**Assurance Argument**

# Southwest Minnesota State University

**9/26/2018**

# 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 broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations.

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

## Argument

The mission of Southwest Minnesota State University states:

> Southwest Minnesota State University prepares students to meet the complex challenges of this century as engaged citizens in their local and global communities. Our comprehensive degree programs, taught in the liberal arts tradition, are dedicated to connecting students' academic and practical professional development experiences in southwestern Minnesota to the wider world.

In living out its mission, SMSU engages in meaningful partnerships across the region and provides students and community members access to a broad variety of educational opportunities, not only through its degree programs, but through the rich activities it sponsors. Over the past four years SMSU has added key programs in demand in the region, strategically expanded and improved its facilities to enable community use, and enhanced leadership and critical thinking skills of its students through civic engagement and professional development.

**1.A.1.**

Minnesota Statutes Section 135A.052 prescribes the mission of public postsecondary institutions in the state and further directs the governing board and administration to take actions to support the missions. Minnesota Statutes Section 136F.05 authorizes each college and university within the Minnesota State system to develop its own distinct mission as provided by Minnesota Statutes Section 135A.052 and subject to the approval of the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees, in Board Policy 1A.1 Part 2. Subpart C has assigned a distinct mission to each state college and university that is consistent and supportive of the overall mission of the system. The Board further provides in Board Policy 3.24 and System Procedure 3.24.1 for the conditions and processes for the review and approval of college and university missions. The mission statement for Southwest Minnesota State University was last reviewed and reaffirmed by the Minnesota State Board of Trustees in 2007, in accordance with the process set forth in Board Policy 3.24. The full SMSU community participated in revision of the previous mission. A Brown and Gold Task Force was

assembled with constituents from all sectors of the campus to review and develop the current mission.

Attention to the needs of the southwest Minnesota region is at the heart of SMSU's mission. Since the Minnesota State system was created by the legislature in 1995, SMSU's mission and strategic plan have been aligned with the system-level mission and strategic directions. The university values are an extension of the mission and were developed by an All-University Strategic Planning Committee. These values are: 1) Excellence and Innovation 2) Civic and Community Engagement 3) Diversity and Global Awareness 4) Environment, Stewardship, Sustainability. Extending these values, our strategic planning yields distinct plans for the following areas: Academic Plan, Diversity Plan, Enrollment Management Plan, Institutional Capacity and Effectiveness Plan, and a Facilities Plan. Each plan has distinct goals, objectives, and strategies.

**1.A.2.**

SMSU's undergraduate academic programs consist of the Liberal Education Program (LEP), which every student must complete, and the degree program(s) chosen by the student. For undergraduate programs, both are necessary components for fulfilling the promises inherent in the SMSU mission statement. In addition to the LEP requirements, as a member institution of the Minnesota State system and through state legislative statute, all undergraduate students must also complete the ten domains of the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum (MnTC). Many of the LEP outcomes correspond to the forty credits of MnTC undergraduate general education, which are fully transferable to other Minnesota State institutions and the University of Minnesota (see grid). Graduate programs consist of program learning outcomes

*Liberal Education Program and Minnesota Transfer Curriculum.*

A cornerstone of the SMSU mission is offering "*comprehensive degree programs, taught in the liberal arts tradition.*" The Liberal Education Program (LEP) at SMSU provides the foundation for exposing all students to the liberal arts, regardless of their major. The LEP took effect in the fall semester 2010, as a result of five years of planning and research prompted by the previous HLC review. Per guidance from the 2014 HLC Report, outcomes were revised in 2014-2015 to include 7 student learning outcomes that are measurable and fulfill SMSU's mission:

- Communicate effectively.
- Be creative thinkers able to identify, formulate, and solve problems using interdisciplinary perspectives.
- Be critical thinkers who evaluate information wisely and examine how assumptions and positions are shaped.
- Understand both physical and social aspects of the world and their place in it.
- Embrace the similarities among peoples and appreciate the diversity that enriches the human experience.
- Analyze moral judgments and engage in moral discourse.
- Practice responsible citizenship in their local and global communities.

The removal of three outcomes occurred spring 2015. "*Continue life-long learning*" and "*Integrate mind, body, and spirit*" were considered to be unmeasurable outcomes and the third "*Understand the techniques and habits of thought in a variety of liberal arts disciplines, having attained an adequate foundation of knowledge in those disciplines*" are covered by the remaining seven outcomes. The spirit of the removed outcomes were written into a preamble for the current liberal education program.

All undergraduates who begin their education at SMSU must take LEP 100 First Year Seminar (or

alternative course for transfer students), a first- and a second-year writing course, and a communication course. These courses provide a baseline in the core skills of critical thinking, oral and written communication, and information literacy. Other LEP goals are introduced in the remainder of the MnTC requirements. The LEP requirements extend beyond the first two years of MnTC general education outlined by the Minnesota State System and include course requirements in the junior and senior years. In addition to the MnTC curriculum, students must complete 1) a core skills-focused class within their major, 2) a capstone within their major (in some degree programs, the major capstone double-counts as the core-skills major requirement), and 3) the LEP capstone, an interdisciplinary LEP 400 Contemporary Issues seminar which also revisits the core skills while emphasizing creative thinking. See the LEP/MnTC grid for a visual overlay of the requirements. Thus, the LEP directly reflects many of the "High-Impact Educational Practices" advocated by AAC&U: a first year seminar, common intellectual experiences, writing-intensive courses, and capstone courses and projects. In this manner, the LEP provides an overarching frame for a student's education at SMSU. Though not embedded directly in the LEP curriculum, other high-impact practices such as undergraduate research, collaborative assignments and projects, service learning, and internships can be found throughout SMSU's academic program offerings.

Through continued development of the campus assessment culture and somewhat due to confusion regarding the dual system of LEP/MnTC requirements, in 2017-2018 a year-long faculty and administrative review of the LEP was led by the Liberal Education Committee as captured in this common understandings document. Although the LEP and MnTC do not overlap in an exact 1:1 ratio, the faculty decided there was sufficient overlap with the spirit of the LEP contained within the MnTC to adopt those outcomes as our LEP outcomes. These new outcomes will be implemented in the fall of 2019 to ensure sufficient time for programs to make adjustments in their instruction and assessment.

*Academic Programs.*

In keeping with the mission, SMSU provides a breadth of academic programs. The University is organized into two Colleges, the College of Arts, Letters, and Sciences (ALS), and the College of Business, Education and Professional Studies (BEPS). BEPS is further subdivided into four schools: the School of Business and Public Affairs, the School of Education, the School of Graduate Studies, and the School of Agriculture. As submitted in the most recent HLC update, SMSU offers the following distribution of degree and certificate options:

Table 1.1. SMSU Degree Options

| | |
|---|---|
| Credit Bearing Certificates | 9 |
| Associate's Degree Programs | 5 |
| Bachelor's Degree Programs | 56 |
| Master's Degree Programs | 5 |
| Specialist Degree Programs | 1 |
| Doctoral Degree Programs | 0 |

To fulfill its mission, a hallmark of SMSU's academic programming is the development of programs designed to fulfill needs in the region. For example, in 2006, in response to the needs of the food industry for product development, the Culinology® program was instituted. The RN-to-BSN degree,

which was the result of a University task force's investigation, began in the Fall 2013. The acknowledgement of the community and region continues in the form of a Nursing Advisory Council, made up of eighteen nursing supervisors, administrators, and educators from across the area. In 2012, an institutional task force was charged with exploring possible restructuring to add a school related to agricultural programs, which resulted in the addition of the School of Agriculture. The School of Agriculture now includes new programs in Agricultural Solutions and Agriculture Education. The Minnesota Board of Teaching (BOT), now named Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB), approved SMSU to offer a complete teacher-licensure Bachelor of Science (BS) program in Agricultural Education on August 12, 2016 with Continuing-Initial-Approval until June 30, 2019. The Minnesota Agricultural Education Leadership Council (MAELC) awarded SMSU a $59,580 Common Fund Grant in June 2014 to assist with the start-up costs of initiating and marketing a new major on the SMSU Campus. In addition, the MN Southwest Initiative Foundation awarded a $25,000 grant to SMSU to support the Agricultural Education program. During the 2015-2016 biennium, the MN Legislature apportioned a one-time budget of $450,000 (allocating $225,000 each in 2015 and 2016) to help SMSU manage the up-front expenses of initiating an Agricultural Education program at SMSU.

*Student Support Services.*

SMSU is a community deeply committed to academic student success. Student support services serve the range of enrolled students' needs from first contact with Admissions through interactions with Financial Aid, Registrar, and Business Services. Each of these areas has developed information tailored to students' and their families' concerns.

Structurally, most student support services are provided by the Division of Student Affairs, but also through Enrollment Management and Student Success. The support services that influence student success are described further below. See Student Affairs organizational chart. Briefly, Student Affairs encompasses a large number of offices that work directly with students. Since developing a new position of Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Success, the new Vice President directs several student support offices. Offices in Enrollment Management and Student Success include Admission, Financial Aid, Registration, Advising, International Student Services, and Student Success.

The Student Affairs mission statement directly addresses the University mission, stating, "*Student Affairs supports the mission of the university by providing co-curricular programs and services that engage students in a successful, collaborative and inclusive education, preparing them to become leaders in a diverse global community*." The Student Affairs mission is accompanied by five vision statements related to all aspects of a student's education at SMSU:

- Develop services that promote student recruitment, retention, academic excellence, and graduation
- Facilitate co-curricular learning through student participation in an inclusive university community
- Encourage student wellness, personal skills development, self-discovery, and personal accountability
- Develop a community that strives for personal integrity, ethical decision-making, mutual respect and human dignity
- Develop programs that promote multicultural competence and leadership necessary for a student's lifelong personal success

*Student Success & Advising Center.*

The Student Success & Advising Center located within the Academic Commons (IL 224) was established Spring 2018 semester as an outcome of SMSU's Student Success Plan Goal 2: Restructure Student Success, Advising and Academic Support Services. The center provides support services for students to assist them in achieving their education goals and brings together, in one central location, a collection of services from the Office of Student Success, Blue to Brown Connection Program (a seamless transfer program between SMSU and Minnesota West Community and Technical College), Academic Commons/Academic Success Program, and the Advising Center.

*Office of Student Success.*

The Office of Student Success helps students with academic issues and guides students to appropriate campus resources for social or personal issues students might be experiencing. The primary function of the office is to perform intervention meetings with students and oversee SMSU's early alert procedures. Faculty use the early alert system to help identify students with academic, attendance, personal, or finance-related risk factors. In addition, the Office of Student Success manages an exit procedure to identify reasons for why students leave SMSU. Furthermore, programming efforts by the office include disseminating Success Tips and holding Mustang Success Night and Finish Strong Week in the fall/spring semesters. Finally, the Office of Student Success works closely with other key Student Affairs offices such as Counseling and Testing, Disability Resources, Diversity and Inclusion, Career Services, and Access, Opportunity & Success to ensure that all students receive the help that they need to succeed

*Blue to Brown.*

The Blue to Brown Connection program developed in 2016 is a newly established partnership between SMSU and Minnesota West Community and Technical College. Program participants save money by taking community college classes on SMSU's campus, while receiving the residential experience by living in the residence halls at SMSU. A Living and Learning community in the residence halls has been added for this program during the 2018-2019 academic year. Program students have access to clubs, organizations, student activities, support services, tutoring, fitness areas, and intramurals (excluding participation in intercollegiate athletics). To seamlessly transfer to SMSU, participants must complete 24 Minnesota Transfer Curriculum credits in two semesters earning a minimum 2.0 GPA.

*Academic Commons / Academic Success Program.*

On-campus students can take advantage of the Academic Commons, a central, visible study center located in the Individualized Learning building. The Academic Commons offers content-area tutoring (in-person and on-line through Tutor.Com), the Education Department Learning Center, and the Math Lab. A large open space with a variety of tables and seating areas, it provides students with a place to study, meet friends, and seek assistance with coursework.

Provisionally admitted students may be selected to participate in the Academic Success Program, which provides additional support in making a successful transition to the expectations of university life. The Academic Success Program provides focused academic advising and instructional support, including enrollment in IDST 110 *The University Experience* during their first semester. This 2-credit orientation and transition course assists students' integration into the SMSU community and strengthens skills for academic and personal success. Academic Success Program students must complete this course with a grade of "C" or better. In addition, students are assigned a program advisor.

*Advising Center.*

The Advising Center provides academic advising for undeclared students. They also assist students in the selection of an academic major and/or minor, work with students on academic warning or probation, and are the official office for a University Withdrawal.

*Technology Resource Center and Library.*

On-campus and distance students benefit from the services offered through the Technology Resource Center and McFarland Library. As a component of the Facilities Strategic Plan, the entities merged in the 2016-2017 academic year. All students, faculty, and staff utilize the Help Desk, located in the Technology Resource Center, with an online presence for aiding distance students. The services supported by the Technology Resource Center and/or the Minnesota State System are listed below:

- Desire2Learn Brightspace course management system
- Adobe Connect web conferencing platform
- E-Services portal for degree program information, registration, and course schedules.

The Library provides an array of services for both on- and off-campus students including:

- Online search databases
- Ask a Librarian- various methods for connecting with a reference librarian
- LibGuides- organized online research guides developed for courses, programs, and special topics
- Individualized library instruction for faculty to use in their courses

*Global Studies.*

The Global Studies program helps students gain a broader understanding of the world outside of southwest Minnesota. The Global Studies program began in 1993 as part of an initiative developed by the Minnesota State University System. Currently, study abroad opportunities are coordinated through the International Student Services Office.

*Undergraduate Research Conference.*

The annual Undergraduate Research Conference (URC) is a high impact one-day conference that began in the fall of 2006 for science students to engage in a professional exchange of scientific ideas and communicate the results of their research to the broader community. This began for students to showcase and celebrate their hard work and accomplishments. In the first year, the program included 21 oral and 27 poster presentations from science students in Environmental Science, Biology, Physics and Chemistry. The conference now includes all disciplines across campus. By the 12th year of the conference in 2017, 217 presenters from 21 different programs participated with supervision by 35 different faculty advisors. The Undergraduate Research Conference is directly aligned with the mission of the university which aims to "*prepare students to meet the complex challenges of this century*" and to connect "*students' academic and practical professional development experiences*." Data from the 2017 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE Survey) indicates that 29% of SMSU seniors have participated in some kind of research with faculty compared to 22% at other Minnesota State institutions and 25% at similar Carnegie class institutions. NSSE considers work with a faculty member on a research project a 'high-impact practice' because it requires considerable time and effort, facilitates learning outside the classroom, and promotes meaningful interactions with faculty and students. Providing opportunities for undergraduate research via a conference event where

students present research to the public encourages innovative and collaborative curricula, attracts engaged students and community interest, is an opportunity for projects that focus on the local community needs and interests, and generally enhances the intellectual vitality of the institution. As a measure of its success, this conference has recently been awarded a $50,011 grant to continue its operations.

*SMSU Enrollment Profile.*

SMSU's enrollment profile is consistent with the University's mission of "*connecting students' academic and practical professional development experiences in southwestern Minnesota to the wider world*." SMSU provides a traditional undergraduate residential experience and selected on-campus graduate programs. SMSU also has a strong presence throughout the state, exemplified by our 2+2 programs, College Now program, and graduate programs.

*Undergraduate Enrollment.*

Overall enrollment at SMSU has gradually increased over the past decade, moving from 6,317 in 2007 to 6,910 in 2017. Over the past decade SMSU has annually averaged a total enrollment of more than 8113 unique students. Recently, however from Fall 2016 to Fall 2017, there was a decline in total enrollment from 7,298 to 6,910. More information relating enrollment to university resources is available in Criterion 5. Much of the total enrollment increase can be attributed to the extensive programming SMSU offers across the state, in particular, the College Now (see http://www.smsu.edu/academics/collegenow/index.html) dual credit/concurrent enrollment program. The program, known within Minnesota as Post Secondary Enrollment Option (PSEO, see http://www.smsu.edu/academics/pseo/new-pseo-students.html), is responsible for more than 90% of this increase. More information about College Now can be found in Criterion 3.

SMSU's undergraduate enrollment comes predominantly from within the borders of Minnesota (77.5%). The majority of students who attend SMSU come from the 19 county service region. However, in the past ten years, the overall percentages of students coming from the local region have decreased as demographic patterns have shifted populations toward urban and suburban districts. Despite SMSU's primarily in-state enrollment mix, 36 other states as well as 27 countries are also represented within the undergraduate student body.

First-generation college students make up 48% of full-time entering first-year students. In addition, many students from the region are Pell grant eligible at a rate of 36%.

Undergraduate degree-seeking student enrollment is 58% female and reflects national trends. Regional population continues to be predominately European-American, but SMSU's racial and ethnic make-up has steadily changed over the past decade. As of fall 2017, 13% of Undergraduate Degree Seeking were students of color. That reflects a rather steady increase over the past decade. However, those gains were offset by a decline in International undergraduate enrollment. See Criterion 1C for a fuller description of issues related to diversity on the SMSU campus.

Transfer students remain a strong portion of the Undergraduate Degree Seeking population representing about 28% of the undergraduate degree-seeking students. Also in the past ten years, SMSU has had more previous degree recipients returning to college to obtain another undergraduate degree.

Despite the overall growth in total enrollment at SMSU during the past decade, the Undergraduate Degree Seeking student population has faced a slow decline. Traditional students make up the

majority of this category, and that group has declined since our 2014 HLC visit.

*Graduate Enrollment.*

SMSU offers graduate programs in Education and in Business that support the mission of the University by responding to needs of citizens and employers in the region, delivering education to rural areas, and contributing to the quality of life in the region. Average enrollment in the past decade has been approximately 450 students. In the past 3 years enrollment has been between 400-486 students. In terms of enrollment diversity the largest gain has been in international student enrollment primarily in the MBA program where graduate enrollment has grown from 1% to over 10% in ten years.

*College Now Enrollment.*

Perhaps no specific student group better shows SMSU's relationship to the region than enrollment in SMSU's concurrent enrollment program, College Now. In 2017-18, 110 high schools and 5,466 unduplicated students who completed 36,039 course credits were served.

**1.A.3.**

Budgeting and planning processes are discussed in detail in Criterion 5. The strategic planning process provides an essential link between the mission in theory and the mission in action. Although SMSU's strategic plan exists to benefit and guide the university, it is also linked to and integrated with the values and strategic plans of larger organizations with which SMSU interacts, including the following:

> 1) The Minnesota State System Strategic Framework
>
> 2) The Minnesota State Board of Trustees Accountability Dashboard
>
> 3) The Higher Learning Commission (HLC)

The primary responsibility for strategic planning rests with the President's Office, which oversees the process. The Strategic Planning Committee is an All-University Committee involving representation from members of each bargaining unit. This committee is charged with reviewing, monitoring, and communicating the university's progress toward its strategic directions. Strategic Plans and a timeline were last developed in the 2014-2015 academic year. Subcommittees based upon the five strategic directions met, and the committee revised the University Strategic Plan. The work continued and resulted in the SMSU Strategic Plan 2016-2021. The outcomes of the planning includes four new core values and five strategic goals described in 1.A.1. Currently, the Strategic Planning/Higher Learning Commission Committees have merged to ensure coordinated efforts across campus.

## Sources

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- Crtn1A2_McFarland Library
- Crtn1A2_Office of Student Success
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- Crtn1A2_Student Affairs Mission Statement

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# 1.B - Core Component 1.B

The mission is articulated publicly.

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

## Argument

**1.B.1.**

The mission, vision, and values are linked throughout the SMSU website from its primary locations on the President's webpage and in the Academic Catalog. Also, the mission, vision, and values are highlighted in select university publications. The mission in particular is clearly represented through a number of additional means, such as in the Strategic Planning process described in 1A, via the departmental annual reporting process, and prominently displayed on several main campus doors and windows. Using SMSU's mission statement as a basis, sub-units within SMSU have proceeded to develop their own subsidiary mission statements, unique to their particular sectors of the university.

Mission statements have been developed by staff departments, such as the Human Resource Department, Career Services Department, and the McFarland Library. Academic departments, such as the Social Science Department and Science Department, have also developed mission statements. Program self-study materials often contain program missions. Each of these subsidiary unit mission statements aligns with the overall mission statement of the university.

**1.B.2.**

The mission and vision were developed in 2007-2008, having been revised previously in 1993. The mission clearly states that SMSU is charged with offering "*comprehensive degree programs*" for connecting learners "*in southwestern Minnesota to the wider world*." The SMSU mission statement and accompanying vision statement ("*Southwest Minnesota State University is a university of choice*") were developed via the campus-wide Brown and Gold Task Force in 2007-2008. The four core values and three University themes were developed via the 2016-2021 Strategic Planning process. The three University core themes are Academic Excellence and Distinctiveness, Student Learning and Success, and Meaningful Partnerships and Engagement. These three themes conceptually encapsulate the four core values described in 1.B.3., placing learners and learning at the core of the university.

**1.B.3.**

As described in 1.B.1, SMSU's Values were revised as a part of the 2016-2021 Strategic Planning process. This further aligns and prioritizes the Mission and Values with concrete objectives that

support the system-wide needs while focusing on SMSU's target constituencies. SMSU upholds core values of transformational learning for undergraduate and graduate students.

The four core values of SMSU are as follows:

<u>Excellence and Innovation</u>

SMSU faculty and staff create and support a high-quality student-centered learning environment that

- Prepares student to meet the complex challenges of this century as engaged citizens in their local and global communities;
- Provides students with the skills and knowledge to be lifelong learners

<u>Civic and Community Engagement</u>

SMSU faculty and staff are engaged in and support activities that

- Promote civic engagement opportunities that enhance SMSU's reputation as a locally, regionally, and globally-engaged institution
- Build mutually beneficial partnerships across our region and state
- Provide rich opportunities for learning that go beyond the traditional classroom and lab settings

<u>Diversity and Global Awareness</u>

SMSU faculty and staff contribute to creating an environment that celebrates the diverse and inclusive nature of the SMSU campus community as they

- Foster cultural understanding and interactions and a welcoming and accessible campus environment for all groups
- Provide supportive environment for intellectual expression and civil communication by all groups

<u>Environment, Stewardship, and Sustainability</u>

SMSU faculty and staff are committed to being responsible stewards of our environmental and fiscal resources who

- Facilitate a safe, accessible campus
- Foster actions, programs, and scholarship that will lead to a sustainable future

The vision statement and core values recognize the University's emphasis on attention to student needs, promoting respect for diverse voices, and encouraging sustainable actions. Furthermore, the University mission aligns with its governing system's mission and strategic priorities. The Minnesota State System mission is "We are a catalyst for positive change through partnership, collaboration, innovation, and leadership."

## Sources

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# 1.C - Core Component 1.C

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

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

## Argument

**1.C.1.**

Although the majority of students who attend SMSU come from the 19 county service region, SMSU addresses its role in a multicultural society. Beyond geographic and racial measures of diversity, SMSU helps students from many disparate backgrounds in "*connecting . . . to the wider world.*" This is especially true of students with disabilities, first-generation college students, and students who come from low-income families. SMSU was built in the late 1960s as a barrier-free campus attracting wheel-chair using students. In Fall 2017, 7.2% of the undergraduate student population were eligible to use the Campus's Office of Disability Services, an increase from 4.4% in 2013. The University recognizes and strives for the transformative educational experiences that can occur when bringing together students, faculty, and staff from diverse backgrounds.

SMSU's student profile includes 37.4% Pell-eligible and 50.4% first-generation college students, as well as when corrected to remove concurrent enrollment data 7.2% students with disabilities. The growing diversity of the region and state is reflected in the first generation students, students of color, new immigrant and underserved and underrepresented of the student body. SMSU consistently welcomes students from 22-25 countries from around the world. These figures show the number and the percentage of enrolled students of color and international students from 2007 through 2017 at SMSU.

In the most current SMSU Strategic Plan for 2016-2021, issues related to diversity and inclusion have taken on a prominent role, as diversity is one of the five primary strategic directions, noted in the Diversity Plan below:

Goal 1: Create a campus community climate that embraces differences and inclusiveness. Define diversity within the context of underrepresented populations; protected classes; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, ally (LGBTQA); disability; gender; religion; and veteran status.

- Objective 1.1: Recruit additional diverse faculty and staff
- Objective 1.2: Recruit a more diverse and inclusive student body
- Objective 1.3: Retain diverse staff and faculty
- Objective 1.4: Retain diverse students
- Objective 1.5: Implement antiracism, safe space/ally and cultural training and programming

**1.C.2.**

Offices on campus support the unique needs of students, as well as provide opportunities for university engagement with diverse groups. These include Disability Services, the Office of Diversity

and Inclusion, and International Student Services. In addition, Human Resources has an [Affirmative Action Plan](#) and the campus has diverse faculty and staff recruitment efforts. Finally, [diverse student organizations](#) provide opportunities for all students to interact with the campus and community.

*Disability Services*

Since its inception, SMSU has been recognized as a leader in providing access and opportunity to students with physical disabilities. In particular, the design and structure of the campus including the tunnels and walkways that connect the academic buildings and the residence halls accommodates students in wheelchairs. In efforts to provide an accommodating and inclusive campus, the [Office of Disability Services](#) provides academic support services including accommodations for exams, textbooks/documents in alternate format, scribes, note-taking, American Sign Language interpreters, amplification, assistive technology, and equipment access.

Physical support services provided by the University include general [physical therapy](#) provided in conjunction with Exercise Science majors. Wheelchair and adapted equipment prescriptions for insurance purposes, and basic mechanical assistance for equipment is arranged through an off-campus provider. The Director of Disability Services collaborates with Admission, Residential Life, the Physical Plant, University Public Safety, Health Services, the Exercise Science program, personal care assistance providers, the Southwestern Center for Independent Living, and Vocational Rehabilitation Services.

[Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act](#) requires that programs, services and activities of state and local governments be accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities. It also requires public entities take appropriate steps to ensure that communications, with applicants, participants, and members of the public who have disabilities, are as effective as communications with non-disabled students. The Americans with Disabilities Act Coordinator and Section 504 Compliance Officer, who is also the [Associate Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students](#) manages issues and concerns of students who think they have not been provided reasonable accommodations or who believe that structural accommodations have not been made. The Office coordinates with other offices throughout the University in an effort to meet these needs.

