Assurance Argument

Northwestern Oklahoma State University

Review date: 1/22/2024

1 - Mission

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

1.A - Core Component 1.A

The institution's mission is articulated publicly and operationalized throughout the institution.

1. The mission was developed through a process suited to the context of the institution.
2. The mission and related statements are current and reference 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 and related statements identify the nature, scope and intended constituents of the higher education offerings and services the institution provides.
4. The institution's academic offerings, student support services and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.
5. The institution clearly articulates its mission through public information, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans or institutional priorities.

Argument

1.A.1

Mission and Vision Statements

In 2021, Northwestern reviewed its Mission Statement while preparing a new strategic plan, Success Lives Here, a prolonged process undertaken by stakeholders including administrators, faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community members. After multiple opportunities for stakeholder input, the new plan was approved by the Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO) and provided to the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE). The new strategic plan has been in place since fall 2022.

The Drafting Process

During spring 2021, NWOSU's stakeholders met to formulate the 2022-2027 Strategic Plan. Early in this process, focus groups re-evaluated the Mission Statement for relevance to NWOSU's current needs and reaffirmed the statement due to its focus on a quality curriculum, the needs of diverse learners, ethical leadership and service, critical thinking, and fiscal responsibility.

With the Mission Statement reaffirmed, Northwestern surveyed stakeholders to evaluate the existing strategic plan. The Strategic Planning Steering Committee also attended the HLC Advancing Strategy Workshop. The new strategic plan, driven by the Mission Statement and drafted based on constituent input, represents Northwestern's continued progress through effective leadership, a proactive approach to teaching and learning, and greater opportunities for service to Oklahoma. It addresses four focus areas with its Strategic Directions, defines its aspirations in a Vision Statement, and articulates its guiding principles in a set of Core Values. These guiding statements and values, and the strategic plan as a whole, compel the institution's operations in all budgeting, pedagogical, and fundraising decisions.

1.A.2

Mission and Institutional Emphasis

NWOSU is one of six institutions in RUSO, which serves over 37,000 students annually and is the state's largest higher education system. Northwestern's Mission Statement is consistent with the mission of the RUSO system, which provides opportunities to students in the appropriate service areas and prepares them to succeed.

Quality Educational Opportunities

NWOSU's academic programs include coursework that leads to baccalaureate degrees in areas typical of a regional comprehensive liberal arts institution as well as in areas of professional licensure and certification. The University also offers graduate programs that meet the needs of its service area. For example, NWOSU added a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree in fall 2017. As of spring 2023, the University has matriculated 25 DNP graduates. The first-time pass rate for AY 2019-2020 DNP graduates was 85.71%, with a 100% pass rate the next two academic years. The lack of qualified medical professionals in rural areas of Oklahoma motivated the establishment of this degree, funded by gifts from two local foundations.

In alignment with the University's mission, the general education curriculum prioritizes leadership, critical thinking, and fiscal responsibility. These competency areas are articulated in the General Education student learning outcomes and assessed through both course-embedded and mid-level assessment methodologies. (See also Criterion 4.B.)

Learners with Diverse Needs

NWOSU continuously adapts practices to meet the needs of diverse learners. For example, the University has supplemented offerings of MATH 1513 College Algebra and ENGL 1113 Composition I with two credit-bearing co-requisite courses, MATH 1513 College Algebra with Lab and ENGL 1113 Composition I with Lab. Taking these courses rather than non-credit-bearing developmental courses results in a reduction in degree-completion hours and tuition costs for students requiring remediation.

In spring 2021, Northwestern was approved to pilot test-optional admissions for five academic years. This pilot allows Northwestern to utilize high school GPA as the criterion for enrollment in dual-credit offerings, giving more opportunities for students who might not be allowed to take these courses based on ACT scores alone. The pilot also allows the University to admit freshmen without ACT scores who meet University-established standards using GPA and class rank. Concurrent students admitted on this basis have had success rates similar to those of students admitted through established standards.

In 2017, Northwestern was awarded a Student Support Services (SSS) grant. The mission of the SSS grant is to aid first-generation, low-income students and students with disabilities to become successful in college. SSS provides services in academic advising, tutoring, financial literacy instruction, academic and university support, career exploration and planning, and cultural experiences, with the expectation that this support will enhance students' chances of degree completion.

In 2021, Northwestern was also awarded a Title III grant exceeding two million dollars. Named Leadership, Academic Success, Superior Outcomes (LASSO), the grant project focuses on support of at-risk students. Grant funds allowed Northwestern to establish the LASSO Center and hire a project director, two learning coaches, and a career coach. Through fulfillment of its mission, the LASSO Project seeks to improve student retention, graduation rates, and overall student success by providing services such as academic advising, career coaching, academic assistance, and student engagement with support services.

In 2022, Northwestern was selected to participate in Complete College America's Policy, Equity, and Practice Initiative, made available in cooperation with OSRHE. This project supports the implementation of equity-focused, evidenced-based strategies grounded in Complete College America's pillars of student success. Northwestern's participation will enhance student retention efforts through establishment of effective onboarding resources and support. (See also Criterion 4.C.)

Cultural Opportunities

NWOSU strives to provide cultural opportunities for students, employees, and community members. Approximately 50 clubs and organizations on campus—including the Aggie Club, NWOSU Art Society, Castle Players Drama Club, NWOSU Cultural Club, Spanish Club, NWOSU Esports Team, Baptist College Ministry, Black Student Union, College Democrats, College Republicans, Native American Student Association, and Gay-Straight Alliance—provide affiliation for students with a wide range of interests and facilitate education and awareness on diverse topics. For example, in spring 2021 the Native American Student Association organized the first campus powwow. The event featured culturally knowledgeable people who spoke about Native American powwows. Topics included the importance of regalia and beadwork, proper etiquette for powwow attendees, and the impact of social media on the spread of culture.

1.A.3

Vision Statement and Intended Constituents

Consistent with its Vision Statement, Northwestern's regional accessibility assists students of all ages and with diverse cultural needs in earning college credentials. As of 2022, the majority of students attending NWOSU (54%) came from its 10-county service area, with students from other states and countries making up 3% of enrollment. Females comprise 61%, and

transfer students comprise 10%, of the student body. Seventy-four percent of students are under the age of 24.

Focus of Mission

NWOSU's mission documents clearly identify the University as an institution focused on teaching and learning. The Mission Statement 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.

Scope of Mission

Northwestern's mission documents specify that the University provides "quality educational and cultural opportunities to learners with diverse needs." While NWOSU's main focus is to educate students in the classroom setting, it also offers other "educational and cultural opportunities" such as guest speakers, play performances, workshops, concerts, and research day events to enhance student education. Because many of these activities are open to the general public, they also address needs of constituencies outside the University.

1.A.4

Academic Offerings

Northwestern's academic offerings are provided by two Schools that house 13 divisions/departments offering certificates, bachelor's and master's degrees, and one doctoral degree. This streamlined and cost-effective structure allows the University to fulfill its mission while modeling fiscal responsibility.

Student Support

One University initiative focuses on helping students who are undecided majors, a group with low persistence and degree-completion rates. As one strategy, the University revised its first-year-experience course, Ranger Connection. A career-exploration component was added to the curriculum, with the goal of helping students see a clear connection between their educational path and career. The LASSO Career Coach speaks to all Ranger Connection classes, providing a lesson over various career assessments such as MyMajors and Focus2Career and discussing the importance of finding connections between disposition and career. With its aim of helping incoming students adapt to different facets of college life, the Ranger Connection curriculum aligns 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 works closely with staff members who administer support services for students in such areas as admission, counseling, international student advisement, retention, accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), student life, and veterans' affairs. (See also Criterion 3.D.1.) In 2022, the University extended the use of the LMS Blackboard by adding Ally, a tool that helps faculty improve the accessibility of course content in the learning management system. Northwestern's food service provider now offers healthier eating options and greater variety to meet the needs of students with medical or religious food requirements. In 2017, the University implemented a new system that generates an all-in-one student identification card and meal card with flex-dollar spending capabilities. In 2020, the identification card was modified to show resources for campus safety and mental health. The University has a policy and procedures for residential students with needs for emotional support animals. Students approved for these services are issued an additional University identification card with the animal and student information.

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.

Enrollment Profile and Degrees Conferred

The Common Data Set for fall 2022 shows NWOSU's student population at 1,852 (1,476 FTE). In AY 2021-2022, NWOSU conferred 403 degrees and certificates.

1.A.5

Clear Articulation of Mission

NWOSU clearly articulates its Mission Statement and publishes it in multiple locations utilizing both print and electronic formats. Examples include the Northwestern website, NWOSU's Facebook page, all course syllabi, and programs for events hosted at Northwestern campus locations. It also appears in 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 posters located in multiple buildings display the Mission Statement. The University's Vision Statement and values, available in the University's strategic plan, served as guides in developing the four Strategic Directions found in that document.

Sources

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- Strategic_Planning_Documents
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1.B - Core Component 1.B

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

1. The institution's actions and decisions demonstrate that its educational role is to serve the public, not solely the institution or any superordinate entity.
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 external constituencies and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

Argument

1.B.1

Service to the Public Good

Northwestern demonstrates 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 psychology, visual arts, Spanish, social work, and computer science as well as the development of new certificates and micro-credentials demonstrate the University's response to the needs of the communities it serves.

In 2017, the University implemented a new master's program in general psychology to provide a degree option for students interested in teaching, or employment in the field of, psychology. During AY 2021-2022, Northwestern proposed micro-credentials and certificates in education, agriculture, cybersecurity, and corrections, with approval granted in 2023. In fall 2023, NWOSU introduced a new interdisciplinary minor in Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH). Designed for students entering helping professions and interested in integrating knowledge of IECMH into their professional practice, the minor emphasizes the importance of supporting developing parent-infant relationships and promoting secure attachments. In addition, Northwestern was approved to reinstate the visual arts program in fall 2023, with funding through a Wisdom Family Foundation partnership supporting an additional faculty hire.

The CAPS (Courses for Alternative Placement) micro-credential program was instituted in spring 2022. CAPS initially provided coursework exclusively for students obtaining alternative-certification teaching credentials by completing State Department of Education-approved courses in Northwestern's Curriculum and Instruction master's program. The program was expanded in fall 2022 to support all students completing coursework to upskill their education credentials by taking coursework in identified micro-credentialing areas: pedagogy, literacy, and classroom management. With OSHRE approval, the list of courses was expanded to reflect this broadened focus. More than 70 scholarships totaling $120,000 have been awarded since the program's inception.

Since NWOSU's last accreditation review, Enid city leaders have continued to identify a need to increase the number of college graduates in their community. The Enid Higher Education Council (EHEC) lists as its primary purpose to support higher education by providing grants and contributions to educational institutions, enabling them to meet expenses and provide a quality education. EHEC meets quarterly with the two Enid higher educator providers, NWOSU and Northern Oklahoma College (NOC), regarding issues affecting higher education. The group also spearheads fundraising efforts to provide endowment and pass-through funds to support NWOSU and NOC students. In collaboration with these institutions, EHEC supports a Bridge Program to encourage seamless transfer to Northwestern for NOC students who have completed associate degrees.

NWOSU has collaborated with Enid Public Schools (EPS) on the completion of an early childhood education center, funded by an EPS bond. NWOSU provided to EPS land adjacent to the University as a construction site; in return, EPS allows students in NWOSU programs access to the school so they may collaborate in instruction and conduct observations. This partnership illustrates positive collaboration between NWOSU and EPS.

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 campus organizations, and within the communities served by the University," also serves the public good. SL/CE "assist[s] students in discovering an educational experience that will

provide a service to our community and training [. . .] within the realm of their individual degree focus." Course-related service-learning projects range from students in Plant Science planting a demonstration plot so that local farmers can evaluate new wheat varieties to students in Student Teaching substitute teaching at an elementary school during lunch and recess to allow all teachers a two-hour lunch break. The Social Workers Association of Tomorrow (SWAT) Club's Compassion in Action Dignity Drive and the Student Athlete Advisory Committee's (SAAC) Bowling for Wishes fundraiser for the Make-a-Wish Foundation provide examples of clubs' service learning projects. The Service Learning Coordinator tracks, within the assessment report, detailed data on annual projects and the number of students involved.

1.B.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. As a public institution, Northwestern has no shareholders or parent organization. Additionally, the University has limited supporting external interests.

The Northwestern Foundation provides supplemental financial resources to Northwestern. Established with the exclusive aim of providing support for the institution's academic endeavors, the Northwestern Foundation provides funding for instructional endeavors as well as student scholarships. In FY23, NWOSU received matching funds from the OSRHE endowment program. These funds were spent on faculty positions that reached endowment levels.

1.B.3

Engagement with External Stakeholders

NWOSU engages with its identified external constituencies as its mission and capacity allow. In response to the teacher shortage in Oklahoma, NWOSU and NOC-Enid created an avenue by which students interested in a degree in Early Childhood and Elementary Education may attain their associate and bachelor's degree in three and a half years through simultaneous enrollment at both institutions.

OSRHE has recognized Northwestern's excellence in civic engagement each of the last 18 years with a Regents Business Partnership Excellence Award, which highlights successful partnerships and cultivates the higher learning environment through State Regents' Economic Development Grants. This award gives the University an opportunity to recognize and celebrate external partnerships consistent with its mission.

NWOSU's continued partnership with 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 was renewed in FY23. Located in Alva, the minimum-security facility houses up to 602 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. Under the terms of an Interlocal Cooperative Agreement, Northwestern provides Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) to offenders in group and individual settings. A staff of eight NWOSU employees manages this effort. This project also provides valuable training for Northwestern students enrolled in the Master of Counseling Psychology program and other social-services programs who serve as treatment program interns.

In addition, Northwestern collaborates with Northwest Technology Center and other public schools to offer a MASH Camp, giving middle school students training in life-saving skills and opportunities to explore health-services careers. A second MASH Camp provides job-shadowing opportunities for adolescents. In 2020, the Wisdom Family Foundation endowed the program, ensuring the camps' continuance. This endowment also provides funding to support scholarships for camp attendees who later enroll at NWOSU.

Northwestern partners with twelve other universities in the Louis Stokes Oklahoma Alliance for Minority Participation in STEM (LS-OKAMP STEM). Funded by a National Science Foundation grant, LS-OKAMP STEM encourages minority students to pursue degrees in STEM fields by providing scholarships and funding for undergraduate research and travel to STEM-related conferences and seminars.

The Math and Computer Science Department and the Department of Natural Science also offer an endowment-funded summer Math and Science Academy that provides elementary students with a math and science enrichment program. The two departments also jointly hold a robotics competition each fall for middle- and high-school students as part of the national robotics competition BEST–Boosting Engineering, Science, and Technology. The Charles Morton Share Trust Foundation, Cargill Salt, Alva Tourism Board, and BancCentral National Association are among the sponsors for program and competition, which began in 2002.

NWOSU has hosted the Northwest Regional Science Fair for students in middle school and high school each year since 1957. Coordinated by the Department of Natural Science, the science fair is supported by NWOSU faculty and students who serve as judges.

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, which are available to high school and youth teams during the off-season. The ARC has begun adding turf to selected fields, including Northwestern's softball field. 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 (SL/CE) Committee with technical assistance from the Service Learning Coordinator, the SL/CE program facilitates engagement with external constituencies. The Coordinator maintains a database of community partners and organizes volunteer efforts for community events such as blood drives, voter registration initiatives, the Alva Car Show, and reading at local elementary schools. NWOSU partners with the Oklahoma Blood Institute and hosts four blood drives during each academic year. Recognizing the value of such activities and reinforcing the University's efforts to establish structures that credit engagement, the Faculty Evaluation and Development Task Force includes community service as an essential component of the faculty evaluation process.

The Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration jointly awarded the University a State Opioid Response – Higher Education Community Outreach Grant in FY20 and FY21. In FY22, NWOSU was awarded two Higher Education Prevention Services (HEPS) grants, one for opioid prevention and the other for suicide prevention. In FY23, NWOSU was again awarded the opioid prevention and suicide prevention grants, plus an additional stimulant prevention grant. Grant funding is renewable each year for up to three years contingent upon performance and availability of state and federal funds. Grants have allowed faculty and staff training in Narcan administration and access to free Naloxone across all campus locations. In addition, Deterra Drug Deactivation pouches were distributed to faculty, staff, students, and community partners to encourage safe disposal of unused, unwanted, or expired medication. The grants have allowed a variety of additional prevention activities on campus.

Many administrators, faculty members, and staff members model civic engagement by serving on multiple boards and committees. Many faculty members also give presentations and provide workshops to area public schools and communities.

Sources

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1.C - Core Component 1.C

The institution provides opportunities for civic engagement in a diverse, multicultural society and globally connected world, as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

1. The institution encourages curricular or cocurricular activities that prepare students for informed citizenship and workplace success.
2. The institution's processes and activities demonstrate inclusive and equitable treatment of diverse populations.
3. The institution fosters a climate of respect among all students, faculty, staff and administrators from a range of diverse backgrounds, ideas and perspectives.

Argument

1.C.1

Cocurricular Programs and Activities

Northwestern maintains a rich tradition of intercollegiate athletics that has constituted a vital part of the institution throughout its history. The University gained membership in the National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) Division II in 2015. The current athletics program consists of 13 NCAA Division II teams, with six men's programs and seven women's programs. Recent additions include women's track (2018) and men's track (2023). The University also supports men's and women's rodeo teams in affiliation with the National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association.

NWOSU athletics cultivate an appreciation for the educational value of "life in balance" and competition as they contribute to well-being. Under the mentorship of coaches, student-athletes enhance their sports ability while developing 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. With the aim of promoting informed citizenship, the University requires all athletic team members to complete a minimum of two community engagement projects each year, with an additional two projects each year encouraged for SAAC members. The program also values academic success, with forty students qualifying for induction into the Chi Alpha Sigma honor society since 2019 and the highest number of Academic All-Americans among Regional University System of Oklahoma schools in 2022-2023.

Approximately 500 students participate annually in Northwestern's intramural sports program, which promotes teamwork, leadership, self-discipline, time management, and rules compliance. Some students serve as coaches, making strategic decisions in competitive situations to ensure their team complies with rules and league policies. Students also serve as officials, placing them in a position of enforcing fair play without favoritism.

Northwestern students interested in Greek life may join the University's sorority, Delta Zeta, on the Alva campus. Promoting community engagement, fiscal responsibility, and leadership, the sorority holds membership in the National PanHellenic Conference (NPC).

The Northwestern Study Abroad program fulfills its mission by offering globally aware curricular and internationally focused student programs. In 2019, the program took 23 students, faculty, and community members on a ten-day grand tour of Italy. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the 2020 study abroad trip to Iceland was cancelled and trips were not planned for 2021 or 2022. Study abroad destinations include England, Ireland, and Wales (2023) and Greece (2024).

Through the Brad Henry International Scholars Program, NWOSU students selected as Brad Henry International Scholars qualify for a Semester Study Abroad Program at Swansea University in Wales.

Curricular Programs and Activities

All NWOSU degree programs are required to include a service-learning component, giving students the opportunity to connect classroom theory and practice to a community need. This course component links community service to explicit learning objectives, preparation, and reflection. Students are expected not only to engage in community service but also to learn about the context in which the service is provided, the connection between the service and their academic coursework, and their role as citizens. Faculty who teach designated service learning courses complete a community-based learning course follow-up form each semester to provide information about the student experience. (See also Criterion 2.B).

1.C.2

Inclusive and Equitable Treatment of Diverse Populations

A dynamic diversity program is an essential dimension of Northwestern's mission. The NWOSU Diversity Statement focuses on valuing the differences of every individual by promoting the expression of differing opinions and beliefs, appreciating the culture and backgrounds of each person, and treating every person with respect. The NWOSU Civility Statement emphasizes that the Northwestern community practices the values of inclusivity, informed and respectful dialogue, collegiality, and acceptance of difference.

In addition to raising cultural awareness through its academic programs, the University supports on-campus organizations that reflect the institution's attention to human diversity. Examples include the Spanish Club, the International Student Association, and the Gay-Straight Alliance. (See also Criterion 1.A.2). Processes for establishing clubs and organizations are easily accessible, financially supported, and available to all students.

The NWOSU Diversity Committee is comprised of faculty, student services program representatives, and the Dean of Students and Enrollment Management. Each year, the Committee promotes diversity awareness and engagement 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 Employee 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.

Activities Focused on Diverse Populations

The Diversity Committee ensures implementation of diversity recommendations and provides diversity training opportunities annually based on the needs of the University community. Recent events hosted by the Committee include i will hold you, a musical performance and lecture by the work's composer about exploring social justice topics through music (2020); The Power of Choice virtual presentation with Dawn Shaw, who spoke about appearance differences (2021); George Lee Speaks – Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion training and discussion of diversity-related challenges within a safe space (2022); and Chris LittleCook's discussion of Native American students' college experiences (2023).

NWOSU educates the campus community about human diversity by celebrating Black Heritage Month, Hispanic Heritage Month, Native American Heritage Month, and Women's Heritage Month. Additionally, the library promotes awareness by showcasing resources from its collection, by displaying Northwestern community members' collections, and by creating bulletin boards or electronic displays for varied causes and during designated heritage months.

