In his very recondite 2012 book, Antifragile: Things That Gain from Disorder, Nassim Nicholas Taleb cautioned against “lecturing birds on how to fly” (p. 187ff). As an introduction to my SECTION 8.2: STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT High Impact Practices (HIP) concurrent session at the December 10, 2018, SACSCOC Annual Meeting, I used this expression to solicit attendees’ overall experience with assessment. More recently with imminent PECC changes occurring, I have been asked to train the next generation of PECC members, whose overall assessment experience has largely been confined to their departmental presentations, i.e., in a sense, to lecture flightless birds on how to fly.

In late January, I scheduled a two-hour training session with the 10 new PECC volunteers, for whom I also generated a PECC Training Guide (https://libguides.sullivan.edu/pecctraining):

*Figure 1: PECConomics Training LibGuide*

Among a constellation of IE-specific and -supportive documents, this LibGuide contains: the new PECC Assessment Plan Guidelines form (PECC Assessment Plan Guidelines) (Figure 2); a new PECC Balanced Assessment Scorecard (BAS) rubric evaluation form (Figure 3) (PECC Rubric Master); and, the some basic PECC Presentation Guidelines. These new forms and process will likely appear on the revised IR webpage in place of those, which they have superseded.
You may recall SACSCOC’s inclusive definition of institutional effectiveness:

Institutional effectiveness is the systematic, explicit, and documented process of measuring performance against mission in all aspects of an institution.

*SACSCOC Resource Manual, p. 115*

**Figure 2: PECC Assessment Plan Guidelines** form

As shown above, the simplified three-page **PECC Assessment Plan Guidelines** form also includes sections:

- Alignment of Mission;
- Culture of Continuous Improvement;
- Expected Outcomes (Continuous Improvement Circle [CIC] Step 1);
- Methodology For Assessment Of Outcomes (CIC Steps 2 & 3);
- Plan For Improvement (CIC Steps 4 & 5);
- Assessment Of Steps Taken To Produce Improvement “Close the Loop” (CIC Steps 6 & 7);
- Appendix: Assessment Data (CIC Step 3)

Alternatively, the form suggests a four-column form (less the appended data of CIC Step 3). **PECC Assessment Plan Guidelines** form parses the institution into the four organizational areas identified by SACSCOC *Principles of Accreditation’s* Section 7 and 8’s institutional effectiveness (IE) standards:

- Administrative Support Services (SACSCOC 7.3);
- Educational Programs (SACSCOC 8.2.a);
- General Education (SACSCOC 8.2.b);
- Academic and Student Support Services (SACSCOC 8.2.c).

Therefore, this one retooled form readily and adroitly identifies to SACSCOC downstream reviewers the area under review while – at the same time – underscoring the maturity of the university’s IE assessment processes.

As noted in the **PECC Balanced Assessment Scorecard** rubric headings shown below, each presentation is assessed using one of four assessment indicator ratings: 1. Recommended immediate action; 2. Developmental phase; 3. Recommended Annual review; and, 4. Recommended Biennial Review. Significantly, the latter highest rating incentivizes the department by permitting them to skip a PECC assessment presentation cycle, but they still need to conduct their assessments.

**Figure 3: PECC Balanced Assessment Scorecard** rubrics

Essentially, the **PECC Balanced Assessment Scorecard** rubric form focuses on the all-important SACSCOC Section 8 compliance criteria of **Alignment of Mission** and the constituent elements associated with a **Culture of Continuous Improvement** (CoCI). Best practices generally model these CoCI elements in a five-column table designed to minimize “discursiveness,” a current SACSCOC team pejorative often associated with IE noncompliance. In addition to an introductory criterion addressing the **Assessment Plan Evaluation**, the **BAS**’s five sections embody ten criteria:

I. MISSION (one criterion);
II. EXPECTED OUTCOMES (CIC Step 1) (three criteria);
III. METHODOLOGY FOR ASSESSMENT OF OUTCOMES (CIC Step 2) (three criteria);
IV. PLAN FOR IMPROVEMENT (CIC Steps 4 & 5) (one criterion);
V. ASSESSMENT OF STEPS TAKEN TO PRODUCE IMPROVEMENT (CIC Steps 6 & 7) (one criterion);

These five sections are mapped to the university’s longstanding Continuous Improvement Circle (CIC), a key visual element in the PECC’s multi-tier architectural assessment strategy. By co-opting the assessment SACSCOC-speak of Sections 7 and 8 as its language, the CIC iconographically encapsulates the PECC’s path-directed assessment processes. Those CIC stepwise outcomes-driven processes are operationalized by the Culture of Continuous Improvement 5-column table.

