

**Assurance Argument**  
**Northwestern Oklahoma State University**

8/21/2019

# 1 - Mission

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The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.

## 1.A - Core Component 1.A

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The institution's mission is broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations.

1. The mission statement is developed through a process suited to the nature and culture of the institution and is adopted by the governing board.
2. The institution's academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.
3. The institution's planning and budgeting priorities align with and support the mission. (This sub-component may be addressed by reference to the response to Criterion 5.C.1.)

## Argument

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### Mission Statement

Northwestern Oklahoma State University provides quality educational and cultural opportunities to learners with diverse needs by cultivating ethical leadership and service, critical thinking, and fiscal responsibility.

### Vision Statement

Northwestern aspires to be a vibrant and innovative regional university of choice whose students, faculty, staff, and alumni succeed and lead in their academic, professional, cultural, and service endeavors.

## Argument

### 1.A.1

In fall 2015, Northwestern reviewed its Mission Statement while preparing a new Strategic Plan, a yearlong process that included many University stakeholders. After multiple [public forums](#) and approval from the University's faculty and administration, the University's new plan was approved by the Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO) and provided to the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE). It went into effect at the start of the fall 2016 semester.

### The Revision Process

During the fall 2015 semester, NWOSU's administration, faculty, staff, students, and stakeholders

met to formulate the University's 2016-2021 Strategic Plan, *Defining Our Future*. Early in this process, focus groups re-evaluated the Mission Statement for relevance to NWOSU's current needs. Upon consulting the [Comprehensive Evaluation Report](#) received from the HLC evaluation team, members of the University reaffirmed the Mission Statement--with its focus on a quality curriculum, the needs of diverse learners, ethical leadership and service, and critical thinking and fiscal responsibility--as still appropriate.

Driven by this [Mission Statement](#), the University's Strategic Plan represents Northwestern's move forward through effective leadership, a proactive approach to teaching and learning, and greater opportunities for service to Oklahoma. The new Strategic Plan addresses four focus areas with its Strategic Directions, defines its aspirations in a Vision Statement, and articulates its guiding principles in a set of five Core Values. These guiding [statements and values](#) and the Strategic Plan compel how the institution operates in all budget, pedagogical, and fundraising decisions.

## 1.A.2

### Consistency with Mission

NWOSU's academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile align with its mission. For example, academic divisions and departments offer a variety of opportunities through credit-bearing programs consistent with its educational mission as a regional university. NWOSU's schools are as follows:

- School of Education (Agriculture, Education, Psychology, and Health Sports Science Education)
- School of Professional Studies (Nursing and Business)
- School of Arts and Sciences (Communication; English, Foreign Language and Humanities; Fine Arts; Math and Computer Science; Natural Science; Social Sciences; and Social Work)

These three academic schools offer:

- 1 -- Doctoral Degree
- 4 – Master's Degrees
- 34 – Undergraduate Degrees
- 8 – Undergraduate Certificates

NWOSU's academic programs include coursework leading to baccalaureate degrees in areas typical of a regional comprehensive liberal arts institution as well as in areas leading to professional licensure and certification. The University also offers graduate programs that meet the needs of the service area. For example, NWOSU added a [Doctor of Nursing Practice](#) (DNP) degree in fall 2017. The lack of qualified medical professionals in rural parts of Oklahoma led to the establishment of this degree, [funded](#) by gifts from the Charles Morton Share Trust and the Wisdom Family Foundation.

In alignment with the University's Mission, general education curricula require that all students address concepts of leadership, critical thinking, and fiscal responsibility. These three competency areas are articulated in the General Education [Student Learning Outcomes](#), which are assessed through both course-embedded assessment methodologies and mid-level assessment methodologies. (These processes are described in greater detail in Criterion 4.B).

Since the team visit in 2014, NWOSU has addressed the needs of diverse learners by providing to students who require [remediation](#) two credit-bearing co-requisite courses, MATH 1514 College Algebra with Lab and ENGL 1114 Composition I with Lab, instead of MATH 1513 College Algebra and ENGL1113 Composition I, respectively. These students experience a net reduction in hours and tuition costs for degree completion as a result of not being required to complete non-credit-bearing developmental courses. (These processes are described in greater detail in Criterion 3.D).

### **Student Demographics**

The Common Data Set for fall 2016 shows NWOSU's student population at 2,218 (1713 FTE). The distribution follows:

- 1,424 Full-Time Undergraduate Students
- 571 Part-Time Undergraduate Students
- 1,995 Total Undergraduate Students
- 64 Full-Time Graduate Students
- 159 Part-Time Graduate Students

Northwestern's regional accessibility assists students of all ages in earning college credit. The majority of students attending the University (52%) came from its 10-county service area in northwest Oklahoma, with students from other states and 18 other countries making up 26% of the enrollment. Females comprised 58% of the enrollment as compared to 42% males, with 90% classified as undergraduate students. Transfer students comprised 10% of the population. Sixty-nine percent of students were under the age of 24, with the remaining 31% at age 24 or above. In 2016, the average composite ACT score for entering students was 19.7.

### **Degrees Conferred**

At the conclusion of the 2016-2017 academic year, NWOSU [conferred](#) 435 degrees and certificates, including 350 bachelor's degrees, 53 master's degrees, and 32 certificates.

### **Student Services**

Northwestern is taking part in [HLC's Persistence and Completion Academy](#), which provides support to evaluate and improve degree-completion rates. The University has focused on helping students with undecided majors, a group with low persistence and degree-completion rates. As one strategy, the University has revised its freshman orientation class, UNIV 1011 Ranger Connection. Undecided majors take a concentrated 8-week course (rather than the typical 16-week course) co-taught by a member of the Student Services staff paired with a faculty mentor. Classroom activities focus in part on exploring careers and choosing a major. Since all incoming freshmen are required to enroll in Ranger Connection, the course also helps students adapt to different facets of college life. Participation in this academy and the changes made to Ranger Connection align with Northwestern's mission to provide "quality education and cultural opportunities to learners with diverse needs."

NWOSU maintains a variety of other services to assist students with diverse needs. The Dean of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management oversees staff members who administer support services for students at all locations in such areas as admission, counseling, international student advisement, retention, accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), student life, and veterans' affairs. A [Student Support Services \(TRIO\) grant](#) received in 2017 provides support for first-generation students with financial needs and students with disabilities. (This grant is

discussed in greater detail in Criterion 3.D.1.) The University's food service provider now offers healthier eating options for students and a larger variety of foods to meet the needs of students with medical or religious food requirements. In 2017, the University also implemented a new ID system that serves as an all-in-one identification card and meal-card with flex-dollar spending capabilities for students. The University also extended its summer hours to provide more services to students beginning in 2017.

Northwestern students also receive academic support through several offices overseen by the Vice President for Academic Affairs. These include the Academic Success Center (ASC), Office of Sponsored Programs, and J. W. Martin Library. A helpdesk aids students with questions concerning Interactive Television (ITV) and online courses through the Online and Distance Education Offices.

### 1.A.3

#### **Planning and Mission**

NWOSU operates under the constitutional and statutory guidelines of the state of Oklahoma and the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education ([OSRHE](#)). As the coordinating body of control, the OSRHE provides budget allocations for each college and university after making a system request yearly to the state legislature. With declining financial support, NWOSU now receives roughly [30%](#) of its budget from state appropriations and is legislatively mandated as a state institution to align planning and budgeting efforts to support the University's educational mission. NWOSU demonstrates shared governance with faculty and staff in planning and budgeting to meet priorities of the University's mission.

NWOSU uses its Mission and strategic planning documents as the foundation to develop annual planning and budget priorities. For example, budget administrators must reference the applicable Strategic Direction from the Strategic Plan to justify any new requests during budget presentations. The [budget planning group](#) composed of senior administrators analyzes the requests to determine alignment with the Mission and Strategic Plan. Thus, appropriate requests shape the budget priorities used to develop the annual budget through a bottom-up approach (rather than through a top-down approach). By defining these parameters of budget development, the University models the concept of fiscal responsibility articulated in its Mission Statement. (These processes are described in greater detail in Criterion 5.C).

#### **Northwestern Foundation**

The Northwestern Oklahoma State University Foundation aids the University in meeting its Mission. The Foundation supports students through scholarships, capital projects, endowed chairs, and other expenditures. In May 2017, Northwestern announced the public phase of its capital campaign, setting an aggressive goal of \$28 million. As of May 2018, approximately [\\$25 million](#) has been raised or pledged toward this goal.

Some examples of recent accomplishments supporting NWOSU's Mission of providing students with quality educational opportunities are included below.

Establishment of Infrastructure:

- [William and Billie Buckles Robotics Lab](#), \$60,000

- [Deane and Esther Wymer Nursing Lab](#), \$40,000
- [Darrell and Grace Wessels Literacy Center](#), \$44,533
- [Darrell and Grace Wessels Early Childhood Education Classroom Lab](#), \$62,766

Endowed Chairs:

- [Charles Morton Share Trust](#), \$2.5 million, for DNP (10)
- [Wisdom Family Foundation](#), \$2.5 million, for DNP (10)

Endowed Scholarships:

- [Keith Vermillion Scholarship](#), \$25,000, for Education

## Sources

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- [Spotlight\\_Newsletter\\_CompSci\\_Fundraiser\\_Spring\\_2017](#)
- [Strategic\\_Plan\\_Core\\_Values\\_2016\\_2021](#)
- [Strategic\\_Plan\\_Defining\\_Our\\_Future\\_2016\\_2021](#)
- [Strategic\\_Plan\\_Mission\\_Statement.pdf](#)
- [Strategic\\_Plan\\_Public\\_Forums\\_2016\\_2021](#)
- [Strategic\\_Plan\\_Vision\\_Statement\\_2016\\_2021](#)
- [TRIO\\_Award\\_Notification](#)
- [Wessels\\_Early\\_Childhood\\_Education\\_Classroom\\_Laboratory.pdf](#)
- [Wessels\\_Literacy\\_Center.pdf](#)
- [Wymer\\_Nursing\\_Lab](#)

## 1.B - Core Component 1.B

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The mission is articulated publicly.

1. The institution clearly articulates its mission through one or more public documents, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans, or institutional priorities.
2. The mission document or documents are current and explain the extent of the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development, and religious or cultural purpose.
3. The mission document or documents identify the nature, scope, and intended constituents of the higher education programs and services the institution provides.

### Argument

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#### 1.B.1

##### Clear Articulation of Mission

NWOSU clearly articulates its Mission in a concise statement of purpose available in multiple locations, utilizing both print and electronic formats, including the [Northwestern website](#) and [NWOSU's Facebook page](#), all [course syllabi](#), and programs for events hosted at Northwestern campus locations. The Mission Statement appears in publications such as the [Undergraduate Catalog](#), [Graduate Catalog](#), [Faculty Handbook](#), [Employee Handbook](#), and [Student Handbook](#). In addition, the *Northwestern News*, the electronic message frames at the University library, and the posters located in multiple buildings display the Mission Statement. The University defines its aspirations in a [Vision Statement](#) and its guiding principles in a set of five [Values](#) that are available in the University's [Strategic Plan](#). Those statements served as guides in developing the four Strategic Directions also found in that document.

#### 1.B.2

##### Focus of Mission

NWOSU's Mission documents clearly identify it as an institution focused on teaching and learning. The Mission and Values reflect an emphasis on "quality educational and cultural opportunities" and "the best possible educational experience for every student," respectively. While the University encourages and supports research activity, it aspires first to be "a vibrant and innovative regional university of choice whose [students](#), [faculty](#), [staff](#) and [alumni](#) succeed and lead in their academic, professional, cultural and service endeavors." In executing these goals, the University uses committees to support its commitment to [service learning](#) and [diversity](#).

#### 1.B.3



## Scope of Mission

Northwestern's Mission documents explicitly specify that the University provides “quality educational and cultural opportunities to learners with diverse needs.” While the University’s main focus is to educate its student body in the classroom setting, it also offers other “educational and cultural opportunities” to enhance student education: guest speakers, play performances, workshops, concerts, research day events, etc. Many of these activities, open to the general public, address needs of constituencies outside of the University.

## Sources

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- Spotlight\_Fall\_2017.pdf
- Strategic\_Plan\_Core\_Values\_2016\_2021
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## 1.C - Core Component 1.C

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The institution understands the relationship between its mission and the diversity of society.

1. The institution addresses its role in a multicultural society.
2. The institution's processes and activities reflect attention to human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

### Argument

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#### 1.C.1

##### Serving a Multicultural Society

Multiple University Mission documents focus attention on cultural awareness and diversity. The [Mission Statement](#) indicates that “Northwestern Oklahoma State University provides quality educational and cultural opportunities to learners with diverse needs...” The University also affirms its commitment to diversity as one of its guiding Values: “Northwestern will respect the individual rights of all persons.” The University defines its interpretation of diversity in its [Diversity Plan](#) as “the presence and valued participation of individuals who differ and are similar by characteristics including race, age, ethnicity, gender identity or expression, national origin, human capacity, community affiliation, religious and spiritual identity, veteran status, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status.” This definition guides the institutional climate individually, academically, and socially. To solidify its commitment to meeting the needs of a multicultural society, the University holds diversity training workshops for faculty and staff on a regular basis as professional development activity.

Despite the University's good-faith attempts to hire a diverse faculty, the percentage of faculty self-identifying as belonging to underrepresented minority groups has declined from 13.8% in 2012 to approximately 9% in fall 2017: 2.24% identify as Hispanic/Latino, 1.12% as American Indian, 2.24% as Asian, and 3.37% as black/African American. The percentage is similar for staff members, of whom nearly 10% (up from slightly more than 6% in 2012) come from underrepresented minority groups: 4.16% identify as Hispanic/Latino, 1.38% as American Indian, and 4.16% as black/African American. Through the adoption of a newly enhanced [hiring statement](#), NWOSU will continue its attempt to attract more diverse employees at its campus locations.

The University addresses its role in a multicultural society through both academic programs and co-curricular activities. (These are discussed in greater detail in 3.E.1.) Academically, the institution addresses diversity through its general education curriculum and through discipline-specific offerings. During the 2015 process of revising the general education curriculum, faculty members lowered the required [general education hours](#) from 54 to 45 but continued to recognize the value of supporting students in developing an enhanced worldview as expressed in the [general education competencies](#): the curriculum maintains a total requirement of 9–10 hours of study in the area of Values and Beliefs and in the area of Human Heritage and Culture. In addition to the general education curriculum, many divisions/departments offer discipline-specific courses that provide opportunities for students to investigate diverse cultures further. World Music, World Literature, Topics in Multicultural Literature, Comparative World Religions, Spanish, American Sign

Language, and Non-Western Civilization expose students to an array of cultural components. Other disciplines offer courses with a practical consideration of diversity within their professions, such as [International Business](#), [International Marketing](#), [Cross-Cultural Management](#), [Multicultural Education](#), and [Social Diversity](#).

Moreover, some disciplines provide ancillary activities in multicultural awareness. For example, the Nursing Division administers an annual Cultural Sensitivity Training Workshop for all nursing students and requires that each student complete clinical activities in a variety of settings, from rural hospitals to urban clinics. In 2017, the Nursing Division also [partnered](#) with the Social Work Department to enable a nursing student and a social work student, working together during clinicals, to create a community needs assessment. The activity gave both parties interdisciplinary insight into the other field's approaches and techniques. These continuing projects identified needs in such areas as homeless health issues and addiction issues in newborn babies. The Social Work Department also requires each major to complete a three-hour course in [Social Diversity](#) as well as to participate in community service projects and field experiences that meet the needs of lower-socioeconomic populations. The Mathematics and Computer Science Department administers the Louis Stokes Oklahoma Alliance for Minority Participation in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics program (LS-OKAMP STEM), which provides support scaffolding for students from underrepresented populations to earn degrees in STEM disciplines. Beyond traditional coursework, the Education Division requires teacher candidates to attend field trips to multicultural urban school districts to gain exposure to the challenges of providing education in extremely diverse, lower-socioeconomic neighborhoods.

Since the 2014 reaccreditation visit, NWOSU has added [Global Citizenship](#). Students enroll in the course in preparation for a Study Abroad opportunity that immerses them in the cultures of other countries while they earn academic credit. Recent Study Abroad trips included travel to England, Ireland, Scotland, Australia, New Zealand, China, Germany, Austria, and the Czech Republic.

Many academic departments also sponsor programs that enhance cultural awareness and appreciation for diversity. NWOSU's Visual Arts program hosts an [Artist-in-Residence](#) on campus five to six times a year to work with students enrolled in the art minor. These artists-in-residence have represented such countries as Iran, the Philippines, South Africa, and Chile. The Masonic Institute for Citizenship Studies, administered by the Social Sciences Department, sponsors NWOSU's annual Constitution Day events, the Presidential Lecture Series, and the Cultural Heritage Lecture Series. Past speakers include Dr. Zuhdi Jasser, MD, founder of the American Islamic Forum for Democracy; Dr. Steven B. Rogers, US Government Investigator of Nazi-Era Crimes; and Dr. Mario Carvajal, former Costa Rican Ambassador to the European Union. The Natural Science Department often holds open forums on religion and science during which faculty and students can explore the intersection of divergent viewpoints. NWOSU's University Singers have toured Europe on two recent occasions and often perform songs by global composers. This department also facilitates the Northwest Concert Series, which brings multicultural programs to the Alva campus each year (see 1.C.2 below). Many faculty also give professional or community presentations on multi-ethnic writers and topics. For example, since 2015, the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies has presented lectures throughout Oklahoma to discuss the state's poets laureate, many of whom were members of Native American tribes.

## 1.C.2

## **Attending to Human Diversity**

A dynamic diversity program is an essential dimension of Northwestern's pursuit of excellence. In addition to raising cultural awareness through its academic departments and programs, the University maintains a number of on-campus organizations that reflect the institution's attention to human diversity. Examples of these organizations include the Multicultural Club, the Spanish Club, the International Student Association, and the Secular Student Alliance. The Multicultural Club encourages cultural exchange and learning through interaction and by hosting monthly speakers. The International Student Association annually hosts its [Festival of Cultures](#) in the spring, which consists of a dinner featuring international food, displays, and performances. The University's Student Government Association (SGA) often partners with the International Student Organization to welcome new international students to campus. The [Northwest Oklahoma Concert Series](#) raises community awareness of other cultures through the performing arts. Some examples include performances by the Peking Chinese Acrobats, The Vienna Boys Choir, The Russian String Orchestra, and A Celtic Christmas. Northwestern's cafeteria offers many [food service adaptations](#) for international students who have dietary restrictions due to religious beliefs and practices.

The University's International Studies Office also helps to educate the campus community about human diversity. With the Heritage Committee and Diversity Committee, this office holds [events](#) to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month in September, Native American Heritage Month in November, Black Heritage Month in February, and Women's Heritage Month in March. The office also sponsors an annual fall multicultural dance at which international and domestic students perform and dance to music from various countries. In October 2017, the International Student Office also held a [professional development workshop](#) to educate faculty and staff about the characteristics and needs of NWOSU's international student population.

Each year, NWOSU's Diversity Committee promotes diversity awareness and engagement among the University's academic and administrative units by offering [diversity training](#) for all faculty and staff members. The Committee also recognizes faculty and staff members annually for their contributions to diversity awareness and engagement during the Faculty and Staff Recognition Ceremony. In spring 2018, the Diversity Committee expanded its [webpage](#) to include such resources as demographic data on Northwestern's student population, presentations from [past training sessions](#), and helpful links to diversity-related webpages and documents.

In an effort to increase campus diversity, Recruitment Office staff members target secondary schools across the state located in census tracts heavily populated by ethnic minority households. For example, in Texas County, Oklahoma, the recruitment staff attends college fairs and engages the resident Hispanic community in collegiate informational meetings. The University has also created a Spanish-language radio commercial to attract Hispanic students to Northwestern from the Oklahoma panhandle. Recruitment staff members arrange numerous opportunities for American Indian students to learn about the many services offered by NWOSU. For example, in 2018 the [Riverside Indian School](#), located in Anadarko, Oklahoma, began attending Ranger Preview, which provides an opportunity for high school seniors to visit Northwestern and to learn about the University and its offerings. On an annual basis, the recruitment staff also presents information to participants of the United Urban Indian Council's Summer Youth Classroom Training in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

The University's [Enrollment Management Plan](#) contains a recruitment goal to increase minority enrollment by 5% annually. Although this annual goal was not consistently met from 2012 to 2016, the University increased its ethnic minority student population by 7.3% during that time period. The most notable increase during this period, of 28%, occurred in the student body's [Hispanic or Latino](#)

[population.](#)

NWOSU continues to place emphasis on increasing diversity at the University by recruiting international students. Until 2017, the institution experienced an increase in [international student enrollment](#). The international student population numbered 81 in fall 2013 but had grown to 150 by fall 2016, an increase of 85%. However, due to obstacles for international students created by federal policy and admission decisions based on analysis of international student retention trends, the number dropped to 55 students in 2017, a 63.3% decrease.

Recognizing human capacity as a form of diversity, NWOSU provides individual accommodations to [students with diverse needs](#). The University's student population includes those who have hearing impairments, visual impairments, Cerebral Palsy, Attention Deficit Disorder, and other physical and cognitive challenges. To meet the needs of these students, Northwestern provides an array of accommodations that include extended time for test-taking, non-disruptive testing locations, verbal testing, volunteer and assigned note-taking, books on tape, and physical mobility assistance. In 2017, the Faculty Development Resource Center added captioning software and other accessibility software to facilitate course-building that helps meet the needs of all students. Accommodating 371 students since fall 2014 illustrates the University's commitment to helping every individual become an integral part of the campus community.

## Sources

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## 1.D - Core Component 1.D

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The institution's mission demonstrates commitment to the public good.

1. Actions and decisions reflect an understanding that in its educational role the institution serves the public, not solely the institution, and thus entails a public obligation.
2. The institution's educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes, such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization, or supporting external interests.
3. The institution engages with its identified external constituencies and communities of interest and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

### Argument

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#### 1.D.1

##### Service to the Public Good

Northwestern demonstrates its commitment to the public good in its educational role, as defined by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education ([OSRHE](#)), as well as in its corporate and individual engagement with external constituencies. The University articulates this commitment in a Core Value that states, "Northwestern will strive to create a sense of community that extends beyond campus boundaries." NWOSU engages with its identified external constituencies as its [Mission](#) and capacity allow and provides structure to foster and reward that engagement. New initiatives in nursing, psychology, and public education demonstrate the University's response to the needs of the communities it serves.

In 2016, the University implemented its first doctoral program, the [Doctor of Nursing Practice](#), with financial support from the Charles Morton Share Trust and Wisdom Family Foundation. This degree was created to meet the need for additional skilled healthcare workers in rural Oklahoma. Another example of the Nursing Division serving public needs is the [collaborative agreement](#) it holds with Vance Air Force Base in Enid. NWOSU nursing students may complete their clinical experiences in community and pediatric nursing at the base's healthcare clinic while students at the base may complete continuing education at the Ketterman Skills Simulation Lab at Northwestern's Enid campus location. In 2017, the Nursing Division and the Department of Social Work paired nursing students with social work students to complete a practical assignment during clinicals. Each pair created a community-needs assessment, giving both participants interdisciplinary insight into the other field's approaches and techniques. These projects identified needs in such areas as homeless healthcare issues and addiction problems in newborns. The Social Work Department also requires each prospective social work student to participate in community service projects and field experiences that meet the needs of lower-socioeconomic populations.

In fall 2016, the University's Psychology Department implemented a thirty-hour, online [Grief and Bereavement Certificate](#) at the undergraduate level. The coursework designated for this certificate provides grief training to ministers, hospice workers, counselors, and other members of the helping community in northwest Oklahoma. By the end of the spring 2018 semester, five students had completed the certification process.

From 2011 to 2015, Northwestern collaborated with Oklahoma Panhandle State University (OPSU), the Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth, and the Texas County Coalition to offer the Master of Counseling Psychology degree to OPSU classrooms via ITV. This initiative increased accessibility for students interested in pursuing a counseling license in the panhandle and increased graduates from the program to serve the needs of the public. Although the state of Oklahoma cut funding for the Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth, NWOSU continues to offer coursework from each of its master-degree programs via ITV at Oklahoma Panhandle State University and area schools. Awarded in FY18, a [USDA DLT Grant](#) will provide equipment and technical support for distance learning and telemedicine technology for rural areas. This grant will expand distance learning opportunities for college and high school students and Oklahoma Department of Corrections inmates and will facilitate professional development opportunities for a cross-section of university and public school educators as well as one rural hospital.