In an effort to increase campus diversity, Recruitment Office staff prioritize secondary schools located in census tracts heavily populated by ethnic minority households by attending college fairs and visiting secondary schools in those areas to engage minority community members in informational meetings. Recruitment staff also cultivate opportunities for American Indian students to learn about NWOSU. For example, the Recruitment Office team attended the 2022 Wzhitawen College and Career Fair for tribal and nontribal students, hosted by The Citizen Potawatomi Nation Department of Education. The Graduate Studies Retention and Enrollment Coordinator also targets staff of primary and secondary schools in areas heavily populated by ethnic minorities when marketing graduate programs. A comparison of institutional data to recent data from the *Chronicle of Higher Education* indicates these efforts are paying off. NWOSU's percentage of American Indian and Hispanic populations are higher than the state average.

Processes Focused on Diverse Populations

In fall 2020, at the direction of the President's Office, a new task force chaired by the Dean of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management was created to address enrollment issues. The Enrollment Management Task Force brings together key personnel who work to establish short- and long-range goals in critical recruitment and retention areas. The Task Force replaced the Enrollment Management Committee that met annually to discuss the enrollment management plan. Through this process, an enrollment goal and strategy was established to recruit and retain a minimum of 500 minority students per academic year.

NWOSU continues to emphasize increasing diversity at the University by recruiting international students. International student enrollment has increased slightly since fall 2018, with 33 international students attending the University in 2019 and 47 international students in fall 2022. Increasing international enrollment significantly has been a challenge due largely to obstacles created by federal policy limiting student visas. This trend was compounded by COVID. By seeking partnerships with international organizations and institutions, the University has made restoring higher numbers of international students a priority.

Recognizing human capacity as a form of diversity, NWOSU provides individual accommodations to students with diverse needs such as 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. Additionally, the University augmented the Blackboard learning management system (LMS) in 2022 by adding Ally, a tool that helps faculty improve accessibility of course content. Ally automatically measures accessibility of documents loaded into the LMS in a range of formats and produces an accessibility score as well as guidance on how to improve the content. Additionally, students can benefit from Ally's ability to convert formats of many original files to electronic braille, audio, HTML, PDF, and ePub (for viewing content with an e-book reader). Two enhanced text options are also provided.

In FY23, NWOSU completed several projects to enhance campus accessibility for individuals with physical challenges. Bathrooms in Ryerson Hall and two suites in Cunningham Hall dormitory were renovated to ensure accessibility. Accessible automatic doors were also added to the J. W. Martin Library, Student Center, and Science Building in FY23, and accessible doors were added to Ryerson Hall and the Struckle Education Center in FY24. Over the past three years, NWOSU has completed a sidewalk project that includes accessible walkways and additional parking spaces at the entrance into campus.

1.C.3

Fostering a Climate of Respect

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 Core 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." The priorities articulated in these documents permeate the institutional climate.

The University addresses its role in a multicultural society through both academic programs and cocurricular activities. NWOSU recognizes the value of supporting students in developing an enhanced worldview as reflected in the general education curriculum's requirement of 9-10 hours in the areas of Values and Beliefs and Human Heritage and Culture. In addition, many divisions/departments offer discipline-specific courses that provide opportunities for students to investigate diverse cultures further. Other disciplines offer courses with a practical consideration of diversity within their professions.

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 opportunities for students from underrepresented populations to earn degrees in STEM disciplines. Beyond traditional coursework, the Division of Education requires teacher candidates to attend field trips to multicultural urban school districts to gain exposure to the challenges of providing education in highly diverse, lower-socioeconomic neighborhoods.

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 up to six times a year. 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 Department of Social Sciences, sponsors NWOSU's annual Constitution Day events, the Presidential Lecture Series, and the Institute for Citizenship Studies events. Additionally, many faculty give professional or community presentations on multi-ethnic writers and topics.

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1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary

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

Summary

Northwestern Oklahoma State University's Mission Statement is clear, is articulated publicly, and guides the institution's operations.

In spring 2021, Northwestern reviewed its Mission Statement while preparing a new strategic plan, a process that included many stakeholders including administration, faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community members. After these stakeholders reaffirmed the Mission Statement as appropriate—with its focus on a quality curriculum, the needs of diverse learners, ethical leadership and service, critical thinking, and fiscal responsibility—they formulated the University's 2022-2027 Strategic Plan, *Success Lives Here*. Driven by the Mission Statement, this plan represents Northwestern's continued progress through effective leadership, a proactive approach to teaching and learning, and greater opportunities for service to Oklahoma.

In alignment with its mission, Vision, and Core Values, the University's general education curriculum requires that all students address concepts of leadership, critical thinking, and fiscal responsibility. Additionally, University practices reflect the institution's understanding of its role in a diverse society that works to foster awareness of and engagement with other cultures.

The University clearly articulates its mission in a concise statement of purpose available in multiple locations, utilizing both print and electronic formats, including Northwestern's website and Facebook page, all course syllabi, catalogs, handbooks, and programs for events hosted at campus locations.

Sources

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2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

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

2.A - Core Component 2.A

The institution establishes and follows policies and processes to ensure fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing board, administration, faculty and staff.

1. The institution develops and the governing board adopts the mission.
2. The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, human resources and auxiliary functions.

Argument

2.A.1

In fall 2021, Northwestern reviewed its Mission Statement while preparing a new strategic plan, a year-long process that included stakeholders from administration, faculty, staff, students, alumni, and the community. After multiple opportunities for stakeholder input, the new plan was approved by the Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO) and provided to the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE). The plan went into effect in fall 2022. (See also Criterion 1.A.1.)

2.A.2

Operating Integrity

OSRHE serves 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 integrity and autonomy of the OSRHE Board, policy dictates that OSRHE membership 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, as the governing body, RUSO oversees and controls the University's administrative, academic, and fiscal affairs. The RUSO Policy Manual states that a Board goal 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. Oversight by these boards ensures that the University acts with integrity in all its functions.

Financial Integrity

Federal and Oklahoma state laws as well as OSRHE's policies and procedures manual and RUSO's policies and procedures manual govern University business. The University carefully stewards the funds appropriated by the Oklahoma Legislature and allocated by OSRHE, and equally carefully stewards the tuition, fees, and charges collected from students and those 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. Division/Department chairs and supervisors gather input for budget requests from their respective division/department members. Requests related to significant University efforts should meet at least one of the 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 amount of purchase. A well-defined bid process assists the University in ensuring that the best price is attained for products and services costing more than $7,500. State statutes require a detailed process for bidding public construction projects. (See also Criterion 5.A.)

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 a transparent manner. Evidence of the University's sound fiscal practices is its ability to maintain quality operations without a tuition increase for the last three academic years.

The University has taken significant additional steps to reduce the financial burden on students. In 2021, the University received a Supplemental Assistance to Institutions of Higher Education (SAIHE) grant. Funds were used to pay off prior balances of undergraduate students, with those having financial need considered first. Referred to as the Debt Relief Grant, the total amount received was $558,786. The University also began waiving undergraduate and graduate application fees in fall 2022 after receiving approval by the RUSO and OSRHE Boards. In FY22, NWOSU also received a Child Welfare Professional Enhancement Program grant (CWPEP). CWPEP offers social work students financial support for college in exchange for a specified employment position in child welfare post-graduation.

Additionally, in 2015 the University began participating in conferences and efforts tied to Complete College America (CCA), a national initiative with the aim of increasing the number of career credentials and college degrees conferred over a twelve-year period and decreasing the total time and subsequent expense for degree completion. This initiative is still ongoing. (See also Criterion 4.C.3.)

In fall 2019, the University replaced its Jenzabar Poise enterprise management system with the robust Ellucian system, a more user-friendly interface where students can easily find billing statements, pay bills, and check financial aid status. Known on campus as Self Service, this system ensures transparency by providing students access to their financial information at any time.

NWOSU remains committed to helping students attain their degrees in a cost-effective manner, providing appropriate policies and support to achieve that aim.

Academic Integrity

Not only does Self Service provide transparency to students concerning their financial obligations, but it also helps students manage their academic functions, including planning, scheduling, and enrolling in courses (with the help of an advisor and the course catalog); checking their grades once posted; producing a transcript; and finding their academic attendance record for all classes.

Current students may access complete and accurate information about academic policies in multiple formats, both in print and online. 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 Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs. The catalogs, reviewed and revised annually to ensure policy statements remain current, also include policies on acceptance of transfer credit.

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, 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, Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA), and President. OSRHE must be notified of all program modifications. (See also Criterion 3.A.1.) Students follow catalog program requirements in effect at the time they entered the University but may request to follow policies in a more recent catalog. However, students not enrolled for one or more semesters must follow policies in place at the time of readmittance to the University.

Students who believe they have experienced 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 the VPAA collects all formal grade appeals. The Student Handbook also contains procedures that students must follow to file formal complaints concerning any classroom or campus incident in which they believe they have been treated inappropriately by an NWOSU student or employee, or for which the University lacks written policy. These formal grievances and complaints are collected in the Office of Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) governs the rights of students at Northwestern. Information about the FERPA waiver form is available on the University's "Parent and Family Resources" webpage.

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 a variety of undergraduate and graduate courses.

Regarding faculty, the Faculty Handbook contains policies specific to their academic responsibilities. Examples concerning

faculty-student interaction include policies on class attendance and admission, and withdrawal from classes. The Faculty Handbook's Grievance Procedures clearly outline processes 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 and the Faculty Handbook list procedures for filing a complaint related to sexual misconduct and/or harassment.

The RUSO Policy Manual is maintained by the RUSO Board Office and serves as a guiding document for University policy. Policies pertaining to nepotism, patents, copyrights, and privately-owned businesses may be found from sections 5.12 to 5.14. Believing that a safe, secure, and ethical workplace is paramount to the success of an institution, the Board provides EthicsPoint, an online system that allows individuals to confidentially report to the Board Office activities that they feel are unethical, illegal, or otherwise inappropriate. EthicsPoint may be accessed on the RUSO webpage or on the University's Human Resources webpage. The University also provides access to HLC's whistleblower web address in the A-Z index to ensure fairness in all aspects of the University's functioning.

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, while the University also uses social media to keep the campus community and its constituents aware of happenings on campus. General faculty meetings occur at the beginning of the fall semester. The President also holds conversations with individual faculty members and divisions/departments each academic year to facilitate the open exchange of ideas. NWOSU's Executive Team, Senior Staff and division/department chairs hold regular 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 VPAA meet regularly in order to address faculty issues and concerns in a timely manner. The VPAA prepares notes from these meetings to share with Faculty Senate. The Faculty Senate webpage includes meeting minutes for public review.

To communicate protocols and procedures related to academic and non-academic areas to new faculty, the University's Faculty Development Advisory Board holds multi-day orientation sessions for new faculty members the week before school begins. The Staff Council and the Professional Staff Council represent the interests of non-exempt and exempt employees and help them participate in the achievement of University goals.

Human Resource Integrity

A fair hiring process characterizes the University's relationship with future employees. Faculty and Employee Handbooks provide an overview of hiring procedures for faculty and staff. Additional policies and procedures detail clearly the employer/employee relationship from hiring to retirement, resignation, or termination.

NWOSU complies with all federal and state law 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 Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action, and Sexual Harassment. Faculty Senate furnishes input into the revision process of the Faculty Handbook, and the Office of Academic Affairs emails a copy of the updated handbook and a document highlighting changes to all faculty annually. The Human Resources Office also sends updates of the Employee Handbook. The Faculty and Employee Handbooks are also available on the website's A-Z Index for easy access.

Auxiliary Functions Integrity

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 and reviewed annually. Periodically, these services are bid to ensure that effective 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 internally operates printing services, housing, stadium facilities, and parking and safety. Student charges and fees fund these operations, which are subject to all University planning, budgeting, and auditing policies and procedures. Information Technology is an additional auxiliary operation. The Faculty Handbook, Employee Handbook, and Student Handbook list policies and procedures for use of information technology. The Faculty Handbook also includes policies related to printing.

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- University_Viewbook
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2.B - Core Component 2.B

The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public.

1. The institution ensures the accuracy of any representations it makes regarding academic offerings, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, governance structure and accreditation relationships.
2. The institution ensures evidence is available to support any claims it makes regarding its contributions to the educational experience through research, community engagement, experiential learning, religious or spiritual purpose and economic development.

Argument

2.B.1

Programs and Requirements

Northwestern's Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs, updated annually, provide students, stakeholders, and the public with information about academic programs, degree requirements, graduation requirements, faculty/staff credentials, and course listings. Students learn to use the Undergraduate Catalog as part of the freshman orientation class, Ranger Connection. Here they also learn about University policies and procedures, building upon information provided during freshman and transfer student orientation sessions. The Office of Graduate Studies orients students to the catalog in Graduate Study Seminar, taken during the first semester of enrollment. In this course, every student either chooses or is assigned a Graduate Advisory Committee. The University also publishes an annual Viewbook that includes degree programs, made available at all campus locations and on the public University website.

A Plan of Study Form for each academic program is posted to the University's website to guide students through their programs. Each division/department also posts its course rotation schedule to help advisors and advisees in completing plans of study. Students submit a degree-audit form to request that the Registrar's Office audit their file for updated information concerning degree progress.

Faculty and Staff

An Employee Directory maintained on the University website lists all current faculty, staff, and administrators with their titles, office locations, phone numbers, and email addresses. This list is updated by University Relations. Faculty and administrators are also listed, with educational credentials and titles, in the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs published each summer. Faculty members' credentials are also listed with additional information on division/department webpages.

Costs to Students

Section II of the Undergraduate Catalog, Section I of the Graduate Catalog, and the Paying for College page on Northwestern's website disclose student costs including tuition, fees, room and board, and estimated book costs; financial aid policies, practices, and requirements; and the student refund policy. A net price calculator on the University website allows prospective students and parents to estimate college costs 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, updated yearly and available 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 Spring Showcase offer opportunities for prospective freshmen and transfer students to tour campus and ask questions concerning costs and financial assistance. Freshman Connection, which allows incoming students to complete their admission process and enroll in fall semester courses, provides an additional chance for families to ask these questions.

In keeping with the University's mission of fiscal responsibility, the Financial Aid staff guides students and parents through the financial aid application process and informs them of advantages and disadvantages of receiving student loans. This begins during financial outreach nights sponsored by the University at local high schools and technology centers. Potential students can find loan information, including the default rate history, on the financial aid webpage. This page also provides links to the U.S. Department of Education loan page with information pertaining to interest rates and repayment requirements. When leaving the University, students must complete student loan exit counseling provided through the Federal

Student Aid webpage.

Self Service provides students with access to their financial aid accounts as well as their latest Business Office statements, which automatically populate when students enroll in classes or undertake any University financial dealings. This system was implemented for students, faculty, and staff during the 2019-2020 academic year.

Government Structure

As a state-assisted, regional public institution, NWOSU is structured and governed within the Oklahoma State System of Higher Education (OSRHE). 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, OSRHE prescribes academic standards for higher education institutions, determines functions and courses of study at state colleges and universities, grants degrees, recommends to the State Legislature budget allocations for each college and university, 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 may be found via a link on the footer of every Northwestern webpage.

Accreditation

The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) 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/departments maintain specialized accreditation. These programs list their accreditation information publicly on their individual University webpages. The Division of Business is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP). The Division of Education is accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). The Charles Morton Share Trust Division of Nursing is accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN) for its undergraduate programs and by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) for its Doctor of Nursing Practice program. The Department of Social Work is accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). Information about specialized accrediting bodies is made public in the University's Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs as well. The education, nursing, and social work divisions/department also disclose licensure requirements for other states. (See also Criterion 4.A.5.)

2.B.2

Research

NWOSU's Ranger Research Day each fall semester affords undergraduate and graduate students as well as faculty the opportunity to share results of both independent and collaborative research in a public venue. Students may submit either poster presentations or conference papers. All presentations receive feedback and a rating, resulting in the awarding of prizes in each category. 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 overall 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. (Criterion 2.E.1 details evidence of the University's Office of Sponsored Programs' contribution to the educational experience.)

Community Engagement

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 English teaching and translation services for Spanish speakers. The SL/CE website lists all courses that incorporate service learning as well as the community partners who take advantage of SL/CE opportunities.

Northwestern's Reichenberger Department of Fine Arts, in collaboration with a 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 musical ensembles perform regularly in University concerts, festivals, First Friday Art Walk events, and regional tours throughout Oklahoma and Kansas. Theatrical productions provide additional cultural experiences for faculty, students, community members, and area school children.

The NWOSU Art Society holds an annual all-school art show that awards cash prizes to student artists, financing the show through fundraising at Northwestern sporting events. The Society, open to all students, meets regularly and holds volunteer efforts and art workshops. The visual arts program 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 University's Artist-in-Residence as well as to conduct art workshops hosted by departmental faculty and visiting artists.

Experiential Learning

NWOSU provides many experiential learning activities. At the undergraduate level, the communication, social sciences, and social work programs, among others, offer internship opportunities for students. All undergraduate education majors must log field-experience and clinical hours and spend their last semester student teaching to prepare for professional careers as educators. At the graduate level, the Master of Arts in American Studies, Master of Arts in Heritage Tourism, Master of Counseling Psychology, and Master of Education programs all offer internship opportunities for students.

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 $11,000 in student activity funds each year, cultivating fiscal responsibility by budgeting for, and hosting, a variety of campus events. Students elected to SGA play an active role in making decisions that affect the University, as evidenced in minutes of SGA meetings. Similarly, Northwestern Scholar Ambassadors (NSA) take part in service learning by sponsoring such events as Stamp-Out Starvation, Ranger Preview, and the Alumni Donor dinner. 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.

Clubs and organizations support the University's mission and also enhance student educational experiences by providing opportunities for leadership training and cultural awareness. Approximately 50 clubs engage students in academic, social, political, and spiritual enterprises. While discipline-specific organizations such as the Medical Science Club or Student Oklahoma Aspiring Educators Association supplement classroom instruction and afford students leadership opportunities, others such as the Gay-Straight Alliance and the recently added Native American Student Association provide opportunities for students to expand awareness of diverse perspectives. The Clubs and Organizations webpage lists academic clubs, while the Undergraduate Catalog contains a complete listing of student organizations.

NWOSU's Study Abroad program provides cocurricular opportunities for students and lifelong learners to travel internationally for experiential learning. A Study Abroad Committee, consisting of four full-time faculty members, facilitates the annual trips. (See also Criterion 1.C.1.) Although recent trips were suspended due to COVID, the program resumed during the summer of 2023 with a trip to England, Ireland, and Wales and with plans for a trip to Greece in 2024. The University enriched the academic experience of student travelers in 2017 by offering a course to be taken in the spring before travel, Global Citizenship, which contextualizes the trip within a global perspective. Study abroad programs and itineraries include a wide range of activities appropriate for those taking the course.

In fall 2022, with the aid of a Northwestern employee who paid tuition and half airfare paid by the University, a graduate student in the Master of Arts in Heritage Tourism and Conservation program attended a Green Summit in Thailand. Sponsored by Humanitarian Affairs Asia and held at the United Nations Center in Bangkok, the summit raised awareness of global warming and green initiatives to cut carbon emissions. The University and employee have plans to send students to future summits.

Through employment, students learn lessons about responsibility and acquire valuable job experience while earning income. Student workers hold a variety of campus positions ranging from tutoring to administrative support to maintenance. Student employment provides a mutually beneficial relationship between students and the University, which relies on student employees to fill various critical needs. The NSSE 2023 reports that 12% of NWOSU seniors surveyed work from 11-15 hours per week on campus, compared to 6% nationally.

As the above evidence demonstrates, the Northwestern student experience is rich in research, community engagement, and experiential learning.

Economic Development

Over the past ten years, NWOSU has created and improved programs to help fill Oklahoma's most critical workforce needs. These are presented in the Oklahoma Critical Occupations List, which is documented on the University's assessment webpage.

In fall 2017, the University started its Doctor of Nursing Practice program to meet the nursing and health-related needs of rural Oklahoma and the rest of the state. Based on the critical occupations list, the need for nurse practitioners will increase by approximately 250 jobs from 2020 to 2025. After a thirty-five-year absence, NWOSU also brought back its visual arts major in fall 2023, which will help meet the critical need for graphic designers, an occupation that will see an increase of more than fifty positions needed by 2025.

In addition, the University continues to maintain its criminal justice, education, psychology, and social work programs in order to fulfill other critical workforce needs. The Department of Social Sciences offers a Corrections Professional Micro-Credential that provides a solid background for students interested in positions as entry-level corrections officers. The education division offers a range of undergraduate and graduate degrees and certifications that prepare teachers and administrators for work in both public and private schools. The education division, in collaboration with the Graduate Studies Office, also developed CAP (Courses for the Alternative Program) that offers coursework leading to standard teaching certification and providing opportunities for individuals in the education field to upskill their credentials. The Department of Psychology maintains its Master of Counseling Psychology program, which enables graduate students to become Licensed Professional Counselors (LPC) and/or Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselors (LADC) and meet the critical need for more mental health counselors in the state. Similarly, the Social Work program trains undergraduates as social work practitioners, the need for which will increase by more than 250 positions by 2025. Additionally, the department introduced an interdisciplinary minor in infant and early childhood mental health in 2023 to address the critical shortage of child mental health services, responding to a statewide need articulated by Western Plains Youth and Family Services in Woodward.