*Office of Diversity and Inclusion*

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion works to provide an [inclusive, quality and comprehensive educational experience](#) for students from all religions, races, ethnicity, genders, ages, sexual orientation and countries by engaging the campus and surrounding communities to promote and advocate for cultural diversity and multiculturalism. The office's staff work with the campus community including academic departments, student organizations, Residential Life, and Athletics to promote diversity through programming and student and academic support. The office involves the University in a host of activities and provides support services addressing the needs of this population as well as the entire student body. For example, in 2017-2018 this office presented over 30 programs related to diversity.

The current Director of Diversity and Inclusion has provided stability and direction to the Office, in addition to the oversight of Access, Opportunity, and Success (AOS). In conjunction with efforts to become a more inclusive campus and because of multiple duties, the director moved the offices to a new location in Commons East. Because many students use both departments, the new location provides easy access to both and is in the pathway of their daily activities. The new location is convenient for the students in the AOS Living and Learning community as well.

*International Student Services*

The International Student Services (ISS) program provides travel assistance, orientation support, social and cultural support, programs for international students' adjustment and cultural acclimation, activities for the campus and region, as well as two major festivals: Fall semester's Art and Culture Show and Spring semester's International Food Festival. International student enrollment has declined as the two primary countries from which SMSU enrolled students, Nigeria and Nepal, have both struggled economically and politically. In addition, in both countries, the U.S. State Department has dramatically reduced the number of approved student VISAs. The University has been working to identify different methods of attracting international students, such as with targeted partnership programs. Recently, a new Director of International Student Services who brings a wealth of experience was hired.

*Affirmative Action and Faculty/Staff Diversity Profile*

SMSU maintains an up-to-date Affirmative Action Plan; a detailed webpage ensures the plan is public. All policies on equal opportunity and affirmative action are consistent with Minnesota State System board policies, Minnesota Statutes, and applicable Federal laws. SMSU has a commitment to affirmative action and proactively recruiting, hiring and retaining persons who are in underrepresented groups. Human Resources is responsible for assisting faculty, staff and students who believe they have been harassed or discriminated against because of protected group status. SMSU's overall Affirmative Action goal is to improve its representation of underrepresented groups. In order to accomplish this goal, Human Resources views each new hiring opportunity as an Affirmative Action opportunity and each hiring unit is expected to make a special effort to recruit applicants in areas where under-utilization has been identified. Southwest Minnesota State University is also committed to hiring individuals with disabilities who can perform the essential functions of the job with or without reasonable accommodation. Despite our efforts, attracting and retaining faculty and staff from underrepresented groups in our rural location remains a challenge.

*Diversity in Academic Offerings*

SMSU provides many meaningful opportunities to experience global, American, and regional diversity opportunities through academic coursework. One of the seven Liberal Education Program (LEP) outcomes is focused on diversity; diversity and global perspectives are also themes required in the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum. Broadly, SMSU offers courses relating to multiculturalism, human diversity and the global perspective. Many departments sponsor speakers, presentations, and activities to supplement the work and themes covered in the courses. The SMSU Global Studies program is another credit-bearing manner in which students can experience diversity. SMSU also offers several academic minors related to diversity studies: Women's Studies, Spanish, and Indigenous Nations and Dakota Studies.

*Partnering to Promote Diversity.*

SMSU works with multiple partners in different formats to increase the diversity profile on campus and to support all forms of diversity among the student body. In developing partnerships with international universities, there has been an increase in the numbers of international students on campus. International partnerships currently include:

China

Xuzhou University of Technology

Jiangsu University of Technology

Beijing University of Civil Engineering and Architecture

Changzhou Institute of Technology

Ireland

University of Ulster

Malaysia

Taylor's University

Mexico

Universidad Autonoma Agraria Antonio Narro

Nigeria

University of Maiduguri

Taiwan

Shih Chien University

Chien Hsin University of Science and Technology

Minghsin University of Science and Technology

Chaoyang University of Technology

Dayeh University

Taipei City University of Science & Technology

Lunghwa University of Science and Technology

Chihlee University of Technology

Thailand

Udon Thani Rajabhat University

Valaya Alongkorn Rajabhat University

Closer to home, SMSU also partners with the TRIO Upward Bound Program to provide a college preparatory program for eligible high school students funded by the U.S. Department of Education and sponsored locally by SMSU. Interested 9th – 12th grade students must meet at least one of three criteria, which include low-income families, first generation to attend college, or at high-risk for academic failure.

SMSU has a number of scholarship partners (see scholarship webpage at https://smsu.academicworks.com/opportunities) who dedicate funds to students from diverse backgrounds. SMSU offers need-based scholarships as well as scholarships for students who are from specific geographic areas. The SMSU Foundation works closely with the Office of Financial Aid to ensure that all students have access to scholarship opportunities and consistently grow the number of scholarships and scholarship dollars that SMSU is able to offer.

Scholarships with diversity criteria include but are not limited to the following:

- Buuck Family Foundation Scholarship – disabled students (preferably wheelchair-bound)
- Oscar & Cora Sather Scholarship – Native American
- LeAnn C. Tolk Scholarship – first generation, financial hardship
- Martin Luther King Memorial Scholarship – minority student
- International Student Success Scholarship – international student
- International Exchange Student Scholarship – visiting international student
- Bush Memorial Scholarship – need-based, Yellow Medicine county
- Foundation Regional Leadership Scholarship – Southwest Minnesota
- Winston Gittens Diversity in Education Scholarship –This scholarship is for a new entering student pursing a degree in education.  Preference given to English Learners and students of diverse or multicultural backgrounds.
- Stewart Madsen Memorial TRIO Scholarship – Recipient must be a TRIO student of sophomore, junior or senior standing, they must be served by the Academic and Diversity Resources Department and they must apply. Apply with Academic and Diversity Resources Department.
- Marie Hinsvark Student Success Grant – this scholarship was established for students who are enrolled as full time, in good academic standing and demonstrate financial need.  Preference given to first generation college students
- Alan Holmes Memorial Scholarship – Financial Need
- Alice Reed Memorial Scholarship – Financial Need
- Barnes and Noble Bookstore Textbook Scholarship – Financial Need
- Doug Sweetland Memorial Scholarship – Non-traditional student and based on financial need
- Justice Administration Second Chance Scholarship – Financial Need
- Nick Roberts Memorial Scholarship – Financial Need
- SMSU Success Grant – Financial Need
- Mary and Jack Hickerson Endowed Scholarship – Non-traditional student
- Charles and Ellora Alliss Educational Foundation Scholarship – Financial Need
- Mark and Deb Boulton Scholarship – this is for non-traditional, female students with a spouse and children.

Other partnership efforts influence diversity on campus. Chartwells, the campus meal/food vendor, remains a partner with global education and diversity efforts. They are the primary campus employer of international students, provide diverse food offerings as contractually-obligated, have an active student advisory committee and support international and cultural food festivals with their facilities, staff, and expertise. Residential Life has a commitment to diversity as evident through their house programming that includes an Access, Opportunity and Success Living and Learning Community. Finally, SMSU engages the Marshall community through its senior citizen-focused Growth Opportunity Learning Development (GOLD College) program that offers non-credit courses to promote life-long learning.

*Opportunities with Diverse Student Organizations*

SMSU has active [student groups](#) whose emphases and missions are to promote global awareness, multiculturalism and human diversity. These organizations often work collaboratively in presenting major festivals, speakers, community services activities, cultural awareness and social events. These include, but are not limited to:

- Access Association
- African Student Association
- American Sign Language Club
- Black Student Union
- Bridges International
- Club Latino
- Feminists Club
- Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Ally (GLBTA)
- History Club
- Hmong Student Organization
- International Student Organization
- Muslim Student Association
- Non-Traditional Student Organization
- Oyate Club
- UGLYS (United Global Leaders Yearning for Success)

## Sources

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- Crtn1A1 Strategic Plan Goals Objectives Strategies
- Crtn1A1 Strategic Plan Goals Objectives Strategies (page number 3)
- Crtn1C Press release 2018 N-03-05 International food festival
- Crtn1C1 Students With Disabilities
- Crtn1C1 UG Enrollment Profile
- Crtn1C2 ADA Title II
- Crtn1C2 Affirmative Action Plan webpage
- Crtn1C2 Campus Clubs and Organizations
- Crtn1C2 Dean of Students
- Crtn1C2 Diversity Courses Academic Catalog
- Crtn1C2 Diversity Courses Academic Catalog (page number 7)
- Crtn1C2 Indigenous Nations and Dakota Studies
- Crtn1C2 Office of Disability Services
- Crtn1C2 Press Release Art and CultureN-11-05 ISO
- Crtn1C2 Rehabilitative Services
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- Crtn1C2 Res Life Access Opportunity and Success Communities
- Crtn1C2 Spanish Academic Catalog
- Crtn1C2 TRIO Upward Bound
- Crtn1C2 Womens Studies
- Crtn1C2_Chartwells Contract
- Crtn1C2_Copy of International Memorandums of Understanding 7.6.18
- Crtn1C2_HR Affirmative Action Plan
- Crtn1C2_Office of Diversity and Inclusion Report 2018

# 1.D - Core Component 1.D

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

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

## Argument

**1.D.1.**

SMSU demonstrates through its mission, programming and collaborative efforts that it is committed to the public good and committed to meeting the needs of its regional constituencies and is acutely aware of its service to the 19 county area of southwest Minnesota. This commitment is nested within SMSU's mission, as it states, "*Southwest Minnesota University prepares students to meet the complex challenges of this century as engaged citizens in their local and global communities.*"Moreover, the core values relate directly to the imperative to connect learning with the community. Each of the four core values outlined and described in 1.B.1, focus on SMSU serving the public while centering on learning.

SMSU's educational impact on the region is pronounced, and the institution itself through its programming and partnerships directly engages in activities that promote the public good. SMSU's continuing commitment to the communities it serves is enacted through multiple means:

- Promoting higher education in the region and beyond
- Emphasizing civic engagement
- Enhancing students' experiences through service-learning
- Providing enrichment opportunities for the greater community
- Supporting a wide range of co-curricular activities
- Engaging in community and regional partnerships

One of the ways that SMSU demonstrates its commitment to the public good is through its distance-based academic programming. In providing access to higher education to the region and beyond, SMSU serves the needs of the public. The two primary means in which SMSU provides this access are through its distance learning opportunities and the College Now program.

The Undergraduate Extended Learning Program, provides geographically place-bound students the opportunity to turn associate degrees into bachelor degrees. These programs may be offered in a variety of formats including online and extended learning via secondary campus locations. Currently, SMSU provides degree completion programs in Management and Early Childhood Education. Graduates of partnering community and technical colleges who have completed an Associates degree need only to apply for the corresponding bachelor degree in either Management or Early Childhood Education.

Since 2013, SMSU has added Extended Learning programs in Exercise Science, Theatre, Nursing, Special Education, and Early Childhood Special Education. Additional Extended Learning/Distance Learning formats are being developed.

Graduate programs are also offered through online and other extended learning formats. These include Master of Science in Education, Management, Special Education, and Master of Business Administration. Employed, place-bound adults in rural Minnesota and adjacent areas continue to be underserved, and these degree programs were designed specifically for them.

College Now, through which SMSU offers college-level courses in high school settings with the high school teacher delivering the SMSU curriculum and being mentored by an SMSU faculty member, has provided access to higher education to thousands of students throughout the state allowing high school students to achieve college credit without incurring student loan debt or paying the tuition themselves.

Another example of how SMSU serves the public good is via Co-Curricular clubs and organizations. Over 80 different clubs and activities are offered at SMSU. Each club, when filling out its annual renewal application and appeal for funding, must report on the service activities they conducted the previous year. Club service can take on many forms, for example, hosting fundraisers for Relay for Life or collecting items for the local food shelf. Clubs and organizations with a particular focus on serving the public good include: Enactus, SMSU Veteran's Association, and Southwest Marketing Advisory Center.

Although not a student club, SMSU Athletics teams provide service to the community through various programs that can be found on their webpage. Athletics was a national finalist representing the Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference for civic engagement Award of Excellence from the NCAA Division II during 2014-2015 for their Mustang Mail program that connects SMSU athletes with local elementary school students.

**1.D.2.**

SMSU is a member of the Minnesota State system and is partially (less than half) funded through state budget allocation. The student educational experience and learning is the primary purpose of the institution. Although some system-wide shared services require SMSU to use revenue for these purposes, the Minnesota State system works to create system-wide contracts for shared services. System-wide contracts can often be obtained at less cost or with more services than individual campuses can obtain on their own. Some of the shared services are mandatory and others are optional. The system provides many shared services for which appropriation is allocated to cover the costs and there are other shared services that are charged back to the institution, which must be covered from SMSU's budget. The external interests and public good described in 1.D.1 and 1.D.3 do not take primacy over the educational responsibilities of the university. Instead, these roles are integrated with student learning and their educational experience.

*1.D.3.*

The new core values adapted during the 2016-2021 strategic planning process moved Civic and Community Engagement to one of the four core values. One of the primary themes of SMSU is "*meaningful partnerships and engagement.*" More specifically, the Strategic Plan includes the community in a goal stating, "*Enhance campus life experiences by aligning facility resources with university and community needs*" (Master Facilities Plan).

In Fall 2016, a Civic Engagement Work Group was initiated by current SMSU President Connie J. Gores. The work group had representation from each of the bargaining units on campus. The work group had five charges, but the primary foci were to identify SMSU's current civic engagement activities and to create SMSU's Civic Action Plan (completed May 2017). The Civic Action Plan has nine goals and it serves as a guiding document and strategic plan for the Civic Engagement Center. An example of how this plan has helped SMSU engage with the regional community and respond to their needs is the development of a web platform called MustangsVolunteer that connects prospective volunteers with local service opportunities.

Another way that SMSU engages with and responds with external constituents and the regional community is through service learning embedded in academic programs. High impact examples of these programs include the Redwood River Mentoring and Monitoring Project and the Schwan's Employee Wellness Project. A large number of public school partnerships are active through the School of Education. SMSU also serves as the anchor institution in a community partnership with the Marshall YMCA to provide the structure for the Healthy 56258 initiative.

The Redwood River Monitoring Project is an ongoing, currently grant-funded, unique collaboration between SMSU and local secondary schools. SMSU students take a 2-credit course (ENVS 115) in which they learn about water quality and how to analyze a variety of water quality parameters. SMSU students then travel to Marshall High School where they mentor high school Biology students. In turn, the high school students, upon mastery of the information, mentor 7th grade students (with guidance and oversight by the SMSU mentors). The following week all groups of students meet at the Redwood River to collect water quality data.

In 2012, the SMSU Wellness and Human Performance Center began partnering with the Schwan's Company to offer a fitness program. The program matches Schwan's employees with Exercise Science majors to achieve individual fitness goals. This program has expanded to offer services to community members who may not otherwise be able to afford exercise prescription services. Ralco Nutrition, Inc. has been added to this program fall 2018. The program helps employees achieve individual health, fitness and wellness goals while giving SMSU Exercise Science students practical experience under the direction of faculty. It is an opportunity for employees and community members to improve their health and aid SMSU students learning.

SMSU provides for the public good by offering the region cultural enrichment and entertainment opportunities. Many academic departments at SMSU offer programs, presentations, and other opportunities for regional and university community members. In addition to their separate activities, each spring many programs collaborate to host a Fine Arts Celebration, which includes end-of-the-year productions but also involves readings and events to highlight fine arts. A brief sample that demonstrates the variety of these offerings can be found in the descriptions below:

- SMSU Theatre performances connect with 1500-2500 community members as audience and performers and recently added a summer Children's Theatre program.
- SMSU Music Program typically provides no fewer than five choral concerts, four jazz ensemble performances, and three concert/symphonic band concerts each year. In addition, the ensembles at SMSU regularly perform outreach performances outside the Marshall area. Music also hosts a 3-day intensive Minnesota Area Conducting Workshop serving over 200 conductors and teachers since its inception.
- The SMSU Planetarium through educational shows serves approximately 4,000 K-12 students each year. Throughout the year, public planetarium shows also attract people of all ages and draws people from 90-mile radius.
- SMSU's GOLD College – (Growth, Opportunity, Learning Development), brings 300-350

adults of the region a series of classes, educational trips and social events that enrich their lives within the stimulating atmosphere of the SMSU campus. Participants attend from a 60-mile radius. Each fall and spring term, 18-20 courses are presented with a variety of topics in history, computer, music, science, literature, writing, art and various other topics.

- Athletic competitive events – In 2017-2018 estimated attendance at SMSU sporting events were near 45,000 total attendees as defined by seats filled per game and not defined as unique individual persons attending.

## Sources

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- Crtn1D_Grants- Redwood Rive Monitoring
- Crtn1D_MustangsVOLUNTEER--Flyer
- Crtn1D1 Athletics Civic Engagement
- Crtn1D1 Grad Programs Online Learning Delivery Option
- Crtn1D1 SMSU Enactus Official Site
- Crtn1D1 Southwest Marketing Advisory Center
- Crtn1D1 Veterans Association
- Crtn1D1_College Now_The SMSU Concurrent Enrollment Program
- Crtn1D1_Office of Extended Learning and Academic Outreach
- Crtn1D2 Grad Programs Learning Community Delivery Option
- Crtn1D3 2018-2019 Theatre Season
- Crtn1D3 Football Cumulative Season Statistics
- Crtn1D3 Gold College
- Crtn1D3 MUSIC EVENTS 2017 - 2018
- Crtn1D3 Planetarium Shows
- Crtn1D3 Redwood River Water Monitoring Project
- Crtn1D3 Schwan Employee Wellness Program
- Crtn1D3 SMSU Childrens Theatre

# 1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary

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

## Summary

SMSU's Mission and mission-related documents are available on the SMSU website and in a variety of widely available publication materials. The current mission of SMSU was developed by a broad cross-section of the campus community in 2007 and subsequently approved by the Minnesota State System Board of Trustees. The Vision and Values of SMSU were more recently revised by an All-University Strategic Planning process. The current Strategic Plan and the five sub-plans (Academic Plan, Diversity Plan, Enrollment Management Plan, Institutional Capacity and Effectiveness Plan, and a Facilities Plan) outlined in Criterion 1 directly link SMSU's operations to the Mission as SMSU prepares students to meet current challenges and participate fully in their local and global communities. The Mission of SMSU states that our courses are taught in the liberal arts tradition and therefore, The Liberal Education Program serves as the general education requirements for undergraduate students.

## Sources

*There are no sources.*

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

## Argument

*Governing Board and System Administration*

Minnesota Statutes Section 136F.02 established the Minnesota State Board of Trustees and Minnesota Statutes Section 136F.06 authorized the Board to serve as the governing authority for all Minnesota State colleges and universities. Minnesota Statutes Section 136F.07 required the Board to appoint a Chancellor to serve as the chief administrator with powers and duties as delegated by the board. Under laws and statutes of the state of Minnesota and regulations of Minnesota Management and Budget, Minnesota State system policies and procedures ensure system institutions operate with integrity in financial, academic, human resource, and auxiliary activities.

All Board of Trustees actions and meetings are public events and are subject to the Minnesota Open Meeting Law. Minnesota Statutes 43A.38 sets forth a Code of Ethics for Employees in the Executive Branch, Board Policy 1C.1 prescribes the Board of Trustees Code of Conduct and System Procedure 1C.0.1 establishes a code of conduct for all employees of Minnesota State, including system administrators.

*Integrity in Functions*

Integrity in Financial Functions

SMSU, operating within its own fiscal and administrative policies as well as Minnesota State Board policies, follows all federal and state laws, rules and regulations that pertain to higher education institutions. MnSCU Policy 7.1 Finance and Administrative Authority of Board, Chancellor and Presidents delegates authority to the Chancellor to develop procedures and guidelines to implement the Board's policies for administrative and financial management of the system, including all colleges and universities. Board Policy 7.3 Financial Administration requires that system procedures assure that financial records are complete and safeguarded, financial information is accurate, reliable and useful for management reporting, and financial management methods support short term and longer term system and college and university strategic objectives.

Under Board Policy 5.9 Biennial and Annual Operating Budget Planning and Approval, colleges, universities, and the system office are required to prepare balanced budgets consistent with board policies and system procedures. The chancellor is responsible for monitoring the system, system office, and college and university budgets. Further, Board Policy 5.10 Reserves and Year-End

Balances and Board Procedure 5.10.1 General Operating Fund Reserve, all institutions in Minnesota State are required to accurately report financial data, which includes, but is not limited to, the composite financial index (CFI); primary reserve ratio; return on net assets; viability ratio; and operating margin ratio.

The Board of Trustees also maintains authority to set tuition rates for all system institutions and regulates fees charged to students in accordance with Board Policy 5.11 Tuition and Fees and System Procedure 5.11.1 Tuition and Fees. SMSU's Student Financial Aid Office guarantees delivery of federal and state financial assistance to students within the rules and regulations established by the respective departments of education and does so in a fair and ethical manner.

Board Policy 7.4 Financial Reporting requires the institution to file financial reports and statements, subject to audit, on an annual basis. Annual financial statements follow a Code of Conduct and are prepared in a combined effort of the SMSU institution and the Minnesota State Financial Reporting Team. SMSU participates in annual system-wide audits, which can be viewed at the Minnesota State – Office of Internal Auditing.

Integrity in Academic Functions

SMSU operates under the premise that the primary purpose of higher education is its academic function. A large number of processes, policies, agreements, and procedures guide the university and ensure that SMSU operates with integrity related to this function. These functions were established via collaborative processes between the faculty and the administration. The IFO-Minnesota State Master Agreement spells out all of the obligations and responsibilities of each party as it relates to the development of curriculum and the delivery of the academic programs. The contractual guidelines describe a process that helps to ensure that programs and courses are appropriate to the University's mission and resources and establishes the undergraduate and graduate curriculum processes.

Coupled with integrity in academic functions is adherence to policies. SMSU is governed by federal and state legislation, Minnesota State System policies (see below), University Policies and departmental or office level policies. Local policies are vetted through Meet and Confer meetings with bargaining units as a standing item on agendas. System polices are reviewed through shared governance functions with input from all levels and all colleges and universities comprising the Minnesota State System.

As the share of courses and programs offered online grows, SMSU is committed to academic quality and integrity. The Office of Extended Learning and Academic Outreach works collaboratively with academic programs and faculty to ensure the integrity and quality of off-campus offerings including Articulation Agreements, online programs in graduate degrees, learning communities, and other outreach programming. SMSU's Information Technology coordinates with the Instructional Design Librarian to offer workshops and support for faculty on online instructional technologies.

College Now, the concurrent enrollment program at SMSU, is another collaboration between academic faculty and administrative and service personnel. A member of the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnership (NACEP) since October of 2010, SMSU's commitment to standards of integrity remains strong. Integrity related to policy and procedures for College Now are included in both a Student Handbook and a Teacher Handbook.

The Minnesota State System also ensures integrity in academic functions via SMSU's compliance with system-wide policies and procedures. Minnesota Statutes 135F.06, Subdivision 1 provides that the board shall approve programs of study and requirements for completion of programs and approve

the awarding of appropriate certificates, diplomas, and degrees. Board Policy 3.36, Part 3, lists the academic awards authorized by the Board of Trustees, and Part 5 delegates to the chancellor the authority to approve new academic programs, changes to existing academic programs, suspension of academic programs, and closure of academic programs at system colleges and universities.

Board policies and related procedures also govern the following areas of academic functions: 2.9 Academic Standing and Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress, 3.3 Assessment for Course Placement, 3.4 Undergraduate Admissions, 3.5 Post-Secondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) Program, 3.6 Student Conduct, 3.8 Student Complaints and Grievances, 3.15 Advanced Placement Credit, 3.16 International Baccalaureate Credit, 3.21 Undergraduate Course and Credit Transfer and the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum, 3.22 Course Syllabi and Course Outlines, 3.29 College and University Transcripts, 3.33 College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) Credit, and 3.39 Transfer Rights and Responsibilities.

Technology and Integrity

Technology and academia are interwoven systematically. All offices, departments, programs, venues, etc. depend upon and utilize technologies with integrity and ethically considerations. Beginning with information security, SMSU acts in accordance with Minnesota State Board of Trustee policies, 5.13 Information Technology Administration, 5.22 Acceptable Use of Computers and Information Technology Resources Procedure and 5.23 Security and Privacy of Information Resources. SMSU Policies related to these are located on the Information Technology webpage.

The Technology Resource Center (TRC) is the face of technology at SMSU and serves as the front door to the SMSU campus community for technology services. Student and faculty are served with professional integrity in areas of user names and passwords, computer labs and printing, email addresses, gaming and network issues, D2L Brightspace access and training, faculty training in software and smart classrooms, assistance with conferencing and other tools, and more.

Integrity in Personnel Functions

Minnesota State requires non-discrimination and equal opportunity in both its educational and employment practices. Board Policy 1B.1 Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination in Employment and Education, defines the criteria for this standard and provides clear direction for accountability to campuses, faculty, and staff. The conduct of Board of Trustee members is governed under Board Policy 1C.1 Board of Trustee Code of Conduct and employees are held to a high standard of integrity through the Employee Code of Conduct (Policy 1C.2 Fraudulent or Other Dishonest Acts and Procedure 1C.0.1 Employee Code of Conduct):

- Members of the Board of Trustees must disclose any potential conflicts of interest and are not permitted to use their political appointment to secure personal benefits. Trustees may not exert personal influence over hiring or contractual agreements at the institutional or System levels.
- Likewise, all Minnesota State employees are held to standards to prevent use of their position as a state and system employee to their personal advantage.
- Minnesota State is committed to providing equal employment opportunities and all employees are held accountable for not allowing harassment of fellow employees or potential hires.

The Human Resources Office and via the contractual processes described in employment agreements ensure fair and ethical policies and practices. Human Resources offices must comply with board policies, system procedures, and local policies regarding Equal Education and Employment Opportunity. Those include in addition to system policies above, Reasonable Accommodations,

Affirmative Action in Employment, Response to Sexual Violence, and Access and Accommodation for Individuals with Disabilities. At SMSU, there are eight categories of employees, five of which are represented by collective bargaining:

- Inter Faculty Organization (IFO)
- Minnesota State University Association of Administrative and Service Faculty (MSUAASF)
- Middle Management Association (MMA)
- Minnesota Association of Professional Employees (MAPE)
- American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), Council 5.

The remaining three categories consist of labor plans:

- Minnesota State Administrator Plan
- Commissioner's Plan
- Managerial Plan

All contracts and/or plans are available on the Minnesota State and the Minnesota Management and Budget websites. Collective bargaining contracts or labor plans outline policies and procedures for processes such as workloads, paid and unpaid leave, grievances, performance reviews, professional development plans, etc.

