

**South Carolina State University
Office of Institutional Research
Savannah River Environmental Sciences Field Station
Program Assessment Process
Summer 2008**

The Institutional Research Staff was contacted to establish and implement a program assessment/evaluation process for the Environment Field Station. Several meetings were held with the Director to determine the mission/goals of the program.

Summer 2008 is defined as a baseline term for the assessment of this program because this is the first formalized assessment process of the program. The assessment process will consist of direct and indirect measures. Both formative and summative assessment methods will be used. Information/Data collection such as program applications, number of students enrolled in courses, demographics of participant population and staff will also be a part of the assessment process.

Each of the goals of the program will have assessment measures identified. Each constituent group, students, program faculty/staff and stakeholders, will participate in the program assessment process. Table 1 outlines the assessment process. For the first summer term, surveys will be the primary assessment measure used to collect data about the program and to make some inferences about program effectiveness.

The IR Staff conducted a literature review and developed a timeline to assess the program. Data collection and assessment activities will be conducted by the IR Staff. The operational definitions that will be used for the program assessment were extracted from the works of Palomba, Banta and Angelo. These definitions are as follows.

Assessment: "Assessment is the systematic collection, review, and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and development." (Palomba & Banta, 1999)

"Assessment is an ongoing process aimed at understanding and improving student learning. It involves making our expectations explicit and public; setting appropriate criteria and standards for learning quality; systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well performance matches those expectations and standards; and using the resulting information to document, explain, and improve performance." (Tom Angelo, 1995)

The focus of the assessment for the program is designed to determine the effectiveness of the program. A definition of evaluation is listed below.

Evaluation: The use of assessment findings (evidence/data) to judge program effectiveness; used as a basis for making decisions about program changes or improvement.

As a follow-up on assessing the program's impact, surveys, focus groups, grade distributions and the like will be employed. IR staff in collaboration with the program director will track current as well as prior participants of the program utilizing the Student Information System (SIS) to extract pertinent data (i.e., course grades, demographics, contact information). The SIS will also be used to identify/track graduates who were program participants based on enrollment in program courses.

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Environmental Field Station Assessment Process			
Program Goal	Means of Assessment for Summer 2008	Results	Action & Follow-up
1. To provide hands-on, field-oriented experiences for students from regional Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) and Minority Institutions (MI) undergraduate in programs that utilize math and science principles to solve complex real-life problems in agriculture, environmental science, natural resource management, and engineering by using the expertise available at the HBCU'S, MI's, government agencies, private sector, and the natural and technological resources available at the Savannah River Site.	1. Survey participants and program staff. 2. Survey stakeholders.		
2. To increase recruitment and retention of minority students and women in science, engineering, natural resources management and environmental career professions.	1. Use SIS Database to determine number of minority and female students enrolled in Environmental Field Station Courses. 2. Conduct follow-up and satisfaction surveys.		
3. To increase science literacy and public education on complex environmental issues.	1. "The Minute Paper" assessment tool. 2. TA Course Logs		