports at the Division level varied significantly. In some instances, Divisions used this vehicle as the entire program review for all areas under its purview, assembling all Program-level program review reports into a single document, while in other instances, no Division-level report was prepared. Other Divisions used this summary to place budget requests in the context of the Division mission but did not reproduce assessment data, accomplishments, or other review material from the component reports. These reports did not (nor in general were intended to) provide an overall assessment of the Divisions' accomplishments, strengths, and weaknesses from the past year.

In interviews, Vice Chancellors observed that these summaries were generally intended to serve as ways to summarize budget requests that they bring forward annually to the Campus Budget Committee and the Campus Technology Committee. The primary value of this summary was to place the requests in the context of their respective Division missions, but then the process of sorting through these priorities was left to the collective expertise of the members of the resource allocation committees. During these discussions, Vice Chancellors – who saw themselves as champions of these areas – felt they were reasonably well-equipped to argue for priorities within their areas, but most acknowledged that on the whole, the budgeting process was not demonstrably tied to assessment practices or specific unit-level goals. One senior administrator even remarked that funding priorities at times were determined by “whoever yells the loudest.”

To the extent that these Division-level reports are intended to prioritize Division-level needs which become integrated into an institution-level priority list, these reports would benefit from additional linkages to assessment data that could be easily culled from unit-level program review reports. A format as basic as what appears below could valuably demonstrate how funding a particular initiative is linked to an intended outcome for improvement:

### Example Budget Request Template

Funding Request	Amount		Unit-Level Objective (number and description)	Relevant Assessment Data			
	One-Time	Recurring		Formal Studies	Presentations (Internal)	Presentations (External)	
Tableau Software – Visual Analysis for Databases	\$746	\$0	4.2.2. Provide ongoing research support for the Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and other senior administrators	2003-04	11	9	0
				2004-05	7	13	2
				2005-06	11	23	4

If such a template for funding requests were adopted, it would be provided to the preparers of unit-level reports, so that Vice Chancellors could simply extract or cut and paste relevant requests into their Division-level summaries. This sort of documentation could assist in prioritizing the resource allocation process and certainly would be a useful piece of documentation for demonstrating compliance with the SACS *Principles of Accreditation*.

## Recommendations

Based on the overall findings of this report, USC Aiken appears to implement a program review process that informs resource allocation to some extent and features a pervasive acknowledgement of the importance of assessment. The further development of this process, however, will be needed in order to meet SACS guidelines for reaccreditation as well as to sustain excellence or in some cases improve the effectiveness of various areas. Five recommendations follow from this review:

**1. Archive all program review reports.**

All program review reports and Division-level summaries should continue to be submitted and archived online by the IE Office. This may be accomplished either by direct email of the reports by the unit or program director to the IE Office or through the Monday Group member who leads that Division. This archive will provide a readily accessible way to examine and refer to program review reports for ongoing management and will ease preparations for SACS accreditation reaffirmation. It will also provide a vehicle for campus constituencies to easily refer to relevant program outcomes, performance results, and needs.

**2. Develop and post online the guidelines for program review.**

The University should develop a written list of guidelines for program review reports should provide unit directors with more guidance about expectations and content; this list should be posted to the internet. The process by which these guidelines are developed should include significant input from senior administrators as well as feedback from mid-level managers who prepare these reports. Material in the SACS *Resource Manual* section on Core Requirement 2.5 (pp. 9-10) should feature prominently in the development of these guidelines. Division-level summaries may be handled separately.

**3. Develop a formal feedback mechanism for improvement.**

A formal review cycle should be developed to provide feedback to report preparers and the senior administration about the quality of the assessment process and use of results (although not the quality of results themselves). This process may entail a formal Administrative Assessment Committee that uses a peer-review process to evaluate program review reports on a multi-year cycle, much as the Academic Assessment Committee does for academic units. This Committee should initially be formed under the auspices of the Chancellor; membership should include a representative from each Division, the Director of Institutional Effectiveness, and possibly some representatives from the faculty.

**4. Treat Division-level reports as budgetary documents rather than assessment documents.**

Because Division-level reports or summaries serve the purpose to prioritize budget requests rather than to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the Division, they should not be included in the proposed Committee's review cycle, nor would they necessarily need to adopt a common format. However, the process of resource allocation could possibly benefit if these reports presented a summary of the unit objective and assessment data that accompanies each request. In the instance where the Division-level report substitutes for program- and unit-level reports, these units should begin preparation of unit-level reports

**5. Provide training to managers and directors.**

Directors who prepare the report should receive formal training or professional development about how to compile a program review report, including the development of goals and objectives, identification of outcomes, design of indicators, selection of assessment methods, tracking and reporting results, and using results for improvement. Further, the structure of reports reveals professional development is needed for many report preparers with tables and charts in MS Word and MS Excel. In some instances, insufficient technical expertise with productivity software may limit the extent to programs and offices develop useful assessment practices.

# Appendix 1. Contents of the Evaluation Rubric

<i>Indicate the extent to which each of the following features or characteristics is present in the program review you are evaluating.</i>	<b>Not Present</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>Developed</b>	<b>Exemplary</b>
<b><i>Mission, Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes</i></b>				
<b>Mission Statement</b> A general statement is provided about what the unit or program does and what role it plays in the university				
<b>Key Measures or Performance Indicators</b> Clear, quantifiable, and summarized data that demonstrate the success -- effectiveness, efficiency, or health -- of the unit or program are listed				
<b>Operational Goals</b> Broad statements of what the unit intends to do on an ongoing basis (not goals for a specific year) are listed				
<b>Operational Objectives</b> Measurable subcategories of each goal (not objectives for a specific year) are listed				
<b>Outcomes (Goals and/or Objectives)</b> What clients (students, faculty, staff, or others) do as a result of the program or unit's activities is listed				
<b>Linkage to University Mission or Strategic Plan</b> Unit or program mission, goals, objectives, or outcomes explicitly mention which section of the University mission or strategic plan they address				
<b><i>Assessment</i></b>				
<b>Assessment Section</b> A section of the report is devoted to assessment				
<b>Measurements are Research-Based</b> Data are provided to demonstrate success				
<b>Trend Data is Provided</b> Data are provided for more than one year				
<b>Comparative Data is Provided</b> Data from comparable institutions or units is provided				
<b>Measurements are Linked to Operational Goals, Objectives, or Outcomes</b> The data provided are explicitly connected to an operational goal, objective or outcome listed in the report to show how effectively it has been implemented				
<b>Major Strengths and Weaknesses are Identified</b> The report shows which goals, objectives, or outcomes are most successfully and least successfully accomplished				
<b><i>Closing the Loop: Improvements and Resource Allocation</i></b>				
<b>Program Changes or Future Plans are Based on Assessment Data</b> Actions taken by the unit are based on findings from the assessment process				
<b>Strategies or Planned Actions for the Upcoming Year</b> Specific courses of action planned by the unit or program for implementation in the next academic year are listed				
<b>Resource Allocation Aligned with Program Goals, Objectives, Outcomes</b> Budgetary requests are linked to program goals, objectives, or outcomes				
<b>Resource Allocation Based on Assessment Data</b> Data are provided to support requests for budgetary increases				

## References

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, (2004). *Principles of accreditation: Foundations for quality enhancement*. Commission on Colleges. Decatur, Ga.

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, (2005). *Resource manual for the Principles of accreditation: Foundations for quality enhancement*. Commission on Colleges. Decatur, Ga.