These are just a few of the ways that the University meets the workforce needs of Oklahoma.

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2.C - Core Component 2.C

The governing board of the institution is autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution in compliance with board policies and to ensure the institution's integrity.

1. The governing board is trained and knowledgeable so that it makes informed decisions with respect to the institution's financial and academic policies and practices; the board meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.
2. The governing board's deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.
3. The governing board reviews the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations.
4. The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests or other external parties.
5. The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the institution's administration and expects the institution's faculty to oversee academic matters.

Argument

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 regional universities under its jurisdiction and has additional powers and duties as enumerated in the Oklahoma Statutes.

2.C.1

Eight of the nine RUSO regents are appointed by the state's governor. The ninth is the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, an elected position that serves in an *ex-officio* capacity. The current regents have academic and/or professional backgrounds in business, finance, banking, economic development, public policy, law, and education to ensure quality oversight of institutions' financial policies and practices. Regents are kept abreast of current issues in higher education through informational presentations during special board meetings.

2.C.2

Deliberations

To preserve and enhance the institutions it serves, the RUSO Board conducts regular and/or special meetings every month from September to June (with the exception of December and March). NWOSU hosts one meeting annually. RUSO Policy Manual Section 1.9 details processes for these meetings. Deliberations about purchases, general maintenance, and curricular matters such as program additions, modifications, and deletions reflect prioritization of institutional needs and well-being, as reflected in board meeting minutes. Campus-based meetings include a tour of the host institution's facilities to observe updates to the physical plant and assess areas of deferred maintenance.

2.C.3

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 University Committees with distinct areas of concern. Section 1.9 prescribes activities and agendas for Board meetings, with meeting minutes reflecting results of the Board's decision-making processes. The Board develops *ad hoc* committees as needed.

The RUSO Board maintains on its website a dashboard that provides data concerning regional university metrics and articulates strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to Oklahoma's regional universities. The dashboard work team makes recommendations for action that guard against ongoing or future problems. Such data drives decision-making by the RUSO Board and university administrators. In spring 2023, RUSO also hired a consultant from the FSL Educators, LLC, consulting group to visit each system university and meet with relevant constituencies to discuss specific enrollment challenges on their campuses. The resulting program review from these visits provides strategies to offset negative trends, to provide pathways for incremental enrollment and revenue growth, and to develop systems that will allow sustained success for

RUSO schools. NWOSU will use this document to guide its future enrollment and retention efforts.

2.C.4

Preserving Independence

Each RUSO Board member 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 their professional affiliations. By adhering to these guidelines, RUSO strictly adheres to Oklahoma Ethics policies.

2.C.5

Delegation of Management

The RUSO Board assigns University management responsibilities 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.

Division/Department chairs and designated faculty committees maintain shared responsibility with faculty for managing academic policies and practices. The Faculty Handbook outlines duties of division/department chairs as well as duties of University Committees. All graduate programs receive oversight from the Graduate Committee.

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2.D - Core Component 2.D

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

Argument

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. These policies, as articulated by the Faculty Handbook, serve as an "assurance to those who teach and pursue knowledge and, thus, pertains to rights of expression regarding teaching and research within specific areas of recognized professional competencies." The lack of grievance filings in more than a decade suggests that Northwestern faculty feel secure in exercising freedom of expression.

Free Speech Areas

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, *Northwestern News*, demonstrates the University's commitment to student freedom of speech even when that speech is critical of the University.

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2.E - Core Component 2.E

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

1. Institutions supporting basic and applied research maintain professional standards and provide oversight ensuring regulatory compliance, ethical behavior and fiscal accountability.
2. The institution provides effective support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff and students.
3. The institution provides students guidance in the ethics of research and use of information resources.
4. The institution enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.

Argument

2.E.1

Northwestern's oversight practices and policies ensure that faculty, students, and staff maintain professional standards regarding regulatory compliance, ethical behavior, and fiscal accountability.

The University's Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) provides oversight of research projects involving human or animal subjects and facilitates pre-approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) or the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC). Subsequently, a researcher who plans to conduct research on human subjects must first submit a research proposal/IRB Application utilizing an OSP template. This proposal must receive IRB approval before research begins. Similarly, the IACUC must approve an Application for Use of Animals form before research on vertebrate animals begins. 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. Through these methods, the IRB and IACUC provide critical oversight by reviewing, approving, and monitoring human and animal research with the aim of protecting the rights and welfare of subjects and ensuring adherence to professional standards.

A major responsibility of the OSP is to assist a Principal Investigator (PI) in the preparation and submission of grants, contracts, and cooperative agreement proposals, authorizing all such agreements representing University obligations. Any faculty or staff member who requests project funds from external sources must submit a Proposal Planning Sheet for approval by the Grants Oversight Committee to ensure that activities, programs, and contracts align with the University's mission. The OSP provides to the PI a flow chart that explains this process and also offers monetary incentives for writing grants. The OSP then acts as a liaison between the granting agencies and the University and reports to the Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA). It also coordinates with the NWOSU Foundation on non-governmental grants. Each fiscal year, the OSP provides an annual report concerning grant applications and awards.

Thus, the OSP provides support to the University community in the acquisition and administration of externally funded projects for research, teaching, and service; ensures the responsible stewardship of funding; and oversees the submission of proposals as well as negotiation and acceptance of awards with an atmosphere of professionalism and collaboration. It also follows guidelines established by the U.S. Department of Education concerning the discretionary grant process.

2.E.2

Effective Oversight and Support

In tandem with the practices of the OSP, Northwestern's additional support practices and policies ensure that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.

Each fall, the Office of Graduate Studies sponsors Ranger Research Day (RRD) on the Alva campus, providing an opportunity for undergraduates, 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 and scoring forms to determine the top three presenters and honorable mention in each discipline. To help with continual improvement, the judges provide the completed score sheets to student presenters and faculty sponsors, identifying areas of strengths and weaknesses in the presentation and research methodology. 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. Approximately forty participants present twenty to thirty 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 participants to network with students and faculty from other universities. NWOSU is set to host the event again in 2027 and 2028.

2.E.3

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 composition courses, and all faculty reinforce the importance of these practices throughout students' academic careers. Ranger Connection instructors include material on academic integrity as part of the freshman orientation course. All faculty syllabi contain a definition of plagiarism as well as the professor's policy concerning plagiarism.

To avoid academic dishonesty, students may take advantage of Turnitin.com, a web-based platform designed to assist students with grammar, correct citation, and avoiding plagiarism. Faculty members may 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. Some faculty also make use of Blackboard's plagiarism-detection tool, SafeAssign.

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 priority. This guidance and use of tools such as Turnitin.com allow students to adhere to the Academic Dishonesty Policy within the Student Handbook. Library Services also guides students in the ethical use of information resources.

As discussed above, Northwestern's IRB offers substantial guidance to student researchers. Any student planning to conduct research on human subjects must first attend training on IRB processes and submit a completed Review of Human Participants Research Form. Faculty advisors who oversee student projects are also encouraged to attend this training. The Director of Sponsored Programs conducts 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 OSP website also provides a link to a tutorial concerning animal care and use. (See also Criterion 2.E.1.)

2.E.4

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. The University has also implemented an Academic Dishonesty Form by which faculty can document acts of plagiarism by students. Those faculty members who encounter academic dishonesty are referred to Faculty Handbook policy 6.3.15. The faculty member emails the completed form with supporting documents to the appropriate administrators. In addition to documenting the incident, completion of the process often allows "teachable moments," opportunities for faculty and administrators to educate offending students on ways to avoid future acts of plagiarism. This form was converted to a fillable PDF and posted to the University webpage in 2022 for easier access and greater procedural transparency.

As part of the mission to "cultivate ethical leadership and service," the University fulfills its moral and legal obligations regarding 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 request duplication of copyrighted material to either identify how the request falls within fair-use guidelines or obtain permission from the author of the 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.

Many NWOSU divisions/departments have adopted a code of ethics or professional behavior policy specific to their academic disciplines. These include the Division of Business Student Code of Ethics, the Nursing Student Handbooks, the Teacher Education 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.

In spring 2023, the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education created an Artificial Intelligence (AI) Impact Committee to discuss the impact of artificial intelligence on higher education. The OSRHE committee's NWOSU members—the VPAA and the Chair of the Department of English, Foreign Language, and Humanities (EFLH)—agreed that an ad-hoc AI Committee needed to be formed on campus to explore implications of faculty and student use of AI and to provide faculty members and divisions/departments with guidance on development of AI syllabus policies. To this end, the EFLH Chair held a professional development session to jumpstart discussions with faculty regarding ways to use AI productively and ethically as well as ways to combat its inappropriate use in the classroom.

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2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary

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

Summary

Northwestern Oklahoma State University (NWOSU) acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible in its financial, academic, human resources, and auxiliary functions.

As a state-assisted, regional public institution, NWOSU is structured and governed within the Oklahoma State System of Higher Education. Federal and Oklahoma state laws as well as the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE) and the Regional University System of Oklahoma's (RUSO) policies and procedures manuals guide University administrative, academic, and fiscal affairs. A goal of RUSO is to "encourage the practice of moral and ethical integrity in all institutional and Board activities."

Northwestern's Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs provide students, stakeholders, and the public with information about academic programs, program requirements, degree and graduation requirements, faculty/staff credentials, and course listings. The University's interface, Self Service, provides transparency to students concerning their financial obligations and helps them manage their academic functions.

NWOSU values diversity of thought and is committed to academic freedom. Not only has the University established designated free speech areas on campus, but it also supports organizations with diverse perspectives. A fair hiring process characterizes the University's relationship with future employees. The Faculty and Employee Handbooks provide an overview of procedures for hiring faculty members and staff. Northwestern's support practices and policies ensure that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly and ethically during their time at the University.

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3 - Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources and Support

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

3.A - Core Component 3.A

The rigor of the institution's academic offerings is appropriate to higher education.

1. Courses and programs are current and require levels of student performance appropriate to the credential awarded.
2. The institution articulates and differentiates learning goals for its 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

3.A.1

Program Currency and Course Rigor

Northwestern Oklahoma State University utilizes several tools to ensure that courses and programs are current, relevant, and appropriately rigorous. These tools include updated catalogs, program modifications and reviews, division/department assessments, and specialized accreditation reviews.

Northwestern updates Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs annually, giving faculty members opportunities to revise courses and programs as necessary. A division/department needing to modify a program's core curriculum completes a program modification form that includes a rationale for the change. Program modifications must receive multiple levels of institutional approval before being approved by the President, who submits them to the Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO) and the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE) for review and approval. From spring 2018 to spring 2023, NWOSU submitted 50 program modifications to OSRHE. In addition to these program modifications, the University received approval for two new degree programs and five certificates during the same time period.

A proposed Master of Business Administration with Management and Health Care Administration (HCA) options has received RUSO approval and is currently under review by OSHRE, with the expectation that it will be submitted in spring 2024 for HLC's consideration and approval. The HCA option is a response to workforce needs identified by area healthcare providers. The University has introduced other credentials in response to changing workforce needs, a priority articulated in OSRHE's current strategic plan, Blueprint 2030. Through the OSRHE initiative UpskillOK, NWOSU has implemented micro-credentials aimed at increasing qualified classroom teachers and preparing corrections officers for employment in Department of Corrections facilities.

All programs undergo formal five-year review as required by OSRHE policy. Divisions/Departments provide essential data outlined in the policy manual, generally utilizing the format of the Program Summary Review Template. Academic programs with specialized accreditation—nursing, education, business, and social work—document program currency, relevance, and consistency with national standards as part of their accreditation processes.

Northwestern adheres to OSRHE policy 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, achievement of academic credit hours is linked to demonstrated student learning through regular class assignments and evaluations and/or demonstration of competencies. Student learning outcomes (SLOs) remain consistent for online, hybrid, and face-to-face course sections.

3.A.2

Articulated Learning Goals

Each program maintains student learning outcomes (SLOs) appropriate to its degree level. Division/Department webpages include undergraduate SLOs that inform program assessment, as mandated in NWOSU's strategic plan. Additionally, the General Education (GE) 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 descriptions of courses, numbered from 1000 to 4000 to reflect their academic level.

Northwestern offers master's degree programs in American studies, counseling psychology, education, general psychology, Heritage Tourism and Conservation, and one 73-hour doctoral program in nursing practice (BSN-to-DNP) that includes 1,020 practicum hours. Master's programs range in hour requirements from 32 to 60 hours, culminating in an action research project, a capstone project, a comprehensive exam, a practicum, or a thesis. Graduate programs designate SLOs specific to each degree and articulate program objectives 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 Counseling Psychology, Master of Education, Master of Science in General Psychology, and Doctor of Nursing Practice programs exclusively at the graduate level. In addition, certification options such as Educational Leadership, Reading Specialist, School Counseling, and Superintendency require courses offered only at the graduate level.

In other graduate degree programs, NWOSU offers split-level courses numbered as 3000 or 4000 at the undergraduate level and 5000 at the graduate level. Students may take split-level graduate courses as part of the American Studies MA program, as hours toward a "field-specific subject" for the Adult Education Management and Administration MEd option, or as required courses for the Heritage Tourism and Conservation MA. Students' Graduate Advisory Committees approve these courses on plans of study. Graduate components within the course syllabi of split-level courses are distinct from the undergraduate components in requirements and rigor. The University employs additional measures to ensure that graduate programs are differentiated, primarily through supervision of programs and program-related policy by the Graduate Committee.

3.A.3

Consistent Program Quality

Northwestern's strategic plan prioritizes the goal of "ensur[ing] consistency and instructional quality across delivery modes." Northwestern's large geographic service area requires multiple delivery platforms to meet the needs of learners in various locations. Therefore, NWOSU not only offers face-to-face courses but also supports Interactive Television (ITV), Zoom class meetings, and hybrid and online delivery of courses. Syllabi illustrate consistent SLOs across all modes and locations. In addition, course evaluations provide feedback on courses taught using all modalities, and faculty members use this feedback to modify courses as needed. Because concurrent students most often attend course sections that also include University students, typically via ITV or online, all students experience consistent standards and learning outcomes. For courses taught at high schools, HLC-faculty-qualified instructors follow departmental syllabi with standard SLOs, assignment requirements, and—in many courses—finals.

The Northwestern Online Learning Committee oversees online education efforts with well-defined goals. Committee policies and practices, as articulated in the 2023 revision of the Online Education Guideline and Policy Handbook, ensure instructional consistency. Faculty proposals for new online courses must be submitted for advance approval by the Online Learning Committee. The Online Course Proposal Form includes a request for information about how the "course will meet the department's long-term strategy and priorities and/or program needs."

Following proposal approval, a faculty member develops the course in the Blackboard LMS. The Committee then reviews and either approves the course or notes required improvements before resubmission and subsequent Committee review. Northwestern's Online Programs webpage includes the Online Education Policy and numerous support resources.

Northwestern supports quality distance education by employing a full-time Online Learning Coordinator, a full-time ITV Coordinator, and multiple classroom proctors to facilitate a positive distance-education experience. The Request for Dedicated Proctor form, adopted in fall 2016 and revised in spring 2018, reflects the priority of ensuring consistent support to faculty. The University also employs a courier to transport class materials daily among all campus locations.

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3.B - Core Component 3.B

The institution offers programs that engage students in collecting, analyzing and communicating information; in mastering modes of intellectual inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.

1. The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings and degree levels of the institution. The institution articulates the purposes, content and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements.
2. 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. The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity and provides students with growth opportunities and lifelong skills to live and work in a multicultural world.
4. The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their offerings and the institution's mission.

Argument

3.B.1

General Education Purpose and Outcomes

In addition to being guided by course-level student learning outcomes (SLOs), general education (GE) coursework addresses both specific components of Northwestern's mission and its broad strategic goals: the 45-hour GE curriculum offers quality educational opportunities prioritized in its Mission Statement and meaningful content and experiences to prepare graduates for successful careers and service to society identified in its strategic plan. Specifically, the curriculum addresses ethical leadership and fiscal responsibility components of the mission by requiring courses in leadership and personal finance.

Northwestern's requirement of 45 GE hours surpasses minimum expectations identified in the OSRHE Policy Manual. Program competencies and SLOs ensure that all students engage in courses that require collecting, analyzing, and communicating information, skills that prepare them for success in their degree programs. The GE course matrix reflects additional transferable skills that serve students well in upper-division coursework and, ultimately, in achieving personal and professional success and fulfillment.

3.B.2

General Education Framework and Philosophy

Northwestern's GE curriculum, originating from the guiding philosophy identified in the GE Mission Statement, "provides a foundation for all degree programs and offers opportunities for students to develop competencies in critical thinking, leadership, and literacy." In addition, the curriculum adheres to the GE framework articulated in the OSRHE Policy Manual. The GE curriculum is reviewed periodically by the GE Committee, with the current curriculum adopted in fall 2016. At that time, the GE assessment process was made more efficient by embedding standardized assessment instruments in specified courses. A review of the curriculum was planned for fall 2022 but has been delayed by the state's consideration of adopting a new GE "state system core" of 30-33 hours for all public institutions.

Faculty and students may access GE requirements in the online or printed Undergraduate Catalog and under the General Education Assessment tab of the Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness webpage, which also includes information about GE competencies, data and reports, and the GE Committee.

3.B.3

Curriculum and Diversity Engagement

Northwestern's educational programs address diversity through both the GE curriculum and discipline-specific offerings. The GE SLOs include "explain[ing] the scope and value of human diversity," and the GE curriculum addresses this SLO and encourages exploration of diversity within a minimum of nine hours of study in the areas of Values and Beliefs, and Human Heritage and Culture. While diversity-related content is reinforced in multiple GE courses connected to this competency, the

University's approach to GE assessment designates a specific course for measurement of an SLO (in this case, through embedded assessment in Music in Life). More broadly, various discipline-specific courses engage diversity topics relevant to their fields. The 2023 NSSE results reflect that "understanding people of other backgrounds (economic, racial/ethnic, political, religious, national, etc.)" was the third-highest perceived gain among seniors, with 69% responding "very much" or "quite a bit."

Cocurricular programs also provide growth opportunities and lifelong skills to live and work in a multicultural world. The Study Abroad program, for example, offers globally aware curricular and internationally focused student programs. In 2019, the study abroad program took 23 students, faculty, and community members on a ten-day grand tour of Italy. Trips were resumed after COVID travel restrictions eased, with recent destinations including England, Ireland, and Wales (2023) and Greece (2024).

Additionally, through the Brad Henry International Scholars Program, five students have participated since 2014 in a semester-long study abroad program at Swansea University in Wales. A sixth student will study in Wales in spring 2024. In 2022, a graduate student participated in The Green Summit held at the United Nations Center in Bangkok, Thailand, sponsored by Humanitarian Affairs Asia, with tuition funded by a private donor and travel partially funded by the University. The University plans to send students to future summits. (Criterion 1.C.2 includes an extended discussion of diversity-related activities beyond the classroom setting.)

3.B.4

Scholarship, Creative Work, and Discovery of Knowledge

Although teaching comprises the most significant faculty responsibility, scholarly and creative activities remain vital elements of faculty work. Faculty portfolio evaluation guidelines allow faculty members to assign a value of 5% to 25% for Scholarly Activity/Creative Endeavors. Creditable activities include evaluation of publications, professional presentations, ongoing research, completion of an advanced degree, and receiving awards for scholarly activity. Professional artistic production or performance is also creditable. This evaluation practice reflects the University's support of these enterprises.

The Spotlight, a newsletter published since 2015 through the Dean of Faculty's Office, regularly highlights and publicizes faculty research presentations and publications. Since 2019, the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies has also documented faculty research efforts.

Institutional Support for Scholarly Work

To support faculty and student scholarly efforts, the University maintains an Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP). Management of approval processes for grant submissions is a primary responsibility of the Director of Sponsored Programs. Principal investigators seeking external grants must receive approval from the Grants Oversight Committee (GOC). To incentivize scholarly and research activity, the University provides a stipend to investigators who submit a grant proposal for GOC approval; those investigators awarded grants receive additional stipends. Northwestern increased stipend amounts in 2021 to further incentivize these activities and to vary awards based on amount of grant funding secured.

The Director also monitors professional development and grant opportunities, sharing them with appropriate faculty and administrators and offering a reminder service for important grant deadlines and processes. The 2023 Annual OSP Report includes 22 grants totaling $2,064,426 received by the University in AY 2022-2023. Funding sources include federal, state, local, and private entities. The OSP maintains an open-door policy to provide technical assistance to faculty, staff, and students in all processes it oversees.

Additionally, the University supports faculty travel for conference attendance and presentation through dedicated travel budgets for each academic school. In tandem with departmental endowed funds, this University resource allows all faculty to travel with institutional support. The Dean of Faculty's Office allocates and tracks faculty travel funding in cooperation with division/department chairs. (See Criterion 3.C.5.)

