Northwest Missouri State University

HLC ID 1453

OPEN PATHWAY: Reaffirmation Review   Visit Date: 10/15/2018

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President

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Context and Nature of Review

Visit Date

10/15/2018
Mid-Cycle Reviews include:

- The Year 4 Review in the Open and Standard Pathways
- The Biennial Review for Applying institutions

Reaffirmation Reviews include:

- The Year 10 Review in the Open and Standard Pathways
- The Review for Initial Candidacy for Applying institutions
- The Review for Initial Accreditation for Applying institutions
- The Year 4 Review for Standard Pathway institutions that are in their first accreditation cycle after attaining initial accreditation

Scope of Review

- Reaffirmation Review
- Federal Compliance
- On-site Visit
- Multi-Campus Visit (if applicable)

- Federal Compliance 2018

Institutional Context

Northwest Missouri State University (Northwest) has been accredited by the HLC since 1921, and is currently in good standing and on the Open Pathway. This was the institution's first Comprehensive Evaluation in the Open Pathway, as its last accreditation visit, in 2012, Northwest was on the AQIP Pathway. The university's HLC Quality Initiative, "Student Preparedness through Relevant Curriculum," was approved and accepted by the Commission in 2016. The five-person team reviewing Northwest on October 15 and 16, 2018 included the team chair, Dr. Christine M. Imbra of St. Cloud State University, Dr. Patrick G. Guilfoile of the University of Wisconsin - Stout, Dr. David S. Jackson of the University of Nebraska, Dr. Jennifer L. Miller of Mercy College of Health Sciences, and Dr. Gertrude P. Pannirselvam of Southern Illinois University - Edwardsville. While on site the team verified the Federal Compliance report prepared by Dr. Benjamin Young of Ivy Tech Community College.

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. Throughout its 113-year history, the university 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 5,654 undergraduate students and 1,203 graduate students with a variety of 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, 95 baccalaureate degrees, 73 minors, 18 pre-professional programs, 27 masters degrees, 3 specialist degrees, 5 graduate certificate programs, 3 undergraduate certificate programs, and 1

cooperative doctoral degree that is conferred by the University of Missouri - Columbia.

The university's bucolic campus is located in Maryville, Missouri and is designated the Missouri Arboretum, recently obtaining Level II accreditation, one of just 86 arboretums in the world to earn that designation. The campus boasts over 1,700 trees and more than 130 different varieties of plants, making a walk around the grounds on a autumn day a sight to behold. Northwest also has two off-campus locations, in Kansas City and Independence, Missouri, where students are able to attend classes and meet with faculty members.

The institution's 2018 enrollment rates of 8.2% overall and 9.3% for first-year students; retention rates of 78% fall 2018, which is up from 73.5% fall 2017; a graduation rate that is in the 89th percentile; and career placement rates of 97% for undergraduate and 99% for graduate students, all provide evidence of a healthy university profile. Students are able to enroll in courses and programs online, face-to-face, and in blended delivery formats, on campus and at the two off-campus sites.

Northwest's mission statement indicates that the institution, "focuses on student success - every student, every day." The visiting team's experience supports the notion that campus and community constituents know, embrace, live, and focus on the mission in making day-to-day decisions and long-range plans. The shortened version of the mission, "every student, every day," is the mantra heard across campus.

Since its last accreditation visit, Northwest recently implemented several system processes that provide transparency, data, and information to campus and community constituents, including the Northwest Performance System, Board of Regents Dashboard, five Strategic Objectives connected to the University Goals and Strategic Plan, and the Academic Program Review tied to performance improvement - while many of these processes are still in their infancy, the institution demonstrated it is on track to building a strong infrastructure; has carried out projects that are transforming the campus, including the new state-of-the-art Hughes Field House, renovation to twenty campus buildings, and a much needed new home for the University Police Department; and has won numerous state and national awards, including the 2018 Christa McAuliffe Excellence in Teacher Education Award, the 2018 Educational Fundraising Award from the Council for Advancement and Support of Education, a prized global distinction for its arboretum, and its third recognition from the Missouri State Recycling Program for its broad-range sustainability efforts and development.

