

Teagle Abstract
Occidental College's
Academic Support Assessment Project (ASAP)

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Occidental College's Academic Support Assessment Project (ASAP) is a three-year initiative to systematically assess the services that are integrally linked to the academic program and total student education experience. The College seeks to determine how the support units unique to liberal arts colleges contribute quantitative and qualitative value to the learning experience. Methodology will be modeled on the College's Student Services department review system that assesses quality of service, relationship to institutional mission, and effective use of resources. The goal of the project is to systematically strengthen student engagement and learning through the alignment of the goals and outcomes of student academic support services with those of the academic program. Among the units to be assessed are the academic centers for teaching and learning; advising offices; the Center for Community Based Learning; Religious and Spiritual Life; Undergraduate Research Center; peer tutoring and mentoring; several pre-orientation residential programs, including the Multicultural Summer Institute; the Keck Language & Culture Studio; and the International Programs Office.

There is a fundamental and underestimated value of academic support units at liberal arts colleges that can be more actively linked to the intellectual satisfaction and academic success of students. These linkages are part of the particular value-added character of the residential liberal arts experience. The misalignment of these resources with the curriculum often undermines the potential of this synergy. Alignment of these units with the curricular needs of the academic departments can only be done by a thorough assessment of the units through the lens of academic needs. Findings will be disseminated on a dedicated web site and at national conferences such as WASC, HEDS, AACU, and NASPA.

The working group is comprised of the academic associate dean, the faculty director of the Center for Teaching Excellence, the director of the Institutional Research and Assessment Group, and the associate dean of students. The dean of the college/vice president for academic affairs is the principal investigator, aided by the academic associate dean and the associate dean of students as co-administrators, reflecting the symmetrical nature of a project that is investigating the synergistic contributions of the academic program and student services to the total the liberal arts experience.