

# **Assurance Argument**

# Southwest Minnesota State University

**Review date: 10/28/2024**

# 1 - Mission

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

## 1.A - Core Component 1.A

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

1. The mission was developed through a process suited to the context of the institution.
2. The mission and related statements are current and reference the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development and religious or cultural purpose.
3. The mission and related statements identify the nature, scope and intended constituents of the higher education offerings and services the institution provides.
4. The institution's academic offerings, student support services and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.
5. The institution clearly articulates its mission through public information, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans or institutional priorities.

### Argument

#### 1A.1

The [mission](#) of Southwest Minnesota State University (SMSU) 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.

The mission statement was developed in 2007 with broad campus input. A [Brown and Gold Task Force](#) was assembled with constituents from all sectors of the campus to revise the previous version, developed in 1993, into its current form.

The current SMSU [vision and values](#) statements were developed during AY 2019 through a collaborative, campus-wide process. These read as follows:

VISION: SMSU aspires to be recognized throughout Minnesota and beyond for being an inclusive and student-centered university.

VALUES: We value (1) Discovery through innovative teaching, research and other high-impact experiences; (2) Civic engagement and strategic partnerships; (3) Developing broadly educated and well-rounded leaders.

Upon his arrival at SMSU in the fall of 2019, President Kumara Jayasuriya engaged campus discussion to create a new vision for the University. He drafted a statement shared with the Cabinet and then discussed at a fall campus-wide Town Hall meeting. This draft statement received strong support and was then sent to the HLC/Strategic Planning Committee, which made minor revisions. The Cabinet approved the revised statement, shared it with campus via a spring 2020 Town Hall meeting, and then brought it to each bargaining unit through the [Meet and Confer](#) process. The approved SMSU vision was then sent to the Minnesota State Chancellor in May 2020 as an information item.

During this same period, the SMSU values statement was also revised into its current form. In the fall of 2020, the Communications office conducted market analysis to identify themes that resonated well with various audiences, including the SMSU Foundation, the external community, and the campus community. Draft versions of the current statement—with its theme Discover, Engage, Lead—were discussed in focus groups and at a Town Hall meeting before going to the HLC/Strategic Planning Committee and following the same approval process as described above.

## 1A.2

In living out its mission, SMSU engages in meaningful partnerships across the region and provides students and community members access to a variety of educational opportunities through its degree programs and through the rich activities it sponsors.

The SMSU [strategic plan](#), developed in AY 2021, is structured to operationalize SMSU's vision and values, which themselves derive from the mission. The strategic plan begins with these three statements and a paragraph that articulates this linkage with emphasis on the vision to be inclusive and student-centered:

The SMSU Strategic Plan articulates six strategic priorities that guide the University in pursuit of its Mission, Vision, and Values. As a first priority, and in all of its actions, SMSU will make central equity, diversity, and inclusion. The Strategic Plan is driven by this overarching commitment and by a consistent focus on student success and engagement.

Strategic priorities two, three, and four derive in turn from the three institutional values of discovery, engagement, and leadership. The final two strategic priorities focus on institutional sustainability with emphasis on operations and well-being (five) and enrollment and retention (six).

The centrality of equity, diversity, and inclusion in the SMSU mission, vision, and strategic plan reflects the priority this focus has within the mission of the entire system. In 2019, Minnesota State launched [Equity 2030](#), an initiative to close educational equity gaps across race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status by the end of the decade at every Minnesota State college and

university. This initiative served as a catalyst for the focus on equity, diversity and inclusion in the new SMSU vision statement and strategic plan.

### 1A.3

Attention to the needs of the southwest Minnesota region is at the heart of the SMSU mission. The mission clearly states that SMSU is charged with offering “comprehensive degree programs” for “connecting students’ academic and practical professional development experiences in southwestern Minnesota to the wider world.” This focus is evident in the SMSU value commitments to fostering “civic engagement and strategic partnerships” (value statement #2) and to “developing broadly educated and well-rounded leaders” (value statement #3) and in the SMSU vision to be recognized “throughout Minnesota and beyond for being an inclusive and student-centered university.”

As has been true since the Minnesota State system was created by the legislature in 1995, SMSU’s mission, vision, values, and strategic plan are aligned with the [system-level mission and vision](#). This alignment is clear with reference to the system-level implementation of mission, as articulated by the [Chancellor’s FY2023 workplan](#) and by the [strategic vision](#) within the Minnesota State division of Academic and Student Affairs. The SMSU mission, vision, and values support these system-wide priorities while focusing on SMSU’s target constituencies.

### 1A.4

#### *Academic Offerings*

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 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 North Star Mutual Insurance School of Business, the School of Education, the School of Graduate Studies, and the School of Agriculture. It also houses the Department of Nursing. SMSU offers the following distribution of degree and certificate options:

**Table 1.1. SMSU Degree Options**

• Associate Degree Programs	5
• Bachelor's Degree Programs	59
• Master's Degree Programs	6
• Specialist Degree Programs	1
• Doctoral Degree Programs	0
• Undergraduate Certificates	13
• Graduate Certificates	16

To fulfill its mission, a hallmark of SMSU's academic programming is the development of programs designed to meet needs in the region. Examples include the following:

- The social work program began the Title IV-E Child Welfare Scholars program in 2019. This program provides stipends, education, and training opportunities for students interested in the child protection/child welfare system. It is designed to provide a more qualified workforce for positions that are in high need throughout the country.
- In 2020, the Center of Innovation and Entrepreneurship was established at SMSU and housed within the Department of Business, Innovation & Strategy. The Center's short-term focus is experiential learning, outreach, and the expansion of curricular and co-curricular entrepreneurship programming. In the long-term, its mission is to enhance the economic viability of the 19-county area.
- In 2023, a partnership between North Star Mutual Insurance Company of Cottonwood, Minnesota and SMSU's School of Business formed the North Star Mutual School of Business at SMSU with a \$3 million dollar investment which provides funding for academic programming, facilities, and scholarships to attract and prepare students to serve the region.
- In response to a high need for certified agriculture teachers across the state and the request from public school principals, the agricultural education program at SMSU redesigned the curriculum in the major to include a Work Based Learning license to make graduates of the program more attractive and prepared candidates for teaching positions.
- The SMSU School of Education, responding to the extreme shortage of special education teachers across Minnesota, created a Para-to-Sped program to assist working paraprofessionals in becoming licensed teachers. The paraprofessionals continue to work in their current position while completing courses and field experiences.
- The new Model Education & Professional Development Space will include a classroom lab and adjoining observation room, which also serves as an environment for professional development. This project is an outgrowth of discussion with area school partners to identify needs for enhanced facilities and programming to meet regional and state educational needs.

### ***Student Support Services***

SMSU offers a wide range of student support services aligned with its commitment to provide a student-centered education that equips graduates to meet society's needs. Each of the support services identified below is described in detail under core component 3D.

- Deann Griebel Student Success Center
- Access Opportunity Success and Mustang Pathway Program
- Honors Program
- Office of Online Learning and Transfer Pathways
- Residence Life
- Career Services
- Technology Resource Center
- Center for International Education
- Mental Health Counseling Center
- Student Health Services
- Veteran's Resource Center
- Accessibility Services

- Mustang Market
- Writing Center and Math Learning Center
- McFarland Library

### ***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, offering transfer programs, the College Now concurrent enrollment program, and online degree options in several academic areas.

### ***Overall Enrollment***

Overall enrollment at SMSU has ebbed and flowed similar to national enrollment trends during the last decade. Like many institutions, SMSU saw a dip in enrollment related to the pandemic (down to 6,529 in fall 2022). However, the institution has worked hard at steadying enrollment and in fall 2023 had the second highest enrollment within the past decade, moving from 6,818 in 2018 to 6,927 in fall 2023.

### ***Undergraduate Enrollment (Degree-Seeking)***

SMSU's undergraduate degree-seeking (UDS) fall 2023 enrollment was up 4.2% over the previous year and 6.0% over five years ago. Graduate enrollment was up by 11.4% year over year and 3.4% over five years ago. In addition, SMSU's enrollment profile includes a large number of dual enrollment/PSEO students (fall 2023 headcount of 4,435, representing roughly 40% of FTE enrollment). Over the past decade, SMSU has annually enrolled over 8,775 unique students.

SMSU's UDS enrollment comes predominantly from within the borders of Minnesota (averaging 77.9% over the past decade). In fall 2023, roughly 33% of UDS came from within the designated 19-county service region, 14% came from Metro counties, and 53% came from other MN counties. Metro enrollment has remained relatively steady over the past decade, but enrollment has shifted from 50% 19-county a decade ago to 50% from greater MN counties in fall 2023. Much of that growth in enrollment outside the 19-county region and the Metro has come from off-campus/online program growth – particularly in the last five years. Despite SMSU's mainly in-state enrollment mix, fall 2023 UDS enrollment came from 30 other states and 24 countries.

Over the past decade SMSU's UDS enrollment has remained steady with roughly 55% of new UDS being first-generation college students. In addition, during the last ten years roughly 42% of new UDS have been Pell eligible. In fall 2023 that increased to 46.2%, the highest over that period. Moreover, nearly 30% of new UDS have been *both* Pell eligible and first-generation over the past decade. In fall 2023 that figure climbed to just under 33%.

SMSU's racial and ethnic profile has changed over the last decade. Ten years ago, roughly 12-13% were new entering students of color. In fall 2023 that percentage had grown to 26.2% for new entering UDS. From 2013 to 2023 UDS enrollment has remained relatively steady in terms of gender percentages with just a bit of an increase in female students in fall 2023 (65%).

### ***Graduate Enrollment***

SMSU offers graduate programs in education, business, nursing, and cybersecurity that support the mission of the University by responding to the 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 425 students. In the past three years fall enrollment has been between 385-437 students. In terms of enrollment diversity there has been a slight increase from 3.7% in fall 2013 to 8% in fall 2023. Numerically that reflects a greater than 50% increase and includes a jump from 16 students of color to 35 students of color in fall 2023. International enrollment has declined since 2018 by roughly 15 students annually.

### ***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 AY 2024, 110 high schools and 5,474 unduplicated students who completed 34,865 course credits were served.

## **1A.5**

The SMSU mission statement is [displayed](#) on the most prominent public entrances to campus and is a [key page](#) on the institutional website. Access to these statements remains across the top webpage header as visitors navigate the entire site. The mission, vision and values are included in key print publications such as [institutional fact books](#) and strategic planning [documents](#). The mission, vision, and values are communicated throughout the recruitment process and included in the key printed [recruitment piece](#) used by all admissions counselors.

The SMSU mission, vision, and values feature prominently in the annual performance reviews required for all employees. The evaluation [form](#) requires documentation and reflection on how employees manifest the vision and values in their work. Using SMSU's mission statement as a basis, sub-units within SMSU have developed their own subsidiary mission statements, unique to their sectors of the University. Mission statements have been developed by staff departments, such as the [McFarland Library](#), [Career Services](#), and the [Deeann Griebel Student Success Center](#), and by academic departments, such [Social Science](#), [Science](#), and [Nursing](#). Each of these subsidiary unit mission statements aligns with the SMSU mission statement.

## **Sources**

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- 1.01\_Mission Vision Values
- 1.02\_BGTF Mission and Vision Recommendations
- 1.03\_April and May 2020 Meet and Confer Agendas
- 1.04\_Strategic Plan
- 1.05\_Equity 2030
- 1.06\_Minnesota State\_Vision Mission Values
- 1.07\_Chancellors FY2023 Workplan
- 1.08\_Academic and Student Affairs Strategic Plan
- 1.09\_Liberal Education Program
- 1.10\_Fall 2023 Enrollment Data

- 1.11\_Mission on Founders Hall
- 1.12\_Fact Book
- 1.13\_SMSU-TravelPub\_08-23\_Final
- 1.14\_Performance Evaluation - Supervisor
- 1.15\_Library Strategic Priorities Plan
- 1.16\_Career Services
- 1.17\_Deeann Griebel Student Success Center
- 1.18\_Social Science Department
- 1.19\_Science Department
- 1.20\_Nursing



## 1.B - Core Component 1.B

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

1. The institution's actions and decisions demonstrate that its educational role is to serve the public, not solely the institution or any superordinate entity.
2. The institution's educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes, such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization, or supporting external interests.
3. The institution engages with its external constituencies and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

### Argument

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#### 1B.1

The commitment to serve the public good is central to SMSU's mission: "Southwest Minnesota University prepares students to meet the complex challenges of this century as engaged citizens in their local and global communities." Moreover, the commitment to "civic engagement and public partnerships" is articulated as one of three institutional values and emphasized via the strategic priority to "Foster civic engagement and strategic partnerships. Develop deep, reciprocal, equitable, and sustained partnerships within our community and region that contribute to the public good, positively impact the environment, strengthen the local and regional economy, and enhance the education of our students."

SMSU's public impact is substantial, both through its economic impact and through partnerships and programming that promote the public good. The most recent data provided by the Minnesota State system shows that SMSU has a significant [economic impact](#) on the state. SMSU generates an annual impact of \$286.5M; supports and sustains 2,248 jobs at the University and in the community; and has a combined tax impact of \$23.4M. Also, SMSU alumni annually generate \$424.5M in economic impact for Minnesota and support and sustain 2,309 jobs.

The University collaborates with public partners in various ways, some of which are described under core component 1A.4. Additional, selected examples include the following:

SMSU supports the [Marshall Learning Center](#), a unique collaboration with the Southwest West Central Service Cooperative (SWWC) and Marshall Public Schools (MPS) in conjunction with Minnesota State Colleges and Universities. The project provides collaboration opportunities, meets the educational space needs of each institution, and supports education for all learners. The collaboration will be on the SMSU campus in the Social Science building, which the University has leased to the Foundation for Innovation in Education, which is subleasing to SWWC and MPS.

The SWWC Marshall Educational Learning Center (ELC) will provide a full range of educational service alternatives designed to meet the needs of special education students with severe disabilities with a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder or behavior issues in their resident school district. The MPS Alternative Learning Center (ALC) will include classrooms and collaboration, group, and individual learning spaces to meet the needs and circumstances of learners who require an alternative to the traditional school setting. Most ALC students are high school age.

The [Southwest Regional Learning Center](#) (SRLC), completed in January 2023 and housed in the SMSU Individualized Learning building, is one of four regional Minnesota Child Welfare Training Academy (MNCWTA) centers that provide training and support to child welfare professionals. MNCWTA is a collaboration between the Child Safety and Permanency Division at the Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare (CASCW) at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities. SRLC will benefit the 19 counties in the Southwest region by providing child protection workers access to education and development opportunities and peer support. SMSU offers a child welfare program as part of the degree in social work, and the department chair receives reassigned time to support the work of SRLC.

The University also 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. SBDC is committed to the creation, growth and success of small businesses in the region and provides expertise and guidance to new and existing business by offering a range of business development services and resources.

SBDC is housed within the SMSU Center of Innovation and Entrepreneurship, which promotes developing the entrepreneurial mindset through experiential learning and community outreach with a goal to enhance the economic viability of the 19-county area. SBDC also works closely with the [Southwest Marketing Advisory Center](#), a student-led office on campus that focuses on providing marketing research and marketing consulting for businesses located in Marshall and the surrounding region while developing student marketing skill sets. Its mission is to connect the demand for sound marketing strategies of America's rural heartland with the proven skills of our finest marketing majors.

SMSU also leases space to the [Agricultural Utilization Resource Institute](#) (AURI), whose facilities include an analytical chemistry lab, bio-based products lab, food lab, food product evaluation and sensory lab, and meat lab. With three locations in Minnesota, AURI's vision to generate impact for the Minnesota agricultural economy is driven by its mission to "Accelerate the expansion of the agricultural economy by empowering expanded uses and markets of agriculturally derived products." The SMSU School of Agriculture partners with AURI in various ways to support degree programs in agriculture, culinology, and hospitality.

SMSU also serves the public good in ways consistent with the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities core commitment to "ensure access to an extraordinary education for all Minnesotans" at an affordable cost.

Through the College Now concurrent enrollment program, SMSU has provided access to higher education to thousands of students throughout the state, allowing high school students to earn college credit without incurring student loan debt or paying the tuition themselves. College Now is particularly important for students in many rural districts who do not have access to advanced placement courses due to limited resources.

SMSU also provides non-traditional and other geographically place-bound students access to undergraduate and graduate degrees through its online academic programming. Students have access to 20 [undergraduate](#) and six [graduate](#) degrees and to nine undergraduate and 10 graduate [certificates](#).

SMSU provides several student support programs designed to increase access and support students from traditionally underserved groups (low income, first generation, and students of color). These are described in detail under core component 3D and include the following:

- Access Opportunity Success provides effective outreach, recruitment, and retention of underrepresented students to enable them to be retained, graduated, and—where appropriate—to enroll in graduate and professional programs.
- The Mustang Pathway Program is an alternative entry program designed to help students achieve growth, success, perseverance, and resiliency to matriculate to graduation.
- Success @ Southwest provides students monthly personalized coaching to enhance their success.

## **1B.2**

The external interests described elsewhere in this core component do not take primacy over the university's educational responsibilities. Rather, these interests inform institutional priorities for students' learning and educational experience. As described in detail under core component 5B, the university budget is created to support the needs of all instructional programs, student support services, and administrative functions. Student needs are the priority.

As a member of the Minnesota State system, SMSU is partially funded through state budget allocation. The system provides many shared services for which appropriation is allocated to cover costs, and there are other shared services that are charged back to the institution, which must be covered from SMSU's budget, as discussed under core component 5B.4. 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.

## **1B.3**

SMSU engages with its external constituencies through the public partnerships described previously under this core component, through extensive community service provided by members of the campus community, by hosting events for external groups, and via the many cultural and entertainment opportunities it provides, all of which are open to the public.

The Center for Civic and Community Engagement is described in detail under core component 1C.1, as are many activities that demonstrate civic engagement between SMSU and its external constituencies. The Center also provides leadership for community service activities that address external needs. The [Civic Action Plan](#) serves as a guiding document and strategic plan for the Center. It was developed in 2017 through the work of the Civic Engagement Work Group at the direction of then-president, Connie Gores. The group had five charges, but the primary focus was to identify SMSU's civic engagement activities and to create the Civic Action Plan. Although work has begun on updating this plan, it still guides strategic decision making.

The Center organizes [Mustangs Give: SMSU Day of Service](#), an annual event held during Homecoming Week. Hundreds of students, faculty, and staff connect with a variety of needs throughout the community. The one-day service opportunities allow for reconnection with longstanding partners and for making new connections with new partners. The Center also maintains web resources that guide students, faculty, and staff to volunteer opportunities, as described under core component 1C.1.

SMSU clubs and organizations engage in community service throughout the year. The annual funding they receive is contingent in part on demonstrating service to the SMSU campus, community, or region in the prior year. Service provided by the approximately 70 different clubs and organizations takes on many forms. Selected examples include the following:

- The Student Association collects items for the local food shelf and partners with the Red Cross to hold annual fall and spring Blood Drives
- Several clubs serve as sponsors for the "Adopt a Highway" program and volunteer their time to do fall and spring clean-ups.
- Various club members write letters of support to soldiers, to residents of area Nursing Homes, and to patients at the children's hospital in St. Paul.
- The Student Social Work Association conducts an annual "Trick or Canning" event every Halloween to collect food for the SMSU Mustang Market.
- The Residence Hall Association sponsors ResHalloween, a trick-or-treating event held for 400-500 area community children (Pre-K to 6<sup>th</sup> grade). Admission for the event is a non-perishable food item or \$1/ per child. Food and money are then given to the local food shelf and/or Mustang Market.
- The Enactus Club created and supports the Mindful Meals program to provide prepared meals for low-income families of local elementary school children. Food for the program is supplemented from crops raised on the SMSU Research Plots just north of campus. The club also initiated the Enactus Compost Operations project to collect reusable waste from local businesses and partner with the SMSU School of Agriculture to compost the waste for community use.
- The Black Student Union, African Student Association, and History Club collaborate to provide the Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service. This event emphasizes service, community building, and justice, and provides participants an opportunity to experience all three.

[SMSU Athletics](#) has earned the NCAA Division II Award of Excellence eight times in the last 15 years as one of the top civic engagement programs among all 16 Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference schools. The award, selected by the NCAA Division II Student-Athlete Advisory

Committee, recognizes events and activities that exemplify the type of campus and community engagement that the division emphasizes. In 2021-22, SMSU once again was honored as one of just 26 Division II schools to earn the 2022 NCAA Award of Excellence for its "Health Care and Emergency Personnel Appreciation Game." SMSU has also been honored with the NCAA Division II award three times for the annual "Ag Bowl" (2007-08, 2008-09, 2012-13), twice for the annual "Smokefest" (2010-11, 2011-12), once for its "Mustang Mail" program in 2014-15, and once for the "Hy-Vee KidsFit" program in 2018-19.

SMSU also provides events to support external groups. These include competitions and camps for school-age students and programming for adults.

- The Ag Bowl Scholarship Invitational is a event for FFA students to compete individually and as a team to earn scholarship awards. The first- and second-place students in each contest are offered scholarships to attend SMSU. The goal of the Scholarship Invitational is to increase awareness of SMSU and the School of Agriculture among high school students while allowing them to challenge themselves in several different FFA-certified Career Development Events. In January 2024, 1,233 students competed in 18 different Career and Leadership Development Events from 50 schools.
- Math Masters for Elementary Schools provides students from the surrounding area the opportunity to compete individually and as teams. In March 2024, SMSU hosted approximately 250 4th, 5th, and 6th graders on over 40 teams from 15 different area schools.
- SMSU Athletics runs camps/clinics throughout the year for young athletes in the area. Camps/clinics are offered in various sports: football, volleyball, soccer, golf, basketball, wrestling, softball, baseball, swimming, wheelchair basketball, and cheer. These camps/clinics are a tremendous asset to SMSU as they bring in thousands of young athletes from throughout the area to campus. In 2023-2024, approximately 4,011 students in grades K-12 attended camps/clinics run by SMSU Athletics.
- The SMSU Theatre program runs two week-long summer Children's Theatre workshops for students in grades 3-8 and 9-12.
- GOLD College is an SMSU program that offers lifelong learning opportunities to adults in areas of personal interest. GOLD is an acronym for "Growth, Opportunity, Learning, Development." GOLD College offers non-credit classes at a minimal cost in many areas, such as art, history, computers, current events, music, writing, health, and physical well-being. Each year, approximately 300 adults from a 60-mile radius enroll.

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 and also involves readings and events to highlight fine arts. A brief sample that demonstrates the variety of SMSU offerings can be found [here](#).

## Sources

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- 1.21\_FY2022-Economic-Impact-Report
- 1.22\_Marshall Independent Article
- 1.23\_Minnesota Child Welfare Learning Center
- 1.24\_Southwest Minnesota Small Business Development Center
- 1.25\_Southwest Marketing Advisory Center
- 1.26\_Agricultural Utilization Research Institute
- 1.27\_Online Undergraduate Degrees
- 1.28\_Online Graduate Degrees
- 1.29\_Online Certificates
- 1.30\_Civic Action Plan - May 2017
- 1.31\_Mustangs Give
- 1.32\_2020-21 Athletics Civic Engagement
- 1.33\_AgBowl Scholarship Invitational
- 1.34\_Math Masters Event Schedule
- 1.35\_SMSU Childrens Theatre
- 1.36\_GOLD College
- 1.37\_18th Annual Fine Arts Celebration
- 1.38\_Cultural Enrichment and Entertainment Opportunities

## 1.C - Core Component 1.C

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

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

### Argument

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#### 1C.1

As demonstrated by the SMSU Mission, Vision, Values, and Strategic Priorities, preparing students to become engaged citizens and leaders in their fields is at the core of the University. SMSU has two offices dedicated to guiding and shaping that preparation: The Center for Civic & Community Engagement and Career Services. Opportunities are also provided by student services and academic programs.

The Center for Civic & Community Engagement plays a central role in preparing students for informed citizenship. The Center provides opportunities for the campus community to connect to Marshall and the surrounding communities in various ways. As described under core component 1B.3, these connections are available through [Mustangs Give: SMSU Day of Service](#). Additionally, the [Handshake](#) job, internship, and employer connection platform connects students with ongoing volunteer opportunities and tracks course-based service learning. The annual Part-Time Job & Volunteer Fair has also been expanded in recent years to promote volunteer opportunities with local non-profit organizations.

The Center manages the nomination process for annual [civic engagement awards](#) selected by the President's Office. SMSU also participates in the Newman Civic Fellowship, which provides leadership development for community-committed students, and in the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement. The Center has also hosted election engagement student fellows for the 2020 and 2022 election cycles and will do so again for the 2024 election. These externally funded fellows connect with their peers and provide nonpartisan voter engagement and education. The Center is guided by the interdisciplinary campus Civic and Community Engagement Advisory Group, which allows for multiple campus viewpoints to be included in initiatives.



The Center also supports [service learning](#) and publicizes opportunities through its web page. Several faculty offer courses focused on topics related to civic engagement or with a service-learning component. See examples [here](#).

Career Services plays a role in workplace success and preparation and is guided by its mission statement: “Career Services provides comprehensive career resources to assist SMSU students and alumni with their career development and employment goals. The role of Career Service is not to act as a placement center. Career Services strives to equip students with resources to successfully manage their career development during their academic experience and beyond their graduation.” SMSU measures this preparation in various ways, most directly through the [Graduate Follow-up Survey](#), managed through Career Services. As discussed under core component 4A.6, SMSU boasts a consistently high return rate and a consistently high related employment rate.

Career Services has a stated goal of “continuing to scale and embed career resources, exploration, and development across the SMSU curriculum and co-curricular student experience with focus on equity and inclusion to prepare and connect all SMSU students to opportunities for career success.” One of the tools that has been most successfully embedded is Clifton Strengths for Students, offered to all students in LEP101, SMSU’s first-year experience course. Another tool that has successfully found its home in programs is Quinncia, an AI resume review and interview tool. Yet another is Candid Career, a video library for career exploration and workforce preparation. The Office also hosts annual career fairs, a biannual etiquette dinner, and on-campus recruitment, and it maintains the Handshake platform described above. The Office partners with several campus entities. SMSU’s Theatre Costume shop is home to the Professional Dress Clothing Closet, where students can borrow professional dress items for free. In partnership with SMSU’s Alumni Relations office, the Mustang Mentorship Program pairs students with alumni mentors to form rewarding, mutually beneficial relationships that advance their careers.