Student Scholarly and Creative Work

Opportunities for students to participate in individual and faculty-collaborative research projects occur through independent studies, special topics courses, and capstone courses. National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) results from 2023 indicate that 80% of first-year students and 90% of seniors participated in at least one *High-Impact Practice* (Learning Community, Service Learning, Research with Faculty, Internship, Study Abroad, and Culminating Senior Experience), a percentage comparable to Northwestern's Carnegie Class (61% for first-year students and 89% for seniors) on the same NSSE administration.

Since 2007, Ranger Research Day has provided a venue for students and faculty to exhibit research with poster or paper presentations. 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. (See Criterion 2.E.2.)

Students also engage in creative application of their knowledge. For example, in 2019, business and mass communication students created new marketing materials for an Alva business, Value Added Products (VAP), as a collaborative practicum. The students, Northwestern, and VAP were ultimately recognized for this partnership by OSRHE. Throughout the year, students designed and presented a new logo, created slogans and a promotional video, and developed a modular vendor booth display for trade shows. Students in the Creative Activities course also demonstrate creative application of knowledge by regularly planning and executing performances for preschool classes at Enid Public Schools' Fowler Early Childhood Center.

All Northwestern graduate programs require students to master modes of inquiry in addition to engaging in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information. Graduate students routinely apply knowledge creatively in response to such assignments as community project proposals, action-research projects, and creative theses. Each program fulfills its objectives with specific coursework included in graduate syllabi.

Ensuring that faculty and students have opportunities to contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge remains a priority at Northwestern.

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3.C - Core Component 3.C

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

1. The institution strives to ensure that the overall composition of its faculty and staff reflects human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.
2. 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, assessment of student learning, and establishment of academic credentials for instructional staff.
3. All instructors are appropriately qualified, including those in dual credit, contractual and consortial offerings.
4. Instructors are evaluated regularly in accordance with established institutional policies and procedures.
5. 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.
6. Instructors are accessible for student inquiry.
7. Staff members providing student support services, such as tutoring, financial aid advising, academic advising and cocurricular activities, are appropriately qualified, trained and supported in their professional development.

Argument

3.C.1

Aligned with its mission of providing "quality educational and cultural opportunities for learners with diverse needs," NWOSU makes every effort to employ and support a diverse faculty and staff. This is evidenced by established hiring practices, adherence to state and Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO) protocols, and intentional and regular diversity-related experiences (see Criterion 3.B.3) made available to students and employees. Collectively, these acts cultivate an environment that values and reflects human diversity.

Consistent with RUSO policy, the University adheres to an Affirmative Action Compliance Statement, which is posted above the job listings section of NWOSU's employment webpage. The University's equal opportunity statement, revised in 2018 to emphasize the value placed on diversity, is included on every position announcement.

As reported in the 2023 NWOSU Factbook, an equal distribution of female and male full-time faculty (50%, respectively) hold a doctorate. More generally, 45.7% of all full-time faculty are male, and 54.46% are female. This distribution is consistent with the 48.8% female population of Northwestern's primary service area. Among faculty in leadership roles, seven of the thirteen academic divisions/departments (53.8%) are currently chaired by females. In addition, of the ten University Committees chaired by full-time faculty in the 2023-2024 academic year, seven are chaired by female faculty members.

For AY 2021-2022, self-reported ethnicity by NWOSU faculty and staff indicated that 14.3% identify as Black, African American, Alaskan American, Native American, Asian, or Hawaiian Pacific Islander. Restricting the self-reported data to instructional staff yields only 11.8% for the same academic year. While commensurate with institutions of higher education collectively in Oklahoma, which reported 11.7% of faculty as Black, Hispanic, or American Indian or Alaskan Native in the 2017-2018 school year, Northwestern recognizes this as an area for improvement to better represent the state's diversity. (See also Criterion 1.C.3.)

3.C.2

Faculty and Instruction

Though state budget reductions have strained personnel funding in recent years, NWOSU has prioritized maintaining sufficient faculty to support classroom and non-classroom roles. Since 2018, NWOSU has added six additional faculty lines—one in the Doctor of Nursing Practice program, one in undergraduate nursing, three in fine arts, and one in psychology—and eliminated one position in social sciences and one in business due to shifting instructional needs. A fall 2022 student-faculty ratio of 14.6 to 1 indicates an appropriate number of faculty members to perform instructional duties. Per RUSO policy, Northwestern requires a full-time faculty instructional load of 24-27 credit hours per academic year.

Adjunct faculty members play an important, but not disproportionate, role in instructional delivery. In AY 2021-2022, 64 adjunct faculty members were employed, equally distributed between the two academic schools. Credit hours generated by adjuncts numbered 11,665, representing 28% of total credit hours delivered.

Northwestern prioritizes instruction as faculty's primary obligation, as reflected in the valuation of Teaching and Instruction at 40%-75% in the faculty portfolio rubric. Additionally, University administrators regularly teach courses at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Academic administrative offices work regularly with the Registry and Dean of Students Affairs and Enrollment Management (Dean of Students) Offices to ensure availability of adequate numbers of course sections.

NWOSU faculty oversee curricula and student performance expectations. All programs must have established student learning outcomes (SLOs), posted on program webpages, that create the foundation for course objectives and evaluation processes. Faculty participate in program reviews and recommend program modifications per OSRHE guidelines. (See also Criterion 4.A.)

Faculty also work closely with division/department chairs, in tandem with University Committees and the Office of Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness (A&IE), to ensure adequate assessment of curricula. Faculty assess student learning at all levels, including general education (GE) competencies and program-specific SLOs. The General Education Committee and A&IE provide guidance and infrastructure for maintaining and reporting student SLO performance. (See also Criterion 4.B.)

Additionally, faculty represent NWOSU on OSRHE Course Equivalency Project (CEP) committees annually. Comprised of educators from Oklahoma public institutions and some private institutions, the CEP committee has become instrumental in establishing SLOs and course descriptions for common courses taught at Oklahoma institutions. Their efforts facilitate statewide course transferability and continuity of curriculum.

Faculty Non-Instructional Activities

Faculty's non-classroom responsibilities include advising, scholarly and creative activities, governance and administrative committee service, and other institutional commitments. Seventeen University Committees help guide all facets of institutional practice. After their first year, all full-time faculty members serve on a minimum of one committee, with rare exceptions granted for those with special assignments. Committees consist of representatives from across the University: administrators, faculty, students, staff, and in some instances members of the communities the University serves; however, faculty comprise the majority, 74.5%, of members.

Committees generally maintain experienced members, with opportunities for faculty to select new areas of service, annually. Faculty members submit committee assignment preferences, after which Faculty Senate makes recommendations to the Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) regarding these assignments. Faculty shape policy in significant ways through committee participation. A recent example is the Faculty Evaluation and Development (FEAD) Committee's retooling of the timelines, requirements, and rubric for faculty portfolios used in performance evaluation, promotion decisions, and tenure consideration/review. New timelines became effective in fall 2023, with the new rubric to be implemented in fall 2024.

Faculty Senate encourages, promotes, and channels faculty participation in the shaping of policy (Faculty Handbook). Faculty elect academic school and at-large representatives from across academic disciplines. Faculty Senate holds regular meetings, with officers subsequently meeting with the President and VPAA to discuss items of interest and concern. Recent Faculty Senate initiatives that have helped shape University policy and practice include adding specific narrative to the Faculty Handbook regarding the privileges of emeritus faculty status (2020), establishing an improved timeline and faculty notification of upcoming athletic grade checks (2021), administering and sharing with administration the results of a survey of the general faculty gauging their concerns (2022), providing constructive feedback on Freshman Connection (2022), removing requests for demographic information on faculty evaluations of Senior Staff (2023), and reviewing and offering input on new course evaluation software (2023) that resulted in the purchase of Watermark Course Evaluations and Surveys (2023). Additionally, senior administration seeks input from Faculty Senate in making decisions about matters of immediate concern such as formulation of institutional COVID response.

Faculty also contribute to University life through service on other decision-making bodies. For example, an Enrollment Management Task Force was created in 2020 to address enrollment concerns, formulate strategies for addressing these concerns, and set goals for retention and enrollment. Three faculty members serve on the Task Force along with campus administrators and representatives from Recruitment, Institutional Research, Housing, and Student Support Offices. A Retention and Enrollment Forum comprised of faculty from each division/department was simultaneously established by the Dean of Faculty to facilitate intradepartmental and interdepartmental communication on matters related to retention and enrollment efforts. Through these channels, faculty members work actively with the Dean of Faculty, Student Services, their divisions/departments, and one another to increase retention and enrollment across campus. (See also Criterion 4.C.1-2.) A newly established ad hoc Artificial Intelligence (AI) Impact Committee is currently helping to formulate University response to educational challenges and opportunities presented by AI.

Faculty members serve on faculty search committees within and, as appropriate, outside their departments. With guidance from the Dean of Faculty and search committee chair, committees determine specific processes and timelines to govern a search. Committee member involvement throughout the selection and interview process ensures job applicants have appropriate qualifications and background. Department chairs work in conjunction with the Dean of Faculty when the need for adjunct instructors arises.

3.C.3

Faculty Qualifications

Northwestern fosters academic excellence by recruiting, hiring, and retaining appropriately qualified faculty, confirming that faculty credentials align with HLC expectations. Each division/department chair initiates a formal Faculty Qualifications Review as part of the hiring process for all full-time and adjunct faculty. These documents are reviewed periodically for completeness and, in the case of provisionally-qualified faculty, academic progress. Additionally, full-time faculty credentials are posted yearly in the Undergraduate Catalog.

Graduate program faculty consists of specified administrators and members of the general faculty. Initial graduate faculty appointees are recommended by their chairs and approved by the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies, Dean of Faculty, and Graduate Committee. In 2018, NWOSU's Graduate Committee revised policies concerning graduate faculty appointments: temporary and associate graduate faculty must still undergo re-approval on a rotating basis, while permanent faculty no longer undergo periodic review. The Graduate Catalog specifies standards for all graduate faculty. Only graduate faculty may teach graduate courses or serve as members of Graduate Advisory Committees.

Employing qualified faculty is a University priority. Approximately 61% of fall 2023 faculty members hold a doctoral degree, as compared to 66% in fall 2018 and 60% in fall 2014. For visual and performing arts faculty, the MFA may be considered the terminal degree. Three current faculty members hold this degree. Northwestern also employs qualified adjunct faculty members. During the 2022-2023 academic year, 16.5% of adjuncts held doctorates, 69.4% held master's degrees, and 14.1% held bachelor's degrees. Division/Department chairs work with bachelor's-degree-holding adjunct faculty on plans to remove deficiencies as a condition of future employment. Because most concurrent students attend the same courses as University students, typically via ITV or online, their instructors are equally qualified. In cases in which adjunct concurrent faculty teach within a high school, faculty qualification procedures are maintained.

Northwestern currently participates in only one consortial program, Oklahoma's Reach Higher, an adult degree-completion initiative established by OSRHE and administered by nine Oklahoma public universities. The program leads to a Bachelor of Science in Organizational Leadership. Appropriately credentialed faculty teach program courses. All participating universities follow the policies of OSRHE and are accredited by HLC.

3.C.4

Faculty Evaluation Processes

Northwestern employs a comprehensive faculty evaluation system that includes self-evaluation as well as peer, administrative, and student evaluations. Central to this system is an electronic portfolio consisting of narrative responses and supporting artifacts submitted by the faculty member under review, then evaluated by peer and administrative reviewers, through the Aurora Learning Community Association (ALCA) assessment system.

Submission and review of the portfolio is conducted using well-established, prescribed processes. Each full-time faculty member selects one peer reviewer; the division/department chair selects the second peer reviewer from a list of faculty members provided by the faculty member under review. At least one peer reviewer must be from the faculty member's division/department. Chairs conduct the administrative evaluations for their faculty members, with the Dean of Faculty fulfilling that function for evaluations of chairs.

Portfolios are structured around five priorities identified in the section headings of the Faculty Evaluation Rubric: Teaching/Instruction, Professional Development, Scholarly Activity, Institutional Involvement, and Community Service. Faculty members must select a preferred percentage value from prescribed ranges for each category. The Faculty Evaluation and Development (FEAD) webpage provides specific instructions for completing a portfolio and resources to guide faculty in portfolio construction. While adjunct faculty do not prepare portfolios, chairs use student course evaluations to assess these instructors and make future hiring decisions.

The FEAD Committee, with input from Faculty Senate, undertook a comprehensive review of the portfolio scoring rubric during AY 2022-2023 to ensure fairness to all faculty members, regardless of number of years under review. Improved

formatting and revised language that correlates activities to a specified time period, typically an academic year, has resulted in a more usable instrument for portfolio preparation and assessment to be implemented in AY 2023-2024.

The FEAD Committee also gained approval for a modified portfolio review schedule, transitioning non-tenured, non-tenure-track faculty from an annual to a three-year portfolio review cycle. This policy took effect in fall 2023, with a FEAD-developed abbreviated review for use by these faculty members and their chairs in non-portfolio years.

Utilizing Watermark Course Evaluation software adopted in fall 2023, students participate in fall course and instructor evaluations of all adjunct and full-time faculty members. Spring or summer evaluations may occur at the request of the Dean of Faculty, chair, or faculty member. Faculty members receive evaluation results immediately after submitting course grades. For additional levels of oversight, division/department chairs have access to evaluations of faculty in their programs, and the VPAA and Dean of Faculty can access all faculty evaluations.

After completion of the faculty evaluation cycle, the Dean of Faculty compiles an overall composite rating for each faculty member. Faculty members receive a scoring summary sheet and reviewer comments, and chairs discuss results with individual faculty. The FEAD Committee monitors effectiveness of the faculty evaluation process and makes recommendations for improvements, as needed.

3.C.5

Faculty Development

NWOSU assures that faculty members maintain up-to-date content in their disciplines and follow best practices in their teaching roles. The Faculty Qualifications Review provides initial documentation of faculty member credentials, and the portfolio process described above provides subsequent documentation of professional growth activities, 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, assisting the VPAA and Dean of Faculty in coordinating ongoing faculty development activities as well as conducting an annual orientation for new faculty consisting of multi-day, intensive training sessions. In 2020, Northwestern also implemented a faculty development and planning day for all faculty members before the start of each fall semester, at which faculty and other speakers present information gained through faculty development experiences and other initiatives.

In addition to coordinating faculty development efforts, FDAB remains instrumental in maintaining the Faculty Development Resource Center (FDRC), which provides a workspace and resources within the University library for faculty planning and development activities. FDRC ledger sign-ins by individual faculty members, committees, and divisions/departments suggest that faculty utilize this resource regularly. In 2022, the FDRC was moved to a more inviting, flexible, and well-equipped work environment. The FDAB continues to pursue ideas to increase the utility and welcoming atmosphere of the FDRC. (See also Criterion 3.D.4.)

The University also supports faculty development by providing conference and travel funding administered by the Dean of Faculty and allocated in collaboration with division/department chairs through a pre-approval process completed early each fall semester. The University draws upon several sources to provide these funds. A portion of the University's academic enhancement fee supplements faculty travel and professional development allocations. In FY23, NWOSU also realized the benefits of OSRHE matching a remaining backlog of endowed chairs funds, increasing this resource that is often used to augment budgetary support of faculty travel. Other endowed sources such as the Carmichael Award in Health and Sports Science Education and the Gwendolyn Hollis Anderson Faculty Development Endowment are awarded to faculty members exclusively for the purpose of faculty development as well. Furthermore, with substantial recent increases in virtual events making professional development opportunities abundant and accessible, faculty may now submit requests to fund professional development that does not involve travel.

Other avenues for professional development exist outside of faculty's affiliations with professional and discipline-specific organizations. For example, faculty have access to Go2Knowledge training video modules made possible through NWOSU's Leadership, Academic Success, Superior Outcomes (LASSO) project and promoted by FDAB. This content is available at no charge to faculty, and NWOSU's administration has incentivized its use by permitting faculty to earn an additional leave day by completing prescribed modules. Participants have unrestricted access to training modules and live webinars on a wide range of academic topics through this platform. OSRHE initiatives have also provided funding to support faculty development in, and adoption of, open educational resources. Other OSRHE initiatives have allowed Northwestern to provide Quality Matters training to members of the Online Education Committee and faculty and, in combination with University funds, to support attendance at events such as the Online Learning Innovations Summit.

In FY23, excluding grant and endowed funds, a total of $56,970 was allocated for faculty development activities and travel. While this equates to an average allotment of $540 per full-time faculty member, additional travel funding was available to accredited program faculty and individual approved travel amounts varied based on input from chairs and the Dean of Faculty. Through a long-standing commitment to faculty development and careful planning, the University remains able to provide significant support to faculty in their efforts to stay current in their disciplines and adept in their teaching roles.

3.C.6

Faculty Accessibility

By policy, faculty members establish a minimum of ten office hours per week (Faculty Handbook 6.3.13), to be posted on or near a faculty member's office door and in each syllabus. Adherence to this policy is verified through the Dean of Faculty's Office. During office hours, faculty assist students with advisement, class preparation, and research, using videoconferencing platforms when necessary to increase accessibility. Northwestern's extensive motor pool allows faculty members to visit other campus locations for face-to-face meetings with students, a practice encouraged by chairs and administration.

In all areas regarding advisors and the advising process in the 2022 Noel Levitz survey, NWOSU students reported high levels of satisfaction. These responses indicated each item addressing advising was a strength of the University; moreover, the responses compared favorably nationally among four-year institutions by achieving a smaller gap between importance and satisfaction measures on the instrument.

3.C.7

Student Support Staff Development

Professional staff members, many of whom possess academic qualifications at the bachelor's and master's degree levels, assist students with essential needs. To increase the potential for professional development, the University encourages all staff members to complete degrees through its employee tuition waiver program. From FY19 to FY22, the University waived an average of $117,409 annually to support the education of employees and their dependents.

University membership in professional organizations provides additional staff training and professional development opportunities. Northwestern holds institutional memberships in more than 20 state, regional, and national associations, and all directors and coordinators receive a budget for travel to professional meetings and other development meetings.

Within this context of broad institutional support for professional staff development, staff members providing student support services are appropriately qualified, trained, and supported in their professional development.

The Dean of Students, an active member of the Oklahoma Council on Student Affairs (COSA), attends monthly COSA meetings that provide current information on such topics as ADA compliance, Title IX training, student conduct, campus life, international students, and campus safety. Northwestern's Director of Financial Aid attends the Oklahoma State Regents Conference on Scholarships and Grants. In addition, the Director and Assistant Director also routinely attend the Oklahoma Association of Federal Student Aid Administrators and the Southwest Association of Student Financial Aid Administration Conferences. These meetings assist the Financial Aid Director and staff in staying current on Title IV and federal compliance.

The Academic Success Center (ASC) Coordinator holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Education and teacher certification in mathematics, and is currently pursuing a Master of Education in Adult Education Management and Administration through the University's tuition waiver program. The ASC provides tutoring services across a broad spectrum of academic areas, with student tutors supervised and trained by the Coordinator. Additional tutoring and academic coaching are provided by the Student Support Services and LASSO Offices, with all full-time staff holding a minimum of a bachelor's degree.

Funded through the LASSO project, academic coaching with a full-time, professional InsideTrack coach was implemented in 2022. Training on foundational coaching provided in 2023 to nine staff and faculty members--who will become coaches and coach trainers--will ensure this initiative's growth and longevity. Additional training on student support issues was initiated in spring 2023 for faculty and appropriate staff through Go2Knowledge training modules. The program will continue through 2026, with each year's module focusing on a different aspect of student support. (See also Criterion 3.C.5.)

Faculty and staff who provide academic advisement receive initial training upon hire and attend ongoing professional development training opportunities. FDAB provides current enrollment materials and checklists for faculty and staff members through training sessions and FDAB Blackboard site postings.

Full-time faculty or staff members supervise cocurricular activities such as athletics, student leadership opportunities, and

student clubs and organizations. Because service learning is an integral aspect of student activity at Northwestern, support in this area is critical. The Service Learning and Community Engagement Coordinator and one faculty member are members of the Oklahoma Service Learning (OSL) Conference committee. Several faculty, staff, and students attended and presented at the 2023 OSL Conference. The intramural program employs a Director and an Assistant Director who report to the Dean of Students.

Athletic personnel possess appropriate credentials and receive continuous training and support from the NCAA.

Sources

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- Psychology_Department_Interview_Committee
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- SWASFAA_Conference

- Syllabus_Template_Office_Hours
- Travel_Budget
- Travel_Requests_Approvals
- Undergraduate_Catalog_Directors_Coordinators
- Undergraduate_Catalog_Faculty_Credentials
- University_Committees
- University_Committees_Gender_Distribution_Leadership_Roles
- Updated_Portfolio_Review_Schedule
- Updates_to_Faculty_Evaluation_Guidelines

3.D - Core Component 3.D

The institution provides support for student learning and resources for 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 offerings 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 and museum collections, as appropriate to the institution's offerings).