New employees are required to complete training on the Minnesota State Code of Conduct, the use of private data, sexual harassment, and if applicable to the position, safety and security (see here).

Integrity in Auxiliary Functions

Board Policy 7.3 Financial Administration establishes general provisions for sound financial administration to safeguard the resources of the state of Minnesota, the system, the colleges and universities, and the constituencies they serve. System Procedure 7.3.2 Auxiliary Operations regulates auxiliary enterprises that are part of the college or university for proper and efficient management. System Procedure 7.3.5 Revenue Fund Management establishes parameters for management of the revenue fund.

Generally, auxiliary functions entail those activities and services related to but not intrinsic to educational functions. Auxiliary units at SMSU include Athletics, Health Services, Housing, Dining Services, the Bookstore, and Public Safety.

*Athletics*

SMSU athletics adheres to compliance procedures, codes of conduct, policies and regulations that hold integrity in high regard. On an annual basis, all SMSU coaching and athletic staff must sign NCAA Certification of Compliance which indicates they are knowledgeable of, and will adhere to, all compliance procedures and reporting. All coaches must annually complete the NCAA Coaches Certification Test. Coaching and athletic staff are governed by NCAA Rules and Regulations, which can be found in the NCAA Manual. There is monitoring of the full SMSU Athletic Department by a Compliance Officer to ensure the integrity of the athletic program at the university.

Student athletes are required to complete the follow policies and regulations:

- Obtain initial certification from the NCAA Eligibility Center prior to completion (prior to start at SMSU)
- Receive and review a copy of the SMSU Student-Athlete Handbook

- Attend annual meeting, prior to first practice, regarding NCAA Rules and Regulations as well as SMSU Student-Athlete Policies and Procedures.
- Complete annual information sheet & sign, indicating compliance to policies and procedures and providing complete and correct information.
- Annually sign the NCAA Student-Athlete Statement, which outlines five area (eligibility, Buckley Amendment, drug testing, amateurism status and ACT/SAT test score). This statement also outlines all NCAA Rules and Regulations that student-athletes much comply with in order to practice and compete.

When SMSU athletes compete in an NCAA championship event, coaches, student-athletes and administration are required to sign the NCAA Championships Code of Conduct Form prior to participation in any NCAA Championship. This further advances the ideals of integrity for individuals, the athletic program, athletic department and SMSU as exhibiting professionalism worthy of a championship honor.

For those engaging in intercollegiate athletics, the Intercollegiate Athletic Advisory Committee (IAAC) serves in an advisory capacity to the President and Athletic Director in matters relating to intercollegiate athletics. IAAC advises on policies, procedures and programs related to student-athletes, the athletic staff, the university, alumni and general public.

### *Health Services*

Health Services provides year round, free and confidential services, including medical evaluations, for registered students. Students pay a small fee for laboratory tests, certain medications, supplies, and sports physicals. Assistance is provided for off-campus referrals as necessary. Health Services employs a full-time nurse and provides local medical professionals three days per week during the school year. See http://www.smsu.edu/campuslife/healthservices/index.html.

SMSU has a Student Health Advisory Council that serves as a liaison between the student body and Health Services. The council assists with formulating new ideas; develops new programs to enhance the quality of services received; and reviews suggestions, concerns or complaints regarding campus healthcare operations in order to make recommendations to Health Services Administration. Members of the council include the Director of Health Services, one student member from the SMSU Student Senate, and other students at large. See current membership.

### *Housing, Dining and Bookstore*

All students living in the residence halls must first apply and then sign housing contracts. Residence Life policies and procedures are public as presented in "A Guide to Community Living". The Residence Hall Association (RHA) acts as a resource to the residence halls, channels communications between the houses, promotes programming and activities for residence hall students, and advises on formulation of residence hall policies.

Dining services and the bookstore operate through contractual agreement with the University per Board Policy 5.14. Currently, Chartwells and Barnes & Nobles are the respective service providers. Contracts are thoroughly vetted and usually active for a 5-year term with exceptions requiring approval from the Minnesota State Vice Chancellor for Finance, the Chancellor and/or the Board of Trustees. This procedure assists in keeping integrity and ethics in these services for the University.

### *Public Safety*

The Office of Public Safety follows procedures established by state and federal law, Minnesota State guidelines, and labor bargaining contracts. SMSU's Annual Security & Fire Safety Report includes important Campus Security Policy and crime statistics. These are maintained on the webpage from 1998 to the present. Sexual Assault reports are also compiled per Minnesota State statute. Complete information regarding parking regulations, traffic regulations, and the appeal process for tickets are available on Public Safety's webpage.

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# 2.B - Core Component 2.B

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

## Argument

SMSU works diligently to ensure that information is accessible, clear and complete. Channels used to disseminate this information include the university's website, marketing promotions, and electronic and print publications. All University-related media must adhere to the SMSU Brand Standards and Social Media Guidelines established by the Office of Communications and Marketing. The Office's Publications Editor monitors documents and media created by SMSU departments and engages in ongoing educational activities for departments and staff regarding the guidelines.

*The SMSU Website*

The SMSU website was recently redesigned and unveiled in June 2017. One of the primary goals of the new design was to make the website more useable as an information resource regarding the University, particularly for prospective students and their family members. A number of customized elements including the SMSU Today newsfeed and the online academic catalog, as well as social media integration and mobile responsive web design have been incorporated into the new website.

In conjunction with the website redesign and development, a new content management system (CMS), Cascade CMS, was adopted along with an improved underlying server architecture. The Cascade CMS provides enhanced version tracking, spell checking, broken link alerts, and accessibility compliance filters. The transition to Cascade CMS also resulted in the adoption of a new approach to managing website content. Key content editors in the administrative and academic departments were identified and provided with extensive training to maintain an assigned set of webpages within the site. Placing the content management in the hands of a small number of highly-trained editors lead to improved consistency of branding, style and design; accuracy in curriculum and academic information; alignment with recruiting and marketing efforts; and compliance for accessibility and legislative standards. In addition, the Office of Web Services utilizes analytics and industry best practices to enhance information clarity and improve the user experience across the entire site. See Office of Web Services philosophy and policies.

*Programs and Requirements*

The Academic Catalog is the paramount source of program and graduation requirement information. Since 2010, the catalog has been available fully and only online, and it is now updated annually; the 2008-10 catalog was the last printed two-year catalog. PDF copies of each year's catalog are retained for archival purposes. Another feature of the Academic Catalog is the recent addition of the 4-Year Mustang Academic Plan (MAP) for each degree. The Mustang Academic Plan is a click-through menu that will give students sample course schedules from freshman to graduation.

While the Academic Catalog houses all requirements for all programs, SMSU uses an online Degree Audit Reporting System (DARS) for the primary tool that students and advisors use to make certain all requirements in their specific degree program are being met. The DARS implementation began in spring of 2000. DARS tracks a student's progress towards degree; students log in to eServices to

access their own DARS, and advisors can access each of their students' DARS reports. The DARS has been improved over the years by adding more dashboard features and color-coding, making it even more clear when requirements have been met (green) or are yet to be accomplished (red). Student petition forms are directly linked on the DARS form, making it easier for students to navigate the petition process. All program requirements have been coded into the DARS system, but as programs change, the DARS coding must also be changed because DARS program requirements are keyed to the Academic Catalog year in which a student began coursework at SMSU. The DARS system also helps to generate degree checks for graduating seniors, and transfer students' previous coursework is loaded into DARS, clearly marking which courses transfer into their degree and program requirements.

Transfer students can find information about which of their classes will transfer by using the Transferology website offered as a link from the SMSU Registration and Records webpage for transfer student information. Using this website, information from previously taken courses from any number of institutions is used to see what automatically transfers and what might have to be petitioned. As part of a "*Smart Transfer*" initiative started by the System Office in 2010 and further prompted by legislation requiring ease of transfer within the state system, SMSU complies with Minnesota State System requirements regarding the sharing of course outlines and other necessary information to ease transfer for students. A new Transfer Credit policy relating System Office requirements to local requirements was approved through SMSU's shared governance Meet and Confer process in January 2014 and revised in February 2016.

Transfer students who are part of a 2+2 program follow the articulated requirements for transfer and acceptance into the designated program. All detailed articulation agreements can be found on the Minnesota Transfer website. The full text of articulation agreements can be unwieldy for students, but the Office of Extended Learning and Academic Outreach maintains listings of the different 2+2 partnerships on their webpage and links to easy-to-use advising guides for 2+2 programs.

College Now program and course requirements are available on the university's College Now webpage, along with all needed information for students, high school teachers, and SMSU faculty liaisons. Students and their high school faculty can find troubleshooting information.

Prospective students and their parents can easily find information on the Office of Admission webpage. Viewers find different types of information depending on whether they are pursuing graduate or undergraduate coursework, or if they are interested in Post-Secondary Enrollment Option (PSEO), College Now, or extended learning opportunities. Requirements for admission to each type of program, along with related information such as financial aid, scholarships, or general information about campus, is easily found through the links from the Office of Admission's portal site. Specific webpages for International and Transfer students interested in the University's programs are also available.

*Cost to Students*

As noted above, the Office of Admission's webpages link directly to the main page for Financial Aid. The SMSU Financial Aid office strives to deliver valuable information to the public and one of the most used tools is the webpage. The webpage is monitored to ensure it provides all current and prospective students with up-to-date information about the costs of attending SMSU, financial aid programs available, and on-campus employment opportunities for students. The Net Price Calculator is included on the site as required by Federal Regulation, and all students who receive an award notice from SMSU receive a link to the Financial Aid Shopping Sheet hosted by the U.S. Department of Education. The Financial Aid Shopping Sheet provides information to students on both possible forms

of Financial Aid and Costs. Many links on the Financial Aid site connect to pages on the University's Business Services site to help direct students to the appropriate offices for help.

*Faculty and Staff*

The University maintains an online directory that is easily searchable by department or individual. In addition to the directory, the Academic Catalog lists the faculty associated with each department or program at the beginning of each discipline's catalog entry. These faculty listings are linked to the online directory. Each department or office on campus also lists its employees on their individual webpages. Employees are responsible for updating their profile page to include information such as where they received their degrees through a Southwest Net tool. However, not all employees fill out the additional information on their profiles. The University is currently working on a process to integrate standard information regarding faculty credentials within the Academic Catalog.

The Office of Communications and Marketing works extensively to promote the achievements of individual faculty and staff through ongoing postings of upcoming events and articles on faculty, staff, and SMSU community members in *SMSU Today* and on the main University website page or other major program pages (e.g. Alumni page). Also, faculty and staff contributions are routinely highlighted in numerous routine print publications including the Alumni quarterly magazine called the Focus and the SMSU Foundation's Annual Report. The University also began in 2017 a program called Mustang Ovations to celebrate and promote campus achievements.

*Control.*

SMSU is one of seven state universities in the Minnesota State system. SMSU's relationship to Minnesota State is clearly indicated at the bottom of every webpage, along with a link to the Minnesota State home page. Furthermore, Minnesota State maintains an Accountability Dashboard for all institutions within the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system. The Accountability Dashboard is designed to track progress in reaching the system's strategic goals and to encourage continuous improvement of each institution in the system. The dashboard contains links to the following types of data, which SMSU reports to Minnesota State annually: Composite Financial Index, Enrollment, Facilities Condition Index, Licensure Exams Pass Rate, and Student Persistence and Completion.

The University notes its accredited status from the Higher Learning Commission on its Accreditations webpage and on a page dedicated to the university-wide accreditation, where it displays the HLC logo and direct link to the HLC. In addition to HLC accreditation, the University is accredited or holds special certification from the following organizations:

- The National Association of Schools of Music
- The Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board
- The Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education
- The Council on Social Work Education
- National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP)

In addition to the information above, 2014 HLC Review Team a comment regarding this component was made. See the table below for information regarding SMSU's response to the comment.

| Summary of 2014 Reviewer Comments:<br><br>Criterion 2 Core Component B | SMSU Response and Actions |
| --- | --- |

| | |
|---|---|
| More uniform credentials of faculty would better communicate the credentials of faculty with constituencies. | Most faculty have updated their credentials in the SMSU Directory and there are ongoing efforts to maintain up to date credentials in directory listings. |

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# 2.C - Core Component 2.C

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

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

## Argument

The Minnesota Senate and House of Representatives oversee the Minnesota State operations and finances, per Minnesota Statute Chapter 136F. The system is governed by a 15-member Board of Trustees appointed by the governor of Minnesota and approved by the Minnesota State Senate. The Board's required mission is to provide programs of study that meet the needs of students for occupational, general, baccalaureate, and graduate education. In order to pursue that outcome, the board is directed to make possible the efficient use of the facilities and staff of the technical colleges, community colleges, and state universities so that students may benefit from improved and broader course offerings, ease of transfer among schools and programs, integrated course credit, coordinated degree programs, and coordinated financial aid. The board shall control administrative costs by eliminating duplicative administrative positions and course offerings (Minnesota Statutes 136F.05).

Policies and Procedures ensure that the governing board:

- Preserves and enhances the institution.
  - Minnesota State Policy 1.C.1 Board of Trustees Code of Conduct
- Listens to, takes into account interests of internal and external constituencies.
  - Minnesota State Policy 2.3 Student Involvement in Decision-Making.
  - Minnesota State Policy 3.1 Student Rights and Responsibilities
- Is independent.
  - Minnesota State Policy 1C.1 Board of Trustees Code of Conduct. See especially Part 3. Conflicts of Interest
- Delegates authority to SMSU's administration
  - Minnesota State Policy 4.2 Appointment of Presidents
- Expects faculty to oversee academic matters.
  - Minnesota State Procedure 3.22.1 Course Syllabi and Course outlines.
  - Inter-Faculty Organization-Minnesota State Master Agreement, Article 6, Section B. Meet and Confer.

**2.C.1.**

The Board of Trustees operates under an extensive Code of Conduct as stated in Minnesota State Board Policies and Procedure 1C. System management, which ensures an individual institution's

preservation and enhancement, however, is chiefly carried out by the Office of the Chancellor. The Minnesota State System's Chancellor, according to the Minnesota State website, "*is responsible for providing academic leadership to the system's 31 colleges and universities, ensuring effective and efficient management and operation of the system's carrying out board policies, recommending operating and capital budgets to the board, and planning for current and long-term educational needs of Minnesota.*"

**2.C.2.**

The Minnesota State Board of Trustees meets at least 7 times per year and all board meetings are open to the public in compliance with the Minnesota Open Meeting Law. The meeting dates, location, and times are posted on the Minnesota State website along with board policies, roster of trustees, calendar, committee assignments, meeting materials, and meeting minutes. Comments and discussion from the general public are permitted at the discretion of the chair of the board, subject to approval of the board. Meetings are recorded and live streamed on the Minnesota State website.

The Board of Trustees submits a biennial budget request to the state legislature reflecting its commitment to provide an extraordinary education to students at an affordable cost. The board submitted its request for FY2016-FY2017 by passing a resolution stating in part:

> *Minnesota's future depends upon a broad-based, highly-trained, highly-skilled workforce. To support increased educational and economic opportunities for all Minnesotans, the Board of Trustees of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities is committed to protecting affordability and the access it provides to our academic programs and student success; providing the talented faculty and staff who deliver an extraordinary education to our students and prepare them for work and careers; and protecting the programs on our campuses that are vital to serving our students and communities across Minnesota and vital to the economic growth of our state.*

President Connie J. Gores leads SMSU and as the chief executive officer is responsible for leading the faculty, staff and students in developing and implementing the University's mission. The President is the primary spokesperson for the college or university and regularly consults with students, faculty, staff and members of the community. Duties and responsibilities of the President include providing innovative educational leadership, allocating campus resources, employing personnel, following system policies and procedures and implementing the system's strategic plan.

SMSU's Student Handbook provides students with information on opportunity for involvement in University governance and describes student access to the Board of Trustees through the Minnesota State University Student Association, as recognized by the Board. SMSU Student Association representatives meet and discuss with the SMSU administration on a regular basis.

**2.C.3.**

Membership of the board is defined in Minnesota Statute 136F.02, Subdivision 1 as follows:

> *The board consists of 15 members appointed by the governor, including three members who are students who have attended an institution for at least one year and are enrolled at the time of appointment at least half time in a degree, diploma, or certificate program in an institution governed by the board. The student members shall include one member from a community college, one member from a state university, and one member from a technical college. One member representing labor must be appointed after considering the recommendations made*

*under section 136F.045. The governor is not bound by the recommendations. Appointments to the board are with the advice and consent of the senate. At least one member of the board must be a resident of each congressional district. All other members must be appointed to represent the state at large. In selecting appointees, the governor must consider the needs of the board and the balance of the board membership with respect to labor and business representation and racial, gender, geographic, and ethnic composition. A commissioner of a state agency may not serve as a member of the board.*

Removal of a member of the governing board may only occur upon cause after notice and hearing, or after missing three consecutive meetings (Minnesota Statutes Section 15.0575).

The Trustees must also comply with Board Policy 1.C.1 Board of Trustees Code of Conduct which prohibits the use of the position to secure personal benefits, to disclose confidential communications or to exert influence in hiring or awarding contracts and must disclose potential conflicts of interest. All meetings of the board comply with the Minnesota Open Meeting Law.

**2.C.4.**

The Board of Trustees is required to appoint a chancellor, who shall perform duties as delegated by the board (Minnesota Statutes 136F.07). Each college or university shall have a president appointed by the board upon recommendation of the chancellor. Policy 4.2, part 1. provides:

*The president is the chief executive officer of the college or university. The president shall report to the chancellor and is responsible for leading the college and/or university faculty, staff, and students in developing and implementing the college or university mission, consistent with the board mission and goals. The president is the primary spokesperson for college or university interests and shall consult regularly with students, faculty, staff, and members of the community. The president shall advise the chancellor, the staff of the system office, and the Board of Trustees on matters of system policy as appropriate, and otherwise administer and support all Minnesota State Colleges and Universities policies and programs. The president shall also lead in generating and sustaining the university/college vision as an integral part of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system. The duties and responsibilities of the president shall include, but not be limited to, adhering to board policies and system procedures, employing personnel, providing innovative educational leadership, allocating campus resources, and implementing the board's strategic plan.*

Minnesota State university faculty are represented by a collective bargaining unit and the agreement assigns responsibilities for academic matters to the faculty. Faculty at the universities are represented by the Inter Faculty Organization (IFO). The 2017-2019 IFO Contract provides, among other things, that: *each faculty member shall be a member of a department and that Department faculty shall establish, annually or more frequently as appropriate, through a democratic process and in a manner consistent with university procedures and the provisions of this Agreement, departmental goals, objectives, policies, procedures, and teaching and other work schedules. In addition, each program may establish program-specific goals, objectives, policies, procedures and schedules. The department shall make every effort to ensure that teaching and other work schedules meet program, department, college and university objectives. The administration may develop guidelines to aid in this effort.*

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# 2.D - Core Component 2.D

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

## Argument

By providing "*a supportive environment for intellectual expression…*" freedom of expression is a core value of this institution and is reflected in the University's guiding values. In addition, SMSU adheres to Minnesota State Board of Trustee's policies. Under Minnesota State Policy 3.1 Student Rights and Responsibilities the first three points address the freedoms of learning, expression, and association. The SMSU Student Handbook references these rights and provides information on the procedure to address grievances.

Students with complaints about the university have clear processes to follow as outlined in the Student Handbook. Students are alerted via email each semester about the complaint policy and procedure.  The Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs maintains a record of these as submitted in Federal Compliance documentation. In addition, SMSU follows the Minnesota State Board's Policy 1.B.1 Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination in Employment and Education.This policy is linked to the University's Affirmative Action webpage, which provides procedures for addressing complaints and lists all Minnesota State policies related to complaints of discrimination or harassment.

SMSU's faculty value their right of academic freedom and accept the inherent responsibilities as stated in their union's contract with Minnesota State.  The Master Agreement between the Inter Faculty Organization and Minnesota State recognizes the value of Academic Freedom in Article 4, with the agreement "*to maintain and encourage full freedom, within the law, of inquiry, teaching and research*."  Faculty rights, responsibilities and obligations are outlined in Section C of Article 4 of the agreement. The contract between Minnesota State University Association of Administrative and Service Faculty and Minnesota State also provides for academic freedom in Article 4, mirroring much of the same language as in the Inter Faculty Organization contract. The contracts contain grievance procedures to address any concerns. While the faculty handbook lists suggestions for what topics a syllabus should include, faculty create and develop their own syllabi, in keeping with agreed-upon departmental requirements for courses. Faculty also guide and conduct academic assessment.

Minnesota State Policy 5.22 Acceptable Use of Computers and Information Technology Resources acknowledges academic freedom as it relates to access to information and resources.  As stated in both the policy and the related procedure, "*nothing in this policy shall be interpreted to expand, diminish or alter academic freedom.*"  (See also 5.22.1 Acceptable Use of Computers and Information Technology Resources Procedure.)

In addition to a commitment to freedom of expression, SMSU is committed to the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning. This is evident by our student Academic Honesty Policy, our Institutional Research Board Policies, and the required Liberal Education Program student learning outcome for critical thinking. Truth in teaching and learning are more fully addressed in Core Component 2.E.

In addition to the information above, 2014 HLC Review Team made a comment related to this component. See the table below for information regarding SMSU's response to the comment.

| **2014 Reviewer Comments:** Criterion 2 Core Component D | **SMSU Response and Actions** |
|---|---|
| Although not mentioned specifically regarding this criteria it was mentioned in the Federal Compliance review. The student complaint policy should be coordinated at the Provost level and published in a greater number of places. | The Student Complaint Policy was updated, is coordinated by the Provost's Office, and has been widely published in faculty and student handbooks. |

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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, students and staff.

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

## Argument

**2.E.1.**

The institution provides effective oversight and support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff and students. In addition to the Academic Honesty policy and procedures noted below in 2.E.3, the University supports the integrity of research by faculty, staff, and students through the Institutional Research Board(IRB). The IRB is a committee of faculty, staff, and administration who review all university research activities involving human or animal participants to ensure that it is being conducted ethically.

As part of the faculty contract, faculty design Professional Development Plans addressing five criteria. One criterion is scholarly or creative achievement or research. Plans are reviewed and may be commented on by department colleagues. The college Deans provide guidance and support for research and scholarly practice. The contract requires the department to provide comment on faculty plan outcomes contained in their Professional Development Report. These are sent to the Deans at the end of the academic year.  The purpose is to guide and support all faculty, but particularly tenure track faculty, toward their creativity and research goals.

**2.E.2.**

Students are provided information at various points in their academic career about their responsibility to read and understand the information in the Student Handbook, which includes ethical guidelines on plagiarism and cheating. Information literacy is taught in conjunction with critical thinking in the LEP 100 *First Year Seminar* (FYS) courses and these often include assistance with Library research and information literacy skills sessions offered by librarians. The SMSU Library has developed a webpage containing Citation Guides. Appropriate citing and documentation may also be covered in one-on-one research consultations scheduled by students with a librarian or with peer students in Writing Center. In addition, the SMSU Writing Center webpage has resources for how to avoid plagiarism and appropriately use citations.

**2.E.3.**

The University's Academic Honesty Policy (A-032) clearly states expectations and ramifications related to academic dishonesty. Graduate students are held to the same academic honesty standard as noted in Policy A-045 Graduate Policies and Procedures.  For all concerns regarding academic honesty, there is a procedure in place that also help to track enforcement, especially of serious cases: incidents are documented and forwarded to the Deans' Office, and sanctions are clearly stated. There

is also an opportunity for students to appeal findings (Procedure G-005 Academic Appeals.)

The Writing Center has a policy regarding academic dishonesty; if Center consultants suspect plagiarism, there are specific guidelines to address this issue with students. Consultants refer to the University's academic dishonesty policy and report incidents to the Writing Center Director.

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# 2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary

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

## Summary

SMSU serves its constituents ethically and responsibly. Integrity is ensured through compliance with many levels of statute, policy, and procedures from the Minnesota State Legislature, to Minnesota State System, campus-level, and support office-level. SMSU is committed to ethical acquisition of knowledge via its teaching and learning focused campus environment and is committed to service of its various communities through living out the ideal of civic engagement.

## Sources

*There are no sources.*

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

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

## 3.A - Core Component 3.A

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

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

## Argument

**3.A.1.**

SMSU has curriculum approval processes that ensure currency and appropriate-level of student performance. These are administered by an undergraduate Curriculum Committee and a Graduate Curriculum Committee. According to SMSU Policy A-001 developing and recommending curricular change proposals mainly lies with the Faculty Association. Proposals may originate from outside the Faculty Association. Normally, proposals must be approved by an academic department prior to submission to the Curriculum Committee. Any new courses or revisions affecting the course description require Course Outline submission. Curricular processes are designed to seek broad input from the academic community, including faculty, students, administrators, and university supporters. Proposals of Major Significance undergo a vote of the Faculty Assembly and subsequent signature by the Faculty Association President prior to submission to Administration for approval. The Assistant to the Dean prepares the curriculum documents for signature by the appropriate Dean. After Dean's signature, the Assistant to the Dean inputs the curriculum into the Minnesota State System's curriculum management system. Each of these steps in the undergraduate curriculum process facilitates assurance of currency and appropriateness of performance level. The graduate curriculum processes utilize the same policies and forms but instead use a committee of faculty with Graduate Faculty Status.

The program review process is an important source of ongoing evaluation of currency and appropriateness. Program reviews are performed on a 5-year rotating cycle for the Arts Letters and Sciences and for Business, Education, and Professional Studies. Programs with specialized accreditation follow their outside accreditation review schedule. The two key elements in program reviews at SMSU are the annual collection of data and the periodic academic Program Review, which includes a self-study and outside consultant evaluation. The Director of Institutional Research & Reporting provides each program data in areas that include demographics, enrollment, and fiscal resources. Periodic program review is conducted on a five-year cycle. The periodic review includes curriculum, students and faculty, distance learning, service to the campus, and other relevant aspects

of the program's activities. In completing a review Self-Study, program faculty examine strengths and weaknesses of their program and consider potential improvements. An outside reviewer evaluates the self-study, interviews students and faculty, and reviews the physical resources available to the program then subsequently submits a report. The program faculty then submits a written response to their academic Dean. The response addresses in detail the reviewer's recommendations and describes strategies they plan to implement resulting from the self-study process. Throughout review, faculty members are expected to identify areas for improvement and adjust their curricula accordingly.