Curricular preparation also occurs through internship and practicum experiences offered by nearly all academic programs. Each academic program has different requirements and processes for their internships. Selected examples include the following:

- Education licensure majors must complete a student teaching experience of 12 weeks at a credit load of 12 credits. Education licensure candidates also must complete a minimum of 100 field experience hours leading up to student teaching.
- Each program in the School of Agriculture requires an internship. The Agronomy internship course is a standard four credits. Agribusiness students can take variable credit of one-four credits depending on the number of hours in the internship. The Agricultural Education major requires one-three credits. Each credit requires the equivalent of 100 work hours.
- Both psychology programs require internships: Psychology (three credits; 120 hours) and Community Psychology-Health Promotion (two three-credit internships; 240 hours).



- Other examples include internships or practicums in Graphic Design, Communication Studies, Computer Science, Exercise Science, Finance, History, Justice Administration, Management, Marketing, Government, Social Work, and Theater.

Residence Life engages students through its year-long program titled *Community Service, Civic Engagement, World Citizenship, and Environmental Stewardship & Sustainability*. Programming provides students with the opportunity to experience serving their fellow humans in a meaningful way and to give back to their larger community (whether that be campus, city, state, country, international). Examples of programmatic topics include raising money for national/international causes, Big Buddies, mentoring/tutoring a child, and adopting a grandparent at the senior center. Topics also include environmental issues and provide students the opportunity to experience and review environmental and sustainability issues, understand their impact on the larger world environment, and explore ways to mitigate their carbon footprint and reduce their waste stream.

## 1C.2

As articulated in the vision statement, “SMSU aspires to be recognized throughout Minnesota and beyond for being an inclusive and student-centered university.” As identified under core component 1A.2 and discussed further under core component 5C, the commitment to advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion is the first of six strategic plan priorities and drives SMSU’s commitment to fostering a climate of respect for all members of the campus community.

SMSU engaged in a systematic and intentional response to the system-wide [Equity 2030](#) initiative described under core component 1A.2. In the spring of 2020, as campus was approving the new vision statement, the president formed the [Equity 2030 Steering Committee](#) charged with examining processes and activities under each of the following six strategic dimensions included within Equity 2030: Enhanced Access; Student Academic Success; Student Engagement and Support; Data-Guided Decision Making; Financial Resources and Support; Workforce Diversity and Strategic Talent Management. Workgroups focused on each area convened that spring and continued their work throughout the following year. Discussions resulted in a series of recommendations incorporated into the strategic plan. This process has resulted in several [tangible changes](#) to policies and practices and has continued to foster campus-wide conversation about equity and inclusion.

Continued campus conversation about diversity is supported in many ways. Soon after launching Equity 2030, the system office developed Equity by Design to help institutions disaggregate and address course-level equity gap data. In response, SMSU established the Equity by Design workgroup to engage faculty in analyzing disaggregated data for all university gateway courses and all program-level courses and in determining strategies for addressing equity gaps. To develop understanding of inclusive and equitable teaching practices, SMSU has funded faculty enrollment in courses offered by the Association of College and University Educators. The [Equity Teaching Fellows](#) Program was created to recognize faculty doing this type of development work. To build capacity within administration, faculty, and staff, funds have also been provided to complete the Intercultural Development Inventory; to participate in the Gardner Institute series on Socially Just Design in Postsecondary Education; to receive certification in College Student Wellbeing, Trauma, and Resilience; and to complete Mental Health First Aid training from the National Council for Mental Wellbeing.

To provide cabinet level leadership for diversity and inclusion, SMSU revised the position of campus diversity officer (CDO) into a full-time appointment beginning in the summer of 2022. The CDO reports directly to the president, oversees the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, and serves with the provost as co-chair of the [Bias Incident Support and Advisory](#) (BISA) team. Established in the fall of 2022, BISA includes representation from various campus leaders and stakeholders who work together to create a campus community that is inclusive of all members. The team reviews reports of bias, provides guidance regarding responses to such incidents and support for those most affected, and provides leadership for campus education and prevention.

The [BISA Annual Report](#) provides a comprehensive overview of reporting practices, responsiveness, and prevention initiatives that the BISA team utilized during AY 2024. Examples of the work BISA has done to strengthen inclusion include the following:

- In the 2023 Legislative Session, the State of Minnesota Legislature passed a law requiring all Minnesota State Colleges and Universities to provide students with access to menstrual products at no charge. The law was in response to a student-led initiative and requires that the products be made available in all restrooms used by students regardless of any gender identifications on individual facilities. Shortly after installation, dispensers in a few restrooms were vandalized. BISA responded by sending emails to the campus community to communicate the origin, purpose, and importance of this initiative. BISA also created informational stickers to place on every dispenser to provide this rationale and contact information to report concerns. No further problems of significance have occurred since these actions.
- BISA responded to three bias incident reports related to gender identity/sexual orientation. The team reached out to individuals directly impacted by each incident and shared a message of support to the Director of the LGBTQ+ Center, who also shared this with affiliated members. The CDO also invited external speakers to provide [campus education](#) events to increase awareness and understanding of gender orientation and sexual identity. These included two workshops—Beyond Visibility: Building Inclusive Communities (for employees); Transcending Barriers: Celebrating LGBTQIA+ Resilience and Visibility (for students) — and a presentation on legal protections for LGBTQIA+ students.

The CDO is also working with SMSU's marketing team to develop campus maps in four languages (Somali, Spanish, Hmong, and Karen); these are languages reflective of the student populations that we increasingly serve. We will also be providing alternative language options on our webpages, in scholarship information, and through the admission process. This information will be especially useful to current and prospective students as they communicate with family members.

### 1C.3

Campus-wide diversity, equity and inclusion education and training opportunities are offered once per month in both the fall and spring semesters. Participation is growing and reflects approximately 100 employees engaging in the education and training offered. SMSU is also utilizing Vector Solutions training specific to managing bias and to developing strategies and

practices to apply equitable and inclusive practices in our day-to-day engagement with students, employees, and visitors to campus.

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion engages students and employees through several [programs](#), including the MLK Day of Service described under core component 1B.3 and two additional events, further described under core component 3B.3. These include the following:

- [It Begins with Us](#). Faculty, students and community members work together to plan and implement a powerful interactive conference covering topics ranging from a day in the life of a refugee camp to a poverty simulation in rural Minnesota.
- [The Dakota 38 +2 memorial ride](#). Volunteers learn about the historical significance of the ride that takes place from the Black Hills in South Dakota to Mankato, MN; assist with feeding and housing riders on the SMSU campus; and engage in activities related to Dakota culture, such as story sharing and drumming.

Through the Center for International Education (CIE), discussed in more detail under core component 3B.3, SMSU offers multiple opportunities for students to grow their intercultural awareness and experience human and cultural diversity. Students and staff are encouraged to attend cultural programs available all year long. CIE offers weekly International Coffee Hours for international and domestic students to meet with each other and with members of the campus community for coffee/tea and fun activities. CIE also serves the wider university community by encouraging a welcoming and inclusive environment conducive to international education and intercultural awareness via educational, social, and cross-cultural programs. Offerings include events such as country cultural showcases during International Education Week in November and WorldFest, a festival that attracted over 1,000 campus and community attendees to share and celebrate local/global diversity through international food, cultural awareness, and cultural arts and entertainment.

[The LGBTQ+ and Women's Centers](#) offer workshops and presentations that increase visibility of women's, men's, and LGBTQ+ diverse identities, promote safe space and ally training, encourage anti-sexual violence awareness, and educate about other issues that affect these communities. The Centers also offer a variety of referrals for community agencies relating to women's and LGBTQ+ issues like sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and domestic abuse, as well as information on birth control and STIs, hormone therapy, and counseling.

SMSU clubs and organizations provide additional opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds to engage with one another. Examples of groups with this focus are listed [here](#).

Discussion under core components 3B.3 and 3D.1 provides additional details and examples of SMSU's commitment to inclusive and equitable treatment of diverse populations.

The [Campus Climate Report](#) administered to students in the spring of 2024 has provided the institution with evidence of success and suggestions for continued work in fostering a positive campus climate. A large majority (78%) of respondents reported being "very satisfied" or "generally satisfied" with the overall campus climate. Respondents acknowledge senior leadership's dedication to diversity and equity, which is crucial for driving institutional change.

There is a strong belief that SMSU is committed to the recruitment and retention of marginalized groups, yet there remains a need for continued efforts to support these communities effectively. Similarly, 76% express satisfaction with the diversity experience on campus. Most respondents reported engaging daily or weekly with individuals from different racial, ethnic, and gender backgrounds, reflecting a diverse interaction environment, and high comfort levels were reported when interacting with diverse groups, although there remains room for improvement in interactions involving political, sexual orientation, and religious differences. Additionally, the impact of various activities on supporting DEI initiatives is significant, with community service being particularly effective in fostering support. Activities such as participating in discussions or training on disability issues and attending diversity-related presentations or art exhibits have also positively influenced individuals' support for diversity and equity.

The report includes several recommendations for improvement that have informed planning in preparation for the current academic year. During the spring 2025 semester, SMSU will administer a similar survey to faculty and staff, which will yield additional helpful information.

## Sources

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- 1.05\_Equity 2030
- 1.31\_Mustangs Give
- 1.39\_Handshake
- 1.40\_Awards
- 1.41\_Service Learning
- 1.42\_Service Learning in Courses
- 1.43\_Annual Report 2022
- 1.44\_Equity 2030 Steering Committee
- 1.45\_Strategic Plan Accomplishments Summary
- 1.46\_Equity Teaching Fellows Program
- 1.47.1\_BISA Annual Report FINAL
- 1.47\_Bias Incident Support and Advisory
- 1.48\_Trans Day of Visibility Flyer
- 1.49\_FY24 AOS-ODI Events
- 1.50\_SMSU to Host It Begins With Us Conference
- 1.51\_SMSU Welcomed Dakota 38+2 Riders
- 1.52\_23-24 Womens Center-LGBTQ Center Yearbook
- 1.53\_Clubs and Orgs Supporting Diversity
- 1.54\_SMSU Climate Report

## 1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary

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

### Summary

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SMSU's mission, vision and values are clearly articulated publicly on the website and in recruitment and informational materials. The SMSU mission statement is displayed on the most prominent public entrances to campus and is a key page on the institutional website. Attention to the needs of the southwest Minnesota region is at the heart of the SMSU mission. SMSU's public impact is substantial, both through its economic impact and through partnerships and programming that promote the public good. SMSU engages with its external constituencies through these public partnerships, through extensive community service provided by members of the campus community, by hosting events for external groups, and via the many cultural and entertainment opportunities it provides, all of which are open to the public. The Center for Civic & Community Engagement plays a central role in preparing students for informed citizenship. SMSU strives to create a climate of respect, including inclusion and equitable treatment of all members of the campus community.

### Sources

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*There are no sources.*

## 2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

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

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

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

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

### Argument

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**Policy and Procedure Abbreviations:** Minnesota Statue Statutes (MS); Board Policy (BP); System Procedure (SPR).

#### 2A.1

MS [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 institutional missions. [MS 136F.05](#) authorizes each college and university within the Minnesota State system to develop its own distinct mission as provided by [MS 135A.052](#) and subject to the approval of the Board of Trustees (BOT). In [BP 1A.1](#), the BOT has assigned a distinct mission to each state college and university consistent with and supportive of the system's overall mission. The board further provides in [BP 3.24](#) and [SPR 3.24.1](#) for the conditions and processes for the review and approval of college and university missions.

As described under core component 1A.1, the current mission statement for Southwest Minnesota State University was developed through a collaborative campus process in 2007. That same year, the Minnesota State BOT reviewed and affirmed the mission in accordance with the process set forth in [BP 3.24](#).

#### 2A.2

##### *Integrity in Governing Board and System Administration*

[MS 136F.07](#) requires 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 BOT actions and meetings are public events and are subject

to the [Minnesota Open Meeting Law. MS 43A.38](#) sets forth a code of ethics for employees in the executive branch; [BP 1C.1](#) prescribes the BOT code of conduct; and [SPR 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 and Minnesota State board policies, follows all federal and state laws, rules, and regulations pertaining to higher education institutions. [BP 7.1](#) 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. [BP 7.3](#) requires system procedures to 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 [BP 5.9](#) 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, [BP 5.10](#) and [SPR 5.10.1](#) require that all institutions in Minnesota State accurately report financial data, which include, but are not limited to, the composite financial index, primary reserve ratio, return on net assets, viability ratio, and operating margin ratio.

The BOT also maintains authority to set tuition rates for all system institutions and regulates fees charged to students in accordance with [BP 5.11](#) and [SPR 5.11.1](#). 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.

[BP 7.4](#) requires the institution to file financial reports and statements, subject to audit, annually. Annual financial statements follow a code of conduct and are prepared in a combined effort between SMSU and the Minnesota State Financial Reporting Team. SMSU participates in annual system-wide audits under the direction of the [Office of Internal Auditing](#).

#### **Integrity in Academic Functions**

SMSU strives to maintain integrity in all its academic functions, defined as the functions, responsibilities, and duties performed in the ordinary course of business in support of academic operations.

##### (a) Maintenance of the Office of the Provost

- The provost oversees all academic functions at the University and serves as the vice president of academic and student affairs ([Organizational Chart](#)).

(b) Standards for student admission and oversight of the admissions process

- Standards for student admissions are governed by board policies and system procedures ([BP 3.4](#) and [5](#); [SPR 3.4.1](#) and [3.5.1](#)). University policies set admission standards for undergraduate, graduate, international, and College Now applicants (SMSU Policies [A-037](#), [A-045](#), [A-029](#)). Some undergraduate and graduate programs have published admission standards. See, for example, [Teacher Preparation Program](#), [RN to BSN Nursing](#), [Social Work](#).

(c) Academic standards and measures of student performance for program offerings, as well as requirements for awarding degrees

- The University sets academic standards for academic standing and academic progress. Academic standing is regularly monitored each term: fall, spring, and summer ([BP 2.9](#); [SPR 2.9.1](#); SMSU Policies [A-005](#) and [A-045](#), and Procedures [A-005.1](#) and [A-005.2](#)). Academic advising is conducted primarily by faculty within their programs, during which time, academic progress is evaluated (SMSU Policies [A-024](#) and [A-033](#); [Academic Advising Guide](#)). Requirements for graduation are published for all programs (SMSU Policies [A-010](#) and [A-045](#); [Catalog Academic Programs and Degrees](#)).

(d) Creation and maintenance of curriculum course materials for program offerings

- The university faculty creates, develops, and maintains curricula ([BP 3.36](#); [SPR 3.36.1](#); SMSU Policies [A-001](#) and [A-004](#), and Procedures [A-001.1](#), [A-001.2](#) and [A-004.1](#)). To improve processes for creating and maintaining curriculum, SMSU implemented new software in AY 2024. Curricular decisions include the assessment of transfer credit, credit for prior learning, and credit by exams ([BP 3.35](#) and [32](#); [SPR 3.35.1](#), [3.35.2](#), [3.35.3](#), and [3.32.1](#); SMSU Policies [A-050](#) and [A-052](#), and Procedures [A-050.1](#) and [A-052.1](#)).

(e) Management of student records through an office of the registrar

- The registrar reports to the provost ([Organizational Chart](#)) and manages student records, grades, and transcripts ([Registration and Records Functional Chart](#); SMSU Policies [G-009](#), [A-034](#), [A-005](#); [Student Handbook](#)) in accordance with BOT Policy ([BP 3.29](#); [SPR 3.29.1](#)). Computer systems used to manage student records fall under the purview of the registrar and follow BOT Policies and Procedures for security principles ([BP 5.23](#); [SPR 5.23.2](#) and [23.3](#)).

(f) Management of instructional staff

- The provost oversees the Dean's Office which manages the hiring and teaching loads of instructional staff ([Organizational Chart](#); [BP 3.32](#) and [SPR 3.32.1](#); SMSU Policies [A-006](#) and [A-028](#)).



(g) Various student support services, including career services, maintenance of a library, and accessibility services

- Academic student support services fall under the purview of the provost ([Organizational Chart](#)) and include the [Deeann Griebel Student Success Center](#), which offers such services as early alerts, student advising, tutoring services, the Success @ Southwest program, and supplemental instruction.

(h) Procurement and maintenance of all required educational approvals and provision of reporting and analysis as needed to meet regulatory and accreditation requirements.

- The University and programs procure and maintain all educational approvals in accordance with BOT Policy ([BP 3.30](#) and [43](#); [SPR 3.30.1](#) and [SPR 3.43.1](#)). The University is regionally accredited by HLC, and the College Now program is nationally accredited by NACEP. Certain [academic programs](#) maintain specialized accreditation.

### **Integrity in Personnel Functions**

Minnesota State requires non-discrimination and equal opportunity in both its educational and employment practices. [BP 1B.1](#) defines the criteria for this standard and provides clear direction for accountability to campuses, faculty, and staff. Employees are held to a high standard of integrity through the Employee Code of Conduct ([BP 1C.2](#); [SPR 1C.0.1](#)). 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](#) complies with board policies, system procedures, and local policies regarding Equal Education and Employment Opportunity. Those include in addition to the system policies above, [Reasonable Accommodations](#), [Affirmative Action in Employment](#), and [Response to Sexual Violence](#). This office ensures fair and ethical policies and practices as it administers the contractual processes described in [employment agreements](#).

At SMSU, there are eight categories of employees, five of which are represented by collective bargaining:

- Inter Faculty Organization
- Minnesota State University Association of Administrative and Service Faculty
- Middle Management Association
- Minnesota Association of Professional Employees
- American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, 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, and professional development plans. 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.

### **Integrity in Auxiliary Functions**

[BP 7.3](#) 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. [SPR 7.3.2](#) regulates auxiliary enterprises that are part of the college or university for proper and efficient management. [SPR 7.3.5](#) establishes parameters for management of the revenue fund.

Generally, auxiliary functions entail those activities and services related, but not intrinsic, to educational functions. Auxiliary units at SMSU include Athletics, Health Services, Housing, Dining Services, the Bookstore, and Public Safety. The integrity of operations within each unit is described [here](#).

### **Sources**

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- 2.001\_MS 135A.052
- 2.002\_MS 136F.05
- 2.003\_BP 1A.1
- 2.004\_BP 3.24
- 2.005\_SPR 3.24.1
- 2.006\_MS 136F.07
- 2.007\_Minnesota Open Meeting Law
- 2.008\_MS 43A.38
- 2.009\_BP 1C.1
- 2.010\_SPR 1C.0.1
- 2.011\_BP 7.1
- 2.012\_BP 7.3
- 2.013\_BP 5.9
- 2.014.1\_SPR 5.10.1
- 2.014\_BP 5.10
- 2.015\_BP 5.11
- 2.016\_SPR 5.11.1
- 2.017\_BP 7.4
- 2.018\_Office of Internal Auditing
- 2.019\_Provost Org 2023-2024
- 2.020\_BP 3.4
- 2.021\_BP 3.5
- 2.022\_SPR 3.4.1
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- 2.024\_A-037
- 2.025\_A-045
- 2.026\_A-029
- 2.027\_Teacher Preparation Program Admissions
- 2.028\_Nursing Admissions
- 2.029\_Social Work Admissions Criteria
- 2.030\_BP 2.9
- 2.031\_SPR 2.9.1
- 2.032\_A-005
- 2.033\_A-005.1
- 2.034\_A-005.2
- 2.035\_A-024
- 2.036\_A-033
- 2.037\_Academic Advising Guide
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- 2.039\_Academic Programs and Degrees
- 2.040\_BP 3.36
- 2.041\_SPR 3.36.1
- 2.042\_A-001
- 2.043\_A-004
- 2.044\_A-001.1
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- 2.047\_BP 3.35
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- 2.049\_SPR 3.35.1
- 2.050\_SPR 3.35.2
- 2.051\_SPR 3.35.3
- 2.052\_SPR 3.32.1
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- 2.057\_Visio-RegistrarsOffice
- 2.058\_G-009
- 2.059\_A-034
- 2.061\_BP 3.29
- 2.062\_SPR 3.29.1
- 2.063\_BP 5.23
- 2.064\_SPR 5.23.2
- 2.065\_SPR 5.23.3
- 2.066\_A-006
- 2.067\_A-028
- 2.068\_Deann Griebel Student Success Center

- 2.069\_BP 3.30
- 2.070\_BP 3.43
- 2.071\_SPR 3.30.1
- 2.072\_SPR 3.43.1
- 2.073\_Specialized Accreditation
- 2.074\_BP 1B.1
- 2.075\_BP 1C.2
- 2.076\_Human Resources
- 2.077\_Reasonable Accommodations
- 2.078\_Affirmative Action in Employment
- 2.079\_Response to Sexual Violence
- 2.080\_Employment Agreements
- 2.081\_SPR 7.3.2
- 2.082\_SPR 7.3.5
- 2.083\_Auxiliary Functions

## 2.B - Core Component 2.B

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

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

### Argument

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**Policy and Procedure Abbreviations:** System Procedure (SPR).

#### 2B.1

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 staff monitor print, digital, and social media created by SMSU departments and programs. The Communications and Marketing office staff engage in ongoing educational activities for departments and staff regarding guidelines, branding, and accessibility.

#### SMSU Website

Ongoing research and development have been in progress since the adoption of the Cascade Content Management System (CMS) to enhance the usability and accessibility of the website. This work includes updates to the overall design of the templates and individual page components and features such as frequently asked questions, accordions, photo galleries, tabs, and personalization. The header and footer of the website templates are continually monitored and modified to increase accessibility, usability, and visibility to high-value information and resources.

A new internal search platform integrated into the website provides analytics, tools, and insights on the content and information website users are looking for. The data identify gaps in essential content across the website. With analytics in the search tool, search results can be customized with more granular control over what content shows up for specific keywords. The search feature is available to all website users in the header of the website template across the entire site.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and into 2021, the website was the main platform for user engagement, critical to providing a robust virtual environment for all operations, and an

integral part of messages and information regarding the pandemic and other health-related communications, updates, and reporting.

An integrated personalization tool can personalize the website experience for each website visitor. This platform allows website visitors to identify their user group, and we can refresh the homepage with customized information and related resources for the type of user they selected. Additional efforts and planning to further personalize the website experience are still ongoing.

A new Academic Catalog system was launched with the coordination of the Web Office, Communications and Marketing, Office of the Registrar, Information Technology, and numerous staff and faculty members. This new system provides a more streamlined approach to developing, editing, and publishing the SMSU academic catalog. The new catalog system is more organized, accurate, and easier to navigate. It also allows for a more efficient archival process for internal use and for providing documentation to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

In 2022, a web governance platform was integrated into the website to better manage the website's accessibility, quality assurance, and content policies. Following a period of setup, training, and Single Sign-On integration, key content editors were given access to manage their assigned set of webpages. Additionally, an AI Chatbot was integrated and initially trained on five content areas of the SMSU website to provide a 24/7 response to inbound communications through the website.

As the U.S. Department of Justice rolled out new guidelines and regulations regarding the accessibility of documents and information provided by state and local governments, an extensive audit was begun in 2023 that involved a comprehensive review of the website's digital assets and resources. Over 18,000 inaccessible, outdated, or unused digital files were subsequently removed from the website. This ongoing audit is aimed at improving the accuracy and relevance of the content provided through the website.

The Office of Web Services utilizes the latest 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, policies and procedures, and student handbook follow an approval and review process prior to publication to ensure accuracy. The academic catalog is published only once per academic year, while policies and procedures and the student handbook may be updated throughout the year.

Updating the institutional catalog follows strict policies and procedures for curriculum management (SMSU Policy [A-001](#) and Procedures [A-001.1](#) and [A-001.2](#)). Curriculum committees meet monthly to review and approve proposals. Approved proposals are copied into the following academic year's catalog. The process is managed by means of the CourseLeaf software suite.

University policies and procedures follow a prescribed approval and publication policy (SMSU Policy [G-001](#) and Procedure [G-001.1](#)). The provost's office updates approved policies and procedures using the CourseLeaf software suite.

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. Information from previously taken courses from other institutions is used to see what automatically transfers and what might have to be petitioned. SMSU complies with Minnesota State System requirements regarding the sharing of course outlines and other necessary information to ease transfer for students.

Transfer students who are part of a transfer pathway program follow the pathway requirements for transfer and acceptance into the designated program. All detailed articulation agreements can be found on the [Minnesota Transfer](#) website.

[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 the Post-Secondary Enrollment Option, 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, are 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 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. Additionally, financial aid staff monitor and respond to a Chatbot devoted just to financial aid questions from external and internal audiences. The director of financial aid worked with the AVP for enrollment, director of admission, and AVP for advancement to develop a new "Value Sheet" with direct costs and scholarship eligibility criteria that is shared with individual prospective students on and off campus. The director of financial aid developed a new cost worksheet that helps new students understand their direct and indirect costs and is included in each paper award package. Financial aid staff now make themselves available for confidential individual meetings with students who attend an orientation day in the spring and summer before they enroll. The [Net Price Calculator](#) is a tool for students and families to estimate what it may cost to attend SMSU. The College Financing Plan is available to students in their e-services account once they have been admitted to the University. It provides information to students on the cost of attendance and the financial aid programs available. 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.

The Office of Communications and Marketing works extensively to promote the achievements of individual faculty and staff through posts, videos, articles, radio/podcast episodes, and features on SMSU Social Media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter-X, LinkedIn, TikTok, YouTube, Podcast), the *SMSU Today* news page, and the main University website page or other major program pages (e.g. Alumni and Foundation page). Faculty and staff contributions are regularly highlighted in digital and print publications including the alumni magazine called [Focus](#). The University continues the program called [Mustang Ovarions](#) to celebrate, recognize, and promote faculty, staff, departmental, and campus achievements.

