

Northwest Missouri State University

HLC ID 1453

OPEN PATHWAY: Open Pathway Year 4 Assurance Review

Review Date: 10/3/2022

Dr. Clarence Green
President

Jeffrey Rosen
HLC Liaison

Luis Montes
Review Team Chair

Virginia Suzanne Balch-Lindsay
Team Member

Robert Ducoffe
Team Member

Daren Snider
Team Member

Suzanne Sydow
Team Member

Context and Nature of Review

Review Date

10/3/2022

Review Type:

Open Pathway Year 4 Assurance Review

Scope of Review

- Assurance Review

There are no forms assigned.

Institutional Context

Northwest is a public state institution of higher education, founded in 1905 as a Normal School dispatched with serving one of the seven Missouri State College Districts. Over the course of its 117-year history, Northwest has evolved from a Normal School to a comprehensive, moderately-selective masters large institution, admitting and serving primarily first-time, full-time, degree-seeking and transfer students. Northwest provides its approximately 5,306 undergraduate students and 2,564 graduate students with a variety of on-ground and online academic programs that are approved by the Missouri Department of Higher Education (MDHE) and the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). The institution reports 1 associate degree, 103 baccalaureate degrees, 73 minors, 18 pre-professional programs, 34 masters degrees, 3 specialist degrees, and 7 certificate programs.

The university's campus is located in Maryville, Missouri and also has two off-campus locations, in Kansas City and Independence, Missouri, where students are able to attend classes and meet with faculty members. Northwest has experienced a significant increase in its graduate student population, primarily through a rapid increase in online graduate program offerings.

Northwest's mission statement indicates that the institution, "focuses on student success - every student, every day." The institution is positioning itself for the future, guided by its strategic plan, performance system, and a variety of new initiatives being implemented across campus and developed specifically to improve university systems, structures, and outcomes. Northwest's Leadership Team (NLT) and Extended Leadership Team (ELT) are designing touchpoints at every level of the institution, and although the work is in its early stages, efforts are starting to pay off for the campus.

Northwest received its initial accreditation from HLC in 1921, and in 2019 was reaffirmed for accreditation. This review is an open pathway year four assurance review, and also includes embedded reports addressing concerns noted by the previous review team. These include Core Component 2E related to faculty/staff training about research integrity; Core Component 3A addressing differentiated learning goals; and Core Component 4B related to assessment.

Interactions with Constituencies

There are no interactions.

Additional Documents

Academic Freedom Policy: <https://www.nwmissouri.edu/policies/faculty/Academic-Freedom.pdf>

Bearcat Student Portal - Presence: <https://nwmissouri.presence.io/>

Consumer Information: <https://www.nwmissouri.edu/aboutus/facts/consumerinfo.htm>

Graduate Catalog: <https://nwmissouri.smartcatalogiq.com/2022-2023/Graduate-Catalog>

Mission, Vision and Values: <https://www.nwmissouri.edu/aboutus/mission.htm>

National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships: <https://www.nacep.org/membership-directory/missouri/>

Northwest Accreditation: <https://www.nwmissouri.edu/accreditation/>

Northwest Calendar: <http://calendar.nwmissouri.edu/>

Northwest Facts: <https://www.nwmissouri.edu/aboutus/facts/>

Program Review Dashboard (password protected):
https://webfocus.nwmissouri.edu/ibi_apps/bip/portal/ProgramReview

Regents address Student Code of Conduct, Financial Audits:
<https://www.nwmissouri.edu/media/news/2020/12/14regentsrecap.htm>

Report an Incident or Concern: <https://www.nwmissouri.edu/studentaffairs/report-incident.htm>

Research Policies: <https://www.nwmissouri.edu/policies/research/index.htm>

Service & Engagement website: <https://www.nwmissouri.edu/getinvolved/service/index.htm>

Strategic Planning - Mapping Our Progress: <https://www.nwmissouri.edu/aboutus/DIAdvisory/progress.htm>

Student Code of Conduct: <https://www.nwmissouri.edu/policies/student/Student-Code-of-Conduct.pdf>

Student Life Policies: <https://www.nwmissouri.edu/policies/student/index.htm>

Title IX Sexual Harassment Policy: <https://www.nwmissouri.edu/policies/student/Title-IX-Sexual-Misconduct.pdf>

Tuition & Fees: <https://www.nwmissouri.edu/studentaccounts/tuitionandfees.htm>

Undergraduate Catalog: <https://nwmissouri.smartcatalogiq.com/en/2022-2023/Undergraduate-Catalog>

Message from the President: <https://nwmissouri.smartcatalogiq.com/en/2022-2023/Undergraduate-Catalog/Northwest-Missouri-State-University/Message-from-the-President>

US Census Data - Maryville: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/maryvillecitymissouri>

US Census Data - Missouri Counties:

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/map/maryvillecitymissouri/RHI825221>

1 - Mission

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

1.A - Core Component 1.A

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

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

The Northwest Missouri State University (Northwest) mission is articulated publicly and operationalized throughout the institution. Northwest's role within Missouri higher education has changed over the years. It is currently serving as one of Missouri's four moderately selective universities. Northwest's mission was reviewed at the request of the Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development (MDHEWD) in 2016, and in 2019 the Missouri Coordinating Board for Higher Education (CBHE) approved the mission description. This mission description identifies the nature, scope and constituents of Northwest's higher education offerings. As described in the argument, the current mission statement ("Northwest focuses on student success – every student, every day") was developed through a collaborative process and approved by the Board of Regents in October 2010. As described in Northwest's mission review update of 2016, Northwest describes student success around metrics focused on enrollment, retention, completion and placement.

As described in the argument, at the beginning of each strategic planning cycle the Extended Leadership Team reaffirms the mission statement. This took place most recently in summer 2021. The current strategic plan (Adventure 2030) identifies four themes related to the mission: Learners - addressing changing learner and marketplace program and service needs; Enrollment and Completion - enhancing recruitment, retention and completion strategies for all learners; People -

delivering on the best place to work; Operations - disrupting and innovating our business model. The combined themes address how Northwest will focus on student success while serving as a moderately selective university in Missouri.

Northwest's academic offerings, as described in the argument, indicate a focus consistent with its mission. Academic programs go through regular Academic Program Reviews, as well as periodic reviews by MDHEWD and CBHE. Program offerings reflect those expected of a moderately selective university, and include undergraduate and graduate programs delivered on-ground and online.

As described in Northwest's argument for 1.A and 3.D, Northwest provides a broad range of support services for its students. These are housed in the Student Success Center, and a number of services can be accessed through the online Success Center website, including schedules for regular supplemental instruction, advising appointments and tutoring appointments.

Northwest's student profile aligns with its mission description, with in-state students comprising 64% of its population and 37% of its students being first-generation. Northwest reports an 11% underrepresented domestic student population. This is in line with the 11% non-white population in Maryville, and higher than most counties in northwest Missouri, based on 2020 US Census data.

The Northwest mission, vision, values and core competencies can be found within two clicks from the Northwest homepage, and they are also found in early sections of both the undergraduate and graduate catalogs. As reported in the argument, the mission, vision and values are displayed in each building and the home office of each school or department.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

1.B - Core Component 1.B

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

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

Northwest's mission demonstrates a commitment to the public good. As a moderately selective higher education institution serving northwest Missouri and surrounding areas, it provides appropriate educational opportunities for the area it serves. As described in the argument, the Northwest Board of Regents are composed of residents from its historic service region (six of its nine members), Missouri residents of counties outside this service region (two of nine positions), and a student who is a resident of Missouri. Northwest also provides an educated and prepared workforce for the regional industries, enhancing the productivity of the area.