In 2016, NWOSU's Education Division expanded its role in serving the public by establishing a literacy center that addresses the needs of students and their families through individualized literacy tutoring. (The center was expanded in 2018 through private funding and has been designated the [Darrel and Grace Wessels Literacy Center](#).) NWOSU Education-major volunteers partner with an area P-12 student to complete assessments that reveal individual interests, strengths, and targeted areas for literacy remediation. Lessons occur weekly and are designed to meet each student's needs. Last year, members of the Education Division received a grant from OSRHE to undertake a project called "[Why Teach?](#)" to combat Oklahoma's teacher shortage by researching teachers' reasons for leaving the profession and by documenting teachers' sentiments toward teaching. As part of this project, high school students in Enid and Woodward who were participating in Teach Oklahoma collaborated with members of the Division of Education to interview in-service elementary, secondary, and collegiate teachers about this matter. Students then shared their findings with OSRHE and at Oklahoma Research Day. Most recently, in 2017 the Education Division created a "[teacher's closet](#)" for which faculty hold clothing drives to collect new and gently-used garments that Northwestern students may wear to job interviews and keep for their professional careers, offering yet another way the Division serves the public.

Since NWOSU's last accreditation visit, leaders from the city of Enid have continued to identify a need in their community to increase the number of college graduates. The [Enid Higher Education Council, Inc.](#), a group of city leaders, lists as its primary purpose the fostering and support of higher education through the making of grants and/or contributions to educational institutions that enable them to meet the expenses of higher education and provide a quality education. This group meets quarterly with the two Enid higher educator providers, NWOSU and Northern Oklahoma College (NOC), regarding issues that affect higher education in Enid. The group also spearheads fundraising efforts to provide endowment and pass-through funds to support students who attend NWOSU or NOC. In collaboration with these institutions, this group supports a [Bridge Program](#) to encourage a seamless transfer to Northwestern for students who have completed associates degrees at any of NOC's campuses or sites.

The addition of an [early childhood education center](#), funded by a City of Enid bond and managed by Enid Public Schools (EPS), illustrates positive collaboration among NWOSU, EPS, and the Enid community. NWOSU leases property to Enid Public Schools; in return, EPS allows students in NWOSU programs access to the school so they may collaborate in instruction and conduct observations. Pending construction of the building in summer 2018, NWOSU currently hosts one early childhood classroom to begin the program.



NWOSU's Service Learning and Civic Engagement (SL/CE) program, which "strives to advance the participation in service learning and civic engagement in all degree programs, throughout standing campus organizations, and within the communities served by the university," also serves the public good. SL/CE seeks to "assist students in discovering an educational experience that will provide a service to our community and training for students within the realm of their individual degree focus." Service Learning Projects required through coursework range from students in ENGL 3153 Technical Writing helping the Ponca City Veteran's Day Parade Association with promotional documents to students in POLS 4703 Public Service Leadership helping the city of Alva with website redesign. The Computer Science Club's 24-hour gaming marathon that raised money for [Toys for Tots](#) in 2016 and the charity Child's Play in 2017 provides an example of a club's service learning project. Beginning in fall 2018, the Service Learning Coordinator will track within her assessment report more detailed data on the nature of annual service learning projects and the number of students involved.

### 1.D.2

#### **Primacy of the Educational Mission**

Academic endeavors reflect the primacy of Northwestern's educational responsibilities in the state system of higher education, as articulated in OSRHE's list of functions of regional universities. Academic functions of regional institutions include providing 1) lower- and upper-division undergraduate study in several fields leading to the baccalaureate degree; 2) a limited number of programs leading toward the first professional degree; 3) graduate study primarily in teacher education; and 4) responsibility for institutional and applied research in those areas related closely to their program assignments. Non-academic functions of regional universities include 1) extension and public service responsibilities in the geographic regions in which they are located, and 2) responsibility for regional programs of economic development. While the Northwestern Foundation [provides funding](#) for instructional resources and projects as well as student scholarships, the Foundation was established with the exclusive aim of providing support for the institution's academic endeavors.

### 1.D.3

#### **Engagement with External Stakeholders**

NWOSU engages with its identified external constituencies as its Mission and capacity allow, on both corporate and individual levels. The OSRHE has recognized Northwestern's excellence in civic engagement each of the last eleven years with a [Regents Business Partnership Excellence Award](#), which highlights successful partnerships and cultivates the higher learning environment through State Regents' Economic Development Grants.

The University partners with the Charles E. "Bill" Johnson Correctional Center (BJCC) to provide a dedicated substance abuse/cognitive behavioral [treatment program](#) under the auspices of the Oklahoma Department of Corrections. Located in Alva, the minimum security facility houses 630 adult, male, felon drug offenders, ages 18–55. Through its treatment program, BJCC returns substance abuse offenders to society with the tools necessary to be productive citizens. Northwestern

partners with BJCC under the terms of an Interlocal Cooperative Agreement to provide Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) to offenders in group and individual settings. Northwestern maintains a staff of six employees to manage this effort: a part-time treatment director who also serves on the faculty of Northwestern, a program assistant, and four treatment counselors. This project also provides valuable training for Northwestern students enrolled in the Master of Counseling Psychology program and other related programs who serve as treatment program interns.

The institution works diligently with public schools across its service area to provide educational opportunities. For example, the University collaborated on three United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Telemedicine grants with schools located in rural areas. These grants have improved the Interactive Television (ITV) capabilities of these schools and have given students additional avenues to access concurrent enrollment courses from Oklahoma colleges and universities. The 2017 USDA Distance and Telemedicine grant has allowed the University to update ITV equipment at the Woodward and Alva campus locations and to add or update end-user equipment at Oklahoma Panhandle State University, Goodwell High School, Woodward High School, James Crabtree Correctional Center, and Cimarron Memorial Hospital in Boise City. NWOSU's nursing faculty will offer quarterly professional development opportunities to hospital employees, saving them thousands of dollars in annual travel expenses.

In addition, Northwestern collaborates with Northwest Technology Center and other public schools to offer a summer first-aid [MASH boot camp](#), giving middle school students training in life-saving skills. A second MASH camp provides job shadowing opportunities for adolescents. Every summer the University also holds a [Summer Jump Start Program](#) in Math and English, sponsored by a Student Support Services (TRIO) grant, that provides incoming students with the opportunity to take remedial and co-requisite courses during the summer instead of during the fall semester.

Northwestern partners with 12 other universities in the Louis Stokes Oklahoma Alliance for Minority Participation in STEM ([LS-OKAMP STEM](#)). This program, funded by a National Science Foundation grant, encourages minority students to pursue degrees in STEM fields. It provides scholarships as well as funding for undergraduate research and travel costs associated with attending conferences and seminars in STEM fields. The Math and Computer Science Department and the Natural Science Department also offer a summer [Math and Science Academy](#), funded by endowment proceeds, that provides elementary and secondary students with a math and science enrichment program. The two departments also jointly hold a robotics competition each fall as part of the national robotics competition BEST—Boosting Engineering, Science, and Technology. The Charles Morton Share Trust Foundation, Cargill Salt, the Alva Tourism Board, MathWorks, BancCentral National Association, and Dowl Engineering sponsor Northwestern's BEST program and competition, which began in 2002.

Northwestern also partners with [INTEGRIS Bass Baptist Health Center](#) in Enid, Northern Oklahoma College, and the Area Health Education Consortium (AHEC) in support of the Ketterman Clinical Simulation Laboratory at the Enid campus location. With funding from these partners as well as from the Ketterman family and St. Mary's Regional Medical Center, the lab provides support for the clinical education of nursing students and hospital staff in northwest Oklahoma. Practicing healthcare professionals use the lab for skills practice, clinical scenario practice, certification classes, and continuing education. In addition, the lab conducts annual flu clinics for the University community and the community at large.

A [partnership](#) between the city-owned Alva Recreation Complex (ARC) and NWOSU continues to thrive. The ARC furnishes a soccer field and a softball field for Northwestern's intercollegiate

women's soccer and women's softball teams; in turn, Northwestern maintains and improves the fields that are available to high school and youth teams during the off-season. University students work as coaches, referees, and umpires for ARC activities. Similarly, Alva High School's football team plays its home games at NWOSU's Ranger Field. At times, Alva's High School baseball team uses Glass Field at Myers Stadium for practice.

Administered by the Service Learning/Civic Engagement Committee (SL/CE) with technical assistance from the Service Learning Coordinator, the SL/ICE program facilitates engagement. The Coordinator maintains a database of [community partners](#) and organizes volunteer efforts in response to specific community events such as annual blood drives, Alva's annual community garden clean-up, and band performances at Alva's Homestead retirement home. Recognizing the value of such activities, the Faculty Evaluation and Development Task Force includes community service as an essential component of the faculty evaluation process.

Many administrators, faculty members, and staff members model civic engagement for their campus communities. University employees serve on multiple boards and committees including the Alva City Council, the Share Medical Center Hospital Board, the Woods County Economic Development Committee, the Alva Area Chamber of Commerce, the Enid Chamber of Commerce, and the Woodward Chamber of Commerce. Many faculty also give presentations and provide workshops to area public schools and communities. Such presentations and workshops have occurred at the James Crabtree Correctional Center, the Alva Public Library, the Oklahoma Territorial Museum, the Cherokee Strip Regional Heritage Center, the Wewoka Public Library, and Graceful Arts Gallery and Studio.

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## 1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary

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The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.

### Summary

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During the fall 2015 semester, Northwestern Oklahoma State University's administration, faculty, staff, students, and stakeholders met to formulate its new Strategic Plan for 2016-2021, *Defining Our Future*. Members of the University reaffirmed the Mission Statement as still appropriate since it focuses on a quality curriculum, the needs of diverse learners, ethical leadership and service, and critical thinking and fiscal responsibility. Driven by this Mission Statement, the Strategic Plan represents NWOSU's move forward through effective leadership, a proactive approach to teaching and learning, and greater opportunities for service to northwest Oklahoma.

Both internal and external constituencies understand what the institution does and whom it serves. The University's Mission is made public in such venues as the Strategic Plan, the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs, the course catalog, course syllabi, and the University website. The Mission Statement guides the institution's day-to-day operations.

In alignment with the Mission, general education curriculum requires that all students address concepts of leadership, critical thinking, and fiscal responsibility. Beyond these priorities, the curriculum and other University practices reflect the institution's understanding of its role in a diverse society. NWOSU works to foster awareness of and engagement with other cultures, and it takes seriously its commitment to the public good.

### Sources

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*There are no sources.*

## 2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

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The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

### 2.A - Core Component 2.A

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The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions; it establishes and follows policies and processes for fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing board, administration, faculty, and staff.

#### Argument

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##### 2.A

##### **Fair and Ethical Policies and Procedures**

The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE) serve as the coordinating entity of control for the Oklahoma State System of Higher Education with powers, duties, and responsibilities defined by [Article XIII-A-2](#) of the Oklahoma Constitution and relevant state statutes. In order to assure the integrity and autonomy of the OSRHE Board, policy dictates that membership of the OSRHE cannot include state employees, state officials, or members of state university governing boards. Such statutory regulations as the Oklahoma Meetings Act and Open Records Act apply to State Regents' operations. The OSRHE oversees and enforces University procedures regarding governance, administrative operations, academic affairs, and student financial aid.

In addition, the Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO), as the governing body, oversees and controls the University's administrative, academic, and fiscal affairs. The RUSO Policy Manual states that a [goal](#) of the Board is to "encourage the practice of moral and ethical integrity in all institutional and Board activities." In addition, the Board [oversees accountability](#) of the University.

##### **Financial**

Federal and state of Oklahoma laws as well as Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education ([OSRHE policies and procedures](#)) and Regional University System of Oklahoma ([RUSO policies and procedures](#)) govern University business. The University stewards carefully the monies appropriated by the Oklahoma Legislature and allocated by OSRHE as well as the tuition, fees, and charges collected from students and received from other sources. The Board oversees [external](#) and [internal](#) audits.

Prioritizing expenditures and using resources effectively serve as hallmarks of NWOSU's institutional character, as evidenced by an open and inclusive [budget hearing process](#). Department chairs and supervisors gather input for budget [requests](#) from their respective department members. Requests related to significant University efforts must reference at least one of the five Strategic Directions outlined in the University's Strategic Plan.

NWOSU practices integrity in its [purchasing policies and procedures](#), as referenced in the Faculty

and Employee Handbooks. All purchase requests progress through varying levels of approval based upon the amount of a purchase. A well-defined bid process assists the University in ensuring that the best price is attained for products and services purchased for more than \$7,500. State statutes require a detailed process for bidding public construction projects. (Criterion 5.A provides a more detailed description of purchasing practices and policies.)

The University establishes tuition and fee rates after approval by RUSO and OSRHE. Students provide input on tuition and fees via the [Student Government Association](#). Student billing statements list all tuition, fees, and charges in an open and transparent manner.

The University has taken steps to reduce the financial burden on its students. For example, the University's President and Vice President for Academic Affairs participate in conferences for [Complete College America \(CCA\)](#), a national initiative started in 2011 with the purpose of increasing the number of career credentials and college degrees conferred over a twelve-year period and decreasing total time and subsequent expense for degree completion. With leadership by chairs and faculty members from both the English and Mathematics departments, NWOSU streamlined its remediation process in order to enroll students into credit-bearing courses sooner.

To further advance the goal of reducing students' financial burden, in 2014 the administration charged the General Education Committee with [reviewing](#) the general education curriculum. As an outcome of the review, the University reduced the number of general education credit hours from 54 to 45 and the number of hours for bachelor's degree completion from 124 to 120 beginning in the fall 2016 semester. Another initiative, dubbed the "15-to-Finish Campaign," encourages students to enroll in at least 15 hours each semester for timely degree completion. (This initiative is discussed in greater detail in Criterion 4.C.3.) These facts illustrate NWOSU's commitment to helping students achieve their undergraduate degrees in a timely manner and to provide the appropriate policies and support to do so.

## **Academic**

Current students may access complete and accurate information about academic policies in multiple formats. Primary sources for these policies include the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs, the Student Handbook, and the University website.

Future students may review admission requirements in the University's [Viewbook](#), on the Office of Recruitment webpage, and in the [Undergraduate](#) and [Graduate Catalogs](#). Admission policies include those for admission to freshman standing, special admission for non-degree-seeking students, alternative admission, adult admission, opportunity admission, and international student admission. The Graduate Catalog contains admission policies for students who elect to pursue a master's or doctoral-level degree. The Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs also include policies on acceptance of [transfer credit](#).

The Undergraduate Catalog contains requirements for general education and specific programs. There, students may access course descriptions and applicable prerequisites. The Undergraduate Catalog also contains policies on remedial education placement, English proficiency, academic forgiveness, satisfactory academic progress, and graduation. The Graduate Catalog contains not only admission requirements but also policies on graduate tuition and fees, complaint procedures, credit-hour regulations, study loads, retention and academic probation, time limits, and course validation procedures.

Academic divisions/departments maintain curricula to meet student learning outcomes. When assessment data warrant a curricular change, the department recommends revisions in the form of a [program modification](#) to the appropriate academic committees, as identified in the Faculty Handbook, including the Academic Affairs Committee, the Teacher Education Committee, and the Graduate Committee. Program modifications must also receive approval from the Dean of Faculty, the Vice President for Academic Affairs, and the President. All program modifications must receive [approval by OSRHE](#), as outlined in the Academic Affairs Procedures Handbook. (These processes are described in greater detail in Criterion 3.A.1.) Once program modifications enter the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs, students follow requirements in effect at the time they entered the University, or they may opt to follow the modified requirements. However, students who sit out one or more semesters must follow policies in place at the time of their re-admittance to the University. Students may not select from lists of requirements outlined in two or more catalogs.

Students experiencing unfair treatment may follow one of the [appeals processes](#), based on the nature of the appeal, as outlined in the Student Handbook. The Office of Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness collects all formal student complaints for future reference. The Student Handbook also contains procedures students must follow to file formal grievances concerning unique campus or classroom problems for which written policies do not exist. The faculty complaint protocol is listed on all NWOSU syllabi, while complaint procedures are listed in the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs.

Ethical leadership is also a major focus of the Mission Statement, making it the University's mission to cultivate "ethical leadership and service" in its students. This philosophy is fostered in such undergraduate courses as LEAD 1013 Habitudes; UNIV 1033 Leadership, Training, and Education; HUM 2643 Ethics in Life; GBUS 4933 Business Ethics; and UNIV 1041 Leadership Northwestern. This philosophy is also the focus of such graduate courses as SOC 5263 Public Service Leadership, PSYC 5013 Ethics, and EDUC 5943 Leadership in Adult Education Venues.

The [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974](#) (FERPA) governs the rights of students at Northwestern.

## **Personnel**

A fair hiring process characterizes the University's relationship with future employees. The [Faculty](#) and [Employee](#) Handbooks provide detailed procedures for hiring faculty members and other employees. Additional policies and procedures detail clearly the employer/employee relationship from hire to retirement, resignation, or termination.

NWOSU complies with all federal and state laws concerning [equal opportunity](#) and affirmative action, fair labor standards, and accommodations for individuals with disabilities. The Faculty Handbook, maintained by the Office of Academic Affairs, and the Employee Handbook, maintained by Human Resources, offer all policies and procedures with regard to personnel, including such policies as the Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action Policy and the Sexual Harassment Policy. As part of new faculty orientation, all faculty receive a hard copy of this manual. Electronic copies reside in [RangerNet](#), the University's faculty and student information system. Employees access [annual updates online](#), and Faculty Senate furnishes [input into the revision process](#) of the Faculty Handbook.

The Faculty Handbook also contains policies specific to academic responsibilities of faculty. Examples concerning faculty-student relations include policies on class attendance and admission



and withdrawal from classes. The Faculty Handbook ([5.2.2 Grievance Procedures](#)) clearly outlines procedures for handling grievances, including the election of a Grievance Committee at the start of each academic year to hear any grievances that may be filed. Grievances include breaches of policies, practices, procedures, and guidelines related to academic matters. The Employee Handbook ([7.8.7 Complaint Process](#)) and Faculty Handbook list procedures for filing a complaint related to sexual misconduct and/or harassment.

Chapter 5 of the RUSO Policy Manual, maintained by the RUSO Board office and serving as a guiding document for University policy, covers General Policies. Policies pertaining to nepotism, patents, copyrights, and privately-owned businesses may be found from sections [5.12 to 5.14](#). The RUSO Board believes that a safe, secure, and ethical workplace is paramount to the success of an institution. To that end, the Board provides [EthicsPoint](#), an online system that allows individuals to report discreetly and confidentially activities that they feel are unethical, illegal, or otherwise inappropriate to the Board Office. This can be accessed for use on the [RUSO webpage](#).

Effective communication protects the integrity of the institution; therefore, NWOSU incorporates a variety of strategies to facilitate communication across all campus locations. The University website and email serve as the primary modes of electronic communication. Full-time employees receive notification of important issues prior to public release. [General faculty meetings](#) occur at the beginning of the fall semester. The President also holds [conversations](#) with many individual faculty members and divisions/departments each academic year to facilitate the open exchange of ideas. NWOSU's executive team, [senior staff](#), and [department and division chairs](#) hold weekly or bimonthly meetings in order to facilitate two-way communication. All divisions/departments hold regular meetings to facilitate the appropriate sharing of information across the University. Faculty Senate leadership, the University President, and the Vice President for Academic Affairs meet monthly in order to address faculty issues and concerns in a timely manner. At the conclusion of each meeting, the Vice President for Academic Affairs shares notes with the Faculty Senate. The Faculty Senate [webpage](#) includes minute meetings for public review.

## **Auxiliary**

University food services, bookstore, Student Union, housing, stadium, and parking and safety comprise the student services auxiliary enterprises. [Chartwells Food Service](#) provides all food service operations for Northwestern, and the [Follett Higher Education Group](#) operates the University bookstore. Both vendors operate under detailed contracts approved by Northwestern administration and the RUSO Board. Review and evaluation of these contracts occur annually. Periodically, these services are bid to ensure that effective and efficient service at a reasonable cost is provided. The Vice President for Administration meets at least monthly with the directors of both operations to ensure quality standards and service.

The University operates printing services, housing, stadium facilities, and parking and safety internally. Student charges and [fees](#) fund these operations, which are subject to all University planning, budgeting, and auditing policies and procedures. Other internal service auxiliary operations include [Printing Services](#) and Information Technology. The Faculty Handbook, Employee Handbook, and Student Handbook list policies and procedures for use of [Information Technology](#). The [Faculty Handbook](#) also include policies related to printing.

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## 2.B - Core Component 2.B

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The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public with regard to its programs, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, control, and accreditation relationships.

### Argument

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#### 2.B

##### Programs, Requirements, and Faculty and Staff

Northwestern's [Undergraduate Catalog](#) and [Graduate Catalog](#) provide students, stakeholders, and the public with information about academic programs, degree requirements, graduation requirements, faculty/staff credentials, and course listings annually. Undergraduate students learn to use the Undergraduate Catalog as part of the freshman orientation class, UNIV 1011 Ranger Connection. Here they also learn more about the University's policies and procedures, building on what was covered during freshman and transfer student orientation sessions. Faculty orient graduate students to the graduate catalog in EDUC 5010 Graduate Study Seminar, taken during the first semester of enrollment. In this course, every graduate student either chooses or is assigned a graduate advisory committee—made up of three approved graduate faculty members, one of whom serves as chair and two who sit as members—that advises each graduate student. The University also publishes an annual [Viewbook](#), which includes degree programs, and makes it available at all campus locations and on the public University website.

##### Costs to Students

[Section II](#) of the Undergraduate Catalog, [Section I](#) of the Graduate Catalog, the [Paying for College](#) page on Northwestern's website, and the University's [course schedules](#) contain lists of student costs including tuition, fees, room and board, and estimated book costs; financial aid policies, practices, and requirements; and the student refund policy. A [cost calculator](#) located on the University website allows prospective students and their parents to estimate the cost of college based on family size and income. These calculations, used in tandem with information resources on Northwestern's student costs, provide immediate results to facilitate college selection.

The University Viewbook, designed and updated yearly and available to the public on the University's website and in hard copy, serves as a promotional and informational document for potential students and parents. A [section of this publication](#) focuses on student costs along with scholarship and financial aid opportunities. Events such as [Ranger Preview](#) and [Transfer Showcase](#) offer opportunities for prospective freshmen to tour the campus and ask questions concerning costs and financial assistance. [Freshman Connection](#) allows incoming students to complete their admission process and enroll in fall semester courses and allows families the opportunity to ask questions regarding cost and available financial assistance.

In keeping with the University's mission of fiscal responsibility, the [financial aid staff guides students and parents](#) through the process of applying for financial aid and informs them of the advantages and disadvantages of receiving student loans. This begins during financial outreach

nights sponsored by the University at local high schools. Potential students can find loan information, including the [default rate history](#), on the financial aid webpage. This page also provides a [link](#) to the Department of Education loan page with information pertaining to interest rates and repayment requirements. When leaving the University, students must complete an online exit process.

Upon enrollment, students receive a printed statement outlining estimated costs for tuition, fees, and room and board. Students also have online access to their enrollment and cost information and charges through [RangerNet](#).

## **Control**

As a state-assisted, regional public institution, NWOSU is structured and governed within the Oklahoma State System of Higher Education. Twenty-five colleges and universities, eleven constituent agencies, and two higher education centers comprise the state system.

As the coordinating body of control for all state institutions, the [Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education \(OSRHE\)](#) prescribes academic standards of higher education, determines functions and courses of study at state colleges and universities, grants degrees, recommends budget allocations for each college and university to the State Legislature, and recommends proposed fees within limits set by the Legislature.

The Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO) assumes responsibility for the operation and management of six regional universities in the state system and serves as Northwestern's governing body. In addition, the Board hires and evaluates RUSO university presidents. Information regarding the functions of the RUSO Board and its administrative office can be found via a [link](#) on the footer of every Northwestern webpage.

## **Accreditation**

The Higher Learning Commission accredits NWOSU. The public may access information about the University's affiliation with the HLC via another [link](#) on the footer of every Northwestern webpage. Four of NWOSU's divisions and departments maintain specialized accreditation: business, education, nursing, and social work. All specialized accrediting bodies are made public in the University's [Undergraduate Catalog](#) and on these specialized programs' [webpages](#). The University's new Doctor of Nursing Practice program will begin its accreditation process with the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) during the 2018-2019 academic year. Upon successful completion of this process, accreditation information will be included on the DNP webpage.

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## 2.C - Core Component 2.C

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The governing board of the institution is sufficiently autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution and to assure its integrity.

1. The governing board's deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.
2. The governing board reviews and considers the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations.
3. The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests or other external parties when such influence would not be in the best interest of the institution.
4. The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the administration and expects the faculty to oversee academic matters.

### Argument

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#### 2.C

The Board of Regents of the Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO) is constitutionally protected by the state of Oklahoma. As reflected in its [policy manual](#), RUSO maintains the supervision, management, and control of the senior regional universities under its jurisdiction and has additional powers and duties as enumerated in the [Oklahoma Statutes](#).