## Control

Each institution within the Minnesota State System is monitored for financial health and stability on the administration and financial management of the system and campuses based on indicators which are reported periodically (currently annually) to the Minnesota State Board of Trustees. This is identified in [SPR 7.3.16](#). These indicators are reviewed and updated for relevancy approximately every five years. Reviews are completed regarding enrollment-based risk factors, cash-based financial risk factors, accrual-based financial risk factors, and physical plant risk factors. Institutions that do not meet or exceed the indicators must either create a written report or meet with system administration to develop a plan to meet the indicators.

Specific KPI are reviewed with the president each year at the president's annual review with the chancellor. These KPI are prepared by the system office staff and sent to the campus's Institutional Review (IR) staff for review prior to the meeting. The IR staff can then pull data and review these KPI with the president prior to the meeting with the chancellor.

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 a direct link to the HLC. As shown on the Accreditations page, the University is also accredited or holds special certification from program-level organizations.

## 2B.2

SMSU supports claims it makes regarding the educational experience it provides. Information is made available to students and the public in several ways, including through the SMSU website, through articles posted on *SMSU Today*, and through other social media outlets.

The SMSU value of discovery through research is supported through publicly available information about the following activities described in greater detail under core component 3B.4:



- The SMSU [Undergraduate Research Conference](#) (URC) is a significant annual campus event that highlights the scholarship and creative work completed by SMSU students under the direction of faculty supervisors. URC aligns with the University's mission by providing students an opportunity to conduct an in-depth analysis of a topic in their field and to create and deliver a professional presentation where they share outcomes of their experience with the greater community. This allows them to “connect their academic/professional development experiences in Southwest Minnesota to the wider world.” URC also aligns with the University's vision, which states that SMSU aspires to be a student-centered institution; URC is a day specifically focused on the hard work and achievements completed by students and is a chance to build their professional portfolio and to share their accomplishments widely.
- [Celebrate Science Week](#) highlights work done by students in science, math, computer science, and agronomy. Events include poster presentations and talks by SMSU undergraduates, highlighting their research. The public, including the university and Marshall community, friends, parents, alumni, prospective students, and employers, are all encouraged to attend.
- SMSU undergraduate students can submit their written scholarship to [Discovery: The SMSU Journal of Undergraduate Research](#), published annually each summer. At the graduate level, students in education can publish their research in the [Educator Development Network Journal](#) supported by the education department and disseminated to roughly 4,000 graduate alumni.
- Faculty and staff research is recognized through the annual [Mustang Ovations](#). Categories recognized during the event include publications and creative works, professional presentations, awards and accolades, and external grants.

The SMSU mission commitment to prepare students as “engaged citizens in their local and global communities” is supported by publicly available information about activities described in greater detail under core components 1B.3, 1C.1, and 3B.3.

SMSU further supports its claims regarding effective student preparation through the [Graduate Follow-up Survey](#). As discussed under core component 4A.6, SMSU boasts a consistently high return rate of over 90% and a consistently high related employment rate. Annual reports of this data are publicly available, with the most recent showing a total related employment rate of 96.6%.

SMSU's contribution to the economic development of the region is supported by the most recent [economic impact statement](#), completed in 2023. In partnership with the Minnesota State System a new study will be conducted and disseminated every four years to align with the legislative sessions. Economic impact statistics are included annually in the [institutional fact book](#). When new reports are conducted, the information is presented at several community forums including town halls, local service clubs such as rotary, to affiliated boards, and through media advisories.

SMSU also positively impacts the region by offering numerous cultural, athletic, and entertainment opportunities that it communicates to the public. These opportunities are publicized through *SMSU Today* and the campus calendar, by the new digital signage added to

every academic building across campus, and by multiple social media outlets including Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, Facebook, and X.

## Sources

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- 2.039\_Academic Programs and Degrees
- 2.042\_A-001
- 2.044\_A-001.1
- 2.045\_A-001.2
- 2.089\_University Brand Standards
- 2.090\_Social Media Guidelines
- 2.091\_Web Policies and Philosophy
- 2.092\_G-001
- 2.093\_G-001.1
- 2.094\_Transferology
- 2.095\_Transfer Agreements
- 2.096\_College Now
- 2.097\_Troubleshooting Registration Enrollment Issues
- 2.098\_Office of Admissions
- 2.099\_Financial Aid
- 2.100\_Net Price Calculator
- 2.101.1\_Focus
- 2.101\_Buisness Services
- 2.102\_Mustang Ovations
- 2.103\_SPR 7.3.16
- 2.104\_Accreditations
- 2.105\_Administration\_HLC
- 2.106\_Undergraduate Research Conference
- 2.107\_Celebrate Science Week
- 2.108\_Discovery the SMSU Journal of Undergraduate Research
- 2.109\_Educator Development Network Journal
- 2.110\_Annual Report 2022
- 2.111\_FY2022 Economic Impact Report
- 2.112\_Fact Book

## 2.C - Core Component 2.C

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

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

### Argument

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**Policy and Procedure Abbreviations:** Minnesota Statute Statutes (MS); Board Policy (BP); System Procedure (SPR).

#### 2C.1

The Minnesota Senate and House of Representatives oversee the Minnesota State operations and finances, per [MS 136F](#). The system is governed by a 15-member Board of Trustees (BOT) 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. 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 ([MS 136F.05](#)).

Minnesota State trustees participate in a new trustee [orientation](#) program upon their appointment to the board. The orientation program covers a variety of topics including an overview of the system and its core value and strategic framework; the role of the board and trustees and board management culture; legal overview including open meeting laws, public/private data, conflict of interest; financial overview including sources and uses of funding, legislative request process, facilities use and maintenance; and overview of current strategic initiatives and enterprise risks.

Ongoing board and trustee development occurs through regular board [retreats](#) and board training sessions, scheduled at the discretion of the board chair and focusing on topics relevant to

the board's work. The Minnesota State system is a member of both The Association of Governing Boards and The Association of Community College Trustees; trustees thus have access to professional development via resources provided by these national organizations as well as the attendance at their national conferences. Additionally, the board is currently engaging in a board assessment process that will measure how it is performing against its goals and standards, identify the steps needed to improve performance, and set in place a process for regular and ongoing assessment and improvement.

In [BP 3.36](#) 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. The board has policy responsibility for system planning, academic programs, fiscal management, personnel, admission requirements, tuition and fees, and rules and regulations. The BOT approves SMSU's budget and presidential work plan.

Oversight of fiduciary responsibilities is required by [MS 136F.06](#). The board shall also require auditing of each college and university to ensure financial integrity, implementation of necessary financial controls, and appropriate accordance between board policies and campus expenditures ([MS 136F.526](#)). The board is also authorized to acquire and manage facilities ([MS 136F.60 – 136F.68](#)) for all colleges and universities and to set tuition and manage funds, grants, gifts, and bonds ([MS 136F.70 – 136F.98](#)). [BP 7.1](#) 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.

## 2C.2

The board is required to appoint a chancellor, who shall perform duties as delegated by the board directed by [MS 136F.07](#). Each college or university shall have a president appointed by the board upon recommendation of the chancellor. Further, [BP 1A.4](#) provides that among college and university administrators in Minnesota, the president is appointed by the board recommendation of the chancellor and other colleges and university administrators are appointed by the president.

The board is authorized by [MS 136F.06](#) to adopt suitable policies for the institutions it governs and exercises oversight through [BP 1A.1](#) (Part 6). Subpart G of that section authorizes the president of a college or university to adopt policies and procedures if they are consistent with board policy and system procedure.

The delegation of authority of the BOT is outlined in [MS 136F.06](#) and [MS 15.06](#), and its execution is in [SPR 1A.2.2](#).

The BOT is knowledgeable about SMSU, including holding the first-ever board meeting outside of the Twin Cities on the SMSU campus in November 2017.

## 2C.3

The board meets at least seven 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 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 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 [meeting summary](#) of November 16, 2022, includes the following statement describing the most recent appropriations request:

The FY2024-FY2025 legislative request strengthens the state's commitment to inclusive excellence and ensuring our students receive an extraordinary, affordable, and accessible education. It further strengthens communities and the State for their continued economic and workforce viability.

SMSU's [Student Handbook](#) provides students with information on opportunities for involvement in university governance and describes student access to the BOT through the Minnesota State University Student Association, as recognized by the board. SMSU Student Association representatives meet and discuss with the SMSU administration regularly.

#### **2C.4**

Trustees must comply with [BP 1.C.1](#) which prohibits the use of the position to secure personal benefits, to disclose confidential communications, or to exert influence in hiring or awarding contracts. Trustees must disclose potential conflicts of interest.

Independence is preserved by the requirement that all meetings of the board comply with the Minnesota Open Meeting Law. The composition of the board also provides for its independence. Membership of the board is defined in [MS 136F.02](#). Removal of a member of the governing board may only occur upon cause after notice and hearing, or after missing three consecutive meetings ([MS 15.0575](#)).

#### **2C.5**

The BOT is required to appoint a chancellor, who shall perform duties as delegated by the board ([MS 136F.07](#)). Each college or university shall have a president appointed by the board upon recommendation of the chancellor ([BP 4.2](#)). 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 BOT 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 faculty are represented by a collective bargaining unit, and the respective agreement assigns responsibilities for academic matters to the faculty. Faculty at the universities are represented by the Inter Faculty Organization (IFO). [Article 20](#) of the 2023-2025 IFO Contract provides 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 the 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.

## Sources

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- 2.003\_BP 1A.1
- 2.006\_MS 136F.07
- 2.009\_BP 1C.1
- 2.011\_BP 7.1
- 2.040\_BP 3.36
- 2.113\_MS 136F
- 2.114\_MS 136F.05
- 2.115\_New Trustee Orientation packet\_Oct2020\_FINAL
- 2.116\_Board of Trustees Retreat
- 2.117\_MS 136F.06
- 2.118\_MS 136F.526
- 2.119\_MS 136F.60-68
- 2.120\_MS 136F.70-98
- 2.121\_BP 1A.4
- 2.122\_MS 15.06
- 2.123\_SPR 1A.2.2
- 2.124\_Meeting Summary
- 2.125\_MS 136F.02
- 2.126\_MS 15.0575
- 2.127\_BP 4.2
- 2.128\_Article 20\_IFO

## 2.D - Core Component 2.D

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

### Argument

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#### **Policy and Procedure Abbreviations:** Board Policy (BP)

SMSU is committed to providing students and faculty with academic freedom and freedom of expression in the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning. Under [BP 3.1](#), which provides for Student Rights and Responsibilities, SMSU ensures that students have freedom to learn, freedom of expression, and freedom of association and assembly. The SMSU [Student Handbook](#) references these rights and provides information on the procedure to address grievances.

SMSU's faculty value their right of academic freedom and accept the inherent responsibilities as stated in their union's contract with Minnesota State. [Article 4](#) of the faculty contract recognizes the value of academic freedom, 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 faculty contract. The contracts contain grievance procedures to address any concerns. Faculty create and develop their own syllabi, in keeping with agreed-upon departmental requirements for courses. Faculty also guide and conduct academic assessment.

[BP 5.22](#) 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 [SPR 5.22.1](#).

### Sources

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- 2.129\_BP 3.1
- 2.130\_Article 4\_IFO
- 2.131\_Article4\_ASF
- 2.132\_BP 5.22
- 2.133\_SPR 5.22.1

## 2.E - Core Component 2.E

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

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

### Argument

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#### 2E.1

The [Institutional Review Board](#) (IRB) is a standing university committee composed of faculty, staff, and an administrator. The IRB ensures that research is conducted ethically. The members of the IRB are responsible for protecting the dignity, rights, and welfare of [human](#) and [animal](#) research subjects through enacting the IRB policies, which are aligned with federal regulations. The IRB Chair is responsible for providing information and application materials to researchers and for organizing meetings of the IRB as needed.

The IRB is composed of one dean (non-voting), three faculty members that include one science faculty, and one member from the other bargaining units. Members review proposals for research and determine if the participants will be adequately protected from harm.

The IRB reviews its procedures to ensure that ethical standards are being maintained. Improvements in the IRB process include revisions to the IRB application [forms](#) to ensure that student researchers complete all parts in detail and provide enough clarity for review, development of a checklist that requires applicants to specify items such as data security, and adoption of using Microsoft Teams as a secure site for application storage and access by the IRB reviewers.

IRB members receive training provided by the [Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative](#) (CITI). Additionally, all faculty, students, and staff researchers proposing to use human subjects in research under the auspices of SMSU are required to complete the human participants training offered through CITI Training.

SMSU also demonstrates regulatory compliance, ethical behavior, and fiscal accountability as it maintains contracts with vendors for research databases. By engaging in a license with a vendor, the University agrees to mutual terms for price, service dates, interlibrary loan procedures, and



permitted users. Vendor contracts are vetted through the State of Minnesota Attorney General's Office. McFarland Library subscribes to many databases through Minitex, a state-funded organization supporting libraries in Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Dakota, and South Dakota, and is able to save money through consortium pricing. Interlibrary loan permissions can vary by database, and SMSU complies with the parameters set forth by contracts (i.e. permission allowed for sharing print copy or electronic copy). Also, many databases restrict access to current students, helping to ensure ethical use. Current student status is verified by the proxy server, permitting current student access from off campus.

As a state-owned public institution, SMSU is subject to state statutes and policies in addition to system policies and procedures that govern financial operations. All grant funds received by SMSU are subject to statutes, policies, and grant agreements that govern financial operation and disbursement of grant funds.

## 2E.2

The [McFarland Library](#) provides spaces and services to support student research. Students can schedule a research consultation in person or online with one of the faculty librarians and access resources to conduct, develop, and document their research. Library faculty have also developed [Student Learning Outcomes](#) for select courses and provide tools such as a [Periodical/Journal Chart](#) and [Research Guides](#) to support student understanding and research.

The McFarland Library provides access to over 60 databases for scholarly research, including ELM (eLibrary Minnesota) databases provided free of charge through Minitex, State Library Services, and the Minnesota Department of Education. Databases cover all areas of study and include magazines, trade, and scholarly journals. In addition to scholarly articles, other information formats are provided, including the following: streaming videos are provided in Films on Demand and Kanopy (documentaries) and in Swank's Top 1000 for access to Hollywood titles most requested by universities; PolicyMap allows users to map data from nationwide to neighborhood levels on a wide variety of topics like education, demographics, and crime statistics; Statista provides infographics of statistics on topics such as consumer goods, sports, technology, and hospitality and tourism. Print journals and books are available, as are several eBook collections.

In addition to the acquisitions budget, the library is supported by gift funds, which add 35% to the budget. Gift funds are restricted to specific areas of purchase but are instrumental in providing database subscriptions. The University recognizes that subscriptions increase annually and has increased McFarland Library's acquisitions budget over the last few years to help accommodate inflation.

Interlibrary loan is a cooperative service allowing students and faculty to request books and articles not available at SMSU from other libraries across the state, nation, and world. This free service provides materials in print (returnable) and/or electronic or photocopy (non-returnable) format. McFarland Library contributes to the greater good by lending materials to requestors.

Faculty also receive support through the evaluation and review process. 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 and are sent to the deans at the end of the academic year for review and comment. The purpose of the planning, review, and feedback process is to guide and support all faculty, but particularly tenure track faculty, toward their creative and scholarly goals.

### **2E.3**

Library faculty provide information literacy instruction sessions for all first-year students enrolled in LEP 101. LEP 101 sections are organized into cohorts, with faculty from three-four courses collaborating on content and activities. One library faculty member teaches a section in the cohort and coordinates the information literacy instruction for that group. This collaboration allows faculty to integrate information literacy more fully into the overall course and assignment design and to tailor instruction more closely to student needs. Two information literacy assignments are required for all sections, one providing students the opportunity to practice the SIFT method of source evaluation, with particular attention focused on Stop and Investigate the Source, and one allowing students to demonstrate an understanding of OneSearch research vs Google searching. [Learning objectives](#) in each section address academic honesty and information literacy. Library faculty conduct a pre/post test in LEP 101 evaluating instruction for information literacy concepts and academic honesty issues. They also conduct an annual assessment of pre/post test results and adjust instruction according to findings.

Information literacy sessions are also frequently arranged for [upper-level courses](#) at faculty request. Library faculty are thus able to scaffold prior instruction with the more advanced level of research conducted within each academic program. The good working relationship established between library faculty and their academic colleagues fosters collaboration to support this outcome.

The required IRB training described under core component 2E.1 also provides students guidance in the ethics of research.

### **2E.4**

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 standards, as articulated in SMSU Policy [A-045](#). For all academic honesty sanctions, students can [appeal](#) decisions. There is a procedure to communicate sanctions and track enforcement. Incidents are [documented](#) and forwarded to the Deans' Office, and sanctions are clearly stated.

The Writing Center also 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.

Through instruction in information literacy and in other ways, 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.

## Sources

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- 2.025\_A-045
- 2.134\_Institutional Review Board
- 2.135\_IRB Policy Human
- 2.136\_IRB Policy Animal
- 2.137\_IRB Animal Human Subjects Application
- 2.138\_Research Ethics Compliance and Safety Training
- 2.139\_Library Strategic Priorities Plan
- 2.140\_Information Literacy SLOs
- 2.141\_Periodical Journal Chart
- 2.142\_Library Research Guides
- 2.143\_LEP Syllabi
- 2.144\_Courses with Library Research
- 2.145\_A-032
- 2.146\_G-005
- 2.147\_Academic Dishonesty log AY23-24 redacted
- 2.148\_Writing Center Policies and Practices

## **2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary**

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

### **Summary**

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SMSU acts ethically and responsibly and operates with integrity. SMSU strives to maintain integrity in all its academic functions. Operating within its own fiscal and administrative policies and Minnesota State board policies, it follows all federal and state laws, rules, and regulations pertaining to higher education institutions. As a state-owned public institution, SMSU is subject to state statutes and policies in addition to system policies and procedures that govern financial operations. 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. SMSU is committed to providing students and faculty with academic freedom and freedom of expression in the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning. 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 Institutional Review Board provides oversight to maintain professional standards, regulatory compliance, and ethical behavior and accountability in basic and applied research. The McFarland Library provides spaces, resources, and services to support faculty, staff, and student research. Library faculty provide information literacy instruction sessions for all first-year students enrolled in LEP 101 and in upper-level courses at faculty request. Academic honesty and integrity are enforced through policies communicated to students as part of this instruction.

### **Sources**

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*There are no sources.*

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

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

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

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

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

## Argument

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### 3A.1

SMSU has curriculum approval processes that ensure currency and an appropriate level of student performance. According to SMSU Policy [A-001](#), responsibility for developing and recommending curricular change [proposals](#) mainly lies with the Faculty Association. This process is administered by an undergraduate Curriculum Committee and a Graduate Curriculum Committee. Each step in the undergraduate curriculum [process](#) facilitates assurance of currency and appropriateness of performance level. The graduate curriculum processes utilize the same policies and forms led by a committee of faculty with graduate faculty status.

As explained in Policy [A-049](#), SMSU defines a credit hour in accordance with the Federal Credit Hour definition, including the requirement that "courses delivered online and through distance learning must ensure similar student workload per credit hour to a course delivered face-to-face."

The program review process, described in detail under core component 4A, is an important source of ongoing evaluation of currency and appropriateness. Program reviews are performed on a five-year rotating cycle for all SMSU academic programs, except for programs with specialized accreditation, which follow their outside accreditation review schedule.

Several programs also maintain currency through guidance from [Advisory Councils](#). Council members include individuals external to SMSU with specialized expertise related to the program. Councils meet at least once each semester, and meetings are designed to share program activities

and objectives and to foster conversation among members about ways to support, strengthen, and promote the program.

As required by the faculty [contract](#), all fixed-term and tenure-track faculty members must set annual goals and report on progress in five areas, one of which is “Evidence of Continuing Preparation and Study.” This requirement helps to ensure the currency of courses and programs.

### **3A.2**

Student learning outcomes (SLOs) have been developed by academic programs as a component of their Plan for the Assessment of Student Learning (PASL). In addition, [SLOs for the Liberal Education Program](#) reflect the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum learning outcomes. Liberal Education SLOs are available on the Liberal Education Program webpage and are contained in the catalog. Policy [A-030](#) requires all syllabi to include course SLO’s for all courses. Programmatic SLO’s can be found on [program webpages](#).

The separation of curriculum committees by degree level aids in differentiating learner expectations, in part by the required graduate faculty status of the Graduate Curriculum Committee. Differentiation also becomes evident through the practice of stacking courses to meet the differing needs of undergraduate and graduate students. When courses are stacked by level (e.g. 400/500), course outcomes are differentiated on the [syllabus](#). Students taking the courses at the 500-level must meet higher standards for graduate-level credit and complete additional assignments.

SMSU offers certificates at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Each is offered within an established academic program which articulates and differentiates program and course-level learning goals as described above.

### **3A.3**

SMSU students can access courses in person on the SMSU campus and at additional locations approved by HLC. Online courses are available to all SMSU students, both to those based primarily on campus, depending on their scheduling needs, and to those who are fully online learners. Regardless of delivery mode or location, SMSU ensures consistency in program quality and learning goals.

#### **Online Instruction**

SMSU offers [fully online](#) degrees in 20 undergraduate and six graduate programs, and certificates in nine undergraduate and 10 graduate areas. These degrees and certificates were developed by faculty as an extension of existing, in-person programs. Each was developed, approved, and offered through established internal and external curriculum and program development processes. Course and program assessment and periodic review are done through regular processes. Courses and programs are delivered by SMSU faculty hired through established processes.

The integration of online instruction within existing programs and processes helps to ensure consistency in program quality and learning goals. SMSU provides additional support for online instruction through the Center of Learning and Teaching, explained in more detail under core component 3C. Additionally, the [Committee on Online Learning](#) supports the development and delivery of quality and equity-minded online, hybrid, and multimodal courses and provides leadership for the broader engagement and support of SMSU students who learn online. To provide marketing, recruitment, and retention services that will support online programs, SMSU has contracted with Risepoint. They will only support SMSU in these areas and will not have any role in developing programs or curriculum, providing instruction, or providing academic advising.

### **Additional Locations**

In spring 2023, SMSU completed a successful [HLC Multi-location Visit Report and Review](#). The review identified no concerns with the three programs SMSU delivers through off-campus instruction. The Master of Science in Education is offered at multiple locations to in-service teachers via a cohort model. The Bachelor of Arts in Theatre and the Bachelor of Science in Exercise Science are offered as degree-completion programs in partnership with selected community colleges within the Minnesota State system.

### **College Now Concurrent Enrollment**

Through the College Now program, SMSU has offered concurrent enrollment courses since 1984 and has maintained National Association of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships accreditation since 2010. College Now utilizes a mentoring structure pairing SMSU faculty with high school instructors. This pairing ensures that the rigor and integrity of the college courses offered at high schools are equivalent to those being offered on campus. Mentors check tests and major assignment samples for difficulty level and grading equivalency. Students enroll in SMSU courses and are subject to the same learning outcomes and grading criteria as other college students.

## Sources

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- 3.001\_A-001
- 3.002\_Curriculum Proposals
- 3.003\_A-001.1
- 3.004\_A-049
- 3.005\_Advisory Councils
- 3.006\_Article 22\_IFO
- 3.007\_MnTC\_LEP Outcomes
- 3.008\_A-030
- 3.009\_Program Webpages
- 3.010\_400 500 Syllabi
- 3.011\_Online Degrees
- 3.012\_The Committee on Online Learning
- 3.013\_SW MN State University MLV Report



## 3.B - Core Component 3.B

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

1. The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings and degree levels of the institution. The institution articulates the purposes, content and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements.
2. The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.
3. The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity and provides students with growth opportunities and lifelong skills to live and work in a multicultural world.
4. The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their offerings and the institution's mission.

### Argument

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#### 3B.1

The Liberal Education Program (LEP) provides the foundation for general education at SMSU and the core intellectual inquiry areas for all undergraduate degrees. One example of the direct connection between the institutional mission and LEP is through the LEP 101 First Year Experience: Discover. Engage. Lead. This course is designed to equip students for academic success, provide an orientation to Southwest Minnesota State University, and assist them in making a successful transition to college both socially and intellectually. Specific areas covered are the value of liberal arts education, the importance of ethnic and social diversity, the skills of information literacy, and the foundations of the university's mission and values.

SMSU articulates the purposes, content, and intended learning outcomes of the LEP on the [website](#). LEP requirements include 42 credits in the 10 goal areas of the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum (MnTC); LEP 101; an additional Goal 5 or 6 goal area course; a designated Communication, Critical Thinking and Information Literacy (also called the core skills) course; and a major Capstone course. As part of the MnTC requirement, each student at SMSU must complete a three-credit course at the sophomore level or above that focuses on written communication skills and builds on the other core skills.

#### 3B.2

The SMSU Liberal Education Program provides students with the opportunity to obtain a foundational, general education across the fundamental domains of human knowledge. When

empowered with these ideas, facts, skills, and values, students can understand and participate effectively in the affairs of the community, nation, and wider world. SMSU believes that a liberal arts education is an approach to college learning that empowers individuals and prepares them to deal with complexity, diversity, and change. It emphasizes broad knowledge of the wider world and in-depth achievement in a specific field of interest. The design and purpose of general education at SMSU reflects the belief that a liberal arts education helps students develop a sense of social responsibility and a set of skills that spans all areas of study and includes a demonstrated ability to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings. SMSU seeks to equip students to continue their liberal arts education as lifelong learners who engage in a process of integration of the mind, body, and spirit.

In the design of LEP, SMSU adopted an established framework of the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum. The framework outlines educational expectations, student outcome goals, and core competencies that are to be addressed in courses included in the MnTC. According to Minnesota State, the 10 [goal](#) areas of the MnTC focus on core liberal arts and sciences competencies and are designed to transfer as a complete package of credits to meet the first two years of general education requirements at any public Minnesota college or university. Additional LEP requirements within this framework are described in the previous section. For further discussion of information literacy instruction provided to all students, see information provided under core component 2E.