As described in the argument, Northwest provides a range of events and opportunities to surrounding communities. The Northwest Service & Engagement website has links to volunteer activities that seek Northwest student, faculty and staff participation. Prior to the pandemic, Northwest organized Alternative Spring Break activities for students. In addition, the Office of Diversity & Inclusion has provided education and support to community groups, including the Maryville R-II School District, the City of Maryville City Council, and has collaborated with the Mosaic Life Care hospital board.

Despite the extensive partnerships, Northwest's attention and resources are primarily devoted to its support for student learning. The four themes in its strategic plan directly address Northwest's educational responsibilities, and five mission-critical priorities (delivering high-quality learning experiences, protecting access and affordability, valuing faculty and staff, preserving long-term viability, and building for the University's future) are central to budget-making decisions. The argument reports that Northwest devotes over 59% of its Education & General funding to support its core mission.

Northwest has interactions with external constituencies appropriate for its mission and resources. It refers to academic advisory boards and rural superintendent groups as sources of information. Northwest partners with area organizations for learning opportunities, such as hosting a recent Small Business Development Center summit. The argument also describes Northwest's participation in Missouri Hope, a domestic field relief exercise. Northwest hosts a Distinguished Lecture series that is

open to the public, and their radio station is an NPR affiliate providing news and information to the region.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

1.C - Core Component 1.C

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

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

Northwest provides appropriate opportunities for civic engagement in a diverse, multicultural society and globally connected world. While including Diversity, Equity and Inclusion as an institutional learning outcome, other ILOs include characteristics that emphasize civic engagement. These include communicating to a variety of audiences (Communicating); comparing value perspectives (Valuing); and negotiating and managing conflict (Teamwork). The Northwest argument reports that in spring 2022 90.8% of students were proficient in measures of diversity, equity and inclusion, while 88.7% of students were proficient in the valuing ILO. The Northwest Office of International Affairs assists international students with integration into the Northwest community, while Study Abroad helps students gain skills needed in a global and diverse workplace.

Northwest incorporates processes and activities that foster inclusive and equitable treatment of diverse populations. The Northwest Leadership Team (NLT) adopted the Inclusive Excellence Framework as a model to provide an inclusive campus environment. This ensures all sectors of campus understand their role in fostering an inclusive campus. The Social Justice Institute provides a source for campus community members to explore diversity and inclusion in a group setting. Northwest provided diversity awareness training for all campus employees and students, covering topics including defining diversity, cultural competence, intentional and unintentional bias, and hostile work environments. The Northwest argument reports 86% of employees completed this training. Northwest also participated in the AAC&U Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation Institute, providing more diverse activities and learning opportunities for their students. Northwest has an office of Accessibility and Accommodations to provide support for students with ADA disabilities accommodations. They also have a Title IX Sexual Harassment Policy and Procedures, most recently updated in 2020, to ensure compliance with federal Title IX policies. Other areas of campus have adapted their own programs to ensure equitable treatment of students and staff. Residential Life provides student Inclusion Assistants to accomplish diversity goals within the unit, while Wellness Services adopted a statement of equity, diversity and inclusion affirming their commitment to supporting the well-being and health of each individual with appreciation and respect

in alignment with the Northwest anti-discrimination policy.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary

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

Rationale

Northwest's mission (Northwest focuses on student success - every student, every day) is articulated publicly and operationalized throughout the institution. It is reaffirmed by the Extended Leadership Team at the beginning of each strategic planning cycle. Northwest provides extensive support services for its students in alignment with its mission. This mission also demonstrates a commitment to the common good in that it provides a variety of educational services to residents of northwest Missouri and surrounding areas, providing essential preparation and support for regional industries. Beyond its education programs, Northwest provides extensive service and support to regional entities, including diversity training, volunteer hours, and hosting and collaborating with conferences. Northwest has very intentionally integrated diversity, equity and inclusion into its educational offerings and institutional processes. Civic engagement is embedded within Institutional Learning Outcomes, including Communicating, Valuing, and Teamwork. In addition, the Northwest Leadership Team adopted the Inclusive Excellence Framework as a model for an inclusive campus environment.

2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

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

2.A - Core Component 2.A

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

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

Northwest Missouri State University (Northwest) has established policies and processes to ensure fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing board, administration, faculty and staff. Northwest has a “whistleblower policy” that protects and encourages employees to report suspected serious violations of university policy, violations of law, dishonesty, fraud, or other misconduct and protects the person making the report from retaliatory action.

The Board of Regents approved Resolution #8702 to adopt a revised mission, vision and values as evidenced in Board minutes dated October 29, 2010. A review of Strategic Planning documents validated the strategic planning teams re-affirmed the mission statement in April 2016, and Northwest reports in 1.A.1 that the Extended Leadership Team approved the mission statement in summer 2021.

Northwest documents described its strategic planning process (SPP), which includes six main actions along with vision and mission reaffirmation. Northwest’s Adventure 2030 Measures drive the SPP, which includes strategic themes, strategic initiatives, strategic objectives, actions, and outcomes developed by a diverse group of stakeholders. The online prominence of the Mission was evident within the *Undergraduate Catalog*, *Employee Handbook for Staff*, *Student Handbook*, and the About Us section on the Northwest website.

The Board of Regents *Third Amended and Restated Bylaws* gives the Board the power to determine and periodically review and adopt the purposes and the mission of the University. In addition, the Board has the power to carry out any functions permitted by its Bylaws concerning Northwest’s general, educational, and financial policies. All Northwest policies are accessible from the Policy Library web page using the A-Z search tool. Policies are separated into general categories: Enrollment and Academics; Faculty; Finance; Information Technology; Operations; Personnel;

Research; and Student Life.

The argument provided several examples from auditing reports to policies, procedures and organizational guidelines that illustrate the fiscal, academic, human resource, and auxiliary integrity practices. These are all documented and referenced within the provided documents as online evidence of the commitment to policies and practices that ensure fair and ethical behavior across the University.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.B - Core Component 2.B

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

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

Northwest presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public regarding its programs, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, control, and accreditation relationships. The Northwest homepage provides easy access to all pertinent information. A review of the University's Consumer Information webpage, which is accessed from the bottom of the Northwest homepage, confirms the institution provides information on programs, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, and accreditation. From the Consumer Information homepage, students and the public can link to individual webpages that provide detailed information related to data, financial information, academics, athletics, safety, policies and emergency procedures, and student's rights and resources. Examples of some of the information made available through links on this webpage include FERPA, graduation rates, faculty credentials, licensure exam results, placement information, net price calculator, accreditation, financial aid, athletics and campus safety. Tuition and fees are listed on the Student Account Services webpage. Additionally, an A-Z search tool is available at the top of all webpage menus providing access to all website data. Many of the Consumer Information page topics can also be found through the Northwest website search tool. Additional materials that communicate expectations to students and external constituencies are available in both printed form and posted online.

Information on academic programs, courses and faculty members is readily available from the Academics homepage and online catalogs. In addition to an overall comprehensive listing of curricular matters, there are clearly delineated links to the various populations of students: undergraduate, graduate, continuing education, and dual credit.