**Figure 3: Continuous Improvement Circle**

In revising these forms – a la SACSCOC’s latest revision of its standards – to eliminates the redundancies and irrelevancies inherent in the Targeted Issues Checklist form and to provide an evaluative rubric mapped to the new presentation instrument in order to provide presenters invaluable and specific Y2Y insights better to effect continuous improvement. Among the LibGuide’s many ancillary supportive documents are the full text of Academic Illuminator articles relating to: mission alignment; outcome development; and, operationalization of the 8.2 IE algorithm (which the PECC designates as its “culture of continuous improvement” component).

The PECC LibGuide also offers the following new **Guidelines for Presenting to the PECC**:
• Departments will have approximately one hour to deliver their presentation to the PECC.
• Departmental reports should have undergone evaluation by those assigned by the PECC (see: additional enumerated pre-presentation process below).
• Please arrive early to assure that your connectivity and presentation are ready and to resolve any technical issues.
• Departments should plan to report on the items in order of significance, rather than just going down the PECC Assessment Plan Guidelines form.

The following question should help to guide the presentation:

• What are the most significant findings of this report?
• Which items have experienced the most significant change?
• Which items have been acted upon or need action?
• Which items are the most critical to the program’s mission/operations?
• Which items have yielded the most surprising results?
• Items that may be left to the end or not reported (depending upon time).
• Items that have not changed since the last report.
• Items that have undergone minor or negligible change since the last report.
• Items that are peripheral or not critical to the program’s mission/operations.

The new PECC pre-process encompasses dyads of PECC member “coaches,” who will be copied on an email to the department presenter(s), which will trigger interaction as outlined below:

1. Meet with department representatives and discuss the new forms and process;
2. Departments generate a PECC Assessment Plan Guidelines (APG) form (q.v.) predicated upon coached instruction;
3. PECC coaches review the department’s APG using the new PECC Balanced Assessment Scorecard rubric evaluation form (q.v.);
4. Coach departments on: 1) PECC feedback from the department’s last presentation (see FEEDBACK on IR web page; and, 2.) any new requisite improvements.
5. The coaches will formulate a consensus Assessment Plan Evaluation onto the APG.
6. The APG will be submitted to the PECC facilitator who will post it on the IR web page and alert PECC members of its availability for their upcoming review.
7. Based upon their interactions with their assessment presenter(s), coaches will provide the PECC with a copy of their PECC Balanced Assessment Scorecard rubric evaluation form.
8. After its own dialectical review of the respective presentation, the plenary PECC will amend the submitted rubric (as warranted) and a single document will be supplied to the presenting departmental representative(s) and archives on the PECC web page.

I mapped the new **PECC Balanced Assessment Scorecard** rubric evaluation form to the new **PECC Assessment Plan Guidelines** form. The **PECC Balanced Assessment Scorecard** rubric also contains a feedback form (see: figure 3) whereby PECC reviewers may provide constructive feedback related to departmental assessment strengths and areas for improvement.

**Figure 4: PECC Balanced Assessment Scorecard** feedback form

Since coaching and instruction are key aspects of the new PECC initiatives, I had originally interlarded both the new **PECC Assessment Plan Guidelines** form and the new **PECC Balanced Assessment Scorecard** rubric evaluation form with point-of-use hyperlinks to helpful articles. In the final analysis, these **Resources for Preparing Assessment Plan** were cumulated in one place at the end of the **Guidelines**. Serving as an armamentarium for assessment practitioners, these key resources – which can be expanded as needed – also appear on the **PECC Training LibGuide**.

Additionally, the PECC Training LibGuide lists my PECC training agenda:
1) PECC: Brief History
2) SACSCOCs and other assessment organizations’ web pages;
3) Institutional Research: Planning and Evaluation Coordinating Council;
4) PECC Training LibGuide;
5) IE High Impact Practices and Exercises;
6) Key Assessment Books/Authors.

Agenda item number five examines the IE High Impact Practices (HIPs) previously addressed in three disparate Academic Illuminator columns relating respectively to mission alignment, formulation of outcomes, and the culture of continuous improvement. Eight HIPs apply to each of those three topics.

Finally, the PECC Training LibGuide provides a one-stop-shop for assessment-relevant web links, such as those for SACSCOC, NILOA and AALHE, as well as featuring a work-in-progress assessment bibliography, which accumulates books and articles I have cited in various assessment papers. Eventually, I hope to add a qualitative indicator when time permits. I have attempted to include hyperlinks (permalink) for found articles: and, I have also added Google book links for monographs. Of course, the Google links may be fugitive over time, plus its content is abridged. However, I wanted to optimize your access to full-text content to the extent possible. This assessment bibliography also appears to the PECC Training LibGuide. As an organic list of journal and monographic resources, I hope to continue to expand it (if you have citations to add, please forward them to me).

References