### 3B.3

The SMSU mission is to prepare students “as engaged citizens in their local and global communities.” The SMSU vision statement further articulates the commitment to fostering student engagement with diversity as preparation for living and working in a multicultural world: “SMSU aspires to be recognized throughout Minnesota and beyond for being an inclusive and student-centered university.” As explained in detail under core components 1A and 1C, the SMSU strategic plan operationalizes this commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Students have many growth opportunities in this area. [The Office of Diversity and Inclusion](#) (ODI) provides campus leadership through many campus and community [programs](#). Students can plan, implement, and attend high-impact events focusing on expanding the narrative that shapes our understanding of culture, community, justice, and diversity. ODI annually helps to organize several keystone campus events where the primary emphasis is to build understanding of culture, diversity, and inclusion. Some examples include [It Begins With Us](#), the [Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service](#), and the [Dakota 38 +2 memorial ride](#).

SMSU clubs and organizations provide additional opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds to engage with one another. Examples of groups with this focus are listed [here](#).

SMSU also offers multiple opportunities for students to grow their intercultural awareness and experience human and cultural diversity through international study and by engaging with international students studying at SMSU. Students are encouraged to study abroad through the [Center for International Education](#) (CIE) to explore new countries, cultures, and languages, and to learn lifelong skills through their experiences. SMSU also supports over 170

international students from around the world, representing over 30 different countries. SMSU currently enrolls 140 international students and supports 31 recent graduates undertaking their Optional Practical Training experiences across the U.S. SMSU charges in-state tuition rates for all students, and our affordable education enhances diversity by attracting international students from all around the world. Our top rankings in affordability and safety have also helped increase international student interest and applications. Additional rankings can be found [here](#).

In 2020, CIE created the Study Abroad & Global Engagement (SAGE) committee to support faculty-led study abroad opportunities. Faculty are encouraged to submit proposals for taking students on international [study trips](#).

CIE offers weekly [International Coffee Hours](#) for international and domestic students to meet for coffee/tea and fun activities. The entire campus community is invited to help build a welcoming and inclusive community for everyone. Additional events include [International Education Week](#), the [International Gala](#), and [WorldFest](#), a festival attracting over 1,000 campus and community attendees to share and celebrate local/global diversity through international food, cultural awareness, and cultural arts and entertainment.

Faculty are dedicated to including human and cultural diversity within academic programs. Beginning in July 2022, the faculty contract has required faculty to propose one or more specific activities “intended to help close educational equity gaps” in at least one of the five professional development criteria areas reported on in the annual review process. As stated in [Article 22](#), “A faculty member’s continuous improvement toward equity and inclusion and the elimination of education equity gaps is highly valued within these activities.” [Examples](#) found in faculty Professional Development Reports include learning about equitable grading practices as part of continuing preparation and study, changing course materials to provide more inclusive examples, adopting more equitable grading practices, and analyzing retention and achievement data by course and instructor.

LEP outcomes and the MnTC also provide students opportunities to engage with diversity. Students take a minimum of six credits related to diversity and global perspective. Currently, 26 courses meet the Diversity learning outcome, and 31 courses meet the Global outcome. These courses represent 16 different disciplines. In 2023, the Minnesota State System Office announced a [revision](#) of MnTC Goal 7 as Human Diversity, Race, Power and Justice in the United States with two options for completion: A) Human Diversity and B) Race, Power and Justice. All curriculum revisions to Goal 7 will take effect in fall 2025.

### **3B.4**

Faculty describe their scholarly and creative work in their [Professional Development Plans and Reports](#). Evidence of scholarship is further documented in departmental [annual reports](#). [Mustang Ovarions](#) is an annual celebration of faculty and staff publications and creative works, professional presentations, awards and accolades, and external grants. The program also recognizes Campus Compact Awards, Equity Teaching Fellows, and the prestigious Cowan Award for University and Community Service.

The SMSU [Undergraduate Research Conference](#) (URC) is a significant annual campus event that highlights scholarship and creative work completed by SMSU students under the direction of faculty supervisors. Each year, approximately 150 students from over a dozen programs across campus participate in the event. URC aligns with the university's mission by providing students an opportunity to conduct an in-depth analysis of a topic in their field and to create and deliver a professional presentation where they share outcomes of their experience with the greater community. This experience allows them to “connect their academic/professional development experiences in Southwest Minnesota to the wider world.” Some student participants continue their work and formally publish in the SMSU journal [Discovery: The SMSU Journal of Undergraduate Research](#) or professional journals in their discipline. Others take their work beyond SMSU and [present](#) it at regional or national conferences.

At the graduate level, students in education can publish their research in the [Educator Development Network Journal](#) supported by the Education Department. Graduate faculty guide students in revising their research thesis paper into articles with suggestions for teaching practice. Disseminated to roughly 4,000 graduate alumni, the journal also provides cutting edge ideas for their classrooms. Graduate students in all programs must engage in research and the discovery of knowledge. Program-specific examples can be found [here](#).

## Sources

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- 3.006\_Article 22\_IFO
- 3.014\_Liberal Education Program
- 3.015\_Minnesota Transfer Curriculum
- 3.016\_Office of Diversity and Inclusion
- 3.017\_FY24 AOS-ODI Events
- 3.018\_SMSU to Host It Begins With Us Conference
- 3.019\_MLKSP23Program
- 3.020\_SMSU Welcomed Dakota 38+2 Riders
- 3.021\_Clubs and Orgs Supporting Diversity
- 3.022\_International Program Rankings
- 3.023\_Study Abroad Trips
- 3.024\_Center for International Education
- 3.025\_ICH Sign Up AY 2023 to 2024
- 3.026\_International Education Week 2023 Poster
- 3.027\_International Gala Flyer
- 3.028\_WorldFest 2023
- 3.029\_Faculty Reports on DEI
- 3.030\_Goal 7
- 3.031\_Professional Development Reports
- 3.032\_Annual Reports 22-23
- 3.033\_Mustang Ovations
- 3.034\_Undergraduate Research Conference
- 3.035\_Discovery the SMSU Journal of Undergraduate Research

- 3.036\_Student Presentations
- 3.037\_Educator Development Network Journal
- 3.038\_Graduate Student Research

## 3.C - Core Component 3.C

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

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

## Argument

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### 3C.1

IPEDS data for fall 2023 show the following composition with respect to diversity across all SMSU employee categories (includes full-time and part-time):

- 87.7% White
- 0.9% American Indian or Alaska Native
- 2.8% Asian
- 3.0% Black or African American
- 1.4% Hispanic
- 41% Two or More Races
- 0.9% International

As shown in the attached [graph](#), the overall percentage of employees of color has increased each of the previous three years and now stands at 9.5%, which is 2.1% higher than in the fall of 2019, President Jayasuriya's first year at SMSU.

Fall 2023 IPEDS data for specific employee categories show the following:

- FT Instructional Faculty: 86.5% White – 9.6% Persons of Color (POC)
- PT Instructional Faculty: 88.0% White – 8.8% POC
- FT Management: 84.6% White – 15.4% POC
- FT Student Affairs: 81.6% White – 18.4% POC
- FT Coaching/Social Services: 89.2% White – 8.1% POC

The composition of faculty and staff shows less diversity than within the student body. SMSU 10<sup>th</sup> day enrollment data for fall 2023 show the following composition with respect to diversity for all degree-seeking undergraduate students:

- 71.1% White – 16.6% lower than faculty/staff
- 0.5% American Indian or Alaska Native – .4% lower than faculty/staff
- 2.3% Asian – .5% lower than faculty/staff
- 8.2% Black or African American – 4.7% higher than faculty/staff
- 8.2% Hispanic – 6.8% higher than faculty/staff
- 3.3% Two or More Races – 1.9% higher than faculty/staff

The overall percentage of undergraduate students of color has increased across the timeline shown in the attached [table](#) and stands at 22.2% for the fall 2023 undergraduate degree-seeking enrollment (compared to 9.5% for faculty/staff and 9.6% for full-time instructional faculty).

The [surrounding area](#) served by SMSU shows greater diversity than the University, as well, though to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the category.

SMSU has set the strategic goal of further increasing and retaining faculty and staff diversity and will continue to track progress as measured by Equity Scorecard data and the [Affirmative Action Plan](#). Steps taken toward addressing this goal have been to restructure the hiring process, provide comprehensive cohort on-boarding, and prioritize diversity and equity-based training and educational opportunities for all employees through Vector Solutions LLC and Learning Connections, as discussed in more detail under core component 3C.5. Detailed discussion and documentation of revisions to the hiring process to increase diversity can be found [here](#).

### 3C.2

SMSU has sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty, as demonstrated by the student-to-faculty ratio of 11.17 (as reported by the [HLC AIDU 2024](#)).

Fall 2023 IPEDS data show the following faculty composition.

<b>Instructional Faculty</b>	<b>Full-Time</b>	<b>Part-Time</b>	<b>Total</b>
total number	104	125	229

members of minority group	10	11	21
women	53	84	137
men	51	41	92
nonresidents (international)	2	2	4

SMSU’s undergraduate degree-seeking (UDS) enrollment in fall 2023 was up 4.2% over the previous year and 6.0% over five years ago. Graduate enrollment was up by 11.4% year over year and 3.4% over five years ago. Over this period, faculty hiring has been done to replace positions that have become vacant due to retirements or departures and to make strategic investments in positions due to enrollment increases in specific programs. The following table shows faculty hiring for each of the five most recent academic years.

**Number and Type of Faculty Positions hired by Fiscal Year**

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Total Faculty Hired</b>	<b>Assistant Professor</b>	<b>Athletic</b>
2023	15	10	5
2022	8	2	6
2021	7	7	0
2020	8	6	2

Since 2018 full-time equivalent (FTE) instructional faculty have increased from 136.0 in 2018 to 145.7 in 2023 (based on IPEDS Human Resources Survey). In 2018, 89.1% of FT instructional faculty were tenured (73.9%) or on tenure track (15.2%). In 2023, 93.3% of FT instructional faculty were tenured (70.2%) or on tenure track (23.1%). As a result, there was a decrease in the number of FT instructional faculty that were on annual or multi-year contracts from 10.9% to 6.8%. The student-to-faculty ratio remained relatively steady over the period: 12.8 in 2018 and 11.37 in 2023 (using the HLC ratio; the IPEDS ratio is also steady at 15:1 using that methodology).

**3C.3**

All SMSU faculty are appropriately qualified. As of March 2024, 85% of full-time instructional faculty have a terminal degree/highest degree in their field. This percentage is based on 92 of 108 full-time faculty holding the terminal/highest degree and excludes coaches and library



appointments. Faculty must undergo stringent hiring processes to meet position announcement qualifications.

As described under core component 3A, College Now, SMSU's concurrent enrollment program, utilizes a mentoring structure pairing SMSU faculty with high school instructors. Consistent with the faculty contract ([Article 21, Section E.3.c](#)) and with HLC Assumed Practice B.2, SMSU requires concurrent enrollment faculty to demonstrate attainment of a master's degree, specialized licensure, or other special preparation or experience as described [here](#). Currently, 84% of SMSU's concurrent enrollment high school instructors hold a master's degree. Of these, 56% have earned 18 graduate credits in the discipline (up from only 17% in 2016) and another 14% have some graduate credits towards their discipline. Those without a master's degree have been approved based upon a combination of academic credentials and prior experience within the field. Faculty continue to complete coursework in their fields as they work towards meeting the credentialing requirements. The College Now program reviews transcripts each semester and sends out status updates upon completion of the reviews.

### 3C.4

As required by contract, faculty are evaluated according to [five](#) criteria. Instructor evaluation periods vary from one to four 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 with respect to the criteria listed above. At the plan's completion, the faculty member provides a copy to 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.

PDPs and PDRs 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 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.

### 3C.5

[The Center of Learning and Teaching](#) (COLT) is a primary means of professional development support for SMSU faculty. Throughout the regular semester, COLT staff, consisting of a faculty member and an IT professional, offer workshops/discussions on topics ranging from utilizing elements of the course management system (D2L), to emerging teaching/learning technologies, to pedagogical best practices, to topics of interest such as

generative artificial intelligence. Faculty may attend live, via Zoom, or access a recording through the COLT online library, housed on Microsoft Teams.

The COLT online library also contains written resources and links on teaching technology and pedagogical best practices, as well as on specialized issues such as culturally responsive teaching, facilitating student engagement in online courses, and designing meaningful assessments. Faculty may access these materials at any time, and they may also add items they find useful to share with colleagues.

COLT also facilitates professional development support through human interaction. COLT staff offer individual consultations, one-on-one training for specialized equipment or strategies, and the COLT Co-Op, an asynchronous online message board where faculty may ask questions and receive answers from COLT staff and other faculty members.

SMSU ensures that new faculty members are informed about resources and support available to them through an [orientation](#) session that takes place before the beginning of classes. Incoming faculty are also encouraged to make an appointment with COLT staff to receive one-on-one guidance in creating their courses. In addition, COLT is in the process of developing a D2L course for incoming instructors that provides best practices for using D2L as a learning management platform. This asynchronous course offers basics in building assignments and assessments, contains suggested syllabus language specific to SMSU, describes best practices in online learning platforms, and provides links and means of obtaining additional support. The first stages of this D2L course for incoming instructors, containing suggested syllabus templates and language, a "quick start" to D2L navigation, and information about getting additional help, will be available in fall 2024. The remaining components will be added throughout the academic year in response to needs expressed by the campus community, including the Committee on Online Learning, the Deean Griebel Center for Student Success, the Campus Diversity Officer, department chairs, and current adjunct instructors.

As required by faculty contract [Article 19](#), several types of development funds are allocated annually for improving professional competence. These are described [here](#).

Sabbaticals are provided per the faculty contract. Faculty are eligible for a first sabbatical one year after being awarded tenure, or after ten years of service. Faculty may choose to apply for a semester or full year sabbatical. Faculty submit a separate written [report](#) of sabbatical accomplishments when they return.

Support faculty in the Minnesota State University Association of Administrative & Service Faculty (MSUAASF) unit often serve as course instructors. MSUAASF members are eligible for funds as described under 3C.7. Support faculty are also eligible for a professional development sabbatical.

[Professional Development Days](#) provide additional faculty and staff development opportunities. This training is provided for one day before the start of the semester and is open to all administration, faculty, and staff. As described under core component 1C, SMSU has also funded external training opportunities for faculty, staff, and administration to develop their

understanding of inclusive and equitable teaching and student support practices. As noted, the [Equity Teaching Fellows](#) program was created to support and recognize faculty and staff doing this type of development work.

The Minnesota State Network for Educational Development (NED) is another crucial means for professional development. NED offers a variety of free educational opportunities, including one-off workshops, short courses, long courses, and faculty learning communities.

### 3C.6

SMSU faculty are available to answer students' questions outside the classroom. Per [Article 10A](#) 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, posted at the faculty member's office for faculty members with assigned offices." The contract further specifies that "A faculty member assigned to work from a remote location shall maintain equivalent interactive availability to students through the internet or other electronic means." Faculty also serve as students' academic advisors. See core component 3D for a detailed discussion of faculty and staff advising duties, resources, and capacity.

As the University has emerged from the pandemic, emphasis has been placed on increasing the availability of in-person instruction and engagement while also meeting the needs of increasing numbers of online students. To address this strategic goal and to provide clarity for faculty regarding availability to both types of students, the provost has sent faculty a [memo](#) of explanation and guidance prior to each semester as course schedules are being developed .

### 3C.7

Staff positions follow the same rigorous hiring process as described previously to ensure that candidates interviewed and hired are appropriately qualified. Additionally, position classification is a service provided at the system office level to determine what classification a new or revised position falls within and, therefore, what specifications are required and suggested for minimum and preferred qualifications. The SMSU HR Office works with departments to review position descriptions and submit the necessary documentation to determine the appropriate classification and state specifications for each position. Once a classification is determined, a hiring authorization is completed and reviewed.

For positions that are part of the MSUAASF union, a [qualifications grid](#) determines the range of the position based on the minimum qualifications listed. The Campus Evaluation Committee reviews position proposals to determine the salary range and ensure that qualifications align with the determined range.

In addition to the annual professional development day described previously, an annual [staff development day](#) is provided for all staff. This is an opportunity to re-energize as a community, learn something new, step away from normal day-to-day tasks, and put time into professional development. SMSU has also offered [Inclusive Leadership Training](#) for all managers, and within specific departments upon request, to learn how to engage in inclusive behaviors as a

leader and build cultural fluency. SMSU also provides a series of opportunities through a program called [Learning Connections](#). This is an optional educational series for all employees on various topics that may interest them. The series repeats from fall to spring to provide more opportunities to attend and engage.

All employees also have access to a State of Minnesota learning management system known as ELM. In addition to a set of [required](#) annual training modules, employees can access others to develop their professional skills. Examples include the following: Communicating Strategically, Employee Coaching, Cultural Awareness, Union Contract Training, Customer Service Skills, Productive Conflict, and other topics. SMSU also created a partnership with [Vector Solutions](#) which is a training platform specific to higher education. Training provided includes requirements employees complete for compliance purposes such as Title IX, but also additional opportunities for employees around building supportive communities, helping accommodate individuals with disabilities, DEIB, and others.

In addition to the training described above, development funds are allocated annually per the MSUAASF contract for improving professional competence. See details [here](#).

To support classified staff, training funds are budgeted annually (approximately \$7K in FY 2024). See details [here](#).

Students serving in support positions described under core component 3D also receive training in the areas list below, as described [here](#).

- Supplemental Instruction
- Interdisciplinary Tutors
- Math Learning Center
- Writing Center
- New Tutor Training Program
- CRLA Certification

## Sources

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- 3.006\_Article 22\_IFO
- 3.038.1\_Employees of Color
- 3.038.2\_Undergraduate Students of Color
- 3.038.3\_Diversity within Lyon County
- 3.039\_Hiring Process Revisions
- 3.047.1\_2022-2024 Affirmative Action Plan
- 3.048\_HLC AIDU 2024
- 3.049.1\_Article 21\_IFO
- 3.049.2\_Evaluating Concurrent Enrollment Qualifications
- 3.049\_Faculty Qualifications
- 3.050\_New Faculty Orientation Schedule - Fall 2023
- 3.051\_Article 19\_IFO

- 3.052\_Faculty Development Funds
- 3.053\_Sabbatical Reports
- 3.054\_HR Ex. 14 Faculty Professional Development Day Agenda
- 3.055\_Equity Teaching Fellows Program
- 3.056\_Center of Learning and Teaching
- 3.057\_Article 10.A\_IFO
- 3.058\_Increasing In-Person Instruction and Engagement
- 3.059\_HR Ex. 17 MSUAASF Qualification Matrix
- 3.060\_HR Ex. 13 Staff Development Day Agenda
- 3.061\_HR Ex. 15 Inclusive Leadership Training Guides
- 3.062.1\_HR Ex. 8 Required Annual Training Notice
- 3.062\_LearningConnections-23-24-ADA
- 3.063\_Vector Solutions Email
- 3.064\_Staff Development Funds
- 3.065\_Staff Training Funds
- 3.066\_Student Training

## 3.D - Core Component 3.D

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The institution provides support for student learning and resources for effective teaching.

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

## Argument

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### 3D.1

SMSU offers a wide range of student support services aligned with its commitment to provide a student-centered education that equips graduates to meet society's needs.

The [Deeann Griebel Student Success Center](#) (DGSSC) strives to engage each student equitably during their experience at SMSU. The Center supports students holistically in achieving their academic, social, and professional success. Often serving as a liaison between students and support services on campus, DGSSC is a one-stop-shop to assist both online and on-campus students with a variety of needs. The Center also houses the Education Curriculum Library and the Math Learning Center where students can receive additional assistance with math coursework through peer tutors. DGSSC staff provide the support services discussed below and the academic tutoring support discussed under core component 3D.2.

### Student Intervention Strategies

- **Courtesy Phone Calls** - Courtesy calls are made to all new, first-year students after the first week of classes both fall and spring semester. These calls are meant to check in with students, answer questions, connect them to resources, and most importantly, identify students who may be having a hard time with their transition into SMSU. Follow up emails are sent to those not reached via phone.
- **[Last Date of Attendance](#) Grades/Outreach.** Due to federal financial aid mandates, faculty are asked to report students who have never attended a course that they have registered for and those that have stopped attending. DGSSC receives a weekly report from the Registration Office so outreach and intervention can take place with impacted

students. Students' academic advisors are also included to make them aware of the concern.

- [Early Alert Procedures](#) with Faculty. Completed during week three and seven of each semester. Faculty review course rosters and identify students who may need more support due to academic, attendance, financial, and/or personal reasons. The Early Alert Intervention Team, comprised of staff members across campus, reaches out to each student to address the early alert(s) and develop a plan for success. Academic advisors are also informed if any of their advisees have received early alerts.
- [Satisfactory Academic Progress \(SAP\) Meetings](#). After a semester ends, if a student is not meeting necessary academic thresholds for their GPA and completion rate, they may be placed on SAP. DGSSC supports these students by having a staff member meet with identified students to discuss thresholds they will need to meet to return to good academic standing, resources available on campus, and success strategies. A D2L course was also developed during AY 2023 to assist students in learning more about the SAP process.

### **Accommodations & Basic Needs Support**

- Accessibility Services. Provides support and accommodation to students with documented disabilities due to physical and/or mental health needs. A few examples of accommodations include extended testing time, testing in a private space, books in audio format, and note-taking technology. The philosophy and services offered by this office are described in more detail later in this core component.
- [Basic Needs Website](#) / [211 United Way Partnership](#). Developed to highlight basic needs resources at SMSU, in the Marshall Community, and through Minnesota State's new partnership with United Way. The United Way 211 resource hub is a state-wide resource to connect students to support in their communities regardless of where they are taking courses.

### **Resources for Student Success**

- [Mustang Bucket List '67](#). Referencing that SMSU was established in 1967, this document was developed to help new students acclimate to campus and make the most out of their first year.
- [Ways to Achieve Success](#). This document includes tips and helpful reminders about how students can achieve success.
- [First Six Weeks Checklist](#). This checklist was developed to guide new students through their first six weeks on campus.
- [Resource Guide for Mustang Success](#). Updated annually, this guide highlights DGSSC services and campus resources.
- [Mustangs Connect Newsletter](#). Sent monthly during the academic year, this newsletter helps new, first-year parents and guardians stay current with important deadline dates, on-campus support services, and success tips.

### **Programming**



- [Meet Your Advisor \(MYA\)](#). Held annually during Gold Rush Days after Convocation, MYA is a program designed to introduce new students to their academic advisor, provide information about their designated academic major/minor, and help them meet other students within their program.
- [Mustang Success Night](#). Held annually every fall semester during the third week of classes, Mustang Success Night helps new students learn about available support services at SMSU. The evening includes a warm welcome from administration, a keynote speaker (SMSU alum), a support services and career exploration fair, and prize drawings.
- [Finish Strong Week](#). Held annually every spring semester during the last week of classes, Finish Strong Week was developed to help students finish the semester strong by preparing them for finals, assisting them with stress relief, and inviting them to celebrate the end of the academic year with their peers.

### **Exit Procedure**

- DGSSC oversees [SMSU's exit procedure](#) for undergraduate students who are not planning to continue their education at SMSU. The procedure serves as a checklist to assist students with necessary steps to complete before leaving the University. Meetings with students are held in person, via phone, or virtually through Microsoft Teams. The most beneficial step of the exit procedure is the completion of the student perceptions survey to better understand why students leave SMSU.

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion, described in detail under core component 3B, supports traditionally under-served students through two programs. Access Opportunity Success (AOS) supports students who have qualified for admission. The mission of AOS is to provide effective outreach, recruitment, and retention of underrepresented students (low income, first generation, and students of color) to enable them to be retained, graduated, and—where appropriate—to enroll in graduate and professional programs. First-year AOS students can participate in the Summer Bridge program to earn free tuition credit and receive priority registration during their first and second years at SMSU. Students have access to individual and group tutoring support, and those students residing on campus may also join the AOS Living and Learning Community, which provides additional support for their educational goals.

The Mustang Pathway Program (MPP) is an alternative entry program designed to allow more students the opportunity to earn their degree at SMSU. Understanding that not everyone has access to the same college prep work and that grades and test scores may not reflect a student's potential, MPP is an adaptive entry program with transition points that meet students where they are. The program is designed to help students achieve growth, success, perseverance, and resiliency to matriculate to graduation. The mission of MPP is aligned with Minnesota State's Equity 2030 goal to eliminate "educational equity gaps across racial/ethnic groups, socio-economic classes, rural and urban divides, and historically marginalized segments of the population."

MPP students participate in a free five-week experience to strengthen English, reading, math, and study skills in an engaging and supportive environment. The program helps students transition to the University with focused coursework before the start of the academic term.



Students who successfully complete the program are admitted to SMSU and must join the Pathway Scholars, a first-year student cohort.

The [Honors Program](#) offers qualified students from all disciplines enhanced opportunities to develop leadership and critical thinking skills and global consciousness. Honors students may choose one of three pathways: the Traditional Pathway, the Transfer Pathway, and the Experiential Pathway. Honors students who maintain a 3.4 grade point average are eligible for priority registration. The program also provides honors conference travel scholarships awarded on a competitive basis, use of the Curtler Honors Lounge, and an Honors Club that sponsors various activities.

The Office of Online Learning & Transfer Partnerships (Online Learning) provides student support to fully online learners. Online Learning developed and now monitors two D2L Brightspace orientations, one for undergraduates and one for graduates. Students admitted to SMSU for fully online degrees are automatically uploaded into the orientation which includes such areas as financial aid, Early Alert, accessibility services, Success @ Southwest, and student organizations encouraging virtual memberships. Specific sections focus on time management techniques, health and stress management, and encouraging early connection with career services. Online Learning also supports students through advocacy for their needs.

[Residence Life](#) support is based on the belief that a student's life outside of the classroom is a meaningful and important part of a student's college experience. The residence halls play a vital role in a student's education, and programming is designed to meet residents' physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual needs all while encouraging them to become active and engaged citizens in the campus and surrounding community.

[Career Services](#) provides comprehensive career resources to assist SMSU students and alumni with their career development and employment goals. Career Services provides students guidance in choosing a major, developing career plans, applying to graduate schools, or looking for internships and full-time employment. Students receive help writing resumes, cover letters, and applications; receive coaching with interviewing skills; and have several opportunities to meet with prospective employers.