Evidence in the argument demonstrates Northwest contributes to the student learning experience through research and cocurricular experiences that align with its strategic plan goals. The argument includes evidence from biology and chemistry majors, humanities, and the computer science program. A student software portal, Bearcat Link (Presence), allows access to information on Northwest's over 200 student organizations, campus events, service opportunities, and co-curricular activities. The software tracks cocurricular experiences, maps them to learning outcomes, and tracks and documents achievement of competencies to develop a cocurricular transcript for students.

Transparency is further provided to Northwest's stakeholders through its Media Center website. The website posts timely News Releases pertinent to stakeholders. For example, on August 21, 2022, the news release concerning the President Search was released.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.C - Core Component 2.C

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

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

Northwest's governing board makes autonomous decisions in the best interest of the institution, in compliance with board policies, and ensures the institution's integrity through its bylaws. Consistent with State of Missouri laws, the bylaws of the Board of Regents define the powers of authority on policymaking, oversight, and responsibility for sound resource management, along with delegating duties to administration, officers, faculty, and others as needed. The Board of Regents also has the power to determine the general, educational, and financial policies, and conduct any tasks permitted by its Bylaws, except as limited by law. For example, these powers include the responsibilities HLC requires of the governing board. All board policies are published on the Northwest website Policies Library page. Article XV addresses non-discrimination and is consistent with the Board's commitment to avoid any bias.

The Board of Trustees publishes its meeting schedule, agendas, and minutes through links on the University's Board of Regents webpage, which is publicly available. Demonstrating ongoing and active deliberations regarding the best academic and financial interests of Northwest University, the Board bylaws and minutes from the past 10 years are available for online review. A review of the Board of Regents minutes shows public meetings include reports from appropriate stakeholders. The Board of Regents approves the annual Education and General and Auxiliary budgets and the annual audit completed by external entities. The Board reviews quarterly investment reports, monthly financial statements, and utilizes a dashboard that is updated three times a year. The University also uses BoardDocs LT, an electronic board document management system providing a searchable legal repository for all documents.

The governor appoints the Board's eight voting members, as well as a non-voting student approved by the Missouri Senate. The Board schedules seven meetings annually using a committee structure

that encompasses an Academic and Student Engagement Committee and a People, Finance and Operations Committee. Additionally, there are five strategy-based work sessions held annually. Article XIV of the Board of Regents bylaws addresses conflict of interest and confidentiality policies for Board members.

The University president reports directly to the Board. Article VI of the bylaws addresses election, powers, and duties of the president. Article XII of the bylaws addresses signature authority. Additional policies address delegation of authority to the president. In alignment with the Missouri Coordinating Board for Higher Education's (CBHE) program approval process, Board Resolution #9581 delegated to the president the authority to approve curriculum changes to expedite the curriculum approval process in certain instances. The Board considers input from various entities in its decision-making and in relationship to Adventure 2030 strategic themes and strategic goals. The Evergreen agreement delineates Foundation and University authorities.

The Board of Regents president, the University president, and legal counsel provide orientation for new Board members using a comprehensive Onboarding guide. A review of board minutes and agendas confirmed all Board members go through annual legal training.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.D - Core Component 2.D

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

Northwest demonstrates academic freedom and freedom of expression in the pursuit of truth through its teaching and learning policies which are available on the Northwest website. A “Freedom of Expression” policy is posted on the University website on the Student Affairs, Student Life Policy, “Freedom of Expression” section. The purpose of the policy is designed to inform students of their positive rights under the law as well as their obligations.

Additionally, students are charged with supporting academic freedom as stated in the Student Code of Conduct found on the website under Policies, Student, “Student Code of Conduct” section. A news release published on Northwest’s website on December 14, 2020, announced an amendment to Article III: Proscribed Conduct of the Student Code of Conduct to address hate speech involving students on campus.

The Missouri Legislature passed the “Campus Free Expression Act” (Section 173.1550 RSMo), which dictates the rights of individuals wishing to engage in expression at public higher education institutions, and governs an institution’s ability to regulate such expression. Northwest’s “Campus Free Expression Policy,” is posted on the Student Affairs, Operations section webpage and aligns with this regulatory act.

Northwest’s “Academic Freedom” policy for faculty is posted on the University website in the Policy Library, Faculty Policies section, and provides extensive protection for inquiry and speech. Northwest acknowledges it subscribes to the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) statements on academic freedom, professional ethics, and faculty freedom and responsibility as defined in statements provided in its "Academic Freedom" policy. The University further states this endorsement should not be construed as a general endorsement of all policies of AAUP. University policies related to faculty freedoms and responsibilities are also identified in the *Faculty Handbook*.

A review of the online campus activities calendar demonstrates that Northwest hosts events, activities, and speakers covering a broad range of topics. These include student recitals, separate discussions of school violence and living a meaningful life, and a travel exhibit exploring the rise and fall of Missouri's Black business districts.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.E - Core Component 2.E

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

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

Northwest's policies and procedures support responsible acquisition, discovery and application knowledge by its faculty, staff, and students. Available on the website, these rights and expectations are outlined in the *Student Handbook*, the *Faculty Handbook* and the *Employee Handbook*.

The 2018 Assurance Review Team expressed the need for Northwest to ensure training for faculty, staff, and students, regarding the ethical conduct of research, and that the training is provided systemically and then monitored. Northwest addressed this through evidence found in several documents. These include the assurance argument, addendum materials, Section 17.7 Research of the Faculty Senate By-Laws and Rules of Order, as well as Faculty, Student and Employee Handbooks and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) webpages. The Faculty Senate website provides a link to the IRB website. To assist applicants, the Northwest IRB Submission Guide link is provided on the IRB website homepage. The IRB website has menu links located in the upper right-hand corner of the screen to additional webpages that describe the IRB process. Graduate students are alerted to the need for IRB approval for thesis projects on the "Who Must Apply" webpage.

To ensure integrity, the IRB CITI Training/Research Ethics Training webpage states that beginning Fall 2021, all researchers (including student researchers) must complete the Human Subjects Research (HSR) training offered by the CITI Program to receive IRB approval for research projects. The training must be completed at least once every three years. E-mail messages to IRB committee members, provided in the addendum, provide documentation of enforcement and emphasized that the training requirement must be completed by all committee members prior to conducting any IRB proposal reviews.

Specifically, all researchers (faculty and students) are required to complete the Social-Behavioral-Educational (SBE) Comprehensive HSR training. Researchers conducting physiological or biological research must complete the Biomedical (Biomed) Comprehensive training in addition to the SBE training. Northwest provided addendum evidence that included a list of faculty certificates completed

and tracked through the CITI third-party vendor. Certificates are required for submission of any Institutional Review Board (IRB) application as evidenced in the IRB application and the Submission Guide instructions. While these policies are available through the Faculty Senate website, the Research Policies section of the online Policy Library had no content at the time of this review.

The Faculty Senate Research Committee provides oversight and support for research by faculty, professional and support staff and information is posted on its Faculty Research Committee webpage. The webpage includes Faculty Research Proposal Guidelines and a Proposal template. The committee also assists faculty in the promotion of research opportunities for students. All faculty research is evaluated yearly by unit leaders to ensure responsible scholarly practice. In addition, tenure track faculty are evaluated at the university level and all research oversight follows Faculty Handbook procedures for the Rank and Promotion, Research, and Provost Council committees.