Specialized Accreditation and Licensing Criteria for teaching programs helps programs who seek outside accreditation along with support programs to ensure courses and curricula are appropriate and current. For more information, see Criterion 4. The following programs have specialized accreditation or licensing:

- Social Work
- Nursing
- Music
- College Now (concurrent enrollment)
- All School of Education Licensing Programs

Per contract, all fixed-term and tenure-track faculty members must annually set goals and then report at the end of the year on their progress on their goals in five areas, one of which is "*Evidence of Continuing Preparation and Study*." Several forms of evidence for this criterion include:

- Currency in professional discipline or field of study
- Structured study leading to development of experimental programs, curricular proposals or revisions, and ongoing revisions to course syllabi or instructional methods
- Disciplinary or pedagogical currency.

Combined with the mechanisms above, select programs also utilize Advisory Councils. The main roles for these councils is to provide input and guidance on policies and best practices. Council members include individuals with specialized expertise related to the program and therefore these interactions enhance curricular currency and appropriate student preparation. See information about policies guiding these current SMSU Advisory Councils:

- Culinology and Hospitality
- Agriculture
- Exercise Science
- Graphic Design
- Teacher Education
- College Now
- GOLD College
- Nursing

### 3.A.2.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) have been developed for every SMSU academic program as a component of our Plan for the Assessment of Student Learning. In addition, SLOs for the Liberal Education Program were developed through an all-campus effort and beginning 2019 will reflect the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum learning outcomes. Liberal Education SLOs are available on the Liberal Education Program webpage and are contained in the Catalog. Syllabus Policy requires all syllabi to indicate Program SLOs for all courses and LEP SLOs for undergraduate courses addressed

by the course. The separation of curriculum committees by degree level described in 3.A.1 aid in differentiating learner expectations in part by the Graduate Faculty status of the Graduate Council's Curriculum Committee.

An example of how differentiation becomes evident is through the practice of stacked courses. When courses are stacked by level (e.g. 200/300 or 400/500), course outcomes are differentiated on the syllabus. In the case of 400/500 level courses classes in Education and Business, students taking the courses at the 500-level must meet higher standards for graduate-level credit and complete additional assignments.

**3.A.3.**

SMSU ensures consistency in program quality and learning goals regardless of delivery mode or location. SMSU has made a concerted effort in the last two years to update course descriptions and course outlines in the academic catalog. Many of these course outlines contain program student learning outcomes and current Syllabus Policy requires faculty to include student learning outcomes. Unique program delivery modes are more fully described below.

*Undergraduate Distance Learning 2+2.*

2+2 programs, also known as Undergraduate Distance Learning are active with select community and technical colleges within the state. Examples of the recent partnerships are Riverland Community College, Normandale Community College, Anoka-Ramsey Community College, and North Hennepin Community College. After transferring their associate's degree coursework, SMSU offers either on-line or face-to-face on the two-year campus all courses that are needed to complete their degree. The Office of Extended Learning and Academic Outreach serves as the gatekeeper for institution initiated articulation agreements. Articulations are initiated with faculty approving the mode of delivery, partnering institutions and other contractual arrangements (see procedures). The Office of Extended Learning and Academic Outreach secures the approval of additional internal and external stakeholders through a systematic process of review and endorsement. Stakeholders include the faculty, department chairs, deans, registrar and provost, each of whom have options to suggest changes or approve the planned articulation. Once articulation agreements are in place, or if academic programs have agreements through the Minnesota State System pathways, the appropriate academic faculty retain the commitment to academic rigor and integrity throughout the curriculum.

*College Now (CN) Concurrent Enrollment.*

SMSU has offered concurrent enrollment courses since 1984 and has maintained National Association of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP) accreditation since 2010. NACEP recently re-accredited SMSU in 2017. High school students are subject to the same learning outcomes and grading criteria as other college students as outlined in HLC's publication "*Dual Credit in U.S. Higher Education: A Study of State Policy and Quality Assurance Practices.*" With course delivery in a high school setting, methods used to achieve learning goals may differ, and often experience more clock time in the course compared to a college section. In order to maintain consistency, SMSU faculty mentors work closely with their assigned high school instructors, and the College Now program provides additional professional development for the high school instructors. Instructor credentials are vetted through departments and the CN Director. SMSU faculty mentors oversee the teacher and regularly communicate with high school teachers. Mentors check test and major assignment samples for difficulty level and grading equivalency. Since 2012, new CN teachers attend an orientation workshop, part of a one day College Now Summer Workshop. Additional resources for CN students, teachers, high school administrators, and supervising faculty are available at this

webpage.

*Graduate Programs.*

Graduate degrees in Master of Business Administration (MBA) and Master of Science in Education (M.S. Ed) are offered in on-campus, online, and distance learning cohort models. Each year, some of the MBA courses are offered via Adobe Connect to ensure on-campus and distance learning students receive the same instruction. Education faculty work diligently to ensure students are meeting the same learning outcomes and have developed an assessment plan for monitoring student achievement in all formats. The learning community locations change as needed every two years depending on demand. SMSU's Statement of Affiliation Status reflects learning communities as additional locations, although they are meeting sites for the groups and change periodically. The learning community format had a successful HLC Multi-State Site Visit in November 2016.

In addition to the information above, 2014 HLC Review Team comments regarding this component were made. See the table below for information regarding SMSU's response to the comments.

| Summary of 2014 Reviewer Comments: Criterion 3 Core Component A | SMSU Response and Actions |
| --- | --- |
| Syllabi should have learning objectives, grading criteria, point assignment schemes, and an ADA statement | The Syllabus Policy was revised to ensure programmatic and Liberal Education Program learning objectives were on syllabi along with an ADA statement. Also, this policy was revised to add language for when artifacts from the course would be used for assessment, that students will be informed. |
| Student Learning Objectives must be measurable. | The Liberal Education Program was changed in 2015-2016 to remove unmeasurable outcomes. Since 2013, SMSU academic programs have received professional development regarding student learning outcomes. Academic programs were assigned assessment liaisons during the first year of the Assessment Academy project to assist with their assessment plans including learning outcomes. Academic programs received additional training at the spring 2018 Assessment Day on how to write Student Learning Outcomes that are meaningful and measurable. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Student Learning Objectives should be on Departmental/Programmatic Websites and published widely.<br><br><br>Student Learning Objectives should be in the course catalog. | Student Learning Outcomes can be found on many program webpages and for the remaining programs are being added to the SMSU webpages. Each academic program webpage, including graduate programs, is linked in the catalog. The Liberal Education Program learning outcomes are linked in the catalog. |
| There are consistency issues with assessment measurement documentation. | Beginning the fall of 2018, academic programs will utilize a newly developed reporting procedure that includes an executive summary template (Report on Assessment of Student Learning). It is expected that this will increase consistency in assessment documentation. |

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- Institution Status and Requirements (6)

# 3.B - Core Component 3.B

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

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

## Argument

**3.B.1.**

SMSU's Liberal Education Program (LEP) provides the intellectual inquiry areas for all undergraduate degrees and is embodied in the university mission, as "*Southwest Minnesota State University prepares students to meet the complex challenges of this century as engaged citizens in their local and global communities. Our comprehensive degree programs, taught in the liberal arts tradition, are dedicated to connecting students' academic and practical professional development experiences in southwestern Minnesota to the wider world.*" As required by the Minnesota State system, the LEP is consistent with the goals of the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum. As discussed in Criterion 1A, in the fall of 2019, the MnTC learning outcomes will replace the current LEP learning outcomes. This is a decrease in number of outcomes from 10 in 2014 to 7 (see 3B2). Currently, the LEP learning outcomes include:

- Communicate effectively.
- Be creative thinkers able to identify, formulate, and solve problems using interdisciplinary perspectives.
- Be critical thinkers who evaluate information wisely and examine how assumptions and positions are shaped.
- Understand both physical and social aspects of the world and their place in it.
- Embrace the similarities among peoples and appreciate the diversity that enriches the human experience.
- Analyze moral judgments and engage in moral discourse.
- Practice responsible citizenship in their local and global communities.

**3.B.2.**

The LEP was originally developed through a multi-year process in consultation with the Center for Inquiry in the Liberal Arts at Wabash College. It was implemented with 10 learning outcomes in 2010 and revised to the 7 most measureable outcomes in 2015 in response to the 2014 HLC report. Recommendations suggested that when combined with the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum outcomes, there were simply too many student learning outcomes to meet. The 7 student learning outcomes in 3.B.1. expose students to broad knowledge and intellectual concepts. Additional graduation requirements include an extension of these LEP requirements in upper-division courses in a student's major:

1) a communication/criticial thinking-focused (Core Skills) course in the major

2) a major capstone course

3) the LEP 400 Contemporary Issues Seminar- an interdisciplinary capstone course, which emphasizes the creative thinking outcome through approved topic sections.

**3.B.3.**

*Undergraduate Programs*

Undergraduate students must complete the LEP requirements described above. The learning outcomes and requirements allow students to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to adapt to changing environments. Specifically, the outcomes of Communicate Effectively, Critical Thinking, and Creative Thinking in a problem-solving manner equip students for a variety of environments. To meet the communication/critical-thinking component described in 3.B.2., all undergraduate programs designate a course as a communication, critical thinking, and information literacy-focused that requires students to collect, analyze, and communicate information. This course is an extension of skills that are developed in the lower-level written communication sequence (English 151 Academic Writing & English 251 Writing in the Professions), the oral communication requirement (Communication 110 Essentials of Speaking and Listening), and the critical thinking requirement (LEP 100 First Year Seminar or Philosophy 101 Critical Thinking). The LEP 100 course is offered using topics courses approved by the Liberal Education Committee and Curriculum Committee. To demonstrate mastering modes of inquiry or creative work, all academic programs designate unique capstone courses. Broadly, evidence for meeting this sub-component includes large student participation rates in the SMSU Undergraduate Research Conference currently encompassing 21 different academic units and other similar campus events such as Celebrate Science Week and the School of Education's Learning Community Research Conference.

*Graduate Programs*

SMSU offers four Graduate-level degrees: Master of Business Administration, Master of Science in Education, Master of Science in Special Education, and Master of Science in Physical Education Coaching of Sport. Each program satisfies this sub-component via program-specific means. In addition, SMSU offers a graduate program in Education leading to Administrator Licensure.

In the M.S. in Education and the M.S. in Special Education, all students complete a 3 course sequence culminating with an Action Research project as a component of their degree program. The project requires students to develop a research question or goal; write a literature review on the research topic; plan an action research project to answer the research question or goal; conduct the research, gather and analyze data, and then report the findings in their paper. Research findings are communicated to peers, committee members, and faculty via online presentations or the Learning

Community Conference held each April. The research process spans the entire graduate program. Coursework and instruction on research methods require working with qualitative and quantitative data. Faculty encourage students to be able to learn, unlearn, and relearn in order to be adaptable. Additionally, radical constructivist and social learning aspects require students to construct and apply meaning experientially. Course material is updated frequently to include the latest in research and practice.

In the M.S. in Physical Education Coaching of Sport, all students complete a problem-focused literature review during PE 602 Research Foundation in Sport Methods & Statistics Analysis as a component of their degree. They are required to develop a research question, write a literature review on the research question, and share how they would conduct the research on the topic. Their literature review and plans to conduct research are shared with their peers, mentors, and faculty via an online presentation. Regarding preparation for a changing environment, in PE 603 Sports Skills, Tactics, and Evaluation in Coaching taught spring 2018, students learned to develop and maintain a Blog and also used software of their choice to analyze motor skills. These projects in PE 603 allow practice in effective uses of technology and data collection that coaches may implement immediately into their coaching practices.

The M.B.A. program is delivered from a practitioner perspective. Students complete the eight core courses regardless of concentration area wherein students collect, analyze and communicate relevant information to meet course goals. Students complete research projects, case studies, court cases, simulations, class presentation, online presentations and more. Each course requires at least one element of collection, analysis and communication of information. The information is generally presented to the faculty and peers via in-class or online presentations. In MBA 607 Strategic Marketing Management and MBA 660 Legal and Ethical Environment of Business, students discuss court cases and simulations. In the capstone course MBA 607 Strategic Marketing Management students collect, analyze and communicate information via business case studies. Up to date simulations and case studies help provide students for an ever-changing career landscape.

**3.B.4.**

The mission, values, strategic plan, and LEP outcomes/MnTC all support diversity. Specifically, the mission is to prepare students as "*engaged citizens in their local and global communities*." One of the key components of the Strategic Plan is the Diversity Plan. The Office of Diversity and Inclusion provides campus leadership by providing many campus and community programs. Between 2016 and 2018 faculty and staff also had anti-racism, anti-bullying (scheduled Fall 2018), and safe space training opportunities.

Academically, students take a minimum of 6 credits related to diversity and global perspective. Currently, 24 courses meet the Diversity learning outcome and 23 courses meet the Global outcome spanning 13 disciplines. Faculty are dedicated to include human and cultural diversity within the courses taught, which is confirmed by results from the Minnesota State Consortium question on the 2017 NSSE. When students were asked whether "*faculty use examples of experiences from various racial or ethnic groups in their courses*," 73% of first year and 73% of senior students agreed with this statement as compared to 75% and 68% respectively in 2015. These data were comparable to the Minnesota State Consortium data in 2017 of 77% of first year students and 69% of seniors responding similarly.

SMSU charges in-state tuition rates for all students, which enhances diversity through attracting international students. Since 2011 international students at SMSU represented 44 different countries and SMSU had 127 international undergraduate and 60 international graduate students in 2017.

SMSU co-curricular activities are another opportunity to experience students with diverse backgrounds. The following co-curricular activities support diversity:

- Access Association
- African Student Association
- American Sign Language Club
- Black Student Union
- Bridges International
- Club Latino
- Feminists Club
- Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Ally (GLBTA)
- History Club
- Hmong Student Organization
- International Student Organization
- Muslim Student Association
- Non-Traditional Student Organization
- Oyate Club
- UGLYS (United Global Leaders Yearning for Success)

**3.B.5.**

For faculty, Scholarly and Creative Work is required in the Minnesota State-IFO contract, Article 10, Section A. Faculty describe the scholarly and creative work criterion in their Professional Development Plans and Reports. This can be satisfied via widely ranging manners as seen in Appendix G of the contract. Evidence of scholarship can be found in the Arts, Letters, and Science Annual Reports and the Business, Education, and Professional Studies Annual Reports.

Students are deeply involved in knowledge discovery, creative work, and scholarship. Undergraduate research is a critical component of many students' programs of study. The following is a recent sampling of student scholarly presentations and related demonstrations.

- 2017 SMSU Undergraduate Research Conference- 217 students presented 46 oral presentations and 93 posters supervised by 35 different faculty members.
- 2017 Minnesota State Undergraduate Scholars Conference - 4 students
- Other campus research presentations- Accounting, Education, and Science
- Research Chefs Association Student Product Development Competition- SMSU Culinology teams placed 4th in 2016, 4th in 2017, and 1st & 2nd in 2018.
- Theatre- 4 programs presented each year
- Broadcasting and Digital Media- over 100 original programs developed since the program redesign including live sporting events, documentaries, narrative films, and promotional videos
- Education M.S.- As described in 3.B.3. over 100 research papers are presented to other students in courses and at their annual Learning Community Conference

In addition to the information above, 2014 HLC Review Team comments regarding this component were made. See the table below for information regarding SMSU's response to the comments.

| **Summary of 2014 Reviewer Comments:** Criterion 3 Core Component B | **SMSU Response and Actions** |
|---|---|
| | |

| | |
|---|---|
| Liberal Education Program:<br><br>The number of LEP Outcomes and Sub-Outcomes is too excessive. | The LEP Student Learning Outcomes was reduced from 10 to 7 in 2015-2016.<br><br>In order to reduce confusion, the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum was adopted as the Liberal Education Program Student Learning Outcomes beginning in the fall of 2019. |
| Revision and prioritization of LEP outcomes should make sure that assessment can be performed and then used for improvement. | Four additional rubrics were adopted for use by the SMSU faculty in 2017-2018 (AAC&U Value Rubrics) to help ensure assessment can be performed and used for improvement. |
| Some faculty do not address scholarship in their PDP/PDR and vitae. | It is possible that the reviewers in 2014 did not understand the breadth of possible ways that faculty can demonstrate scholarship and creative work based upon the Minnesota State-Interfaculty Organization contract (Article 22 Appendix G). Please note that faculty in consultation with their academic dean determine the amount of focus the faculty member will give to this criterion of their evaluation based upon the needs of their academic program. All faculty are required to include evidence for meeting this evaluation criterion at the pre-determined level of focus in their Professional Development Plans/Reports. |

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

## Argument

**3.C.1.**

*Faculty Numbers and Continuity*

Full-time equivalent (FTE) faculty numbers have declined mirroring a decrease in student-to-faculty ratio from 18:1 to 17:1 in the past 4 years. Selective retirement replacements and cautious hiring practices are in place. In 2014-2015, there were 136.61 FTE faculty. In FY18, there were 130.91 FTE faculty. The number of probationary FTE faculty, however, has increased, and the percentage of fixed term faculty (those on one-year contracts) has decreased to 18.33 FTE (14.00%) in FY18. Overall, probationary/tenure-track positions have outpaced fixed term contracts, lending some stability to the faculty workforce despite the downturn in number of FTE positions overall. Additionally, tenure-track faculty perform more non-classroom duties than fixed-term and adjunct appointments. The table below (as of March 16, 2018) shows the number and type of faculty positions searched since 2014.

Table 3.1. Number and Type of Faculty Positions Searched by Fiscal Year.

| Fiscal Year | Total | Fixed-Term | Tenure-Track | Athletic |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2014 | 16 | 5 | 10 | 1 |
| 2015 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| 2016 | 18 | 5 | 10 | 3 |
| 2017 | 13 | 5 | 5 | 3 |

| 2018 | 18 | 6 | 7 | 5 |

**3.C.2.**

At SMSU 90% of faculty (76% when including coaching and library appointments) have the highest degree in their field. Faculty must undergo stringent hiring processes to meet the position announcement qualifications (see completed example). Academic Deans and Human Resources examine new-hire credentials. Faculty hired specifically to teach online courses must have relevant experience and/or training prior to teaching online.

College Now, concurrent enrollment staffing uses a mentoring structure with the SMSU faculty member serving as the teacher of record. After instructor application submission, departments initially vet high school teacher credentials followed by human resources to evaluate resume/vitae, reference letters, and transcripts. A Minnesota State audit regarding SMSU College now teachers indicated that 100% of tenured/tenure track and overall 99% of SMSU instructors had the appropriate degree or 18 credit hours of graduate coursework in their teaching field. As of 2016, only 17% of College Now concurrent-enrollment high school teachers met the revised HLC dual credit guidelines. Efforts are underway to quickly improve the proportion of partner teachers meeting the upcoming guidelines. These efforts include enhanced discussion with concurrent enrollment teachers, greater engagement with the College Now Advisory Council, and transcript auditing of current concurrent enrollment teachers.

SMSU does not have contractual or consortial programs.

**3.C.3.**

Per Minnesota State-Interfaculty Organization contract, faculty are evaluated upon these criteria:

- Demonstrated ability to teach effectively and/or perform effectively in other current assignments
- Scholarly or creative achievement or research
- Evidence of continuing preparation and study
- Contribution to student growth and development
- Service to the university and community

Instructor evaluation periods vary from 1 to 4 years depending on rank and tenure status. Generally, during the fall semester, each faculty member, after consultation with their immediate supervisor (Dean and/or Athletic Director/designee), prepares a Professional Development Plan (PDP) for the period to be covered by the evaluation. The PDP includes specific objectives, methods, and expected achievements in respect to the criteria listed above. At the completion of the plan, the faculty member provides a copy of the plan to his/her department members through the department chairperson. The supervisor comments on the plan to provide guidance. At the end of the evaluation period, the faculty member prepares a Professional Development Report (PDR) with appropriate documentation and sends it to their supervisor. Contractually, university-wide student evaluations are not required, but faculty use their own student evaluation tools as evidence for meeting the primary teaching criteria. Reports are copied to departments via the chair and department members are encouraged to submit comments on performance related to the plan. A written summary of the supervisor's assessment of the faculty member's accomplishments in respect to his/her plan, as they relate to the criteria, together with suggestions to guide future professional development activities, and any upcoming application for tenure and/or promotion, are sent to the faculty member and placed in the faculty member's official personnel file. SMSU strictly complies with this contractual evaluation process.

**3.C.4.**

Per Minnesota State-Inter-Faculty Organization contract Article 19, funds are yearly allocated for improving professional competence. All members of the Inter-Faculty Organization faculty except adjunct faculty are eligible for the funds. After meeting and conferring with the Faculty Association, the SMSU President establishes procedures and criteria for the application and awarding of these funds to individual faculty members. Three forms of faculty improvement grants are available: Professional Study and Travel, Sabbatical Leave, and Faculty Improvement Grants.

In Professional Study and Travel, academic departments receive funds to equitably distribute to its members. Permissible uses include, but are not limited to, travel, housing, meals and registration associated with professional conferences, workshops, and similar meetings in addition to courses, professional memberships, professional books and journals, supplies and more. Professional study and travel funds are available to all faculty members at the time of hire in article 19B. In Sabbatical Leave, eligible faculty members propose scholarly research, additional study, or other professional development. See contract language. In Faculty Improvement Grants, faculty may apply to receive up to $800.00. The request must specify whether the activity fits into the category of continuing preparation and/or scholarly/creative achievement. See contract language.

Support faculty in the Minnesota State University Association of Administrative & Service Faculty unit often serve as course instructors. Members are eligible for grants (see application) to fund projects that enhance professional competence while giving support to the mission of the University. Four funding cycles are available annually. Support faculty are also eligible for professional development sabbatical.

**3.C.5.**

SMSU faculty make time to answer to students' questions outside the classroom. Per Article 10 Section A of the faculty contract each faculty member is responsible for ten (10) office hours weekly for assisting students, at times and approved locations, either on or off-campus, and posted at the faculty member's office for faculty members with assigned offices. As a standard practice, faculty submit their weekly schedule to their respective departmental Administrative Assistant. A faculty member assigned to work from a remote location shall maintain equivalent interactive availability to students through the internet or other electronic means. If a faculty member's assignment includes teaching load at an off-campus site, a portion of his/her office hour obligation can be met at the off-campus site. SMSU faculty members also serve as academic advisors.

**3.C.6.**

Student Affairs positions have specified minimum qualifications. In each search, job postings include these qualifications. The search process and human resources ensure the individual hired meets minimum requirements. Once hired, staff members undergo an annual review process appropriate for their position (see https://www.smsu.edu/administration/humanresources/forms/index.html) with the Associate Vice President of Student Affairs. Ongoing training includes scheduled professional improvement days that involve all staff members. Professional Improvement Grants are available to support training activities. Every unit within Student Affairs develops their own plan and schedule for continuing training.

Staff members who work with student tutors maintain their own training based on their specific development plans. Qualified staff members who are current in their fields train student tutors. Most tutors in the Writing Center complete a 1-credit formal course before working with students in the

Center and participate in ongoing professional development through regular staff meetings and participation in professional conferences. [Students tutoring for Academic Commons](#) are chosen based on success in the corresponding program. These students frequently sit in on the introductory classes for which they tutor and regularly work through homework assignments independently before students in the course see the assignments.

In addition to the information above, 2014 HLC Review Team comments regarding this component were made. See the table below for information regarding SMSU's response to the comments.

| Summary of 2014 Reviewer Comments: Criterion 3 Core Component C | SMSU Response and Actions |
| --- | --- |
| College Now faculty may not be appropriately credentialed when using the newest HLC credentialing criteria. | As of 2016, approximately 80% of SMSU College Now faculty had a master's degree, but did not meet the new HLC credentialing criteria. SMSU has received the extension waiver until 2022 and is working within the Minnesota State University system and locally to increase opportunities for College Now faculty to reach the Master's Degree with 18 credit hours in the field requirement. Locally, graduate-level content courses have been added and credit for prior learning initiatives have been developed. |
| Student Evaluation of Teaching should be campus-wide. Faculty are not supportive of centralized evaluation. | Based upon the contract between the Minnesota State System and the Interfaculty Organization, centralized evaluation is not performed. All faculty are required to show evidence of teaching effectiveness. This evidence may include student evaluation of teaching or other evaluation measures can be provided to ensure teaching effectiveness. |
| Program and LEP assessment processes are not mature enough to reliably direct professional development needs. | The work of the Assessment Academy Team identified gaps in assessment for several Liberal Education Program student learning outcomes. This led to the development of Professional Development Day sessions about the AAC&U VALUE Rubrics related to these outcomes. More robust data that should come with our new reporting procedures will enhance professional development offerings. |

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# 3.D - Core Component 3.D

The institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching.

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

## Argument

**3.D.1.**

SMSU provides a broad range of student support services across campus. Recently, SMSU coordinated several of these services into a single location. The Student Success & Advising Center is located within the Academic Commons. The purpose of the new center is to encourage student development and academic success. The center provides support services for students to assist them in achieving their academic goals and brings together, in one central location, a collection of services from the Office of Student Success, Blue to Brown Connection Program, Academic Commons and Advising Center.

Office of Student Success (OSS) addresses issues related to retention and helps students identify their unique support needs. Faculty and staff use an Early Alert System coordinated by OSS to identify concerns about a student's academic performance, personal concerns, or financial concerns. OSS provides a variety of programming focusing on helpful tips for students.

The Academic Commons houses the Education Learning Center that hosts a curriculum library and tutoring services. Academic Commons also hosts a Math Learning Center with tutoring and resources. Most of the materials provided by the Academic Commons are at no charge with specialized materials and services provided at reasonable costs to students.

Advising Center coordinates academic advising for undeclared students and provides services for students on academic warning or probation. The Director of the Advising Center works directly with students on academic warning or probation, reviewing the policy with them and helping them set goals and employ strategies to improve their academic standing, in coordination with their major advisors. The Director assists undeclared students in the selection of an academic major(s) and/or minor, answers student questions about academic forms and policies as well as functions as a drop-in center for student concerns. The Advising Center is also the official office for a university withdrawal.

Career Services supports students in determining potential career paths and charting the path to

achieve those goals. Staff assists with interview skills, resume writing, graduate school applications, internship opportunities and more.

Counseling and Testing Services provides mental health screening and counseling services. This office also provides test proctoring services for licensure and certification exams. Health Services provides medical evaluations, limited laboratory tests, and assistance with off-campus referrals.

Financial Aid coordinates all federal, state and institutional financial assistance, including grants, scholarships, student employment, and student loans and guarantees delivery of federal and state financial assistance to students within rules and regulations established by government authorities.

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion helps provide an inclusive, quality and comprehensive educational experience for students from all religions, ethnicities, genders, ages, sexual orientations and countries: one that encourages a diverse and multicultural educational experience.