The [Technology Resource Center](#) (TRC) houses the Information Technology Services Helpdesk. Support is provided seven days a week during the academic year and in a more limited capacity during holidays, breaks, and the summer. TRC services include login assistance, password resets, mobile device support, D2L Brightspace support, e-mail assistance, and support for on-campus Internet services including on-campus wireless access, computer kiosks, and computer labs.

The [Center for International Education](#) (CIE) supports SMSU students from around the world. CIE oversees international admission, processing international student applications, providing counseling and guidance regarding international student visas, and offering orientation to all new students arriving from abroad studying at SMSU. As discussed in detail under Criterion 3B, CIE also supports study abroad opportunities to broaden students' cultural awareness and serves the wider campus and surrounding community through many events.

The [Mental Health Counseling Center](#) is staffed by mental health professionals who provide confidential, short-term counseling services. Counseling is available and free to students who are currently enrolled at SMSU and who reside in the state of Minnesota at the time of counseling. Students are also able to take a free, anonymous online mental health [screening](#) to identify needs related to depression, alcohol, anxiety, and eating disorders. The Center also organizes the annual [Fresh Check Day](#), a mental health and wellness fair.

[Student Health Services](#) partners with local provider ACCESS Health to reserve daily appointments at their facility just a few blocks away from campus. SMSU provides free transportation to the clinic for those in need and offers a \$25 co-pay reimbursement for students. New staffing allows for an LPN to be on campus five days a week to assist students in navigating their needs and services available.

SMSU was named a 2022-23 Military Friendly School (Gold Division) and supports the [Veterans Resource Center](#) to serve the unique higher education needs of students who are Veterans, military members, or family members. It is a campus space where Veterans, military members, and their families feel welcome. The Center facilitates communication between departments and staff who regularly interact with Veterans and whose services Veterans depend upon (admissions, financial aid, counseling, disability services, career services); develops and coordinates training opportunities for campus staff on Veterans issues; and solicits feedback from Veterans and attempts to remove unnecessary impediments to Veterans services.

Disability Services was renamed [Accessibility Services](#) beginning spring 2023 and relocated closer to the DGSSC beginning fall 2023. Through these changes, academic accommodations are now seen as an extension of support provided to all students within the DGSSC. Students with documented disabilities due to physical, learning, and/or mental health needs now feel more comfortable asking for assistance because services are being normalized. They no longer feel like they are being labeled as “disabled” by going to a separate location on campus. The number of students accessing support in Accessibility Services has increased dramatically since these changes were implemented. In December 2022, 23 students received services and had an accommodation plan. That number increased to 212 students by May 2023 and to 240 students by May 2024.

The [Mustang Market](#), SMSU’s food and resource pantry, is centrally located on campus and serves the entire campus community. Supported by the SMSU Foundation and by donations from faculty and staff, the market is a valued resource for many members of the campus community.

### **3D.2**

Academic learning support is provided in many ways, including by offices described elsewhere under criterion 3.

#### **Tutoring Support**

- [Interdisciplinary Tutoring Program](#). The DGSSC offers walk-in peer tutoring support in multiple courses such as biology, chemistry, accounting, finance, and others. Subject

areas may vary each semester. Peer tutors have completed coursework in the subject areas they tutor.

- **[Tutor.com](#)**. A service provided by Minnesota State, Tutor.com offers 24/7 online, on-demand tutoring support in a variety of subject areas including student success topics such as note-taking, goal setting, and time-management. SMSU students access Tutor.com through their D2L Brightspace and have access to 15 hours of free tutoring per academic year. If a student runs low or out of hours completely, they can request more through the DGSSC.
- **[Supplemental Instruction \(SI\)](#)**. SI provides embedded tutoring support in targeted courses that have been identified as high-risk (typically 20% or higher DFW rates), as well as those with high achievement gaps. Students who have successfully completed these courses are recruited to serve as SI leaders and collaborate with faculty to conduct peer-facilitated discussions and study sessions outside of regular class hours. SMSU's SI program had its pilot during the fall semester of 2021 starting with three courses supported. In 2023, SI grew to twenty sections supported.

The **[Writing Center](#)**, located on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor of McFarland Library, assists undergraduate and graduate students throughout various stages of writing in all disciplines, with the goal of helping them become more independent and successful writers. Writing Center tutors help students at any stage of the writing process and provide guidance in how to incorporate secondary and primary research, revise document structure or content, and compose citations. Students may schedule in-person or online appointments on an individual or group basis.

The **[Math Learning Center](#)**, located in the DGSSC, assists students with selected pre-calculus mathematics courses and beginning computer science courses by correcting quizzes, providing informal tutoring, and answering questions on course material. The Center is equipped with study booths and a library of mathematics and computer science books, including information on such topics as careers in mathematics and computer science, math anxiety, and women role models in mathematics. Support is provided by a faculty member in mathematics and by trained peer tutors.

The **[McFarland Library](#)** provides spaces and services to support student research. Students can schedule a research consultation with one of the faculty librarians and access resources to conduct, develop, and document their research. Library faculty provide Information Literacy instruction sessions in specific courses upon faculty request. They have also developed **[Student Learning Outcomes](#)** for selected courses and provide tools such as a **[Periodical/Journal Chart](#)** and **[Research Guides](#)** to support student understanding and research. These services are discussed in more detail under core component 2E.

Entering students who are members of a designated cohort enroll in an Interdisciplinary Studies course designed to provide them with additional support. These include the following, each linked to additional information **[here](#)**:

- IDST 110: The University Experience
- IDST 111: The University Student-Athlete
- IDST 112: International Cultural and Academic Transitions

## Course Placement & Test Proctoring

SMSU has required placements into key areas of math and English. Domestic students are placed based on guidelines from the system office. Multilingual students receive screening via Accuplacer exams to ensure their success in speaking/listening and writing/reading courses. SMSU follows all course placement guidelines from the system office and is aligned with [Multiple Measures](#) guidance. For mathematics placement, SMSU has followed the faculty recommendation not to use stand-alone high school GPA, which is an option given to each campus. DGSSC staff collaborate with faculty to review each student's record to evaluate course placement and then follow up with individual students who do not have a valid means for course placement on file. Those students can begin by taking developmental coursework or try to improve their course placement by sending in transcripts or taking the ACCUPLACER. Course placement is displayed to students in E-Services. Working with the Departments of English and Mathematics, the Center for International Education, and Registration, DGSSC staff screen students prior to the start of each semester to ensure that they are meeting the appropriate prerequisites and course placement for entry-level courses in their respective departments, including our EMLS (English for multi-language speakers) courses which are taken predominantly by our international students.

## Developmental and Corequisite Courses

Related to ensuring students are adequately prepared, SMSU is engaged in a Minnesota State initiative called [Math Pathways](#). This initiative has two primary parts: the creation and implementation of corequisite courses so that students may progress through developmental and primary courses concurrently, with the corequisite course providing additional instruction and support alongside the college-level course being taken in the same semester; and alignment across the system's two- and four-year institutions of baseline math courses needed for every major program.

SMSU has started a similar corequisite with EMLS courses, ensuring parity with the number of credits domestic students take when they are placed into developmental courses; this is ahead of any system-level requirement.

Selected academic programs have [special admissions requirements](#) designed to ensure proper preparation for continued study in the major. These include education, nursing, and social work.

### 3D.3

All students who have declared a major are assigned academic advisors in their program of study. Advising occurs as needed throughout the year, including on the designated Advising Day held each semester prior to registration. Academic advisors have access to the student's academic record via the [Interactive Degree Audit Report](#). Students may not register for courses until their assigned advisor provides them with an access code, which is given during the advising session.

Incoming students register with the advice of academic advisors via [New Mustang Day](#) programs where admitted students receive orientation to campus and meet with academic advisors from their expected major area. SMSU hosts eight admitted student days from April through August.

Advising capacity within a given department is a function of the numbers of majors and of full-time faculty. Even through the pandemic, SMSU has expanded the overall size of the faculty in response to existing instructional needs and to enrollment growth in specific areas. Additional staff hires have also expanded faculty advising capacity in two departments with many advisees. In Education, the director of advising, recruitment, and retention (started fall 2023) advises students and provides overall advising coordination that enables full-time faculty advisors to be more efficient and effective. Additionally, the director of assessment, accreditation, and licensure (started summer 2022) has taken over duties previously done as overload by full-time faculty, thus providing them with more time for advising. In a similar way, the director of social work field education (started spring 2024) provides both professional and academic advising as part of overall duties.

Led by the assistant director of student success, DGSSC supports academic advisors at SMSU by providing training to new advisors and ongoing professional development for returning advisors. This position also provides leadership through the [Academic Advising Support Committee](#) (AASC) formed in 2020 after researching similar committees and work groups from multiple peer and system institutions. AASC was created to address advising issues across campus, to highlight successful strategies and techniques currently being used, to share advising best practices, and to ensure that all advising stakeholders have a voice.

Additional advising support and leadership is provided by other staff positions, as described below.

ODI provides advising/co-advising with academic faculty advisors meeting with MPP students through the completion of their first year and with AOS students through completion of their second year. Students in each program are also supported by peer mentors and by the diverse programming described under core component 3B.

DGSSC staff members serve as academic advisors to undeclared and AA degree seeking students. Depending on the number of undeclared students, additional faculty within the McFarland Library and other departments on campus advise these students. Career Services provides additional support to help students select an academic major and/or minor.

All fully online students are assigned a faculty advisor at the point of admission through the Office of Online Learning. This timing helps to facilitate connections to faculty advisers immediately upon acceptance to the University. Online Learning also provides students with additional support in their initial transition to SMSU.

All undeclared and Liberal Arts students are invited to [Mustang Success Night](#), held during week three of the fall semester, so that they can participate in the student resource and major/minor fair. Undeclared students also receive a semester-long communication plan that

connects them with resources on campus and provides them with ideas and suggestions about how to explore different majors and careers.

Scaling Up College Completion Efforts for Student Success (SUCCESS) began as a three-year pilot program funded through Minnesota State and MDRC and is now fully supported by SMSU beginning AY25 as [Success @ Southwest](#). It provides students from historically underserved populations a coach with whom they meet twice a month for personalized coaching. Spring 2024 data show 147 active in the program including 66 who started in fall 2023 and 81 who are returning from previous semesters.

### **3D.4**

SMSU continues to enhance the infrastructure and resources necessary to support effective teaching and learning. These improvements have been accelerated in recent years due to some unanticipated factors, including the recent pandemic and the more recent decision by the University to decommission a building and lease it to local K-12 education agencies.

First, as was the case across the country, the pandemic greatly escalated the need for the University to rapidly expand its virtual teaching and learning infrastructure to continue serving students' learning needs even though on-campus instruction was greatly reduced. In addition, even as the pandemic has eased, it has served to greatly impact higher education delivery approaches. Specifically, the University continues to witness the need for an advanced technology infrastructure that can support multiple modes of learning including hybrid and other multi-modal formats.

The needed technology infrastructure expansion was supported by the allocation of federal COVID relief funding and a mix of other funding resources. Investments of federal funding alone in the university's technology infrastructure has exceeded \$1.7M since 2020. These investments have included the deployment of hybrid classroom technology and campus network enhancements that support both technology-enhanced and virtual learning capabilities. Other recent technology funding sources have been made available through such avenues as: 1) the University's membership in the [Southwest/West Central Higher Education Organization for Telecommunications and Technology](#), one of six regional consortia that comprise the Learning Network of Minnesota, and 2) Minnesota State System Leveraged Equipment funding, discussed in detail under core component 5B.4.

Second, the University recently decommissioned its Social Science building and has initiated a lease with the Marshall School District and a Marshall-based regional education service agency. This decision was made to increase classroom utilization as a prerequisite to applying for state bonding funds for a new facility project. The lease resulted in the reduction of 13 classrooms, many outfitted as "smart classrooms" even prior to the pandemic. As a result, the University has moved to outfit most of the remaining classrooms on campus that had not previously had technology capabilities with hybrid classroom capability. Also, the University has repurposed other spaces, including space previously used for racquetball courts since the early days of the University, as technology-enhanced classroom space.



Perhaps most importantly, at the direction of President Jayasuriya the University launched a new Center to support faculty seeking to offer online instruction. This initiative began before the pandemic upon the president's arrival in 2019. The [Center of Learning and Teaching](#) (COLT), described in detail under core component 3C, is a dedicated space created on the top floor of the library. COLT offers a series of professional development opportunities and resources focused on the integration of technology with teaching. It is primarily supported by both IT and Library personnel. Both a full-time IT staff member and a Graduate Assistant have their offices in COLT, which also provides dedicated meeting and webinar space.

## **Technology Infrastructure**

In terms of physical technology infrastructure, SMSU currently has 33 general classrooms including three lecture halls. Of these classrooms, all but one is technologically enhanced in some manner. The remaining classroom is being developed as a "model classroom" with state-of-the-art technology for use by the Education Department. Most classrooms are enabled for hybrid learning capabilities and multi-faceted presentation technologies including the ability for students to share their monitors to the class. Many classrooms have been specially enabled to support technology-enhanced active learning. There are four general-purpose computer labs suitable for instruction with 102 computers and another lab with 24 docking stations with monitors that can be used in conjunction with checkout laptops or student owned laptops. In addition, there are approximately 90 computer workstations and several discipline-specific special purpose labs across the campus. Students also have access to several study spaces, including four group study areas or "collabs" in the McFarland Library. Most meeting rooms on campus are also technology-enhanced with wireless display and web conferencing capabilities.

In recent years, extensive investments have been made in the campus network infrastructure. These investments have included deployment of a new wireless network system across the entire campus. Also, the University has completed the installation of a new optical fiber backbone to replace a previous optical fiber backbone installed in the 1990s. The new backbone has much greater capacity to support current and future networking service demands on campus.

Technology resources available to support teaching and learning also include a variety of software products including "cloud" services. The Minnesota State System manages several critical services available to all students and employees. These services include the Learning Management System Desire2Learn Brightspace, Zoom web conferencing, Kaltura media management, and Microsoft Office365 services. Office365 includes email, calendaring, Teams, the Office suite of applications (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, etc.) and cloud storage services. The University also contracts for the Adobe Cloud suite of services that is available on all university-managed computer workstations. Some academic programs support Adobe Cloud access for students on their own workstations through course fees. Also, some software products (e.g., SPSS, Maple) can be made virtually accessible to students to use on their own workstations. A product called Labstats is being deployed to support remote access for students to software licensed by the University. Information Technology Services has also implemented a short-term university-managed laptop checkout program. This program provides for a sponsored checkout for up to two weeks. The University also licenses several software products for all faculty to use

in their instructional activities. Such services include Respondus Monitor, SPSS, Hypothesis, and TurnItIn. In some cases, individual faculty or departments will procure licenses for specialized discipline-specific software including e-textbooks or even software to be installed on a single workstation for research.

## **Laboratories**

Most science laboratory spaces were renovated between 2010 and 2012. Since then, science faculty have placed emphasis on acquiring and updating select laboratory equipment. For example:

- 24 compound and 13 dissecting microscopes were acquired in 2022, all of which are Wi-Fi and camera enabled, thereby allowing images under the microscope to be projected to computers, tablets, and smartphones. These microscopes enhance student-student, student-instructor, and student-content interactions by better allowing accurate discussion of what is visualized; they also promote a more inclusive learning environment, as students with visual or other physical impairments who have difficulty using traditional microscopes can better engage with lab activities.
- An Anatomage Virtual Cadaver table was acquired in 2022. This table allows students to visualize anatomical features just as they would on a real cadaver. Students in the health-sciences can view and dissect structures on human cadavers, and students in zoology or general biology can view and virtually dissect several vertebrate specimens.
- A new UV/Vis Spectrometer is replacing instrumentation that is outdated and failing. This equipment is used in several chemistry courses, allowing students to analyze compounds that absorb UV or visible light
- The SMSU Planetarium is being updated with a new cove lighting system and a new industry-standard planetarium projection system (Digistar 7), providing a more polished and robust astronomical dataset. These updates will enhance the experience for students in astronomy courses, as well as K-12/public visitors that attend planetarium events throughout the year

A significant single-lab renovation has been completed for use in AY 2025. The renovated space in the Science and Math building (SM 169) is an active science laboratory, accommodating 24 students. The lab includes typical biology laboratory features such as student work benches, storage cabinetry, and sinks. Additionally, the lab has cutting-edge design features included in active learning classrooms, such as television monitors and associated technology that allows students to stream/project images they are viewing under the microscope onto a screen at their designated bench top. Used with the microscopes described earlier, this functionality allows for a more engaging and inclusive laboratory experience.

The SMSU exercise science program currently has one laboratory room (PE 211/212) where students gain hands-on experience by conducting their own research studies and by participating in and contributing to faculty research. The lab also serves as the SMSU Physical Therapy clinic, a pro bono clinic for college students. Exercise science students work under the direction of a Doctor of Physical Therapy and gain volunteer hours or professional practicum experience. The



lab holds ergometers, physiology testing equipment, wheelchair accessible equipment, physical therapy tables and equipment/supplies, and anatomical models.

The exercise science program also has a fitness center in PE 236/237. This space was renovated in the summer of 2023 to accommodate the Community Fitness program where seniors train clients in all areas of fitness after performing a fitness assessment and movement analysis. This new location provides ease of access for students, faculty, and clients to be all in one space. The exercise science program can also use the Dance Studio (PE 235) when available for labs requiring more space. The proximity of the PE gym also provides more lab space when these spaces are available.

### **Library Physical Space and Collections**

- The main (2nd) floor of the McFarland Library includes both university technology and library circulation services and houses the library's print journal collection. The university's Technology Resource Center is now in the library and began offering services there in July 2016. This has been a good partnership for the library and a well-located service for students needing technology assistance.
- The main floor offers both Macintosh and PC computers, three printers, a photocopier, a scanning station, study tables, and individual study spaces including six technology-enabled study pods and one group study room. Two walk-up COLLAB workspaces (collaborative workstations for groups supported with airtime technology) are also available on this floor.
- The third floor includes two computer classrooms equipped with 16 and 32 computers, presentation technologies, and instructor stations. When classrooms are not in use for instruction, computer labs are open for student use. Computer stations, two printers, a scanning station, study tables, and three group COLLAB study rooms are also available. The COLLAB rooms on this floor can be reserved online from the McFarland Library homepage. This floor also houses the Reference Collection and interlibrary loan services.
- The fourth floor holds the library's circulating book and media collections. Government Documents are cataloged by the Library of Congress, allowing them to be shelved by subject with the general collection. This floor is the designated quiet floor and has three group study rooms available.
- The fifth floor includes computer workstations, two printers, study tables, and one group COLLAB study room. Although not managed by the library, the Writing Center (a peer-tutoring service run by the English Department) is also housed on this floor as are two [archival](#) collections.
- In addition to the four-floor library, the library maintains the Education Curriculum Library, housed in the Deeann Griebel Student Success Center.
- Additional information about library staffing, services, and resources can be found [here](#).

### **Performance and Creative Spaces**

SMSU's theatre facilities give student directors, designers, actors, artisans, and technicians experience working in a traditional proscenium space (the Fine Arts Theatre) and in a flexible experimental space (the Black Box Theatre). The two theatres, plus the scene shop, costume

shop, and makeup rooms, foster creative work by students from many majors, applied to productions of classic and new works in a variety of genres and styles, as well as improvisational comedy, and special events on campus and in the community. The Fine Arts Theatre also serves as one of the primary performance locations for the music program with performances by all the bands as well as student recitals. The Black Box Theatre has also hosted some smaller music performances. The upper-level lobby of the SMSU Student Center as well as the Conference Center are also used on occasion for music program performances.

### **Off-Campus Clinical Sites**

The RN to BSN program partners with nursing students to locate prospective experiential nursing learning sites. Experiential nursing learning organizations/agencies/sites are primarily rural and urban, ranging from public health agencies and public schools to senior/assisted living settings, home care, hospice agencies, and academic centers such as health services, jail, and parish nursing, to name a few, and consist of over 150 public/community health organizations across Minnesota and the U.S.

The SMSU social work program requires a 440-hour practicum where students are placed in organizations to give them hands-on, experiential and professional experience to prepare for their careers. The practicum is set up by the program and the student to find a placement matching the student's career interest in social work and the program's need to meet accreditation standards for a practicum. The practicum placement organization must agree to a memorandum of agreement from SMSU and the Minnesota State System and contractual program requirements. Over the almost thirty years of the program's existence, the social work program has utilized hundreds of organizations, nonprofits, government and tribal agencies and university-based practicum placements all over the country.

The School of Education Teacher Preparation Program maintains a list of approximately 200 E-12 school partners that serve as formal placement partnerships for clinical experiences, which include field experiences, student teaching, and practicum experiences.

### **Museums and Collections**

SMSU maintains museums and collections including:

- The Natural History Museum focusing on plants and animals, particularly those native to Minnesota
- The SMSU Planetarium offering an accurate view of deep space for students and school groups
- The Archer Daniels Midland/SMSU Environmental Learning Center giving visitors a compact area in which to observe a variety of prairie environments and wildlife
- The greenhouse used for biology, agronomy, and environmental science courses and research, also open to the public and popular with school tours.
- The Museum of Indigenous Americans, the newest museum on campus, displays regional artifacts and others collected throughout the Americas. It is currently awaiting renovation of a new campus location, to be completed in AY 2025. Both museums will then be in

proximity to each other and to the planetarium and greenhouse, making them more accessible for off-campus groups.

## Sources

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- 3.024\_Center for International Education
- 3.054\_HR Ex. 14 Faculty Professional Development Day Agenda
- 3.067\_Deann Griebel Student Success Center
- 3.069\_Last Date of Attendance (LDA) Grades
- 3.070\_Early Alert Procedures
- 3.071\_Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Counseling
- 3.072\_Supporting Student Basic Needs
- 3.073\_United Way 211
- 3.074\_bucketlist67lettersize2023\_2sided
- 3.075\_successtipsposter2022\_1000
- 3.076\_First Six Weeks Checklist
- 3.077\_Resource Guide 2023
- 3.078\_Mustangs Connect Newsletters
- 3.079\_Meet Your Advisor
- 3.080\_Mustang Success Night 2023
- 3.081\_Finish Strong Week 2024
- 3.082\_Exit Procedure
- 3.083\_Honors Program
- 3.084\_Residence Life
- 3.085\_Career Services
- 3.086\_Faculty Staff Assistance
- 3.087\_Mental Health Counseling Center
- 3.088\_Year-Round Screenings
- 3.089\_Fresh Check Day
- 3.090\_Student Health Services
- 3.091\_Veterans Resources
- 3.092\_Accessibility Services
- 3.093\_Mustang Market
- 3.094\_Interdisciplinary Tutoring
- 3.095\_Tutor
- 3.096\_Supplemental Instruction
- 3.097\_Writing Center
- 3.098\_Math Learning Center
- 3.099\_Library Strategic Priorities Plan
- 3.100\_Student Learning Outcomes
- 3.101\_Periodical Journal Chart
- 3.102\_Library Research Guides
- 3.103\_Interdisciplinary Studies Cohorts

- 3.104\_Course Placement Guides
- 3.105\_Minnesota State-Math Pathways
- 3.106\_Program Admission Requirements
- 3.107\_Marcia Mustang Audit
- 3.108\_New Mustang Days
- 3.109\_Academic Advising Support Committee
- 3.110\_Success @ Southwest
- 3.111\_SHOT
- 3.112\_Library Collections
- 3.113\_Library Staffing and Resources

## **3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary**

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

### **Summary**

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SMSU provides a current and rigorous high-quality education. The Liberal Education Program (LEP) provides the foundation for general education at SMSU and the core intellectual inquiry areas for all undergraduate degrees. LEP provides students with a foundational, general education across the fundamental domains of human knowledge. The curriculum approval processes at SMSU ensure currency and an appropriate level of student performance. The separation of curriculum committees by degree level aids in differentiating learner expectations. As required by contract, faculty are evaluated on a regular basis according to five criteria. Faculty describe their scholarly and creative work in their Professional Development Plans and Reports. Evidence of scholarship is further documented in departmental annual reports. The SMSU Undergraduate Research Conference is a significant annual campus event that highlights the scholarship and creative work completed by SMSU students under the direction of faculty supervisors. SMSU offers a wide range of student support services aligned with its commitment to provide a student-centered education that equips graduates to meet society's needs. SMSU offers multiple opportunities for students to grow their intercultural awareness and experience human and cultural diversity so that they may become engaged citizens in their local and global communities.

### **Sources**

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*There are no sources.*

## 4 - Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

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

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

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The institution ensures the quality of its educational offerings.

1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews and acts upon the findings.
2. The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning, or relies on the evaluation of responsible third parties.
3. The institution has policies that ensure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.
4. The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It ensures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.
5. The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.
6. The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution ensures that the credentials it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission.

### Argument

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#### 4A.1

SMSU employs processes to evaluate program quality. As specified by SMSU Policy [A-004](#) and Procedure [A-004.1](#), program reviews are performed on a five-year rotating cycle for all academic programs, except those with specialized accreditation, which follow their outside accreditation review schedule, as discussed below under 4A.5. The Dean's webpage posts the [schedule](#) for program reviews through AY 2034.

The program review includes analysis of curriculum, assessment, students and faculty, online learning, service to the campus, and other relevant aspects of the program's activities. Faculty examine strengths and weaknesses of their program and consider potential improvements and future directions. An outside reviewer evaluates the self-study, interviews students and faculty,

reviews the physical resources available to the program, and writes the external review. [Sample](#) program reviews are provided as evidence to demonstrate adherence to this process.

Program faculty then consult with their academic dean to develop a plan for the next five years that describes strategies to implement resulting from the self-study process. The academic dean discusses this plan with the provost to provide support, as appropriate and feasible, for academic priorities emerging from the periodic review process. Examples of program review recommendations and actions are linked [here](#).

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. [Annual reports](#) from each college and from the McFarland Library are available on the Deans' Office website dating back to 2015. Further discussion of program reviews and annual reports can be found under core component 4B.