The Institutional Review Board and the Animal Welfare Committee are free-standing subcommittees of the Faculty Senate Research Committee, which provides oversight. Evidence provided in the addendum assured reviewers that both committees are fully staffed and required to comply with CITI training requirements prior to serving.

The Institutional Review Board reviews all proposals related to research involving the use of human participants. According to the Faculty Senate By-Laws and Rules of Order, the Animal Welfare Committee reviews all proposals from faculty members involving the use of animals in research and educational activities. The Animal Welfare Committee meets only when a proposal for research is presented. This committee also provides reports to the president. The USDA inspects the animal welfare procedures at Northwest.

The Learning and Teaching Center (LTC) provides support and training in the ethical conduct of research, including the protection of human subjects and animal welfare. The Office of Grants Coordination assists faculty and staff through the entire grant-making process. Externally funded projects go through a pre-award process that covers project duties, fiduciary integrity, and mandatory internal and external reporting. Fiscal accountability of all externally funded research grants is shared by the Principal Investigator, Office of Grants Coordination, and the Risk Management Specialist within the Office of Finance.

Northwest accentuates policies on academic honesty and integrity through its required University Seminar course. This first-year course for undergraduate students covers a review of all academic policies, along with the Code of Academic Integrity. Faculty are required to provide a link to the Code of Academic Integrity on all course syllabi. The Code of Academic Integrity is linked from the Student Handbook and defines the expectations and repercussions of academic integrity and plagiarism for all undergraduate and graduate students.

The B.D. Owens Library provides research assistance and resources to students and faculty. Links from the Library website access webpages providing research guides, citation guides, library information, research help: ask a librarian, and other links on how to use library resources effectively and ethically. The library also provides additional individualized support for faculty, staff and student research and scholarly activities. To maintain credibility in research, the library subscribes to Cabell's database.

Research that promotes best practices in ethical behavior as related to information sources is included in General Education Program classes, core undergraduate, and graduate classes. Writing courses employ a rubric to evaluate papers for proper citation and documentation of sources. Library and staff

members support the ethical use of information resources and assist in educating students during all library instruction sessions. Best practices of research, academic integrity and ethical use of university resources are reinforced in the Writing Center and the Student Success Center.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary

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

Rationale

Northwest Missouri State University provided many examples demonstrating that the institution acts with integrity and strives for conduct that is ethical and responsible. They have developed an expansive scope of relevant policies to which they hold the Northwest community accountable, as well as various means to resolve alleged violations. The policies include both internal and external obligations and are designed to comply with institutional, state and federal regulations. Conflict of interest, whistleblower, and complaint policies are included as well. Compliance roles are located throughout the institution and collaborate across the organization to assist with education, compliance and revision. Lastly, educational opportunities and tools regarding policy, research development, fiscal guidelines and academic integrity are plentiful, easily accessible and relevant to a range of audiences.

3 - Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources and Support

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

3.A - Core Component 3.A

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

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

Northwest's academic offerings are current and require appropriate levels of student performance. Curriculum development comes from the faculty in a process designed by the Faculty Senate. Review of academic programs is the responsibility of appropriate entities including the Designated Curriculum Matters (DCM) Committee, the Council on Teacher Education (COTE) and the Graduate Council, with specified roles typical of such councils in higher education as evidenced in the Faculty Senate Bylaws. A "Curriculum Relevance Scorecard" is part of the regular program review process and allows Northwest to aggregate results of program reviews across the university and identify themes for improvement. Focus areas in program reviews include PLOs, currency of the curriculum and employer and alumni feedback. Nationally normed assessments, such as the Assessment of Core Proficiencies for general education, demonstrate that Northwest's students are learning at levels appropriate for higher education.

The 2018 team report expressed concern about a lack of evidence showing that Northwest differentiates learning goals by program level. Evidence provided upon the 2022 team's request clearly shows that they have subsequently been intentional in this regard, substantially resolving the concern. For example, meeting minutes of the Assessment and Evaluation Committee from 2019-2022 show the emerging strategy and structure for LO differentiation, and PLOs for all programs are now available to students in Northwest Online. Sample course syllabi also demonstrate different performance expectations for the undergraduate and graduate levels. Finally, reviewers were able to access the Northwest Program Review Dashboard, and found that undergraduate and graduate programs have level-appropriate PLOs. If Northwest has not yet created guidelines that describe course-level characteristics differentiating lower division, upper division and graduate courses, they

might consider doing so. Such guidelines can be helpful for maintaining clear differences in the rigor and depth of courses at all levels.

The quality of Northwest's programs and learning goals are consistent across campus locations and modes of delivery. Evidence in the Outcomes Inventory and elsewhere in the evidence file demonstrates that assessment of student achievement of the ILOs and PLOs for all academic programs is measured and reported by academic unit, by campus location and by mode of delivery. A lack of evidence comparing learning outcome achievement across delivery modes was a concern expressed in the 2018 team report, and Northwest has responded in the assurance argument by offering convincing evidence of such assessment. The institution's ongoing accreditation by the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP) assures that dual-credit offerings are of similar quality as traditional campus offerings. Further, over a dozen academic programs have special accreditation or endorsement by their professional or state organizations, which is additional confirmation of the quality and consistency of Northwest's programs and learning goals.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.B - Core Component 3.B

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

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

Northwest's general education curriculum (or "Core") is appropriate for its mission and the scope of the institution's offerings, and the institution conveys the associated purposes, content and learning outcomes. To ensure quality and appropriateness of their offerings, Northwest aligns its Core learning outcomes and required credit hours with competencies and expectations articulated in the state's Transfer Guidelines for Student Transfer and Articulation among Missouri Colleges and Universities. Further, the aims of the general education program are communicated to students in venues such as course syllabi, the first-year student University Seminar course, and the undergraduate course catalog.

Northwest's faculty built the general education curriculum of a framework focused on values such as practicing lifelong learning, developing career competencies, critical thinking, and acting as leaders. Further, the curriculum fosters profession-based learning that includes co-curricular engagement, internship opportunities and capstone experiences. Oversight of the curriculum comes from the Designated Curriculum Matters committee and office of the provost.

A Northwest education recognizes human and cultural diversity to prepare students to live and work in a multicultural world. The academic mission is guided in part by Inclusive Excellence, an equity-focused framework centering on four "pillars": access and success, education and scholarship, institutional viability and vitality, and climate and intergroup relations. The Inclusive Excellence Framework influences the general education Core, for example, and the institution reports that a high number of its students rate as being proficient in assessments of diversity, equity and inclusion.

Further, learning outcomes in many academic programs engage students in cultural diversity competencies. Ancillary to the curriculum, offices such as the Office of Diversity and Inclusion and the International Involvement Center contribute to human and cultural diversity in the academic mission.