Disability Services provides students with disabilities an equal opportunity to fully participate in all aspects of the educational environment. Services, advocacy and accommodations are provided to students with documented disabilities in their academic program or to access university programs, facilities and/or activities.

The International Student Services Office is the primary contact for international students from the time they apply until graduation assisting with accomplishing academic and career goals. Support is offered with United States immigration laws and regulations.

Residence Life provides housing and programming for students to assist with developing peer networks and enhance life skills. Living and Learning Communities provide additional targeted programming based upon students majors, minors, or academic interests.

The Writing Center and Speech Center provide consultations with trained advanced students to help students prepare quality finished writing assignments or speech presentations.

The Center for Civic Engagement connects academic programs with community needs to use scholarship and action for the mutual benefit of the University, its communities and its diverse peoples. The Center serves as the intersection between student learning, faculty research, and community engagement. It manages the Mustangs Volunteer system to help students connect with local opportunities.

**3.D.2.**

All SMSU students have access to the services listed above. To direct students to appropriate courses and programs targeted services are available for first-year students, Honors Program students, provisionally admitted students, Access, Opportunity, and Success students, and student-athletes. More fully described below, all students are assigned an academic advisor and most often within their declared major.

According to SMSU policy, provisionally admitted students are limited to 16 credits, must complete Interdisciplinary Studies 110 The University Experience, and are advised by the Director of Academic Commons. Students not meeting minimum admission standardized test scores are required to complete non-credit remedial level coursework prior to enrolling in English 151 Academic Writing or Math 110 College Algebra. Provisionally admitted students may receive additional support through Access, Opportunity, and Success.

The Honors Program offers two pathways to provide support and guide course choices: the Traditional Pathway and the Transfer Pathway. The Traditional Pathway provides qualified students with an alternative to the university's Liberal Education Program (LEP). In place of the standard LEP, honors students, in consultation with the Honors Program Director and a review board of faculty members, design their own course of study in the liberal arts. The Transfer Pathway is an option for transfer students. Transfer Pathway students are required to complete the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum and other Honors requirements.

All freshman student-athletes regardless of admission status complete Interdisciplinary Studies 110 The University Experience. Student-athletes participate in study tables at levels determined by each team. Full-time coaching staff receive academic advising training and provide guidance for appropriate course selection. Student-athletes needing additional support are referred to the appropriate campus support services described in 3B1. The Athletic Office maintains a Student-Athlete Academic Affairs drop-in office for student questions and concerns, and helps student-athletes achieve their academic, athletic and personal goals. See Student-Athlete Handbook.

### 3.D.3.

SMSU most often provides registration, career, and personal advising to students via one-on-one meetings with faculty advisors. During the academic year, one day per semester is set aside as Advising Day (see calendar). Students have access to an Advising Guide. Faculty members utilize an Academic Advising Handbook. Individual academic programs are developing program advising guides. Academic programs developed for advising Mustang Academic Plans, which are linked to the course catalog. Students may not register for courses until their assigned advisor provides them with an access code, which is given during the advising session. Faculty advisors have access to the student's academic record via the Interactive Degree Audit Report. This allows the advisor to see which degree requirements have been completed and which have not been satisfied. Faculty members often make additional appointments with students to complete personal and career discussions.

Incoming students register with the advice of faculty via New Student Registration programs where admitted students receive orientation to campus and meet faculty for advising from their expected major area. SMSU hosts seven or more admitted student days from February through August. Before advising, faculty receive updates from the Director of the Advising Center on the Liberal Education Program, required courses, limitations on enrollment in specific courses and other important information related to academic advising of new students.

### 3.D.4.

Despite ongoing funding challenges, SMSU continues to strategically enhance its physical infrastructure. 32 of SMSU's 41 general classrooms are equipped with smart technology to support classroom presentations. Every course offered at SMSU also has access to SMSU's course management system, Desire to Learn D2L Brightspace, an online resource for course materials and discussions to support online courses, hybrid course with some online activity and in-class courses that use the online discussion, group work areas and online submissions. Several technology-enhanced meeting/study rooms and special purpose classrooms across campus include science labs and specialized computer labs for disciplines like Geographic Information Systems, Graphic Arts, Exercise Science, Social Science, Music and Active Learning classrooms. In all Smart Classrooms, lecturers can capture lectures or provide real-time distance-learning opportunities using Adobe Connect. In addition, eleven classrooms are equipped with cameras to enhance recording and distance-learning. The next step in this process will include adding room microphones.

*Technology*

The campus has 7 general-purpose computer labs and numerous stand-up or roll-up computer work stations accessible to students in the Academic Commons, Student Center, and Library. There are approximately 250 computer workstations available for student use. Faculty members also have access to video conferencing, web conferencing and an online media management system. The [Technology Resource Center](#) is located on the main floor of the Library and provides just-in-time responses to questions and issues from students, faculty and staff.

*Laboratory Space*

Between 2010 and 2012, SMSU restructured and refurbished laboratory space in the Science and Math building as well as kitchen space in the Individualized Learning building for the Culinology Program. Six laboratories and their preparation and storage areas, the teaching greenhouse and three food-preparation lab kitchens were updated. The [Geographic Information System Center](#) provides software for analysis of location-based data sets and creation of detailed maps and other representations of complex data and demographic trends. An Iplotter allows students to prepare and use full-color posters to display their work. This printer is also used to prepare and print all research posters for the Undergraduate Research Conference and other research events on campus

The [SMSU McFarland Library](#) is open seven days per week (90.5 hours) during the academic year and many services are available 24/7 via the library webpage. The physical space is a four story building located near the center of campus. The library was remodeled in 2005 and includes eight group study rooms, two teaching labs, and houses the Writing and Speech Centers along with the general collection (including government documents), a children's/youth collection, media, and reference collections. Services provided include classroom instruction, research help, interlibrary loan services, circulation, and technology support. Since 2015, significant space changes within the library have taken place to better accommodate today's students, such as relocating the Technology Resource Center to the main floor and the purchase of individual, technology-enabled study pods.

Online access is available to over 80 databases, the online catalog, eBook and streaming video collections, and access to program-specific resources via [Research Guides](#). The library is part of the MINITEX Library Consortium, a public supported network of academic, public, state government, and special libraries serving patrons in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin libraries. These services are provided at no additional cost to students.

Four American Library Association accredited librarians and four library technicians staff the library. The Collection Development/E-Resources librarian is the primary contact for material requests. As new courses are proposed within the curriculum, the Collection Department Librarian sits on the faculty Curriculum Committee to help identify resources the library may have or may need to support the proposed curriculum.

*Performance and Creative Spaces*

The Whipple Gallery inside the Library and the Library Plaza offer attractive spaces for displaying student and faculty artwork as well as student research projects. Two large outdoor courtyards provide another option for performance and practice space. SMSU's Fine Arts building provides practice space in 2 large rooms and 10 individual practice rooms. SMSU's mainstage theatre has recently replaced the stage floor as well as the house seats. The smaller Black Box theatre gives student directors a flexible space for staging original works, improvisational performances and other performances. Two large lecture halls in Charter Hall and one in Bellows Academic provide space for

student performances and public presentations.

*Off-Campus Clinical Sites*

As components of coursework, the SMSU RN to BSN Program provides clinical experiences at a wide variety of community/population based settings. Criteria for selection and use of clinical facilities include 1) a contractual agreement, also called a clinical facilities, and if appropriate 2) commercial general liability and professional liability insurance, and 3) staffing including BSN prepared nurses with the assigned Preceptor holding a BSN degree. Clinical facilities are primarily located in rural areas currently with over forty agencies. Agencies range from public health agencies and public schools to senior living settings, family planning centers, and university health services.

The SMSU Education Department maintains a list of approximately 500 schools that serve as placement partnerships for field experience and student teaching.

SMSU maintains museums and collections including:

1) Natural History Museum focusing on plants and animals, particularly those native to Minnesota

2) Planetarium offering an accurate view of deep space for students and school groups

3) Archer Daniels Midland/SMSU Environmental Learning Center gives visitors a compact area in which to observe a variety of prairie environments and wildlife

4) Southwest Minnesota Regional Research Center and the Society for the Study of Local and Regional History is a public records repository and resource for historical information about Marshall and southwest Minnesota, and

5) The Museum of Indigenous Americans is the newest museum on campus and displays regional artifacts and others collected throughout the Americas.

**3.D.5.**

In addition to disciplinary-specific training regarding effectively using research and information resources, SMSU's Liberal Education Program requires students to encounter and address information literacy and the use of information resources in at least three ways. Entering students take LEP 100, the First-Year Seminar that has learning outcomes of information literacy, critical thinking, and written and oral communication. Communication Studies 110, Essentials of Speaking and Listening, requires a library research component. English 251, Writing in the Professions, or a similar course is part of every student's second year program at SMSU, and students expand their research skills by investigating information in their field of study. In the third or fourth year, each student takes LEP 400, Contemporary Issues Seminar, and a designated upper-level core skills course, each of which explicitly returns to information literacy and the use of resources. Library faculty support every program on campus with instruction specifically tailored to instructors' requests, and supports students through multiple means including face-to-face reference desk staffing, online guides, and online chat sessions.

In addition to the information above, the 2014 HLC Review Team made a comment regarding this component. See the table below for information regarding SMSU's response to the comment.

| Summary of 2014 Reviewer Comments:<br><br>Criterion 3 Core Component D | SMSU Response and Actions |
|---|---|
| There was a note of substantial amounts of outdated technology and equipment in disrepair in Fine Arts/Music/TV/Radio. | Since 2014, SMSU has upgraded its media production facilities and media major curriculum to reflect industry trends. SMSU has invested more than $330,000 to fully digitize including a digital control room, high definition cameras, fiber lines at sports venues, a new studio TV set, and collaborative use of the city of Marshall's Studio 1's remote equipment and van. In art, the graphic design lab has been updated with tablet computers, the photo studio received lighting and flooring upgrades, and new cameras were purchased for the digital photography class. The music program has purchased an audio system for music theory rooms and new electric pianos with a piano lab computer system. The theater program has purchased a wireless headset system, a lighting control board, and a converter system to allow multiple systems to communicate. |

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- GIS Center _ Southwest Minnesota State University
- Health Services _ Southwest Minnesota State University
- International Student Services _ Southwest Minnesota State University
- MustangsVOLUNTEER _ Southwest Minnesota State University
- Office of Diversity and Inclusion
- Office of Student Success _ Southwest Minnesota State University
- Residence Life _ Southwest Minnesota State University
- Speech Center _ Southwest Minnesota State University
- Writing Center _ Southwest Minnesota State University

# 3.E - Core Component 3.E

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

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

## Argument

**3.E.1.**

In addition to a robust intercollegiate athletics program, SMSU provides a broad array of student organizations. These organizations provide a broad range of experiences for students including academic program-specific, honors organizations, intramural sports, specialized media, music, art, and student government. All programs are required to perform service components, which helps students "*meet the complex challenges of this century as engaged citizens in their local and global communities.*" These activities contribute to the experience of students and support the mission via "*connecting students' academic and practical professional development experiences in southwestern Minnesota to the wider world.*" The various Student Services offices submit assessment reports annually to their corresponding supervisor (see report example). The Dean of Students /Associate Vice President for Student Affairs compiles these into annual assessment reports.

**3.E.2.**

The mission of Southwest Minnesota State University states: "*Southwest Minnesota State University prepares students to meet the complex challenges of this century as engaged citizens in their local and global communities. Our comprehensive degree programs, taught in the liberal arts tradition, are dedicated to connecting students' academic and practical professional development experiences in southwestern Minnesota to the wider world.*" Civic engagement is a critical component of this mission and SMSU maintains a Center for Civic Engagement. The center maintains resources for students, such as MustangsVolunteer, that seeks to connect students to volunteer opportunities in the community and service-learning resources for faculty. Faculty include civic engagement components in student classroom experiences. Data from the 2016 Civic Engagement Survey indicates historically, over 40% of SMSU students volunteer in the community and nearly 59% of students have taken coursework that have included community involvement such as volunteer service, community-based learning experiences, one-time service projects, or other service activities.

A number of University programs are actively involved in creating and executing activities and events that provide service learning and real economic opportunities for members of their communities locally and globally. Examples include but are not limited to:

- Enactus
- Athletics Ag Bowl
- Exercise Science Schwan Employee Wellness Program

## Sources

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# 3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary

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

## Summary

SMSU fulfills the claims it makes by virtue of its mission to prepare students for the complex nature of the current century in all of its program delivery options. SMSU's degree programs and staffing are appropriate to providing high quality education: faculty and staff are appropriately credentialed and faculty maintain currency in their field of expertise through contractual obligations; the faculty-controlled curriculum ensures high quality; the broad use of program Advisory Councils ensures programs are relevant to current needs of the region. SMSU supports teaching and learning through coordinated support offices and infrastructure that provide appropriate resources to academic and support programs. Intellectual inquiry and integrating broad learning and skills are critically important for SMSU as evidenced by the Liberal Education Program learning outcomes of critical thinking and creative thinking (creative problem solving). In addition, a large proportion of the campus engages in intellectual inquiry through original/action research and synthesis of knowledge projects that are presented locally and regionally.

## Sources

*There are no sources.*

# 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 demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs.

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

## Argument

**4.A.1.**

*Program Review*

SMSU employs processes to evaluate program quality. Every academic program engages in comprehensive review at least once every five years. The Dean's webpage posts the schedule for program reviews through FY 2029 for Arts, Letters, and Science (ALS) and for Business, Education, Professional and Graduate Studies (BEPS). The review policy and procedures for conducting the review. For externally accredited programs, SMSU uses the accreditation review and findings as a substitute for regular program review.   Upon completion of the review process, programs submit a 5-year plan to the Dean and Provost.

In addition to program review, all departments submit an annual report at the end of the spring semester, including demographic information from the current year that can later be used in the program review.   Until FY 2017, these annual reports incorporated the programs' assessment reports,

but in Spring 2018, the Deans requested that assessment reports be submitted separately, at the beginning of the next academic year. See 4.B. Departmental reports are combined into College reports (see ALS and BEPS reports).

**4.A.2.**

*Credit Transcription*

SMSU uses a Degree Audit Reporting System (DARS) as the official university system to provide for the evaluation of student academic records by tracking transfer credits, program requirements, and completion of credits. For traditional on-campus or online courses, the faculty member of record submits grades to the Registration and Records office, after which grades are recorded on the student's transcript.   Course credit earned through College Now (CN) courses are included on a student's SMSU transcript.

Courses submitted for transfer from another institution are accepted if they meet acceptance standards under the General Criteria for Acceptance of Transfer, See Policy A-052.   Generally, courses taken for a Baccalaureate or Associate of Arts degree are accepted for transfer credit, but a course's applicability to any given academic program may be determined in several ways: through pre-existing articulation agreements, the Minnesota State Transfer Pathways process/system, or through course-by-course evaluation by program faculty to determine course content parity. Specifically, a Transfer Specialist in consultation with departments evaluates credits to determine equivalencies for courses and ensures the quality of the transfer credits accepted by SMSU. Credits evaluated include courses from Minnesota Transfer Curriculum, Transfer Pathways, Blue to Brown, RN to BSN, Concurrent Enrollment, experiential learning, foreign institutions, and others. See below and 4.A.3. Articulation agreements can also outline what transfer credit SMSU accepts towards specified major programs. Articulation agreements are located on the Minnesota Transfer site.

*Credit for Prior Learning*

Credit for Prior Learning can be transcripted, as outlined in Policy A-050 and Procedure A-050. These include AP courses, International Baccalaureate, CLEP, DANTES Subject Standardized Tests, portfolio review, faculty-written test-out exams, and Veterans Education Transfer System. Students can access this information on the SMSU website. Minnesota State system-wide procedures are currently being reviewed by a multi-campus workgroup.

*Minnesota Transfer Curriculum (MnTC)*

Minnesota's public colleges and universities have established a state-wide general education plan to help transferability of students' general education courses. A receiving institution accepts a goal course in the MnTC goal area of the sending institution. Completion of the MnTC at one institution enables a student to meet SMSU's general education requirements. SMSU accesses official, consistent, and accurate transfer information via a web-based service Mntransfer.org. See About Minnesota Transfer.

*Transfer Pathways*

The Minnesota State System developed the Transfer Pathways program to facilitate effective transfer from 2-year campuses into majors on 4-year campuses. The 4-year institutions review and determine which 2-year courses are going to transfer into the 4-year program to complete the entire program in 4 years. The Campus Transfer Pathways Implementation Toolkit v2 outlines the processes.

*Other Transfer Mechanisms*

For lower division courses, the Transfer Specialist uses course outlines and descriptions to determine a minimum of 70% curriculum match. Any 300-400 level course usually goes through faculty review via a student petition. SMSU has two unique transfer programs: Blue to Brown and RN to BSN. Both of these programs are treated as normal transfer evaluations. The Transfer Specialist uses the Transfer Evaluation System (TES)and Transferology CollegeSource programs. CollegeSource holds online catalogs to compare course information and outlines. Most Blue to Brown courses are developmental courses and do not receive credit. Instead, developmental courses serve as course prerequisites. The RN to BSN treats all MnTC goal courses as stated above. Associate of Science nursing courses are accepted as elective credit. No prior nursing courses transfer as a course-for-course match.

*Concurrent Enrollment Programs*

When concurrent enrollment courses are coming from institutions not in the Minnesota State system, concurrent enrollment programs (e.g. College Now, PSEO) are evaluated using TES since those courses are often coming from community colleges and universities whose curriculum has previously been evaluated. Advanced Placement and College-Level Examination Program tests are evaluated by faculty. Test score determines the courses for which students are credited.

**4.A.3.**

*Transfer Policies*

SMSU adheres to Minnesota State System policies and university policies for transfer credit evaluation. The SMSU Registration and Records Office ensures policy compliance. The following policies contain information about the criteria SMSU uses to make transfer credit decisions.

Minnesota State System Policies

3.15.1 Advanced Placement Credit

3.16.1 International Baccalaureate Credit

3.21 Undergraduate Course and Credit Transfer and the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum

3.21.1 Undergraduate Course Credit Transfer

3.33.1 College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) Credit

3.35.1 Credit for Prior Learning

3.39 Transfer Rights and Responsibilities

SMSU Policies

A-040 Advanced Placement

A-045 Graduate Policies and Procedures

A-050.1 Credit for Prior Learning

A-052 Transfer Credit and Transfer Credit Appeal

A-054 Adult Education Professional Development

Additional policies and procedures for accepting transfer credits available on the Registration and Records Transfer Credit Information link.

Military Transfer Credits.

Credit for Prior Learning – CLEP/AP/IB/DSST.

International Credit.

Transfer Credit Appeals Form.

Transfer Policies.

Consortium Program.

Recommended Links.

**4.A.4.**

*Course Quality*

SMSU ensures courses and programs maintain college-level rigor and quality through processes and policies about curriculum design, explicit learning outcomes, wrap-around student support services, and highly-qualified faculty. College Now offers the same courses that are taught on campus. These require satisfaction of identical learning outcomes and utilize the same criteria for evaluation as presented on-campus.

*Curriculum, Course Descriptions and Prerequisites*

As an institution within the Minnesota State system, SMSU follows system-level policies and procedures. SMSU is responsible for the rigor and quality of its programs and courses. Through shared governance, the SMSU faculty assume responsibility for course descriptions and prerequisites during development and maintenance of curriculum. The curriculum approval process provides several checkpoints to ensure rigorous review of any proposed course or program. Faculty assume responsibility for course quality through the faculty-led Curriculum Committee according to policies and procedures. See below.

Programs with input from the course instructor determine course descriptions. Course descriptions and prerequisites are subject to curricular policies and procedures before appearing in the course catalogue. The curricular policies and procedures requires completion and submission of curricular forms including: Curriculum Change of Less than Major Significance, Curriculum Change of Major Significance, Curriculum Change of Major Significance Affecting LEP courses, Library Resource Checklist, one form for each of the ten Minnesota Transfer Curriculum courses (Goals: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10), and the Course Outline. All curricular proposal forms require review by that department's faculty and written approval from the department chairperson before submission to the graduate or undergraduate Curriculum Committee Chair. The committee's approval of proposals of Less than Major Significance is forwarded to the appropriate academic Dean for consideration of approval. Curricular changes of Major Significance such as new courses, changes to a major, and courses with

Liberal Education Program designation, require additional approval by the Faculty Association. During Faculty Assembly, faculty review Proposals of Major Significance. All approved proposals are sent to the academic Dean of the College in which the course is housed. Details of the curricular process and all curricular forms can be found on the Curriculum Committee's webpage. Forms are archived electronically.

All new programs must go through the SMSU curricular process, the Minnesota State process, and any required HLC review. New programs initially can be proposed by departments, programs, or administrators. Prior to July of 2012, any new program that was researched, investigated for feasibility and sustainability, reviewed for budget, costs and resources by the initiator, and then encouraged at the University level, was required to seek approval from MnSCU, now Minnesota State. (See Policy 3.36 Academic Program Policy.) Each campus designates authorized personnel to participate in the new program application approval process.

*Dual Credit*

Dual credit rigor evidence includes National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP) accreditation. Regarding curriculum design and prerequisites related to dual credit, SMSU retains complete authority over the courses it offers in high schools through its College Now program. Each academic program ensures course requirements, grading standards, and other course elements are the same for a College Now course as for on campus. Participating high schools must agree to SMSU's conditions of partnership. A Concurrent Enrollment Agreement Contract makes explicit what each party can expect and must abide by. While the overall availability of dual credit is made possible by the Minnesota state legislature via the Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) statute, SMSU determines student eligibility for College Now. Requirements include the following:

- High School Sophomores, Juniors & Seniors Only
- Sophomores – Top ten percent of class AND has scored over the ninetieth percentile on a nationally standardized test (proof of eligibility must be sent to the CN office for sophomores)
- Juniors – Top 1/3 class rank *and* 3.0 cumulative GPA
- Seniors – Top 1/2 class rank *and* 3.0 cumulative GPA

*Student Learning and Learning Resources*

Course outlines with learning outcomes must be included in the new course application to the curriculum committee. The curriculum approval process provides initial oversight related to student learning outcomes. As noted earlier, dual credit College Now (CN) courses share the same outcomes as an on-campus section of a course. The criteria for grading remains the same and standards are not lowered because a course is being delivered in a high school setting. SMSU faculty mentors work closely with the high school instructor to ensure learning outcomes are being met and evaluation of student work meets college-level expectations. SMSU faculty review and sign off on grades. Therefore, it is possible that a CN student could earn a different grade on his or her CN college transcript compared to the grade a high school instructor assigns for high school credit. Maintaining authority over rigor and learning outcomes is further described in Criterion 4B.

In terms of maintaining authority over access to learning resources, several learning resources offered by SMSU are in partnership with the Minnesota State System Office including include the Desire2Learn (D2L) course management platform, which is the common platform offered at all Minnesota State campuses. The System provides funding and access to a help desk for D2L. SMSU provides a local service manager and performs training for students and staff. The Library catalog as a shared service provides continuity for students regardless of which Minnesota State school a student

attends. Additional information on student support services can be found in Criterion 3D. Briefly, support services include the library, Disability Resources, and the Writing Center; these are available for on-campus, distance learning, and College Now students.

*Faculty Qualifications*

SMSU is committed to recruiting and hiring high quality faculty and staff. As described in 2A: Integrity with Regard to Personnel, the hiring process requires multiple stages of review for every candidate. Both the local campus and the Minnesota State System oversee all hiring processes. Agents for both entities are informed by state, federal, and university regulations regarding equal opportunity employment. Faculty positions are advertised locally, regionally, and nationally. SMSU is an equal opportunity/AA employer. Approximately 90% of full-time (excluding library and coaching appointment) faculty hold a terminal degree in the field in which they teach. With few exceptions, part-time faculty hold a minimum of a Master's degree. In addition to credentialing, another method for ensuring faculty qualification is the annual review of faculty professional goals and progress, as well as the promotion and tenure review processes. These review processes are described in 3C3. Faculty teaching in graduate programs must be approved as graduate faculty through a review process conducted by the faculty Graduate Committee, as outlined in the Graduate Faculty Status Policy.

Regarding faculty qualifications for College Now (CN), SMSU programs retain authority over schools and high school instructional partners. SMSU faculty mentors work closely with their high school instructor counterparts. The success of a CN Program is based on an effective mentoring system, similar to that of the relationship between a professor and teaching assistant on the college campus. As instructor of record, the SMSU faculty member is ultimately responsible for the class. Instructors must be approved by the SMSU program or department responsible for the effectiveness of the curriculum. The high school teachers delivering CN courses are expected to have master's degrees, discipline-specific graduate level coursework, and years of teaching experience. The College Now Handbook describes the general requirements and teacher approval process which includes submission of resume/vitas, letters of recommendation, and copies of all transcripts (undergraduate and graduate). Various factors are considered, including undergraduate and graduate coursework, number of years teaching, experience with Advanced Placement or other college level courses, ongoing professional development pursuits, principal letters of recommendation, and possibly visits to labs or phone interviews.

SMSU follows HLC's *Dual Credit: Guidelines for Institutions and Peer Reviewers* policy, as well as the *Guidelines for Determining Qualified Faculty* in the instructor approval processes. Currently, master's level credentialing of the high school teacher is not a state-mandated requirement for the four-year universities in Minnesota. SMSU expects high school teachers should have a master's degree, preferably in the content area. However, not every school has such highly qualified teachers. SMSU closely monitors adherence to the expectation that the instructor as well as the school must be approved to partner with the CN Program. In light of the updated HLC expectations, College Now has focused on this topic in its summer workshop. College Now has performed recent transcript audits and each College Now instructor has received a letter indicating whether they meet the new requirements.

**4.A.5.**

SMSU has four programs that are nationally accredited.  These programs are Nursing, Social Work, Music, and College Now.  Additionally, the Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB) approves School of Education (SOE) programs every five years.

Nursing was accredited in 2015 by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE).  A mid-cycle Continuous Improvement Progress Report was submitted in December 2017. The SMSU RN to BSN Nursing Program continues to meet the CCNE program quality standards for Mission and Governance, Institutional Commitment and Resources, Curriculum and Teaching-Learning Practices, and the program effectiveness standard for Assessment and Achievement of Program Outcomes. The next site visit will occur during the fall of 2019.