#### 2.C.1

##### Operating in Good Faith

To preserve and enhance the institutions it serves, the RUSO Board conducts six annual [open meetings](#) from September to June. NWOSU hosts one of these meetings biennially. [Section 1.9.2](#) details processes for these meetings. [Deliberations](#) about curricular matters such as program additions, modifications, and deletions reflect prioritization of institutional needs and well being. Meetings held on a campus include a [tour](#) of the host institution's facilities.

#### 2.C.2

##### Serving the Institution's Interests

The RUSO Policy Manual articulates Board functions in relation to constituencies of the institutions it governs. The Board accomplishes its functions through standing committees that include Audit and Finance, Educational Excellence, Facilities Stewardship, Pension, Personnel, Policy and Procedures, and Systems Advancement. [Section 1.9](#) of the RUSO Policy Manual prescribes activities and agendas for Board meetings. [Minutes](#) of Board meetings reflect results of the Board's decision-making process. The Board develops *ad hoc* committees as needed.

### 2.C.3

#### **Preserving Independence**

Each member of the RUSO Board takes an Oath of Office and a Loyalty Oath required of all Oklahoma state officials to preserve independence from undue influence as prescribed in [Section 1.2](#) of the RUSO Policy Manual. In addition, the [Manual](#) prescribes limitations for Board members and includes restrictions regarding professional affiliations of Board members. By adhering to these guidelines, RUSO strictly adheres to Oklahoma Ethics policies.

### 2.C.4

#### **Empowering the Institution's Personnel**

The RUSO Board assigns [management responsibilities](#) of the [University to the President](#) and also defines the [role of faculty](#) at regional institutions. In compliance with RUSO policy and as outlined in the NWOSU Faculty Handbook, faculty members hold primary responsibility for [academic matters](#). The Handbook also discusses the role of NWOSU's part-time faculty, articulates policies concerning faculty members' [academic freedom](#) and academic responsibilities, and describes the function of [Faculty Senate](#) in determining policy.

Academic matters are determined not only by the faculty but also by division/department chairs and designated faculty committees. The [Faculty Handbook](#) outlines duties of division/department chairs as well as duties of [standing committees](#). All graduate programs receive oversight from the [Graduate Committee](#).

## **Sources**

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- Faculty\_Handbook\_Div\_Dept\_Chairs\_2017\_2018
- Faculty\_Handbook\_Faculty\_Senate\_2017\_2018
- Faculty\_Handbook\_Faculty\_Senate\_Standing\_Committees\_2017\_2018
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## 2.D - Core Component 2.D

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The institution is committed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.

### Argument

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#### 2.D

##### Commitment to Freedom of Expression

NWOSU values diversity of thought and ideology, and the University's commitment to academic freedom resonates in its policies and practices. The Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO) Policy Manual and the University's [Faculty Handbook](#) outline faculty's rights to academic freedom, administrators' responsibility to protect these rights, and a well-defined grievance policy for faculty who feel that their academic freedom has been compromised. The absence of grievance filings in more than a decade validates the conclusion that faculty feel secure in exercising freedom of expression at the University.

NWOSU's procedures uphold freedom of expression broadly. Not only has the University established [designated free speech areas](#) on campus, but it also supports organizations with [diverse perspectives](#). Additionally, [RUSO policy](#) upholds students' rights to freedom of expression in student newspapers. A [sample of articles](#) in Northwestern's student newspaper, *The Northwestern News*, demonstrates the University's commitment to student [freedom of speech](#) even when that speech is critical of the University.

### Sources

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- Faculty\_Handbook\_Freedom\_Expression
- Northwestern\_News\_Secular\_Student\_Alliance\_2015
- Northwestern\_News\_Ranger\_Pulse\_Free\_Speech.pdf
- Northwestern\_News\_Sample\_Articles
- RUSO\_Policy\_Manual\_Freedom\_Expression
- Student\_Services\_Student\_Handbook\_Demonstrations\_Peaceful\_Assesmbly

## 2.E - Core Component 2.E

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The institution's policies and procedures call for responsible acquisition, discovery and application of knowledge by its faculty, students and staff.

1. The institution provides effective oversight and support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff, and students.
2. Students are offered guidance in the ethical use of information resources.
3. The institution has and enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.

### Argument

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#### 2.E.1

##### Effective Oversight and Support

Northwestern's oversight and support practices and policies ensure that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly during their time at the University.

The Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) manages the approval processes for grant submissions and research projects undertaken at NWOSU. The OSP also provides support to the University community in the acquisition and administration of externally funded projects for research, teaching, and service. The Office ensures the responsible stewardship of research funding and oversees the submission of proposals and the negotiation and acceptance of awards with an atmosphere of professionalism and collaboration.

A major area of responsibility of the OSP is to assist the Principal Investigator (PI) in the preparation and submission of grants, contracts, and cooperative agreement proposals, authorizing all grants, contracts, and cooperative agreements representing University obligations. Any NWOSU faculty or staff member who requests project funds from external sources must submit a [Proposal Planning Sheet](#) before doing so. The OSP acts as a liaison between the [granting agencies and the University](#) and reports to the Vice President for Academic Affairs. It also coordinates with the NWOSU Foundation on non-governmental grants.

The University's OSP also manages research projects involving human or animal subjects and facilitates prior approval from the [Institutional Review Board \(IRB\)](#) or the [Institutional Animal Use and Care Committee \(IACUC\)](#). Subsequently, a researcher who plans to conduct research on human subjects must first submit a [Review of Human Participants Research Form](#) to be approved by the IRB. The Institutional Review Board/Independent Ethics Committee (IRB/IEC) provides critical oversight by reviewing, approving, and monitoring research involving humans and animals with the aim of protecting the rights and welfare of the subjects. In spring 2017, NWOSU updated and streamlined the IRB process with [input](#) from the IRB/IEC, selected faculty members, and other stakeholders. (These processes are discussed in greater detail in Criterion 3.B.5.)

Every fall semester, the Office of Graduate Studies sponsors [Ranger Research Day \(RRD\)](#) on the Alva campus, which provides an opportunity for undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty to share research projects through poster or paper presentations. All student projects are

sponsored by a faculty member who oversees the research methodology to ensure the responsible acquisition of data. Judges use [formal rubrics](#) to determine the top three presenters in each discipline. To help with continual improvement, the judges provide score sheets identifying areas of strengths and weaknesses in the presentation and research methodology to student-presenters and sponsoring faculty members. RRD allows an opportunity for research methodologies and findings to be shared with NWOSU's students, colleagues, staff, and the Alva community, thereby promoting a culture of research on campus. During the event, art students are also allowed to submit their creative work to be judged. Approximately sixty participants present thirty to forty projects each year.

RRD presenters are invited to share their research at Oklahoma Research Day (ORD), an event sponsored every spring by the state's regional universities. ORD brings together the [state's higher education faculty and students](#) in a central location to present approximately 500 projects from between 600 to 1,000 participants. The event also allows students, colleagues, and faculty from other universities to network with one another. In 2017 and 2018, NWOSU hosted [Oklahoma Research Day](#). This year, the University saw its largest participation ever with 47 students.

## 2.E.2

### **Ethical Use of Information**

Northwestern students receive guidance in the ethical use of information resources from faculty and staff in several ways. The English Department teaches incoming students to document sources properly and to avoid plagiarism in [English composition courses](#), and all faculty reinforce the importance of these practices throughout students' academic and professional careers. Instructors of [UNIV 1011 Ranger Connection](#) include material on academic integrity as part of the freshman orientation course. All [faculty syllabi](#) contain a definition of plagiarism as well as the professors' own policy concerning plagiarism.

To avoid academic dishonesty, students involved in research may take advantage of Turnitin.com, a web-based platform designed to assist students with grammar, correct citation, and avoiding plagiarism. Faculty members also take advantage of Turnitin.com when grading research and other assignments from students. Since fall 2012, Turnitin.com resources have been [integrated](#) with the Blackboard Learning Management System to facilitate their use.

University Printing Services posts and distributes copyright law of the United States (Title 17 U.S. Code) and enforces it on campus. Library Services also [guides students](#) in the ethical use of information resources. Neither University Printing Services nor Library Services allows students to make copies of or to disseminate copyrighted material.

To provide additional oversight for student research, NWOSU's Psychology Department started an anti-plagiarism campaign in 2016, providing workshops on plagiarism as well as sponsoring a student poster contest concerning plagiarism. The department displayed these [posters](#) and other fliers around all campus locations to inform students about different aspects of plagiarism.

## 2.E.3

### **Promotion of Integrity**

NWOSU promotes an environment of academic integrity. The [Student Handbook](#) contains the University's definition of academic dishonesty, and the [Faculty Handbook](#) reinforces the importance of academic integrity. As a standing committee, the University's [Grievance Committee](#) may address issues of student plagiarism, cheating, and academic dishonesty if the problem has not been resolved in meetings between the student and instructor or among the student, instructor, and division/department chair. To ensure fairness in its decision making, the Grievance Committee consists of six faculty members, each from a different division/department at the University.

As part of the mission to “cultivate ethical leadership and service,” the University fulfills its moral and legal obligations with the use of copyright-protected work, as reflected in the [Student Handbook](#) and [Faculty Handbook](#). The University Print Shop enforces federal copyright law, requiring individuals who are requesting duplication of copyrighted material to either identify how the request falls within fair-use guidelines or obtain permission from the author of the original work. The Print Shop keeps on file the [form granting permission for duplication](#). The University also adheres to copyright laws concerning electronic media, including music, paying [yearly licensing fees](#) for the use of music in the Communication and Fine Arts Departments. Additionally, Northwestern pays [licensing fees to publishers](#) for the rights to all theatrical productions.

In addition, many divisions/departments at NWOSU have adopted a code of ethics specific to their academic discipline. These include the [Division of Business Student Code of Ethics](#), the [Nursing Student Handbook](#), the [Student Teaching Handbook](#), and the [Social Work Student Handbook](#). The policies adopted by each of the listed divisions, departments, and programs help to ensure that students adhere to academic honesty and integrity guidelines and policies.

## Sources

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- Blackboard\_Turnitin\_Integration
- Business\_Code\_of\_Ethics
- ENGL\_Comp\_Syllabi.pdf
- Faculty\_Handbook\_Academic\_Integrity\_2017\_2018
- Faculty\_Handbook\_Copyright\_Law\_2017\_2018
- Faculty\_Handbook\_Grievance\_Procedure\_2017\_2018
- Fine\_Arts\_Licensing\_Fees.pdf
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- [OSP\\_Proposal\\_Planning\\_Sheet](#)
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- [Psychology\\_Anti\\_Plagiarism\\_Poster\\_Contest](#)
- [Ranger\\_Research\\_Day\\_Abstracts\\_Fall\\_2017](#)
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- [SOCW\\_Student\\_Handbook\\_Code\\_of\\_Ethics](#)
- [Student\\_Services\\_Student\\_Handbook\\_Academic\\_Dishonesty\\_2017\\_2018](#)
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## 2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary

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The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

### Summary

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Northwestern Oklahoma State University expresses responsibility as one of its Core Values. The University maintains ethical standards and accountability by adhering to the following directives: “act with integrity and accept responsibility, use our resources in the most effective and efficient manner possible, conduct business in an atmosphere of transparency, and promote a culture of continuous improvement.”

In order to "act with integrity and responsibility," Northwestern follows policies and procedures outlined in University handbooks, the Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO) Policy Manual, and the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSHRE) Policy and Procedures Manual. This allows for transparency and unbiased decision-making by administration.

Prioritizing expenditures and using resources effectively serve as hallmarks of NWOSU’s institutional character. To aid with such transparency for faculty, staff, and stakeholders, the administration holds open budget meetings each spring semester. Funding requests for significant University efforts reference at least one of five Strategic Directions outlined in the University’s Strategic Plan.

Academic divisions/departments maintain curricula to meet student learning outcomes. When assessment data warrant a curricular change, the division/department recommends revisions in the form of a program modification to the appropriate academic committees. These program modifications must receive approval by OSRHE. These processes show that the University is dedicated to continuous improvement and responsible practice.

### Sources

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*There are no sources.*

## 3 - Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support

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The institution provides high quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

### 3.A - Core Component 3.A

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The institution's degree programs are appropriate to higher education.

1. Courses and programs are current and require levels of performance by students appropriate to the degree or certificate awarded.
2. The institution articulates and differentiates learning goals for undergraduate, graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate, and certificate programs.
3. The institution's program quality and learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery and all locations (on the main campus, at additional locations, by distance delivery, as dual credit, through contractual or consortial arrangements, or any other modality).

## Argument

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### 3.A.1

#### Course and Program Rigor

Northwestern Oklahoma State University utilizes several tools to ensure that courses and programs remain current and relevant, requiring levels of student performance appropriate to the degree awarded. These tools include annual updated catalogs, program modifications and reviews, department and division assessments, and specialized accreditation.

Northwestern updates its [Undergraduate](#) and [Graduate Catalogs](#) annually, giving faculty members opportunities to revise courses and programs as necessary to remain current. An academic division/department with the need to modify the core curriculum of a degree program completes a required [program modification form](#) that includes a rationale for the requested adjustment. Program modifications must receive approval from the Academic Affairs Committee and the Associate Vice President for Academics before moving to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and the President. The President submits the program modification to the Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO) and the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE) for review and approval. From fall 2014 to fall 2017, NWOSU submitted 69 [program modifications](#) to OSRHE. Additionally, the University has sought and received approval for the following new programs from fall 2014 to fall 2017: [Doctorate of Nursing Practice](#), [Master of Science in General Psychology](#), and [Certificate in Grief and Bereavement](#).

All academic programs undergo a formal five-year program review as required by [OSRHE policy](#). Divisions and departments provide the required data outlined in the policy manual, generally utilizing the format of the [Program Summary Review Template](#) to accompany the required Program Review Executive Summary. Academic programs with specialized accreditation include [Nursing](#), [Education](#), [Business](#), and [Social Work](#). As part of the accreditation process, these units meet



requirements designed to ensure that courses and programs are current, relevant, and consistent with national standards.

Northwestern adheres to the policy of OSRHE when [defining the credit hour](#). Hybrid and online courses may use alternatives to reliance on time-in-class as the basis for determining academic credit hours earned. In these cases, the achievement of academic credit hours is linked to demonstrated student learning either through regular class assignments and evaluations or through the demonstration of competencies.

### 3.A.2

#### **Articulated Learning Goals**

Each undergraduate and graduate program maintains [student learning outcomes](#) appropriate to the degree level. Divisional/Departmental webpages include undergraduate student learning outcomes that inform divisional/departmental assessment, as mandated in NWOSU's Strategic Plan.

Concomitant with a reduction of the general education program from 54 to 45 hours based on an analysis and recommendation of the [General Education Committee](#), the minimum number of hours required for successful completion of an undergraduate degree also changed from 124 to 120 hours, beginning with the [2016 Undergraduate Catalog](#). The general education program builds a foundation for all degree programs and offers opportunities for students to develop competencies in critical thinking, leadership, and literacy ([General Education Mission Statement](#)). The Undergraduate Catalog offers course descriptions for courses numbered from 1000 to 4000.

Northwestern master's programs range in hour requirements from 32 to 48 hours, culminating in a comprehensive exam, capstone project, action research project, or thesis. The University offers master's degree programs in Education, Counseling Psychology, General Psychology, and American Studies, and one 73-hour doctoral program in Nursing Practice (BSN-to-DNP online) that includes 1020 practicum hours. Graduate programs designate goals and/or student learning outcomes specific to each degree in the [Graduate Catalog](#).

A 5000- or 6000-level number designates a graduate-level course. The University offers all core courses in the Master of Education, Master of Counseling Psychology, Master of Science in General Psychology, and Doctor of Nursing Practice programs only at the graduate level. In addition, certification options such as Educational Leadership, Reading Specialist, and School Counseling require courses offered only at the graduate level.

In other graduate degree programs, NWOSU offers split-level courses numbered as either 3000 or 4000 at the undergraduate level and 5000 at the graduate level. Students may take split-level graduate courses as part of the Master of Arts in American Studies program; as hours toward a "field-specific subject" for the Master of Education in Adult Education Management and Administration option; or as "related areas of study" courses for the Master of Education Non-Certificate option. Students' graduate advisory committees approve these courses. Graduate components within the course syllabi of split-level courses are [distinct](#) from the undergraduate components of these courses in requirements and rigor.

The University employs additional measures to ensure that graduate and undergraduate programs are differentiated. The Graduate Committee supervises the graduate program and recommends program-related policy. The Graduate Catalog details the duties of the Graduate Committee under

[“Administration of the Graduate Program.”](#)

### 3.A.3

#### Consistent Program Quality

Northwestern’s Strategic Plan calls for the University to “increase online course and other program offerings while ensuring rigorous standards and student learning outcomes.” Northwestern’s large geographic service area in northwest Oklahoma requires multiple delivery platforms to meet the needs of learners from various locations. Therefore, the University not only offers face-to-face courses but also supports Interactive Television (ITV), hybrid, and online delivery of courses. Syllabi illustrate consistent student learning outcomes [across all modes](#) and in all locations. In addition, course evaluations provide feedback on course effectiveness in all modalities, and faculty members use this feedback to modify courses as needed. Because concurrent students attend the same courses as University students, typically via ITV, consistent standards and learning outcomes are achieved.

The Northwestern Online Learning Committee oversees the University’s online education efforts with a well-defined set of [goals](#). Policies and practices of the Online Learning Committee ensure consistency. Faculty and divisional/departmental proposals for online courses must be submitted for review and approval by the [Online Learning Committee](#) in the semester before the course will be taught. The committee returns submissions that are not approved with suggestions for improvement and encouragement to the faculty member to resubmit. In fall 2017, the committee revised the [Online Course Proposal Form](#) to include a request for information about how “teaching this online course will meet the department’s long-term strategy and priorities and/or program needs.” Northwestern’s [Online Programs webpage](#) includes the [Online Education Policy](#), a student complaint section, and numerous support resources, such as tutorials on the effective use of Blackboard, to ensure student success.

Northwestern also supports quality of distance education by employing a full-time Online Learning Coordinator, a full-time ITV Coordinator, online helpdesk staff, and multiple classroom proctors to facilitate a positive distance education experience. While budget cuts have caused some reduction in staff, procedures have been implemented to ensure adequate support for faculty. The [Request for Dedicated Proctor form](#), adopted in fall 2016 and revised in spring 2018, reflects this priority. In addition to the positions listed above, the University employs a courier to transport class materials on a daily basis among all campus locations.

#### Sources

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- [Business\\_Continued\\_Accreditation.pdf](#)
- [Departmental\\_Webpages\\_Student\\_Learning\\_Outcomes.pdf](#)
- [Education\\_Continued\\_Accreditation](#)

- ENGL1113\_Consistent\_SLOs\_Different\_Modes
- Executive\_Summary\_Program\_Review\_Spch\_Theatre
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- Program\_Modifications\_List
- SOCW\_Accreditation\_Letter\_2013
- Undergraduate\_Catalog\_2017\_2018.pdf
- Undergraduate\_Catalog\_Defining\_Credit\_Hours

## 3.B - Core Component 3.B

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The institution demonstrates that the exercise of intellectual inquiry and the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning and skills are integral to its educational programs.

1. The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings, and degree levels of the institution.
2. The institution articulates the purposes, content, and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements. The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.
3. Every degree program offered by the institution engages students in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information; in mastering modes of inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.
4. The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity of the world in which students live and work.
5. The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their programs and the institution's mission.

## Argument

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### 3.B.1

#### General Education and University Mission

General education at NWOSU addresses both specific components of Northwestern's Mission and broad strategic goals: the 45-hour general education curriculum offers "quality educational opportunities" identified in its [Mission Statement](#) and "meaningful content and experiences to prepare graduates for successful careers and service to society" identified in Strategic Direction 1 of the University's [Strategic Plan](#). The 45-hour requirement associated with the undergraduate bachelor's degree surpasses minimum expectations identified in the [OSRHE Policy Manual](#). Specifically, [general education](#) curriculum addresses "ethical leadership" and "fiscal responsibility" components of the Mission by requiring a course in leadership and a course in personal finance.

### 3.B.2

#### General Education Framework and Philosophy

Northwestern's general education curriculum flows from the guiding philosophy identified in the [General Education Mission Statement](#): "The general education program at Northwestern Oklahoma State University provides a foundation for all degree programs and offers opportunities for students to develop competencies in critical thinking, leadership, and literacy." In addition, the general education program follows the general education framework identified in the [July 2017 OSRHE Policy Manual](#).

Using the general education curriculum and assessment procedures implemented in 2007 as a starting point, the General Education Committee [initiated a review](#) of the curriculum during the 2014-2015 academic year. As a result, the committee reduced the number of hours required in the general education curriculum from 54 to 45, retained the existing general education learning outcomes with minor refinements, and made more efficient the general education assessment process by embedding standardized [assessment instruments](#) in specified courses. The resulting 45-hour general education curriculum received [approval](#) of the Academic Affairs Committee and administration as well as [OSRHE approval](#) for implementation in fall 2016. The [new assessment process](#) is only in its first year of data collection, so analysis of those results is incomplete.

Faculty and students may access general education requirements in the [Undergraduate Catalog](#) and under the [General Education Assessment](#) tab of the Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness webpage, which also includes information about general education competencies, data and reports, and the General Education Committee.

### 3.B.3

#### Degree Programs and Essential Skills

The University's general education program [competencies](#) ensure that all students engage in courses that require collecting, analyzing, and communicating information. Students practice these skills in courses across the general education curriculum but do so particularly in Section II, "Communication and Symbols," and Section IV, "Natural Science." In addition to general education courses that require these activities, specific academic program curricula contain courses that address collecting, analyzing, and communicating information. These courses, such as the examples outlined in this [table](#), encompass an array of activities including research components, projects, required recitals or performances, civic engagement and service learning opportunities, and internships. In keeping with the Mission, the General Education curriculum's emphasis on "critical thinking, leadership, and literacy" prepares students to adapt to changing environments. All of Northwestern's graduate programs require students to master modes of inquiry in addition to engaging in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information. Each program fulfills its [objectives](#) with specific coursework included in [graduate syllabi](#).

### 3.B.4

#### Curriculum and Diversity Engagement

Northwestern's educational programs address diversity through both the [general education curriculum](#) and through discipline-specific offerings. The [general education student learning outcomes](#) include explaining the scope and value of human diversity. The general education curriculum addresses this student learning outcome and engages discussions of diversity within a minimum of 9 hours of study in the areas of Values and Beliefs, and Human Heritage and Culture. [Discipline-specific courses](#) take a practical approach to addressing diversity within their field, such as Diversity Issues in Death, Grief, and Bereavement; International Marketing; Adapted Physical Education; Cross-Cultural Management; Multicultural Education; and Social Diversity. The Office of Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness has also identified courses that are connected to

this [diversity-related competency](#). While diversity-related content is reinforced in multiple courses, the redesigned approach to assessment of general education student learning outcomes designates a specific course for measurement of the SLO. This diversity competency is measured through embedded assessment in [HUM 2533 Music in Life](#). The [2017 NSSE results](#) reflect that 55% of responding seniors indicated their courses had often or very often included diverse perspectives in class discussions or writing assignments as compared to 49% in comparable Southwest Public Universities. (Criterion 1.C.2 includes an extended discussion of diversity-related activities beyond the classroom setting.)

### 3.B.5

#### **Scholarship, Creative Work, and Discovery of Knowledge**

Although teaching comprises the most significant component of faculty responsibility, scholarly activity remains a vital element of faculty work. According to [faculty evaluation guidelines](#), faculty members may select a category weight between 5% and 25% for value assigned to scholarly activity in the portfolio review process. Creditable activities include evaluation of publications, professional presentations, professional artistic production or performance, ongoing research, completion of an advanced degree, and receiving awards for scholarly activity.

#### **Institutional Support for Scholarly Work**

To support faculty members and students in their scholarly efforts, the University established an [Office of Sponsored Programs \(OSP\)](#) in 2007. The Director of Sponsored Programs manages approval processes for grant submissions and research projects involving human or animal subjects. Principal investigators seeking external grants must receive approval from the [Grants Oversight Committee \(GOC\)](#). Investigators who submit a grant proposal with GOC approval receive an incentive stipend of \$100. For each funded proposal, the Investigator/Co-Investigators receive an additional \$150. Researchers who will involve [human or animal subjects](#) in their projects must receive prior approval from the [Institutional Review Board \(IRB\)](#) or the [Institutional Animal Use and Care Committee \(IACUC\)](#) before initiating the project. The IRB processed fifty-five student applications and one faculty application for spring, summer, and fall of 2017, and the IACUC approved one student application.

In January 2017, the University hired a new OSP Director with a focus on improving efficiency and conserving resources. Applications to the Institutional Review Board, Institutional Animal Use and Care Committee, and Grants Oversight Committee are now submitted, reviewed, and signed electronically. The OSP offers student, staff, and faculty [training](#) to facilitate the IRB application process and reduce required revisions. The Director monitors many professional development and grant opportunities, sharing them with the appropriate faculty and administration and offering a reminder service for important grant deadlines and other dates. The OSP maintains an open-door policy to provide technical assistance to faculty and staff in all processes it oversees.