Critical inquiry and scholarship by faculty and students is part of Northwest's mission and offerings. The Faculty Handbook articulates expectations for faculty research productivity, especially for those in tenured and tenure-track positions. Northwest maintains a listing of faculty scholarship through its Creative Scholarly Accomplishments portal. Degree programs include learning outcomes about modes of inquiry, and analyzing and communicating information. Faculty Research Grants are available, as is a grants coordinator to support faculty in seeking external funding. Funding is available to undergraduate and graduate students for research as well as for conference travel. Undergraduate students are expected to engage in scholarship and creative work through the professional seminars, capstone courses or capstone experiences that are required components in all undergraduate programs, and all graduate programs have research requirements.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.C - Core Component 3.C

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

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

Northwest is seeking to ensure overall balance in diversity of faculty and staff appropriate to its mission and constituencies. In addition to being an EEOC employer that complies with Title IX and other federal and state laws relative to diversity, Northwest has established its Inclusive Excellence Framework to encourage diversity. The Inclusive Excellence Action Team steers implementation of the framework, which is a model for fostering an inclusive atmosphere through things such as programming and training, internal and external review of policies and procedures, etc. Current emphases in Inclusive Excellence include efforts to retain employees from historically underrepresented communities.

There are sufficient numbers of faculty to carry out necessary faculty roles both within and outside of the classroom. Eighty-one percent of Northwest's faculty are full-time, an enviable proportion when compared nationwide. According to data shown in the Academic Program Reviews, faculty are broadly vested in areas of their purview, including managing the curriculum, articulating and assessing learning outcomes, and ensuring faculty qualifications. Additionally, faculty participation in institutional matters such as advising on policy, participating in searches, and strategic planning is also extensive.

Northwest ensures the qualification of its faculty members, including dual credit instructors. The

Provost's office oversees policies in this regard, and in 2022 undertook a full review of existing faculty to verify their meeting HLC and state (MDHEWD) standards for faculty qualification. New hires undergo a similar review process, which includes submission of official transcripts. Northwest's policies on faculty qualification are consistent across locations, including in dual-credit settings.

The Faculty Handbook requires, and the online Northwest Performance System (NPS) provides the mechanism for, robust annual evaluations of faculty. This process includes requirements that faculty obtain peer observations of their teaching as well as regular student course evaluations. Faculty present annual evaluation portfolios to demonstrate meeting the standards both of the campus and of their academic unit, and those portfolios are then reviewed by the chair or equivalent supervisor and submitted to the office of the Provost for review. Annual review of faculty members who carry administrative responsibilities follows a similar process.

Northwest has established processes to ensure that instructors are current and adept in their discipline and teaching, and supports professional their development. The Faculty Handbook describes various aspects of professional development, including faculty-to-faculty mentoring and peer observations. Other development opportunities are available to instructors, such as those sponsored by the Learning and Teaching Center (LTC), which in 2020-21 provided such services to 1,443 faculty and staff. Financial support ensues through budgeted travel and professional development money and research grants.

Faculty are required to offer a minimum number of office hours and must be responsive to contact from students in a timely way. This includes returning emails from students in online-only programs within 24 hours. The Northwest Success 360 online platform also includes a communication tool for contacting students about academic progress; while this platform is new since 2021, the previous platform, called Starfish, was used at high rates for communication with students and setting appointments between faculty and students.

Staff at Northwest are appropriately qualified, trained and offered opportunities for professional development. The Office of Human Resources maintains position descriptions that outline qualifications and expectations and ensure the integrity of the search and hire process. Staff performance is evaluated annually by supervisors and next-line supervisors. Further, evidence shows that HR provides ongoing personal and professional development opportunities for staff as well as area-specific trainings to those who work directly with students. Academic advisors and success coaches all possess a relevant master's degree and are active members of NACADA. Further training for staff ensues through summer retreats and monthly meetings where best practices are reviewed.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.D - Core Component 3.D

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

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

Northwest provides suitable student support that address needs of students from various demographics. These services are managed through the Student Success Center (SSC), which assists students through advising and coaching. As a sampling, there are programs to serve new students (First-Year Experience), transfers (New transfer and Returning Student Orientation and Registration), existing students (Supplemental Instruction) and athletes (Student-Athlete Success). Northwest offers an array of these and similar services for both general and specific student populations.

Likewise, preparatory instruction and learning support are available to all students, and there are processes to guide incoming students into appropriate courses and programs. From the Math Lab to the Writing Center to Office of Equity, Accessibility and Accommodations, Northwest evidences that they provide broad support for student learning, and that they have articulated processes effectively to guide students into the right programs and courses. Services are available to students across campus locations.

Students receive academic advising both from professional advisors, and from department faculty once they have declared a major. Northwest differentiates its services by student population based on their needs. For example, first-year students, transfers, returning students, international students and graduate students all receive guidance appropriate to their circumstances. The SSC provides clarity as to the role of each entity that advises students so that there is common understanding and expectations.

The university's infrastructure and resources are sufficient to support effective teaching and learning. In 2016 a professional evaluation of academic facilities was completed to facilitate long range master planning. Ongoing investment in teaching and learning facilities is evidenced in part by the use of designated student fees and budgeted equipment and technology monies. Further, learning in the arts

is supported such as through donor contributions, endowment funds and budgeted facilities upgrades. Likewise, clinical sites support teacher education programs, communication students gain professional experience in the television and radio studios, and the university supports various museums as well as a state arboretum.

Northwest guides students in using information resources, such as through the digital literacy course requirement for all undergraduate degree programs. This requirement supports one of the seven institutional learning outcomes, Managing Information. The campus Owens Library provides training, consultation and research guides to foster information literacy. Campus level policies about ethical and responsible uses of information and research subjects steer the development of student competence in conducting research and using information resources.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary

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

Rationale

Northwest provides quality education to its students. Academic offerings are current and require appropriate levels of student performance. Learning goals are appropriately differentiated by level and consistent across teaching modalities. The general education curriculum (or “Core”) aligns with Northwest’s mission and is designed to impart broad knowledge and skills that the faculty believe to be important. Its purposes are clearly conveyed to stakeholders. Both faculty and students contribute to Northwest’s scholarly and creative work, and students are guided in learning research and information literacy.

The institution has taken measures to ensure greater diversity of faculty and staff and provides sufficient faculty and staff to serve in their respective roles. Student success is fostered by trained professionals who provide appropriate intake, mentoring and intervention as needed. Regular review of faculty and staff performance, orientation to their duties and ongoing professional development are in place. Further, Northwest has the necessary infrastructure and resources to support quality teaching and learning, as well as processes to ensure that faculty are current in their discipline, adept at their teaching and regularly accessible to students.

4 - Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

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

4.A - Core Component 4.A

The institution ensures the quality of its educational offerings.

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

Northwest Missouri State University (Northwest) continues to employ its practice of regular program reviews through its Northwest Performance System (NPS). Central to that overarching system is its Academic Program Review (APR) based on a five-year rotation, to ensure that all programs are evaluated regularly. Its use of uniform rubrics (the “Curriculum Relevance Scorecard”) reinforces that process, and ensures comprehensive evaluation of each program with consistency. Externally accredited programs are included in this process. Evidence provided for programs reviewed under the 5-year rotation thus far indicates that the information is proving useful in programs’ planning regarding program currency, and as the basis for focused, data-driven based improvements. The process allows appropriate latitude in the methodologies employed for program review and assessment that might derive from program content-area or specialized curriculum, which is transparent in the APR reporting. Findings from the APR process are disseminated to appropriate

stakeholders under the institution's plans and processes, as is evidence of plans and results of improvements derived from the NPS. As the process unfolds before the next comprehensive review, further evidence of the efficacy of the NPS will be clearer, both to the programs themselves and to future accreditation reviewers, as will any adjustments made to the process itself through time and practice.