The Social Work program has been fully accredited and in good standing since 1996 by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) and is currently in the process of re-accreditation. The self-study has been submitted and the on-campus reviewer visited campus in Spring 2018. The CSWE's Commission on Accreditation deferred its decision, pending receipt of additional clarifying information on only five of fifty-eight standards. A decision regarding the program's reaffirmation will be made in October, 2018.

The SMSU Music Program has been fully accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) since 1986 and its membership status is current after a 2017 review. While SMSU's program was commended for its comprehensive and informative self-study, NASM requested additional information regarding four items in the self-study (see page 2 of membership status link above), by October 1, 2018. NASM will make its final decisions regarding accreditation at its meeting in November 2018.

The SMSU College Now program has been accredited by the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP) since 2010. The program was re-accredited in 2017 through 2024. Based on NACEP recommendations from the recent review, College Now will be making changes to how it communicates professional development expectations and will expand attempts to reach students for follow-up evaluations for students who graduated between 1 and 4 years out of high school.

The SMSU School of Education's (SOE) licensure programs are accredited by the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB) that is the accrediting body for all teacher education programs in Minnesota. There are approvals for individual licensure programs and also at the unit level. At the individual program level, the SOE is approved to offer three programs in Standards of Effective Practice and 36 licensure programs and endorsements at the undergraduate and graduate levels. The SOE's last site visit was in November of 2017. Two areas for recommendation were noted in a follow-up report from the review team regarding Minnesota Teacher Education unit standards 2J. Culturally Responsive Curricula and 3C. Establishing Criteria for Thresholds of Diverse Experiences in Teacher Candidate Placements. The recommendations have been reviewed and changes were made to meet the standards that were in question. PELSB reaccredited the SOE until 2023. The SOE has a progress report due on April 30, 2019 to address the two areas identified.

**4.A.6.**

SMSU evaluates success of its graduates. One important measure is the employment rate of SMSU graduates. SMSU graduates had a 99% employment rate in 2016 with 97% of SMSU graduates reporting being employed in a field related to their major. The majority of those graduates (84%) were working in Minnesota. Data from 2011 to 2016 also indicates the percentage of graduates intending to continue their education ranged from 9-14%. Annual employment reports are public and are published on the Career Services webpage.

SMSU requires all graduating seniors to complete a multi-stepped procedure called the campus clearance process. As part of the campus clearance process, students must complete three surveys. All

three surveys are conducted online.

- the Senior Survey, revised and shortened in 2016 asks departing graduates feedback on their educational experience at SMSU
- the Student Civic Engagement Survey, which queries students on their activities related to civic engagement
- the Graduate Follow-up Survey, which focuses primarily on the employment status of the graduating senior,

The Graduate Follow-up Survey has been part of the campus clearance process since 1971. SMSU's current survey consists of 11 Minnesota State-required survey questions (#1-11 on survey) and four (#12-15) SMSU-specific questions (not required). SMSU participates with Minnesota State System Universities to determine best practices in conducting the survey, obtaining accurate data, and reporting the data. SMSU collects the data on its graduates via an email requesting updated employment information at three different times: degree completion (graduation), six months after graduation, and one year after graduation. A letter that is sent with the students' diplomas encourages students to keep SMSU up to date on their address and employment. When graduates cannot be located through this process, academic programs are asked to help locate them. Minnesota State requires a return rate minimum of 85%; SMSU consistently has a return rate of 90% or higher (range 85-95%). Minnesota State conducts the statistical analysis. SMSU publishes the data yearly in the Annual Employment Report and makes the information available online (see above).

The Civic Engagement Survey has been part of the campus clearance process since 2008 (the first full year of data is from academic year 2008-2009). SMSU's current survey consists of 50 items (30 items are a part of the Civic-Minded Graduate scale and are rated on a 1-6 Likert scale). SMSU consistently has a high return rate of 90% or higher (range 85-95%). SMSU conducts statistical analysis and publishes a Civic Engagement Survey annual summary report online. SMSU reports are available online from 2009 through 2016. Data are not currently available online for surveys completed beyond 2016 due in part to recent development of the Center for Civic Engagement and the transition of the survey to a new electronic platform.

The current version of the Senior Survey was established in 2016 to ask direct questions about exiting students' experiences at SMSU. The survey inquires about a student's satisfaction with their program, asks for feedback on strengths and weakness of the program, as well as questions on academic advising. Students can provide names of faculty and staff that had made a positive contribution to their education.

In addition to the information above, 2014 HLC Review Team comments regarding this component were made. See the table below for information regarding SMSU's response to the comments.

| Summary of 2014 Reviewer Comments: Criterion 4 Core Component A | SMSU Response and Actions |
| --- | --- |
| The processes tying budget and strategic planning to program review and assessment | Academic programs have completed prioritization documents in which Program Review data were included. One major reason why SMSU joined the Assessment Academy is |

| | |
|---|---|
| are too new to be sure if they are effective. | to better perform assessment so that data could be used for budgeting and strategic planning along with enhancing student learning. |
| The reliance on recent graduate surveys is insufficient. Additional methods to determine graduates' success is needed. | SMSU performs regular official and unofficial graduate follow-up surveys in addition to determining employment rates. Alumni and Development staff contact alumni multiple times annually via direct mail, email and phone inquiry to share information and collect updated employment data and major life event announcements.  The data is maintained by the SMSU Foundation.  SMSU alumni consistently have the highest giving percentage of any public institution in Minnesota, an indicator of loyalty and success. |

## Sources

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- Critn4A4_CourseOutline
- Critn4A4_Curriculum Image System
- Critn4A4_LessThanMajor
- Critn4A4_LibResourceChecklistRevised
- Critn4A4_MajorSig1
- Critn4A4_MajorSigLEP
- Critn4A4_MnTC1_Communication
- Critn4A4_MnTC10_PeopleEnvironment
- Critn4A4_MnTC3_NaturalSciences
- Critn4A4_MnTC4_MathematicsLogical
- Critn4A4_MnTC5_SocialSciences
- Critn4A4_MnTC6_HumanitiesFineArts
- Critn4A4_MnTC7_HumanDiversity
- Critn4A4_MnTC8_GlobalPerspective
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- Crtn4A2_Minnesota Transfer Articulation Agreements
- Crtn4A2_Minnesota Transfer Dot Org
- Crtn4A2_Transfer Credit and Transfer Credit Appeal Policy
- Crtn4A2_Transfer Evaluation System
- Crtn4A2_Transfer Pathways Implemented to date (PN)
- Crtn4A2_Transferology
- Crtn4A3_Consortium Program
- Crtn4A3_Credit for Prior Learning
- Crtn4A3_International Credit
- Crtn4A3_Military Transfer Credits
- Crtn4A3_Minn State 3.15.1 Advanced Placement Credit
- Crtn4A3_Minn State 3.16.1 International Baccalaureate Credit
- Crtn4A3_Minn State 3.21 Undergraduate Course and Credit Transfer and the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum
- Crtn4A3_Minn State 3.21.1 Undergraduate Course Credit Transfer
- Crtn4A3_Minn State 3.33.1 College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) Credit
- Crtn4A3_Minn State 3.35.1 Credit for Prior Learning
- Crtn4A3_Minn State 3.39 Transfer Rights and Responsibilities
- Crtn4A3_Recommended Links
- Crtn4A3_Registration and Records Office
- Crtn4A3_SMSU A-040 Advanced Placement
- Crtn4A3_SMSU A-045 Graduate Policies and Procedures
- Crtn4A3_SMSU A-050.1 Credit for Prior Learning
- Crtn4A3_SMSU A-052 Transfer Credit and Transfer Credit Appeal
- Crtn4A3_SMSU A-054 Adult Education Professional Development
- Crtn4A3_Transfer Credit Appeals Petition Form
- Crtn4A3_Transfer Policies
- Crtn4A4 2018-19 CN Contract
- Crtn4A4 CN teacherhandbook
- Crtn4A4 Curriculum Committee Home Page
- Crtn4A4 Gradute Faculty Status Policy A-044-1
- Crtn4A4 Minnesota State Policy 3-36 Academic Program
- Crtn4A4 MnTC2_CriticalThinking
- Crtn4A5_CSWE Commission on Accreditation Final Decision Letter
- Crtn4A5_PELSB Education Accreditation 2018
- Crtn4A6 Civic Engagement Report Menu
- Crtn4A6 Civic Engagement Survey 2016
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- Crtn4A6 Senior Survey Spring 2018
- Crtn4A6_Career Services Employment Reports
- Ctrn4A5_NACEP Accreditation Commission Findings - Southwest Minnesota State University
- Ctrn4A5_NASM Accreditation 12.15.17
- Ctrn4A5_SMSU Unit Report 2017 4.20.18

# 4.B - Core Component 4.B

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

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

## Argument

Following the 2014 HLC Accreditation visit, the comprehensive review team recommended a Focused Visit to monitor Criterion 4B. This has since been rolled into the 2018 Comprehensive Visit. The following concerns were noted by the reviewers in the 2014 HLC Report:

1. Assessment of student learning outcomes and evidence of a university-wide assessment system to inform decisions should be present. This should include programmatic assessment at both the undergraduate and graduate levels as well as a full cycle of assessment of the LEP or general education program.
2. The institution should pay particular attention to the use of assessment results to improve programs.

See the Focused Visit response addressing the specific requirements here. The rationale for this focused visit was that assessment of student learning outcomes has been a challenge for the University since at least 1993. While progress was made with the 2004 visit, the current team found little understanding about an effective approach to the assessment of student learning outcomes at the program level. At the graduate level, the use of systematic assessment varies by program, and the assessment of the Liberal Education Program was only in its first rotation of assessing the changes, being in the second year of a three-year rotation.

SMSU has made substantial progress in developing a culture of assessment for improving student learning since our 2014 HLC Accreditation Re-affirmation visit. Authentic and useful assessment has been implemented via campus-wide assessment processes. These processes have focused on graduate level assessment and Liberal Education Program (LEP) assessment originally via Ad Hoc Assessment Teams (AHA Teams) and later the SMSU Assessment Academy project. Briefly, in 2015-2016, in an effort to better assess the university-wide LEP Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) academic programs identified where programmatic learning outcomes and LEP SLOs overlapped via completing an Alignment Matrix. In this year each academic program was assigned to an Assessment Academy Liaison to aid in their assessment of programmatic and LEP SLOs. In 2016-2017, the Liaisons continued to ensure that programs were moving forward in their assessment efforts. Through these efforts, academic programs have begun moving through SMSU's Assessment Levels: Level 1- identify learning outcomes, Level 2- develop assessment plan, Level 3- collect evidence, Level 4- use analysis for improvement or sustaining success. The following table shows the percent of programs at each assessment level and the growth occurring from 2016-2017 to 2017-2018.

Table 4.1 Percent of Academic Programs at Each SMSU Assessment Level.

|           | Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 3 | Level 4 |
|-----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 2016-2017 | 8.0%    | 44.5%   | 44.5%   | 3.0%    |
| 2017-2018 | 5.0%    | 27.5%   | 10.0%   | 32.5%   |

An Assessment Day was held in the spring 2018 semester that featured our Assessment Academy scholar Jan Smith who presented on "Making Assessment Meaningful." Professional Development Days, in 2017-2018 included sessions on assessment. The Committee on Institutional Assessment offers Assessment Mini-Grants for programs in order to assist with new or on-going assessment. In the past, SMSU had an Assessment Coordinator position that was ongoing and an HLC Coordinator that only prepared for upcoming HLC site visits. SMSU recently combined these two faculty coordinator positions to lead and integrate its assessment and accreditation efforts. Combining these two positions has been useful in integrating the work of entities involved in assessment. See the HLC/Assessment Coordinator job description here.

Currently, SMSU has 3 committees involved in campus-wide assessment of student learning. The Liberal Education Committee is charged with oversight of assessment of the LEP Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs). The Committee on Institutional Assessment (CIA) is charged with coordinating all campus assessment. Finally, the SMSU joined the Assessment Academy in 2015 and the Assessment Academy Team has sought to enhance communication between the LEP and CIA as well as engage academic programs to assess LEP SLOs in addition to their programmatic learning outcomes.

**4.B.1**

*Liberal Education Program*

In the spring 2015, SMSU removed 3 Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) to leave 7 Liberal Education Program SLOs. The SMSU Faculty Assembly adopted 4 rubrics for programs to use when assessing critical thinking, information literacy, written communication, and oral communication. In spring 2018, the SMSU Faculty Assembly upon recommendations from the CIA and Liberal Education Committee also adopted for use the following AAC&U Value Rubrics: Creative Thinking, Intercultural Knowledge and Competence (Diversity), Ethical Reasoning (Moral Judgment and Discourse), and Civic Engagement (Responsible Citizenship).

The most recent committee charge for the LEC includes oversight of courses proposed to meet LEP SLOs and to conduct assessment of the LEP outcomes. The initial efforts to conduct assessment of these outcomes from 2013 to 2016 were performed by Ad Hoc Assessment Teams and upon completion of their work, these teams were suspended unless subsequent need for reconstituting them would arise. Ad Hoc Assessment Teams completed assessment of the original 10 LEP SLOs over 3 academic years and presented their Ad Hoc Assessment Reports to the campus. Assessment results indicated great difficulty aggregating these results in a meaningful manner and reported evidence suggested faculty focused heavily on assessment of 100-200 level courses. Indeed, the 2014 HLC Report revealed that this was a serious concern regarding assessment processes. This concern spurred SMSU to join the Assessment Academy and although it continues to develop, its original project was

focused on campus-wide assessment of LEP SLOs from the 100-400 level via having programs complete assessment of LEP SLOs in addition to their programmatic SLOs when outcomes were appropriately aligned. Challenges inherent in developing effective assessment processes within the Assessment Academy project has benefited campus assessment through logically connecting them to other processes used in the Plan for the Assessment of Student Learning (PASL). Integration and alignment of these processes led to a comprehensive SMSU Campus Assessment Master Plan (CAMP). The following flowchart demonstrates the organic evolution of these processes.

SMSU participated in the Minnesota Collaborative project which helped reveal that many of the AAC&U Value Rubrics align with LEP SLOs; the 4 rubrics include: Creative Thinking, Intercultural Knowledge and Competence (Diversity), Ethical Reasoning (Moral Judgment and Discourse), and Civic Engagement (Responsible Citizenship). Furthermore, the Gap Analysis survey employed by the Assessment Academy Team indicates that random sampling of student artifacts from courses designated in LEP outcomes beyond those assessed at the program level could greatly benefit LEP assessment processes; assessment committees currently are discussing how to implement this practice.

As noted in the 2014 HLC Report, assessment has been impeded by Minnesota State system requirements. Specifically, curriculum processes designate courses by the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum (MnTC) instead SMSU LEP outcomes, which essentially have led to dual requirements for the general education program. The comments from reviewers in the 2014 HLC report led to the development and implementation of the SMSU Assessment Academy project in 2015 and 2016. As the project developed, it became more clear that we were still having challenges assessing student learning for all of the LEP SLOs. These events led to the understanding there was a need for rectifying these differences between LEP and MnTC, which has been the subject of regular robust conversation, including bi-weekly discussions in the fall of 2017. In these discussions faculty cross-referenced the LEP outcomes with the MnTC. There is substantial overlap, but structurally there is not a 1:1 ratio for goals with the MnTC having 10 goals and the LEP's 7. Late in the Spring 2018 semester, faculty approved the adoption of the MnTC as our structure for the LEP outcomes; these new outcomes will not be implemented until the 2019-2020 academic year. The delay in implementation will allow time for unforeseen challenges and give programs time to update their PASL to reflect the new outcomes. In addition, this will give the committees charged with assessment oversight time to integrate these outcomes into their assessment processes.

*Academic Programs*

SMSU uses the PASL assessment plan contained in the Campus Assessment Master Plan (CAMP) for assessment of academic programs. In accordance with processes outlined in the PASL, All SMSU academic programs have identified learning goals and SLOs. Academic programs also have mapped these SLOs to specific courses where they will assess their program SLOs. In this step of our assessment process, programs also identify artifacts and assessment tools. The next step in the process is for programs to develop an assessment timeline to complete assessment. Programs then perform the assessment and using the Report on the Assessment of Student Learning (RASL) make recommendations on curriculum, instruction, pedagogy, and program structure as well as then determine whether any modifications to student learning goals and SLOs are necessary for their program structure. As these processes have become more fully institutionalized, programs have begun moving through the assessment cycle to have greater numbers of programs performing assessment at SMSU Assessment Level four.

### 4.B.2

The following section of this narrative broadly discusses SMSU's assessment processes. Additional

information on assessment related to this specific outcome can be found throughout Core Component 4.B.

SMSU assesses achievement of seven LEP learning outcomes from both the curricular and co-curricular areas of the campus.   Within academic programs, the culminating assessment results have traditionally been reported in the department annual reports. These reports are completed at the end of the academic year. The past few years of assessment reports that department chairs submitted on behalf of the academic programs were often incomplete and did not allow the CIA, LEP, and Assessment Academy Teams to use these reports to aggregate assessment data on program student leaning outcomes and LEP student learning outcomes. Therefore, in order to ensure the most accurate and consistent assessment results, beginning with the 2017-2018 academic year, the assessment reports have been decoupled from the annual reports and are due in September of the subsequent year; here are the instructions for completing the RASL assessment report and the executive summary template. It is important to note that a department may have multiple academic programs housed within the department and department chairs submitted the department reports; the new reporting structure will ensure that academic programs will submit their own assessment reports.

Since 2012, each academic program at SMSU has been tasked to develop a Plan for the Assessment of Student Learning (PASL). The PASL includes components such as program mission statement, goals, student learning outcomes, course mapping for the learning outcomes, and an assessment timeline. In order to assist the programs with the PASL, the Committee on Institutional Assessment (CIA) and the Assessment Academy Team (AAT) have combined to form several consultative Liaison Teams. Each liaison team was assigned academic programs in which to contact, be the liaison to, and assist the program in completing their PASL.   As of Spring 2018, each program has also named a Program Assessment Leader with the primary role of coordinating communication with the assessment liaisons. The position responsibilities for the Program Assessment Leader can be found here.

Since the assessment reporting processes have recently changed, the Assessment Coordinator employed a GAP Analysis. The Gap Analysis indicates the frequency in which the Student Learning Outcomes are assessed within the various academic programs. Highlights from this analysis revealed widely varying rates for assessing LEP outcomes. The table below captures the percent of programs explicitly assessing the LEP SLOs in 2014, their reported Coverage Rates (a program touches on that LEP SLO at some point in their curriculum) from the 2017 Assessment Day, and the Assessment Rates from their Alignment Matrix in their assessment plans in 2018. It is important to note that the Liberal Education Committee used Ad Hoc Assessment Teams (AHA Teams) in its original assessment of the LEP SLOs. It was unclear after the AHA Team Reports whether students were meeting these goals and whether additional mastery of these outcomes was occurring in 300-400 level coursework. This led to the Assessment Academy Team project, and through the Assessment Academy Team, these analyses below were performed.

Table 4.2. Percent of SMSU Academic Programs Covering and Assessing LEP Outcomes.

| Student Learning Outcome | Assessment 2014 | Coverage 2017 | Assessment 2018 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Communicate Effectively | not determined | 100.0% | 96.0% |
| Creative Thinking | not determined | 88.6% | 68.4% |
| Critical Thinking | not determined | 100.0% | 90.0% |

| Physical/Social World | not determined | 80.0% | 48.5% |
| Diversity | not determined | 80.0% | 59.5% |
| Moral Judgment/Discourse | not determined | 77.1% | 55.3% |
| Responsible Citizenship | not determined | 82.9% | 63.2% |

Not all programs cover all LEP SLOs. In addition, it is clear there are gaps between LEP coverage and assessment that will be closed by the 2022 HLC Reaffirmation visit. This analysis has informed the Committee on Institutional Assessment in their work with the Program Assessment Leaders and individual programs to quickly increase these rates in the future. This analysis also indicates that it is necessary to have additional LEP SLO assessment separate from program assessment due to lower than 100% coverage rates by programs. These gaps and the solutions will be a topic of discussion within the Liberal Education Committee and Committee on Institutional Assessment in 2018-2019. Also, see 4.B.1.

Co-curricular programs have assessed student learning for many years and have utilized an assessment report that sought to standardize the assessment process and organize its results. This report format directs each program assessment activity through the process of goals/objectives to results and future recommendations for the activity.

In past years, the co-curricular programs have determined their individual programmatic goals and assessed on these. However, most recently, the co-curricular programs have added the seven institutional learning outcomes as additional goals in which they program toward and assess the outcomes. The annual assessment reports for student affairs identifies the current assessment activities and processes (see example).

Most assessment within the co-curriculum programs has been indirect assessment. In an effort to move to some direct assessment measures, the SMSU Dean of Students/Associate Vice President met with Jan Smith, SMSU's Assessment Academy Scholar, to discuss this prospect during SMSU's 2018 Assessment Day. It was recommended that a retreat with all of the student services departments be held in early fall to discuss student assessment for the upcoming year. During this consultation, Dr. Smith recommended that the group select one of SMSU's student learning outcomes for all programs to assess during that academic year. SMSU Student Services will begin discussions on how to implement this recommendation in the fall of 2018.

**4.B.3**

Although not yet fully implemented until 2018, assessment processes will soon allow data aggregation on student learning at the campus level. SMSU academic departments and programs have annual reporting and 5-year review procedures in place to ensure that assessment is used to enhance student learning. This includes use of assessment data in Department Annual Reports and Program Reviews (see below). One of the components of the newly developed Campus Assessment Master Plan is an executive summary template for academic programs to use when completing their annual assessment reports. This executive summary will assist campus-wide sharing of assessment data and campus-level aggregation. This summary will also be used in the reporting processes described below.

Department Chairs submit an annual report to the Academic Deans as a mechanism for capturing information that will be useful for planning, program reviews, promotional activities and fundraising,

and accreditations. One of the components of this annual report's instructions is to include a description of this area's assessment plan and how the results have impacted or will impact teaching and learning. The Assessment Academy Team (AAT) project helped develop an addition to the instructions in the 2016-2017 year-end reports to include: highlighting any Liberal Education learning outcomes that had been aligned with program learning outcomes and for programs to self-identify their SMSU Assessment Cycle Level. Furthermore, academic programs complete 5-year self-studies and program reviews. While the extensive review procedure can be found here, there are specific requirements for programmatic assessment data to be used in its self-study narrative. Upon completion of an external review, administration and faculty develop recommendations based upon the review and the data generated.

In the summer of 2017, the AAT discovered inconsistencies in reporting of assessment data for both LEP SLOs and programmatic SLOs. Through the summer 2017 AAT retreat work, the institution has learned that the Department Annual Reports did not generate useful data that would help improve student learning across disciplines. This may have been caused due to department chairpersons condensing submissions from programs into the final report; an academic department may contain a series of academic programs. In the past, assessment reports were compiled by department chairs into a single departmental report with a section on assessment. Therefore, we have recently decoupled the program assessment reports from the Department Annual Reports. The new Report on the Assessment of Student Learning will be completed by individual programs instead of at the department level and will have an early fall semester submission deadline. The RASL begins with an executive summary and programs then will be able to use the series of 5-years of assessment executive summaries in the 5-year self-study assessment data. Implementation of these changes should lead to more thorough and insightful assessment data from academic programs and an enhanced use of assessment data in the 5-year program reviews.

In addition, many course instructors of LEP approved courses are collecting course-level data to improve student learning in their courses. One group of faculty have begun to investigate the Diversity SLO across a series of courses using the AAC&U Value Rubric for diversity. Student Services also collects assessment data for LEP SLOs via their Student Services Assessment Recommendation in their program annual reports.

One of the specific concerns noted in our 2014 HLC Report indicated that SMSU did not employ a college-wide system of assessment at the graduate level. Since our 2014 HLC visit, all graduate programs have submitted assessment plans and have begun collecting assessment data. The Master's in Business Administration program has an aggressive two-year plan so that they can begin to inform instruction, pedagogy, and curriculum to enhance student learning in an expeditious manner. Master's degree program faculty in the Education Department have a long-standing practice of using assessment data for student learning. The more recently developed Master of Science in Physical Education Coaching of Sport has also developed a plan that is currently undergoing revisions.

**4.B.4**

SMSU is committed to best practices in assessment as outlined in the many sessions given at the HLC Annual Meeting. The adoption of best practices has not been perfectly smooth, but progress has been consistent since the 2014 HLC visit through efforts by the Assessment Academy Team and newly appointed HLC/Assessment Coordinator. Through the Assessment Academy, assessment processes have advanced and institutionalized throughout campus (see previous reference to the CAMP and PASL). Evolution of assessment processes continue in large part due to the efforts of the AAT working with the CIA; see this flowchart. SMSU has identified four assessment levels: 1) identifying learning outcomes 2) determining assessment processes 3) analyzing collected data 4) implementing

recommendations from analyzed assessment evidence. Since tracking program assessment levels began in 2016-2017, most programs in 2017-2018 moved from lower levels to higher levels with the goal of continual improvement in student learning (see 4.B.2).

Former SMSU Assessment Coordinator and SMSU faculty emerita Betsy Desy (Partnership for Undergraduate Life Sciences Education Fellow) originally designed the PASL in 2011 and it was updated with input from the CIA, AAT, and HLC/Assessment Coordinator in 2014 and 2017. The PASL was modeled after recommendations by Maki (2002) as outlined in Developing an Assessment Plan to Learn about Student Learning in the *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 28(1):8-13. The PASL format was derived with permission from Creating a Plan for Student Learning Assessment by Maurice Levesque, the Associate Dean at Elon University. Key components of the PASL include Student Learning Goals & Objectives, Identification of Assessment Tools, aligning SLOs with courses through a Course Map, and matching program SLOs to LEP SLOs with an Alignment Matrix. The PASL guides academic programs to create strong assessment plans through using assessment best practices.

Embedding program assessment reports into Department Annual reports was ineffective due to campus structure. Departments may include several programs that may only be minimally related (e.g. Science Department contains Biology, Chemistry, Environmental Science, and Exercise Science majors). This has made the submission of assessment reports the duty of the department chair and not the program. In addition to this structural condition, assessment processes needed two enhancements that include adoption of rubrics to cover a larger number of our LEP SLOs and ensuring that assessment reports by programs follow similar formatting. As described in 4.B.1, additional rubrics have recently been adopted. In the summer of 2018, all Program Assessment Leaders received the updated assessment reporting template and instructions for use in upcoming program Report(s) on the Assessment of Student Learning. Essentially, assessment reports are decoupled from the larger departmental report. This new reporting procedure will allow programs to more deeply analyze their assessment data in the summer and complete reports when they are contractually obligated to have duty days.