#### 4A.2

The SMSU transcript includes all grades earned. Transferred credit and credit by external assessment appear separately because credits earned do not count in the cumulative grade point average. Credit for prior learning is normally assigned to specific courses and appears without special designation. Evaluations by third parties, besides those used for credit for prior learning, are used in determining transfer credits from international institutions and military agencies.

SMSU adheres to the following policies and procedures in the transcript evaluations it performs:

- Minnesota State Board Policy (BP): 3.29, 3.35
- Minnesota State System Procedure (SPR): 3.29.1, 3.35.1, 3.35.2, 3.35.3
- SMSU Policy: A-034, A-029, A-050
- SMSU Procedure: A-050.1

#### 4A.3

SMSU adheres to Minnesota State board policy, system procedures, and university policies for evaluating all types of transfer credit. SMSU employs a full-time transfer specialist, reporting to the registrar, who ensures policy compliance. Special consideration is given to policies pertaining to international, higher education, military education, credit for prior learning, and credit for examination. Additionally, accreditation of the originating institution is considered. In cases where policy is not clear, faculty are consulted either by the transfer specialist or by the student through the transfer credit appeal process.

Applicable policies and procedures are as follows:

- [BP 3.21](#)
- [SPR 3.21.1](#)
- SMSU Policy: [A-052](#)
- SMSU Procedure: [A-052.1](#)

#### 4A.4

SMSU ensures courses and programs maintain college-level rigor and quality through processes and policies about curriculum design, learning outcomes, student support services, and highly qualified faculty.

#### **Curriculum, Course Descriptions, Prerequisites, and Learning Outcomes**

As an institution within the Minnesota State system, SMSU follows system-level policies and procedures ([BP 3.36](#); [SPR 3.36.1](#)). 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 the 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 (SMSU Policy [A-001](#); Procedures [A-001.1](#) and [A-001.2](#)).

College Now, the SMSU concurrent enrollment program, 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. The majority of SMSU College Now courses do not have any pre-requisites listed. For the math and English courses, the on-campus sections typically look at test scores from a nationally standardized test for pre-requisites. If scores are not available, students can utilize a high school GPA and instructor approval to allow enrollment into a course. Because many of the concurrent enrollment students do not have test scores available, the College Now program utilizes the GPA and instructor approval requirement for these courses.

College Now has several measures in place to ensure parity and equity in rigor, learning outcomes, and standards of achievement between on-campus and concurrent enrollment sections. The faculty mentor assigned to that course will review and approve the required syllabus before the course starts. This syllabus must include the required learning outcomes, which are the same learning outcomes listed for on-campus courses. Grading structures are also required on the syllabus and correspond to those used for on-campus sections.

Samples of student exams, assignments, and quizzes are regularly submitted to SMSU faculty mentors. Mentors review these assignments to confirm equivalency in grading and return them to instructors with comments, direction, and feedback as needed. This process helps to ensure that assessments are graded like those completed for on-campus sections. In most disciplines, exam questions are written by SMSU faculty and are equivalent to those used in on-campus sections.

The SMSU faculty mentor, in collaboration with the concurrent enrollment instructor, determines all final grades. The faculty mentor is the faculty of record for College Now courses and is responsible to enter grades into the SMSU system. Submission of final grades to the SMSU system by faculty mentors constitutes acknowledgement by faculty that concurrent enrollment learning outcomes and standards of achievement are equivalent to on-campus.



## **Access to Learning Resources**

In terms of maintaining authority over access to learning resources, several learning resources offered by SMSU are in partnership with Minnesota State including the D2L Brightspace (D2L) learning management platform, which is the common platform offered at all Minnesota State campuses. The system office 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.

The extensive student support services SMSU provides are described in detail under core component 3D. All learners, including online and College Now students, have access to the many resources available through SMSU. The library, Writing Center, and tutoring services are all available online for students to use throughout the year. Students can access the library [online](#) and utilize library guides to help navigate the system. They also have access to librarians through a 24/7 chat service. Information literacy instruction is also provided to College Now classes upon request. The [Writing Center](#) helps students identify a topic, organize ideas, and learn how to cite appropriately and use proper grammar and mechanics. Online appointments and e-tutoring are available for all students. Additional tutoring is also available online by contacting the [Deeann Griebel Student Success Center](#). Any students interested in using on-campus services can do so.

SMSU also provides services for College Now students with disabilities and IEPs at high school. Accommodations may vary from what is available at the high school level. If a student taking a College Now course in high school would like consideration of accommodation for a course, the request and supporting documentation must be submitted to the College Now Office.

## **Faculty Qualifications**

SMSU is committed to recruiting and hiring high-quality faculty and staff. As described under core component 3C, 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.

Regarding faculty qualifications for College Now, SMSU programs and departments retain authority over concurrent enrollment instructors. As the faculty of record on a College Now course, the SMSU faculty member is ultimately responsible for the course. For this reason, the SMSU program or department is part of the approval process for concurrent enrollment instructors.

#### 4A.5

SMSU has several programs that undergo review by a specialized accreditation or licensing entity. Details about the status and most recent accreditation review for each of the following programs can be found [here](#).

- Social Work: Council on Social Work Education
- Nursing: Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education
- Music: National Association of Schools of Music
- Business: International Accreditation Council for Business Education
- Exercise Science: Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs
- College Now: National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships
- All School of Education Licensing Programs: Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board

#### 4A.6

SMSU evaluates the success of its graduates. One important measure is the employment rate of SMSU graduates. Information from the [2022 graduate survey](#) had an 88% response rate showing that 10.9% of all graduates reported continuing their education beyond SMSU. Of the remaining students reporting, 96.6% indicated being employed in a field related to their major. The majority of those graduates (87%) were working in Minnesota. Annual employment reports are public and are published on the [Career Services](#) webpage.

At the program level, faculty evaluate the success of their graduates in a number of ways. Programs receive information from Career Services identifying the place of employment and job title or, for those continuing their education, the institution and field of study. Programs also learn about their students' success by administering alumni surveys and other assessments, by including graduates as members of their advisory councils, and by staying in contact with them in more informal ways. Through this information, faculty are able to determine the effectiveness of the preparation provided and to make improvements where needed. Information about graduates is typically included in the program review report (see [here](#) for some examples).

SMSU also gathers information about the success of graduates through its outreach to alumni. The Alumni Association regularly sends out electronic newsletters to 15,700 alumni. Each newsletter contains a request to provide updated contact, employment, and other life event announcements. An alumni magazine is sent out to nearly 20,000 people twice each year. The magazine also contains a request for updated alumni information. Development staff attempted to contact 18,909 alumni by phone, text, social media, and postal mail in 2023-2024 to request updated contact and employment information and to request donations. All data obtained by the Alumni Association and Development staff is stored in the SMSU Alumni Database. The alumni giving percentage was 5% in FY 2023, which is consistent with other public institutions in the state.

## Sources

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- 4.01\_A-004
- 4.02\_A-004.1
- 4.03\_ALS and BEPS Program Rev 22-23
- 4.04\_Example Program Reviews
- 4.05\_Responses to Program Review
- 4.06\_Annual Reports 22-23
- 4.07\_BP 3.29
- 4.08\_BP 3.35
- 4.09\_SPR 3.29.1
- 4.10\_SPR 3.35.1
- 4.11\_SPR 3.35.2
- 4.12\_SPR 3.35.3
- 4.13\_A-034
- 4.14\_A-029
- 4.15\_A-050
- 4.16\_A-050.1
- 4.17\_BP 3.21
- 4.18\_SPR 3.21.1
- 4.19\_A-052
- 4.20\_A-052.1
- 4.21\_BP 3.36
- 4.22\_SPR 3.36.1
- 4.23\_A-001
- 4.24\_A-001.1
- 4.25.1\_Library Guides
- 4.25\_A-001.2
- 4.27\_Writing Center
- 4.28\_Deann Griebel Student Success Center
- 4.29\_Specialized Accreditation
- 4.30\_Annual Employment Report 2022
- 4.31.1\_Success of Graduates
- 4.31\_Career Services

## 4.B - Core Component 4.B

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

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

### Argument

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See [List of Acronyms](#) for clarification.

#### 4B.1

SMSU faculty and staff engage in ongoing assessment to fulfill the university's mission and meet campus-wide and programmatic learning outcomes. Assessment occurs at several levels with information from one level feeding another. The university-wide Committee for Institutional Assessment (CIA) plays a pivotal role in assessment processes. In addition, the Liberal Education Committee (LEC) supports the central role of the CIA. Academic departments and programs engage in continuous assessment of programmatic student learning outcomes and of Minnesota Transfer Curriculum (MnTC)/Liberal Education Program (LEP) student learning outcomes. In addition to academic assessment, offices within Student Affairs assess student services and programming provided within their areas.

The CIA coordinates, assists, and supports a university-wide program of evaluation and feedback to enhance institutional effectiveness. To this end, the committee is charged with

- fostering a university-wide culture of assessment
- developing, implementing, and reviewing a comprehensive university assessment plan
- articulating and disseminating assessment results to the campus community that serve to enhance the university's ability to achieve its goals and outcomes
- collaborating with the Liberal Education Committee and Strategic Planning Committee on all aspects of assessment related to campus infrastructure
- supporting ongoing HLC accreditation efforts

The CIA committee membership structure includes the campus assessment coordinator, select members of administration, faculty from each campus department, campus employees selected by position, and representatives from other collective bargaining units. [Committee members](#) serve as liaisons to the academic programs on campus, guiding programs in their assessment processes. [Liaison teams](#) of one to two committee members coordinate support for assigned

academic programs. Each academic program has designated a [Program Assessment Leader \(PAL\)](#) who works with the liaison teams and the assessment coordinator to ensure programs engage in ongoing assessment.

The processes and methodologies used to assess academic student learning are outlined in the [Campus Assessment Master Plan \(CAMP\)](#). The current CAMP was written in 2020 and is scheduled to be revised in AY 2025.

## Academic Assessment

As outlined in the CAMP, each academic program creates a [Plan for Assessment of Student Learning \(PASL\)](#), collects and analyzes student assessment data at the course level, and reports findings in the [Report on Assessment of Student Learning \(RASL\)](#).

The PASL is the collective assessment plan for each academic program. In the PASL, academic program members have identified and developed programmatic student learning outcomes (SLOs) that guide curriculum and instruction. Programmatic SLOs are mapped to courses so that introduction, development, and high-level understanding of knowledge and skills are scaffolded across the program of study. Programs also identify which of the LEP learning outcomes align with the programmatic SLOs and illustrate these relationships via an alignment matrix. The assessment plan follows a timeline for assessing these learning outcomes; most academic programs follow a three- or four-year assessment plan that assesses SLOs and LEP goals on a rotating basis. Furthermore, the PASL requires programs to identify assessment methods and appropriate artifacts that will be used.

Each academic program submits a RASL every two years covering the previous two-year data collection period. The RASL identifies the SLOs and LEP learning outcomes that were evaluated in the program's self-designated timeline along with the metrics used for evaluation. Academic programs identify the improvements or changes to instruction, pedagogy, curriculum, course sequencing, and assessment methods they will make or have made based on data.

The RASL form and processes have been continuously reviewed and updated based on campus needs. One such recent change was the addition of a question asking programs how their recent assessment work has informed their discussions regarding equity. The question is meant to prompt continuing discussions related to Equity2030 goals and to tie those goals to potential action at a programmatic level in course design, curriculum, and pedagogy.

In support of the CIA, the LEC also contributes to assessment processes. The LEC has an established [rotational schedule](#) for each MnTC/LEP goal area to be assessed. In the year immediately before a goal's assessment, the LEC conducts a curriculum review process to ensure each goal-designated course continues to meet a substantial portion of the MnTC Goal area's learning outcomes. As a refinement of this curriculum review process to collect assessment data from goal areas consistently and efficiently, beginning in fall 2024 any course being reviewed must indicate the LEP assessment data that will be provided.

Each summer, the assessment coordinator completes a report called the [Assessment on Campus: A Report and Evaluation](#) (ACRE) that outlines accomplishments and summarizes data reported for the year. The ACRE offers data on assessment reporting compliance, programmatic assessment, and LEP assessment data drawn from LEP alignment of SLOs. The data from the ACRE is shared each year on Assessment Day.

[Assessment Day](#) is held each year in the spring semester. Assessment Day was established in 2012 to further develop a culture of assessment and offer an opportunity for community-building around assessment topics and needs. It is a day where there are no classes and departments utilize the time in a variety of ways to progress in their assessment work. Examples include conducting direct student assessment, reviewing programmatic assessment updates, and analyzing assessment data. In 2021 and 2022, the focus for Assessment Day was utilizing the Equity by Design data provided to all programs, to analyze and determine if equity gaps exist for students of color, first generation students, and Pell eligible students. Departments discussed best practices for narrowing identified gaps and reported to the CIA about their discussions. In 2023, the focus was on best practices in writing the RASL and reviewing alignment of LEP outcomes to programmatic outcomes.

### **Student Affairs and Co-Curricular Assessment**

Student Affairs supports students' needs holistically through the variety of programming offered. Offices within student affairs conduct ongoing assessment of services provided and include their analysis in [annual reports](#). For each activity assessed, analysis describes the methods/measures used, the findings identified, and the conclusions based on these findings, including reflection on changes needed to improve outcomes.

Embedded in these annual reports is information that demonstrates assessment of co-curricular activities. To address differing understandings on campus of what constitutes a co-curricular activity, SMSU has developed the following definition for this term: Co-curricular activities are experiences or programs that happen outside the classroom with the intent to have student learning that complements the formal curriculum. A given activity qualifies as co-curricular if the answer to each of the following questions is affirmative:

- Is the intent to have student learning?
- Do students know learning is involved?
- Does it happen outside the classroom?

For their [AY 2024 annual reports](#), student affairs offices were directed to focus on activities that meet this definition and to articulate and assess the intended learning outcomes of each one chosen. The purpose of this emphasis is to build understanding of the intentional focus on student learning as a component of a formal co-curricular activity and to foster proactive planning in the design of new activities. This revised approach will allow for broadening co-curricular reporting beyond student affairs to include activities such as the Undergraduate Research Conference, which has typically been reported on in academic department annual reports.

The AY 2024 reports provided from all areas within student affairs demonstrate increased attention to articulating and assessing student learning and to making data-informed changes. For their AY 2025 annual reports, student affairs will be asked to continue specific assessments of formal co-curricular activities, as defined by SMSU, and to include the broader assessments done within each office.

## 4B.2

### Improving Student Learning through Academic Assessment

SMSU academic departments and programs provide evidence of using assessment to improve student learning through three main avenues: 1) annual department reports, 2) five-year program reviews, and 3) biannual RASL reporting.

As identified under core component 4A.1, assessment data can be found in department annual reports and program reviews. Department chairs submit an annual report to the academic deans to capture information that will be useful for planning, program reviews, promotional activities and fundraising, and accreditation. One component of the annual report instructions is to include a description of this area's assessment plan and how the results have impacted or will impact teaching and learning. Examples of this analysis can be found [here](#). Academic programs also complete five-year self-studies for program reviews; these self-study narratives include reporting on programmatic assessment data. Upon completion of an external review, administration and faculty develop recommendations based upon the review and the data generated. Examples of the use of assessment data in program reviews can be found [here](#).

As described in 4B.1, each academic program submits a Report on Assessment of Student Learning (RASL) to the CIA every other year. The RASL template has two main sections: Programmatic Assessment and LEP Assessment. For each section, the RASL template asks the program to indicate the SLOs addressed, the assessment aligned to the SLO, key findings for each SLO, recommendations from findings, and whether the program has enacted recommendations from those findings. Examples of recent RASLs can be found [here](#).

SMSU has identified categories within which recommendations from programmatic assessment should fall. These include: 1) identifying baselines and benchmarks, 2) monitoring learning trends, 3) improving assessment, 4) changing instruction or changing pedagogy, 5) changing curriculum, and 6) improving learning of future students. The following shows the percentage of recommendations for each category.

<b>Recommendation Type</b>	<b>AY 2022</b>	<b>AY 2023</b>	<b>AY 2024</b>
Baseline/Benchmark	7.1%	0.0%	7.1%
Monitor Learning	28.5%	75.0%	28.5%

Improve Assessment	42.8%	25.0%	28.5%
Change Instruction or Pedagogy	57.1%	41.7%	35.7%
Change Curriculum	14.2%	25.0%	21.4%
Improve Future Student Learning	28.5%	33.3%	35.7%

Recommendations pulled from ACRE reports over the past three academic years can be found [here](#). The types of recommendations shift as programs move through the assessment cycle. Specific examples of recommendations from programs are outlined in the ACRE. The above data include recommendations for both undergraduate and graduate programs.

### Improving Student Learning through Student Affairs Assessment

As demonstrated in the annual reports referenced previously, student affairs offices routinely monitor their services to make improvements that help students succeed in their academic journeys and help the University provide better support. Selected examples include the following:

- Through the Office of Accessibility Services (AS) assessment, it was determined that improved access to services was needed. Early in 2023, feedback from students and families indicated barriers such as inconsistent office hours, unpredictable response time, and inconsistent application of the ADA Law. In response, consistent availability and office hours were implemented, and the office is now present on all recruiting and registration days. The number of students supported by AS increased from 23 in December 2022 to 92 in July 2023. As of July 2024, there were 225 students impacted by the Office of Accessibility Services.
- After a thorough review of the test proctoring request process in AS, it was determined that the 21-step process was challenging for students. Therefore, the process was paired down to [three simple steps](#). From this change, the number of students that requested test proctoring after the new process was implemented increased by 30%.
- In an additional example, the Mustang Market consistently collects student survey data. This [survey data](#) showed overwhelming positive responses supporting the impact and need for the program. Due to the program's [demand](#), the Mustang Market expanded availability and increased the volume of products.

As described previously, student affairs offices involved with co-curricular programs and experiences conduct assessment to determine the effectiveness of the program or activity and to inform them of necessary changes. Selected examples include the following:

- The Deeann Griebel Student Success Center coordinates the Supplemental Instruction (SI) program. In SI, learning outcomes are tailored to the courses being supported. SI



assessment data demonstrates that the SI methods resulted in lower DFW rates for those courses. The SI assessment data also helped them determine that the SI student leaders needed additional support, leading them to require SI leaders to complete a training program to support College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA) guidelines.

- The Mustang Market collaborated with a [SOCI 315](#) class in fall 2023 as a client for the students' semester-long research project. This project culminated in recommendation report presentations to administrators about a variety of research questions related to the Mustang Market's viability, needs, and potential improvements.

A complete description of changes made to improve co-curricular activities based on assessment data, as presented in the AY 2024 annual reports for student affairs, can be found [here](#).

### **4B.3**

SMSU is committed to best practices in assessment. The processes and methodologies used to assess academic student learning are indicated above under core component 4B.1. Faculty and other relevant members actively engage in various assessment processes and professional development. These include structured involvement in the Committee on Institutional Assessment (with representation from every academic department and student affairs), annual Assessment Day activities, routine work of departments and programs, and presentations at Professional Development Day. This variety of ongoing opportunities helps to ensure that the culture of assessment is normalized and recognized as essential for student success.

#### **Participation in Committee Structures and Collaboration**

As described in 4B.1 and noted above, the CIA is a primary avenue for faculty and staff to engage in assessment planning and oversight. The CIA consists of representatives from every academic department as well as several from Student Affairs and other bargaining units. This structure allows for participation and for sharing assessment information and protocols broadly across campus. The CIA meets generally twice a month ([minutes](#)), and committee members are assigned for two-year terms. The CIA collaborates with the LEC on assessment issues. Given the LEC's position representing the university-wide, cross-program objectives of the LEP, this collaboration broadens participants' perspectives (see sample LEC [minutes](#) for assessment topics discussed). The assessment coordinator sits on both committees to help connect the efforts of both bodies.

#### **Assessment Day**

Assessment Day at SMSU is well attended. Faculty typically attend a morning session as a group to discuss the needs of the campus as a whole and focus on an important topic. They then have the rest of the day to engage in assessment work determined by their department or program. Assessment Day is a duty day, and all faculty are expected to participate with their programs. Different groups utilize the time in a variety of ways with some engaging in direct assessment of students and others updating their assessment plan or analyzing data. Each program submits an Assessment Day report to indicate how they spent the allotted time. Examples of Assessment Day reports from 2022-2024 can be found [here](#).

### **Professional Development Days**

Professional Development Days, held on duty days before classes begin, offer opportunities for faculty and staff to engage further with assessment topics. Faculty and staff, and sometimes students training as RAs, attend the morning sessions, which usually are themed around an identified development need. Afternoons consist of concurrent sessions delivered by faculty and staff presenters who have responded to a call for proposals related to the day's theme. In this way, expertise is shared, and connections are built across offices and programs. While assessment could be the specific topic of a session ([agendas](#)), many sessions—for example sessions on culturally responsive pedagogy—build on needs identified from assessment. Faculty apply what they learn to improve student learning in their courses and in their interactions with students.

### **Programmatic and LEP Assessment Participation**

The structure of the assessment collection process and the culture of assessment built at SMSU facilitate participation and input. When one program shares a best practice, that information is brought to the CIA meeting via the program's liaison report. Those best practices are in turn shared with other programs that are perhaps experiencing challenges. This team approach to assessment has led SMSU to be successful in creating a culture of assessment and ultimately increasing student success.

#### *Assessment Reporting Compliance*

RASLs are due September 15 for programs scheduled to submit. A fall due date was implemented to give programs time to analyze results from the late spring Assessment Day. However, the CIA continues to accept RASLs throughout the year and into the next if reporting has been delayed. RASL report data indicates the assessment health of the institution by showing compliance with academic assessment reporting and connection to LEP assessment measures. While the ACRE reports which programs completed the RASL during the academic year assigned, the compliance statistics below include submissions made after the academic year and are more complete.

<b>Academic Year</b>	<b>Compliance</b>
2020	74%
2021	78%
2022	83%
2023	89%

2024	70% (in progress)
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These rates of compliance demonstrate broad faculty engagement in assessment processes. The CIA will continue to follow up with programs who have not yet submitted for AY 2024.

### **College Now Assessment Engagement**

As described in core component 4A.4, the College Now program uses multiple points of review to ensure [parity](#) between dual credit courses and on-campus courses. Any changes to College Now courses are predicated on the changes made to on-campus courses. NACEP accreditation requires paired assessment tools for each discipline. This linkage ensures that College Now students are held to the same standards of learning and achievement as those expected of students in on-campus sections. Assessment of College Now student achievement is conducted by programs in concert with their ongoing, routine assessment of courses. Examples include art, for which students create a portfolio of their coursework that is reviewed just as it is for on-campus students. In communication studies and English, samples of student work are included in department-wide assessment, where faculty grade student work (both College Now and on-campus) anonymously using a campus-wide rubric.

Strong participation by SMSU faculty and high school faculty is embedded in the structure of, and commitment to, College Now. The College Now program hosts an annual College Now Summer [Workshop](#) that has consistently strong participation by SMSU and high school faculty (876 attendees over the past five summers). This workshop focuses on new instructor orientation and returning teacher professional development sessions. During these sessions, SMSU faculty mentors review curriculum and learning outcomes, introduce syllabus updates, and conduct assessment activities with concurrent enrollment instructors. In addition, the College Now program ensures parity in the assessment of student learning through yearly course syllabi reviews, continuous communication with concurrent enrollment instructors, faculty mentor site visits, and periodic grading reviews by faculty mentors.

### **Sources**

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- 4.32.1\_CIA Members 2023-2024
- 4.32.2\_Liaison and PAL List 23\_24
- 4.32\_List of Acronyms
- 4.33\_SMSU CAMP 2021
- 4.34\_PASL Directions and Examples
- 4.35.1\_LEP Assessment Rotation
- 4.35\_SMSU RASL Form\_24
- 4.36\_SMSU Assessment for Campus Report and Evaluation 2023\_2024
- 4.37\_Assessment Day Itinerary 2024
- 4.38\_Student Affairs Annual Reports
- 4.39.1\_Test Proctoring Request Form

- 4.39.2\_Mustang Market Survey Data
- 4.39.3\_Mustang Market Data
- 4.39.4\_Mustang Market Survey Presentation
- 4.39\_Student Affairs Co-curricular Assessment
- 4.40.1\_Co-Curricular Improvements Based on Assessment
- 4.40\_Annual Report Assessment Examples
- 4.41\_Program Review Assessment Examples
- 4.42.1\_CIA Minutes
- 4.42.2\_LEC Minutes
- 4.42\_RASL Examples
- 4.43.1\_Assessment Day Reports
- 4.43.2\_PDD Agendas
- 4.43.3\_CN Statements of Equivalency
- 4.43\_ACRE Recommendations
- 4.44\_Summer Workshop Schedule

## 4.C - Core Component 4.C

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The institution pursues educational improvement through goals and strategies that improve retention, persistence and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.

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

### Argument

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#### 4C.1

SMSU has established goals for enrollment, persistence, and completion. As it relates to measures, SMSU utilizes the Minnesota State system definitions for retention, persistence, and completion.

- 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.
- Persistence is the percentage 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.
- The completion definition is the percentage 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.

Until the most recent academic year, SMSU had continued to use the 70% retention goal used for the previous strategic plan. The retention goal for the 2022 cohort was 70% and SMSU achieved 69.5%. Based on this good performance, SMSU set a goal of 73% for the 2023 new student cohort. The fall 2024 [10th Day report](#) indicates that goal has been met with retention at 73.4%. To achieve this goal, SMSU has continued to invest in student persistence initiatives. One of those investments has been SMSU's participation in the SUCCESS grant program, described under core component 3D, that has shown positive results.

Regarding goals in other areas, SMSU had long been guided by accountability metrics conveyed from the Minnesota State system. Between 2019 and 2020 Minnesota State moved away from defined goals and moved toward a structure that looked more at comparisons to SMSU's Minnesota State system university group. The focus looked more at how SMSU compared and how SMSU was working on closing any gaps or improving on any areas of excellence. Those measures have grown to include work on Minnesota System Equity 2030 efforts to eliminate achievement gaps. The setting of definitive numeric targets has been eschewed in favor of developing strategies and tactics aimed at eliminating gaps, benefiting students, and accomplishing continuous improvement. The specific objective for Equity 2030 is to eliminate the measured retention, persistence, and completion gaps by race, Pell eligibility, and first-generation status. As discussed below, SMSU analyzes and responds to data as it seeks to achieve this goal.