The [2017 Annual Report](#) of the Office of Sponsored Programs indicates that faculty, staff members, and administration submitted a total of 24 grant proposals totaling \$1,721,617 during the 2016-2017 academic year, with 20 of those being funded for a total of \$1,434,510. Funding sources include federal, state, local, and private entities. The [Northwestern Foundation & Alumni Association](#) processes private funds. After a stable two years (\$1,962,829 in FY15 and \$1,958,345 in

FY16) in grant funding, the University experienced a \$524,000 decrease in awards due to lack of availability of some previous funding sources and faculty engagement with other commitments in FY17.

### **Opportunities to Share Scholarly Work**

Opportunities for students to participate in individual and faculty-collaborative research projects occur through independent studies, special topics courses, and capstone courses. Examples of discipline-specific research courses include GBUS 3753 Business Research, MCOM 4432 Introduction to Media Research, NURS 4003 Research Utilization, PSYC 4222 Research Methodology, SOC 4723 Social Research and Evaluation, and AMST 5113 Interdisciplinary Research in American Studies. [NSSE results](#) from 2017 indicate that 84% of Northwestern senior respondents participated in at least one *High-Impact Practice* (Learning Community, Service Learning, Research with Faculty, Internship, Study Abroad, and Culminating Senior Experience). This compares to an 80% average for other Southwest Public universities.

Initiated in 2007, [Ranger Research Day](#) provides a venue for students and faculty members to exhibit research publicly with poster or paper presentations in a number of designated categories. Participants in Ranger Research Day automatically become eligible to participate in [Oklahoma Research Day](#) (ORD), along with faculty members and students from all state institutions of higher education. In addition, the first place winner of Ranger Research Day receives a nomination to participate in [Research Day at the Capitol](#), sponsored by the Oklahoma Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research.

Students also engage in creative application of their knowledge. For example, Computer Science students developed an environmentally friendly [ORD mobile app](#) in 2017 and updated it in 2018. The app provided the schedule, guidebook, and helpful information for participants and attendees at the 2017 and 2018 ORD events hosted by NWOSU. Students in this program are currently developing an app for the Northwestern Foundation and Alumni Association. In 2018, physics students proposed to senior administration a "musical highway" that would play a portion of the University fight song when a vehicle passes over a modified portion of roadway near campus. Individual senior theatre students regularly present public performances of productions for which they serve as directors and designers.

Many faculty members engage regularly in creative and scholarly activities in their fields of study. Fine arts faculty [share creative activities](#) by presenting concerts and art exhibits both at the University and in communities served by Northwestern. As reported in *The Spotlight*, a newsletter published each semester since 2015 through the Dean of Faculty's office, Faculty regularly [present](#) and [publish](#) research. In FY19, as part of its Annual Academic Assessment Plan, the Office of Graduate Studies will begin tracking and publishing information regarding all faculty research.

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## 3.C - Core Component 3.C

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The institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services.

1. The institution has sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty members to carry out both the classroom and the non-classroom roles of faculty, including oversight of the curriculum and expectations for student performance; establishment of academic credentials for instructional staff; involvement in assessment of student learning.
2. All instructors are appropriately qualified, including those in dual credit, contractual, and consortial programs.
3. Instructors are evaluated regularly in accordance with established institutional policies and procedures.
4. The institution has processes and resources for assuring that instructors are current in their disciplines and adept in their teaching roles; it supports their professional development.
5. Instructors are accessible for student inquiry.
6. Staff members providing student support services, such as tutoring, financial aid advising, academic advising, and co-curricular activities, are appropriately qualified, trained, and supported in their professional development.

## Argument

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### 3.C.1

#### Faculty and Instruction

Though state budget reductions have strained personnel funding in recent years, several indicators provide evidence that NWOSU has prioritized maintaining sufficient faculty to support classroom and non-classroom roles. A student-faculty ratio of approximately [17 to 1](#) indicates an appropriate number of faculty members to perform instructional duties. With the exception of three additional faculty members in the new Doctor of Nursing Practice program, the present [number of full-time faculty](#) remains virtually unchanged from fall 2014.

Adjunct faculty members play an important role in delivering instruction at Northwestern. Fall 2017 saw 65 adjunct faculty members employed, with 21 in the School of Education, 17 in the School of Professional Studies, and 27 in the School of Arts and Sciences. Credit hours generated by adjuncts number 6,683, representing 26% of the total number of credit hours generated at Northwestern that semester.

As a teaching institution, and per Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO) [policy](#), Northwestern requires a full-time faculty instructional load of 24 to 27 hours per academic year. In addition to instructional responsibilities, non-classroom activities for faculty members include advising, scholarly and creative activities, service on governance and administrative committees, and other service commitments.

#### Faculty Non-Instructional Activities

Non-classroom activities of faculty members include University governance. Sixteen [standing committees](#) help guide University practice pertaining to students, staff, faculty, University events, student life, appeals processes, and more. Committees consist of representatives from across the University: administrators, faculty, students, staff, and in some instances, members of the communities the University serves (Teacher Education Committee, for example); however, faculty comprise the majority of members. Committees generally maintain experienced members from year to year. After their first year of University service, all full-time faculty members serve on a committee or serve a special assignment at the University (some science faculty oversee the museum, for example). Each academic year, faculty members [submit preferences](#) for committee assignments to the Faculty Senate, which then makes recommendations to the Vice President for Academic Affairs for final committee assignment.

Faculty Senate serves as the governance body for the faculty and encourages, promotes, and channels faculty participation in the shaping of University policy ([Faculty Handbook](#)). Faculty elect academic school and at-large representatives in staggered years. Faculty Senate holds regular meetings, and Senate officers meet regularly with the President and Vice President for Academic Affairs to discuss items of interest and concern. Recent Faculty Senate initiatives that have shaped University policy and practice are reviews of [the office hour policy](#) for faculty (2016), [distribution of representatives](#) by academic school on the Online Education Committee (2017), and the [frequency and use of student evaluations](#) in the tenure review and consideration process (2018).

Faculty members from all departments serve on search committees when academic job openings occur at the University. With the guidance of the Dean of Faculty and chair of the area of vacancy, the committee determines [specific processes and timelines](#) to govern the search. Committee member involvement throughout the selection and interview process ensures job applicants have the appropriate qualifications and background. Department chairs work in conjunction with the Dean of Faculty when the need for adjunct instructors arises.

Faculty members at NWOSU oversee the curriculum and expectations for student performance. Northwestern faculty members identify [student learning outcomes](#) (SLOs), listed on the NWOSU website, for each program. These SLOs create the foundation for course objectives and evaluation processes. Faculty members assess student learning at all levels, including general education competencies and program-specific student learning outcomes. (These processes are discussed in greater detail in Criterion 4.) Faculty members in each department or division participate in [program reviews](#) and make recommendations for program modifications on a periodic basis, according to guidelines established by [OSRHE](#).

### **3.C.2**

#### **Faculty Qualifications**

Northwestern Oklahoma State University fosters academic excellence by recruiting, hiring, and retaining appropriately qualified faculty. NWOSU confirms the credentials of each faculty member according to the policies of the Higher Learning Commission ([Faculty Handbook 3.2.3](#)). Effective May 2017, each department and division chair is required to complete a formal [Faculty Qualifications Review](#) as part of the hiring process for all full-time and adjunct faculty. The Dean of Faculty and the Vice President for Academic Affairs verify this review. Faculty credentials are posted yearly in the [Undergraduate Catalog](#). In areas where professional experience is important, the

University recruits faculty members based on both education and practical knowledge.

The [graduate program faculty](#) consists of specified University administrators and members of the general faculty who have been [recommended](#) by their division/department chairs and approved by the Dean of Faculty and the Graduate Committee. Reappointment to a graduate faculty position currently requires the approval of the division/department chair, the Dean of Faculty, the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies, and the Graduate Committee; the Graduate Committee will review this reappointment procedure in 2019. Only graduate faculty may teach graduate courses or serve as members of graduate students' advisory committees. The [Graduate Catalog](#) specifies standards for Permanent Graduate Faculty, Associate Graduate Faculty, and Temporary Graduate Faculty.

[Employing qualified faculty](#) is a priority of the University. Approximately 62% of faculty members held a doctoral degree as of [fall 2016](#), as compared to 59.8% in fall 2014 and 53.75% in fall 2009. In addition to the full-time faculty, the University employs qualified adjunct faculty members. During the 2017-2018 academic year, 18% of adjuncts held doctorates, 74% held master's degrees, and 8% held bachelor's degrees. Faculty members holding only bachelor's degrees teach primarily developmental English and mathematics courses. Division/Department chairs are working with these adjunct faculty members on plans to remove deficiencies as a condition of future employment. Because concurrent students attend the same courses as University students, typically via ITV, concurrent faculty are equally qualified.

Northwestern participates in [Oklahoma's Reach Higher](#) program, an adult degree completion initiative established by OSRHE. The program, administered by a consortium of nine Oklahoma public higher education universities, leads to a Bachelor of Science degree in organizational leadership. Appropriately credentialed faculty members from each of the participating institutions teach courses in this program. All participating universities follow the policies of OSRHE and are accredited by the Higher Learning Commission.

### 3.C.3

#### **Faculty Evaluation Processes**

Northwestern employs a comprehensive [faculty evaluation](#) system consisting of multiple components and developed through input from faculty members. Specific components include self-evaluation, peer evaluations, administrative evaluations, and student evaluations. All non-tenured faculty members must participate in this process annually. Faculty members eligible for promotion, tenure, or tenure review must also participate.

Central to the faculty evaluation system, portfolios are structured around the five specific elements identified in the section headings of the [Faculty Evaluation Rubric](#). Each faculty member must select a preferred weight from prescribed ranges for each category based on self-perceived strengths, then complete a self-evaluation and provide evidence for claims. The [Faculty Evaluation and Development \(FEAD\)](#) webpage contains specific instructions for completing a portfolio. While adjunct faculty do not prepare portfolios, chairs use student course evaluations to assess these instructors and make future hiring decisions.

Faculty peers and administrators participate in portfolio review according to prescribed processes. Each faculty member selects one peer reviewer and provides a list of suggested faculty members from

which the division/department chair selects the second peer reviewer. The chair conducts the administrative evaluation for his/her division/department faculty members, with the appropriate academic dean filling that function for chairs scheduled to be evaluated. Peer and administrative reviewers utilize the Aurora Learning Community Association ([ALCA](#)) Assessment System, adopted in 2016, to complete evaluations and access scoring rubrics. The University moved from the LiveText system to the ALCA system to make preparing and assessing the portfolio as well as generating reports more efficient.

Students participate in course and instructor evaluations of all adjunct and full-time faculty members each fall to ensure quality instruction. Prior to fall 2018, tenured faculty could opt to be evaluated in tenure review years only. (See 3.C.1 above.) Spring or summer evaluations may occur at the request of the dean, chair, or faculty member. The [Office of Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness](#) schedules each class in a computer lab during a specified time frame for students to submit evaluations online. Faculty members receive results of those evaluations immediately after submitting grades for the course in order to shape content and instruction for the following semester.

After completion of all components in the faculty evaluation process, the Dean of Faculty compiles an overall composite rating for each faculty member based on individual data sets submitted. Each faculty member receives a [scoring summary sheet](#) as well as written comments from peer and administrative reviewers. Each division/department chair discusses these results with individual faculty. The FEAD committee monitors effectiveness of the faculty evaluation process and makes recommendations for improvements as needed.

### 3.C.4

#### **Faculty Development**

NWOSU assures that faculty maintain up-to-date content in their disciplines and follow best practices in their teaching roles. Using the [Faculty Qualifications Review](#), the appropriate chair and administrators initially assess credentials and transcripts of prospective faculty members during the hiring process. Faculty members track their professional growth and current practices through the portfolio process described in 3.C.3 by documenting evidence of knowledge, efforts to keep information current, participation in program reviews, and maintenance of licensure.

The [Faculty Development Advisory Board](#) (FDAB) oversees professional development and continuing education opportunities for all faculty throughout their careers at Northwestern. The FDAB assists the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of Faculty in coordinating [ongoing faculty development](#) activities as well as the annual orientation for new faculty. New faculty members participate in multi-day, [intensive training sessions](#). FDAB assists first-year faculty members by coordinating faculty development programs and providing resources for faculty to enhance teaching methods. In 2017, the FDAB was instrumental in the establishment of the Faculty Development Resource Center (FDRC). Housed in the library on the Alva campus location, the FDRC provides work space and resources for faculty planning and development activities. These resources include 12 computers and a SMART Board with an integrated microcomputer.

The University draws upon several sources to provide funds for faculty travel and professional development. During the 2011-2012 academic year, the University implemented an academic enhancement fee, a portion of which supplements pre-existing faculty travel and professional

development budgets. All three academic Schools receive funds, administered by the Dean of Faculty or Associate Dean, for these pursuits. From 2012 to 2016, a \$1.5-million Title III grant supported department-led faculty enrichment activities, travel to teaching and learning conferences, and other professional development activities. These funds also included \$50,000 matched by an equal commitment from the University to support faculty development initiatives into the future. This \$100,000 Title III Lectureship, administered by the Northwestern Foundation Office, yields approximately \$3,500 annually. The [Carmichael Award in Health and Sports Science Education](#) and the [Gwendolyn Hollis Anderson Faculty Development Endowment](#) furnish additional support for professional development through enhanced travel funds from the Foundation.

### 3.C.5

#### **Faculty Accessibility**

As a matter of policy, faculty members establish a minimum of 10 office hours per week each semester ([Faculty Handbook 6.3.13](#)). Faculty members assist students in advisement, class preparation, and research during office hours, using platforms such as Mega Meeting, Zoom, and SKYPE to communicate with students enrolled in distance education. The University's extensive motor pool allows faculty members to visit other campuses and locations for face-to-face meetings with students. The [2017 NSSE report](#) indicates that 36% of its seniors *often* or *very often* discussed course topics, ideas or concepts with faculty members outside of class as compared to a national response of 35% for seniors. Additional evidence from [NSSE](#) shows that 63% of Northwestern seniors indicated advisors were available when needed.

### 3.C.6

#### **Professional Staff Development**

Professional staff members assist students with essential needs inside and outside the classroom. Many of these staff members possess academic qualifications at the master's and bachelor's degree levels, as reflected in the [qualifications of selected directors and coordinators](#). A tuition waiver program provided by the University encourages all staff members to complete degrees. From FY14 to FY18, the University waived an average of [\\$104,384 annually](#) to support the education of NWOSU staff.

New staff members, both professional and classified, participate in a staff orientation held annually prior to the start of the fall semester. The orientation includes presentations on the traditions and history of the University, policies and procedures, staff resources, and tours of various offices. Members of the Staff Council plan and organize the orientation. (These sessions are discussed in greater detail in Criterion 5.A.4.)

University membership in professional organizations provides [training and professional development opportunities for staff](#). Northwestern holds institutional memberships in more than 20 state, regional, and national associations, including the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers and the National Association of College and University Business Officers. All directors and coordinators receive a budget for travel to professional meetings and other development

meetings.

Northwestern's student affairs staff assists students with essential needs inside and outside the classroom. The Dean of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management, an active member of the Oklahoma Council on Student Affairs (COSA), attends monthly meetings with other COSA members to discuss policies and issues affecting students. Attendance keeps the Dean informed on issues related to such topics as ADA compliance, Title IX training, student conduct, campus life, international students, and safety.

Northwestern's Director of Financial Aid attends the Oklahoma State Regents Conference on Scholarships and Grants. In addition, the Director and Assistant Directors also attend the [Oklahoma Association of Federal Student Aid Administrators Conference](#). These meetings assist the Director and the financial aid staff in staying current on Title IV and federal compliance.

Faculty and staff members who provide student advisement receive initial training upon hire and attend ongoing professional development training opportunities. The Faculty Development Advisory Board (FDAB) provides current enrollment materials and checklists for faculty and staff members through training sessions and [FDAB Blackboard site postings](#). Student support staff members who advise students remain active in attending conferences and improving service. During summer enrollment periods, staff members from the Office of Recruitment work closely with academic administrators to ensure students receive appropriate advisement.

Full-time faculty or staff members supervise co-curricular activities such as athletics, student leadership opportunities, and the International Student Organization. The [intramural program](#) employs a Director and Assistant Director who report to and confer with the Dean of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management. The University also utilizes off-campus adults to sponsor sororities. These sponsors collaborate with the PanHellenic Advisor, a full-time employee of Northwestern. Sorority sponsors have extensive experience as members of the organizations they oversee. Athletics personnel possess appropriate credentials and receive continuous training and support from the NCAA. The Intramural Director holds a Bachelor of Science in Health and Sports Science and is completing coursework for a Master's in Adult Education Management and Administration.

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## 3.D - Core Component 3.D

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The institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching.

1. The institution provides student support services suited to the needs of its student populations.
2. The institution provides for learning support and preparatory instruction to address the academic needs of its students. It has a process for directing entering students to courses and programs for which the students are adequately prepared.
3. The institution provides academic advising suited to its programs and the needs of its students.
4. The institution provides to students and instructors the infrastructure and resources necessary to support effective teaching and learning (technological infrastructure, scientific laboratories, libraries, performance spaces, clinical practice sites, museum collections, as appropriate to the institution's offerings).
5. The institution provides to students guidance in the effective use of research and information resources.

## Argument

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### 3.D.1

#### Student Population

The institution provides support services suited to the needs of its student populations. Germane characteristics of the 2016 NWOSU student body ([2017 Factbook](#)) are listed below:

- Average composite ACT score of entering freshmen: 19.7
- Adult learners (students who are more than 24 years of age): 30% of enrolled students
- Transfer students to NWOSU: 9.3%
- Total minority enrollment: 29.7%
- In-state enrollment: 74%
- Out-of-state enrollment: 18%
- International enrollment: 8%
- Students receiving financial aid: 86%
- Students awarded scholarships or grants: 87%
- Students living in residential halls: 28.1%
- Students enrolled in a remedial course: 11%

#### Student Support

Northwestern maintains numerous support services aligned with these characteristics to meet student needs.

The student profile indicates a significant population of students requiring academic assistance. Central to the academic support of these students, the [Academic Success Center \(ASC\)](#) makes available tutoring services. A full-time director oversees a staff of trained student tutors. Based on student needs, the ASC doubled its capacity in both space and computers in fall 2012. Student usage increased significantly at that time and has [continued to be robust](#).



A [Student Support Services \(TRIO\) grant](#) currently supplies resources for student support efforts, as did the [Title III grant](#) from FY12 to FY16. Additionally, the [HLC Persistence and Completion Academy](#) provides dedicated time and resources to address retention and persistence concerns. The Academy has identified students with undeclared majors as a target population in need of assistance. (TRIO grant activities and Academy initiatives are discussed in greater detail in Criteria 1.A.2 and 4.C.3.)

Specific departments have also undertaken efforts to support student learning in innovative ways. Implementation of co-requisite labs in math and English--credit-bearing, one-hour lab sections that supplement course content and offer guided practice--allows students in need of remediation to move directly into credit-bearing courses with the support necessary to be successful. (See Criterion 4.B.3 for further discussion of the [co-requisite model of remediation](#).) In science gateway courses, Student Learning Assistants (SLAs)--students who have recently passed the science course in which they assist--are employed to attend the course and offer guidance to students. Science faculty report that students who may be reluctant to ask questions and seek assistance find these SLAs approachable. Subsequently, [SLAs](#) enroll in a one-hour course to discuss pedagogical issues and approaches with the course professor.

With combined holdings of more than 350,000 items, the [NWOSU libraries](#) provide support services at the Alva, Enid, and Woodward campus locations. In addition, the library offers interlibrary loan services to supplement its assets and to increase its offerings. Consistent upgrades include the increase of [database subscriptions](#), increased technology resources including tablets and laptops, and the provision of a SMART Board training room for student use. Students may access the main library building more than 90 hours per week. Four professional librarians hold either a Master of Library and Information Studies or Master of Library and Information Science degree that is appropriate for an academic librarian, according to the [Association of College and Research Libraries](#). One of the librarians holds an additional graduate degree in Education.

Northwestern serves [students](#), from traditional freshmen to adult learners, with an array of counseling needs. Due to the size and scope of the student population, the institution provides a [Counseling Center](#) to provide services to all students and employees confidentially and free of charge. Students and employees may be referred to specialized counselors if needed.

Data indicate a significant percentage of NWOSU students enroll in at least one distance education course. Northwestern employs a full-time [Online Learning Coordinator](#) to provide support and oversee the delivery and operations of its [online programs and courses](#). In addition, facilitators manage an online helpdesk to assist faculty members and students after hours and on weekends. NWOSU utilizes interactive television (ITV) extensively across multiple campuses and locations. Support for this area includes classroom facilitators and a Coordinator with vast experience in distance learning. The Coordinator synchronizes course schedules at all locations to maximize use of the studios, classroom facilitation, and delivery of course materials, and, working with Information Technology (IT) staff, provides [trouble-shooting assistance](#). The Coordinator works with deans, faculty members, and students to ensure that all students, regardless of location, have a quality classroom experience.

In fall 2017, approximately 2% (47) of Northwestern students completed the process to become fully certified to receive veteran's benefits. NWOSU provides [services](#) for these individuals. Veterans or their dependents interested in using GI Bill benefits contact the Veteran's Affairs Coordinator in the Office of Student Services. This office offers support by certifying enrollment, serving as a facilitator in contacting other Veterans Affairs (VA) sources, and providing guidance in solving any

problems veterans might encounter at the University. The ultimate goal is to assist students in receiving all VA educational money they are entitled to in a timely manner.

NWOSU offers multiple accommodations to assist students with special needs in achieving their educational goals. The Dean of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management serves as the University's [ADA Compliance Officer](#). The Dean works with students to determine needs, then makes arrangements to assist with appropriate services and support. Northwestern provides an array of accommodations including, but not limited to, extended test time, non-disruptive testing locations, verbal testing, volunteer and assigned note taking, books on tape, closed-captioning services, and physical mobility assistance. The [Faculty Development Resource Center](#) includes software that allows faculty to design online course materials that meets students' accessibility needs. Information about the Americans with Disabilities Act can be found on the Northwestern Oklahoma State University [website](#).

[Data](#) indicate that a significant number of NWOSU students receive some type of financial assistance during their college career. The [Financial Aid Office](#) assists students in determining their eligibility for potential sources of financial aid support. Sources of aid administered by the Financial Aid Office include all Title IV funds, state grants and scholarships, and institutional aid and scholarships. The Office awards [scholarships](#) to students at all campus locations based on academic accomplishments and participation in such activities as athletics, musical and theatre groups, and leadership groups. The Enid Partnership in Higher Education Association conducts a fundraising campaign every three years to fund student scholarships at the Enid campus location. The city of Alva, through a [one-half cent economic development sales tax](#), funds [scholarships](#) for first-time students who attend NWOSU and live in Alva. In addition, Northwestern awards academic and participation [tuition waivers](#), and the Northwestern Foundation funds [scholarships](#) generated from endowment earnings to eligible students.

### 3.D.2

#### **Placement of Entering Students**

Northwestern assesses ACT or SAT scores for entering students to determine appropriate course placement based on student level of preparedness. In 2016, as part of the [Complete College America](#) effort, both English and math faculty reviewed placement policies for students with deficiencies. The goal of this effort was to move these students into credit-bearing courses earlier in their academic careers in order to increase the chances of retention and success. The result of this effort has been the introduction of credit-bearing [co-requisite courses](#) in both English and mathematics. The [Undergraduate Catalog](#) contains details of course placement. (These courses are discussed in greater detail in Criterion 4.B.3.)

Prior to the beginning of each fall semester, Northwestern's Student Affairs personnel conduct [freshmen orientation](#) and [transfer orientation](#) to prepare students for life at NWOSU. Incoming students receive student identification cards, purchase parking decals, receive information about Northwestern e-mail accounts and the Student Information System, and attend a J.R. Holder Wellness Center orientation. In addition, campus clubs and organizations recruit new students for participation in co-curricular activities. The Financial Aid, Registry, and Business Offices remain open throughout these sessions to assist students with final payments and questions. In summer 2018, Northwestern will pilot a Student Government Association-initiated orientation experience, [Camp](#)

## [Ranger.](#)

Northwestern's Advanced Standing Program, detailed in the [Undergraduate Catalog](#), provides students opportunities to begin college work on the academic level for which they are prepared. Students may earn advanced credit by passing institutionally accepted examinations or through prior military experience. Students may also request special consideration from the University for other nationally recognized exams. The Vice President for Academic Affairs considers these requests on a case-by-case basis.