Argument

3.D.1

Student Support

NWOSU provides support services aligned to the needs of its student populations from the outset of their academic careers. Prior to each fall semester, Student Affairs personnel conduct freshman and transfer orientation to prepare students for University life. Incoming students receive identification cards, parking decals, and information about Northwestern e-mail accounts, Blackboard access, and the Self Service student portal. They also attend a J.R. Holder Wellness Center orientation. In addition, campus organizations recruit new students for participation in cocurricular activities. The Financial Aid, Registry, and Business Offices remain open throughout these sessions to assist with final payments and questions. Additionally, in 2018, Northwestern's Student Government Association initiated a multi-day orientation experience, Camp Ranger, that has grown from 24 participants in its first year to 70 in fall 2023. As part of a 2022 Complete College America Policy, Equity, and Inclusion initiative, the University developed a series of helpful onboarding videos for new students that may be accessed at any time through the University webpage. (See Criterion 4.C.3.)

Northwestern's student profile indicates a significant population of students requiring academic assistance. Central to their academic support, the Academic Success Center (ASC) provides tutoring services with a staff of trained student tutors overseen by a full-time ASC Coordinator. In 2022, the ASC was put under the supervision of the Director of Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness/Academic Support.

Working together, the Director and the Coordinator have revitalized ASC operations by expanding promotion of ASC services, participating in campus student support events, increasing the number of tutors, broadening the range of subjects for which tutoring is provided, and adopting new tutoring strategies such as the use of meeting software and online platforms to facilitate services for online students and those at additional campus locations. The ASC also offers a range of services including standardized testing, course testing for students with ADA accommodations, individual and group study areas, and computer and printing access. In fall 2023, the ASC adopted new sign-in and sign-out software to track student-use data that will guide future decisions about staffing and services.

Two grant-funded projects currently supply resources for student support efforts. A 2020 Student Support Services (TRIO) grant provides aid to first-generation and low-income students as well as students with disabilities. SSS staff, project advisors, and student coaches teach professional behavior, mentor students individually, and provide workshops to help students achieve their academic and life goals.

A 2021 Title III grant supported the establishment of the Leadership, Academic Success, Superior Outcomes (LASSO) Project and Center, which foster accessibility and support for all students. LASSO staff conduct student coaching based on the InsideTrack model, provide academic advisement, and connect students with academic advisors in their majors. The LASSO Center provides a welcoming space for students seeking information, advocacy, or simply a listening ear. Students may also explore career possibilities with guidance from a LASSO-funded career coach and MyMajors and Focus 2 Career resources. (See also Criteria 1.A.4 and 3.C.3.)

Specific departments continue to support student learning in innovative ways. Math and English co-requisite labs allow students to move directly into credit-bearing courses with the support necessary to be successful. (See Criterion 4.C.3.) In science gateway courses, Student Learning Assistants (SLAs)—students who have recently passed the course in which they assist—are employed to attend those courses and offer students guidance. Students who may be reluctant to seek assistance

from faculty 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 114,000 items, NWOSU Library Services provides support to Alva, Enid, and Woodward students as well as to online and distance students. In addition, the library offers interlibrary loan services to expand its offerings. Consistent upgrades include the increase of database subscriptions, expanded access to resources including peer-reviewed articles and eBooks, additional technology resources such as tablets and laptops, and the provision of a SMART Board training room for student use. Updates are made in response to needs expressed by academic programs and other campus stakeholders. Students may access the J.W. Martin Library building on the Alva campus more than 84 hours per week. A full-time librarian travels to the Enid and Woodward campus locations weekly to provide services.

Appropriate library staffing ensures that students' research efforts are well supported. Three professional librarians hold either a Master of Library Science or Master of Library and Information Science degree that is appropriate for an academic librarian, according to the Association of College and Research Libraries. Two of the librarians hold additional graduate degrees.

Northwestern's Counseling Center serves students with a variety of counseling needs confidentially and free of charge for up to six sessions per semester, after which they may be referred to an external provider for additional services. In 2020, the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services furnished each NWOSU campus location with iPads equipped with the MyCare app, which provides immediate mental health assistance from a licensed professional counselor to individuals in crisis.

Grant funds were also used to purchase the Tao Connect online library of behavioral health resources, Mindwise online screening tools for a range of mental health and substance abuse issues, and an Interactive Screening Program used by students to assess their current mental health and well-being. An additional interactive online resource, eCHECKUP, gives students immediate, confidential, and personalized feedback about alcohol and cannabis abuse as well as tools for identifying and interrupting sexual violence. Other efforts to support students' emotional and mental wellness include providing seminars on substance abuse prevention and mental health awareness to all students—with attendance mandatory for athletes in support of NCAA requirements to promote mental and physical health—and printing the national suicide prevention number on all student ID cards.

Northwestern supports students taking courses in every modality by employing a full-time Director of Online Services to oversee delivery of its online programs and courses. The Director offers full technical support during office hours and monitors Blackboard helpdesk email on weekends. The NWOSU Blackboard webpage contains vendor-produced and institutionally developed tutorials for students, and every online Blackboard course shell is prepopulated with information regarding available technical and student support.

NWOSU utilizes Interactive Television (ITV) extensively to deliver synchronous courses across multiple campus locations, using existing Polycom technology and a four-year phase-in of Zoom technology that will expand flexibility for students. ITV support is provided by a full-time Coordinator, two part-time office managers, and multiple classroom facilitators. The Coordinator synchronizes course schedules at all locations to maximize studio utilization, classroom facilitation, and course material delivery. Working with Information Technology (IT) staff, the ITV Office also provides trouble-shooting assistance to instructors during course meetings.

The Coordinator works to ensure that all students, regardless of location, have a quality classroom experience. The ITV Office offers exam proctoring for online and ITV students, developing a test-scheduling webform in 2022 for students' convenience. Students who live more than 75 miles from a campus location but prefer a synchronous classroom experience may submit a Request for ITV Class form to attend an ITV course via Zoom, further meeting students' varied needs. Northwestern employs a courier to transport ITV course materials, as necessary, among all campus locations.

NWOSU's Veteran's Affairs Coordinator in the Office of Student Services and Enrollment Management (Student Services) provides services to veterans and their dependents interested in using GI Bill benefits. This office supports students by certifying enrollment, serving as a facilitator in contacting other Veterans Affairs (VA) sources, and providing guidance in benefits-related problem solving. The Coordinator's ultimate goal is to assure students' timely receipt of all VA educational money to which they are entitled. In fall 2023, approximately 2.6% of Northwestern students completed the process to become fully certified to receive veteran's benefits.

In 2023, the University received first-time Department of Homeland Security Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) approval authorizing the Enid and Woodward campus locations to enroll F-1 Visa nonimmigrant students in academic programs. This authorization extends opportunities that were previously available only on the Alva campus and will offer

greater opportunities to students at all campus locations.

NWOSU offers multiple accommodations to assist students with special needs in achieving their educational goals. The Dean of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management (Dean of Students) serves as the University's ADA Compliance Officer, working with students to determine needs and making arrangements to assist with appropriate services and support. Information about the Americans with Disabilities Act can be found on Northwestern's website. The Faculty Development Resource Center includes software for designing online course materials that meets students' accessibility needs. In FY22, the University also added Ally, a tool that helps faculty improve the accessibility of course content in Blackboard. (See also Criterion 1.C.2.)

As noted above, 92% of NWOSU students received financial assistance in AY 2021-2022, making support in this area critical. The Financial Aid Office, which administers all Title IV funds, state grants and scholarships, and institutional aid and scholarships, assists students in determining eligibility for potential sources of support. 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, leadership groups, and teacher preparation.

The Financial Aid Office also distributes funds tied to grant-supported initiatives such as the Reach Higher Direct Complete program and UpskillOK micro-credential programs that serve non-traditional students and students in critical occupations fields. The Enid Partnership in Higher Education Association conducts a fundraising campaign every four 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.

Meeting students' material needs is also prioritized at Northwestern. The Campus Cabinet food pantry, established on the Alva campus and soon thereafter expanded to Northwestern's other two campus locations, has as its mission to provide supplemental food and other basic necessities to alleviate food insecurity and barriers to student and employee success. The Teacher's Closet was initially founded to supplement the professional clothing needs of education majors but now welcomes any student seeking to build a professional wardrobe. The Single Parent Support Network, funded by a Women's Foundation of Oklahoma grant, provides direct support to NWOSU's single parents via gift cards used for textbooks, fuel, childcare, and other needs. The grant aims to help single-parent students stay in school and graduate while overcoming unique obstacles not encountered by other students. The 2022 grant also provided two $500 scholarships. Grant coordinators on each campus maintain a local directory of relevant resources.

3.D.2

Placement of Entering Students

Northwestern has traditionally used entering students' ACT/SAT scores to determine appropriate course placement. As part of a 2020 statewide pilot program, the University began considering students' seven -semester high school GPA as an alternative to standardized scores for placement. This pilot was expanded to concurrent students in 2021, with GPA as an alternative measure for course placement. Data show that concurrent students placed using this criterion experience success comparable to their counterparts admitted based on ACT/SAT scores.

NWOSU continues to use a co-requisite model to move students in need of remediation into credit-bearing courses earlier in their academic careers. This model provides additional support through a co-requisite lab that accompanies the credit-bearing course, increasing students' chances of retention and success. (See Criterion 4.C.3.)

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 having prior military experience. Students may also request special consideration from the University for nationally recognized exams and certifications. The Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) considers these requests on a case-by-case basis.

Northwestern supports the needs of high-achieving students through its Honors Program. Admissions requirements reflect this focus on high achievement. Full-time faculty members possessing a special expertise or interest lead topic-based courses designed specifically for honors students.

Northwestern supports freshman students who exhibit extraordinary leadership or potential for success through the President's Leadership Class (PLC). Candidates undergo an interview process prior to selection for the class. PLC students receive a $2,750 scholarship and explore a variety of leadership topics with the President in the context of a weekly class. In addition, PLC students accompany the President on a multi-day, all-expense-paid trip to a major U.S. city; meet legislative

and community leaders; and meet with the RUSO Board.

Support for Entering Students

Ranger Connection, a required first-year-experience course, introduces incoming students to the college experience and focuses on developing practical techniques to achieve academic success. An institutionally developed workbook explores multiple student support topics and resources. In summer 2021, returning students serving as Ranger Connection Peer Leaders began outreach to incoming freshman students not yet on campus through text messages offering support and guidance. (See also Criterion 4.C.3.)

Pre-University Support

Renewed in fall 2022, NWOSU's Upward Bound (UB) and Upward Bound Math and Science Programs strive to create a multicultural educational community of students with great potential who demonstrate a strong desire to acquire higher education. The program's academic and counseling components provide high school students with four years of continuous preparation for college. 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.

3.D.3

Academic Advising

Undergraduates receive advisement from instructional faculty or Student Services personnel. Students undecided on a major work initially with a LASSO advisor. (See also Criteria 3.D.1 and 4.C.3.) Once they select a major, students may request or be assigned a faculty advisor from their program. To accommodate students at all campus locations, faculty frequently travel to a student's primary campus location to conduct advisement. All students, including online students, may also receive advisement via ITV, Zoom, e-mail, and telephone. Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Survey results (2022) indicate that students perceive academic advisement as an institutional strength and that Northwestern performs favorably against its comparison group of national four-year public institutions.

Entering freshmen may receive academic advisement well in advance of their first fall semester. Each spring, Northwestern hosts Freshman Connection for high school seniors, affording them an opportunity to meet with an advisor and enroll in courses for the upcoming fall semester. During the summer months, students receive advisement from a faculty member in their chosen discipline when available, from Recruitment Office staff members, or from LASSO staff.

The Faculty Development Advisory Board provides faculty with advisement training and guidance on effective schedule construction through advisement forums and advising checklists. For planning and monitoring student progress toward degree completion, advisors and students utilize official degree audits produced by the Registry Office as well as degree audit functions available in Self Service. (A phase-in of this functionality begun in 2022 will be completed by 2025.) Divisions/Departments also maintain updated and standardized course rotations and uniform plans of study, all easily accessible under Degree Planning Resources on each division/department webpage.

Beyond assisting with schedule construction, advisors monitor advisees' academic progress through individual consultation with students and use of the Early Alert Reporting System (EARS). A 2022 update to the EARS system, accessible to faculty through Self Service, provides efficient communication from instructors to advisors, retention staff, and students about course performance, excessive absences, and other course-related issues. (Additional advisement and support provided through the SSS Grant program and LASSO Center is discussed in Criteria 4.C.1 and 4.C.3.) Notably, through a LASSO partnership with InsideTrack, staff and faculty have received on-going trainings for student coaching certification, assessing and developing strategies to advance students toward both academic and non-academic goals. These trained University coaches will significantly increase the capacity to offer student coaching, which is currently provided to 141 students by an InsideTrack coach.

Concomitant with Northwestern's NCAA Division II membership, student-athletes receive benefits of assurance toward academic progress through the work of the NCAA Compliance Committee and University personnel. The Committee recommends, and the Assistant Athletic Director for Compliance works cooperatively with the Registrar to implement, policies and procedures that ensure compliance with NCAA and institutional rules and regulations. The unofficial degree audit function in Self Service and other web-based resources, as well as close coordination between the Athletic Department and Registry Office, has benefited athletic program personnel in tracking student-athletes' academic progress.

A new graduate student is initially advised by the Graduate Studies Enrollment and Retention Coordinator, after which the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies appoints a three-member advisory committee during the student's first semester. (Committee members may also serve at the invitation of the student with approval of the Office of Graduate Studies.) Students receive subsequent advisement, assistance with developing a plan of study, and plan approval from their committees. Committees also administer written comprehensive examinations and evaluate action research, capstone, practicum, and thesis 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 Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (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 hub sites. A 1Gb Virtual Private Network (VPN) using OneNet, soon to be upgraded to 10Gb, connects all three campus locations.

OneNet also provides infrastructure for Northwestern's information technology system. Twenty-three physical servers and 19 virtual servers located across the three campus locations, as well as 23 servers located at the OneNet facility, equip the University's network. Building upon 2019 upgrades to residential hall wireless capacity, CARES funds were used in 2021 to finance upgraded and expanded fiber-optic cable and wireless capacity at all campuses. NWOSU also takes advantage of OneNet's firewall services, which provide updates and modifications to campus firewalls.

NWOSU's 2019 transition to a new administrative platform provided by Ellucian, commonly referred to as Self Service, resulted in a significant technology upgrade for students and employees. Integrated roster and grade reporting functions, departmental oversight capabilities, advisement and enrollment tools, and an Early Alert Reporting system available through Self Service all support effective teaching and learning.

All University courses use the Blackboard SAAS platform. Faculty are allotted a substantial course- size quota of 1 Gb and may house additional video material on a University shared drive to expand capacity. A full-time Director of Online Services maintains the system and provides technical and instructional-design support to faculty and students.

To meet the unique needs of a geographically dispersed student body, NWOSU conducts Interactive Television (ITV) classes among all instructional sites using existing Polycom technology and new Zoom technology. The latter is being phased in over a four-year period to expand flexibility for students and faculty. Northwestern offers an average of 125 classes per semester via ITV or Zoom using 24 high-definition studios equipped at a total cost of approximately $1.1 million. 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 Board, and an easy-to-use touch-panel interface. As instructors facilitate classes in ITV teaching studios, SMART Boards at distant locations mirror the content being displayed from the originating site.

In addition to those in ITV studios, non-ITV classrooms across all campus locations contain 43 SMART Boards, making a total of 68 SMART Boards and 5 Promethean Boards for instructional use.

The Information Technology Department (IT) replaces all office computers on a regular rotation. Up-to-date computers and software allow employees to meet job demands effectively. IT staff also maintain 22 student computer labs across three campus locations. In addition to 29 computers housed in the robotics and esports labs and 20 computers in the nursing lab, the University maintains 55 computers and 174 virtual computers (which improve cost-savings and efficiency) for general student use at the Alva campus location. Enid labs supply 25 computers and 52 virtual computers, with plans to outfit an esports room with 5-6 additional computers in 2024; Woodward labs supply 8 computers and 31 virtual computers.

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. It is home to purebred Angus cattle, Maine Anjou cattle, Berkshire hogs, and occasional other livestock species used for laboratory and demonstration purposes. The Farm's Wisdom Agriculture Education Center provides a welding laboratory outfitted with state-of-the-art metal-working equipment and a SMART Board-equipped classroom. The Farm also includes an educational greenhouse and cattle-working facilities. Equipment added since 2018 includes a new John Deere 320D skid steer and attachment, an Apache CNC Plasma Table, a Tye plot grain drill, and HE&M metal bandsaw.

Nursing professional practice labs located at the Alva, Enid, and Woodward campus locations provide simulated experiences

of low-volume, high-risk clinical situations in a safe learning environment. The University Center in Ponca City has also partnered with the local hospital–AllianceHealth-Ponca City–to provide space for a limited number of practice-lab experiences. A medium-fidelity simulator and static mannequin are maintained at the Ponca City site.

The Division of Education's Darrell and Grace Wessels Literacy Center provides teacher-education-preparation students with practical experience and meets the needs of area P-12 students through individualized literacy tutoring. In 2020, the Literacy Center expanded its reach to rural students by adding virtual tutoring. The Roy Vayle and Leah Beisel Evans Literacy Center Chair for Academic Excellence provides a generous endowment for ongoing technology updates. Additionally, an Early Childhood Education Classroom Lab on the Alva campus allows University students to participate in pedagogy planning and activities for children of various ages. The Division partners with Enid Public Schools at the Fowler Early Childhood Center to provide students with hands-on experience with preschoolers.

NWOSU's student media outlets serve all three campus locations. These platforms, operated by students with guidance of faculty advisors, serve as labs for mass communication students. An updated digital television studio at the Alva campus location provides new cameras that allow students to broadcast from remote sites and state-of-the-art computer software that generates virtual studio sets. The audio studio utilizes equipment comparable to that used in professional settings. A student-led public relations and advertising agency, Ranger Communication, was established in spring 2022, with new workspace dedicated to house it in fall 2023.

The Bill and Billie Buckles Computer Science Robotics Lab, funded with private donations, includes a sixteen-computer lab for student and faculty use as well as a robotics-build lab that includes two 3D printers, a laser cutter, and other tools and resources to support a new computer science minor in game programming and additional courses in robotics. Charles & Jane Tucker Endowment and Buckles Endowment funds provide additional support to the computer science program.

Northwestern's esports arena, established in 2021, includes 10 Alienware gaming computers, new gaming chairs, four large wall-mounted monitors, desks, worktables, and new flooring and lighting. Used throughout the academic year for esports practice and competitions, the arena also hosts three or four middle- and high-school esports tournaments annually.

The Science Building includes sixteen laboratory classrooms dedicated to biological studies, chemistry, and the physical sciences. Each science discipline receives supplementary funds derived from proceeds of endowed funds in addition to general operating funds for equipping labs. Updated facilities and equipment support effective teaching and learning across the natural sciences.

The Alva campus houses Northwestern's main University Library, while Woodward and Enid campus locations provide spaces for a virtual library supported through a weekly campus visit from a librarian. Physical library holdings exceed 114,000 items, while the library's website provides access to over 100 electronic journal, news, and book databases. The library subscribes to over 80 journal and news databases, and multiple e-Book databases subscriptions provide access to over 250,000 digital/electronic books. Students have access to all items regardless of location or class delivery method. Books and other materials travel daily through the campus courier system, and librarians mail requested materials to distance-education students. (See also Criterion 3.D.1.)

The library also houses the Faculty Development Resource Center (FDRC), which contains a conference table, 15 computers (six desktops and nine laptops), nine webcams, a SMART Board with integrated microcomputer, and specialized pedagogical software. The Center is available for individual use as well as for collaboration and meetings. Faculty use the Center for such activities as conducting research, developing instructional presentations, working on group projects, completing training, holding meetings, and writing reports. (See also Criterion 3.C.5.)

Public performance spaces supporting fine arts programs include the 850-seat Herod Hall Auditorium. Constructed in 1924 and last renovated in 1980, the auditorium includes a stage of professional dimensions, dressing rooms, and theatre shop. The University has replaced stage rigging and much of the lighting equipment within the last ten years, yet the administration acknowledges infrastructural and aesthetic issues that limit artistic experiences for patrons and performers. The University has obtained architectural concept drawings for renovation and is actively seeking private funding to undertake the project, but to this point, has not obtained a lead gift. A smaller performance space in Ryerson Hall serves as a venue for more intimate performances such as recitals and competitions.

Northwestern provides additional facilities and resources appropriate to meet unique needs of fine arts programs, including individual and organizational rehearsal and studio spaces. Separate spaces for instrumental and choral ensembles provide students with acoustically sound environments for rehearsals, and practice studios contain well-maintained upright pianos. A 2018 private donation of $15,000 refurbished the grand piano in the choral practice room. New choir chimes, choir risers, conducting podium, and choir folio cabinet were purchased in 2020-2021 at an approximate cost of $30,000. The University

commits $20,000 annually to band instrument maintenance, repair, and replacement.

Visual arts students utilize a digital imaging computer lab, updated in 2018. With the expansion of the visual art program in 2023, the department plans additional computer lab updates and substantial studio purchases. The department will seek to renovate additional classroom space for expanded offerings.

The department also maintains studio space for an Artist-in-Residence (AIR) program that hosts up to six artists per year. The AIR's studio is often available to students for observation and instruction. Furthermore, visual arts faculty and students collaborate with Alva's 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 six endowed chairs in visual arts, plus the purchase of new studio art equipment. Numerous endowed chairs support the performing arts and provide dividends to enhance the educational experience for the department's students.