The university has been deliberate about increasing student enrollment and retention by offering options and services such as online program and course delivery; developing a Student Success Center; and creating the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in 2016 headed by a vice president who reports directly to the president. In addition, the Board of Regents is currently operating at full capacity after a year with empty seats around the table; faculty and staff members reflect a broad range of specializations and experiences; and Northwest students, according to the 2017 - 2018 Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Survey, indicate higher satisfaction rates than national and regional comparison groups for first-year and third-year students.

The institution is poising 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 touch-points at every level of the institution, and although the work is in its early stages, efforts are starting to pay off for the campus. While the visiting team noted three Core Components met with concern (2.E, 3.A., and 4.B.), there was consensus among team members that Northwest be given time to fully operationalize their new systems, focus on the concerns noted in this report, and report outcomes and results in an embedded Interim Monitoring report during the Year 4 Review.

Interactions with Constituencies

Meeting with Northwest President and Leadership Team on 10/15/18 from 8:15 - 9:00 a.m.

President

Provost

Vice President of Student Affairs

Vice President of Strategy and Operations

Vice President of Finance and Facility Services

Vice President of External Relations

Vice President of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Meeting with Northwest Assurance Team on 10/15/18 from 9:00 - 10:00 a.m.

President

Provost

Associate Provost, Arts and Sciences

Provost Fellow in Assessment

Director, Institutional Research

Associate Director, Institutional Research

Associate Professor

Meeting with CFO and Director of Financial Assistance on 10/15/18 from 10:00 - 11:00 a.m.

Vice President of Finance and Facility Services

Controller

Director, Financial Assistance

Open Forum: Criteria 3 and 4 on 10/15/18 from 10:00 - 11:00 a.m.

Associate Provost, Graduate and Professional Studies

Assistant Professor/Faculty Senator

Chair, Department of Math and Statistics

Senior Instructor/Director of Didactic Program in Dietetics

Generalist, Human Resources

Associate Professor/Faculty Senate Vice President/Graduate Coordinator, Department of English

Professor/Faculty Senate Past President

Associate Professor/Faculty President

Director of Nursing

Director of Health Science and Wellness

Senior Data Analyst, Institutional Research

Data Analyst, Institutional Research

Director, Communication and Mass Media

Associate Professor/Faculty Senator

Director, Partnerships and Placement

Coordinator, Educational Leadership

Director, Computer Science and Information Systems

Dean, School of Education/Director, Teacher Education

Director, Academic Success and Retention

Registrar

Chair, Humanities and Social Sciences

Adjunct Faculty, Humanities and Social Sciences

Associate Director, Institutional Research

Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences

Assistant Professor and Provost Fellow in Assessment

Chair, Natural Sciences/Professor of Geography

Director, Learning and Teaching Center

Chair, Fine and Performing Arts

Focus Area: Governance on 10/15/18 from 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Associate Vice President, Student Affairs

Associate Professor/Provost Fellow

Student Senate President

Student Senate Vice President

Coordinator, MBA Program

Director, Institutional Research

Vice President of Strategy and Operations

Faculty Senate President

Vice President of Finance and Facility Services

Director, Diversity and Inclusion

Coordinator, Special Education/Assistant Professor/Graduate Council

Professor, Political Science

Director, Booth School of Business

Chair, Board of Regents

Vice President of Student Affairs

Professor, Humanities and Social Sciences

Regent, Board of Regents

Professor/Past President Faculty Senate

Assistant Professor, Communication/Director, University Seminar

Chair, Fine and Performing Arts

Associate Director, Institutional Research

Dean, School of Education/Director, Teacher Education

Chair, Natural Sciences/Professor, Geography

Director, Communication and Mass Media

Chair, Math and Statistics/Former Chair of University Chairs and Director's Council

Director, Health Sciences and Wellness

Generalist, Human Resources

Director, Computer Science and Information Systems

Drop-in Session: Student Government & Students on 10/15/18 from 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Seven (7) students attended the session.