Northwestern supports the needs of high-achieving students through its [Honors Program](#). Candidates for the Honors Program must achieve an ACT score of 27 or higher, submit an essay, and provide two letters of recommendation to the Honors Committee for evaluation. Full-time faculty members possessing a special expertise or interest lead topic-based courses designed specifically for honors students. During their junior and senior years, students in the program must select two of the following four options to fulfill requirements: 1) Leadership Northwestern Class, 2) Service Learning project, 3) OSLEP Seminar, or 4) faculty-guided independent research project. Recently, the faculty chair of the Honors Committee has undertaken an aggressive [recruiting effort](#) that includes promotions at Freshman Connection and Ranger Preview as well as contacts with area high school counselors. NWOSU has also added book scholarships as an incentive for students in the program. In 2018, the University created a dedicated study and meeting lounge for the Honors Program.

Northwestern supports freshmen students who exhibit extraordinary leadership or potential for success through the [President's Leadership Class \(PLC\)](#). Candidates must undergo an extensive interview process, conducted by Student Affairs personnel and faculty members, prior to being selected for the class. Selected students receive a \$2,750 scholarship and have the unique opportunity to discuss a variety of topics with the President in the context of a weekly class. In addition, PLC students accompany the President on a three-day trip to Boston, meet legislative and community leaders, and meet with the RUSO Board. Through such activities, these student leaders become stewards of the University.

## **Support for Entering Students**

[Ranger Connection](#), an 8- or 16-week course required of all incoming freshmen, introduces students to the college experience and focuses on developing practical techniques to achieve academic success. Topics include college resources, support systems, student services, time management, test taking, communication skills, study techniques, career exploration, learning styles, and personal issues that face many college students.

## **Pre-University Support**

The Northwestern Oklahoma State [University Upward Bound \(UB\) Programs](#) serve to create a harmonious, multicultural, educational community of students with great potential who demonstrate a strong desire to acquire higher education. The program's rigorous academic and counseling components provide students with four years of continuous preparation for college beginning in the fall of their ninth grade academic year. The UB academic component is comprised of both an academic year curriculum and a six-week summer session held on the Northwestern campus. The

counseling component consists of four interrelated sets of activities: career awareness and planning, college adjustment and financial aid training, personal advising and mentoring, and academic advising and motivation. The 2011 Upward Bound or Upward Bound Math and Science Program student cohort consisted of 38 students. Of those students, 21% went on to complete a post-secondary education with 25% choosing Northwestern.

### 3.D.3

#### Academic Advising

Students receive advisement from one of two sources, instructional faculty or Office of Student Services and Enrollment Management personnel. Students with an undecided major initially work with a designated advisor. Once students choose a major, they may either select an advisor or accept an assigned advisor from their area of study. According to [2017 NSSE results](#), 54% of seniors rated the interaction with an advisor as a 6 or 7 (7 being "excellent"), which is 4% higher than other Southwest Public schools and the same average as our Carnegie Class.

Entering freshmen receive academic advisement well in advance of their first fall semester. Each spring the University invites entering freshmen to campus for [Freshman Connection](#), affording them an opportunity to meet with an advisor and enroll in courses for the following fall semester. Students registering for classes during the summer months receive advisement from a faculty member in their chosen discipline, when available, or from staff members in the Office of Student Services and Enrollment Management.

Continuing students receive academic advisement from a faculty member in their major area of study or from an advisor who works with undecided majors. To accommodate needs of students at all campus locations, faculty advisors may travel to a student's home campus location to conduct advising sessions. Students may also receive advisement via ITV, SKYPE, MegaMeeting, Zoom, e-mail, and telephone.

Faculty members receive advisement training in [advising forums](#) hosted by the Faculty Development Advisory Board. That committee provides advising checklists and practical advice on effective schedule construction for students. Students and advisors may also use a recently enabled (2017) unofficial degree audit function in RangerNet for planning purposes. Advisors utilize official [degree audits](#) produced by the Registry Office to monitor student progress toward degree completion. During the 2017-2018 academic year, departments updated and [standardized course rotations](#) and developed [uniform plans of study](#), all of which are easily accessible online for use by advisors and students.

In addition to assisting students with schedule construction, advisors continually monitor academic progress of advisees through use of the [Early Alert Reporting System \(EARS\)](#) and individual consultation with students. The EARS system, accessible to all faculty members through RangerNet, provides efficient communication from instructors to advisors, retention staff, and students about course performance, excessive absences, and other student-related issues. The system was updated in 2016 to increase its efficiency and usefulness, allowing faculty members to complete multiple reports from a single [course roster page](#) rather than completing each student report on a different page.

In 2015, the University gained full NCAA Division II membership. Northwestern athletes receive

benefits of assurance toward academic progress through the work of the NCAA [Compliance Committee](#) and University personnel. The Committee recommends policies and procedures that ensure compliance with NCAA and institutional rules and regulations, and the Assistant Athletic Director for [Compliance](#) implements those compliance policies and works cooperatively with the Registrar to address eligibility standards. In FY18, Northwestern employed a Compliance Assistant to aid in this effort. The recent addition of the unofficial degree audit function in RangerNet and other web-based resources has benefited the Assistant Athletic Director for Compliance and athletic programs to track student-athletes' academic progress.

Students admitted to Northwestern's Graduate Program receive advisement from advisory committees comprised of three members of the graduate faculty. The Associate Dean of Graduate Studies appoints advisory committee members and chairs, or they serve at the invitation of individual students upon approval of the Office of Graduate Studies. Committee chairs must hold full membership on the graduate faculty. Advisory committees assist students in developing [plans of study](#) and approve those plans. They also administer written comprehensive examinations or evaluate action research or capstone projects prior to graduation.

### 3.D.4

#### **Technological Infrastructure**

Northwestern has well-established technological infrastructure to support effective teaching and learning. The state of Oklahoma's telecommunications provider, OneNet, a division of the OSRHE, boasts a high-speed, high-availability network with multiple hub sites providing the framework for the state's integrated network. NWOSU's Alva and Enid campus locations serve as two of those hub sites. OneNet also provides the infrastructure for Northwestern's information technology system. Twenty-eight physical servers and seventeen virtual servers equip the University's network, with buildings at the Alva campus location connected through an extensive fiber optics network.

The University uses Blackboard 9.1, which was updated to a newer version in December 2017, as its learning management system for all online and face-to-face courses. Each instructor determines the level of use for each class, but Faculty Senate is currently exploring whether [faculty Blackboard minimum-use standards](#) for such things as recording grades and posting course documents should be adopted.

The University's administrative platform, Jenzabar PX, known on campus as RangerNet, provides faculty with human resources documentation, access to student records for advising purposes, and access to the Early Alert Reporting System (EARS). RangerNet allows students to access their schedules, final course grades, and unofficial transcripts as well as account balances and financial aid information. Students may also pay balances online. NWOSU will begin transitioning in summer 2018 to a new administrative platform provided by [Ellucian](#).

To meet the unique needs of our geographically dispersed student body, NWOSU distributes [Interactive Television \(ITV\) classes](#) among all instructional sites. This infrastructure allows Northwestern to offer an average of 130 classes per semester taught via ITV. NWOSU equips 22 high-definition studios at a total cost of approximately \$1.1 million. Equipment in each studio includes a high-definition H.323 Codec, multiple high-definition flat panel televisions, two high-definition cameras, a document camera, a computer, a SMART Technologies interactive whiteboard,

and an easy-to-use touch panel control interface. Parts of the funding for the ITV systems came from multiple United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) grants, the [most recent](#) awarded in 2018. These grants also provide educational opportunities to NWOSU's partner schools in rural Oklahoma. In response to the ongoing challenge of keeping pace with emerging technologies in distance education, the University upgrades studios on a regular basis (6 in FY18, 6 planned in FY19).

To minimize the "distance" in distance learning, the University employs a courier who travels between the Alva, Enid, and Woodward locations daily. The courier carries assignments, library books, documents for administrators, and other items as needed between the campuses. This service allows faculty members to give timely written feedback on assignments and students to procure library materials quickly. At the request of faculty, in 2018 the ITV Coordinator and the Dean of Faculty designed an [online fillable form](#) to facilitate communication and streamline processes between instructors and the ITV office.

In addition to SMART Boards in Northwestern ITV classrooms, independent classrooms across all campus locations contain a total of 64 SMART Boards and 4 Promethean Boards. This represents a 38% increase since 2014. This technological infrastructure provides students and faculty members with interactive teaching tools. As instructors facilitate classes in the ITV teaching studios, SMART Boards at distant locations mirror the content being displayed from the originating site.

Northwestern's computer facilities are adequate to meet the needs of its students. Trends in the University's computer technology purchasing reflect the recognition that virtual computers increase efficiency and cost-savings. The University maintains 89 computers and 181 virtual computers for student use at the Alva campus location. Enid labs hold 31 computers and 54 virtual computers; Woodward labs hold 25 computers and 29 virtual computers. These distributions represent a significant change in ratio since 2014. The University Information Technology Department replaces all computers on a regular rotation. All Northwestern campus locations feature wireless access, allowing easy accessibility to digital information.

### **Teaching and Learning Infrastructure**

Northwestern's [University Farm](#) provides practical education for Agriculture students. The 320-acre farm consists of grazable mixed-grass prairie and tillable crop acres and is home to purebred Angus and Maine Anjou cattle, Berkshire hogs, and occasional other livestock species used for laboratory and demonstration purposes. At the same location, the [Wisdom Agriculture Education Center](#) consists of a welding laboratory outfitted with state-of-the-art metal working equipment and a SMART Board-capable classroom. The Farm also includes an educational greenhouse, cattle-working facilities, and other improvements made since 2014: a virtual welding machine that allows students to practice welding skills on a computer-based platform, a hydraulic pipe-bending machine, and a Tungsten Inert Gas welder.

Nursing professional practice labs are located at the Alva, Enid, and Woodward campus locations and provide simulated experiences in low-volume, high-risk clinical situations in a safe learning environment. The [Wymer Lab](#) on the Alva campus location, dedicated in 2016, houses seven adult hospital beds with bedside tables, two labor/birthing beds, three high-fidelity simulators, one medium-fidelity simulator, and one static mannequin. This lab can be configured as a hospital ward or private room setting to suit a given simulation scenario. It includes seating at tables for twenty students, a SMART Board, and a computer for debriefing and class sessions. Additional static models are used for specific skills and care training. The [Ketterman Lab](#) at the Enid campus location houses

eight adult hospital beds with bedside tables, one labor/birthing bed, one child crib, one infant crib, and one infant warmer. There are two high-fidelity simulators, two medium-fidelity simulators, and two static mannequins used in clinical training experiences. This lab may be configured as a hospital ward, private patient rooms, or a birthing suite. It includes seating for 28 students, six computers, a SMART Board, and a computer that may be used for debriefing and instruction sessions. The Woodward campus location houses a smaller lab with five adult beds and one crib. Two high-fidelity simulators, one medium-fidelity simulator, and one static mannequin allow faculty to provide realistic practice sessions in caring for adult and pediatric patients. A limited number of training skills models are available. The University Center in Ponca City has partnered with the local hospital—AllianceHealth-Ponca City—to provide space for a limited number of practice lab experiences. A medium-fidelity simulator is maintained at the Ponca City site.

In 2016, the Division of Education established a literacy center that addresses the needs of students and their families through individualized literacy tutoring. The center was expanded in 2018 through private funding and has been designated the [Darrell and Grace Wessels Literacy Center](#). Lessons are provided weekly and are designed to meet each student's individual needs. The Division has also added an [Early Childhood Education Classroom Lab](#) comprised of two laboratory classrooms for children of various ages. University students participate in pedagogy activities and planning.

NWOSU's four student media outlets serve all three campus locations. These platforms, operated by students under the guidance of a faculty advisor, serve as labs for mass communication students. [Significant investment since 2015](#) has updated the television studio at the Alva campus location from analog to digital technology. This technology and new cameras allow students to broadcast from remote sites, while state-of-the-art computer software provides an array of virtual sets that "transform" the studio to serve student needs and teaching contexts. Upgrades in the radio studio put into the hands of students equipment of the same quality as the equipment they will use in professional settings post-graduation.

In 2017, the [Bill and Billie Buckles Computer Science Robotics Lab](#) opened in Shockley Hall. The facility, funded with private donations, includes a lab with sixteen computers for student and faculty use as well as a robotics build lab that includes a 3D printer and other tools and resources. This facility supports a new Computer Science minor in Game Programming and additional courses in Robotics.

The Science Building includes sixteen laboratory classrooms dedicated to biological studies, chemistry, and the physical sciences. In addition, each of the science disciplines receives supplementary funds, derived from state resources and private donations, for equipping labs. Recent purchases include biotechnology stations and a centrifuge rotor in FY15, anatomy supplies and microscopes for the Woodward lab in FY16, laboratory water purification systems and trail camera equipment in FY17, and wireless probeware and a SmartPodium in FY18. Using these physical and technological resources, science faculty members and students engage in research and experiments designed to help students achieve student learning outcomes intended for the general education curriculum and within their majors.

The Alva campus location houses the main [University Library](#), while Woodward and Enid campus locations provide spaces for a virtual library supported through a weekly campus visit from the University's Instructional and Research Librarian. Combined physical holdings of the libraries exceed 350,000 items. Students have access to all items regardless of location or class delivery method. Books and other materials travel daily through the campus courier system as needed, and librarians mail requested materials to students enrolled in distance education courses. In addition, the

libraries provide online access through library journal databases and e-books.

Library faculty members fulfill a vital instructional role for students acquiring information literacy and library research skills, important general education competencies. The library utilizes [course-specific guides](#) and online tutorials created by the librarians and based on faculty and student feedback to aid in student research. In addition, the Library Director assigns librarians to act as liaisons to specific departments, and librarians are included on rosters for courses with a Blackboard component to enable their participation in online discussions about research sources.

Northwestern provides a number of facilities and resources appropriate to meet unique needs of students and faculty members in [Fine Arts](#). The University maintains both public performance spaces and individual and organizational rehearsal and studio spaces. The University also provides resources in the form of visual art and music studio equipment, plus appropriate equipment for the instrumental music program and technical equipment for the theatre program. In 2016, the Fine Arts Department established a choral music library, housed in the Alva library, to organize and preserve sheet music.

Public performance spaces include Herod Hall Auditorium and a small recital hall in the Fine Arts Building. Constructed in 1924, Herod Hall houses an 850-seat auditorium with a stage of professional dimensions, dressing rooms, and theatre shop. The University renovated the auditorium in 1958 and 1980, and within the last 10 years has replaced stage rigging and much of the lighting equipment. However, this space requires additional attention to elevate artistic experiences for both patrons and performers. In 2016, the University obtained [concept drawings](#) for renovation from one architect, with options for additional performance spaces among the renderings. As one focus of its ongoing capital campaign, the University has sought funding to undertake renovation of this auditorium. To this point, the University has not obtained a lead gift. A smaller performance space in room 200 of the Fine Arts Building serves as a venue for more intimate performances.

The University also maintains individual and organizational rehearsal space. Separate spaces for instrumental and choral ensembles provide students with appropriate acoustic environments for rehearsals, and practice studios contain new upright pianos purchased in 2012. Beginning in FY14, the University has committed \$10,000 annually to band instrument maintenance, repair, and replacement, and that amount has been raised to \$20,000 for FY19. A private donation of \$15,000 in May 2018 will refurbish the grand piano in the choral practice room.

Visual Arts students benefit from the use of studios that received new equipment when the University reinstated the program in 2011. With money from a private endowment, the University purchased all new easels, drawing benches, plaster models, and an Apple computer lab for digital imaging. (The University will purchase new computers for the Apple lab in FY19.) The department also maintains studio space for a thriving Artist-in-Residence (AIR) program that hosts approximately six artists per year. The AIR's studio is often opened to students for observation and instruction. Furthermore, Visual Arts faculty and students often collaborate with the [Graceful Arts Gallery and Studios](#), a community-based arts exhibition and education center, for shows, workshops, and other events.

Fine Arts programs benefit from gifts provided by external foundations and donors in addition to University resources. One private foundation funded two endowed chairs in Visual Arts, plus startup funding to purchase new studio art equipment. Four endowed chairs support the performing arts, and two endowed funds provide dividends to enhance the educational process for music students.

The University's Alva campus location houses the Museum of Natural History. Founded in 1902, the



Museum contains more than 6,000 artifacts, including one of the largest ornithological collections in the United States. The space is outfitted with a multitude of display cases and large tables, with new display cases added in 2016 and 2017. The Museum, open to the general public, is ideal for classroom visits and activities. For example, Visual Arts students recently utilized the space for an [extended art project](#) on natural history drawing that culminated in displays for young visitors. Museum exhibits include mounted birds and mammals, fossils, and geological, anthropological, archaeological, and natural history displays. Historical photographs and articles about the University and northwest Oklahoma are also available for viewing.

The University provides resources to instructors not only in the form of professional development, but also in the form of appropriate material resources. All full-time faculty members receive an office assignment with a personal computer, phone, and appropriate furnishings. The University replaces faculty computers on a regular rotation as part of its computer reallocation process. The University also furnishes discipline-specific software as appropriate. In addition, faculty members have access to regional copiers as well as large-volume copiers available in Printing Services.

In fall 2017 the University established a [Faculty Development Resource Center](#) housed in the Alva campus library. Containing a large meeting table, twelve computers, a SMART Board with an integrated microcomputer, and specialized pedagogical software, the Center is available for individual faculty use as well as for collaboration and meetings. Working with the Faculty Development Advisory Board, faculty have been encouraged to determine the best uses of the space. [Initial use of the Center](#) by faculty has been promising and indicates that the space is meeting a variety of purposes.

### 3.D.5

#### **Guidance in Responsible Use of Information**

Recognizing the importance of guiding students in effective use of research and information resources, the University established a general education Student Learning Outcome (SLO) related to information literacy: gathering, analyzing, and communicating information effectively. Students encounter coursework addressing this SLO first in [Ranger Connection](#), with activities designed to introduce them to information resources available in the library. Required English Composition courses also address information literacy, and the [Academic Integrity and Plagiarism Policy](#) included in all University syllabi reflects this same priority. Additionally, students involved in research take advantage of Turnitin.com, a web-based platform designed to assist students with editing, making correct citations, and avoiding plagiarism. This tool allows students to adhere to the [Academic Dishonesty Policy](#) within the Student Handbook.

Northwestern's Institutional Review Board/Independent Ethics Committee (IRB/IEC) guides students who engage in research involving human subjects. Any student planning to conduct research on human subjects must first submit a completed [Review of Human Participants Research Form](#) to the Board. The IRB/IEC approves, monitors, and reviews research involving humans with the aim of protecting the rights and welfare of the subjects. In fall 2017, the Director of Sponsored Programs, the office with IRB oversight, began conducting [workshops on responsible human research](#) in courses in which such research is part of the curriculum. These workshops contextualize the IRB process within the broader concern of ethical research practices.

The [Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee's \(IACUC\) Policies and Procedures Manual](#) contains protocol for faculty members and students conducting research using vertebrate animals. The IACUC operates in accordance with the *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals* (Eighth Edition), the Animal Welfare Act and Animal Welfare Regulations, and the Public Health Service Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals. (IRB and IACUC processes are discussed in greater detail in Criterion 2.E.1.)

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## 3.E - Core Component 3.E

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The institution fulfills the claims it makes for an enriched educational environment.

1. Co-curricular programs are suited to the institution's mission and contribute to the educational experience of its students.
2. The institution demonstrates any claims it makes about contributions to its students' educational experience by virtue of aspects of its mission, such as research, community engagement, service learning, religious or spiritual purpose, and economic development.

### Argument

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#### 3.E.1

##### Co-Curricular Programs and Activities

Northwestern maintains a rich tradition of intercollegiate athletics that has constituted a vital part of the institution throughout its history. After decades of affiliation with the National Association for Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA), the University gained [membership](#) in the National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) Division II in 2015. The current athletics program consists of 13 sports and involves more than 400 students. Effective fall 2018, the University will add a women's track program to its offerings. The University also supports both men's and women's rodeo teams in affiliation with the National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association.

NWOSU athletics provide guidance in understanding and appreciating the educational value of "life in balance" and competition as they contribute to human well-being. Under the mentorship of their coaches, student-athletes enhance their ability in a sport as well as develop important qualities such as leadership, responsibility, and self-discipline. The [Student Athletic Advisory Committee \(SAAC\)](#) meets on a regular basis to discuss policies and provide a student perspective on issues and initiatives. All athletic team members must complete a minimum of two community engagement projects each year; in addition, SAAC members must complete an additional [two projects](#) each year.

Approximately 400 students also participate in Northwestern's [intramural sports program](#) each year. Students engage in activities that promote teamwork, leadership, self-discipline, time management, and rules compliance. Students may participate in basketball, dodge ball, flag football, softball, and volleyball. Some students serve as coaches, making strategic decisions in competitive situations to ensure their team complies with rules and policies of the league. Students also serve as officials, placing them in a position of enforcing fair play without favoritism.

Northwestern students interested in Greek life may choose to join one of the University's sororities. Currently, two sororities, Delta Zeta and Alpha Sigma Alpha, have chapters located on the Alva campus location. The organizations promote community engagement, fiscal responsibility, and leadership. Both sororities hold membership in the National PanHellenic Conference (NPC), an organization composed of 26 women's Greek-letter sororities.

Opportunities for [student leadership](#) exist at all campus locations, with Northwestern's Student Government Association (SGA) operating on the Alva campus. SGA representatives distribute

approximately \$12,000 in student activity funds each year, requiring fiscal responsibility. Students elected to the organization play an active role in making decisions that affect the University, formulating a stance on issues of importance to students and voicing those opinions to stakeholders in the Northwestern community. For example, in spring 2017 the [SGA](#) discussed the need to renovate the Student Center and Ranger Market and concurred with the Food Committee, also comprised of students, in proposing that the University move forward with the renovation. The [newly renovated Student Center](#) opened in fall 2017. More recently, the SGA drafted a [resolution](#) opposing weapons on campus to be submitted to the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. The [Woodward Leadership Advisory Board](#) and the [Northwestern Enid Leadership Council](#) serve similar student leadership functions at their respective campus locations. All groups meet regularly with campus administration and periodically with the President and other members of the executive team. These student leadership groups learn aspects of leadership such as conducting and participating in regular meetings, planning and coordinating events, and making decisions on expenditures of student activity funds.

### **Co-Curricular Activities and the Mission**

Clubs and organizations support the University's Mission and enhance student educational experiences by providing opportunities for leadership training and cultural awareness. Fifty-two clubs engage students in academic, social, political, and spiritual enterprises. While discipline-specific organizations such as the Biology Club or Student Oklahoma Education Association supplement classroom instruction and afford students leadership opportunities, others such as the recently added Anime and Manga Club and Secular Student Alliance provide opportunities for students to expand awareness of diverse perspectives. The Undergraduate Catalog contains a [complete listing](#) of student organizations.

Ranger Research Day affords all students the opportunity to share results of both independent and collaborative research in a public venue. Students may submit either poster presentations or conference papers in one of several disciplines within five distinct categories, including arts and music, business, education, liberal arts, and math and science. All presentations receive feedback and a rating, resulting in the awarding of prizes in each category. All participants in [Ranger Research Day](#) become automatically eligible to participate in Oklahoma Research Day, along with faculty members and students from all Oklahoma institutions of higher education. In addition, the first place winner of Ranger Research Day receives a nomination to participate in [Research Day at the Capitol](#), sponsored by the Oklahoma Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research. The Ranger Research Day webpage contains instructions for submitting projects, plus a [list of past award recipients](#).

NWOSU's [Study Abroad](#) program provides co-curricular opportunities for students and lifelong learners to travel internationally for experiential learning. A Study Abroad Committee, consisting of six full-time faculty members, facilitates the annual trips. Recent trips have taken students to France, China, Italy, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, New Zealand, and most recently the [United Kingdom \(2018\)](#). Study abroad programs and itineraries include a wide range of activities appropriate for those taking college credits in the humanities. The University enriched the academic experience of student travelers in 2017 by offering a course to be taken in the spring before travel, UNIV 2013 [Global Citizenship](#), that contextualizes the trip within a global perspective.

Through employment, students learn lessons about responsibility and acquire valuable job experience while earning income. Student workers hold a variety of positions ranging from tutoring to administrative support to maintenance. Student employment provides a mutually beneficial

relationship between the University and students: the University values and relies on its student employees to fill some critical needs. The [NSSE 2017](#) reports that 14% of NWOSU seniors surveyed work from 11-15 hours per week on campus, compared to 7% nationally.

### 3.E.2

#### Student Experience and the Mission

The [Service Learning and Civic Engagement \(SL/CE\) program](#) advances participation in service learning and civic engagement in all degree programs, through campus organizations, and within the communities served by the University. The program facilitates the University's service activities to the three campus communities through more than 30 designated service-learning courses and numerous club and organization projects and events. All degree programs offered at NWOSU incorporate a service learning component, with the Undergraduate Catalog including an ["SL" designation](#) beside the course description of any service learning course. The Service Learning Coordinator tracks [classes meeting this requirement](#). Examples of recent service projects include [Primp for Prom](#), annual blood drives, and a [Christmas Store](#) for children in the community.