#### 4C.2

The Data Management/Institutional Research Office (DMIR) collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence, and degree completion. This information is reported on the SMSU [Disclosures](#) page.

The currently posted retention data is as follows:

- The fall 2022 Federal Cohort (full-time/first-time) retention rate continued a post-pandemic increase to 69.5%. That is an improvement from an historic average of 67% and several points higher than pandemic cohorts of fall 2020 and fall 2021. Domestic student retention was 69.8% for the fall 2022 Federal Cohort. Retention for students of color was below those figures at 60.7% for fall 2022.
- Pell Eligible student retention was 62.6%. Students identified as first-generation had a retention rate of 62.5%.
- New fall Entering Cohorts have averaged a fall to 1st spring retention of 87.1% pre-pandemic and the fall 2022 cohort was in line with that average at 87.3% (again above pandemic cohorts of 2020 and 2021). Fall 2023 fall to spring retention is in line as well at 87.2%.
- Overall retention for transfer students was 71.3% for the fall 2022 cohort. Part-time transfer retention was 68.2%.

The fall 2024 [10th Day report](#) shows further improvement in overall and cohort-specific retention, with equity gaps closing substantially for first generation, Pell eligible, and students of color. For fall 2024, retention for these groups stands at 71.6% (first generation—a 5.3% gap compared to non first generation), 72.4% (Pell eligible—4.1% gap), and 69.9% (students of color—4.5% gap). Notably, each of these rates now exceeds the 10-year overall average SMSU retention rate of 67%.

The currently posted graduation and transfer rate data is as follows:

- After a dip in completion during the pandemic, the AY 2023 Federal Cohort completion (fall cohort 2017) improved to 44.4%. The four-year transfer out rate for the fall 2017

cohort was 15.8%. The overall success rate for the fall 2017 cohort (including ALL enrolled, transfers and completions via the National Student Clearinghouse) was 80.0%.

- Transfer student completion improved to 57.5% for AY 2023.

The DMIR also provides cohort-specific and program-level retention, persistence, and completion data. Beginning summer 2016, DMIR began posting retention data specific to each program. In fall 2023 DMIR also began posting completion data by program. The reports provide program data for Federal Cohort students and transfer students. Due to ADA accessibility concerns, SMSU is in transition from deploying these and other datasets via the web to other routes. These changes are being made now with the goal of being completed early in AY 2025. This process is made more complex by also transitioning to the new system-wide CRM, which will ultimately enhance data reporting capabilities.

In addition to these data postings, SMSU deploys retention, persistence, and completion data in other ways (i.e. spreadsheets, databases, reports, 3<sup>rd</sup> party software, CRM software). Further, SMSU has access to system-gathered and system-managed data. SMSU DMIR pulls from those data systems and provides raw and analyzed data daily. The University has also acquired additional licenses for deploying data via Power BI, which will increase capacity in this area.

Recently, through a system wide launch in October 2023, Minnesota State has made widely available a reporting tool called the Equity Scorecard. This Microsoft Power Business Intelligence (Power BI) environment is designed for institutions to develop awareness of disparity patterns and equity gaps, which is critical for improving equity, diversity, and inclusion across institutions. The strategic aim of the Equity Scorecard is to encourage and foster institutional change through data-informed decision making to address disparities and close equity gaps.

The Equity Scorecard focuses on six (6) Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):

- KPI 1: Student Success
- KPI 2: Compositional Diversity
- KPI 3: Employee Retention and Development
- KPI 4: Supplier Diversity
- KPI 5: Equity Strategy and Action (in development)
- KPI 6: Campus Climate (in development)

**KPI 1** includes retention, persistence, and completion data by race, Pell eligibility, and first-generation status for entering cohorts from 2017 through 2022. Data for SMSU show that some disparities in fall-to-fall retention exist within the fall 2022 entering cohort. For Hispanic students (72 enrolled), the gap currently stands at 5.6% when compared to white students (450 enrolled). The gap for Pell eligible students (270 enrolled) is 7.4% and for first-generation students (133 enrolled) is 9.6%.

To collect and analyze information about students who choose not to return to the institution, the Deann Griebel Student Success Center (DGSSC) oversees a multi-step [exit procedure](#). The procedure is reviewed annually to ensure necessary changes and/or additions are made for the upcoming academic year, so the information provided to students is current.

Completing the Student Perceptions Survey is the first item listed on the exit procedure. Although it is not mandatory for students to complete when they leave SMSU (mid-semester as an official university withdrawal or at the conclusion of a semester), it is strongly encouraged. Survey data is collected each fiscal year (July 1<sup>st</sup> – June 30<sup>th</sup>) and extracted/reviewed annually after July 1. A [report](#) is developed, and findings are shared with Cabinet, department chairs, Student Association, FARBOS (Financial Aid, Registration, Business Services, Student Success), bargaining units, and other applicable areas, such as Residence Life, Athletics, and Chartwells (food service vendor).

The process for measuring retention and persistence for concurrent enrollment students follows that of the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP), which has undergone a recent change. Previously, NACEP utilized one- and four-year out surveys to collect persistence and time-to-degree information from past concurrent enrollment students. However, these surveys had low yields due to limited ability to reach students after high school graduation. For this reason, NACEP has now transitioned to conducting research projects that demonstrate the effectiveness of a concurrent enrollment program. As a result, starting in AY 2024 SMSU College Now began collaborating with the SMSU Institutional Research Office to pull data pertaining to students who continue coursework with SMSU directly, as well as those who continue within the Minnesota State system. This research project, which will meet the NACEP Evaluation requirement for accreditation, will be pulled and evaluated every third fiscal year moving forward.

Data show that over the past decade, former College Now students have represented 22.6% of SMSU’s New First Year cohort (Federal Cohort). Over the past five years that figure is a bit higher (almost 25% have been former CN students). Over that same time frame these former CN students have been retained at a rate 16% points higher than students that were not a former CN student. As we look at completion, former CN students (Federal Cohort) complete their degrees at SMSU at a rate 26% points higher. The table below gives this historical composite data for retention and completion.

<b>Student Population</b>	<b>Retention</b>	<b>Completion</b>
College Now	78.6%	67.0%
Non-College Now	62.2%	41.0%

Results are similar for former CN students who transfer back to SMSU. Former CN transfer students are retained at a rate nearly 14% points better and complete at a rate more than 21% points greater.

### 4C.3

SMSU uses data regarding retention, persistence, and completion for continuous improvement. This data is used by administrators, enrollment management, and various work groups and committees. The following are examples of how such data have been used to improve programs.



To make progress toward the Equity 2023 goal of eliminating equity gaps for underserved groups of students, SMSU convened the Equity by Design task force to analyze equity gap data at the course level and to facilitate program-level changes to improve performance. Faculty were presented with equity gap data prior to the spring Assessment Day and asked to respond to questions engaging them in analyzing and responding to this information. To facilitate this analysis on Assessment Day itself, the morning program included presentations on data fluency and culturally responsive teaching, and the afternoon provided time for faculty to talk with their program colleagues. In April 2021, programs reviewed DFW data disaggregated by student cohorts for university gateway courses. In April 2022, programs reviewed data for all courses, including program-level gateway courses. Examples of initial responses programs identified and are now implementing to close these gaps can be found [here](#). Discussion of this data has continued for the two most recent Assessment Days, as well, and faculty commitment to strengthening equity and inclusion is demonstrated by the many [examples](#) of course-level changes presented under core component 3B.

Steps to close equity gaps are one of several ways academic programs make changes to improve student retention and persistence. Some additional examples of recent actions including the following:

- Communications Studies: Increased emphasis on students using the grad planner tool to ensure they include courses on a two-year rotation. Program now sees fewer students needing petitions and/or expressing concerns about the infrequency of course offerings. Program has also made significant investments in equipment in recent years that are paying dividends in the broadcasting and digital media area. Students now report that having access to equipment is one of the key reasons they like the program.
- Nursing: Created a study leave process so students do not drop if they need to step away for a semester. Also added accelerated course options in RN/BSN programming to extend semester start times and meet the needs of students seeking that type of learning environment.
- Sociology: Shifted from a traditional grading practice to specifications grading in introductory course, which is an equity practice that gives students agency over their own grades. It focuses on subject matter competence instead of compliance, removes the destructive power of a zero, and provides students with choices on when and how to do work. Specs grading allowed faculty member to proactively engage with students before they experienced difficulties and barriers. The DFW rate for the course dropped to 9%, a drastic reduction from 23% the prior year. The feedback from the students on specs grading was positive: 82% of students reported more flexibility to complete tasks, 73% agreed they had more control over their grades, and 55% reported that this method reduced their stress over the semester.
- Hospitality Management and Culinary: Created Program Welcome Back Fall 2022; also has engaged students in creating appetizers and serving at University Gala.
- Agricultural Education: Added Work-Based Learning license and structured curriculum so students take courses as a cohort.
- Sustainable Agricultural Solutions: Restructured BS program to put a strong emphasis on sustainability, as outcome of strategic planning retreat.

- Agronomy: Provided Certified Crop Advisor (CCA) certification training and encourages students to take the exam.
- Agribusiness: Maximizes diversity in students' choice of instructor in lower division courses by ensuring that no faculty member teaches more than one section of the same course in each term.

The Mustang Pathway Program (MPP), the alternative entry program described in detail under core component 3D.1, has analyzed retention and achievement data from the four cohorts enrolled since inception in fall 2020. Of the 67 students enrolled in the summer program, 60 (89.7%) have qualified and enrolled for the initial fall semester. The overall fall 1 to spring 1 MPP retention rate is a strong 86.7% (52 of 60) compared to 84.7% for all SMSU new first year students, but the fall 1 to fall 2 MPP rate is a weaker 50% (18 of a possible 36 to date) compared to 64.7% for all students. An additional 11% (4 of 36) transferred to another institution, which is a positive indicator of their successful transition to college. Although the “n” is relatively small at this stage to draw reliable conclusions, MPP has taken an important recent step to strengthen overall retention by adding a developmental math course (Math 060) to the summer 2024 curriculum. This decision is based on ACCUPLACER assessment data collected for the past four cohorts, showing that nearly all program participants test into the developmental math course. Taking this course in the summer will position students to be more successful during their first full academic year. MPP has also raised the minimum high school GPA required for summer enrollment from 1.7 to 1.9, based on the assessment that those falling below that level have not been sufficiently able to complete the program.

The Equity Scorecard data described previously has informed Cabinet conversation since it was first made available in late fall 2023. In addition to actions taken to increase the success of all underserved students, as described elsewhere in this narrative, SMSU has made improvements for each of the following groups identified as having an equity gap:

- Specific actions to support Latinx students include providing intrusive advising through such programs as Access Opportunity Success (AOS) and promoting the Latinx student club, one of the most active student clubs on campus. Additional actions to increase support for Latinx students will be developed as part of the response to the campus climate student survey data collected in spring 2024.
- Actions to support Pell-eligible students include administering a student basic needs survey and planning for disbursement of a \$150K emergency grant funding allocation from the system office to address identified needs.
- Actions to support first-generation students include establishing a first-generation student club and planning for an annual first-generation day.

SMSU used retention and persistence data as a driver for the redesign and relocation of several student support areas. Analysis of data guided the decision to consolidate the Office for Student Success, Advising Center, and Academic Commons into a centralized location and staffing organization and has since been renamed the Deanne Griebel Student Success Center (DGSSC). This office provides programming and support for student retention, persistence, and completion.

As discussed under core component 3D, DGSSC oversees the SUCCESS program designed to increase retention of traditionally underserved students. Initial results in 2022 from the first SUCCESS cohort were promising. Overall, retention of students participating in the program was on par with overall retention figures in fall 2022 (fall 2021 cohort) despite these students being more at risk than non-participants. In fall 2023, the SUCCESS program continued to show impressive results. Comparison of SUCCESS cohort and overall SMSU retention rates by at-risk groups is shown in this [table](#).

The provost and the Director of the DGSSC analyzed information on the participation, retention, academic performance, and perceptions of students served by the SUCCESS program to recommend its modification and continuation beyond the three-year grant period. As a result, funding has been provided to continue all staff positions to support a two-year program, now called Success @ Southwest.

Exit data gathered from the Student Perceptions Survey, administered by the DGSSC, and from other sources has led to various improvements in student support. These include the changes in Accessibility Services and the increased support for Mustang Market described under core components 3D and 4B. Exit data identifying student concern about inconsistencies in advising led to creation of the Academic Advising Support Committee, described under core component 3D, and student comments about their struggles with online instruction led to creation of the Committee on Online Learning, described under core component 3A.

#### 4C.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 except preliminary retention figures, for which SMSU and Minnesota State use the same source data tables compiled by the system.

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.

## Sources

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- 4.45.1\_Fall 2024 Cohort Retention
- 4.45\_Equity Scorecard KPI 1
- 4.46\_Disclosures
- 4.47\_Exit Procedure
- 4.48\_FY24 - Student Perceptions Survey Results

- 4.50\_Department Responses to Close Equity Gaps
- 4.51\_Faculty Reports on DEI
- 4.52\_SUCCESS and Overall SMSU Comparison

## **4.S - Criterion 4 - Summary**

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

### **Summary**

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SMSU demonstrates accountability for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services. Courses and programs maintain college-level rigor and quality through processes and policies around curriculum design, learning outcomes, student support services, and highly qualified faculty. SMSU participates in regular assessment and review of programs that follow established policies and procedures set by faculty and staff committees. Faculty and staff engage in ongoing assessment and professional development to fulfill the university's mission and meet campus-wide and programmatic learning outcomes. Assessment occurs at several levels with information from one level feeding another. The structure of the assessment collection process and the culture of assessment built at SMSU facilitate participation and input. Student Affairs supports students' needs holistically through the variety of programming offered by their offices. Evidence of their overall efforts can be found in annual reports. Offices involved with co-curricular programs and experiences conduct assessment to determine success of the program or activity and to inform them of necessary changes. SMSU has established goals for enrollment, persistence, and completion and uses data for continuous improvement.

### **Sources**

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*There are no sources.*

## 5 - Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning

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

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

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

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

### Argument

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#### 5A.1

The centrality of shared governance at SMSU is evident in the structures, practices, and expectations that guide planning and decision making. 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 and one plan 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.

Monthly "meet and confer" sessions provide a regular, structured opportunity for each bargaining unit to meet with the President's Cabinet. Two units (ASF, IFO) have separate meetings; the other units hold a joint meeting. Bargaining unit leaders collaborate with administration to set the meeting agenda as follows: ASF leaders meet with the provost and the dean of students; IFO leaders meet with the provost and president; the other unit leaders submit agenda items to the Office of the President/Provost. The resulting [agendas](#) include discussion items identified through this collaborative process and standing reports from cabinet members. Examples of topics discussed during AY 2024 include legislative funding; staffing capacity; policies for annual sick time, telework, and marijuana use; funding to support education abroad; and changes to existing positions.

In response to specific issues of importance, the president may also meet with bargaining unit leaders as a group to receive their input and advice. Leaders have been convened to discuss telework guidelines, the contract with Risepoint to recruit/support online students, Covid mitigation, and various administrative positions and titles.

Consultation with students occurs through bi-monthly meetings between the president and the student association (SA) president and through weekly meetings between all elected SA senate members and the associate vice president (AVP) of enrollment management/student engagement and the SA faculty advisor. The AVP also meets weekly with the SA executive board, including the SA president, and separately with the SA president on a drop-in basis as needed, typically several times a week. Future formal consultations with students will occur with the same frequency and in the same format. However, the dean of students will replace the AVP as student government advisor.

Regular [meetings](#) of the President's Cabinet also demonstrate the importance of shared governance, in that all members are invited to include agenda items important for their areas of responsibility and are expected to communicate initiatives and concerns important to their direct reports, most of whom are bargaining unit members. Recent examples include reconfiguration of the Mental Health Counseling Center, admissions recruiting/scholarship events, data security improvements, faculty capacity needs, SMSU Foundation development initiatives, athletic strategic planning, DEI training, and Mustang Thanks employee recognition.

Shared governance is also evident in the membership of [university committees](#). Bargaining units elect members to serve on each committee, and additional unit members typically serve by function, as do members of the administration. Each committee also includes student representation, though often it can be difficult to find students to fill these positions. As detailed under core component 5A.3, university committees work collaboratively to make decisions, establish processes, draft policies and procedures, and make recommendations.

Collaboration is evident in less formal practices as well, such as the monthly [Town Halls](#) that the president initiated during his first year at SMSU. He uses these meetings to share items that may be of interest and to provide an open forum for all members of the campus community to ask questions and to express their views on any topic of interest. Examples include student discussion of the campus response to LGBTQ+ hate speech, a year-end [report](#) by the SA president, the plan to lease the Social Sciences building and options for relocating departments, a presentation by the new coordinator of accessibility services, options for increasing residence hall occupancy, and enrollment status and strategies. The president also holds open [office hours](#) throughout the academic year for employees and students to share items of concern or interest.

SMSU has a collaborative relationship with the SMSU Foundation, a private, nonprofit organization that engages alumni and friends in funding scholarships, projects, and activities that benefit students and support the strategic priorities of SMSU. The AVP of advancement is a member of the President's Cabinet and communicates regularly with campus leadership. Foundation Board [meetings](#) include faculty/staff/student presentations of accomplishments and engage campus members in discussion of key issues. The governing role of the Minnesota State

Board of Trustees, as it relates to finance, academics, student services, and human resources, is discussed in detail under core component 2C.

## 5A.2

Data informs decisions made by the Cabinet as a collective and by members for their individual areas of responsibility. Cabinet reviews weekly [enrollment reports](#) from the system office and regular internal reports providing data on [enrollment and retention](#), [financial performance and budget projections](#), and [housing](#). The Cabinet also reviews data regarding [strategic plan accomplishments](#), key performance indicators from the system-wide [Equity Scorecard](#), and responses to student and employee surveys. Cabinet members also review data applicable to their specific areas and use this data to inform discussion and decision making in collaboration with each other and with their direct reports.

Examples of recent collaborative, data-informed decisions include the following:

- The VP for finance and administration and the campus space committee analyzed data on classroom utilization, academic program and student facility needs, and classroom technology needs to request an architectural pre-design of [three options](#) for taking the Social Sciences building offline and renovating existing campus space to accommodate relocation of several programs.
- The provost and the director of the Deanne Griebel Student Success Center analyzed [data](#) on the participation, retention, academic performance, and perceptions of students served by the SUCCESS program to recommend its modification and continuation beyond the three-year grant period.
- The academic deans and the scheduling and events planning officer use [data](#) provided by the event management system optimization tool to assign classrooms.
- The AVP of enrollment management/student engagement and AVP for advancement worked with the director of admission and director of financial aid to analyze student financial aid information to develop and roll out a new university merit [scholarship model](#) for the incoming class of 2024. They also developed the Brown and Gold gap scholarship level for high-need students as part of that process.
- The AVPs of enrollment management and advancement, the director of athletics, and the dean of the College of Arts, Letters, and Sciences surveyed and interviewed staff and students and reviewed data on residence hall capacity and occupancy to evaluate the current housing requirement and to recommend strategies for increasing the number of students living on campus, including the new [Opt-On Advantage](#) program.
- The provost, VP for finance, and academic deans analyzed [data](#) on the cost, enrollment, and efficiency of academic programs to inform decisions about position requests and to identify areas requiring monitoring and potential additional
- The director of facilities collaborated with the classroom workgroup to design and administer the classroom remodel survey and make recommendations based on [data](#) gathered from students and staff.
- The campus diversity officer analyzed results of the student campus climate [survey](#) and presented this information to the Cabinet to inform discussion of ways to address the needs identified.



### 5A.3

SMSU administration, faculty, staff, and students work together through the shared governance structures described elsewhere in the assurance argument to set academic policies, procedures, and requirements. As described under core component 5A.1, university committees work collaboratively to make decisions, establish processes, draft policies and procedures, and make recommendations. Academic requirements are developed by the Curriculum and Liberal Education Committees through the curriculum approval process detailed under core component 4A.4.

Additional academic policies and processes are developed by other committees. Examples include the following:

- The Study Abroad and Global Engagement Committee has established a process and criteria for reviewing applications for faculty-led education abroad programs.
- The Committee on Online Learning reviews and recommends working goals to continually improve online education and the experience of online learners at SMSU.
- The Committee on Institutional Assessment provides leadership to develop and implement assessment plans and to review and disseminate results.
- The Commencement Committee oversees the structure, requirements, and planning for the annual commencement ceremony.
- The Professional Development Committee organizes all-campus, all-day, workshops and breakout sessions addressing issues that involve campus constituents.
- The Office of Human Resources organizes an annual staff development day that engages employees in discussion of important campus issues.
- The Calendar Committee engages all campus units in developing the annual academic calendar, which goes through several iterations before being finalized through the meet and confer process.

The review of university policies and procedures is monitored and assessed by the Policy and Procedure Steering Committee (PPSC). [PPSC](#) oversees scheduled reviews of, and requests to create or revise, university policies and procedures. PPSC delegates review/revision to the appropriate campus entity, engages the Diversity and Inclusion Committee to review for inclusive and equitable language, shares progress with the Cabinet, posts documents for an open review and comment period by the campus community for 15 calendar days, and prepares a final draft for review at meet and confer. After all edits are completed and Cabinet has given final approval, PPSC publishes the resulting document.

### Sources

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- 5.01\_AY24 Meet and Confer Agendas
- 5.02\_Cabinet Minutes
- 5.03\_SMSU Committees
- 5.04\_SMSU Town Hall Schedule AY23-24
- 5.05\_Town Hall Student Association Report

- 5.06\_Presidents Open Office Hours AY 23-24
- 5.07\_Foundation Board Agenda
- 5.08\_Fall and Spring FYE Compare Report
- 5.09\_10th Day Snapshot Fall 23 Spring 24
- 5.10\_FY25 budget estimates 20240313\_1
- 5.11\_Housing Reports
- 5.12\_Strategic Plan Accomplishments Summary
- 5.13\_Equity Scorecard KPI 1
- 5.15\_Campus Relocation Options\_SK30-35\_121522
- 5.16\_SUCCESS\_Report\_Nov22
- 5.17\_Hourly Room Utilization - Weekly
- 5.18.1\_SMSU Opt-On Advantage
- 5.18\_Southwest Guarantee
- 5.19\_Program Listing by Direct Cost
- 5.20\_Student Classroom Remodel Survey
- 5.21\_SMSU Climate Report
- 5.23\_Policies and Procedures

## 5.B - Core Component 5.B

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

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

### Argument

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#### 5B.1

As discussed in detail under core component 3C, SMSU faculty and student support staff are appropriately qualified, trained, and supported. The policies, processes, and resources described are applicable to all operational staff, helping to ensure the overall quality and effectiveness of all SMSU employees. In addition to this professional development and regular training, employees receive external training specific to their responsibilities. Examples include Vector Solutions DEI; Minnesota State decision-maker, Title IX, and other compliance requirements; Campus Security Authority.

SMSU has the human resources needed to support its operations and deliver its programs. As of FY 2024, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) data indicated the following employment numbers:

**Table 5.1 Number of SMSU Employees by Position Type and Status (IPEDS Fall 2023 HR Data):**

<b>IPEDS 2023 HR Survey</b>	<b>Full-Time</b>	<b>Part-Time</b>
Instructional Staff	104	125
Library Staff/Student & Academic Affairs	42	18
Management	13	0
Business	11	3

IT	11	0
Coaches/Social Service	37	3
Health	0	1
Service	21	2
Sales	2	0
Office Support	21	8
Facilities	9	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>161</b>

Between FY 2019 and FY 2024, IPEDS HR data showed an overall -1.4 decrease in total employees (438 in fall 2018 and 432 in fall 2023). However, there was a 6.3% increase in full-time employees and a decrease of -12.0% in part-time employees during the period. Many of these increases in full-time employees were in student facing categories such as instructional faculty, student and academic affairs, and coaching. SMSU does not rely heavily on adjunct or part-time positions for teaching courses. In the spring of 2024, 83.9% of undergraduate courses (and 82.6% of all courses at both the undergraduate and graduate levels) were taught by full-time faculty.

Infrastructure and resources provided to support effective teaching and learning are described in detail under core component 3D.4. SMSU also provides sufficient infrastructure to support broader technology and facility needs, as follows.

#### Technology Infrastructure

SMSU relies upon a core administrative software application managed by the system office Information Technology Services division. This application is branded as the Integrated Student Records System (ISRS). It is a homegrown system that has been in various states of use since the 1990s. ISRS provides support for all aspects of operations including being the primary Student Information System. A multi-year system-level project known as “NextGen” has been underway for over five years to replace ISRS with Workday software. The first components of the new Workday system—Finance and HR services—went “live” on July 1, 2024.

Conversion of academic services into Workday is in the planning stage. Internet services are provided to the University via a unique partnership among the State of Minnesota, the Minnesota State System, the University of Minnesota, and the Learning Network of Minnesota. The Minnesota State System provides critical information security services including identity management services.

The Minnesota State System Office also manages a system-wide learning management software, Desire2Learn Brightspace (D2L Brightspace), as well as specific enterprise-wide academic services such as Microsoft Office365, Zoom, and Kaltura. The University provides support on these systems for faculty, staff, and students. University IT staff are responsible for:

- Supporting university-specific software implementations;
- Supporting the procurement and contracts process for technology-related services used at both a university-wide level as well as usage by individual departments;
- University-level information security;
- Disbursing and servicing all hardware on campus including computer workstations and classroom technology;
- Providing campus-wide 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 Perceptive Software for document management. IT staff have recently helped implement such systems as the new Atrium Campus ID Card service, the Slate CRM system, the Lenel door access system, and the new Courseleaf online catalog as well as many other such systems that support all aspects of university operations.

