Institutional effectiveness is defined as **the extent to which an institution achieves its mission and goals**. The college's institutional effectiveness process is an ongoing, college-wide process of planning and outcomes assessment for the purpose of documenting that the college is achieving its mission and goals and continuously improving its programs and services. The IE process starts with the College Mission Statement, Vision Statement and College Goals. At the unit level, the process includes (a) developing a unit purpose statement and annual objectives and/or student learning outcomes to support the college's mission and goals (b) developing procedures / assessment methods and criteria for measuring the success of the unit's objectives/learning outcomes and (c) documenting results and use of results to show that the unit is continuously improving its programs and/or services. The institutional effectiveness process at Cape Fear Community College is a continuous planning-implementing-evaluating- improving cycle that is applied at every level of the college.

In 1996, Cape Fear Community College adopted a model for institutional effectiveness and student outcomes assessment developed by Dr. James O. Nichols and often referred to as the “Nichol's Model”. Dr. Nichols conducted a two-day workshop at CFCC for faculty and staff in November 1995. The model that follows depicts the components of the college's planning and assessment process. (Also see the Description of the CFCC Annual Institutional Effectiveness (IE) Implementation Cycle for more information.)