Founded in 1902, the Museum of Natural History on the Alva campus contains more than 6,000 artifacts, including one of the nation's largest ornithological collections. The Museum is open to the public and ideal for K-12 classroom visits as well as interdepartmental collaboration. 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.

In 2021, Northwestern commissioned concept drawings for a new multi-purpose outdoor space on the site of the razed Boiler Room based on input from an Outdoor Classroom Committee. Initial dirt work and leveling for construction has begun, with plans to begin the building process in AY 2023-2024 using dedicated University funds and private funds currently being sought through meetings with potential donors. This space will provide a site for outdoor events as well as class meetings.

Northwestern provides faculty with appropriate material resources for effective teaching. All full-time faculty members receive an office assignment with a personal computer, phone, and appropriate furnishings. NWOSU replaces faculty computers on a regular rotation as part of its computer reallocation process, and also furnishes discipline-specific software as appropriate. In addition, faculty members have access to regional copiers as well as large-volume copiers through Printing Services.

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3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary

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

Summary

Northwestern provides quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

NWOSU utilizes several tools to ensure that courses and programs remain current and relevant: annually updated catalogs, program modifications and reviews, division/department assessments, and specialized accreditation reviews.

In alignment with its mission, NWOSU makes every effort to employ and support a diverse faculty and staff. This is evidenced by established hiring practices, adherence to state and Regional University System of Oklahoma protocols as well as best practices, and the intentional and regular diversity-related experiences made available to NWOSU students and employees.

NWOSU faculty members oversee the curriculum and expectations for student performance. While some academic programs have additional criteria to meet accreditation requirements, all programs must have established student learning outcomes (SLOs), which are posted on program webpages. These SLOs create the foundation for course objectives and evaluation processes. Division/Department faculty members participate in program reviews and make recommendations for program modifications, according to guidelines established by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education.

In addition to being guided by course-level student learning outcomes, general education coursework addresses both specific components of Northwestern's mission and its broad strategic goals: the 45-hour general education curriculum offers "quality educational […] opportunities" prioritized 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.

Ultimately, NWOSU provides learning support and physical infrastructure aligned to the needs of its student populations throughout their academic careers.

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4 - Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

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

The institution ensures the quality of its educational offerings.

1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews and acts upon the findings.
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 ensure 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 ensures 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 ensures that the credentials 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.

Argument

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 five-year program reviews and reviews filed with specialized accrediting bodies, are designed to ensure program currency, rigor, and quality.

Faculty, division/department chairs, and the Dean of Faculty participate in the program review process based on priorities established by OSRHE. Based on results of these reviews, divisions/departments may make modifications to improve program offerings and division/department procedures.

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

4.A.2.

Evaluation of Credit

NWOSU follows OSRHE curriculum guidelines related to evaluation of transcripts, including credit awards for credit transfer, experiential learning, and prior learning assessment. The Undergraduate Catalog's Section IV, General Academic Regulations, and Section V, Advanced Standing, identify methodologies used to evaluate course credit. Using these policies, the Registry Office evaluates transcripts (high school and college) and standardized entry exam (ACT, SAT) scores for all incoming students. Transfer credit requests undergo a multilevel review process: the division/department chair, with oversight

of the Dean of Faculty and Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA), reviews all student requests for transcript of credit. The Registrar further reviews credit requests approved by chairs and makes a final determination regarding credit transcription. The Graduate Committee approves graduate transfer credit requests for core courses, while the student's Graduate Advisory Committee approves requests for elective courses in their plans of study.

Faculty (with oversight of division/department chairs and approval by the Dean of Faculty and VPAA) oversee experiential learning experiences related to internships and research. This oversight ensures the merit of such offerings. Northwestern accepts several types of experiential and advanced standing credit.

Students with 45 hours or more may request a degree audit from the Registry Office to track their progress through a program of study. Registry staff evaluate all completed credit hours and provide to the student a copy of the audit. Students may request a subsequent degree audit update to verify degree completion status. Additionally, the Self Service system provides access to informal degree audits and unofficial transcripts. NWOSU's Registry Office staff 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.

4.A.3.

Quality of Transfer Credit

NWOSU participates in the Course Equivalency Project (CEP) coordinated by the OSRHE. This project consists of collaborative efforts between Oklahoma colleges and universities to construct a matrix of like classes for automatic transfer between these institutions. The Registry Office awards other transfer credit for courses from fully-accredited institutions as outlined in catalog Section IV. 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 published in the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers *Transfer Credit Practices Guide.* Faculty from appropriate academic divisions/departments must approve transfer courses not identified as being equivalent to NWOSU courses. Consequently, credit from some technical colleges and professional schools may not apply toward NWOSU degree requirements.

Registry staff follow guidelines outlined in the NWOSU Graduate Catalog when awarding credit to transfer students. 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. An exception to this policy applies to students enrolled in the Master of Education in Adult Education Management and Administration program, who may transfer 18 hours of discipline-specific courses if they are listed on an approved plan of study.

4.A.4.

Prerequisites for Courses

Faculty determine course prerequisites, which are clearly indicated in Northwestern's Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs. Academic advisors check for prerequisite requirements when enrolling students, and Self Service flags attempts to enroll in courses with unmet prerequisite requirements. As part of the program review process, divisions/departments review prerequisite courses, ensure each course description in the catalog is listed in the standard format, and submit any edits to the Registry Office. The Registrar verifies the appropriateness of submitted catalog revisions before finalizing changes.

Course Rigor and Student Learning Expectations

Faculty members oversee the curriculum and expectations for student performance, identifying student learning outcomes (SLOs) to create a foundation for course objectives and evaluative processes and to target discipline-specific knowledge and skills for each academic program. Faculty members devise assignments and assessments based upon current practices and theories in their disciplines, with syllabi reflecting assessment methodologies linked to stated course objectives. The appropriate division/department chair and Dean of Faculty review all course syllabi to ensure academic rigor and adherence to division/department expectations. (See also Criterion 3.C.2.)

Access to Learning Resources

The Library Services Director and library faculty acquire materials, including digital and online resources. Library faculty and staff process materials that support the physical collections. Additional resources are available to students and employees through the University's interlibrary loan program. The library also maintains computer and instructional technology for student use and library instruction. The Faculty Development Resource Center, housed in the library, provides space for

faculty workshops and training and includes desktop computers, a SMART Board, and equipment available for checkout.

NWOSU provides tutoring services through its Academic Success Center (ASC). The ASC Coordinator hires and trains tutors to oversee its operations. The ASC provides tutoring primarily in mathematics, English, and the sciences but also offers assistance in other content areas. In coordination with Ranger Connection instructors, the ASC provides first-semester guidance to each student during an initial visit. To support these efforts, the ASC is equipped with 32 computers for student use, with another 25 available in an adjoining room.

Northwestern's Director of Information Technology and staff oversee the University's information-technology investments. The University replaces physical computers in labs on a five-year rotation 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. (See also Criterion 3.D.4.) As physical computer labs have become virtualized, resulting in a shortage of computers available for reallocation, NWOSU has purchased new physical computers for some staff and faculty offices. Through the use of CARES funds, Northwestern has made several improvements to its technology infrastructure.

Northwestern exercises authority over its learning management system, Blackboard, through the Director of Online Services. The Director creates user accounts and course modules for all faculty members and manages the online helpdesk during regular business hours. The Director also chairs the University's Online Education Committee.

Northwestern maintains ITV activities through the Office of the ITV Coordinator, who executes ITV course scheduling to maximize use of 24 fully equipped, high-definition ITV studios. Northwestern has begun a four-year phase-in plan to change its ITV infrastructure from Polycom to Zoom to allow greater flexibility and compatibility with other sites. Three of the 24 studios are currently configured as Zoom rooms, with plans to reconfigure six more during the 2023-2024 academic year. (See Criterion 3.D.1 for an extended discussion of ITV resources.) Many non-ITV classrooms are equipped with computers and webcams for Zoom use, and six classrooms contain 55" DTEN Zoom boards.

Northwestern partners with the Aurora Learning Community Association (ALCA), which provides an assessment system to collect data for the education division, nursing division, and faculty portfolios. The Associate Dean of Graduate Studies oversees user accounts, portfolio templates, and the Graduate Candidate File in ALCA, while education division personnel create assignments to be turned in through the system for evaluation and data collection. Students complete benchmark and milestone assessments to track progress through program requirements in ALCA. (See also Criterion 3.C.4.)

Faculty Qualifications

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 division/department chairs, in collaboration with faculty, determining the parameters of the job description for open positions. Candidates proceed through a departmentally driven search process that culminates in personal interviews with the search committee, division/department chair, and administration.

Sharing HLC's recognition that qualified faculty members are vital to the University's ability to provide effective, high-quality academic programs, Northwestern ensures that faculty education requirements are met. Specifically, NWOSU utilizes a Faculty Qualifications review, initiated by the division/department chair and completed by the Dean of Faculty and VPAA, as part of the hiring process. Once hired, faculty members participate in periodic evaluations as prescribed in the Faculty Handbook. The Faculty Evaluation and Development webpage contains additional information about this process.

The distribution of full-time NWOSU faculty members by academic rank 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 the Faculty Handbook.

Concurrent Enrollment

Although NWOSU does not offer dual credit programs, it does offer concurrent enrollment to area high school students. The University assures that concurrently enrolled students receive collegiate-level instruction. Students' eligibility to enroll in concurrent courses is verified through a concurrent enrollment recommendation and permission form signed by the student, high school principal, parent/guardian, and high school counselor. These students enroll in traditional, ITV, or online courses with the same qualified faculty as University students. A limited number of high school campus-based courses are also offered by high school campus faculty whose credentials are verified through the established faculty qualifications review process. OSRHE funds the tuition of qualified high school students for up to 27 college credit hours, and the University funds an additional three hours, enabling students to complete the equivalent of a full academic year's credit before graduating high

school. Student learning outcomes, course expectations, and assessment procedures remain consistent for students enrolled in these courses.

4.A.5

Specialized Accreditation

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. NWOSU's programs with specialized accreditation— doctoral nursing, education, undergraduate nursing, social work, and business—are periodically reviewed by their national accrediting organizations:

- Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE),
- Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP),
- Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN),
- Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), and
- Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP).

4.A.6

Success of Graduates

As part of the graduation-application process, the Registry Office collects information regarding students' future employment plans. The Registry Office provides completed applications to the Office of Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness (A&IE), where responses are collated and provided to appropriate division/department chairs. In addition, the A&IE collects data on recent graduates through the use of annual alumni surveys. While not all alumni respond to the survey request, 73% of fall 2022 respondents were either employed and/or continuing their education. A&IE also conducts a survey of alumni five years post-graduation, and 67% of respondents to the 2022 survey (2017 graduating cohort) were employed and/or continuing their education.

In addition to institution-wide efforts to track activities of recent 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. Reports supplied by OSRHE also provide helpful data on student employment.

The Office of Graduate Studies queries master's-level students about future plans and/or educational goals on its graduate satisfaction exit survey. The Associate Dean of Graduate Studies compiles the data and disseminates it to program coordinators and chairs of master-degree-offering divisions/departments. These data are used to guide each program's continuous improvement. Since most graduate students already hold jobs, exit survey questions gauge perceptions of preparation for future employment as well as future educational plans.

Strategic Direction 1 of NWOSU's strategic plan emphasizes preparing students for success in careers and service to society. Northwestern fulfills this direction in part by connecting students with internship opportunities. The University stresses experiential learning as an integral part of bachelor and master degree programs, with students regularly taking advantage of these opportunities. NWOSU understands that tracking internships is critical to optimizing opportunities for students. In fall 2023, the Dean of Faculty partnered with the Director of Counseling and Career Services to centralize internship information and resources for student internships. A form was created through which agencies can express interest in establishing an internship opportunity for NWOSU students. The completed form is shared with division/department chairs, who contact eligible students to apply. In addition, the Dean of Faculty created a database to track paid internships. The Office of Graduate Studies also reports all graduate internship data as part of its Institutional Assessment Report.

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4.B - Core Component 4.B

The institution engages in ongoing assessment of student learning as part of its commitment to the educational outcomes of its students.

1. The institution has effective processes for assessment of student learning and for achievement of learning goals in academic and cocurricular offerings.
2. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
3. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty, instructional and other relevant staff members.

Argument

4.B.1

Student Learning and Effective Assessment Processes

NWOSU's Mission Statement and strategic plan specify goals for student learning. Goal 1 of Strategic Direction 1 states that Northwestern will "ensure program assessment review to enhance academic programs" while also evaluating "existing and new academic programs."

General Education Assessment

NWOSU uses a triangulated approach to general education assessment. The General Education (GE) Committee analyzes course-embedded assessment data, results from the Educational Testing Service Proficiency Profile (ETS), and the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) to identify successes and address areas of needed improvement in student achievement. As reflected in Criterion 4.B.2, these results are tied to GE outcomes in order to make specific adjustments for continuous improvement.

Within this multi-faceted approach, the University first assesses course-embedded measures of student learning derived from a competency-based curriculum. All GE courses are aligned with target student learning outcomes (SLOs) in the areas of critical thinking, leadership, and literacy. Divisions/Departments with course-embedded measures complete a General Education Assessment Plan form annually to report data from the assessments performed in assessed GE courses.

Second, the ETS is utilized to assess general education. Administered annually, the ETS collects data from students who have completed 40 to 75 credit hours and who have fulfilled GE requirements only at Northwestern. The ETS assesses student learning in four core areas: critical thinking, reading, writing, and mathematics. Yielding actionable score reports and Carnegie-class comparative data that can be used to pinpoint strengths and areas for improvement, the ETS provides a unified picture of the effectiveness of the GE program and promotes curriculum improvement.

Third, NWOSU administers the NSSE to freshman and senior students every three years as an indirect measure of student learning. This instrument assesses undergraduate students' allocation of time to curricular and cocurricular activities and their perception of benefits of attending college. The GE Committee evaluates responses to selected questions from freshman students as indicators of student learning in general education.

Program-Level Assessment

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/Academic Support (A&IE). Divisions/Departments use student learning outcomes that reflect, to the extent possible, appropriate levels of critical thinking.

A&IE utilizes a web-based data management system designed by the Aurora Learning Community Association (ALCA) to collect relevant data for academic assessment plans. The assessment form available in ALCA is a standardized tool for documenting the assessment process across all disciplines, but it has been tailored to meet the division/department needs. Each September, divisions/departments submit to the A&IE data for evaluation from the previous academic year. The A&IE monitors completion of the plans, provides guidance when needed, and compiles results for review by academic administrators. 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.

Accredited Program Assessment

Accrediting bodies drive assessment processes for specialized programs. NWOSU's accredited programs use national or state exams as assessment tools or to track graduate success. The NWOSU Educator Preparation Program (EPP) is accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). The Division of Education tracks candidate performance on the OSAT (Oklahoma Subject Area Test) on the PPAT (Praxis Performance Assessment for Teachers), and through a multi-phase student assessment process to prepare candidates for professional service and certification after graduation. The Division of Nursing uses the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) for its pre-licensure Bachelor of Science in Nursing program. The program also completes formative evaluations through course and integrated examinations, competency assessments, and skills laboratory simulations. Summative assessments and evaluations are completed through End of Program Student Learning Outcome measures such as licensure examinations and graduate surveys. A similar tool documents DNP student assessment. The Division of Business (DOB) assesses its business administration and accounting students using the Peregrine Academic Services and Skyfactor/EBI Exit Survey; project-based, course-level assessments; and DOB rubrics. As indicated in Criterion 2.B.1, specialized accreditation reports satisfy Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE) requirements for program review. The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) standards require that students demonstrate social work competencies through the use of multi-dimensional assessment methods completed by program-designated faculty and field instructor personnel.

Cocurricular Assessment

At Northwestern, "cocurricular" refers to activities, programs, and experiences that provide learning opportunities outside the classroom. These cocurricular activities are tailored to NWOSU's mission, with areas of focus that include ethical leadership, service, fiscal responsibility, and critical thinking. A&IE uses a cocurricular learning assessment tool to assess student perceptions of learning related to these priorities in cocurricular areas in which they participate, then provides information to University administration through a results summary and to the campus community via the University's website and the annual assessment newsletter.

Consistent with the University's missional prioritization of service, the Service Learning and Civic Engagement (SL/CE) program strives to advance participation in service learning and civic engagement in all degree programs, throughout campus organizations, and within the communities served by the University. The goal of SL/CE is to assist students in discovering an educational experience outside of the classroom that will provide a service to the community and training within their individual degree focus through organization and execution of service activities.

These experiences take place within the context of student cocurricular service learning projects as well as through community-based learning courses. Student cocurricular service learning activities may be performed by any group or organization on campus, whereas community-based learning courses are embedded into degree programs. Though service learning activities may take place in multiple courses within a program, each division/department has one designated program course that includes a service learning project, ensuring that each NWOSU student has participated in at least one such project upon graduation. A&IE collects data on projects performed through community-based learning courses and those completed by any other campus organizations. To showcase projects, various SL/CE awards are presented to employees and students at the annual Employee Recognition Ceremony.

4.B.2

General Education Assessment

The GE Committee manages assessment processes and considers changes based on analysis of assessment data. Committee membership comprises faculty from each division/department, with the expectation that they will serve as liaisons to their respective faculties. This practice facilitates greater faculty input through ongoing discussion of GE curriculum and assessment, particularly in disciplines which administer embedded assessments. Efforts to solidify the link between GE assessment and course content resulted in a GE Committee request that the relevant GE SLOs be included in syllabi for those courses with embedded assessment.

As stated above, the practice of data collection utilizing course-embedded assessment was established in AY 2017-2018. Data are compiled annually and analyzed alongside ETS and NSSE responses. Results are highlighted as they relate to the three major general education outcomes: critical thinking, leadership, and literacy. Northwestern uses these data sets to monitor trends in student success and to perpetuate efforts toward achieving higher student success rates. For example, results related to critical thinking were discussed in 2020 and 2021, when the committee explored ways to improve critical thinking through

use of instructional language that fostered student metacognition about critical thinking. While modest, spring 2022 gains in this area suggest a link between the Committee's strategies and student outcomes.

Northwestern's GE Committee had planned a fall 2022 comprehensive review of the general education curriculum and processes. However, OSRHE's consideration of a proposed statewide GE curriculum, tentatively named the State System Core, delayed the review process. Initially postponed until late spring 2023 based on OSRHE projections for completion of their work, which was not accomplished, the review date remains delayed. The most recent update indicated that the Council on Instruction's GE Committee, in collaboration with OSRHE office staff, would resume discussions of the proposed curriculum in October 2023. To date, this has not happened.

One priority of Northwestern's comprehensive GE review will be a consideration of expanding the division/department liaison's role in communication and oversight throughout the assessment cycle. Specifically, liaisons will examine division/department data analysis with the goal of correlating committee and division/department assessment practices more effectively. This discussion was initiated in fall 2023 as a first phase of the review.

Program-Level Assessment

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

Modifications include such things as tailoring course content to meet specific programmatic needs, changing program requirements, adding new courses, and creating new credentials. As examples of the latter, computer science faculty reviewed the curriculum in order to ensure that coursework prepares students for a fast-changing field, resulting in the addition of three new cybersecurity courses from spring 2022 to spring 2023. Additionally, a cybersecurity certificate was approved by OSRHE in spring 2023 and implemented effective fall 2023. Faculty are also considering adding more networking classes and potentially a networking lab. The Department of English, Foreign Language, and Humanities is using results of the senior exit survey to make future curriculum and assessment modifications.

Analysis, findings, and proposed changes to academic programs resulting from assessment can be found in NWOSU's academic assessment plans and in the OSRHE Annual Assessment Report. Submitted by all Oklahoma higher education institutions, this report requires a narrative summary of program-level analysis, findings of assessment data, and instructional changes based upon the data.

Accredited Program Assessments

As articulated in Criterion 4.B.1, accrediting bodies drive assessment processes for Northwestern specialized programs. Successful completion of accreditation reviews in business (2023), education (2020), nursing (2019 and 2020), and social work (2021) programs indicate assessment processes are appropriate and meet accreditation standards.

Cocurricular Assessment

Data gathered using the cocurricular assessment tool, first administered in spring 2017, are published in the A&IE newsletter and shared with cocurricular personnel, who evaluate it to guide their processes. Additional data from community-based learning and cocurricular service learning projects are collected by the SL/CE Committee. In spring 2023, the reporting tool for community-based learning activities was augmented to solicit information about project modifications made to activities as a result of assessment.

4.B.3

Sound Assessment Practices:

General Education Committee

The GE Committee undertook a three-year review of the general education mission, competencies, and curriculum in 2014. After review and approval, all curricular changes and new assessment tools were implemented in fall 2017. As described above, students are assessed using committee-approved course-embedded assessments, the ETS Proficiency Profile, and NSSE. Data from assessment results are reviewed each year by the Committee and triangulated through observations of the data and discussion. The Committee then makes recommendations for any changes warranted by those results. As described

in 4.B.2, a subsequent review planned for 2022 has been delayed due to likely changes in the statewide general education curriculum.