Lunch Meeting with Board of Regents on 10/15/18 from 12:00 - 1:30 p.m.

Eight (8) of nine (9) Regents attended the lunch meeting (the student Regent was not present).

Focus Area: Academics on 10/15/18 from 3:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Associate Professor, Marketing

Professor, Math and Statistics

Assistant Professor, Language, Literature, Writing

Chair, Designated Curriculum Matters

Chair, Curriculum Degree Requirements

Chair, Math and Statistics/Former Chair of University Chairs and Director's Council

Dean, School of Education/Director, Teacher Education

Director, Institutional Research

Faculty Senate President

Associate Professor/Assistant Director, School of Computer Science and Information Systems

Assistant Professor, Computer Science and Information Systems

Director, Learning and Teaching Center

Director, School of Computer Science and Information Systems

Associate Provost, Graduate and Professional Studies

Senior Data Analyst, Institutional Research

Director, Academic Success and Retention

Associate Professor

Associate Provost, Arts and Sciences

Open Forum: Criterion 5 on 10/15/18 from 3:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Generalist, Human Resources

Controller

Director, Forensics/Senior Instructor

Professor, Parks and Recreation, and Gerontology

Assistant Vice President, Student Affairs - Residential and Auxiliary Services

Vice President, Student Affairs

Vice President, Strategy and Operations

Chief Finance Officer, Northwest Foundation

Assistant Professor, Parks and Recreation

Director, School of Health Sciences

Director, Booth School of Business

Registrar

Assistant Chair, Natural Sciences

Data Analyst, Institutional Research

Associate Director, Institutional Research

Provost Fellow in Assessment

Chair, Language, Literature, and Writing

Instructor, Emergency and Disaster Management

Chair, Humanities and Social Sciences

Instructor, Math and Statistics

Vice President of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

<u>Open Forum: Criteria 1 and 2 on 10/15/18 from 4:00 - 5:00 p.m.</u>

Generalist, Human Resources

Controller

Faculty Member, Agriculture

Professor, Parks and Recreation

Vice President of Student Affairs

Vice President of Strategy and Operations

Chief Finance Office, Northwest Foundation

Professor, Communication and Mass Media

Executive Secretary, Graduate Office

Director, Computer Science and Information Systems

Director, Health Science and Wellness

Director, Booth School of Business

Director, Academic Success and Retention

Registrar

Associate Professor/Assistant Chair, Language, Literature, and Writing

Vice President of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Data Analyst, Institutional Research

Associate Director, Institutional Research

Past President, Faculty Senate

Chair, Language, Literature, and Writing

Chair, Humanities and Social Sciences

Director of Diversity and Inclusion

Director, Learning and Teaching Center

Chair, Math and Statistics

Faculty Senate President

Dean, School of Education/Director, Teacher Education

Senior Data Analyst, Institutional Research

Chief of Police

Focus Area: Institutional Effectiveness on 10/16/18 from 8:00 - 9:00 a.m.

Provost

Professor, Fine and Performing Arts

Associate Provost, Graduate and Professional Studies

Director, Learning and Teaching Center

Assistant Professor, School of Education

Senior Data Analyst, Institutional Research

Associate Director, Institutional Research

Assistant Director and Associate Professor, Computer Science and Information Systems

Director, School of Health Science and Wellness

Provost Fellow in Assessment

Vice President of Finance and Facility Services

Registrar

Director, Agricultural Sciences

Director, Institutional Research

Faculty Senate President

Professor/Faculty Senate Past President

Drop-in Session: Faculty Senate & Faculty on 10/16/18 from 9:00 - 9:30 a.m.

Ten (10) faculty members attended the session.

Drop-in Session: Staff Council & Staff on 10/16/18 from 9:30 - 10:00 a.m.

Seven (7) staff members attended the session.