The institution continues to employ policies regarding evaluation of transferred credit that ensure the quality of those credits that conform with the state of Missouri's transfer guidelines, referenced in the assurance argument, and explained in its catalogs and transfer materials online. Institutional evaluation of transferable credit is implemented through the registrar's office. Northwest's catalog provides guidance regarding transferability of credit based on the accreditation status of the granting institution. The Northwest catalog also includes detailed explanations for acceptance of credit via testing (CLEP, DANTES, IB, etc.) and how credit applicable to B.A.A.S. degrees from technical/vocational programs may be used in transfer.

Narrative evidence of the breadth of engagement for development and amendment of curriculum occurs through a multi-level, shared governance process centered around a Faculty Senate Curriculum and Degree Requirements (CDR) committee. A document detailing the process is included in the assurance argument. Both curricular and non-curricular proposals to be included in academic catalogs are reviewed using an electronic workflow system.

Northwest continues to maintain authority over course prerequisites, rigor, student learning expectations at the course and program levels using its review processes and Ellucian's Degree Works. Dual credit offerings are included in this evaluation, and are governed under statute and the Coordinating Board for Higher Education guidelines disseminated by the state. Northwest has been accredited by the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP) since 2015. The NACEP website shows current accreditation for Northwest.

The qualification process for instructors for campus and dual credit coursework is subject to processes outlined in the institution's Faculty Hiring Policies and Procedures provided as evidence in the assurance argument, and applies to all programs, regardless of location or mode of delivery. Evaluation of faculty qualification is explained in detail in Criterion 3.

Specialized accreditations for seven of Northwest's programs are noted in the catalog and online. Four additional endorsements or affiliations are also listed. Like many institutions, Northwest does have programs that may choose an external accreditation process specific to content area, and include in their curriculum and program review process a review of whether (or when) additional accreditation might be considered for that program. External accreditation based on content is not required.

Northwest documents a robust tracking process to confirm the success of its graduates six months after graduation. These results of which disseminated for program use in completing the Curriculum Relevance Scorecard and APR reviews. Especially notable is the practice of reaching out to graduates who indicate that they have not secured employment after graduation to offer assistance and support.

Disciplines and programs augment that information with use of employer and alumni surveys, professional advisory groups, and other sources as part of the APR process to inform future planning to enhance student success. Northwest is to be commended for its success in implementing and using this information and intentionally integrating that information into regular curricular and assessment protocols.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

None recommended

4.B - Core Component 4.B

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

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

Northwest engages in ongoing assessment of student learning to support students' achievement of learning objectives broadly, and uses many modes and multiple levels of measures. That assessment begins during summer orientation (the "Writing Challenge" discussed in Criterion 3.D.2) used in part for course placement. Assessment continues throughout a student's progression toward the degree through use of the ETS Proficiency Profile (to assess Core Proficiencies) and the Missouri General Education Assessment (MoGEA). Northwest indicates it is exceeding state-defined benchmarks for achievement based on results of those assessments. A central Assessment Office administers ETS field tests for content-area learning in several disciplines. Administration of an Area Concentration Achievement Tests (ACAT) for Biology, Missouri Content Assessments administered to teacher education candidates, and other instruments also provide data that informs programs on student achievement that are considered in the program review process. Results and analyses from these various instruments are housed within the Northwest Performance System for ease of access by relevant groups as part of overall review processes.

Institutional, Program, and Student learning objectives are assessed at the course and program levels, and it is clear that there is an expectation that programs will use all of these myriad assessments to address overall effectiveness of curricular, co-curricular, and other measures defining student success. According to the institution's argument, "experiential data," specifically in relation to assessment of co-curricular assessment of institutional learning goals, is currently being reviewed by undertaking an inventory of available data by Student Affairs for its use in their "4-UP" planning tool.

Program reviews provided for this assurance review process indicate promise for the effectiveness of this approach to collecting these assessments. The argument indicates that program faculty are satisfied that the process and results are leading to meaningful information and driving improvements to programs. Evidence from program reviews made available to this team reinforce that assertion. It is less clear at this time how this information is deployed into making changes to programs, allowing for building on successes and addressing any gaps in achievement over time. It is

not readily apparent how different constituencies (faculty, student support personnel, bodies concerned with oversight or appropriation of assets to support SLO, PLO, ILO, etc.) incorporate these results into their overall evaluation of the effectiveness of existing program curricula, or how results will directly inform future planning. As Northwest progresses further through periodic program review, more evidence of the effectiveness of its approach to weaving assessment from all of the sources described in the assurance argument into a coherent whole will be more apparent. It is clear that the institution intends to monitor the effectiveness of this robust system. What is not yet clear is how the results of these processes will show greater intentionality in “closing the loop” in future program review and other processes, including curricular development and planning. Future reviews should see progress in using assessment data for strengthening and improving majors, programs and departments.

Criterion 4.B. was “met with concerns” in the final team report for the 2018 comprehensive visit. Their concerns related to the assessment of student learning process in some core areas. Specifically, the team acknowledged the diligence by which Northwest created the multi-tiered system and multi-sourced data related to the different SLO, PLO, and ILO in place, and in development for and dissemination of assessment data described in that argument and again in the current assurance review.

In the broad categories of Learning Outcomes, Scale of Measurement, and issues of Aggregation of Data, the 2018 review team found that there had been a great deal of effort devoted to creating the frameworks to house data (the Program Review Dashboard), but there was not a great deal of evidence available to assure the 2018 team at the time of the efficiency or efficacy of that data’s utility for relevant stakeholders. The current review team had access to the Program Review Dashboard, and verified that assessment data is available for programs, departments and colleges to use.

Learning Outcomes: There is evidence that the alignment of program learning outcomes with institutional learning outcomes is more direct and cohesive than had been achieved at the time of the last review. The current review team understands this can be a complicated process. After reviewing LO assessment data for a number of programs, the current team finds that the progress made in this area is encouraging. Results of the ongoing attention to ensuring that this alignment is explicit and measurable will continue to be a feature of the next 10-year review.

Scale of Measurement: Concern at the time of the site visit indicated that there was concern rising in faculty forums and in the institution’s QI report about different levels of student and program outcomes (a 2-level scale for some LO, 3-level or 4-level for others). It was suggested that review and discussion of a more consistent, “more nuanced” assessment scale (i.e. more than 2-level) would likely guide curricular improvement more effectively and more sustainably campus-wide. This more unified approach to establishing scales of measurement is evident in the 2022 review. Again, this ongoing campus-wide discussion of more consistent scales of measurement of student learning at course, program, and institutional level LOs will be more evident if the current pace of addressing the issues is continued.

Aggregation Issues: Course-level, program-level, and institution-level aggregation of student achievement assessment is abundant at Northwest. As has been discussed in Criterion 3 and 4 of the 2018 argument and evidence, and again in the 2022 argument and evidence, it is a very intensive task to collect, digest, and use this data effectively to improve student learning. What is clear, is that Northwest has made progress in the way in which the varied sources of assessments are aggregated into the Program Review Dashboard. There are improvements in ensuring that there is attention to

understanding when aggregation is useful, and when it is not (i.e. in ensuring rigor appropriate to different levels of achievement in lower-level and upper-level undergraduate program LOs and from undergraduate to graduate learning objectives). Again, there is evidence that Northwest has begun to delineate those and other nuances, but the conversation and actions to refine what is effectively aggregated and where aggregation might hide areas for improvement is worthy of ongoing, deliberate review and improvement.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

None recommended

4.C - Core Component 4.C

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

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

Northwest is committed to educational improvement through defined goals for student retention, persistence, and completion. Its "integrated model of success and retention" is gathered in a "reorganized" team focusing on six areas: academic support; academic advisement and success coaching; academic recovery; new student orientation; first-year experience; and retention support. Fall-to-spring freshman retention rates show great promise from fall 2020 to spring 2022. Goals for retention are also explicit in the "4-Ups" for individual programs.