Northwestern's Fine Arts Department, in collaboration with a series board made up of community members, provides cultural opportunities through the [Northwest Oklahoma Concert Series](#). The series serves not only the campus community but also Oklahoma's northwest region by hosting four professional performances each year. These performances provide cultural experiences that would otherwise not be available in this rural area of the state. Additionally, the NWOSU choir ensembles perform regularly in [University concerts](#), [performance festivals](#), First Friday Art Walk events, and regional tours throughout Oklahoma and Kansas.

The NWOSU Art Society holds an annual all-school [art show](#) that awards cash prizes to student artists. The Society finances the show through fundraising at Northwestern sporting events. The Society also holds volunteer efforts including holiday ornament painting for charity and a Christmas sale to benefit local school children. The organization meets weekly and is open to all students. The Visual Arts Department also partners with the Graceful Arts Center, a community-based arts exhibition and education center in Alva, to exhibit student work and work by the [Artist-in-Residence](#) as well as to conduct art workshops hosted by departmental faculty and visiting artists.

The Northwestern student experience is rich.

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## 3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary

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The institution provides high quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

### Summary

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Northwestern Oklahoma State University offers degrees at the bachelor's and master's levels at the Alva, Enid, and Woodward campus locations as well as at other sites throughout northwest Oklahoma. The University delivers its courses through face-to-face offerings, Interactive Television, online, and in a hybrid format. In fall 2017, the University enrolled students in its first doctoral program, the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP), which is offered exclusively online to students. Across all modalities and in all programs, NWOSU provides a high quality educational experience for all students.

Northwestern ensures that it employs qualified faculty to meet demands and equips them with resources and development appropriate to current trends in their respective disciplines. A student-faculty ratio of approximately 17 to 1 indicates an appropriate number of faculty to perform instructional duties. Many faculty members engage regularly in creative and scholarly activities that keep them current in their fields. Faculty members also oversee the curriculum and expectations for student performance by identifying program-specific student learning outcomes (SLOs) that create the foundation for course objectives and evaluation processes. Thus, faculty members assess student learning at all levels, including general education competencies and program-specific SLOs.

Though Northwestern is a small regional university, it provides a broad spectrum of services to support student learning, such as a library with holdings of more than 350,000 items; an assigned faculty advisor for each student; a confidential and free Counseling Center; trouble-shooting assistance with Information Technology (IT); and an ADA compliance officer who makes accommodations for individual learning needs. In these ways, the institution provides support for a high-quality education that is suited to the needs of its student population.

NWOSU also offers an enriched educational experience through co-curricular activities. Northwestern maintains a rich tradition of intercollegiate athletics that provides guidance in understanding and appreciating the educational value of "life in balance" and competition as they contribute to human well-being. Opportunities for student leadership, from the Student Government Association to the Woodward Leadership Advisory Board and the Northwestern Enid Leadership Council, exist at all campus locations. Ranger Research Day affords all students the opportunity to share results of both independent and collaborative research in a public venue. The Service Learning and Civic Engagement (SL/CE) program advances participation in service learning and civic engagement in all degree programs within the communities served by the University, while the Study Abroad program provides opportunities for students to travel internationally for the ultimate in experiential learning.



## **Sources**

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*There are no sources.*

## 4 - Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

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The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

### 4.A - Core Component 4.A

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The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs.

1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews.
2. The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning, or relies on the evaluation of responsible third parties.
3. The institution has policies that assure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.
4. The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It assures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.
5. The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.
6. The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution assures that the degree or certificate programs it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission, such as employment rates, admission rates to advanced degree programs, and participation rates in fellowships, internships, and special programs (e.g., Peace Corps and Americorps).

## Argument

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### 4.A.1

Faculty, divisions/departments, the University, and the University's two governing boards demonstrate responsibility for quality and rigor of NWOSU's educational programs. In addition, many programs meet specialized accreditation, licensing and certification requirements, and undergo internal and external reviews conducted by peer reviewers.

### Program Review and Academic Prioritization

NWOSU's two governing boards, the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE) and the Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO), require periodic internal and external reviews of educational programs offered by Oklahoma academic institutions. These reviews, accomplished through NWOSU's Academic Affairs Committee process as well as through [five-year program reviews](#), are specifically designed to ensure currency, rigor, and quality of programs and course

offerings.

Faculty, division/department chairs, and the Dean of Faculty participate in the [Academic Affairs Committee](#) process according to goals listed in the [Faculty Handbook](#). College faculty, the Academic Affairs Committee, the Dean of Faculty, and the Vice President for Academic Affairs [approve](#) any recommended program or curriculum changes prior to the President's request for approval from NWOSU's two governing boards, OSRHE and RUSO. In addition, faculty and department chairs review existing and new course offerings during the annual program review process. If new courses are approved, the division/department chair presents a program assessment report to the Dean that includes a thorough analysis of sustainability of any new program or course offerings. The [Program Review Template](#) includes information based on key assessment data, community needs, class enrollment trends, required budget and support services, as well as student enrollment projections and revenue estimates.

Division/Department chairs, the Dean of Faculty, and administrators also review results from specialized program accreditation, certification exams, and external and [internal program reviews](#) to further ensure quality and rigor of program offerings. [OSRHE Policy Section 3](#) requires five-year academic program reviews and [Section 3.7](#) requires [low-productivity reports](#) for any academic programs that fail to meet five-year average minimum requirements for graduates or headcount.

#### **4.A.2.**

##### **Evaluation of Credit**

NWOSU follows [OSRHE Policy 3.11](#) related to evaluation of transcripts, including credit awards for credit transfer, experiential learning, and prior learning assessment. For example, the division/department chair (with oversight of the Dean of Faculty and Vice President for Academic Affairs) reviews and approves all student requests for transcript of credit, including [transfer of credit](#) from out-of-state academic institutions, experiential credit, and prior learning credit. If the credit request is approved by the University, the registrar further reviews the request and makes a final determination related to transcription of the transfer credit. In addition, NWOSU performs a final [degree audit](#) prior to granting any degree. Through this multilevel, quality-control process, NWOSU ensures that graduates meet the guidelines and policies set forth by OSRHE, RUSO, and HLC.

The Undergraduate Catalog's Section IV, [General Academic Regulations](#), and Section V, [Advanced Standing](#), identify methodologies used to evaluate course credit for students. These policies follow OSRHE curriculum guidelines as outlined in Sections 3.9, 3.10, and 3.11 of [Chapter 3](#) in the OSRHE Policy and Procedures Manual. The Registry Office [evaluates](#) transcripts (high school and collegiate) and standardized entry exam (ACT, SAT) scores for all incoming students.

Faculty (with oversight of division/department chairs and approval by the Faculty Dean and Vice President for Academic Affairs) oversee [experiential learning](#) experiences, whether these consist of internships, study abroad trips, field trips, research, or service learning opportunities. This oversight ensures currency, quality, and rigor of such offerings. Northwestern accepts several types of experiential and [advanced standing credit](#).

Students nearing their junior or senior academic year may request degree audits from the Registry

Office to track their progress. Members of the Registry staff evaluate all completed credit hours at the date of the request and provide the student with a copy. Degree audits are completed on a first-come, first-served basis, but they are generally not recommended to students with fewer than 45 credit hours. Students may request a subsequent degree audit update to verify degree completion status. Additionally, a new function in the University's Jenzabar system provides access to informal degree audits for students through [RangerNet](#), the student information system. Here, they may also access unofficial transcripts. The Registry Office staff completes a final degree audit for students who register for graduation to ensure that each student has met graduation requirements according to OSRHE guidelines.

#### 4.A.3.

##### **Quality of the Credit in Transfer**

NWOSU participates in the [Course Equivalency Project](#) (CEP) coordinated by the OSRHE. This project consists of collaborative [efforts](#) between state colleges and universities to construct a matrix of like classes for automatic transfer between these institutions. For students seeking other transfer credit, the Registry staff awards credit for courses from fully-accredited institutions as outlined in [Section IV](#) of the Undergraduate Catalog. Students wishing to transfer credit from a non-accredited institution must validate such credit by successfully completing 12 semester hours at NWOSU. The Registry staff applies transfer credits to degree programs in accordance with recommendations in the *Transfer Credit Practices Guide* published by the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers. Faculty members from appropriate academic departments must approve transfer courses that are not identified as being equivalent to NWOSU courses. Consequently, credit from some technical colleges and professional schools may not apply toward degree requirements at Northwestern.

The Registry staff follows guidelines outlined in the NWOSU [Graduate Catalog](#) when awarding credit to transfer students seeking graduate degrees. NWOSU accepts up to nine hours of transfer credit toward all graduate degrees, provided the work forms an appropriate part of the program and is approved by the student's Graduate Advisory Committee. The only exception to this policy applies to students enrolled in the Master of Education in Adult Education Management and Administration program, who may transfer the final 18 hours of discipline-specific courses if the courses are listed on an [approved plan of study](#) filed in the Office of Graduate Studies.

#### 4.A.4.

##### **Prerequisites for Courses**

Faculty members determine prerequisites for courses in academic programs, and the OSRHE confirms and approves these courses as degree requirements. NWOSU's [Undergraduate Catalog](#) clearly indicates prerequisites for courses. NWOSU's Registry Office employs RangerNet to flag students attempting to enroll in courses without completing prerequisite requirements. Academic advisors also check for prerequisite requirements when advising students for enrollment. As part of the catalog review process, departments were [asked](#) in fall 2017 to review and update course prerequisites and to standardize the placement of these prerequisites at the end of each course

description. After these catalog edits were submitted, the Registrar verified the appropriateness of submitted catalog revisions before making changes.

### **Rigor of Courses and Expectations for Student Learning**

NWOSU faculty members oversee the curriculum and expectations for student performance. They identify [student learning outcomes](#) (SLOs) for each academic program, creating a foundation for course objectives and evaluative processes. Faculty members also create assessment tools to measure student performance and SLOs based on the upper levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. Resulting [syllabi](#) reflect assessment methodologies that link with stated course objectives. Faculty members in each division/department devise assignments and assessments based upon current practices and theories in their discipline. The appropriate division/department chair and the Dean of Faculty review all course syllabi to ensure academic rigor and continued improvement based upon assessment data.

### **Access to Learning Resources**

The Library Services Director and library faculty acquire library materials, including digital and online resources. Library staff members process materials and support the physical collections. The library also maintains 22 laptop computers and a variety of tablets plus a SMART Board for student use as well as for library instruction. Additional resources are available to students and faculty members through the University's interlibrary loan program. The new Faculty Development Resource Center, housed in the library, provides space for faculty workshops and training and includes 12 computers and an interactive SMART Board.

NWOSU exercises authority over tutoring services through its [Academic Success Center \(ASC\)](#). The Director of the ASC hires and trains tutors to oversee its operations. The ASC provides [tutoring services](#) primarily in mathematics, English, and the sciences but also offers assistance in many other content areas. Students can access services in person at the Alva campus location or from any location via the ASC webpage on the University's website. Additionally, in coordination with Student Support Services, the ASC offers workshops for students to develop academic skills in note taking, test taking, and study strategies. The ASC also offers first-semester guidance in coordination with Ranger Connection, which brings every class of freshman students for an initial visit. Thirty-two computers are available at the ASC for student use, with another 25 available in an adjoining room.

Northwestern's Director of Information Technology, along with a staff of six individuals, oversees the University's technology investments. The University replaces physical computers in labs on a five-year rotation schedule and reallocates hardware to faculty and staff offices as well as to classrooms and labs. In 2010, the University began implementing a [Virtual Desktop Infrastructure](#) in its computer labs that continues today. (This trend is discussed in greater detail in Criterion 3.D.4) Hardware in virtual computer labs is replaced on a six-year rotation schedule. As physical computer labs have become virtualized, the University has purchased new physical computers for some staff and faculty offices to make up for the shortage in computers available for reallocation.

Northwestern exercises authority over its learning management system, Blackboard, through the [Online Learning Coordinator](#). The Coordinator creates user accounts and course modules for all

faculty members and manages the online helpdesk during regular business hours. The Coordinator also hires and trains around the clock [helpdesk](#) personnel and chairs the [University's Online Learning Committee](#).

Northwestern maintains ITV activities through the Office of the ITV Coordinator. This individual coordinates ITV course schedules to maximize usage of 22 studios distributed across all campus locations. In 2017, the University received a three-year USDA Distance and Telemedicine [grant](#) that will help update the equipment at the Alva and Woodward campus locations and will add/update end-user equipment at Oklahoma Panhandle State University, Goodwell High School, Woodward High School, James Crabtree Correctional Center, and Cimarron Memorial Hospital in Boise City during the summer of 2018. The hospital is in a StrikeForce (Initiative for Rural Growth and Opportunity) county.

In fall 2016, Northwestern partnered with the Aurora Learning Community Association (ALCA), which provides an assessment system to collect data for the Education Division, Nursing Division, and faculty portfolios. Prior to 2016, NWOSU utilized LiveText for its assessment needs. The Associate Dean of Graduate Studies oversees user accounts, portfolio templates, and the Graduate Candidate File in ALCA, while Education Division personnel create course plan books for instructors who require assignments to be turned in through the system for evaluation and data collection. ALCA houses all faculty portfolios for the annual [review](#) of non-tenured faculty, for the three-year review of tenured faculty, and for tenure consideration for eligible faculty. Use of ALCA has streamlined and improved the faculty portfolio scoring process by allowing for reviewer comments to auto-populate summary forms and by generating a score summary table for each faculty portfolio submitted.

## **Faculty Qualifications**

The faculty serve as the most important learning resource for students attending NWOSU. The institution maintains authority over faculty qualifications through its selective hiring process, which begins with faculty members determining the parameters of the job description for open positions. Potential candidates proceed through a [departmentally-driven search process](#) that culminates in personal interviews with the search committee, division/department chair, and administration.

Sharing the Higher Learning Commission's recognition that qualified faculty members are vital to the University's ability to provide effective, high-quality academic programs, the University ensures that faculty education requirements are met. Specifically, as part of the search and hiring process, NWOSU has instituted a [Faculty Qualifications](#) review to be initiated by the division/department chair and completed by the Dean of Faculty and Vice President for Academic Affairs. Once hired, faculty members participate in annual evaluations as prescribed in the [Faculty Handbook](#). The University's Faculty Evaluation [webpage](#) contains additional information about this process.

The numbers and ratios of [full-time faculty](#) members according to academic rank and doctoral degree completion at NWOSU shows that the percentage of doctoral degrees increases with each level in the academic ranking system. This demonstrates the University's maintenance of authority over faculty qualifications pertaining to rank, tenure, and promotion policies as outlined in NWOSU's [Faculty Handbook](#). Currently, the Dean of Faculty and the Vice President for Academic Affairs are identifying underqualified faculty under HLC guidelines and are working with division/department chairs and those faculty to address the [issue](#).

## **Concurrent Enrollment**

Although NWOSU does not offer dual credit programs, it does offer concurrent enrollment to area high school students through a [Memorandum of Understanding \(MOU\)](#), a legal agreement between the University and high schools. The University assures that high school students concurrently enrolled at Northwestern receive collegiate-level instruction. This methodology integrates concurrently enrolled students into either traditional or ITV classrooms and ensures that they receive instruction from qualified University faculty members. Student learning outcomes, course expectations, and assessment procedures remain consistent for all students enrolled in these courses.

### **4.A.5**

NWOSU values external evaluations and supports programs that seek national accreditation through the dedication of time, expertise, and monetary resources. National accreditation of NWOSU programs demonstrates the rigor and currency of its degree programs to potential and current students and constituents.

## **Specialized Accreditation**

NWOSU's four programs with specialized accreditation are periodically reviewed by the following national organizations:

- [Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing \(ACEN\)](#),
- [Council on Social Work Education \(CSWE\)](#),
- [Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs Accreditation \(ACBSP\)](#), and
- [National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education \(NCATE\)](#)/Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP).

In October 2013, the Unit Accreditation Board (UAB) of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) notified the University that its Education Division had met all six standards for the Initial Programs (bachelor's level), and four of the six standards for the Advanced Programs (master's level). The requirements for Standards 1 and 2 for the Advanced Programs had not been met. As a result, a focus visit from NCATE was scheduled for 2014. In preparation for the visit, the Education Division's program coordinators began working with the Graduate Studies Office to ensure that these programs held the same expectations of assessment as those that led to certification, ensuring that each program could evaluate and show evidence of program improvement. As a result of this work, the UAB found that Standards 1 and 2 for the Advanced Programs were met upon its 2014 focus visit. In spring 2019, the Education Division will undergo a regular visit from CAEP as part of its seven-year cycle. The visit will include both a national and a state team that will check the alignment between the Education Division's programs and the new CAEP standards at both the initial and advanced levels.

In 2014, the Board of Commissioners of the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing, Inc. (ACEN), reaffirmed full accreditation status for Northwestern's Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree program following a site review. The [Oklahoma Board of Nursing](#) also approved the Northwestern Bachelor of Science in Nursing Degree Program in 2017. The University's new BSN-

to-DNP Nursing Program will be submitted for national accreditation after the first year of courses has been completed as required by the national accreditation agencies. The BSN-to-DNP Nursing Program for the preparation of Family Nurse Practitioners received provisional approval from the [Oklahoma Board of Nursing](#) in 2016.

The Social Work Program at NWOSU maintains accreditation through the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). CSWE is a national association preserving and enhancing the quality of social work education for practice and promoting the goals of individual and community well-being and social justice. The Social Work Department received initial accreditation by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) in 2005 and received its reaffirmation through a follow-up visit in 2012. This program will undergo its next visit in 2019.

NWOSU's Division of Business received initial accreditation by the Accreditation Council on Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP) in April 2012 and submitted its first Quality Assurance Report in May 2014. The business programs accredited include Accounting (B.B.A.), Business Administration (B.B.A.), Organizational Leadership (B.S.), and Technical Management (B.A.A.S.). The ACBSP made a follow-up visit in 2015, and the department submitted follow-up Quality Assurance Reports to the body in February 2016 and February 2018. This program will undergo its next review in 2022.

#### **4.A.6**

##### **Success of Graduates**

As part of the application-for-graduation process, the Registry Office collects information from students regarding employment plans and future residence plans upon degree completion. In spring 2014, the Office of Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness coordinated with the Registrar to add these additional questions to the application to strengthen its assessment of graduates. NWOSU implemented this tool during the spring 2014 semester. The complete application is submitted to the Registry Office and is then provided to the Office of Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness, where student responses are maintained in a [spreadsheet](#) and given to appropriate division/department chairs. In addition, the Office of Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness collects data on recent graduates through the use of [annual alumni surveys](#). In 2016, 94.52% of respondents were either employed and/or continuing their education.

In addition to institution-wide efforts to track activities of graduates, various academic programs have methodologies in place to assess graduate success. Examples include the Division of Education, which conducts [annual surveys](#) of graduates and employers as part of its specialized accreditation process, and the Division of Nursing, which distributes a survey to area healthcare leaders at its annual Advisory Board meeting. [Survey results](#) provide insight into how well Nursing graduates meet the needs of area employers.

The Office of Graduate Studies asks master's-level students about future plans and/or educational goals on its [exit survey](#). At the end of their degree program, graduate candidates are asked to respond to questions by ranking their responses either by an ordinal scale or by open response. The Associate Dean of Graduate Studies compiles the data every semester and disseminates it to program coordinators and chairs of divisions/departments that offer master's degrees. This data is used to provide a guide for each program's continual improvement. Since most graduate students already



hold jobs, the questions asked on the exit interview pertain to perceptions about preparation for future employment as well as future educational plans.

Strategic Direction 1 of NWOSU's current Strategic Plan emphasizes preparing students for success in [careers and service](#) to society. The University fulfills this direction in part by connecting students with internship opportunities. Because the University has stressed experiential learning as an integral part of bachelor and master degree programs over the past few years, NWOSU has seen an increase in the number of students who take advantage of these opportunities. A [sample](#) of FY18 internships follows:

- Marketing and Promotion internship with Chartwell's, the University's food service company,
- Accounting internship with the City of Alva, and
- American Studies graduate internship with AFS-USA Intercultural Program, New York, New York.

NWOSU understands that tracking internships is critical in optimizing opportunities for students. All division/department chairs and the Associate Dean of Graduate School will begin [reporting](#) all internship data within their annual Academic Assessment Plans beginning in fall 2018.

NWOSU has also asked each division/department to conduct an assessment of societal trends and needs, including prospective students' interests that may necessitate a change in content and/or pedagogical approach for the major. As part of this reflexive process, each division/department has been asked to map clear professional pathways to larger business and professional communities in order to provide a sharpened career focus for students. For example, in 2016, the English Department coordinated with the Office of Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness to develop an [online exit survey](#) for English graduating seniors. This survey asked questions about satisfaction, impactful courses, and needed subject areas.

## Sources

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## 4.B - Core Component 4.B

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The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.

1. The institution has clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals.
2. The institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and co-curricular programs.
3. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
4. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members.

### Argument

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#### 4.B.1

##### Student Learning and Effective Assessment Processes

NWOSU's [Mission Statement](#) and Strategic Plan state specific goals for student learning. Goal 1 of Strategic Direction 1 states that Northwestern will continue the “assessment of programs for relevant and rigorous content, effective delivery, appropriate measures of student learning, and logical sequencing” while also ensuring that “all accredited programs take the necessary steps to continue to adhere to standards for national accreditation within their specific timelines.”

##### General Education Assessment

For general education, the University has transitioned from using [comprehensive assessment](#) of all general education courses based on a three-year cycle to using course-embedded assessment of student learning derived from a competency-based curriculum.

In 2014, the Executive Vice President charged the General Education Committee with reviewing the General Education Mission and student learning outcomes in order to address needed curriculum changes. Northwestern implemented those changes during the fall 2016 semester. All general education courses are aligned with target SLOs in the areas of critical thinking, leadership, and literacy. In addition, the General Education Committee developed new course-embedded [assessments](#) for updated student learning outcomes. Data will be gathered for the first time following the 2017-2018 academic year. The General Education Committee will also analyze results from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) as well as the Educational Testing Service (ETS) Proficiency Profile to facilitate needed changes and to foster continued improvement.

##### Program-Level Assessments

At the program level, faculty members develop student learning assessments by using [student learning outcomes](#) that reflect, to the extent possible, the upper cognitive levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. These are continually updated by divisions/departments to reflect the student learning needs measured by the outcomes. (These are described in greater detail in section 4.B.2.)

In 2016-2017, the Office of Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness began utilizing a web-based data management system designed by the Aurora Learning Community Association (ALCA) for academic [assessment plans](#). This change from the prior assessment system, LiveText, was implemented in order to streamline the process and allow for more efficient data collection. The assessment form available in ALCA is a common tool for documenting the assessment process across all disciplines yet has been tailored to meet the needs of each division or department. The Office of Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness collects data for evaluation at the end of each academic year.

### **Accredited Program Assessments**

All of NWOSU's accredited programs—Education, Nursing, Business, and Social Work—use national or state exams as [assessment tools](#) or to track graduate success. The Education Division uses the Oklahoma General Education Test (OGET) for admission to the Teacher Education program, the Oklahoma Subject Area Test (OSAT) for admission to student teaching, and the Oklahoma Professional Teaching Exam (OPTE) to track those graduates who have acquired certification. The Nursing Division uses the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) for its pre-licensure Bachelor of Science in Nursing program. The Business Division uses the Certified Public Accountant (CPA) Exam to track the success of accounting graduates who have become certified accountants as well as the Peregrine Academic Services test to assess Business Administration students and Accounting students. Similarly, the Social Work Department tracks success of graduates who have become certified social workers by passing the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) licensing examination.

### **Co-Curricular Assessments**

In 2017, NWOSU began using a newly developed co-curricular [assessment tool](#) that is administered annually and examines learning in relation to ethical leadership, service, critical thinking, and fiscal responsibility. The instrument asks students to reflect on their experiences in relation to their specific co-curricular activity.

## **4.B.2**

### **Assessment of Student Achievement**

#### **General Education Assessment**

NWOSU uses a triangulated approach to general education assessment. The General Education Committee manages assessment processes and considers changes based upon assessment data. The principal component of this triangulation involves course-embedded assessment of student learning derived from a competency-based curriculum. This approach to general education assessment aligns general education outcomes with data retrieved from mid-level testing (ETS Proficiency Profile) and the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE).

In 2014, NWOSU began a review of its general education curriculum that resulted in a revised curriculum implemented in fall 2016. New [course-embedded assessment tools](#) were also developed. The first data will be collected after the 2017-2018 academic year and will be analyzed to facilitate needed changes and to foster continued improvement.