Exit Session on 10/16/18 from 12:00 - 12:30 p.m.

President

Provost

Additional Documents

In addition to the documents found in the Assurance System, which include the Evidence File, Northwest's Assurance Argument, and Addendum, the team reviewed the following documents during the visit:

Net price calculator Missouri Campus Free Expression Act: http://www.senate.mo.gov/15info/pdf-bill/perf/SB93.pdf Academic Integrity tutorial: http://libguides.nwmissouri.edu/integrity View all majors: https://www.nwmissouri.edu/academics/majors.htm

NW Missouri Common Data Set for 2016-2017 NW Facts https://www.nwmissouri.edu/facts/index.htm

Research Misconduct Policy: https://www.nwmissouri.edu/fsenate/pdf/research/ResearchMisconduct.pdf

Board Write-Up Grants policy

Grants Process Flow document

LLW Grade Appeal document

Stakeholder Engagement document

1 - Mission

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

1.A - Core Component 1.A

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

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

Rating

Met

Evidence

Northwest Missouri State University's (Northwest) mission statement indicates that the institution, "focuses on student success - every student, every day" and the vision portrays its desire to become an academic leader in the region by declaring, "we will be THE university of choice for a comprehensive, exceptional student experience." Northwest lists student success; scholarship and life-long learning; intercultural competence; collaboration; respect and integrity; strategic thinking; and excellence as its core values.

The current mission statement was approved by the Board of Regents (BOR) on October 29, 2010, after a campus process that was inclusive of a variety of campus constituents including faculty, staff, students, and administrators. The university's Extended Leadership Team (ELT), consisting of approximately 50 campus representatives, re-affirmed the mission statement in spring 2018, which it does at the beginning of each strategic planning cycle. The mission guides the strategic planning process (SPP) and strategic plan, referred to as "Focus", and connects to the university's five strategic objectives (SOs) consisting of academic programming and strategic enrollment; learning and college completion; diversity, equity and inclusion; high performance culture; and organizational viability. "Focus," also reinforces the institution's student success agenda and mission. In addition, the Northwest Performance System (NPS), a document that explains the institution's structure and its use of measures and indicators, also provides evidence that the university is mission-driven.

Further, the Board of Regents (BOR) include mission understanding into their on-boarding sessions with new board members, connecting their work, strategies, and actions to the mission. Conversations with the entire BOR provided evidence to the team that they understand the institution's mission and that their decisions and actions are guided by the mission. One Regent stated

that although they are all appointed by the governor, "everything we do centers on students, there are no politics involved." The BOR is also very engaged with the campus, citing examples of Regents attending sports events, building openings, and a variety of other campus activities. As an aside, all but one member of the BOR is an alumni of Northwest. Also, Northwest's HLC Quality Initiative focuses on "student preparedness through relevant curriculum", which is directly related to the university's mission and culture of learning. And, in a final indication of the university's mission-informed and mission-driven culture, on July 6, 2017, the Maryville Daily Forum reported in a message from Northwest's president, that the 2018 budget, approved by the BOR on June 23, 2017, reflects measures used to make cuts to the budget that were aligned with the university's mission and strategic plan. These mission-driven cuts were affirmed in a variety of meetings with the President, his Cabinet, and the BOR.

Northwest provides students with a variety of academic programs that are approved by the Missouri Department of Higher Education (MDHE) and the HLC. Regarding educational programs, the institution reports 1 associate degree, 95 baccalaureate degrees, 73 minors, 18 pre-professional programs, 27 masters degrees, 5 graduate certificate programs, 3 undergraduate certificate programs, 3 specialist degrees, and 1 cooperative doctorate in educational leadership which is conferred by the University of Missouri - Columbia. However, there is a discrepancy regarding some of those numbers (detailed in Criterion 2). Specifically, for example, confusion about counting the number of undergraduate degrees (95) or the number of undergraduate degrees and concentrations/tracks within those degrees (over 120 listed on the institutional website).