As has been the case for all aspects of Northwest's assurance report, there is ample evidence of specific processes, protocols and documentation of how performance measures for retention are collected and disseminated. Selection of Northwest as a participant in the AASCU Center for Student Success in 2019 is evidence for how the institution is addressing some of its challenges. Peer-mentoring, review of resource allocation to better serve students in high-risk categories and using that information to deliver meaningful support to students is clearly a goal. What is less clear is evidence to substantiate the results of those efforts. That is not, in itself, cause for great concern, given that many of the processes discussed in the assurance argument are relatively new.

Preliminary evidence from the program reviews completed before the date of this writing indicate that there are clear expectations that data and trends related to supporting student retention and timely completion are central to evaluation of current performance and future planning. By the time of Northwest's next full accreditation review, more ample evidence should demonstrate results of this strategic focus as part of improving student learning.

Processes, methodologies for collection of information, and definitions of information on retention rates, persistence, and completion making use of resources identified through the Association of Institutional Research and MDHEWD are identified as sources of data. Northwest is aware that the 'first-time full-time' standard does not provide a sufficiently nuanced view of retention and graduation rates given Northwest's demographics and mission. Northwest's alliance with Complete College America, its use of 4-UPs across the university, and use of Student Achievement Measure (described as an alternative to federal graduation rate) provides evidence of this awareness. The use of Civitas to provide administrative analytics also indicate understanding of the need to identify consistent sources of information to guide decisions based on commonly agreed to standards and measures.

The narrative provided for Criterion 4.C indicates that Northwest has approached goals for enrollment, retention and graduation. Use of the Curriculum Relevance Scorecard, discussed elsewhere in Criterion 3 and 4, allows constituencies at Northwest to readily see data collated from different sources related to the student experience. What is not as apparent, as has already been noted, is how access to this plethora of data is being incorporated into program effectiveness, whether within the evaluation of course, program, or institutional learning goals or by other units. It is apparent, from the program review documentation shared with the assurance review team, that incorporation of this data is intended to support a culture of integrated assessment supporting student success. As has already been noted, a fuller discussion of the success of this intent will be clearer once there are more examples of how different disciplines and areas within the institution have used this information to support learning goals for students. Good practice is certainly evidenced in the processes and collection of data relevant to achieving Northwest's overall goals. More attention to showing evidence of the creativity and intentionality of use of that data will be a central feature of future reviews for Northwest to sustain this focus and energy. Initial results are promising.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

None recommended.

4.S - Criterion 4 - Summary

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

Rationale

The institution demonstrates that it takes seriously its responsibility to insure the quality of its educational programs and services that support those programs. It evaluates the effectiveness of its many levels of student learning objectives through established processes designed to promote continuous, ongoing improvement.

Northwest continues to employ its practice of regular program reviews through its Northwest Performance System (NPS). Central to that overarching system is its Academic Program Review (APR) based on a five-year rotation, to ensure that all programs are evaluated regularly. Its use of uniform rubrics (the “Curriculum Relevance Scorecard”) reinforces that process, and ensures consistent and comprehensive evaluation of each program. Externally accredited programs are included in this process.

Northwest engages in ongoing assessment of student learning to support students’ achievement of learning objectives broadly, and using many modes and multiple levels of measures. That assessment begins during summer orientation and continues at regular milestone points throughout a student’s career. That assessment is collated and available to stakeholders as appropriate, and there is evidence that the institution continues to address alignment and logistical issues to integrate that information into well-documented processes.

Northwest is committed to educational improvement through defined goals for student retention, persistence, and completion. Its ‘integrated model of success and retention’ indicate that commitment. Fall-to-spring freshman retention rates show great promise from fall 2020 to spring 2022. Goals for retention are also explicit in the “4-Ups” for individual programs.

As has been noted, issues raised from the 2019 HLC review for Criterion 4 are under active consideration and adjustment. Program review and other processes continue to yield data and areas for continued evaluation of what is assessed, and where and how it is disseminated. Continued focus on student learning, and how assessment of academic and support services deployed to meet that obligation to its students, is ongoing. Northwest shows progress toward efficient and effective service to its institutional mission.

5 - Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning

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

5.A - Core Component 5.A

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

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

Northwest Missouri State University leadership demonstrates it is effective in enabling the institution to fulfill its mission through robust planning, serving more students, assessing their learning via mature processes, and stable financial management.

Shared governance is facilitated through bylaws and handbooks that are accessible to participants. The assurance argument includes bylaws or handbooks that describe the roles and responsibilities for Northwest Board of Regents, faculty, staff, and students. There is evidence from institutional, internal governance-group, and Board of Regents minutes that leadership and campus employee groups are working collaboratively to address challenges and opportunities.

The institution uses a leadership development framework it labels the Northwest Leadership model, as a guide to hire, set expectations, develop, and promote University administrative leaders. Attention is devoted to improving decision-making through a framework labeled RACI - responsible, accountable, consulted, and informed -- to build the campus's capacity to evaluate opportunities and challenges.

The institution's administration uses data (including student performance data disaggregated by race) to make decisions in its own and constituents' best interests. The Northwest Performance System is an established, documented guide that describes how university performance is assessed in three

broad areas; performance measurement (what is measured, why, and when), performance analysis and review (who reviews performance, when is it reviewed, and how it is communicated), and performance improvement (how data is used for improvement). This performance assessment system is aligned with the university's strategic plan, Adventure 2030, that emphasizes four themes: Learners, Enrollment and Completion, People, and Operations. Within each thematic area, strategic initiatives focus attention on priorities. For Learners, these are academic, student success, and employer programs. For Enrollment and Completion, these are initiatives to strengthen educational pathways and inclusivity. For People, these are engaging, valuing, developing, supporting, and recognizing the strengths and accomplishments of employees. For Operations, these include infrastructure and resource plans, pricing, continuous improvement, and staffing models.

Student learning and co-curricular experiences are both assessed using common constructs. Undergraduates reaching 60 credits are required to take an assessment of core proficiencies, and six disciplines implement additional learning assessments covering knowledge in their majors. Individual academic programs are assessed for continuous improvement every five-years.

Student engagement and satisfaction are tracked using the National Survey of Student Engagement and the Noel-Levitz inventory, respectively, but only one example of how administration has responded to such data are provided in the argument (e.g., improving lighting in parking lots).

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

5.B - Core Component 5.B

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

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

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

The institution has qualified and trained operational staff and infrastructure sufficient to support its operations. As documented in 3C.2., the institution maintains a high proportion of full-time faculty (81 percent) compared to national levels (49 percent) and 67 percent possess doctoral or other terminal degrees. The student-to-faculty ratio is 21:1. The institution provided evidence that, beginning in 2018, 9.25 additional non-instructional staff positions were added to support strategic growth in online and international programming.