This executive summary template was designed to ensure these reports can help aggregate data. These assessment report summaries can then be forwarded to committees involved with assessment and be used for program planning through the 5-year self-study process. Instead of waiting for an entire year for these results, a one-time use assessment survey was employed to better gauge assessment progress and perform a gap-analysis for where any LEP goal area assessment was lacking. The newly formatted assessment report or RASL will be utilized during a fall 2018 submission and will enhance the ability to aggregate data and perform gap analyses.

As noted, SMSU has worked diligently on developing a culture of assessment to enhance student learning. Assessment topics are regular parts of All-University Conversations and the sole topic of our February Assessment Day. One recently developed part of our Assessment Day activities is an assessment Poster Presentationwhere all academic and student services units were invited to submit posters for presentation during an afternoon reception. In its first year, 12 posters were presented by 11 different campus units.

A group of 4 faculty and 1 support faculty through the Minnesota Collaborative/AAC&U Value Rubric project have been trained to use several of the rubrics including Critical Thinking, Written Communication, and Civic Engagement. Recently, two faculty members in the group above have twice presented at Professional Development Day on using the Value Rubrics. Their presentations led to the recommendation from the CIA to adopt rubrics for Diversity, Creative Thinking, Ethical Reasoning, and Civic Engagement which after adoption by the faculty assembly were then be added

to our campus-developed Written Communication, Oral Communication, Information Literacy, and Critical Thinking rubrics previously adopted. These rubrics have now been adopted by the Faculty Assembly.

In addition to the information above, 2014 HLC Review Team comments regarding this component were made. See the table below for information regarding SMSU's response to the comments.

| Summary of 2014 Reviewer Comments: Criterion 4 Core Component B | SMSU Response and Actions |
|---|---|
| A position should be established for assessment which would allow 1) simplify assessment processes & increase their effectiveness 2) sustain assessment efforts over time 3) assure best practices are implemented/maintained 4) provide consultative services on assessment and 5) assure assessment information is used to inform Strategic Planning & Budgeting to improve the entire campus | SMSU combined its HLC Coordinator and Assessment Coordinator positions. Historically, the HLC Coordinator position was only used when preparing for an HLC site visit. The Assessment Coordinator position did remain unfilled during some of 2016-2017. SMSU has had the same HLC/Assessment Coordinator in the position since April, 2017. This faculty member receives 50% reassign and summer duty days. |
| SMSU should consider joining the Assessment Academy. | SMSU joined the Assessment Academy and completed its 3rd Year Consultation during August, 2018. |
| LEP Assessment: The number of sub-components measured by programs/LEP need to be reduced in order to focus assessment & provide a reasonable | |

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| data-collection plan. | |
| The assessment performed by some of the AHA teams was not systematic.<br><br>There is too much assessment at the 100-level for programs & LEP. | Since 2014, SMSU's Liberal Education Program Student Learning Outcomes have been reduced from 10 to 7 outcomes. The lack of useful data generated by the Ad Hoc Assessment teams was part of the impetus for SMSU joining the Assessment Academy. The Assessment Academy project was developed to create a pathway for faculty and academic programs to assess the Liberal Education Program outcomes within their academic programs and through student services programs. Each academic program has a capstone-designated course and these courses have been identified by most programs as useful places for end-point assessment of student outcomes. |
| There is no systematic 400-level/capstone assessment of the LEP.<br><br>SMSU faculty need to demonstrate leadership in assessment of program outcomes & LEP outcomes.<br><br>Faculty should be actively engaged in identifying how program/LEP outcomes help the institution meet its mission. | SMSU faculty currently lead the assessment efforts on campus. Faculty understand the university's mission and that assessment of teaching and learning plays a role in fulfilling its mission. Through Assessment Day activities, participation in the Assessment Academy, creating support structure for program assessment via Liaison Teams and Program Assessment Leaders, SMSU has developed a culture of assessment for student learning, which helps in fulfilling its mission. SMSU has a faculty member serving as the HLC/Assessment Coordinator. This faculty member serves as the chair of the Committee on Institutional Assessment. The Coordinator led regular discussions on the common understandings about assessment with the chair of the Liberal Education Committee. |
| Faculty involvement in assessment:<br><br>Assessment has been inconsistent.<br><br>Each program must develop well-defined assessment plans that allow faculty to | |

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| effectively & efficiently evaluate program outcomes. | |
| Programs have focused too much on entry level assessment and not enough on the skills acquired through the course of a student's studies nearer to graduation.

Faculty will need to engage with the results of assessment in order to improve teaching & learning.

The full faculty were not engaged in the assessment process. | Until 2014, SMSU's assessment was inconsistent. Since this time, all academic programs have developed well-defined assessment plans. These assessment plans were developed to assess student learning across the level of courses (from 100 to 400). Each academic program has a Program Assessment Leader that coordinates programmatic assessment. All faculty are expected to engage in the assessment process. Each academic year, SMSU has an Assessment Day in the spring semester. These days have provided work days on assessment and training on assessment-related topics. The SMSU Campus Assessment Master Plan was developed based upon the pieces of the assessment procedures and training that have been ongoing since 2014. |
| Students may need to be engaged in the assessment processes on campus. | Ongoing discussions are occurring to determine how to implement this recommendation. Students have volunteered for the HLC/Strategic Planning Committee and this continues for 2018-2019. This will be an item of discussion for the Committee during this academic year. |
| Artifacts of student learning should be evaluated by two or more faculty using rubrics tied to the student learning outcomes. | During Professional Development Days, presentations on effective use of the AAC&U Value Rubrics have been made to faculty during break-out training sessions. |
| Assessment Sharing: | Implementation of the recommendations to enhance assessment data sharing |

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| Sharing data from assessment needs to be improved.<br><br><br>Assessment results are not widely distributed and considered. | required altering assessment reporting procedures (by creating a Report on the Assessment of Student Learning Executive Summary Template) and creating a Campus Assessment Master Plan. The Assessment Reports will now assist in data aggregation and sharing by the Committee on Institutional Assessment, The Liberal Education Committee, the Academic Deans' Office for use in Program Review, and the HLC/Strategic Planning Committee. SMSU also used a Poster Presentation Session on Assessment during its Spring 2018 Assessment Day where 11 different academic programs shared assessment posters, many which had substantial data and results. |
| Many members of assessment-related committees are on multiple committees limiting the faculty participation. | SMSU has made a concerted effort to increase participation its committees. SMSU implemented a Program Assessment Leader position in order to increase the participation of faculty In assessment and coordinating their results with assessment related committees. |
| Assessment data are not sufficiently developed to reliably enhance teaching & learning. | Almost 1/3 of SMSU's Academic Programs are evaluating assessment data and using their results to improve student learning. This is greatly improved since 2016 when these rates were only 3%. Regarding the Liberal Education Program, the newest assessment reporting procedures will provide data that can reliably enhance teaching and learning. |
| Graduate Program Assessment:<br><br>There is inconsistent evidence of the graduate program assessment<br><br><br><br>The assessment of graduate programs may want to include culminating projects-In particular, the MBA program may want to consider graduate theses or culminating projects.<br><br><br><br>All graduate programs need to develop assessment plans and to make that information readily available in the graduate catalog. | The 5 graduate programs have active assessment plans. These plans were developed based upon their unique student learning outcomes. Each program has its own culminating evaluation of student learning through a capstone course, action research project, or portfolio review.<br><br><br><br>As described elsewhere, including assessment plans and student learning outcomes in the course catalogs currently are not feasible endeavors. The SMSU website has undergone some redesign and assessment plans will be posted on the Assessment Webpage (http://www.smsu.edu/administration/academicdeans/assessment/index.html) during the 2018-2019 academic year.<br><br><br>The graduate programs submit assessment reports through the same |

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| The CIA needs to discuss graduate assessment data in addition to undergraduate. | reporting mechanisms described above. The CIA has had discussions with the graduate programs and discuss undergraduate and graduate assessment data. |
| Some faculty are still equating course grades with assessment. | The Assessment Academy/Committee on Institutional Assessment Liaison Teams have reviewed all of the academic program assessment plans. At no point in the last two years has there been evidence that course grades have been conflated with assessment. |

## Sources

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- Crtn4B_LEP Assessment Gap Analysis_June2018
- Crtn4B_SMSU Campus Assessment Master Plan
- Crtn4B_SMSU Campus Assessment Master Plan (page number 17)
- Crtn4B_SMSU Campus Assessment Master Plan (page number 18)
- Crtn4B_SMSU Campus Assessment Master Plan (page number 22)
- Crtn4B_SMSU Campus Assessment Master Plan (page number 24)
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- Crtn4B1_ Assessment Day Levels 2017
- Crtn4B1_Ad Hoc Assessment Reports
- Crtn4B1_Ad Hoc Assessment Teams
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- Crtn4B1_Assessment Academy Program Liaisons 2016
- Crtn4B1_Assessment Academy Webpage
- Crtn4B1_Assessment Day Levels 2018 3_13
- Crtn4B1_Assessment Mini Grants
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- Crtn4B1_Critical Thinking Rubric approved by Assembly on 4-4-13-1
- Crtn4B1_HLC-Assessment Coordinator Position
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- Crtn4B1_Liberal Education Committee Webpage
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- Crtn4B2_Annual_Report_Instructions(2)
- Crtn4B2_Assessment Day Schedule
- Crtn4B2_Assessment Liaison Teams with PALS
- Crtn4B2_Program Assessment Leaders Description
- Crtn4B3_AY 17 18 Interdisciplinary LEP Diversity Assessment Day Poster
- Crtn4B3_Graduate Education Program Plan for Assessment (PASL)
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- Crtn4B4_ProfDevelopment Day Session Descriptions 1.4.18
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- Page 5 Assessment Academy Team (AAT) project

# 4.C - Core Component 4.C

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

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

## Argument

**4.C.1.**

SMSU has established goals for enrollment, persistence, and completion. SMSU utilizes the Minnesota State system definitions for persistence and completion. The completion definition is the percent of an entering cohort of full-time undergraduate regular and transfer students that has completed a degree. Completion is measured as graduation by the end of the sixth spring after entry at the universities and as graduation or transfer by the end of the third spring after entry at the colleges. Additionally, SMSU uses the definition for completion determined by the system that states that system persistence is the percent of a fall entering cohort of full-time regular and transfer students who have been retained, graduated or transferred by the second fall term following original fall enrollment. Retention is defined as New First Year students (i.e. Federal Full-Time Cohort) beginning in the fall that return to campus for the following fall semester.

Some of these goals have risen to the level of [Key Performance Indicators](#) (KPIs) for the campus. The retention goals for the 2021 Strategic Plan are rates of 70% overall, 75% domestic, and 70% for International students. The degree completion goal, established by the Minnesota State system for the campus is 49.1%. Persistence goals for students to remain in the Minnesota State system is 90%.

**4.C.2.**

The Data Management/Institutional Research Office collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence, and degree completion. As demonstrated in the [KPI document](#), 86% of the overall New First Year retention goal, 90% of the domestic student goal, and 21% of the International student goal was met (over 70% in 2016). Currently system completion is 104% and system retention (persistence) is 97% of targets. Detailed information regarding students of color and other demographic information can be found [here](#).

Beginning summer 2016, Data Management and Institutional Research began posting retention

information on its webpage specific to each program. The reports are intended to provided programs data for both Federal Cohort students as well as transfer students. Work continues on the development of a program completion methodology. Currently, these data are not utilized in program review.

In addition to the data on the goals described above, SMSU also has goals for and collects data on Licensure success rates. National licensure exam passing rate goals are set at 88.8% and SMSU in academic year 2015 and 2016 achieved an 84.4% and 74.5% passing rate respectively.

**4.C.3.**

Through the Data Management and Institutional Research Office, SMSU collects and analyzes data regarding retention, persistence, and completion. Examples of groups or individuals utilizing the data include administrators, enrollment management, and various work groups and committees. Recently, SMSU used retention and persistence data a driver for a redesign and relocation of several areas into one centralized Student Success & Advising Center. This group brought together the Office for Student Success, Advising Center, and Academic Commons into a centralized location and staffing organization. Concerns over student persistence data were a driving force in the creation and launch of standardized Mustang Academic Plans (MAPS) for all majors/programs in the Fall of 2017.

*Retention and Completion*

A strong public definition of student success in higher education is defined by the conferring of a degree to a student. The result is a statistic referred to as completion rate or graduation rate defined as completion within 150% of time, which for a 4-year institution constitutes a six-year window. Additionally, within that time-period an initial measure is taken after the first academic year that is commonly referred to as the first-year to second-year retention rate. SMSU categorizes this measured group as New First Year (NFY). Students from the NFY are considered "traditional" and as a group represent roughly 65% of degree-seeking undergraduates. Transfer students and students with previous degrees represent the remaining 35%. Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) data indicates NFY students graduate at a rate of 39% and is not reflective of the number of unduplicated degrees we confer based upon our total student enrollment.

Over the past five years (2012 to 2017), SMSU's NFY enrollment has declined around 30%. In addition, new transfer enrollment has declined by approximately 15%. SMSU's composite retention rate for the 2006 to 2016 cohorts is 67%; the 2016 cohort rate of 59.5% demonstrates a significant drop from our long-term rate. SMSU responded to that decline by making the organizational realignment described above and the physical move of several offices previously spread about campus into a central Office for Student Success, Advising Center, and Academic Commons. This office opened in January 2018, so whether or not this will benefit retention is unclear, but SMSU is optimistic that the changes will be student friendly and efficient.

Over the past 20 years, SMSU's completion rate has risen from approximately 30% to 46.2% for the most recent year. The past five cohorts for which data is available average 44%, with a significant gain to 51% for the Fall 2011 cohort. A more detailed analysis is provided in SMSU's Strategic Framework Performance Measures.It is important to note that these rates are reflective of a 6-year lag time from the initiation of the cohort before we can analyze data and therefore, makes understanding the cause of these data trends a complex endeavor.

Within Minnesota State, SMSU's persistence rate 15 year average is 85.8% as noted in the Strategic Framework Performance Measures report above. System persistence defined NFY cohort students and transfer students that have graduated or are still enrolled in higher education 6 years after first

enrolling hovers just under 90%. Strategies for improving persistence are being investigated by the Vice President of Enrollment Management and Student Success (see Student Success Plan).

**4.C.4.**

As a member of Minnesota State, SMSU's IPEDS data surveys are submitted from the system Institutional Research office.  SMSU has review oversight.  As such, the system follows all IPEDS-mandated submission definitions.  Internally, SMSU uses the same IPEDS definitions for reporting official retention, persistence, and completion data with exception of preliminary retention figures, for which SMSU and Minnesota State use the same source data tables compiled by the system (see Key Performance Indicators).

However, IPEDS definitions are very narrow in scope and only apply to approximately 40% of SMSU's total student population.  Moreover, IPEDS rates do not provide broad insights into long-term student persistence, specific variables influencing retention, and various institution-level persistence concerns and goals. Thus, SMSU also compiles and analyzes data using a broader dataset that includes a wider range of bio/demographic, financial, and academic criteria.  Wherever and whenever possible, these analyses follow IPEDS guidelines as closely as possible.

In addition to the information above, 2014 HLC Review Team comments regarding this component were made. See the table below for information regarding SMSU's response to the comments.

| **Summary of 2014 Reviewer Comments:**<br><br>Criterion 4 Core Component C | **SMSU Response and Actions** |
|---|---|
| There was little evidence to show that assessment is used for improving programs. | More programs currently are using assessment data for program improvement recommendations than in 2014. Using assessment for program improvement is a key reason that the Report on the Assessment of Student Learning Executive Summary Template asks programs to identify changes that were made to curriculum, pedagogy, and instruction in their report. In addition, being able to compile multiple years of these reports will help provide rich data for use in program review. |
| There was little evidence of the data used in campus discussions to improve academic programs in order to benefit retention, persistence, or completion rates. | The SMSU Program Prioritization process used large amounts of data. A focus of this process was to identify programs that needed support with the goal of increased student retention, persistence, and completion. |
|  | The SMSU Student Success plan was developed using retention, persistence, and completion rates to set and help reach goals. |

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|---|---|
| It is unclear how retention, persistence, and completion goals are tied to data analyses, and how data analysis drives decisions. | Historical data are used to help identify groups of students who have lower rates and strategies are developed to improve the rates for these groups. Students who choose to leave the university are surveyed to determine reasons for why they leave and this information is taken into consideration in planning and decision-making. |

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- Crtn4C3_Southwest Minnesota State University SPM Report 2018

# 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

SMSU is deeply committed to the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services. SMSU has worked diligently to develop a culture of assessment for the promotion of continuous improvement in student learning. Through development of this culture, more parties are engaged in assessment of programmatic and Liberal Education Program student learning outcomes. Furthermore, SMSU has developed campus-wide procedures to ensure assessment is meaningful and useful. These newly aligned procedures will serve SMSU as it seeks effectively utilize assessment data to enhance student learning and improve retention, persistence, and degree completion.

## Sources

*There are no sources.*

# 5 - Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

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

# 5.A - Core Component 5.A

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

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

## Argument

**5.A.1.**

*Fiscal Resources*

SMSU has the fiscal resources needed to support its operations during a currently challenging time for state-appropriated and tuition-generated revenue. Tuition revenue, state appropriation, personnel expenses, and non-personnel expenses influence the financial health of the University. Enrollment and tuition rates determines tuition revenue. State appropriation is a two-fold factor determined by regular appropriations for operations and capital appropriations for building or improvements. Personnel expenses are largely influenced by contract negotiations and by adding or reducing employees. Non-personnel expenses are influenced largely by inflation and if funds are short, this is a likely area for reducing expenses.

Tuition rate increases are at the discretion of the Minnesota State Board of Trustees, but in fiscal year 2014, 2015, 2017, and 2019, the State of Minnesota Legislature mandated no increases for undergraduate Minnesota tuition rates. In fiscal year 2016, SMSU raised the undergraduate tuition rate by 3.45% and in fiscal year 2018 by 3.85%. Conversely, graduate tuition rates legislatively have been allowed to increase annually. SMSU increased graduate tuition rates by 2.5%, 3.8%, 0%, and 2.6% for the fiscal years from 2015-2018. Minnesota State Board of Trustees caps student fees at 3% annually.

State appropriations to the Minnesota State System have increased but have not been sufficient to cover inflationary expenses considering the gap in revenue from tuition rate freezes and enrollment

declines. Therefore, challenges continue each year to balance budgets. In fiscal year 2013, appropriations accounted for approximately 40% of total revenue and tuition nearly 60%. This balance has improved in fiscal year 2018 with appropriation at approximately 49% and tuition 51% of total revenue.

Since 2014, SMSU has continued to carefully plan and submit a balanced budget to the Minnesota State Board of Trustees. At the time of SMSU's last HLC visit and comprehensive report, a challenging budget process for Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 was underway. Throughout Spring 2014, the SMSU administration, faculty, staff and students met through monthly budget meetings, Meet and Confers, All University Conversations, and Strategic Planning gatherings to work together to develop solutions to the budget issues. The task was to find cost-savings without losing focus on the SMSU themes of educational excellence and distinctiveness, student learning and success, and meaningful partnerships and engagement or Minnesota State's three guiding priciples of "*the success of our students, our commitment to diversity and equity, and the financial sustainability of our colleges and universities*." These meetings identified cost saving ideas such as reducing electives, increasing class sizes, etc. and revenue generating ideas such as ideas for delivering programs on 2-year campuses via the system Twin Cities Baccalaureate plan.

In FY2014, SMSU's administration offered to selected programs, departments, and work areas Board Early Separation Incentives (BESIs). Eight faculty and staff accepted BESIs. Replacement faculty were hired for two of four faculty positions and for two of four staff positions.   These reductions and replacements resulted in savings in fiscal year 2015 of approximately $470,000. Funding for BESIs came from fund balance thus negatively affecting FY2014 financial statements. In FY2015 budgets were managed through concerted efforts to minimize expense spending. FY2016 yielded increased enrollments, larger general fund cash balances, and positive income although at fiscal year-end revenue was reduced due to the Government Accounting Standards Board rule 68 regarding liability for unfunded retirement benefits. This cost was almost $4.9 million, which is approximately a 14% increase for that expense.

FY2018 was the first year of a new funding biennium. The Minnesota Legislature funded a $91 million biennium supplement for the Minnesota State system but froze tuition rates for FY2019. Enrollment projections suggested SMSU would incur reduced enrollment around 45 FYE in FY2018. Projections underestimated the enrollment deficit and SMSU used carryover funds to meet its FY2018 budget. In FY2019, program discontinuance, reduction, and reorganization may occur to ensure future sustainable financial health. In addition, enhanced efforts to generate revenue are on-going.

*Human Resources*

SMSU has the human resources needed to support its operations and deliver its programs. SMSU employees fall into one of five bargaining units or three employee plans: Inter-Faculty Organization; Administrative Service Faculty; Middle Management Association; Minnesota Administrative Professional Employees; American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees; Commissioner's Plan; Managerial Plan; and Minnesota State Administrator's Plan. As of FY2018, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) data indicated the following employment numbers:

Table 5.1 Number of SMSU Employees by Position Type and Status.

|  | Faculty | Staff | Administration |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Full-Time | 102 | 164 | 13 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Part-Time | 128 | 36 | 0 |

Between fiscal years 2014 and 2017, SMSU's unduplicated annual headcount of employees changed by just two fewer employees. No unit gained or lost more than three unduplicated headcount. SMSU does not rely heavily on adjunct or part-time positions for teaching courses; in the spring of 2018 71% of courses were taught by full-time faculty.

Directed by the Institutional Capacity and Effectiveness Strategic Plan, SMSU is engaging in succession planning for critical campus positions. Training programs and activities are being developed to allow employment mobility if needed. SMSU has also improved its employment search processes to ensure search committees are more involved throughout the entire search process and receive enough training to identify the highest qualified candidates. Positions announcements are disseminated widely through increased advertising. See 5.A.4 for newly developed onboarding for recent hires.

*Physical Infrastructure*

The SMSU campus consists of 27 accessible buildings, on 216 acres, with an interconnected core of academic and student services buildings. SMSU has designated 41 classrooms of which 30 use Smartboard projection technology, 4 are interactive television rooms that can live-stream or record lectures, and 3 are large lecture halls. Twenty-five teaching laboratories are also available and have discipline-based specialized laboratory equipment. One active-learning classroom became operational in the fall of 2018. There are 7 Residence Hall buildings mainly located on the south end of campus and have greater capacity than current demand; Residence Life oversees 7 Living and Learning communities in these halls. Residence Life also manages the 30-unit Foundation Residence Apartments. A 40-acre Environmental Learning Area on the northwest edge of campus is used for teaching, recreation, and outreach. Athletic fields and two stadiums are situated on the north side of campus and serve intercollegiate athletics, regional middle-school, high school, and club sports as well as community events. Other multi-use facilities include fitness areas, indoor gymnasiums and a swimming pool.

The University completed a Comprehensive Facilities Plan (CFP) that was presented to the members of the Minnesota State System Office in November 2017. This plan will help guide capital project decisions over the next few years. A priority of the State of Minnesota and the Minnesota State system is space utilization. During planning, space utilization was analyzed and confirmed substantial underutilized classroom spaces. This indicates sufficient classroom and teaching laboratory space is available and may also indicate capacity for future re-design without the need for capital building projects. The utilization study has also guided classroom scheduling, space assignments, the leasing of space, and future renovation, remodeling and potential decommissioning of space.

SMSU budgets for repair and maintenance of the physical infrastructure. Minnesota State has a capital bonding process for capital improvements, building or demolition of its general fund buildings. The University can also request Higher Education Asset Preservation (HEAPR) funding to reduce deferred maintenance of current general fund buildings. The University's current deferred maintenance total is almost $40 million. HEAPR funds ensure that the campus operating dollars are used to improve educational outcomes, not repair buildings.

*Technological Infrastructure*

SMSU relies upon core administrative software applications managed by the System Office's Information Technology Services division. The System Office's Information Technology also

manages a systemwide learning management software, Desire2Learn Brightspace (D2L Brightspace), as well as specific enterprise wide academic services such as Adobe Connect and Kaltura. Although the System Office's IT division manages these services, the campus IT office provides campus support. The campus IT staff is responsible for:

- internal software implementations
- review of software and other contracts for appropriate language relating to information technology
- disbursing and servicing all hardware on campus
- providing network access and services

SMSU continues to be a member of the Southwest/West Central Higher Education Organization for Telecommunications and Technology (SHOT), one of six regional consortia that comprise the Learning Network of Minnesota. SHOT supports communication systems and services critical to university operations.   SMSU utilizes Image Now for document management. IT staff supports on-premise systems such as Blackboard Campus Card services and Hobson's Connect and Retain constituent relationship management systems, as well as other such systems.

In January of 2016, the University Technology Advisory Committee and the SmSUFA Academic Technology Committee jointly formed the Academic Technology Infrastructure Workgroup. This workgroup developed five General Higher Education Findings and four SMSU findings along with implications and considerations, short-term and long-term recommendations and led to an update of SMSU's Information Technology Strategic Plan. The IT Office has set four strategic directions:


1. A highly technologically literate and informed campus community that is supported by a customer-service oriented, effective and agile information technology services organization

2. A reliable, accessible, secure and advanced technology infrastructure

3. An innovative and engaging academic technology environment that strives to support student success across the University.

4. Support for tools and processes that enable increased efficiency and innovation across all areas of the University while also addressing critical information security needs.

**5.A.2.**

SMSU allocates its resources to teaching, learning, and support services, which includes academic affairs, student services, institutional support, administration, athletics, and physical plant and facilities support. No revenues of the University are sent directly to the System Office. There are shared services provided to the 31 institutions of the Minnesota State System that have funding requirements to be covered by the institutions. These include such services as various information technology services, our Integrated Student Reporting System, a scheduling system, a facilities reporting system, a centralized Human Resources Transactional Service Model, a web platform for online courses, as well as other services.

The University supports the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) located on campus and acts as its fiscal agent. SMSU provides $25,000 in support of the SBDC each fiscal year. This connects to our mission through community outreach. The SBDC office has worked closely with the Southwest Marketing Advisory Center, a student led marketing research office located on campus.

**5.A.3.**

SMSU continues to meet the goals incorporated in its mission statement. SMSU's Strategic Planning Committee includes members across campus and remains cognizant of the resources it has to carry out the plan and invest in the university's future. The President's Cabinet meets each summer to review the Strategic Plan, review the strategies to be met the coming year, review the past year's outcomes, and vet them ensuring resources are available to carry out actions. These strategies are then reviewed with the Strategic Planning Committee and adjustments are made based on the committee suggestions. Sub-committees determine the actions matching these strategies. As the academic year progresses, updates are provided at the Strategic Planning Committee meetings to review the actions and outcomes of each strategy. These actions and outcomes are shared at All-University Conversations.