Program Faculty Meetings

Academic administrators, division/department chairs, and other faculty members meet in formal and informal assessment meetings to review program assessment processes, to share best practices, and to discuss University assessment of student learning. Assessment meetings are held at the beginning and end of each academic year in conjunction with the all-chairs meetings. At the division/department level, program chairs and faculty conduct regular meetings that include discussion of program effectiveness and evaluation. Chairs work continually with faculty to develop annual assessment plans and propose modifications that improve student learning and close the loop of assessment.

In addition, faculty in programs with specialized accreditation meet with assessment groups regularly to review assessment data. In the Division of Business (DOB), the chair and faculty members meet throughout the year to assess the delivery of instruction in the program and compile the annual business assessment report each fall. Additionally, once per academic year the Business Advisory Council, made up of faculty members and external constituents from the business community, reviews assessment data and offers feedback during a face-to-face meeting or via survey responses. This collaboration between DOB faculty members and community leaders provides valuable insights from potential future employers regarding the business curriculum and expectations for student learning. Also, the DOB Student Advisory Council meets with business faculty members and University administrators annually to offer a student perspective on the program.

Division of Education (DOE) faculty 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 accreditation standards set forth by Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation. Committee members gather assessment data on a continual basis and compile an annual report with recommendations for improvement. The DOE utilizes multiple assessments to gauge accomplishment of its aim of positively impacting 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 DOE's governing body, also reviews all data at one of its monthly meetings. The TEC is comprised of elected teacher education faculty from the Division, teacher education faculty from all disciplines that offer secondary credentials, 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 program assessment data. The Student Committee assesses student outcomes through responses to graduate surveys and employer surveys to ensure that each nursing graduate is competent and workforce ready. The Nursing Advisory Board, comprised of various internal and external stakeholders, meets each spring to discuss regional needs for BSN-prepared nurses and potential solutions to meet those needs, perceptions of NWOSU students' and graduates' preparation in clinical settings, and general outcomes of the NWOSU nursing program. The 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. Evidence of the effectiveness of these processes is the nursing program's consistent positive rankings by one of the many online polls that examine nursing programs.

The social work program seeks input from the Social Work Advisory Board. Comprised of social workers, practitioners, and leaders in local communities, the Board supports the continued development of social work education in the region by focusing 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 substantive program modifications and new courses, 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 formulates policy and coordinates assessment across all areas of the University, including academic assessment, institutional assessment, and cocurricular assessment.

In cocurricular 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 student feedback regarding the educational environment and educational experiences.

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4.C - Core Component 4.C

The institution pursues educational improvement through goals and strategies that improve 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, 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

4.C.1

Appropriate and Attainable Goals

At the direction of the University President, a task force chaired by the Dean of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management (Dean of Students) and comprised of individuals from relevant offices was established in fall 2020 to address enrollment challenges. This Enrollment Management Task Force replaced the Enrollment Management Committee that met annually through 2019 to discuss the Enrollment Management Plan. The Task Force established data-driven short- and long-range enrollment, retention, persistence, and completion goals appropriate for a regional comprehensive institution that serves a diverse concurrent, transfer, undergraduate, and graduate student body, as well as plans to accomplish those goals.

One goal, retaining 80% of first-time full-time (FTFT) students with no declared major, resulted from the University's participation in the 2015 HLC Persistence and Completion Academy. This initiative revealed that students who had not declared a major during their first semester left college at a higher rate than FTFT students aggregately. Focusing on this cohort throughout the Academy resulted in retention of undeclared students at a rate 9% higher than first-time freshmen.

A desire to sustain these gains led Northwestern's successful application for a Title III Strengthening Institutional Practices (SIP) federal grant. Named LASSO (Leadership, Academic Success, and Superior Outcomes), the grant program will serve students from October 1, 2021, to September 30, 2026. LASSO goals align with Enrollment Management Task Force goals and include improving FTFT retention and six-year graduation rates, establishing effective systems and processes that promote student engagement and success, and improving student retention and graduation rates.

Additionally, Northwestern's Student Support Services (SSS) grant program, renewed through a 2020 $261,888 TRIO grant and an additional $785,664 Student Support Services grant, also sets goals related to retention, persistence, and completion. SSS staff, project advisors, and student coaches execute the program's mission through multiple training and guidance activities provided to up to 144 first-generation, low-income students and students with disabilities throughout the academic year. This holistic program customizes services to address the academic and non-academic needs of participants at every level of the college experience.

More specifically, the SSS program helps develop individualized student success plans to better serve students' needs and ultimately help them complete their degrees. The SSS program serves the University's first-generation student population by tracking their progress toward completion. Data on first-generation students is now reported in the University's annual Factbook. Reported significant percentages of first-generation students for fall 2022 (50%), substantiates the need for these continued efforts.

4.C.2

Collection and Analysis

NWOSU's Office of Information Technology (IT) annually develops and compiles the University Factbook from data provided by the Registry, Student Services, Financial Aid, Business, and Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness (A&IE) Offices.

The Factbook provides a public reference concerning institutional demographics and statistics that help drive enrollment and retention initiatives. The Factbook includes not only longitudinal data on enrollment trends by classification, race, gender, age, and country but also current enrollment numbers for first-time freshman, out-of-state, and international students, among others. Additionally, the Factbook provides an overall snapshot of the University by including such things as the number of undergraduate credit hours generated per year, housing information, average ACT composite scores, tuition revenue sources, and financial aid disbursement numbers. Central to this process, the Institutional Research Specialist in IT retrieves and organizes retention, persistence, and completion data. IT as well as other University offices uses Ellucian Colleague and a data tool, Argos, to run reports and compile this information for University use.

The Enrollment Management Task Force, along with Senior Staff, utilize this data in tandem with the retention matrix, an institutionally developed tool for promoting retention efforts through campus-wide communication. The use of this matrix, updated regularly after enrollment opens for the upcoming fall or spring semester, ensures that all integral offices are engaged in a collective effort to complete advisement and student enrollment. The Dean of Students emails the updated matrix to administrators, chairs, faculty, and advisors on a regular basis during the enrollment period to inform them of current enrollment and retention numbers.

A robust document, this matrix provides the names of students who are enrolled, those who are not enrolled, those who plan not to enroll, those who have withdrawn from the University, those who cannot enroll due to an office hold, and those who are graduating. The matrix also informs individual divisions/departments of the percentage of majors who are and are not enrolled as well as the percentage of majors graduating. Subsequently, this tool allows University personnel to target their energies on specific areas and students. This matrix and other communication from the Task Force meetings are also shared with each division/department "Enrollment Champion" serving on the Retention and Enrollment Forum (Forum).

The Forum, also established in 2020, brings representatives from each division/department into dialogue with one another, the Office of Student Services and Enrollment Management, and other campus entities involved in enrollment, retention, and completion efforts to improve their effectiveness. This high-impact group meets two or three times per semester to share successful enrollment strategies and retention efforts that range from division/department dialogues on how best to market programs to setting benchmarks for enrolling current students based on matrix data for an upcoming semester. The group also offered early feedback on refinements that could be made to the retention matrix to make it more useful at the division/department level. The collaboration between academic areas and Student Services, unique in higher education—where these areas are often siloed—has aided in efforts to meet and in some cases exceed enrollment goals.

Additional ancillary information is obtained through other University sources. The LASSO Director collects real-time student data obtained from early alerts from faculty, through face-to-face communication with students regarding their academic progress, and through individual follow-up. NWOSU also compiles and submits Student Achievement Measure (SAM) data every year. SAM tracks student movement across postsecondary institutions and provides a comprehensive report of undergraduate student progress and completion within the higher education system, yielding a report that reveals completion trends related to NWOSU graduates as well as those who have transferred to different institutions.

Data on retention, enrollment, and completion inform institutional reports and studies required by the University's governing board, the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE). Notably, the annual OSRHE Institutional Degree Completion Form A compiled by the Office of Academic Affairs includes reports on student retention and graduation efforts that align with Complete College America (CCA) initiatives. This office also compiles and submits an annual Academic Plan Form B that details data-informed enrollment projections and program priorities to increase enrollment.

Since 2017, RUSO institutions have submitted data to be compiled into a Student Satisfaction, Enrollment, Graduation, and Employment Outcomes Benchmark Report, the most recent of which was published in April 2023. In 2022, the Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO) Board also commissioned an Enrollment Management Program Review featuring comparative data on the six universities in the RUSO system. This report has provided another resource for data-driven decision-making at the University.

To gain insight into barriers to retention and persistence, the Office of Student Services tracks withdrawal information using a Complete Withdrawal Form. The Office then uploads information from the form to SurveyMonkey, which collates data. These data provide information on peak withdrawal periods of the semester, withdrawing students' majors and classification, and their reasons for leaving the University.

Using responses to questions on the Application for Bachelor's Degree form, A&IE has developed a database to track graduate completion information. This database includes student demographic information, degree received (with major and minor), employment plans, and responses to questions concerning graduate satisfaction with NWOSU. These data are shared with members of the administration and with each division/department chair.

4.C.3

As established above, the conversation around retention, persistence, and completion goals is spearheaded by Student Services and the Enrollment Management Task Force, but it is conducted campus-wide. Conversation participants include Senior Staff, Forum participants, faculty, A&IE and Academic Support personnel, and LASSO Project and SSS staff. The conversation and resulting improved practices resonate campus-wide. Data on retention and persistence has driven strategies such as sharing successful retention and recruitment efforts across divisions/departments, encouraging articulation agreements, committing to intrusive advisement practices, close tracking of student progress through programs, and ambitious but attainable retention benchmark-setting at all levels.

A long-term unifying element of Northwestern's data collection and analysis processes has been its participation in Complete College America (CCA), which dates to 2015 and the implementation of 15 to Finish strategies. The research, data, and strategies provided by CCA have helped guide practices utilized to improve degree completion rates. CCA champions four pillars of success: Purpose, Structure, Momentum, and Support.

Aligned with the Purpose pillar, the University recently improved students' transition into institutional culture through participation in the CCA Policy Equity and Practice (PEP) begun in 2022. This initiative has as its underlying premise that students cannot focus on their purpose for attending college if they are unable to assimilate into collegiate culture. NWOSU identified fragmented onboarding strategies for new students—including first-time freshman, transfer, online, and non-traditional students—as a barrier to assimilation. In response, the PEP initiative team, comprising members from Academic Affairs, Institutional Research, Student Services, and University Relations (with input and participation from student leaders) produced streamlined and easily accessible resources to guide students through onboarding processes. A successful institutional effort to add single sign-on functionality to Blackboard further simplified onboarding.

These resources consist of helpful videos produced by the University in spring 2023 and posted to the University's public website beginning in summer 2023. They assist students and others needing guidance on how to access and utilize essential University utilities. Students receive guidance on completing the application process, on accessing the University's Blackboard learning management system, on using the Self Service student portal, and on utilizing the Outlook email system. Additional videos on residential life and major selection are also posted, with more videos in the initial planning stages.

An additional resource is live Zoom sessions available and publicized to all University applicants. These sessions provide short onboarding presentations with live chat question-and-answer capability. The University has begun initial data collection to assess the efficacy of the PEP project. These data include number of clicks on videos, number of attendees at live Zoom onboarding orientations, and comparative information on complete withdrawals within the first four weeks of the semester.

In tandem with this project and to promote student's identification of purpose, the University continues to improve its first-year experience course, Ranger Connection, to aid students in career and major exploration. Subsequent to identification of undeclared majors as a target population for retention efforts, select Ranger Connection sections have been designated specifically for these undeclared students. LASSO Office staff members teach these six Ranger Connection courses and are proactive in working to advise all students toward a major. Efforts to direct all undecided students into these sections have been somewhat hindered by scheduling challenges and a limited number of sections, but the University is continuing to seek strategies to achieve this aim.

The University has also worked to improve career exploration tools by making available to students MyMajors and Focus 2 Career assessments. A dedicated career coach employed through the LASSO Project aids in this effort by exploring career and major choices with students, making career presentations to all first-year Ranger Connection courses, and offering guidance on building resumes, preparing for interviews, and obtaining internships. Additionally, the Office of Career Services has improved online student employment resources by adding the Handshake platform.

Aligned with the Structure pillar, Northwestern has addressed the areas of Math Pathways as well as stackable certificates and credentials. The Math Pathways strategy guided 2017 efforts to redesign and promote a Contemporary Math course as an alternative to College Algebra for students in non-calculus-based meta-majors. Continued efforts to promote this course are reflected in tracking of distribution of students across the two general education math courses. Northwestern has also been active in providing certificates embedded in degree programs so that students may obtain additional credentials without adding hours to degree plans. Additionally, the University has designed two micro-credential programs that allow students to complete coursework targeted toward a career aim. Supported by grants through the OSRHE, these programs have provided more than $100,000 in scholarships to 54 education students seeking alternative certification in FY23 and will provide $15,000 to seven students serving as correction and detention professionals in FY23 and FY24. (See also Criterion 2.B.2.)

Also critical to the Structure pillar, NWOSU continues to strengthen the effectiveness of advising in order to increase the

number of students who declare a major within their first 30 hours. Regularly maintained standardized course rotations and plans of study at the division/department level have been developed for all bachelor's degree options. In 2023, as a result of an initiative by chairs to increase the accessibility and standardize the presentation of information across programs, these tools were housed under a Degree Planning Resources tab on each program's website.

Aligned with the Momentum pillar, the University has focused on the strategies of offering corequisite support in math and English, providing expanded access to concurrent enrollment, and maintaining its 15-to-Finish initiative to ensure timely degree completion. Corequisite lab sections that reinforce and support student learning in math and English courses provide scaffolding for students who do not meet minimum criteria for unconditional course admission, thereby facilitating timely completion of general education requirements. It is encouraging to note that students in courses with lab sections continue to meet or approach target success rates.

Concurrent enrollment has developed into a priority at Northwestern in response to state initiatives to increase concurrent offerings for high school juniors and seniors. Nine hours of concurrent enrollment for juniors and 18 hours for seniors are reimbursed by the state. To provide additional momentum, in 2022 Northwestern also began funding three hours of tuition-free concurrent enrollment for juniors, making it possible for high school students to earn 30 hours of credit before high school graduation. A pilot program allowing students to enroll concurrently based only on high school GPA has expanded the enrollment base for these courses, with pilot program students experiencing success comparable to their counterparts who were admitted based on ACT scores.

CCA research demonstrates the importance of full-time enrollment. To promote this idea, 15-to-Finish campaigns advocated by CCA educate students about the need to complete 15 credit hours each semester, or 30 hours per academic year, to obtain a degree within four years. NWOSU's 15-to-Finish campaign is now integrated into University enrollment culture and informs its data-collection practices. In addition to other advertising materials, the University has adopted the practice of University employees wearing 15-to-Finish shirts on opening days of enrollment.

These efforts to place students in credit-bearing courses earlier in their academic careers, to provide opportunities for completion of coursework in high school, and to encourage a course load that ensures timely degree completion are based in CCA research. Its data demonstrates that students maintaining momentum throughout a degree program is critical to program completion.

Aligned with the Support pillar, Northwestern continues to expand its capacities for active academic support, proactive advising, and student basic-needs support. Based on 2022 Noel Levitz results, these are areas with which students are generally satisfied. In addition to the Academic Success Center, the University offers student support services provided by grant-funded initiatives and based on data-driven objectives.

The logic model for the 2021 LASSO Project grant, which seeks to foster accessibility and support for all students, was anchored in IPEDS, Factbook, and retention data that suggested needed areas of improvement. Through a partnership with InsideTrack, LASSO staff participate in on-going trainings for student coaching certification, assessing and developing strategies to advance students towards both academic and non-academic goals. Implementing CCA's Purpose First Strategy in the areas of career exploration, academic structures, and the first-year experience, the LASSO Center's certified career coach offers career guidance to students. The LASSO staff provides academic advisement and work to connect students with academic advisors in their chosen major. The LASSO Project has also partnered with Innovative Educators using StudentLingo workshops to enhance Ranger Connection courses.

Data gathered through the Office of Student Services showed that early withdrawals by freshman students were a persistent issue. In response, the Office undertook two initiatives to foster early institutional connection through relationship building with incoming students. Sophomore, junior, and senior Ranger Connection Peer Leaders serve as mentors to freshmen in the Ranger Connection classes. During the summer before courses begin, mentors send text messages concerning different processes, such as logging into student accounts, and serve as a point of contact, providing information and engaging in a conversation with mentees. The Peer Leaders also assist instructors during the Ranger Connection class period. Similarly, Northwestern Scholar Ambassadors (NSA) is developing a mentor program for underclassman. Additionally, they host numerous campus and community service events throughout the year. Each Ambassador hosts a service event with a goal of inviting other students to serve.

Providing adequate campus services is critical to retention and completion, and these are areas in which Noel Levitz results reveal student satisfaction. The University has as its goal to maintain current levels of service and to improve in areas as possible.

An international student advisor assists students on the Alva campus with applying to the University, with gathering

appropriate documents to study in the United States, and with staying in compliance with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement – Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) rules and regulations. The University recently received SEVP I-17 approvals to allow the Enid and Woodward campus locations to serve international students as well. Northwestern has a designated Veteran's Affairs (VA) contact. This person assists veteran students and their family members with benefit questions and helps them submit all necessary documents to meet VA requirements.

Counseling services are available at no cost to all Northwestern students. Responding to increased demand for mental health services, the University has introduced two new resources. Therapy Assistance Online (TAO), a completely private online library of behavioral health resources, includes interactive modules and practice tools to help students understand and manage how they feel, think, and act through stress management, mindfulness skills, problem-solving, relationship skills, and strategies to develop more helpful thinking patterns. Students also have access to MindWise Innovations, which offers brief online screenings for a wide range of mental health and substance use issues.

Data provided by CCA and generated by the University continue to drive decisions about how best to sustain and improve student services. These decisions are anchored in an understanding that the totality of a student's University experience directly affects student retention, persistence and completion.

4.C.4

Validity of Measures

NWOSU compiles and enters institutional data securely into the Integrated Post-Secondary Education Data System (IPEDS). NWOSU also collects and reports institutional data to the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education's Unitized Data System (UDS) using a secure file transfer protocol. 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. (See also Criterion 4.C.2.) Centralization of reporting for IPEDS by the Institutional Research Specialist benefits the University through consistent approaches to data collection and management.

The University defines retention, persistence, and graduation consistently when analyzing data, and these definitions are included in relevant sections of the Factbook.

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4.S - Criterion 4 - Summary

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

Northwestern Oklahoma State University (NWOSU) 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.

Faculty, divisions/departments, the University, and the University's two governing boards demonstrate responsibility for quality and rigor of NWOSU's educational programs.

NWOSU uses a triangulated approach for general education assessment. The General Education Committee analyzes course-embedded assessment by looking at the General Education Assessment Plan data, results from the Educational Testing Service Proficiency Profile (ETS), and the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) to facilitate needed changes and to foster continued improvement. At the program level, faculty members oversee student learning assessment with support from academic administrators and the Office of Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness/Academic Support. Divisions/Departments use student learning outcomes that reflect appropriate levels of critical thinking.

The University's retention, persistence, and completion goals are spearheaded by the Office of Student Services and Enrollment Management and the Enrollment Management Task Force, which analyzes and discusses available data to develop strategies for improving student retention, persistence, and completion. Data has driven practices such as encouraging articulation agreements, committing to intrusive advisement practices, and tracking progress of majors. Additionally, Northwestern's participation in Complete College America (CCA) initiatives has helped guide practices utilized to improve degree completion rates.

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5 - Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning

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

5.A - Core Component 5.A

Through its administrative structures and collaborative processes, the institution's leadership demonstrates that it is effective and enables the institution to fulfill its mission.

1. Shared governance at the institution engages its internal constituencies—including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff and students—through planning, policies and procedures.
2. The institution's administration uses data to reach informed decisions in the best interests of the institution and its constituents.
3. The institution's administration ensures that faculty and, when appropriate, staff and students are involved in setting academic requirements, policy and processes through effective collaborative structures.

Argument

5.A.1

Governance

The Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO) Board consists of nine members serving nine-year staggered terms. The Governor appoints, with Senate confirmation, eight of the positions to represent various geographical regions of the state; the elected State Superintendent of Public Instruction serves as the ninth member. Following 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 and Administrative Vice President attend all Board meetings. The Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) attends committee and Board meetings as needed. These individuals provide input to the Board upon request. In preparation for these meetings, the University solicits and submits agenda items and other requested information. RUSO committees evaluate submitted documents and make recommendations to the full Board. Approval of budgets and any increases to tuition and mandatory fees occur at the June meeting.

In addition to regular agenda submissions, Northwestern submits several reports to the RUSO Office for distribution to Board members. These include the Sources and Uses Report, Quarterly Out-of-State Travel Reports, and FTE Employee Report. Additionally, RUSO oversees institutional accountability through review of financial audits and examination of all pertinent reports to ensure compliance 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).

Constituency Engagement

As Northwestern's governing body, 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 NWOSU's vision and mission. Minutes of RUSO Board meetings document all materials presented on behalf of Northwestern.

The University uses a well-delineated administrative hierarchy and committee structure for governance. The VPAA, acting upon recommendations from Faculty Senate, appoints faculty committees prior to each fall semester. These committees' functions and responsibilities are clearly defined in the Faculty Handbook. (See also Criterion 3.C.2.)