The Educational Testing Services Proficiency Profile (ETS) comprises the second component of general education assessment. [Administered annually](#), the ETS collects data from students who have completed between 40 and 75 credit hours and who have fulfilled general education requirements only at Northwestern. The ETS assesses students in four core areas: critical thinking, reading, writing, and mathematics. NWOSU maps ETS competencies to its own locally-constructed general education outcomes for purposes of triangulation and validation. The University is considering whether students who have earned 60 to 75 credit hours would provide a more reliable sample pool in the future.

Third, NWOSU administers the NSSE every three years to freshmen and senior students as an indirect measure of student learning. The General Education Committee evaluates responses to selected questions from freshmen students as indicators of student learning in general education. Northwestern maps NSSE questions to its general education outcomes as a part of its triangulation model.

The General Education Committee uses all results to identify successes and address areas of improvement in student achievement. These results are tied to general education outcomes in order to make specific adjustments for continuous improvement.

### **Program-Level Assessments**

NWOSU employs a consistent and ongoing process for the evaluation of student learning in academic programs. At the program level, faculty members oversee student learning assessment with support from academic administrators and the Office of Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness. Divisions/departments use student learning outcomes that reflect, to the extent possible, the upper cognitive levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. In addition, chairs and faculty members utilize both [direct and indirect methodologies](#) to assess student learning, to define appropriate measures of success, and to interpret data in order to determine whether [program modifications](#) should be made to improve student learning.

The Director of Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness uses an [assessment form](#) to aid faculty members in mapping the assessment cycle. In 2016-2017, the Office of Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness began utilizing a web-based data management system for academic assessment plans within ALCA, as discussed in Criterion 4.B.1 above. This assessment form is a common tool for documenting the assessment process across all disciplines yet is tailored to meet each department's needs. Data is reported at the end of each academic year and is submitted for evaluation to the Office of Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness.

Once plans are submitted, University academic administrators and the Director of Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness review the plans to ensure the effectiveness of the assessment process. Administrators use information from this process to structure [assessment retreats](#) for division/department chairs and faculty members to discuss best practices in assessment methodologies and data collection.

In response to [Strategic Direction 1, Goal 3](#) of the University's Strategic Plan, NWOSU informs its constituents about the aims of academic programs by posting SLOs to webpages. The Office of Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness webpage also contains links to all program SLOs.

### **Accredited Program Assessment**

Accrediting bodies guide assessment processes for specialized programs. Northwestern consistently operates within these guidelines and is transparent in [reporting](#) results on the University website.

### **Co-Curricular Assessment**

Currently, the Office of Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness uses a [co-curricular learning assessment tool](#) to identify where students are learning about ethical leadership, service, fiscal responsibility, and critical thinking. The Office assesses student learning in the following co-curricular areas: athletics, clubs and organizations, concert series, intramurals, Ranger Research Day, service learning, student government, student employment, and study abroad opportunities. The survey invites students to respond specifically regarding the learning that takes place in areas in which they participate.

### **4.B.3**

#### **Utilization of Assessment Results**

##### **General Education Assessment**

As stated in Criterion 4.B.2, the University is collecting data utilizing the revised general education assessment tools for the first time in the 2017-2018 academic year. Utilization of data has been an [established practice](#) and will continue to be systematic using the new tools. Data will be compiled and analyzed alongside the ETS Proficiency Profile and NSSE responses. The University will use those data sets, as they have used results from the previous tools, to monitor trends in student success and to perpetuate efforts toward achieving higher student success rates. The results will be highlighted as they relate to the three major general education outcomes: critical thinking, leadership, and literacy.

NWOSU applied for and received a \$1.5 million Title III grant with the aim of improving persistence and retention and increasing classroom engagement in gateway courses in 2010. In 2012, the University began a course redesign initiative--[informed by general education results](#) and financed by Title III grant funds--in gateway courses tied to specific general education outcomes. The University defined gateway courses as general education courses required for all students, typically taken early in students' academic careers. Departments sought, through the redesign effort, to improve student performance in these courses.

The initial phase of NWOSU's course redesign project involved English courses. With the goal of stimulating student capacity in both critical thinking and literacy, the English faculty redesigned composition course offerings to provide theme-based opportunities with appeal for students. The faculty also redesigned developmental courses by combining two courses into one. This change provided concentrated assistance to at-risk students and reduced the amount of time required to move into credit-bearing courses. In 2015, the English department added laboratory sections of composition courses to provide additional focused help to students who were coming from the developmental course. In fall 2017, the department eliminated these developmental courses and adopted a [co-requisite model of remediation](#), with students moving directly into [credit-bearing courses](#) that incorporate remediation.

As part of the second phase of the University's course redesign project, in 2014 the math faculty implemented new strategies for both developmental math courses and College Algebra to increase

student success. The department built upon its 2010 implementation of [Supplemental Instruction \(SI\)](#) in Pre-Intermediate Algebra, which [yielded conflicting results](#), when it began planning this redesign. (The addition of SI had as its goal to increase students' abilities to interpret data and to solve problems.) The redesign of MATH 0123 Intermediate Algebra and MATH 1513 College Algebra involved adding new technology—SMART Boards, WebAssist, and a student-response system—to increase student engagement.

Starting in fall 2017, the Math Department also [adopted the co-requisite model](#) and changed several of its courses, including eliminating one level of remediation, MATH 0023 Pre-Intermediate Algebra. Having developed clear Math Pathways based on student needs, the department [encouraged advisors](#) to steer students majoring in non-STEM fields to take MATH 1403 Contemporary Math rather than MATH 1513 College Algebra. Thus, STEM and STEM-related majors such as Math, Science, Business, and Nursing take MATH 1513 College Algebra or co-requisite MATH 1514 College Algebra with lab for general education. Non-STEM students, majoring in such things as Fine Arts programs, English, History, Health and Sports Science Education, and Criminal Justice take MATH 1403 Contemporary Math for general education. [Initial results since 2015](#) of all these efforts have been promising, with an increase in student success continuing into the 2017-2018 academic year.

The third phase of the University's course redesign project focused on gateway courses in the Natural Sciences and the fourth in the Social Sciences. These departments made similarly significant changes as part of this process. Natural Sciences, for example, employed upper-division majors as Learning Assistants (LAs) who attend the gateway courses, adding a [credit-bearing course for the LAs](#) in which they discuss pedagogy and student issues with teaching faculty. Social Sciences redesigned gateway courses around a common syllabus with shared [signature assignments](#) focused on critical thinking. All four departments increased technologies to encourage student engagement and active learning. In 2014, NWOSU shared its experiences in course redesign at the [HLC annual conference](#).

### **Program-Level Assessment**

NWOSU's academic programs utilize multiple methodologies, ranging from embedded course-level evaluations to national exams, to assess student learning and to gauge the need for pedagogical, course, or program changes. The utilization of multiple methodologies also ensures that academic programs continually have assessment processes drive program changes. As part of the process of constructing annual [Academic Assessment Plans](#), academic programs submit written responses related to both the interpretation of data collected from assessment methodologies and the program modifications that may be warranted.

As a result of the continuous assessment loop, individual programs make [modifications](#) such as creating new programs, creating new options, adding seminars, creating new curricula, changing course content, adding remediation, and providing opportunities for communication with students. For example, an examination of declining NCLEX-RN pass rates in the Nursing program led to an evaluation of the NCLEX-RN prep products used for pre-licensure BSN students. The Virtual ATI product that had been used since the program's inception was a student-driven product that, when completed, assured students were ready to take the NCLEX-RN exam. In 2015 and 2016, graduates were not completing their VATI in a timely fashion and, as a result, some were not successful on the NCLEX exam after waiting up to 12 months post-program-completion to take it. This delay not only resulted in students not meeting the program outcome but also directly impacted the calendar-year NCLEX pass rates for the Division of Nursing. As a result, in 2017 the Nursing program transitioned to a [KAPLAN review](#) product for the May 2017 graduating cohort. This product is a live, instructor-

led review that students complete within 4 days after commencement. All but two of the class of 2017 completed their exam within the benchmark 90 days post-program-completion. Analysis, findings, and proposed changes for all academic programs, as a result of assessment, can be found in NWOSU's academic assessment plans and are in the [OSRHE Annual Assessment Report](#). This report, submitted by all Oklahoma higher education institutions, requires a narrative summary of program-level analysis, findings of assessment data, and instructional changes based upon the data.

### **Co-Curricular Assessment**

Data gathered using the new [co-curricular assessment tool](#) described in Criterion 4.B.2, first administered in spring 2017, has been published in the Office of Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness [newsletter](#) and shared with co-curricular personnel, who are evaluating it to guide practice and processes. Some departments are already using the data to [draft initial goals](#).

### **4.B.4**

#### **Sound and Inclusive Assessment Practice**

##### **General Education Committee**

Through the auspices of the General Education Committee, the University includes representation from all academic programs when designing general education student learning outcomes and curricula. The Committee completed a review of the general education mission, competencies, and curricula that began in 2014, then [reviewed and approved](#) all curricular changes, developed new assessment tools, and is currently in its first year of data collection. Once triangulation among the course-embedded measures, ETS Proficiency Profile, and NSSE data has occurred, the assessment results will be disseminated to the General Education Committee to make recommendations for any changes warranted by those results.

##### **Program Faculty Retreats and Meetings**

Academic administrators, division/department chairs, and other faculty members meet in formal and informal assessment retreats and meetings during the year to review program assessment processes, to share best practices, and to discuss the assessment of student learning at the University. Meetings were also arranged to provide support to chairs and faculty members while transitioning to the new assessment system in ALCA. At the division and department level, academic program chairs and faculty members conduct regular meetings involving discussion of program effectiveness and evaluation. Chairs work continually with faculty to develop annual assessment plans and propose modifications that improve student learning and connect the loop of assessment. As specified in the [Strategic Plan](#), external reviews at the division and department level may also occur.

In addition, programs with specialized accreditation have created assessment groups who meet regularly to review assessment data for program accreditation. In the Division of Business (DOB), the chair and Business faculty members meet regularly throughout the year to assess the delivery of instruction in the program and each fall to compile the [annual business assessment report](#). Additionally, the [Business Advisory Council](#), made up of faculty members and external constituents from the business community, meets once each semester to review assessment data and to advise the DOB on meeting its mission to improve the education that students receive. This collaboration



between DOB faculty members and community leaders provides valuable insight from potential future employers in regard to the business curriculum and expectations for student learning. Also, the DOB Student Advisory Council meets each semester with business faculty members and University administrators to include a perspective on student learning within the program.

In the Division of Education (DOE), faculty members and assessment staff comprise the [Teacher Education Assessment Management System Committee](#) (TEAMS), which reviews and analyzes undergraduate and graduate program data and monitors assessment and instructional changes to meet the accreditation standards set forth by NCATE/CAEP. Committee members gather assessment data on a continual basis and compile an annual report with recommendations for improvement. The DOE utilizes multiple assessments to determine whether it is accomplishing its mission of impacting positively the PK-12 schools in its service area through a program of applied professional pedagogy that leads to effective teachers and effective schools. The Teacher Education Committee (TEC), the governing body for the DOE, reviews all data at one of its monthly meetings. The TEC is comprised of teacher education faculty members from all disciplines, teacher education candidates, and teacher education community members.

The Division of Nursing (DON) uses a Systematic Evaluation Plan to assist faculty and stakeholders in the assessment of program processes and outcomes following guidelines prescribed by the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN). Several faculty members and stakeholder committees, including the Academic Affairs Committee, the Student Committee, and the [Nursing Advisory Board](#), provide input regarding annual assessment data for the program. The Student Committee assesses student outcomes on graduate surveys and employer surveys to ensure that each Nursing graduate is competent and ready to enter the workforce. The Nursing Advisory Board, comprised of various internal and external stakeholders, meets annually in the spring to discuss regional needs for BSN-prepared nurses and potential solutions to meet those needs, issues with NWOSU students' and graduates' preparation in clinical settings, and general outcomes of the NWOSU Nursing program. The Nursing program also utilizes student advisors who represent their peers in the Division's faculty meetings, on the Division's Student Committee, and on the Division's Academic Affairs Committee. Annually, NWOSU's Bachelor of Science in Nursing program is "ranked" by one of the many online polls that examine nursing programs. In November 2017, the University learned that the program was ranked #18 in the Central region by [NurseJournal.org](#).

The Social Work program seeks input from the [Social Work Advisory Board](#). Comprised of social workers, practitioners, and leaders in local communities, the Board fosters and supports the continued development of social work education in the region. While members come from different communities, the committee works as one functional unit and focuses on the overall development of the program. The primary purpose of the board is to maintain active communication between the social work practice community and the program to ensure continued improvement.

### **Committee Processes**

The Academic Affairs Committee actively participates in the process of assessing new courses and programs, using guidelines detailed in the [Faculty Handbook](#).

The Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness Committee coordinates campus-wide processes and activities. Comprised of administrators, faculty members, and staff members, the Committee recommends policy and coordinates assessment across all areas of the University, including academic assessment, institutional assessment, and co-curricular assessment. During the spring 2016 semester, the committee initiated a discussion of the need for the course assessment tool to be reviewed.

Currently, the committee is modifying the wording and format of the course assessment, clarifying the reporting for tenure, and proposing a new software system for course assessment.

In co-curricular areas, faculty and staff members serve as advisors for student organizations. One example includes the [Student-Athlete Advisory Committee \(SAAC\)](#), advised by the Faculty Athletic Representative and the Associate Athletic Director for Compliance and Student-Athlete Services. The purposes of the SAAC are to [represent the diverse interests](#) of student-athletes to NWOSU's athletic administration, to promote community among all NWOSU student-athletes, to foster commitment to service, and to represent NWOSU's Athletics Program locally and at the conference and national levels. This group provides qualitative feedback to administration from students regarding the educational environment and their educational experiences.

Each spring since 2014, the Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness Director has provided to the NWOSU community an assessment newsletter that includes links to the results of each assessment tool administered during the academic year. The advisors and directors of various co-curricular areas access the results via the [newsletter](#).

## Sources

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- Assessment\_MCOM\_Plan
- Assessment\_Retreats
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- Nursing\_Meeting\_Minutes\_KAPLAN
- Nursing\_Rank18
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- SAAC\_Members
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- Social\_Sciences\_Signature\_Assessment
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- Strategic\_Plan\_Direction\_1.2
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- Student\_Outcomes\_Data.pdf
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## 4.C - Core Component 4.C

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The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational improvement through ongoing attention to retention, persistence, and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.

1. The institution has defined goals for student retention, persistence, and completion that are ambitious but attainable and appropriate to its mission, student populations, and educational offerings.
2. The institution collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence, and completion of its programs.
3. The institution uses information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data.
4. The institution's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs reflect good practice. (Institutions are not required to use IPEDS definitions in their determination of persistence or completion rates. Institutions are encouraged to choose measures that are suitable to their student populations, but institutions are accountable for the validity of their measures.)

### Argument

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#### 4.C.1

##### Appropriate and Attainable Goals

NWOSU's Enrollment Management Committee has established specific retention, persistence, and completion goals in keeping with the University's Mission and Core Values to meet its purpose as a rural, regional institution in Oklahoma. These goals, which are appropriate for the University's student populations and educational offerings, may be found in the [Enrollment Management Plan](#), with a [synopsis of results](#) shared during the annual Enrollment Management Committee Meeting. Goals, results, and action steps reported during that meeting follow:

1. Achieve an annual return rate of 65% for first-time, full-time freshmen. For the fall 2017 semester, the return rate was 54.99%, an increase of 1.5% over the previous academic year. Because of this increase, the University still believes that this goal is attainable, although return rates have fallen somewhat short in recent years. The University has analyzed this data and implemented intrusive advising strategies and course redesign strategies as explained later in this criterion.
2. Achieve a six-year cohort graduation rate of 37%. For the fall 2017 semester, the six-year graduation cohort rate was 29.1%, an increase of 2.2% from the previous academic year. Because of this increase, the University believes that the goal is still attainable.
3. Achieve a fall-to-spring persistence rate of 87% for first-time, full-time freshman students. For the fall 2017 semester, the fall-to-spring persistence rate for first-time, full-time freshmen was 71.9%, a 2% increase over the previous academic year. Because of this increase, the University views this goal as attainable. The University has implemented strategies identified in this criterion to address this issue.
4. Achieve an annual return rate of 75% for sophomore students from fall to fall. For the fall 2017 semester, the fall-to-fall return rate for sophomores was 72.5%, an increase of 5.7% over

the previous academic year. This increase shows that this goal is attainable. The Dean of Student Services and Enrollment Management has collected data to analyze causes, and the University has implemented strategies identified later in this criterion.

5. Achieve a persistence rate for undecided majors of 78% from fall to spring. For the fall 2017 semester, the persistence rate for undecided majors was 71.3%, a 1.9% increase over the previous academic year. Because of this increase, the University sees this goal as attainable. To help define a path to completion, the University has developed and offers resources to assist students in selecting a major earlier in their academic career.
6. Achieve a success rate from remedial math to credit-bearing courses of 75% for students who enter MATH 0013 and of 78% for students who enroll in MATH 0123. These goals have been attained. The success rate for students entering MATH 0013 for the 2016-2017 academic year was 80%, while the success rate for those entering MATH 0123 was 81%. This goal is being modified in response to the co-requisite model currently in use and the subsequent change in developmental offerings.

It should be noted that an influx of students from Nepal whose intent was to transfer after a single semester has had a negative impact on first-time, full-time freshman return rates and fall-to-spring persistence rates in recent years. In fall 2016, 74 of 80 students from Nepal did not return to the University in the spring. Calculations of fall-to-spring [retention rates](#) (83.71%) and [persistence rates](#) (66.19%), excluding international students, paint a more encouraging picture.

#### 4.C.2

##### Collection and Analysis

The Institutional Research Specialist in the Information Technology Department retrieves and organizes information associated with student retention, persistence, and completion. The University uses Jenzabar PX (Poise), known on campus as [RangerNet](#), to compile this information. Student information is housed in this database management system and is ultimately published in the [University Factbook](#) and the [Enrollment Management Plan](#). Data indicates that NWOSU's six-year graduation rate is consistent with the [average rate](#) for regional institutions in Oklahoma. Ancillary information is obtained from the Retention Coordinator, who collects real-time data on students in the form of [early alerts](#) from faculty, face-to-face communication with students regarding their academic progress, and individual follow-up.

#### 4.C.3

##### Application of Information

The Enrollment Management Committee, along with the Dean of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management, analyzes available data to develop strategies for improving student retention, persistence, and completion and compiles the [Enrollment Management Plan](#). This plan informs University practice.

For example, Northwestern opted to join the HLC Persistence and Completion Academy in 2015. The Academy team annually evaluates the Enrollment Management Plan as well as each

division's/department's recruitment plans and retention reports. A primary goal of the team is to raise awareness of issues related to retention, persistence, and completion. To this end, in March 2018 faculty members and team members held a [faculty development workshop](#) to provide information and training on the Academy.

The University also complies with guidelines of [Complete College America's \(CCA\) Scaling Corequisite Initiative](#) to address the needs of students at all academic levels in order to achieve higher degree completion rates. As a participant in CCA's Scaling Corequisite Initiative, the OSRHE commits to supporting the State System institutions, including NWOSU, in achieving ambitious but attainable [outcomes](#).

In 2017, the University's Student Services Office received a \$220,378 TRIO grant allotment from the U.S. Department of Education to provide support, resources, and information necessary for student success and thereby to increase student graduation rates. The [\\$644,122 grant program](#) employs a holistic approach that customizes services to address academic and non-academic needs of participants at each level of their college experience. The program serves first-generation, low-income students and students with disabilities by providing support to more than 125 students through multiple training and guidance activities throughout the academic year. An initiative undertaken in 2016 as part of this program is the [Summer Jump Start Program](#), which allows incoming students to complete an English co-requisite course and a Math developmental course during the summer in preparation for non-remedial fall courses.

The English, Math, Science, and Social Sciences Departments also apply best-practice strategies from Title III redesign efforts to provide additional help with student persistence and completion by decreasing below-average performance and withdrawal rates in gateway courses.

In addition, the University maintains student advising as an integral part of faculty members' professional responsibilities. NWOSU has made efforts to strengthen the effectiveness of advising in order to increase the number of students who declare a major within their first 30 hours. Standardized [course rotations](#) and [plans of study](#) support this effort. Since the Academy has identified undeclared majors as a target population for retention efforts, some [Ranger Connection](#) sections have been designated specifically for students who have not declared a major. Another initiative, dubbed the "15-to-Finish Campaign," encourages faculty to advise students to enroll in at least 15 hours each semester for timely degree completion. These efforts have paid off in an increase in average number of enrollment hours for first-time, full-time freshmen from [14.3 in fall 2016 to 14.9 in fall 2017](#). This increase, along with the sustained retention effort by NWOSU, resulted in [recognition](#) by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education.

Analysis of retention data has led to these and other University initiatives designed to mitigate student attrition rates. Clearly, these initiatives reflect a pattern of analysis and use of data.

### **Validity of Measures**

NWOSU uses both the Integrated Post-Secondary Education Data System (IPEDS) and the Unified Data System (UDS) for reporting institutional data. Data included in both systems transfer to the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. The Institutional Research Specialist reports data through IPEDS, and the UDS/Records Coordinator in the Registry Office reports data through UDS. In addition, the Institutional Research Specialist creates the [University Factbook](#) and supplies additional institutional reports as needed. Centralization of reporting for IPEDS by the Institutional Research Specialist benefits the University through consistent approaches to data collection and

management.

## Sources

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## 4.S - Criterion 4 - Summary

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The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

### Summary

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Northwestern Oklahoma State University closely follows directives from the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education to assure the quality of its programs. These directives include prescribed methods for conducting program reviews, evaluating course credit and transfer credit, and establishing appropriate curricula, including prerequisites and logical course sequencing for each of its degree programs. In addition, the University has established rigorous processes for measuring achievement using specific student learning outcomes. These processes include general education assessment, program level assessment, accredited program assessment, and co-curricular assessment. The University uses data from these processes for the continual improvement of its academic programs and endeavors to ensure the delivery of relevant and rigorous content as well as effective instructional delivery. These processes also ensure that all accredited programs take the necessary steps for continued adherence to national accreditation standards within specified timelines.

The 2017-2018 academic year will be the first time data will be collected utilizing the revised general education assessment tools. These will be compiled and analyzed alongside the ETS Proficiency Profile and NSSE responses. The University will use these data sets to monitor trends in student success and to perpetuate efforts toward achieving higher student success rates. The results will be highlighted as they relate to the three major general education competencies: critical thinking, leadership, and literacy.

NWOSU also takes responsibility for its learning environments. The Library Services Director and library faculty acquire library materials that include digital and online resources. The Director of the Academic Success Center hires and trains tutors to oversee its operations. The Director of Information Technology, along with a staff of five individuals, oversees the University's technology uses and investments. The Online Learning Coordinator oversees the Blackboard learning management system, while ITV activities and scheduling occur through the Office of the ITV Coordinator. Similarly, the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies manages the Aurora Learning Community Association Assessment System (ALCA), which provides assessment data for the Education Division, the DNP program, and faculty portfolios.

NWOSU defines ambitious but attainable goals for student retention, persistence, and completion. These are appropriate to the University's mission, student populations, and educational offerings. The Enrollment Management Committee, along with the Dean of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management, analyzes and disseminates the data annually to develop strategies for improving student retention, persistence, and completion.



## **Sources**

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*There are no sources.*

## 5 - Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

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The institution's resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The institution plans for the future.

### 5.A - Core Component 5.A

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The institution's resource base supports its current educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.

1. The institution has the fiscal and human resources and physical and technological infrastructure sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered.
2. The institution's resource allocation process ensures that its educational purposes are not adversely affected by elective resource allocations to other areas or disbursement of revenue to a superordinate entity.
3. The goals incorporated into mission statements or elaborations of mission statements are realistic in light of the institution's organization, resources, and opportunities.
4. The institution's staff in all areas are appropriately qualified and trained.
5. The institution has a well-developed process in place for budgeting and for monitoring expense.

## Argument

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### 5.A.1

#### Resources and Infrastructure

Northwestern operates under the constitutional and statutory guidelines of the state of Oklahoma and the [Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education](#) (OSRHE). OSRHE, as the coordinating body of control, provides budget allocations for each college and university after making a yearly system request to the Oklahoma State Legislature. The OSRHE approves any proposed tuition and fee increases within limits set by the Legislature. As a state agency, Northwestern operates within a balanced annual budget. Since FY15, [state appropriations](#) have decreased some 24% and [tuition and mandatory fees](#) have increased 21%.

Support of Northwestern's educational programs resides mainly in the Education and General Part I (E&G Part 1) of the budget. E&G Part 1 represents nearly two-thirds of the overall [revenues](#) and [expenses](#) for the institution. As state appropriations decline, the University's dependence on tuition and fees increases. Northwestern carefully evaluates tuition and fees each year and the impact that any changes will have on students. The University also charges several [academic service fees](#) to help offset program costs.