Although University budgets have been tight these past few years, SMSU has invested in new initiatives consistent with the Strategic Plan by obtaining additional money through special legislative funding, donations, and grants. Initiatives include an Agriculture Education Program, a Paraprofessional to Special Education program, and a Concurrent Enrollment Education Program. The University has allocated budget money to increase Enrollment Management and Student Success and marketing budgets, as well as investing in a Twin Cities (Metro) Baccalaureate Program in Exercise Science. Through the Minnesota State System's Leveraged Equipment Program by obtaining matching funds from the SMSU Foundation, a collaboration with the Schwan Food Company, and other outside donations the following departments have benefited from the Leveraged Equipment program including Communication Studies, Chemistry, Biology, Accounting and Finance, Exercise Science, Agronomy and Agriculture. The table below captures amounts for some of the funding discussed in this paragraph.

Table 5.2. Grants, Donations, and Leveraged Equipment Funding.

| Program | Purpose | Amount | Year |
|---|---|---|---|
| Agriculture Education | Start-Up and Marketing New Program | $58,580 | FY17 |
| Agriculture Education | Private Support Start-Up | $505,000 | FY16/FY17 |
| Agriculture Education | Legislative Start-Up | $450,000 | FY16/17 |
| College Now | Concurrent Enrollment Grant | $150,000 | FY18/19 |
| College Now | Credit for Prior Learning Credentialing | $25,000 | FY18/19 |
| Leveraged Equipment | State Match to Private Donations | $104,294 | FY15* |
| Leveraged Equipment | State Match to Private Donations | $165,734 | FY16* |
| Leveraged Equipment | State Match to Private Donations | $135,095 | FY17* |
| Leveraged Equipment | State Match to Private Donations | $158,100 | FY18* |
| Leveraged Equipment | State Match to Private Donations | $160,300 | FY19* |
| Para to SPED | MN Dept. of Education Grant | $385,000 | FY17/18/19 |

*These funds required matching private donations of the same amount.

**5.A.4.**

The University continues to ensure its employees are the best-qualified candidates through the search and interview process. Human Resources follows guidelines in a Human Resources ensures job descriptions are appropriate for the requisite qualifications and screen applications to verify candidates meet minimum requirements. Additional rigor has been added to the search committee process, where search committees are involved throughout the search process and not just the interview process. Search committees follow a Search Advisory Committee Handbook. Changes in advertising sources have been made to help diversify the applicant pool. Once hired, a more attentive onboarding process (in alignment with Academic Strategic Plan 2.1.1) is taking place involving the Deans, department faculty, and newly hired faculty. Onboarding includes:

- Mentoring support for new faculty and staff
- Informing appropriate unions of new hire start dates
- Earlier access to system identification for email and learning management system access
- Earlier access to State of Minnesota employee Self Service system
- Creation of a new employee on-boarding guide and checklist for departments

Probationary and tenured faculty have Professional Development Plans and Reports that must be reviewed with their Deans according to the contractual schedules. All other employees are included in an annual performance evaluation process.

SMSU faculty attend professional development days for a full day in the fall and spring. Usually one general session is focused on various topics such as strategic planning, assessment, online instruction, or diversity and inclusion. Other sessions include breakout sessions with a variety of topics offered from which faculty choose. Staff attend SMSU Development Day at the end of May. An Assessment Day in the spring is scheduled for assessment training for academic and student service departments but is open to all employees and departments. Recently, additional training has been provided on Anti-Racism, Anti-Bullying, and Safe-Space topics.

The Administrative and Service Faculty and the Inter-Faculty Organization (IFO) bargaining units each have professional development funds available to them on an individual and grant funded basis through their contractual agreements. The agreements outline approved uses for funds, which may include travel expenses to professional training and conferences, electronic subscriptions, software, books and journals as well as for other uses. Grants are offered on a competitive basis as approved by the units and the University President. Faculty also are eligible for sabbatical leave to enhance their professional development as outlined in the IFO contract.

Classified staff training is facilitated by the Training & Affirmative Action budget, which for FY2018 was $4,600. Of this money, approximately $2,000 is allotted for Development Day, which is open to all employees at SMSU, $1,000 was used to bring in Anti-Racism Training and Crisis Management Training, and the remaining $1,600 was available for classified staff requests to attend conferences and trainings.

**5.A.5.**

In the internal budgeting process, administrators work with their directors, chairs, and other cost center responsible persons to allocate available budget as strategically as possible. The budget process does take into consideration the strategic plan and those focus areas each fiscal year. The area-

responsible persons look to find ways to provide funding when possible for strategic actions such as increased training opportunities, changes in advertising for searches, the Comprehensive Facility Master Plan, additional enrollment management activities, etc.

As part of the Minnesota State System, budget requirements are set forth by the System Office and includes annually balanced budgets to be submitted to the System Office. The Minnesota State Board of Trustees approves budgets per Board Policy 5.9. The System, as a state agency, receives its appropriation on a biennial basis from the State of Minnesota. Guidance is provided by the System Office for parameters of the budget. Consultations on budget occur with bargaining units, department chairs, department heads, and students. The general budgeting timeline is as follows:

1. Mid-to-late Fall Semester- budget estimates are prepared.

2. Late Fall Semester or early Spring Semester- estimated budgets are presented at Meet and Confer meetings with Bargaining Units and the Student Association's Meet and Discuss.

3. Adjustments are made to the budget as new information is received.

4. Mid-May- Minnesota State receives a biennial appropriation from the Minnesota Legislature. The Legislature meets between January and May.

5. Per a system allocation model an allocation is made after state appropriation.

6. Student consultation is required per Board Policy 5.9 and 2.3 on specific issues within the budgeting process such as tuition and fees as stated in Board Policy 5.11. This consultation occurs during monthly Meet and Discusses with Student Association members present and may also be presented at the full Student Association meetings.

7. April- a full budget is due to the System Office for review and approval. This budget is presented at all bargaining unit Meet and Confers.

The Minnesota State system office monitors financial health indicators for each institution based upon System Procedure 7.3.16. Upon not meeting enrollment projections in the Fall semester as submitted the previous March or June, an adjusted budget is submitted. Budgets, expenses, and budget balances are monitored, on a monthly basis by the Vice President for Finance and Administration, the appropriate other Vice Presidents and Deans, the accountants assigned to the different funds, grant program managers, and cost center responsible persons who are usually academic department chairs and department heads or their designees. Revenue reports created in the Business Office are submitted to the Vice President for Finance and Administration for review at least twice per semester. Monthly reports are sent by the General Fund Accountant to the various cabinet members. Department responsible persons as well as cabinet members have access to the Information Storage Retrieval System to monitor their accounts.

Since FY2017, summarized monthly budget report are presented as an agenda standing item by the Vice President for Finance and Administration to the bargaining units at Meet and Confers and to the students at Meet and Discuss meetings.

In addition to the information above, 2014 HLC Review Team comments regarding this component were made. See the table below for information regarding SMSU's response to the comments.

| Summary of 2014 Reviewer Comments: Criterion 5 Core Component A | SMSU Response and Actions |
|---|---|
| SMSU faces continued fiscal issues. | SMSU faces continued fiscal pressure but also continues to budget responsibly. SMSU has worked with faculty and staff to identify cost-savings and efficiencies. The Strategic Plan for SMSU considers its fiscal constraints. |
| The state allocation sending money to system functions rather than institution functions is a problem for the university. | The proportion of the state allocation sent for system functions is a reality of being an institution in a large multi-campus system. This also provides substantial shared services that would not be available for a reasonable cost to the university. SMSU currently has a balanced budget. |

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# 5.B - Core Component 5.B

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

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

## Argument

The President's Cabinet is the senior management team on campus who leads the day-to-day operations of the university, and includes the following administrators:

- Provost/Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs
- Vice President for Finance and Administration
- Dean of Students /Associate Vice President for Student Affairs
- Dean of the College of Business, Education, Graduate and Professional Studies
- Dean of the College of Arts, Letters and Sciences
- Vice President for Advancement & Foundation Executive Director
- Director of Athletics
- Chief Information Officer
- Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Success

See organizational chart.

The University's leadership works closely with the leadership from bargaining units, employment plans, and the Student Association in the development of policies, procedures, and strategic planning, and in addressing the fiscal health of the university through a number of collaborative processes, all of which are described in more detail below.

As a State of Minnesota-assisted institution, SMSU maintains strong relationships with Legislative and Executive branches of state government and the Minnesota State System Office. Through these relationships, SMSU endeavors to align its mission and strategic objectives with the initiatives and priorities of the State and system office.

**5.B.1.**

The Board of Trustees was established by the legislature in Minnesota Statutes Section 136F.02 with membership representing students and labor, and at least one representative residing in each congressional district. The governor is required to consider the needs of the board, the balance of the board with respect to labor and business interests as well as race, gender, and ethnicity. In Board Policy 3.36 Academic Programs, the Board directs decision-making regarding the development,

approval and management of academic programs at its colleges and universities, and delegates program approval responsibilities to the chancellor under 3.36, Part 5.The Board has policy responsibility for system planning, academic programs, fiscal management, personnel, admission requirements, tuition and fees, and rules and regulations.The Board of Trustees approves SMSU's budget, strategic plan, and presidential work plan.

SMSU shares with the governing board as well as other external agencies a data for system-wide reports and also a number of annual reports that assess the financial and academic policies and practices, per statute and policies described herein. The following are examples of reporting to the Board: Annual SMSU Strategic Direction, data for Annual Financial Reports and Audits, Facilities Master Planning and Deferred Maintenance Reports, various Academic and Student Affairs data, Annual Foundation Audits, Strategic Plan, and more.

Oversight of fiduciary responsibilities is required by Minnesota Statute Section 136F.06, Subd. 2: *The board shall have the authority needed to operate and govern the state colleges and universities unless otherwise directed or prohibited by law. The board is responsible for its operations and necessary decisions unless these are specifically delegated by law to a state department or agency.*

The board shall also require auditing of each college and university in order to ensure financial integrity, implementation of necessary financial controls and appropriate accordance between board policies and campus expenditures (Minnesota Statutes Section 136F.526). (see Office of the Revisor webpage for statutes: https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/136F) The board is also authorized to acquire and manage facilities (Minnesota Statutes Sections 136F.60 – 136F.68) for all colleges and universities and to set tuition and manage funds, grants, gifts and bonds (Minnesota Statutes Sections 136F.70 – 136F.98). Board Policy 7.1 Finance and Administrative Authority of Board, Chancellor and Presidents mandates that there be a high degree of coordination of administrative systems across all colleges and universities, yet the board shall allow sufficient autonomy to the colleges and universities. Part 2 specifies the responsibilities of the chancellor and the presidents: *Part 2. Responsibilities-*

> *The chancellor shall periodically advise the board of the administrative and financial management performance of the system, system office, colleges and universities. The chancellor is responsible for periodic communications, reporting, and oversight of the presidents. Presidents shall have the authority, responsibility and accountability to administer their colleges and universities in accordance with board policies, delegation from the chancellor, system procedures, and federal, state and local laws and regulations. The president of each college and university is responsible for developing and maintaining conforming and compliant college/university-wide administrative, financial, and facilities management procedures in consultation with students, faculty, staff and recognized organizations for faculty, students, and staff.*

The Board of Trustees is authorized by Minnesota Statutes Section 136F.06, Subd. 1 to adopt suitable policies for the institutions it governs, and exercises oversight through Board Policy 1A.1, Part 6: Board Policies and Procedures. Subpart G of that section authorizes the president of a college or university to adopt policies and procedures provided that they are consistent with board policy and system procedure.

The current Board of Trustees is knowledgeable about SMSU, including first-hand knowledge. The Board of Trustees held a regular board meeting on the SMSU campus in November 2017, which was the first time the Board has met outside of the Twin Cities.

**5.B.2.**

Campus-level governance involves communication and sharing of information among the internal constituents of the institution. These practices help develop and implement policies and procedures and to shape the direction of the strategic plan. The President, Vice Presidents and the Directors are all responsible for building agendas for Cabinet meetings. Many of the topics discussed in President's Cabinet are shared with the bargaining units and Student Association at the monthly meetings with each group.

Governance structure is partly determined by Minnesota's collective bargaining laws. Under Minnesota law, three collective bargaining agreements and two plans are negotiated at the state level rather than on the campuses and two collective bargaining agreements are negotiated at the system level. Each bargaining unit participates in governance of the institution in accordance with the statutory language and provisions in their Master Agreements, or labor plans (see https://www.smsu.edu/administration/humanresources/labor-union-contracts.html or links to individual contracts in 2A). There are governance structures in place to communicate, develop, and assess the institution's policies, procedures, and strategic objectives and these are in detail in other parts of this report:

- Meet and Confer (faculty, support faculty, Council 5, MMA & MAPE)
- Meet and Discuss
- All-University Committees
- All-University Conversations
- Strategic Planning

See Criterion 2.C for more information on the role of the Board of Trustees related to finance, academics, student services, and human resources.

**5.B.3.**

SMSU administration, faculty, staff and students work together through shared governance to set academic policies, procedures and requirements. The President's Cabinet is committed to collaborating with all bargaining units to facilitate these collaborative efforts. The variety of forums and processes described in Criterion 5.B.1 enable this collaboration to occur.

An example of shared governance currently under way is the transformation of general studies through the Liberal Education Committee and open biweekly sessions. A second example is the ongoing work of the Academic Advising Work Group. Shared governance is also used in development of the academic calendar. Though semester start dates are determined by the System Office, the rest of the calendar is developed locally. All units on campus, including students, are deeply involved in this process. The calendar goes through a number of iterations and compromises before being finalized through the Meet and Confer/Discuss process. The Professional Development Committee organizes two all-campus, all-day, workshops and breakout sessions addressing issues that touch each part of the campus from facilities to cyber security to curriculum. We have also worked as a university on campus climate and this has resulted in surveys of climate for underrepresented groups, and workshops on anti-racism and anti-bullying.

In 2016, the university embarked on an academic prioritization process that built upon our Program Analysis System. The goal of this was to encourage academic programs to seek efficiencies in the ways they offer courses while working toward a future focus. This prioritization process has gone through the shared governance processes described above.

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# 5.C - Core Component 5.C

The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.

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

## Argument

**5.C.1.**

The budget for SMSU is based on supporting the academics and support services for our students. The Strategic Plan with its five parts was developed with the SMSU Mission as its backbone. Even though the budget for SMSU recently has not grown sufficiently to cover inflationary expenses, a number of strategic plans in Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 have been incorporated into the budget. See below.

| | |
|---|---|
| *Enrollment* | Increased funding by $80,000 for Admissions and Marketing (total $188,700) |
| *Facilities Master* | Modernize Facilities via pre-design for capital bonding request |
| | Repurpose space via creation of active learning classroom |
| | Repurpose space via unifying Student Success and Advising Center |
| | Optimize space via rental to Marshall Adult Basic Education |
| Diversity | Anti-racism training provided (2016-2017, 2017-2018) |
| | Anti-bullying training scheduled (2018-2019) |
| | Safe Space Training provided (2016-2017, 2017-2018) |
| *Academic* | English Language Learner program development |
| | Participation in HLC Assessment Academy |

**5.C.2.**

Assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting are linked through the Strategic Planning process. Whenever possible, assessment and data were used in the development

of the Strategic Plan's goals, objectives, and strategies. The Cabinet has managed and the HLC/Strategic Planning Committee has operationalized the Strategic Plan. The evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting is captured within Cabinet meetings and HLC/Strategic Planning meetings.The evaluation of the university's functions, then are seen through the achievement of the Strategic Plan and SMSU's Key Performance Indicators.

Academic program assessment of student learning is related to the data generated in the paragraph above. SMSU has committed time and resources to the assessment process through the participation in the HLC Assessment Academy, granting a half-time release to a faculty member to lead the assessment coordination, through the addition of Assessment Days for gathering, learning, and sharing of information. Assessment has been allocated $13,000 for a budget in 2017-2018. SMSU participates in the Assessment Academy and has allocated the appropriate fiscal resources to fully participate. Please see Criterion 4 for the major discussion regarding assessment.

**5.C.3.**

*Internal Constituent Perspectives*

SMSU engages internal constituent groups in planning using these mechanisms:

- The Strategic Planning Committee is an All-University Committee comprised of representatives from all bargaining units, students, and administration. These representatives are tasked with bringing information back from the committee to share with all its respective members.
- The Administration also hosts at least one All-University Conversation with a strategic planning topic each semester, to which all students and employees are invited.
- All-University committees focused on specific issues or topics such as academic appeals, space, institutional assessment, diversity and inclusion compile input from all bargaining units, students, and administration and forwards these concerns to administration through administrators on these committees. See committee lists.
- Work Groups composed of internal constituency groups are convened when needed to work on specific subjects for a short period of time (e.g. Spanish Studies, Student Success, Advising Plan, and Academic Technology and Infrastructure).

*External Constituent Perspectives*

SMSU engages external constituent groups in planning using these mechanisms:

- SMSU currently has these program advisory councils mostly comprised of experts in their fields with ties to SMSU: Culinology and Hospitality; Agriculture; Nursing; College Now; GOLD College; Graphic Design; Wellness & Human Performance (Exercise Science); and Education. These groups provide program advice and administration regularly attends these council meetings.
- Community focus groups were engaged during the development of the current university Strategic Plan (e.g. the Marshall Chamber of Commerce sponsored group Women's Connect).

**5.C.4.**

One of the plans contained in the Strategic Plan is the Institutional Capacity and Effectiveness Plan. This plan, in part, helps to link the other components of the plan to the overall Strategic Plan. During the planning process, constituents considered fiscal constraints.

Through shared governance processes such as [Meet and Confer](), the Administration regularly provides internal groups with up to date enrollment and financial reports. The following information illustrates SMSU's attempts to anticipate and plan for revenue fluctuations. In 2017-2018, SMSU's on-campus and international undergraduate population declined sharply. This decline was largely related to lower numbers of student visa allotments and Admission Office staff turnover. Recruitment efforts were adjusted quickly to expand recruitment areas and advertising to students. The impacts of the one-year large decline in enrollment have been accounted for in 2018-2019 budget planning through reducing expense budgets, using funding set aside for Fiscal Year (FY) 2019, using interest earnings in the general fund and using reserves to balance the budget.

Although the extent of the FY2019 deficit was unknown, it has been expected since fall 2017. During the last two years, the Administration required academic programs and departments to complete an [Academic Prioritization ]()process to determine measures for creating efficiencies. Recently, the Administration submitted to bargaining units a series of program discontinuances, reductions, reorganizations, and possible retrenchment. [Board Early Separation Incentives]() were also offered. Realizing this deficit must also be solved through investments that buffer future fiscal challenges, enhanced marketing and recruitment efforts were expanded.

**5.C.5.**

As a rural institution, SMSU strategically plans for budgetary challenges tied to state and national political decisions, economic fluctuations tied to national and global markets, and changes in technology. SMSU is united in working with our partners in the legislature and executive branches to increase revenue and is thinking in new ways about growing enrollments.

A larger challenge has been preparing for projected declines in southwest Minnesota's rural population of traditional, college-aged students. Demographic shifts are expected in rural Minnesota to include considerable more diversity in the next decade. Therefore, recruitment and retention of more diverse students, faculty, and staff is a key component of planning. Anti-racism workshops and "safe space" training (described above) is also a component of planning for these demographic changes.

Current and future demographic shifts led to recruiting in new geographic areas and metropolitan areas (e.g. Kansas City). SMSU is also bringing its programs to more populated areas, as demonstrated with the Twin Cities Baccalaureate Exercise Science Program. SMSU's Theatre Department has also expanded with a program at Normandale Community College in Bloomington, MN. SMSU's RN-to-BSN program was designed as an online program to reach those students who are not able to be on campus.

The Presidents, Provosts, and Vice Presidents for Finance and Administration at SMSU and Minnesota West Community and Technical College (MnWest), a two year sister institution, have partnered with the Minnesota State System office to create a [Regional Planning Workgroup]().

An unexpected enrollment decline yielded lower numbers of entering students from Nepal and Nigeria. Retention efforts were quickly intensified including development and curricular approval of English Language Learner courses and creation of a club indoor soccer Futsal team that many international students had requested.

In addition to the information above, the 2014 HLC Review Team made a comment regarding this

component. See the table below for information regarding SMSU's response to the comment.

| Summary of 2014 Reviewer Comments:<br><br>Criterion 5 Core Component C | SMSU Response and Actions |
|---|---|
| Upper administration should use more data in their budgetary decision-making processes in a manner that will positively impact student needs, curricular needs, and faculty needs. | The Cabinet uses institutional data to determine budgetary decision-making.  This was most evident during the 2017 -2018 Academic Prioritization process that lead to recommendations of course eliminations, course consolidations, adjustments to minors and majors, elimination of minors, hiring decisions, and faculty retrenchment. |

## Sources

- 3B4_Prof Dev Day August 2016 Safe Space
- 4C1_KPI_June_2018
- 5A5_meet confer_budgetreport_examples
- 5B3_Academic Prioritization 12-5-16
- 5C1_ Anti-Racism Building a Community of Rapport Workshop
- 5C1_FW_ Respectful Workplace_Anti-Bullying Training - Save the Date
- 5C1_Institutional Capacity and Effectiveness 2017-2018
- 5C1_New Active Learning Classroom in Charter Hall 104
- 5C2_HLC Strategic Planning Agenda 9_10_18
- 5C3_2018 smsucommitteemembership
- 5C4_2018_BESI_Plans_MOUs
- 5C5_2018-06- Regional Planning Report - FINAL
- Crtn1A1 Strategic Plan Goals Objectives Strategies
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- Crtn3_Ag Advisory Council ByLaws
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# 5.D - Core Component 5.D

The institution works systematically to improve its performance.

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

## Argument

**5.D.1.**

SMSU documents evidence of operational performance. Data are gathered by the following methods:

1. Strategic Plan Outcome Reporting Key Performance Indicators
2. IPEDS Data
3. Enrollment Management Reports
4. Academic Program Review
5. Academic Department Reports (and College Annual Reports)
6. Student Services Annual Reports
7. Financial Audits and Reports performed by Minnesota State System
8. Non-Academic Program Review
9. System Level Reports
10. System Level Accountability Dashboard Reports
11. Campus-Wide Surveys

**5.D.2.**

Since the last HLC visit in 2014, SMSU has undertaken several efforts to increase self-reflection and analysis. At a high level, SMSU's Strategic Planning process resulted in the creation and adoption of Key Performance Indicators for monitoring of critical high-level measures involving enrollment, persistence, academics, and finances. Moreover, since 2013-2014, SMSU leadership study and discuss weekly Enrollment Management reports concerning prospects, applicants, enrollment, and persistence. The reports are generated from a very large aggregate dataset with a week-by-week, point in time structure put in place in the past 5 years.

Leadership's access to and monitoring of these data have driven decisions such as the purchase of additional prospect names to widen SMSU's marketing reach and to extend programs showing potential or growth. For example, SMSU extended its recruitment of community college students for transfer (2+2) programs such as Exercise Science and expanded those offerings to community college campuses in the Twin Cities region.

During Strategic Planning, items such as the process of Employment position requests were identified as obstacles. Now, positions that end as failed searches or were not filled the previous year, the Cabinet approves those requests to fill earlier in the academic year to expand the recruitment window. Moreover, the speed to completion of new searches has also improved this academic year thanks to a team effort by HR and members of search committees as well as more direct reporting of search timelines and days since opened.

Another example of trying to improve effectiveness concerns academic program annual reports. Within the past year, the HLC Assessment Academy team suggested that there be a decoupling of the assessment portion of the annual departmental reports. This was suggested in order to highlight the institutions and departments focus on assessment effort but also to allow departments a larger time window in which to perform assessment and programmatic self-reflection.

Other examples of recent institutional self-analysis and change can be found in the 2017-2018 Campus Diversity Climate Survey, finalization of a Campus Facilities Master Plan and process, and the third year of SMSU's Assessment Academy project. Specifically, the SMSU Assessment Academy project led to the development of the Campus Assessment Master Plan and new assessment reporting procedures and forms.

The fiscal health of the university is reviewed through the annual financial process, through internal audits, and by a series of metrics reviewed by the system office per Board Policy 7.3 and Procedure 7.3.16.

In addition to the information above, 2014 HLC Review Team comments regarding this component were made. See the table below for information regarding SMSU's response to the comments.

| Summary of 2014 Reviewer Comments:<br><br>Criterion 5 Core Component D | SMSU Response and Actions |
|---|---|
| Grants:<br><br>Grant submissions by faculty and staff can enhance sustainability and therefore enhance institutional effectiveness.<br><br><br>Grant activity is not systematic or consistent and has no coordinating office on the campus. | Some faculty are pursuing extramural funding. In 2017-2018, SMSU revised its grant submission procedures. While there is not a "Grants Office" on campus, the Provost is the first point of contact for the development of grants. There is a grants checklist and grant flowchart on the Advancement web page for SMSU faculty, staff, and administration to use. |

## Sources

- 4C1_KPI_June_2018
- 5A1_Comprehensive Facility Plan
- 5D_Cultural_Climate_Fall2017
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- 5D2 Exercise Science Normandale 9.16.14
- 5D2_7-03p16
- Crtn2A Board Policy 7.3
- Crtn2A Minnesota State - Audit Reports
- Crtn3A1_Arts Letters Sciences Program Review Schedule
- Crtn3B4_NSSE17 Consortium Report - Minnesota (SMSU)

- Crtn3B5_ALS Annual Report 2016-2017
- Crtn4B_SMSU Campus Assessment Master Plan
- Crtn4C3_Southwest Minnesota State University SPM Report 2018
- Crtn5D_v.4_SMSU External Grants Process Checklist
- Ctrn4_Final 2016-2017 Student Services Assessment

# 5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary

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

## Summary

SMSU has sufficient resources, structures, and processes to fulfill its mission. In fact, the commitment to shared governance ensures these resources, structures, and processes are allocated and developed under broad campus-input. SMSU maintains high quality in and improves the quality of its educational offerings through processes related to faculty development, departmental reporting, and regular program review. Through systematic and strategic planning, SMSU is positioned to respond to future challenges and opportunities. SMSU is intentional with its planning and includes a large cross-section of constituents in the planning process.

## Sources

*There are no sources.*