Faculty Senate promotes and channels faculty participation in shaping University policy. Its three objectives are contained in

its by-laws. The Faculty Senate President, VPAA, and University President meet regularly to facilitate communication between faculty and administration. (See also Criterion 3.C.2.) 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, a forum for non-exempt employees to aid in achieving Northwestern's goals by offering significant participation in University life, coordinates several activities annually. These include new staff orientation, spring campus clean-up days, and the Campus Kudos Award.

The Student Government Association (SGA) represents the interests of the student body. SGA holds semi-monthly meetings, with the Dean of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management (Dean of Students) serving as the administrative liaison. The Enid Leadership Council and Woodward Leadership Advisory Board, composed of students, coordinate student activities at their respective campuses. These three student leadership groups, which receive specified fees for student events and activities, make recommendations to the administration concerning policy.

Northwestern's eleven-member senior management team (Senior Staff) meets formally on a monthly basis to oversee University operations by setting policy and implementing strategic plan initiatives. Senior staff members routinely attend various meetings of these groups.

These groups allow the University to involve all constituencies in governance through the review and implementation of policies and procedures that impact students, employees, and stakeholders.

5.A.2

Northwestern's administration uses data to reach informed decisions in the best interests of the institution and its constituents. Based on feedback and data yielded by the processes described above, senior administration implements change as appropriate. Three examples follow.

Faculty Senate discussions regarding increased chair duties led to advocacy for, and approval of, increases in chair stipends. Similar discussions resulted in new stipends for faculty teaching to correctional facilities.

Budget procedures require that budget administrators provide appropriate data to support requests during pre-budget meetings and budget hearings. Through the budget process documented in Criterion 2.A.2, Northwestern's administration deliberates and implements needed change. As an example, analysis of division/department capacity and cost to deliver credit hours generated informs approval of additional faculty lines. Similar considerations of the relationship of capacity to cost informed the administration's decision to increase adjunct pay in FY24.

Data on overall credit hours generated provides a post-budget-hearing roadmap to help administration allocate funds for campus needs. These needs include personnel, infrastructure, scholarship, and technology demands. As credit hours increase or decrease, so do funding resources for these respective areas. Careful planning allows the University to respond to these changes with agility.

One additional resource consistently used in these and all administrative decision-making processes is the Factbook, described in detail in Criterion 4.C.2.

5.A.3

Structures for Contribution and Collaboration

Many of the organizations and committees discussed in Criterion 3.C.2 have a voice in setting academic requirements, policies, and processes as part of their functions. Additionally, the Faculty Evaluation and Development Committee directly sets, and the Tenure Committee directly applies, expectations for faculty. Faculty and division/department chairs modify existing program offerings and introduce new offerings during the program review process. (See also Criterion 4.A.1.)

Students share in the process of governance as student representatives on 12 of the 17 University Committees. Students are also empowered through service on student advisory boards such as the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee. Individually and collectively, staff as well as students may recommend changes to academic requirements, policies, and procedures, with Senior Staff serving as the administrative body through which all recommendations are considered and implemented. Northwestern involves administration, faculty, staff, and students in the strategic planning process as well.

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- Technology_Services_Fee
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5.B - Core Component 5.B

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

1. The institution has qualified and trained operational staff and infrastructure sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered.
2. The goals incorporated into the mission and any related statements are realistic in light of the institution's organization, resources and opportunities.
3. The institution has a well-developed process in place for budgeting and for monitoring its finances.
4. The institution's fiscal allocations ensure that its educational purposes are achieved.

Argument

5.B.1

Staff and Infrastructure

Northwestern's employment processes ensure a well-qualified and well-trained operational staff. The Human Resources Office maintains detailed job descriptions listing minimum qualifications for each position. Background checks occur for all new employees. Seeking to develop a qualified and diversified applicant pool, the University uses several print and online methods for advertising vacant positions. (See also Criterion 3.C.2 for faculty credential and hiring processes.)

NWOSU offers orientation to all new employees. Through 2021, Staff Council provided a one-day orientation for new staff. Based on participant feedback, the University has implemented half-day, individualized mentoring sessions. Prior to each fall semester, the Faculty Development Advisory Board coordinates a multi-day orientation for new faculty members. Both of these methods provide information on wide-ranging topics to familiarize new employees with Northwestern's culture and processes.

Northwestern provides further training and professional development opportunities to employees on an ongoing basis. The Dean of Faculty and chairs use yearly travel budgets to fund faculty conference and training expenses. (See also 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. (See also Criterion 3.C.7.) Northwestern also partners with the Northwest Technology Center to provide various trainings upon request.

Northwestern benefits from continuity brought by established professionals on its Senior Staff as well as from perspectives provided by newer members. Senior Staff members have contributed 78.5 years of combined experience to the institution, with a total of 170 years in their respective positions. Students receive support from qualified professional and classified staff members. Of the 34 administrative staff members, 97% hold master's or bachelor's degrees.

The University also has sufficient infrastructure to support its operations and programs. Northwestern's physical infrastructure consists of more than 470 acres and 39 buildings located in three counties. The Alva campus is spread over 104 acres. Twenty-seven buildings, with five additional buildings on the 350-acre University Farm, make up that campus location. The Enid and Woodward campus locations each consist of a single building for all instructional and administrative services, with an early learning center adjacent to the Enid campus building on University property. (See Criterion 1.B.1 for more information about the early learning center.)

Since its 2018 HLC review, the University has accomplished numerous facility upgrades. Northwestern submits an updated Long-Term Capital Planning Commission Report to the Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO) Board as well as the Oklahoma Office of Management and Enterprise Services (OMES) annually. A three-year project plan highlights upcoming projects identified with funding sources. A 2023 legislative interim study requested a list of deferred maintenance projects to be considered for one-time possible funding next legislative session.

Technology plays a vital role in accomplishing NWOSU's mission, allowing employees to meet job demands efficiently and effectively with up-to-date computers and software. Northwestern Information Technology (IT) staff maintains 19 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. (See also Criterion 3.D.4.) An electronic media fee of $10 per credit hour for ITV courses upgrades studio technology. United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) grants, the most recent awarded in FY18, also assist with technology upgrades. Part of the Institutional CARES funding was used for technology upgrades during the pandemic. These upgrades continue to impact the campus community positively.

In addition to ITV studios, approximately 46 independent SMART classrooms serve faculty 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 provider, OneNet, connects all three campus locations. OSRHE provides this resource at great cost savings to Oklahoma higher education institutions.

In 2019, in collaboration with two other RUSO institutions, Northwestern replaced its antiquated Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system with Ellucian Colleague. This replacement resulted in resource savings to each institution and a significant technology upgrade for students, faculty, and staff. Financial budgeting for the project began in 2015, with the initial implementation process beginning in summer 2018. The core and all three modules (Finance, Human Resources, and Student) were fully implemented by fall 2020. Functionalities within these modules continue to be refined.

5.B.2

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 Direction 1 focuses specifically on student learning and success.

In order to help accomplish this direction, 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, maximizing efficient operations with minimal bureaucracy. Institutional support accounts for only 6.1% of the Educational and General (E&G) Part 1 budget for FY24, with instruction accounting for the majority of the budget at 43.3%.

5.B.3

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 VPAA, Administrative Vice President (AVP), and Dean of Students. These administrators discuss current-year budgets and expenditures as well as needs for the upcoming fiscal year. The President later leads formal budget hearings that are open to the campus community. Budget administrators present anticipated needs, with new budget requests linked to Strategic Directions listed in Northwestern's strategic plan. As part of the budgeting process, Senior Staff members meet with the Student Government Association to discuss possible tuition and mandatory fee increases. Time is also allowed for general discussion about the University budget and governance.

The President, AVP, and VPAA 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 Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE). Upon final budget approval by both the RUSO Board and OSRHE, the AVP provides departmental budgets to budget administrators.

Monitoring of budget expenditures occurs continually at division/department, dean, vice president, and institution levels throughout the fiscal year. Budget administrators access real-time budget and expense information through Self Service. The University comptroller generates monthly expenditure reports for the AVP, who investigates expense variances and takes appropriate corrective action. A monthly revenue report for each fund is monitored by comparing current to prior-year statements. A cash flow report is also used for monthly analysis. The AVP provides regular briefings to the University President as well as to the Senior Staff.

These fiduciary processes reflect the University's careful stewardship and planning for financial contingencies.

5.B.4

Resource Allocation Process

Northwestern operates under the constitutional and statutory guidelines of the state of Oklahoma and OSRHE. After making a yearly system request to the Oklahoma State Legislature, OSRHE provides budget allocations for each higher education institution and approves any proposed tuition and fee increases within limits set by the Legislature. As an Oklahoma state agency, Northwestern operates within a balanced annual budget. In four of the last six years, an increase in state funding has allowed Northwestern to increase faculty and staff salaries.

Support of Northwestern's educational programs resides mainly in the E&G Part I of the budget, which represents nearly two-thirds of the institution's overall revenues and expenses. As state appropriations have declined over the decades, the University's dependence on tuition and fees has increased. Northwestern carefully evaluates tuition and fees as well as the impact of any changes on students annually and is proud that no increase in tuition or mandatory fees has occurred for the past three years. The University charges academic service fees to help offset program costs. Requests for these fees originate from academic divisions/departments.

Northwestern's Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) works with faculty and staff to incentivize and foster grant activity. (See also Criterion 3.B.5.) Funding from grant contracts and awards enhances student services and academic programs University-wide. For example, a Title III grant supports operations of the LASSO Center (also discussed in Criteria 1.A.2, 3.C.3, and 3.D.1), and an OSRHE Renewable Energy STEM Summer Academy Grant funds a program to introduce high school students to STEM fields.

The state provides two additional sources of revenue for capital needs. School land funds result primarily from oil and gas production on state-owned land. The Legislature also provides Section 13 Offset Allocations (295 Funds), which have increased significantly over the last six years.

The NWOSU Foundation aids the University in meeting its mission, supporting students through scholarships, capital projects, endowed chairs, and other contributions. In 2017, Northwestern officially kicked off the public phase of its first ever capital campaign, setting an aggressive goal of $28 million. By its 2019 conclusion, the campaign raised more than $28 million.

Northwestern also benefits from an Endowed Chair Program through which the state of Oklahoma matched private gifts given to the Foundation. Combined Foundation and OSRHE endowment earnings benefit academic programs each year. One example of the use of these earnings is the 2023 restoration of NWOSU's visual arts major.

Employee wages and benefits constitute the largest percentage of Northwestern's budget. As stated in the last HLC assurance argument, Northwestern eliminated a number of vacant positions during times of state-appropriations reductions. Processes put in place to evaluate all vacant positions are still in place today. By following this strategic process, NWOSU has maintained sufficient full-time employees to fulfill its mission.

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 cycle, Northwestern prepared a summary document highlighting 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 institution's educational purposes. The E&G Part 1 summary of expenses reflects spending for the past seven years. The slight shifting of resources reflects allocations received from the state as well student credit hours generated. The Northwestern Foundation, while a separate entity, supports the University's mission. (See also Criterion 1.A.3.) As part of its yearly external audit, NWOSU performs financial ratio analysis including the calculation of the Composite Financial Index (CFI), which it submits to HLC each spring as part of the institutional update process.

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5.C - Core Component 5.C

The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning and improvement.

1. The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities, including, as applicable, its comprehensive research enterprise, associated institutes and affiliated centers.
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, including fluctuations in the institution's sources of revenue and enrollment.
5. Institutional planning anticipates evolving external factors, such as technology advancements, demographic shifts, globalization, the economy and state support.
6. The institution implements its plans to systematically improve its operations and student outcomes.

Argument

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. Administration prepares an annual budget after receiving input and budget requests--which must be tied to the strategic plan--from all divisions/departments and offices. Budget hearings provide opportunities for budget administrators to present requests and discuss their alignment with the mission and Strategic Directions. Two examples of alignment between resources and strategic plan priorities are the decision to upgrade the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system and the renovation of Cunningham Hall.

5.C.2

Linked Processes

Northwestern uses data from student and institutional assessment to drive planning and budgeting. For example, student-satisfaction survey responses showed a need to update campus housing. The most recent project completely renovated Cunningham Hall, a female residence hall. Feedback from students also showed a desire to discontinue basic cable and upgrade all residence halls to high-speed Wi-Fi, ultimately resulting in the re-allocation of funds that had initially been budgeted for cable television.

Academic program modifications derived from program assessments must account for resource allocation as part of the OSRHE review process. Annual assessment plans must also include budget implications. In addition, the Administrative Vice President (AVP) must file a budget-needs request with OSRHE as part of the annual budgeting cycle.

5.C.3

Inclusive Planning Process

Northwestern has engaged in formal strategic planning for over two decades. Widespread solicitation of input from internal and external stakeholders serves as the hallmark of each strategic plan. The University developed the 2022 plan with the aid of a Strategic Planning Committee, including administration, faculty, staff, and student representatives. The University announced the strategic plan's publication through an email to stakeholders and a posting of the document on its website.

University stakeholders review progress toward meeting the plan's Strategic Directions on an ongoing basis, with Senior Staff periodically completing reviews at their monthly meetings. The President also verbally updates the governing board, faculty, staff, and civic groups on initiatives that meet strategic plan goals.

Northwestern seeks input from internal and external constituents as it develops other plans to ensure that it meets students' needs and accomplishes its mission. Examples include the Academic Plan, Campus Master Plan, Athletic Department Strategic Plan, Diversity Plan, and IT Annual Risk Assessment. Similarly, Northwestern solicits planning input from the

Northwestern Foundation Board as well as several advisory boards and committees associated with academic disciplines, cocurricular activities, and additional locations. (See also Criteria 1.D.1 and 4.B.4.)

5.C.4

Capacity Planning and Responsiveness

An understanding of Northwestern's capacity is embedded in its Core Values. The "Academic Excellence" value acknowledges the need for quality advising, where impacts on student retention and enrollment are palpable. Effective and efficient use of resources is explicitly prioritized in the "Responsibility" value. Clearly, Northwestern remains aware of its capacity.

More tangibly, Northwestern responds as appropriate to immediate programs' enrollment needs. For example, administrators and faculty cooperate to create new course sections that meet these needs, working from previous years' projections while anticipating changing needs in the current term. NWOSU has also significantly increased capability to offer concurrent courses in response to state support and increased student demand.

A recent example of long-term capacity building is the approval a new full-time psychology position for FY24 to support a program that has demonstrated sustained enrollment and potential for additional growth. Programmatically, in AY 2023-2024, NWOSU took initial steps toward introducing an online Master of Business Administration program, with financial and human resources capacity analysis as part of the process.

To augment quality student advising practices, Northwestern established, and continues to invest in, the LASSO program to assist at-risk students. The program was initially financed through TRIO grant funds, a condition of which is that NWOSU must supplant grant support with institutional support over the five-year grant cycle. Initial progress toward this goal has been made. Greater institutional investment in program sustenance, made possible by increased tuition proceeds resulting from higher FY24 student retention rates, demonstrates the University's compliance with this expectation.

These examples speak to Northwestern's responsiveness to enrollment needs, awareness of its resources, and understanding of how capacity is coupled to opportunities for growth.

Institutional capacity is a common concern discussed in University leadership meetings. The Executive Team meets weekly to discuss key indicators, and Senior Staff meets monthly to share news and developments across administrative offices. Senior leadership meets with the Northwestern Foundation weekly to discuss potential funding sources, communicate updates on current donors, and explore matters related to capacity.

Northwestern follows an inclusive planning process, setting flexible goals that maximize opportunities and minimize threats due to fluctuations in enrollment, the economy, and state support. The University focuses attention on student recruitment and retention. Despite modest recent enrollment gains cited in Criterion 4.C.2, long-term enrollment rates show a general decline over the past several years. Attendance at Ranger Preview continues to provide one starting point for the Recruitment Office to contact prospective students.

Partnerships supplement University resources to help mitigate the impact of financial fluctuations. For example, Northwestern attracts students with its strong Foundation scholarship programs and City of Alva Sales Tax Incentive awards. These scholarship programs provide an ongoing source of student financial support.

5.C.5

Emerging Factors

Emerging factors, articulated as driving forces in the strategic plan, guide planning processes. To keep these driving forces in the forefront of planning, University leadership contributes to a working document of progress toward goal accomplishment. A focus on the evolving educational environment also informs division/department planning.

This approach informs such recent decisions as infrastructure updates using CARES funds. State support for programs meeting workforce demands in critical occupations among a new demographic, credential-seeking adult learners, has led to the introduction of micro-credentials to alternatively prepare P-12 educators (2022) and serve individuals currently employed as corrections professionals (2023). Similarly, state-provided Critical Workforce/STEM Development Initiative funds beginning in FY23 support areas that prepare students for these occupations. Anticipation of shifting technological needs led to the successful application for an Oklahoma Friction-Free Network (OFFN 7) to support high-speed data transmission for those engaged in research (2023). As these recent examples illustrate, the University carefully considers emerging factors

during planning processes.

The Oklahoma economy has seen tax-collection increases over the last three years, resulting in increased University appropriations. As with all economic trends, at some point the economy will regress, resulting in possible state-funding decreases. Through strategic planning tools, Northwestern has positioned itself, financially, to weather future economic changes.

5.C.6

Improving Institutional Effectiveness

Northwestern utilizes the planning processes detailed above to increase its effectiveness, capabilities, and sustainability, overall and in its component parts. These processes led to the FY24 purchase and implementation of new Watermark Course Evaluation and Survey software, a need first identified in 2017. These processes also led to an increase in student flex dollars as part of the student meal plan, resulting from a spring 2023 recommendation of the Food Committee. More broadly, the implementation of a new Enterprise Resource Planning system (Criterion 5.C.1) and substantial renovations to Cunningham Hall (5.C.2) reflect plan-driven systematic improvements undertaken by the University.

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. Northwestern remains strong and vibrant through conservative and forward-looking budgeting, on-going cost analysis, and aggressive fundraising.

Sources

- Academic_Plan
- Allocation_of_State_Appropriated_Funds
- Alva_Sales_Tax_Scholarship
- Annual_Risk_Assessment_Survey
- Budget
- CARES_Infrastructure
- Concurrent_Enrollment_Database
- Corrections_Professional_Micro-Credential
- Course_Evaluation_Software_Emails
- Cunningham_Hall_Renovations_Floor_Plan
- Division-Department_Priority_Goals_Summary
- EFLH_Request_for_Additional_Courses
- Enrollment_Management_Task_Force_Goal_Database
- Enrollment_Task_Force_Goals_and_Plans
- Enterprise_Resource_Planning_System
- Food_Committee_Meeting_Notes
- Formal_Budget_Hearing_Emails
- Foundation_Scholarship_List
- LASSO_Educational_and_General_Budget
- LASSO_Grant_Budget_Narrative
- LASSO_Grant_Institutionalizing_Practices_and_Improvements
- Library_Services_Assessment_Plan
- Long_Range_Capital_Planning_Commission
- Masters_of_Business_Administration_Email
- NSSE_Results_Residence_Halls
- NWOSU_Athletics_Strategic_Plan
- NWOSU_Diversity_Plan
- NWOSU_Driving_Forces_and_Assumptions
- NWOSU_Micro-Credentials_UpskillOK
- NWOSU_Mission_Statement
- OneNet_Grant_Award_Letter
- Organizational_Chart
- OSRHE_Budget_Needs_Survey
- OSRHE_Program_Request_Form_and_Program_Approval_Letter

- OSRHE_Special_Initiative_Funding
- Pedagogy_Certificate
- Presidential_Updates
- Presidents_Strategic_Plan_Email
- Psychology_Education_and_General_Budget
- Ranger_Preview_Numbers_Updated_Year-to-Year
- Residence_Hall_Technology_Survey
- RUSO_Meeting_Minutes_Flex_Increase
- Senior_Staff_Meeting_Minutes_Meeting_Dates
- Senior_Staff_Meeting_Minutes_Strategic_Plan
- South_Hall_Bid_Recommendation_Letter
- State_Appropriations
- Strategic_Plan_Accomplishments_Working_Draft
- Strategic_Plan_Mission_Statement
- Strategic_Plan_Strategic_Directions
- Strategic_Planning_Documents
- Strategic_Planning_Steering_Committee
- Watermark_Course_Evaluation_and_Survey_Implementation_Timeline
- Watermark_Course_Evaluation_and_Survey_Software_Invoice

5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary

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

Summary

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

As the governing body for the University, the Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO) approves budgets and personnel decisions and provides oversight of academic affairs, the physical plant, and campus locations. The University prepares yearly documents that include a budget, external audit, internal audit, and OMES claims audit to assist the RUSO Board in its oversight.

The University continues to offer sufficient infrastructure to support its operations and programs, consisting of more than 470 acres and 39 buildings located in three counties in northwest Oklahoma. Each year Northwestern submits an updated Long-Term Capital Planning Commission Report to the RUSO Board as well as the Oklahoma Office of Management and Enterprise Services (OMES).

The Northwestern Oklahoma State University Foundation aids the University in meeting its mission, supporting students through scholarships, capital projects, endowed chairs, and other contributions.

NWOSU also uses institutional assessment as a way to improve its effectiveness, capabilities, and sustainability, overall and in its component parts.

Sources

There are no sources.