The university has two additional locations where they provide programs and courses for students in the region, Northwest - Kansas City which has been operating since the early 2000s and Northwest - Independence which opened this academic year. Both locations are authorized by MDHE and HLC. In addition, all Northwest academic programs include mission and purpose statements that are aligned with the university's mission of being student-centered.

Program reviews are systematic and occur on a five year rotation. These evaluations are submitted to, and reviewed internally by, the MDHE and CBHE. Those programs that are accredited by outside accrediting agencies are externally reviewed. All accredited programs are up-to-date and current in their affiliation.

Northwest also offers a variety of student support services in recognition of the needs of particular students/groups they serve. Examples include TRIO programs, international student support services, veterans services, services for students with disabilities and special needs, services for LGBTQIA+ and multicultural students, students in need of academic support through the Student Success Center, students in need of financial support through on-campus employment opportunities, a wellness and fitness center where students are able meet with counselors, a university program that includes laptop computers in the price of tuition, and textbook rental that is just $6.00/credit for students. In addition, a variety of student support services and student organizations, the Student Senate, and Student Affairs all have mission and purpose statements that align with the university's mission. The team toured the Student Union and were impressed by how the various student-focused offices are integrated and work collaboratively on behalf of students.

The university is one of 80 post-secondary institutions in Missouri. The institution serves approximately 6,800 students and is designated as a moderately selective university - large, by the Carnegie Foundation. Northwest accepts students in two ways, generally based on an examination of academic ability, an ACT composite score of 21 or higher, student high school class rank, and the student's experiences and potential to succeed. A variety of other indicators such as letters of recommendation and personal student statements are also used periodically to assess a student's

potential to be successful at Northwest. Sixty-five percent of the students at Northwest are Missouri residents and twenty-three percent are residents of border states (Iowa, Nebraska, and Kansas). In addition, thirteen percent of students at Northwest are classified as domestic under-represented; fifty-six percent are female and forty-four percent are male; thirty percent are first-generation; thirty-two percent are Pell-eligible; and seventy-five percent are between the ages of 18-22, all of which are characteristics of a moderately selective institution and consistent with the university's mission.

The institution's planning and budgeting priorities align with and support the mission. The team was given multiple examples of how the institution's mission and strategic plan inform budget decisions, starting with the BOR who set annual institutional goals based on information from the president and strategic plan priorities in a given year. Planning begins with an institutional environmental scan, from which the strategic plan and five strategic objectives were formed. An example of how the institution's plan is used to inform budget priorities includes the institution being faced with declining enrollment data, which initiated a Kaizen (improvement) event, and an outcome that outlined an improvement process and funds set-aside for online courses and programs, recruitment strategies, more advising and tutors, and the development of the Student Success Center, all solutions used to increase enrollment through budget allocations (also see Criterion 5.C.1.).

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

1.B - Core Component 1.B

The mission is articulated publicly.

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

Rating

Met

Evidence

Northwest's mission statement is easily found on the institution's website and is included in university documents such as the undergraduate and graduate catalogs; faculty, staff, and student handbooks; graduate assistant handbook; and a variety of other institutional documents and materials. All individuals and groups that the team interacted with during the visit know the mission, are able to site mission-driven examples, and believe in and are passionate about the institution's focus on students. The university's mission statement, "Northwest focuses on student success - every student, every day," is clearly visible on its website and can be accessed by linking to the site's "About" page, yet it also appears on other university web pages along with specific unit and departmental missions that incorporate the spirit of this over-arching mission. The mission statement is typically presented on the website and in documents with the institution's vision, core values, and core competencies. The team noted that in every day life on campus, the mission is lived, and individuals across campus, from the BORs to the student body, understand and embrace the mission. Most people on and off campus simply state the mission as, "every student, every day."