There is evidence of the adequacy of the campus physical infrastructure in the following areas: instructional spaces (e.g., classrooms, lecture halls, labs, studios); overall campus acreage and features; academic space innovation to meet current and projected needs; and other infrastructure upgrades.

The goals incorporated into the mission and any related statements are realistic in light of the institution's organization, resources and opportunities. Northwest's goals are aligned with its State-defined mission and captured in the Northwest Performance System, a guide to assessing performance of the university, that has been in place over 20 years. Goals align with strategic themes and include:

- serving learner, employer, and community needs through curricular and co-curricular offerings, and improving student success;
- enhancing enrollment and completion through strengthening educational pathways to completion and career readiness, and inclusiveness;
- being a best place to work through building an inclusive culture, supporting the development of colleagues, their well-being, and elevating employee strengths and contributions; and

- continuing to adapt and strengthen its business model through diversifying revenue streams, remaining affordable for students, striving to continuously improve, and maintaining flexible staffing.

These goals appear realistic. Recent enrollments at Northwest are strong, overall and relative to other institutions in the State. Trends in student success rates are positive as well with the second highest fall-to-fall retention rate of 75.6% in 2021 and fall-to-spring retention of 92.5% in spring 2022.

The institution has a well-developed process in place for budgeting and for monitoring its finances. The institution's fiscal allocations support achievement of its educational aims. Its enrollment portfolio has evolved with growth in graduate enrollments compensating for declines in the undergraduate population. Northwest Missouri State is able to maintain affordability in its tuition and fees relative to other institutions as evidenced by its "top 23 percent" affordability ranking and rates that include laptops and textbooks, supporting efforts to close equity gaps among Pell-eligible and students of color populations. The institution has maintained solid "above the zone" Composite Financial Index (CFI) levels in recent years. Fiscal stability is bolstered by successful fundraising with the recent campaign reaching \$55 million, exceeding its goal by \$10 million and helping to fund two new buildings. Energy savings are obtained via conversion of power generation to biomass steam. Northwest has a significant and unmet need, estimated at \$100 million, for deferred maintenance of campus facilities. While significant, this is not uncommon among public regional institutions.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

5.C - Core Component 5.C

The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning and improvement.

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

Northwest Missouri engages in systematic and integrated planning and improvement. Overall, the amount spent on the institution's primary mission of educating students is tracked and reported by the institution to the Board of Regents as part of performance assessment and, in the last reported cycle, was 59.5 percent.

There are ongoing efforts to collaboratively set, revise, and respond to mission-critical priorities and strategic themes as part of annual budget-setting and strategic planning processes. The Northwest Leadership Team and the larger, cross-functional Extended Leadership Team are the key groups involved in moving the Strategic Planning Process forward. Those who participate are assisted by a framework for environmental scanning that includes reviewing the political, economic, social, technological and organizational factors that are the basis for defining strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing the institution.

The recent output of this process, the Adventure 2030 plan, emerged from a process including the environmental scan, reaffirming the institution's vision, mission, its "why", goal setting, theme-setting, assessment, tactics, and actions.

Beyond the broadly-articulated emphasis on educating students, there is evidence of an effective budgeting process in place. This includes a timeline for making budget requests and considering these requests for discretionary funds in light of strategic priorities, followed by a timeline for making decisions and for sharing decisions with the Extended Leadership Team.

The institution's performance, tracked as part of the Northwest Performance System, is carried

through to the operations of academic departments and units through Academic Program Reviews, Academic Leadership Team 4-UPs, Facility Services 4-UPs, and Board of Regents meeting reporting and discussions. Meeting minutes provide evidence that these all appear to be active, on-going processes ensuring that planning and performance tracking leads to actions and continuous improvement.

Northwest also collects information from employee groups via surveys and shares the feedback received with campus constituents. Results from the 2021/22 Employee Engagement Survey include the top three concerns of faculty and staff groups.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary

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

Rationale

Northwest Missouri State University's leadership demonstrates its effectiveness in enabling the institution to fulfill its mission. The institution's resource base is sufficient to support its educational offerings and its plans to strengthen them in the future, and it is using systematic and integrated processes to develop and implement plans to improve.

Review Dashboard

Number	Title	Rating
1	Mission	
1.A	Core Component 1.A	Met
1.B	Core Component 1.B	Met
1.C	Core Component 1.C	Met
1.S	Criterion 1 - Summary	
2	Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct	
2.A	Core Component 2.A	Met
2.B	Core Component 2.B	Met
2.C	Core Component 2.C	Met
2.D	Core Component 2.D	Met
2.E	Core Component 2.E	Met
2.S	Criterion 2 - Summary	
3	Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources and Support	
3.A	Core Component 3.A	Met
3.B	Core Component 3.B	Met
3.C	Core Component 3.C	Met
3.D	Core Component 3.D	Met
3.S	Criterion 3 - Summary	
4	Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement	
4.A	Core Component 4.A	Met
4.B	Core Component 4.B	Met
4.C	Core Component 4.C	Met
4.S	Criterion 4 - Summary	
5	Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning	
5.A	Core Component 5.A	Met
5.B	Core Component 5.B	Met
5.C	Core Component 5.C	Met
5.S	Criterion 5 - Summary	

Review Summary

Conclusion

Northwest Missouri State University is a comprehensive, moderately-selective masters large institution, admitting and serving primarily first-time, full-time, degree-seeking and transfer students. Northwest provides its approximately 5,306 undergraduate students and 2,564 graduate students with a variety of on-ground and online academic programs that are approved by the Missouri Department of Higher Education (MDHE) and the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). The university's campus is located in Maryville, Missouri and also has two off-campus locations, in Kansas City and Independence, Missouri. Northwest has experienced a significant increase in its graduate student population, primarily through a rapid increase in online graduate program offerings.

Northwest's mission (Northwest focuses on student success - every student, every day) is articulated publicly and operationalized throughout the institution. It is reaffirmed by the Extended Leadership Team at the beginning of each strategic planning cycle, most recently in 2021. Northwest has very intentionally integrated diversity, equity and inclusion into its educational offerings and institutional processes. In addition, the Northwest Leadership Team adopted the Inclusive Excellence Framework as a model for an inclusive campus environment. Northwest demonstrates that it acts with integrity and strives for conduct that is ethical and responsible. They have developed an expansive scope of relevant policies to which they hold the Northwest community accountable, as well as various means to resolve alleged violations. The policies include both internal and external obligations and are designed to comply with institutional, state and federal regulations. They have adequately addressed concerns from their most recent reaffirmation review related to training for ethical research. Northwest provides quality education to its students. Academic offerings are current and require appropriate levels of student performance. Northwest has demonstrated that learning goals are appropriately differentiated by level and consistent across teaching modalities. Northwest demonstrates that it takes seriously its responsibility to ensure the quality of its educational programs and services that support those programs. It evaluates the effectiveness of its many levels of student learning objectives through established processes designed to promote continuous, ongoing improvement. In response to concerns from the previous review, program review and other processes continue to yield data, and these processes are reviewed for what is assessed and where and how it is disseminated. Northwest's leadership demonstrates its effectiveness in enabling the institution to fulfill its mission. The institution's resource base is sufficient to support its educational offerings and its plans to strengthen them in the future, and it is using systematic and integrated processes to develop and implement plans to improve.

Overall Recommendations

Criteria For Accreditation

Met

Sanctions Recommendation

No Sanction

Pathways Recommendation

Eligible to choose

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