Northwestern's Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) works with faculty and staff to incentivize and

foster grant activity. (The role of the OSP is discussed in greater detail in Criterion 3.B.5.) These [contracts and awards](#) greatly enhance academic and student services programs across the University.

[School land funds](#) offer another source of revenue available to NWOSU and several other Oklahoma higher education institutions. These funds result primarily from oil and gas production on land owned by the state of Oklahoma and provide dollars for capital expenditures.

The Northwestern Oklahoma State University Foundation aids the University in meeting its [Mission](#), supporting students through [scholarships](#), [capital projects](#), [endowed chairs](#), and [other contributions](#). In May 2017, Northwestern officially kicked off the public phase of its [capital campaign](#), setting an aggressive goal of \$28 million. As of May 2018, funds raised or pledged total more than \$25 million. Northwestern also benefits from an [Endowed Chair Program](#) through which the state of Oklahoma matches private gifts given to the Northwestern Foundation. [Endowment earnings](#) from both the Foundation and the OSRHE benefit [academic programs](#) each year.

As part of the yearly external audit, NWOSU performs financial ratio analysis including the calculation of the [composite financial index](#) (CFI). The University also submits the CFI to the Higher Learning Commission each spring as part of the institutional update process. Northwestern experiences sound financial health, as evidenced by the “above-the-zone” ratio.

Employee [wages and benefits](#) constitute the largest age of the University budget. A decrease in state funding in FY16 necessitated various reductions in expenses. In response, senior administration anticipated midyear revenue failures from the State of Oklahoma and strategically evaluated positions as they became vacant. This strategy resulted in a number of [positions](#) being eliminated over a 24-month period. Based on this early proactive strategy, no layoffs or furlough days occurred during the decline in state funding. During employee-reduction decisions, Northwestern leadership eliminated the two-academic-dean structure and replaced it with one Dean of Faculty position, providing funds to help preserve faculty positions and the instructional integrity of the institution. The responsibilities of the eliminated position were distributed between the Dean of Faculty and the Vice President for Academic Affairs. In these ways, the University has maintained sufficient [full-time faculty and staff](#) to fulfill its mission.

Northwestern’s physical infrastructure, consisting of more than 470 acres and 39 buildings located in three counties in northwest Oklahoma, sufficiently supports its operations. The [Alva campus](#) location is spread over 104 acres. Twenty-seven buildings, with five additional buildings on the 350-acre University Farm five miles southwest, make up that campus location. The [Enid](#) and [Woodward](#) campus locations each consist of a single building for all instructional and administrative services.

Since the 2014 HLC visit, the University has accomplished numerous [facility upgrades](#). Each year Northwestern updates a [Long-Term Capital Planning Commission Report](#) and submits it to the Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO) Board as well as the Oklahoma Office of Management and Enterprise Services (OMES). A [three-year facilities plan](#) highlights upcoming projects identified with funding sources.

Technology plays a vital role in accomplishing NWOSU's Mission, allowing faculty and staff members to meet job demands efficiently and effectively with [up-to-date computers](#) and software. Northwestern Information Technology (IT) staff maintains 22 [computer labs](#) for students across its three campus locations.

Interactive Television (ITV) serves as a technological tool to provide instruction among the three NWOSU campus locations. Northwestern currently operates 22 fully equipped, high-definition ITV studios. (ITV studios are described in greater detail in Criterion 3.D.4.) An electronic media fee of \$10 per credit hour for ITV courses upgrades studio technology. [Grants](#) received from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the most recent one awarded in FY18, also assist with technology upgrades.

In addition to the ITV studios, approximately 34 independent [SMART classrooms](#) serve faculty members and students across the three campus locations. An extensive fiber-optic network connects buildings at the Alva campus location. A 1Gb Virtual Private Network (VPN), using the state of Oklahoma's telecommunications provide, OneNet, connects all three campus locations. The OSRHE provides this resource at a great cost savings to Oklahoma higher education institutions.

Northwestern [recently announced](#) an upgrade to its Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system. In a [collaborative effort](#), Northwestern joined with two RUSO sister institutions to move forward with the same request for proposal, resulting in resource savings to each institution and a significant technology upgrade for students, faculty, and staff. [Financial budgeting](#) began three years ago to fund this project, with the initial implementation process beginning summer 2018.

## 5.A.2

### Resource Allocation Process

Northwestern allocates appropriate funding to its educational purpose and uses its [Strategic Plan](#) to help guide resource allocation. At the conclusion of its most recent strategic planning process, Northwestern prepared a [summary document](#) to highlight institutional accomplishments. This document provides evidence of institutional resource allocation and expenditures.

All areas of the University, including academic affairs, business affairs, student services, intercollegiate athletics, and university relations directly or indirectly support the educational purposes of the institution. The [E&G Part 1 summary](#) of expenses reflects spending for the past four years. The reduction in overall spending relates directly to the reduction in [state appropriations](#) and the slight decline in [student credit hours](#) generated. The Northwestern Foundation, while a separate entity, supports the Mission of the University (as explained in Criterion 1.A.3).

## 5.A.3

### Resources and Goals

A commitment to "providing quality educational and cultural opportunities to learners with diverse needs" anchors Northwestern's [Mission Statement](#). The University's [Vision Statement](#) reinforces that commitment by indicating that Northwestern aspires "to be a vibrant and innovative regional university of choice." [Strategic Directions #1 and #2](#) focus specifically on student learning and success.

In order to help accomplish these directions, Northwestern commits the majority of its resources to instructional purposes. A streamlined [organizational structure](#) allows the bulk of funded positions to

be assigned to instruction, academic support, and student services, which maximizes efficient operations with minimal bureaucracy. [Institutional support](#) accounts for only 6.2% of the E&G Part 1 budget for FY18, with instruction accounting for the majority of the budget at 42.7%.

#### 5.A.4

##### **Well-Qualified and Trained Staff**

The Human Resources Office maintains [detailed job descriptions](#) that list minimum qualifications for each position, and reference and [background checks](#) occur for all new employees. In an effort to seek qualified applicants and to develop a diversified applicant pool, the University uses several [print and on-line methods](#). (Faculty credentials and the hiring process are described in greater detail in Criterion 3.C.2.)

NWOSU offers orientation to all new employees. Once a year, the Staff Council provides a [one-day orientation](#) for new staff. One week prior to the fall semester, the Faculty Development Advisory Board coordinates a [multi-day orientation](#) for new faculty members. Both of these sessions provide information on a wide range of topics to help each new employee become familiar with the University's culture, processes, services offered, and key locations.

Northwestern provides further training and professional development opportunities to both faculty and staff on an ongoing basis. Academic deans and chairs use [yearly travel budgets](#) to fund conference and training expenses for faculty. (Faculty travel is discussed in greater detail in Criterion 3.C.4.) Staff offices also receive annual budget allocations for professional development. [Staff members](#) attend numerous training and professional development opportunities, most sponsored by professional organizations.

Northwestern benefits not only from continuity brought by having a number of established professionals on its [Senior Staff](#), but also from perspectives provided by its newer members. Senior Staff members have contributed 208 years of combined experience to the institution, with a total of 109 years in their respective positions. Students receive support from qualified professional and classified staff members. Of the approximately 44 professional staff members, 93% hold doctoral, master's or bachelor's degrees. Almost 60% of non-classified staff members at NWOSU have attained either a bachelor's or master's degree.

#### 5.A.5

##### **Budgeting and Monitoring Processes**

Northwestern's budgeting process encompasses all areas of the University. Early each spring, [pre-budget meetings](#) occur with budget administrators or supervisors and the Vice President for Academic Affairs, Vice President for Administration, and Dean of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management. These administrators discuss current-year budgets and expenditures as well as needs for the upcoming fiscal year. During late spring, the President leads [formal budget hearings](#) that are open to the campus community. Budget administrators present [needs](#) for the upcoming fiscal year, with new budget requests linked to a Strategic Direction listed in Northwestern's [Strategic Plan](#). During the same time period, members of the University Senior Staff meet with the [Student](#)

[Government Association](#) to discuss possible tuition and mandatory fee increases, if applicable.

The President, Vice President for Administration, and Vice President for Academic Affairs compile all budget requests and finalize budget priorities as well as tuition and mandatory fee amounts for the new fiscal year once [final state appropriations](#) are received from the OSRHE. Upon final budget approval by both the RUSO Board and the OSRHE, the Vice President for Administration provides [departmental budgets](#) to budget administrators. The fiduciary processes described in Criterion 5.B.1 and the accompanying financial documents in that section reflect the University's careful stewardship and planning for financial contingencies.

Monitoring of budget expenditures occurs at the division/department, dean, vice president, and University levels continually throughout the fiscal year. This process is facilitated by the University comptroller, who generates [monthly expenditure reports](#) for each budget administrator, and the Vice President for Administration, who investigates variances and takes the appropriate corrective action. [Monthly revenue and expense report](#) status for each fund is monitored by comparing current to prior year statements. The Vice President provides regular briefings to the University President as well as to the [Senior Staff](#).

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## 5.B - Core Component 5.B

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The institution's governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the institution to fulfill its mission.

1. The governing board is knowledgeable about the institution; it provides oversight of the institution's financial and academic policies and practices and meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.
2. The institution has and employs policies and procedures to engage its internal constituencies—including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff, and students—in the institution's governance.
3. Administration, faculty, staff, and students are involved in setting academic requirements, policy, and processes through effective structures for contribution and collaborative effort.

### Argument

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#### 5.B.1

##### Governance

The Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO) Board consists of [nine members](#) serving nine-year staggered terms. The Governor appoints, with confirmation of the Senate, eight of the nine positions to represent various geographical regions of the state; the elected State Superintendent of Public Instruction serves as the ninth member. Following their appointment to the RUSO Board, members attend an [orientation program](#) to learn their duties and responsibilities. (The two-board system comprised of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education and RUSO is discussed in greater detail in Criterion 2.A.)

NWOSU's President attends all [Board meetings](#) held throughout the year. The Vice President for Administration and the Vice President for Academic Affairs attend committee and Board meetings as needed. These individuals provide input to the Board upon request throughout the year. In preparation for these meetings, the University submits agenda items and other requested information. RUSO [committees](#) evaluate submitted documents and make recommendations to the full Board. Budget approval as well as approval of any increases to tuition and mandatory fees occurs at the [June meeting](#).

In addition to regular agenda submissions, Northwestern also submits several reports to the RUSO office for distribution to Board members. These reports include the [Sources and Uses Report](#), [Quarterly Out-of-State Travel Reports](#), and [FTE Employee Report](#). Additionally, RUSO oversees the accountability of the University through review of accreditation reports and financial audits, evaluation of academic program reviews, and examination of all pertinent institutional reports, taking action to ensure the University complies with RUSO policy.

The University prepares yearly documents including a [budget](#), [external audit](#), [internal audit](#), and [OMES claims audit](#) to assist the Board in its oversight. As part of the annual external [audit exit conference](#), the Audit and Finance Committee of the RUSO Board also reviews the University's [composite financial index](#) (CFI). Northwestern's CFI ratio continues to be "above-the-zone."



## 5.B.2

### Constituency Engagement

As the governing body for Northwestern, RUSO engages in hiring and reviewing the performance of the President, approving budgets and personnel decisions, and providing oversight of academic affairs, the physical plant, and campus locations. The [RUSO mission and philosophy](#) correlate with the [Vision](#) and [Mission](#) of NWOSU. Minutes of the [RUSO Board meetings](#) document all of the materials presented on behalf of Northwestern.

The University uses a well-delineated [administrative hierarchy](#) and committee structure for governance. The Vice President for Academic Affairs, acting upon recommendations from the Faculty Senate, appoints [faculty committees](#) at the beginning of each fall semester. The functions and responsibilities of these various committees are clearly defined in the [Faculty Handbook](#).

The [Faculty Senate](#) promotes and channels faculty participation in shaping University policy. Its three objectives are contained in its [by-laws](#). The Faculty Senate President, Vice President for Academic Affairs, and University President meet on a [regular basis](#) to facilitate communication between faculty and administration. (Examples of Faculty Senate participation in governance are discussed in greater detail in Criterion 3.C.1.) The [Professional Staff Council](#) (PSC) serves as the representative body of professional exempt employees and participates in the formulation of policies affecting such employees.

The [Staff Council](#) is a forum for non-exempt employees to aid in achieving Northwestern's goals by offering significant participation in University life. This group coordinates several activities each year, including [new staff orientation](#), [spring campus clean-up days](#), and the [Campus Kudos Award](#).

The [Student Government Association](#) (SGA) represents the interests of the study body. The SGA holds regular semi-monthly meetings, with the Dean of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management serving as the University liaison. The [Enid Leadership Council](#) and the [Woodward Leadership Advisory Board](#), composed of students, coordinate student activities at the Enid and Woodward campus locations, respectively. Each leadership group receives [specified fees](#) for student events and activities. SGA and these other student groups make recommendations to the administration concerning policy.

The [senior management team](#) (Senior Staff) at Northwestern consists of 11 members. This group [meets formally](#) on a monthly basis to oversee the operations of the University by setting policy and implementing initiatives of the Strategic Plan. Members of this group routinely attend various committee meetings held in conjunction with the other groups discussed earlier.

By including each of these groups, the University involves all constituencies in governance through the review and implementation of policies and procedures that impact students, faculty, staff, alumni, and stakeholders.

## 5.B.3

### Structures for Contribution and Collaboration

Many of the organizations and committees discussed in 5.B.2 have a voice in setting academic requirements, policies, and processes as a part of their function. University [standing committees](#) also shape various aspects of academic policy and procedure. Several examples of [faculty committees](#) directly involved in setting academic requirements and policies as well as shaping processes include the Academic Affairs Committee, General Education Committee, Service Learning/Civic Engagement Committee, Online Learning Committee, Teacher Education Committee, and Graduate Committee. The Faculty Evaluation and Development Committee and the Tenure Committee are instrumental in shaping expectations of faculty.

Faculty and department chairs review existing and new course offerings during the [program review process](#). (This process is discussed in greater detail in 4.A.1.)

Students share in the process of governance as student representatives on 12 of the 17 standing committees. Students are also empowered through service on [University committees](#) and student advisory boards such as the [Student-Athlete Advisory Committee](#). Exempt and non-exempt staff members as well as student committees may recommend processes for implementing academic requirements and policies, with senior staff serving as the administrative body through which all recommendations are considered and potentially implemented. Northwestern involves administration, faculty, staff, and students in the [strategic planning process](#) as well.

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## 5.C - Core Component 5.C

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The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.

1. The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities.
2. The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting.
3. The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.
4. The institution plans on the basis of a sound understanding of its current capacity. Institutional plans anticipate the possible impact of fluctuations in the institution's sources of revenue, such as enrollment, the economy, and state support.
5. Institutional planning anticipates emerging factors, such as technology, demographic shifts, and globalization.

### Argument

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#### 5.C.1

##### Resource Allocation and Mission

Northwestern allocates resources to support faculty, staff, students, administrators, and other stakeholders, enabling them to accomplish the institution's [Mission](#) and [Strategic Directions](#). University administration prepares an annual [budget](#) after receiving input and budget requests, which must be tied to the University [Strategic Plan](#), from all divisions, departments, and offices. [Budget hearings](#) provide opportunities for budget administrators to present requests and discuss their alignment with the University's Mission and Strategic Directions. Two examples of aligning resources of the Mission and Strategic Plan priorities include the decision to upgrade the [Enterprise Resource Planning](#) (ERP) system and the [renovation of two dormitories](#).

#### 5.C.2

##### Linked Processes

Northwestern uses data from student and institutional assessment to drive planning and budgeting. For example, responses on [student satisfaction surveys](#), discussions during the strategic planning process, and input on the Financial Aid Office's [Institutional Assessment Plan](#) led to the addition of a staff member to process student financial aid in a more timely fashion. (The University's open and inclusive budgeting process is discussed in greater detail in 2.A.)

Academic program modifications derived from program assessments must account for resource allocation as part of the approval process for the OSRHE. [Institutional assessment plans](#) must also include budget implications as part of the annual reporting process. In addition, the Vice President for Administration must file a [budget needs request](#) with the OSRHE each year as part of the annual budgeting cycle.

### 5.C.3

#### **Inclusive Planning Process**

Northwestern has engaged in formal strategic planning for nearly two decades, on a five-year cycle. Widespread solicitation of [input from internal and external stakeholders](#) serves as the hallmark of each of the strategic plans. The University developed the 2016 plan with the aid of a [Strategic Planning Committee](#), including administration, faculty, staff, and student representatives serving with an external consultant with expertise in connecting strategic planning to accreditation planning. The University published the completed [Strategic Plan](#) and invited internal and external stakeholders to the [unveiling](#).

University stakeholders review progress in meeting the plan's Strategic Directions on an ongoing basis. University Senior Staff periodically complete a [formal review](#) at their monthly meetings. The President also verbally updates the governing board, faculty, staff, and civic groups on the implementation of strategic plan initiatives.

The University uses many other plans to ensure that it meets the needs of students and accomplishes its Mission. Northwestern seeks input from internal and external constituents as it develops these plans. Several examples of annual planning documents include the [Academic Plan](#), the [Enrollment Management Plan](#), the [Campus Master Plan](#), the [Athletic Department Strategic Plan](#), the [Continuity of Operations Plan](#), and the [Diversity Plan](#).

Northwestern seeks input for planning from several advisory boards and committees associated with academic disciplines, co-curricular activities, and additional locations. (These are discussed in greater detail in Criteria 1.D.1 and 4.B.4.)

### 5.C.4

#### **Planning**

The 2016 strategic planning process began with articulating [planning assumptions](#) used to guide the current Strategic Plan. The University continually monitors its planning assumptions and progress toward achieving its Strategic Directions. To this end, the University Executive Team--consisting of the President, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Vice President for Administration, Dean of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management, and Associate Vice President for University Relations--meets weekly and routinely discusses key indicators. The [Senior Staff](#) meets monthly for the same purpose.

Two examples of how assumptions guide planning follow:

- The University assumes that students will require additional support services and guidance to meet their academic goals. The University applied for and received a [Student Support Services grant \(TRIO\)](#) to provide this additional support and guidance.
- The assumption that fundraising and grants would be more critical to the University's ability to fulfill its Mission led to the initiation of the quiet phase of the [Imagine Capital Campaign](#) in 2013 in preparation for the announcement of the public phase in 2017.

Northwestern follows an inclusive planning process, setting flexible goals that maximize opportunities and minimize threats due to conditions such as fluctuations in enrollment, the economy, and state support. The University focuses attention on recruitment and retention of students. Despite modest recent gains in retention cited in Criterion 4.C.2, [retention rates](#) show a general decrease over the past several years, as do [enrollment trends](#). However, strong attendance at [Ranger Preview](#) indicates that fall 2018 freshman enrollment may increase. University involvement in the [HLC Persistence and Completion Academy](#), TRIO grant activities, and the implementation of [co-requisite courses](#) and Math Pathways (as described in Criterion 4.B.3) reflect the University's commitment to improving retention rates.

The University attracts students with its affordability and strong [scholarship programs](#) offered through the Northwestern Foundation and supported by the city of [Alva Sales Tax Incentive](#) awards. The scholarship program provides an ongoing source of financial support for students. One focus of the [Imagine Capital Campaign](#) is raising additional scholarship funds. The new Doctor of Nursing Practice program provides another example of an increased educational opportunity that brings additional revenue.

The state of Oklahoma economy in the last three years has forced the University to be more innovative in its approach to funding, and declining state appropriations have forced Northwestern to make adjustments in staffing, operating funds, and travel. Northwestern, through conservative and forward-looking budgeting (as described in 5.A.1), cost cutting, and aggressive fundraising, protects the core function of providing instruction to students. However, maintaining [adequate compensation](#) for NWOSU faculty and staff members proves difficult in the current economic environment.

## 5.C.5

### **Emerging Factors**

The strategic planning team deemed the [emerging factors](#) identified in the 2011 Strategic Plan, articulated as "driving forces," as still relevant for guiding the planning process for the 2016 document. For example, changes in response to the technological expectations of students include an updated University website (2017), the adoption of a new Electronic Resource Planning system (2018), and a Faculty Senate discussion of the need for [minimum standards for faculty use of Blackboard](#) classroom management system (2018). The adoption of co-requisite math and English courses and implementation of TRIO grant programs reflect an attempt to meet the needs of underprepared students, and the anticipation of declining state funding led to the conservative fiscal measures described in Criterion 5.A.1. As these examples illustrate, the University has displayed a pattern of carefully considering emerging factors during planning processes and will continue to do so in the future.

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## 5.D - Core Component 5.D

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The institution works systematically to improve its performance.

1. The institution develops and documents evidence of performance in its operations.
2. The institution learns from its operational experience and applies that learning to improve its institutional effectiveness, capabilities, and sustainability, overall and in its component parts.

### Argument

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#### 5.D.1

##### Evidence Development and Documentation

The [Strategic Plan](#), the University's overarching planning document, guides all of its operations. Northwestern maintains a strong record of continuous improvement by developing and documenting evidence of performance of institutional operations. Progress on accomplishing University goals articulated in the [former](#) and [current Strategic Plan](#) guides administrative units as they develop institutional assessment plans.

Careful planning at multiple levels is highly valued at Northwestern. Academic changes since 2014, such as the increase in and documentation of internships, the development and implementation of a Doctor of Nursing Practice program, and the introduction of co-requisite courses, stem from priorities identified in the University's [Academic Plan](#), institutional assessments (discussed in Criterion 4), and [Strategic Directions](#). Financial documentation, including the [unqualified audit](#), "above-the-zone" [CFI](#), and [budgets](#), reflect the University's continued financial stability in challenging economic times. Effective comprehensive planning has allowed for [completed renovations](#) that have improved the experiences of all University stakeholders. The [Imagine Capital Campaign](#) has focused and supported these and other initiatives.

#### 5.D.2

##### Improving Institutional Effectiveness

Northwestern uses institutional assessment as a way to improve its effectiveness, capabilities, and sustainability, overall and in its component parts. The assessment process led to the 2015 and 2016 dormitory renovations in response to [student survey](#) input and [institutional assessment planning](#), while the 2017 renovation of the University Student Center and change in meal plan were based on responses from [student focus groups](#). The 2018 adoption of a new Electronic Resource Planning System came in response to the need for more efficient institutional processes identified in [strategic planning focus groups](#).

While the above initiatives resulted from institutional assessment plans of individual offices, Northwestern also moved from provisional NCAA Division II candidacy to [full membership](#) in 2015. This membership provides a powerful example of continuous improvement as Northwestern strives to



increase scholarships, upgrade facilities, and provide life in balance for student-athletes.

Strongly committed to the students it serves, NWOSU fulfills its Mission, improves its educational offerings, and maintains efficient planning processes in order to respond to potential challenges and maximize upcoming opportunities. Despite declining state support, Northwestern remains strong and vibrant through conservative and forward-looking budgeting, cost cutting, and aggressive fundraising.

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## 5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary

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The institution's resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The institution plans for the future.

### Summary

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As a regional, public, state-assisted institution, Northwestern Oklahoma State University maximizes its resources to model efficiency and fiscal responsibility. In an environment of declining state allocations, the University seeks and obtains funds from external sources to continue offering quality programs and to plan for the future. In addition, Northwestern closely examines its operations to allocate its resources most effectively. Input from faculty, staff, students, and external constituents drives institutional planning to align available resources with the University's Mission.

NWOSU's administration prepares an annual budget after receiving requests and input from all divisions, departments, and offices. Budget requests must be tied to the University's Strategic Plan for consideration. Northwestern also uses data from student and institutional assessment to drive planning and budgeting. Academic program modifications derived from program assessments must account for resource allocation as part of the approval process for the OSRHE.

For almost two decades, the University has engaged in formal strategic planning. Widespread solicitation of input from internal and external stakeholders serves as the hallmark of each strategic plan. The University also uses seminal annual planning documents from a variety of sources to ensure that it meets the needs of students and accomplishes its Mission. The University continually monitors its planning assumptions and progress toward achieving its Strategic Directions, as demonstrated by the fact that the University's Executive Team meets weekly and routinely discusses emerging factors. The Senior Staff meets monthly and also discusses emerging factors.

NWOSU maintains a strong record of continual improvement by developing and documenting evidence of performance of institutional operations. In this way, Northwestern uses institutional assessment as a way to improve its effectiveness, capabilities, and sustainability. University goals, identified in a former and current Strategic Plan, guide administrative units as they develop institutional assessment plans. Renovation of the University Student Center, adoption of a new Electronic Resource Planning System, and the move from provisional NCAA Division II candidacy to full membership provide three examples of improvements that had their genesis in the assessment process.

In these and other diverse ways, NWOSU fulfills its Mission, improves its educational offerings, and plans for the future in order to respond to recent challenges and future opportunities. Despite declining state support, Northwestern remains strong and vibrant through conservative and forward-looking budgeting, cost cutting, and aggressive fundraising.

### Sources

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*There are no sources.*