### Physical Infrastructure

The [SMSU campus](#) consists of 27 accessible buildings, on 216 acres, with an interconnected core of academic and student services buildings. There are seven residence hall buildings, mainly located on the south end of campus, that provide greater capacity than current demand. Residence Life oversees seven living and learning communities in these halls. Residence Life also manages the 40-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 on the north side of campus and serve intercollegiate athletics and regional middle-school, high school, club sports, and community events. Other multi-use facilities include fitness areas, indoor gymnasiums, and a swimming pool. As noted, additional infrastructure supporting teaching and learning is described further under core component 3D.4.

The University completed a [Comprehensive Facilities Plan](#) (CFP) presented to Minnesota State System Office members in November 2017 and finalized in February 2018. This plan has guided capital project decisions, the most significant of which is the Comprehensive Space Study conducted in 2022 by consultant Hay Dobbs. The space study confirmed low classroom utilization numbers. To provide students with the very best educational experience and improve resources available to enhance teaching and learning, SMSU implemented a CFP initiative to take the Social Science building offline and relocate the tenants/departments more centrally on campus. This initiative provided improved access and efficiency for students and improved campus department collaboration and culture. Details and supporting documents can be found [here](#).

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. HEAPR funds ensure that campus operating dollars are used to improve educational outcomes, not repair buildings.

Guided by the CFP, SMSU hired an architect to provide a preliminary pre-design of how best to move forward with bringing a better-quality environment and experience to students, reduce the deferred maintenance backlog, and correctly size spaces. Initially, this project was an estimated \$60M to provide new exercise science labs, athletics training labs, active learning classrooms, and student collaboration spaces. However, this project has since been divided into three phases to ease the demand on general obligation bonding and make it more likely the project will get funding to make these necessary improvements. Below are the three phases requested to bond:

- Wellness and Human Performance Center. This [attachment](#) includes the project summary, project description, project rationale and other considerations.
- Bellows Academic Renovation. This [attachment](#) includes the project summary, project description, project rationale and other considerations.
- Physical Education Building Improvements. This [attachment](#) includes the project summary, project description, project rationale and other considerations.

In addition to projects supported by capital bonding and HEAPR, SMSU has also made several facility investments in recent years, including the following:

- Relocate Public Safety to first floor of Founders Hall for visibility and to enhance collaboration with New Horizons and relocate legal kiosk.
- Relocate Marketing and Communications to bottom floor of Founders Hall.
- Upgrade two traditional residence hall complex lobbies and common areas with renovation to lounges/kitchens and installation of air conditioning.
- Upgrade kitchen for the Culinology Learning Community.
- Renovate space for the relocation of the Exercise Science lab from the Social Science Building to the Physical Education Building.
- In collaboration with the University of Minnesota Child Welfare Program renovated a conference room and a training lab to support services provided.
- Replace and enhance entrance to the Deeann Griebel Student Success Center and create more staff offices.
- Relocate Accessibility Services and renovate space to improve services.
- Renovate space to house Esports.
- Remodel space in Science and Technology building to house North Star Mutual Insurance School of Business.
- Remodel School of Education space to create Education Model Classroom & Professional Development lab.
- Remodel space to create new, state-of-the-art science lab.
- Purchase and develop 50-acre research field plot for agronomy program.

## 5B.2

The University's main revenue sources are tuition and state allocations. Additional sources include fee revenue, grants, and donations. Fee revenue is normally collected for very specific purposes funded by those fees. Similarly, grants and donations also generally have specific expenses associated with them. State allocations can be considered base funding and used along with tuition to fund teaching, learning, and all support services, such as student services, institutional support, administration, athletics, physical plant and facilities. State allocations can also include specific funding for various high-need areas considered of special interest to students, the community, or the Board of Trustees. Recent special funding sources are described under core component 5B.4.

As discussed under core component 1A, the SMSU [strategic plan](#) is aligned with the institutional mission, vision, and values. Fiscal allocations support strategic plan actions, as evidenced by the number and variety of [accomplishments](#) achieved during the first three years of implementation. Those with the largest cost include the following: new positions (full-time campus diversity officer, health navigator, faculty liaison for supplemental instruction, liberal education coordinator); employee training and development (student trauma and mental health, culturally responsive teaching, inclusive leadership); facility enhancement (classroom technology, campus secure door access).

Strategic plan actions are also supported by fundraising done through the SMSU Foundation. Accomplishments made possible include providing funding for students conducting undergraduate research, endowing the North Star Mutual School of Business, and purchasing nearly \$1.5M in [cutting edge academic equipment](#) by matching leveraged funds available through the Minnesota State system, as discussed in more detail under core component 5B.4. Additionally, the annual [M4L \(Mustangs for Life\) Day](#) enables donors to give directly to academic departments to support their strategic needs.

As a member of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, SMSU also supports shared services, which are usually paid through chargebacks to each system university or college. These shared services include such areas as a Human Resources Transactional Service Model (payroll and transaction hub); various software such as e-Builder, Microsoft 365, EMS; library services; and data imaging services. The largest chargeback process over the past few years is the transition from the current Enterprise Resource Management system to Workday.

## 5B.3

### Developing Budgets

[Annual budgets](#) are submitted to the system for approval by the Minnesota State Board of Trustees. Oversight and guidelines are provided by the system's vice chancellor of finance and his staff. Funding from the State of Minnesota is obtained in response to [legislative budget requests](#) presented to the legislature by the Board of Trustees. This funding is then allocated to the system institutions using the allocation framework. There are five components to the allocation framework. Each component creates a dollar value to an institution which is then

combined to determine each institution's percent share of the base allocation. The state allocation and tuition revenue create most of the university's revenue budget, but there are other revenue sources such as fees, grants, and donations figured into the total budget.

One of the largest factors in budgeting is the state of the current economy and its effect on legislative funding and on the capacity to change tuition rates. A related factor is inflation and its effects on operating costs. Most employees at the University are within bargaining units whose contracts expire and are renegotiated every two years. Budgets are created using estimates for the following: state allocation, future enrollment trends, inflationary factors on spending, bargaining contractual changes, and new initiatives.

A [two-year budget](#) is created with the second year being much more likely to change and be reworked in the following fiscal year. Estimates to create the budget are discussed between the VP for finance and the president, at cabinet meetings, and at Budget Committee meetings throughout the fall. Cabinet members assist in creating the estimates for enrollment and for staff and operational costs. Often more than one budget scenario is created to assist in planning. Spreadsheets with the ability to change estimates have been provided on the campus T drive for others to use to create their own scenarios. The budget process starts in the fall for the next fiscal year. Operating budget goals are provided to each cabinet administrator who works with their departments and programs to create operating budgets. Salary and fringe estimates are determined for the entire University based on approved positions for the next fiscal year and contractual changes per bargaining.

Once budgets, tuition, and fee rates are agreed upon at the cabinet level, they are presented at multiple meet and confer sessions to all bargaining units and also to student government for consultation. Institution budgets are due to the system office either in late April or early May. These budgets include all funds of the University. Budgets must be approved by the Board of Trustees and have two readings before approval. Tuition and fee rates must also be presented to the Board of Trustees by each institution for approval each year. Budget narratives and budget reallocation reports are also due with the budget reports. Budgets may also need to be updated to the system for Board review once or twice during the year. [Systemwide budgets](#) and [SMSU budgets](#) are posted online.

### Monitoring Finances

Monitoring revenues and expenses takes place at many levels throughout the University, at the president and cabinet level, at the unit level, and at the cost-center level. The University uses both the Integrated Statewide Record System (ISRS) for standardized reporting and a replicated database to create customized reports. [Budget reports](#) are presented to the bargaining units at monthly meet and confer sessions in a summarized fashion to explain how the current year revenues and expenses are tracking as to budget, and discussion often compares current status to the status at this time in the prior year. Monthly a customized [summary report](#) is sent to cabinet members of all M&E cost centers and quarterly NAI reports. The CFO reviews all cost centers monthly for review of irregularities. Cost center responsible persons have access to ISRS and monitor their cost centers at least monthly. Quarterly reports are sent to the athletic director and



CFO for review of all athletic accounts. Quarterly reports are completed for the revenue fund accounts and sent to the revenue fund responsible persons and CFO for review.

SMSU's [Composite Financial Index](#) has fluctuated over the past few years. Although SMSU's cash balances have remained relatively stable, net assets have decreased because there have not been any significant building improvements over the last few years. The restricted assets have also decreased due to cash reserves in the revenue fund area. The operating margin is usually negative largely due to the non-cash components of the financial statements.

Purchasing is done through the Marketplace software connected to ISRS. To comply with state and system policies on purchasing, encumbrances must be completed prior to purchasing goods or services. This is monitored through the Marketplace system and by the business services director and Buyer's Aid.

Financial statements are completed at the system level for the University with assistance by the VP for finance and administration and the staff in the Business Office along with other university staff as necessary. Audits are completed by an external audit firm, currently CLA, who also completes the Federal Single Audit each year. System internal audit staff, supplemented by a contract with Baker Tilly, audit various areas throughout the year. [Audited Financial statements and Federal Single Audit Reports](#) are posted online.

Every three years the NCAA Division II Agreed Upon Procedures engagement audit is completed. The System's [Internal Audit](#) plan is posted online.

#### **5B.4**

The university budget is created keeping in mind the needs of all instructional programs, student support, and administrative areas. Student needs are the priority. Fiscal allocations in support of educational purposes are discussed in detail under core components 3D.4, 5B.1, and 5C.1. Additional discussion of allocations, including supplemental funding sources, is provided below.

Specific strategic goals are included in the budget process such as student success and Equity 2030 along with growing enrollment. Specific areas that have seen additional budget are in student retention, in programs that are growing such as social work, and in online programming. Additional funding has also been provided for staffing in the School of Education. The [SUCCESS](#) grant ended in FY 2024, so in the budgeting process for FY 2025 that program is a specific area added to continue funding. Social work has growing enrollment and additional faculty are included in the FY 2025 budget. SMSU is committed to growing enrollment both on campus and online. A contract with Risepoint was established to help with marketing, enrollment, and student support for online programs.

During the past three fiscal years, the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF) has helped our students and the university's operating budget. SMSU has used a large portion of the [funds](#) for technology infrastructure and network improvements and classroom technology improvements for additional and improved online programming. See discussion of these investments under core components 3D.4 and 5B. SMSU also used HEERF funding to assist

with the financial situation of the residence life area as the occupancy in the residence life area has decreased over the past few years.

Through the state appropriation there are funds available for [leveraged equipment](#). These funds normally must be matched from non-state funds on a one-to-one basis. During the COVID pandemic and during FY 2024 and FY 2025 due to other state funds with matching requirements, the match requirement was suspended. Over the past three years, the University has been able to purchase nearly \$1.5M in state-of-the-art equipment for use in multiple fields. Examples include the following:

- Biology – autoclave, microplate reader, stereomicroscope, compound and research grade microscopes
- Chemistry – spectrometer, potentiostat, centrifuge, polarimeter
- Environmental Science – streamflow and water quality meter systems
- Exercise Science – cadaver table, motionless capture system, COSMED metabolic system, accessible treatment table
- Planetarium – cove lighting system
- Communications – DSLR cameras
- Art – kilns, pottery wheel
- Agriculture – tractor

In the 24-25 biennium the state legislature has allocated several new funding sources to be used for FY 2024 and FY 2025 initiatives. The funds for these specific initiatives have supported strategic initiatives for the University as follows:

- Equipment and Learning Environment (\$500K plus \$250K match) -- Science lab renovation; North Star Mutual School of Business classroom upgrades
- Industry Sector and Workforce Development (\$320K plus \$120 match) -- Education Model Classroom
- High Need Student Support (\$70K) -- Accessibility Services, Health Services, Mental Health Counseling, Career Center

## Sources

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- 5.10\_FY25 budget estimates 20240313\_1
- 5.12\_Strategic Plan Accomplishments Summary
- 5.24\_SHOT
- 5.25\_Campus\_Wildlife Maps
- 5.26\_ADM SMSU Environmental Learning Area
- 5.27\_SMSU Master Plan v1
- 5.28\_Social Science Building Project
- 5.29\_2024 Minnesota State Capital Request
- 5.36\_CBR\_SMSU\_1\_WHPC\_100pct\_Narrative
- 5.37\_CBR\_SMSU\_2\_BA Reno\_100pct\_Narrative
- 5.38\_2024CBR\_SMSU\_3\_PE Reno\_100pctPredesign

- 5.40\_Strategic Plan Summary
- 5.42\_Leveraged Equipment Purchases FY23-24-25
- 5.43\_M4L Day 24
- 5.44\_Budget Submissions to BOT
- 5.45\_FY2023\_Operating\_Budget\_Report\_to\_Board
- 5.46\_Systemwide Budgets
- 5.47\_Budget
- 5.48\_AprFY24\_MCbudgetreport
- 5.49\_ME Summary January 2024 Report
- 5.50\_SMSU CFI
- 5.51\_Financial Statements
- 5.52\_2024 Audit Plan
- 5.53\_Success @ Southwest
- 5.54\_HERFF and IT Spending

## 5.C - Core Component 5.C

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The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning and improvement.

1. The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities, including, as applicable, its comprehensive research enterprise, associated institutes and affiliated centers.
2. The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning and budgeting.
3. The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.
4. The institution plans on the basis of a sound understanding of its current capacity, including fluctuations in the institution's sources of revenue and enrollment.
5. Institutional planning anticipates evolving external factors, such as technology advancements, demographic shifts, globalization, the economy and state support.
6. The institution implements its plans to systematically improve its operations and student outcomes.

### Argument

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#### 5C.1

SMSU allocates its resources to teaching, learning, and support services, which include academic affairs, student services, institutional support, administration, athletics, and physical plant and facilities support. As discussed under core component 1A, the SMSU [strategic plan](#) is aligned with the institutional mission, vision, and values. As a result, fiscal allocations supporting strategic plan goals advance institutional priorities.

Alignment between resource allocation and mission priorities extends to the broader institutional planning integrated with the strategic plan. Each of the following institutional plans is embedded in the strategic plan through its inclusion within the strategic priorities (SP) listed. Specific resource allocations in support of strategic and institutional plans are discussed in detail under core component 5B and under 5C.6, below.

- [Equity 2030 Planning](#) (SP1-6)
- [Enterprise Risk Management Plan](#) (SP2-6)
- [Civic Action Plan](#) (SP 3)
- Athletics Strategic Plan (SP4; also SP1 & SP6)
- [Information Technology Strategic Plan](#) (SP5)
- [Comprehensive Facilities Plan](#) (SP5)
- Strategic Enrollment Management Plan (SP6; also SP1 & SP4)

#### 5C.2

Assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting are linked through the strategic planning and budgeting processes described under core component 5B. As discussed under criterion 4, the academic program assessment process identifies recommendations for improving student learning that are reviewed and prioritized by administration, included in the strategic plan, and addressed through annual budgeting and strategic plan action items, to the degree that resources permit. In a similar way, the operational planning process identifies needs and priorities that are then addressed through annual budgets and actions.

Fiscal allocations in support of institutional planning and priorities are discussed in detail under core component 5B. The annual budget also directly supports the assessment of student learning in several ways. The HLC/assessment coordinator receives reassigned time and summer duty day pay. This position provides leadership for university-wide accreditation, assessment, and institutional effectiveness. Budget line items also support annual assessment day activities, assessment mini-grant initiatives, strategic plan preparation, attendance at the annual HLC Conference, and payment of annual HLC and program-level accreditation fees and costs associated with periodic site visits.

### 5C.3

The university planning process is conducted through the shared governance structures described under core component 5A and guided by the commitment to serve the external community, as articulated in the mission and discussed in detail under core components 1A and 1B.

The SMSU [strategic plan](#) was developed through a collaborative process that began fall 2020 and concluded spring 2021. The process was led by the provost and the HLC/assessment coordinator in their roles as co-chairs of the [HLC/Strategic Planning Committee](#). This committee consists of twenty-five members representing all bargaining units and administrative, staff, and faculty positions essential for this work.

Following initial discussions to determine plan structure and priorities, the committee divided into six workgroups to develop goals and action items under each strategic priority. These were shared with the full committee for input and revision. The committee also received recommendations emerging from the campus-wide Equity 2030 discussions described under core component 1C. In late fall, the committee shared an initial draft of the full plan with the campus community for comment and subsequent revision. The draft was also presented at the all-campus [Professional Development Day](#) in early January 2021. A revised draft was shared that spring, and the final version was made publicly available in early May.

The consideration of external perspectives is evident throughout the strategic plan, most notably in the priority to “Develop deep, reciprocal, equitable, and sustained partnerships within our community and region that contribute to the public good, positively impact the environment, strengthen the local and regional economy, and enhance the education of our students.”

Strategic plan implementation is overseen by the Cabinet and by the HLC/Strategic Planning Committee, which collaborate to set annual goals and monitor progress. Campus is kept

informed through Town Hall and other meetings. Any member of the campus community can report on a current or new plan initiative via the [form](#) posted on the strategic planning landing page.

The athletics strategic plan, scheduled for completion in December 2024, has also been developed through a collaborative process that has engaged internal and external constituent groups. The department hired a third-party firm with considerable experience in Division II athletics strategic planning to lead the project. Engagement from multiple constituent groups has been a consistent theme throughout the process and has included use of surveys, listening sessions, and shared drafts.

As discussed elsewhere in the assurance argument, the perspectives of external constituent groups also inform program-level planning through advisory councils for academic programs (see core component 3A) and for civic and community engagement (see core component 1B).

#### 5C.4

The process in place for budgeting and monitoring finances, described in detail under core component 5B.3, allows SMSU to plan with a sound understanding of sources of revenue and enrollment. Tuition revenue is the largest revenue source for the University after state appropriations. Therefore, enrollment changes can greatly affect the university budget. SMSU's tuition rates are determined by the University, per Board guidelines. Consultation takes place with student government, cabinet, and bargaining units, and rates are ultimately approved by the system Board of Trustees. Starting in FY 2023, SMSU chose to align all tuition rates at each level, graduate and undergraduate, to be one rate for each level. This alignment provides students with a clearer ability to estimate what they would owe for tuition and not let the difference of an online versus an on-campus tuition rate determine their choice of class.

Examples of planning guided by capacity include the following:

- Proposals to create new academic programs must complete required curriculum forms; address [questions](#) related to resources, student interest, and market needs; and complete a [financial viability](#) analysis, which is based on the expectation that a new program must be able to be sustained by tuition revenue after two years. Following internal approval, the institution must then complete the system level program navigator review process, which includes an analysis of market demand and potential student enrollment.
- Requests for new or renovated campus spaces must complete a space request [form](#) reviewed by the Space Committee. Decisions are informed by the campus facilities plan, as described elsewhere in this core component, and by [data](#) regarding space utilization.
- Technology and other classroom upgrades are recommended by a committee formed for this purpose after the Social Science building lease. Lease revenue is allocated according to a prioritized list and schedule established by the committee. In addition, the University has an annual process involving a committee made up of faculty, staff, and students to make recommendations to the student senate and university administration on the utilization of available student technology fee revenues.

- Concerns about the financial capacity of the residence hall revenue fund have led to strategic planning intended to increase the number of students living in the residence halls. The Cabinet has reviewed and implemented strategies such as discounting rates for returning students, renovating and air conditioning common areas, and increasing the number of living-learning communities.
- Assessment of future enrollment trends informs strategic enrollment management planning. The decision to partner with Risepoint to expand marketing and recruiting for online programs was made in response to the decrease in the number of traditional students seeking higher education. The decision to partner with additional agents to assist with international recruiting was also made for this reason.

## 5C.5

As a regional public institution, SMSU plans strategically 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 legislative and executive branches to increase revenue and is thinking in new ways about growing enrollments.

Anticipatory planning is evident in the Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) plan developed by the Cabinet in 2022 and reviewed by this body regularly. The [ERM risk register](#) identifies risks to the institution and articulates strategies to mitigate those that pose the greatest threat. As indicated in the risk register, ERM mitigation steps are included in strategic plan annual actions and implemented accordingly.

In the summer of 2023, the Cabinet identified five risks as having a high likelihood of occurring and a potentially high negative effect on operations. These include the following:

- Financial Sustainability: Insufficient financial resources to provide essential programs and services.
- Enrollment Management: Decline in overall and on-campus enrollment.
- Program Demand: Insufficient number/variety of in-person courses offered.
- Facilities: Reduction in residence hall occupancy.
- Talent Management: Inability to retain and hire staff.

For each of these risks, mitigation strategies were identified and risk owners were assigned. Implementation of these mitigation strategies is discussed in more detail under 5C.6, and results to date demonstrate success in reducing the likelihood of occurrence.

The SMSU risk register identifies twelve additional risks deemed less likely to occur but still needing to be monitored due to their potential impact on operations, reputation, or compliance. Specific examples include risks posed by network and data security systems, levels of public and corporate support, internal and external perceptions of campus climate, Title IX compliance, and implementation of the system-wide Workday technology platform.

## 5C.6



The Cabinet oversees implementation of the strategic plan through annual goal setting and ongoing monitoring of progress. The HLC/Strategic Planning Committee reviews plan implementation and provides input on annual goals. Strategic plan [accomplishments](#) for each of the six priorities are updated annually and posted on the SMSU website in a summary version and in a more detailed version listing goal-level accomplishments and action items for the coming year. This documentation provides evidence that SMSU acts on its planning priorities to improve operations and outcomes. The six strategic priorities are as follows

1. Affirm and support diversity, equity, and inclusion.
2. Inspire academic success and discovery through innovative teaching, research, student support services, and other high-impact experiences.
3. Foster civic engagement and strategic partnerships.
4. Support student engagement and leadership development.
5. Ensure Effective Institutional Operations and Community Well-being.
6. Increase enrollment and improve retention.

The table linked [here](#) identifies the number of specific actions taken since the strategic plan's inception to implement goals for each of the six strategic priorities. Integration between the strategic plan and other institutional plans demonstrates that improvements extend into other key areas within the University. Examples include those listed below.

**[Equity 2030](#)**. As discussed in detail under core component 1C, recommendations made by the Equity 2030 Steering Committee are integrated into the strategic plan, primarily under the first strategic priority. The number of separate actions taken over the past three years to “affirm and support diversity, equity, and inclusion” demonstrates implementation of planning recommendations to improve outcomes, especially for traditionally underserved students. Examples include hiring a full-time campus diversity officer, establishing the Bias Incident Support and Advisory Committee, creating the Equity Teaching Fellows program to incentivize professional development around culturally responsive pedagogy, disaggregating course-level equity gap data to address disparities, and integrating a DEI focus in recruiting events and tours.

**[Emergency Risk Management \(ERM\)](#)**. Strategic plan actions include ERM mitigation strategies, all implemented during AY 2024. These are listed [here](#) for each of the five risks prioritized in the SMSU ERM risk registry described above.

**[Comprehensive Facilities Plan](#)** and **[Information Technology Strategic Plan](#)**. Implementation of the Comprehensive Facilities Plan and the Information Technology Strategic Plan is evident in strategic plan actions, particularly in support of strategic priority 5, which includes eight major facility projects and nine separate technology improvements. Six additional technology improvements are listed under other priorities. Facility and technology enhancements are discussed in detail under core components 3D and 5B.

**[Civic Action Plan](#)**. The Civic Action Plan, discussed under core component 1B, was developed in 2017 through the work of the Civic Engagement Work Group at the direction of then-president, Connie Gores. Although work has begun on updating this plan, it still guides strategic decision making. The importance of civic engagement is articulated as one of three institutional



goals and through strategic priority 3: Foster civic engagement and strategic partnerships. Develop deep, reciprocal, equitable, and sustained partnerships within our community and region that contribute to the public good, positively impact the environment, strengthen the local and regional economy, and enhance the education of our students.

**Athletics Strategic Plan.** As indicated above, the SMSU Athletics Department has undergone an extensive strategic planning process that will be completed in December 2024. The resulting planning document will guide operations and support student-athletes.

**Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM).** The SEM Committee, which had not met in recent years due to changes in leadership, was reconstituted in the fall of 2023 and charged with developing a SEM plan for SMSU. This work has been guided by a system-level initiative to support campus-level planning with resources identifying best practices, suggested templates, and opportunities for collaboration with peer institutions. The resulting SEM plan will be completed in fall 2024 and will identify strategies to enhance recruitment, retention, student engagement, and student support.

## Sources

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- 5.12\_ Strategic Plan Accomplishments Summary
- 5.17\_ Hourly Room Utilization - Weekly
- 5.27\_ SMSU Master Plan v1
- 5.40\_ Strategic Plan Summary
- 5.55\_ Equity 2030 Planning
- 5.56\_ ERM Plan
- 5.57\_ Civic Action Plan - May 2017
- 5.59\_ FY 25-27 Information Technology Strategic Plan
- 5.61\_ HLC Strategic Planning Committee
- 5.62\_ PDD Schedules
- 5.63\_ Form
- 5.65\_ New Program Proposal Guidelines
- 5.66\_ Revenue Generating Worksheet-Program (1)
- 5.67\_ Space Allocation Request Form
- 5.68\_ Number of Actions Taken
- 5.69\_ ERM Implementation

## 5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary

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

### Summary

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The centrality of shared governance at SMSU is evident in the structures, practices, and expectations that guide planning and decision making. Data informs decisions made by the President's Cabinet as a collective and by members for their individual areas of responsibility. SMSU administration, faculty, staff, and students collaborate through shared governance structures to set academic policies, procedures and requirements. Annual budgets are submitted to the system for approval by the Minnesota State Board of Trustees. Oversight and guidelines are provided by the system's vice chancellor of finance and his staff. Funding from the State of Minnesota is obtained in response to legislative budget requests presented to the legislature by the Board of Trustees. The university budget is created considering the needs of all instructional programs, student support, and administrative areas. Student needs are the priority. SMSU is united in working with our partners in the legislative and executive branches to increase revenue and is thinking in new ways about growing enrollments. As a regional public institution, SMSU plans strategically for budgetary challenges tied to state and national political decisions, economic fluctuations tied to national and global markets, and changes in technology. The Cabinet oversees implementation of the strategic plan through annual goal setting and ongoing monitoring of progress. The HLC/Strategic Planning Committee reviews plan implementation and provides input on annual goals.

### Sources

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*There are no sources.*