Responsibility for fulfilling the mission is dispersed broadly across campus, starting with the Board of Regents, president, his leadership team (NLT), and the Extended Leadership Team (ELT). The mission statement can also be found in the undergraduate and graduate catalogs, and is highlighted in the faculty handbook (p. 2), staff handbook (p. 5), student handbook on (p. 1), and graduate assistant handbook on (p. 4), all of which provides evidence that the responsibility for fulfilling the mission of the university is dispersed across constituencies and is an expectation for all campus constituents. In addition, students who participate in the First-Year Experience (FYE) and Student Orientation and Registration (SOAR) are exposed to Northwest's "Be a Bearcat" campaign, that stresses the university's mission, core values, core competencies, and general expectation for student behavior.

The institution's mission statement has gone through a variety of iterations, with the latest version developed in 2010 with input from a variety of campus constituents (administrators, faculty members, staff, and students), and was recently reaffirmed in spring 2018 through the strategic planning

process. In addition, Northwest has a plethora of student support services, such as the TRIO programs, transition services for veterans and transfer students, and the Student Success Center that are all designed and developed to support the matriculation and success of all students, in keeping with its mission. Further, the institution's budget decisions are continually connected to Northwest's mission, and multiple examples were given to the team in a variety of meetings with campus constituents regarding mission-driven budget decisions.

The university's strategic planning documents, which flow from the mission, coupled with faculty's commitment to teaching, research, and service, set the stage for an expectation that campus programs and courses; student and faculty scholarship and research; public service and outreach; and economic development strategies are all aligned with the mission. For example, faculty members seek service-learning and volunteer opportunities in the community for their students to participate in, including engaging in and assisting the community with a variety of events that serve both internal and external constituents, such as Special Olympics and work in nursing homes. In addition, university administrators and faculty members are proud of how nimble and responsive they are in developing and designing new programs and courses to meet student and industry demand, and this includes the opening of Northwest - Independence, a new location that serves students in that part of the region by bringing faculty members and education courses to the area. The new Hughes Field House is another example of how the university worked with the community to build a state-of-the-art building that economically benefits internal and external constituents by bringing people into the venue for concerts, sports, conferences, and a variety of other activities.

Northwest's mission documents are typically published with the university's vision, core values, and core competencies to provide context to internal and external constituents. In addition, the institution has a strategic plan, strategic goals, and strategic objectives that are aligned with the mission. All of these institutional documents, that flow one from another, provide evidence of a university that has student success as its priority. The institution is currently considering writing a purpose statement as well, and connecting that statement to its mission.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

1.C - Core Component 1.C

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

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

Rating

Met

Evidence

Northwest's mission, core values, and planning documents all identify the university's commitment to diversity. The strategic plan includes Strategic Objective 3 (SO3), which encompasses diversity, equity, and inclusion. SO3 was added to the strategic plan in 2015 after the Extended Leadership Team (ELT) determined that embedding diversity, equity, and inclusion into other strategic objectives was not yielding the outcomes they had hoped for, so they developed a stand-alone strategic objective specifically for diversity, equity, and inclusion. There are three strategic goals attached to SO3, and they include improving access and success for diverse populations; enhancing diversity and inclusive learning across curricular and co-curricular offerings; and cultivating a diverse, equitable, and inclusive campus and community climate. To facilitate this strategic priority a vice president, who reports directly to the president, was hired in 2016 to lead the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). The position is funded through the BOR and a student-supported culture and climate fee. In addition, the BOR affirmed a university diversity statement in 2016 and DEI established a guiding statement for the office that influences how the campus is taught and learns about diversity, accessibility, equity, and civility. The DEI is also now working on a civility statement for the university. Further, Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) include diversity, equity, and inclusion. The particular ILO attached to diversity states, "Northwest students will be culturally competent citizens who understand and engage comfortably with difference." The International Programs Office also welcomes students from a variety of countries, and Northwest students are able to study all over the world, for credit, primarily through third-party study abroad trips, to become globally competent citizens.

The DEI provides a variety of workshops and trainings for both the campus and community, including Implicit Bias 1 and 2 that focuses on micro-aggression and inequities, Safe Zone 1 and 2 that focuses on support for LGBTQIA+, and Harassment training. Social justice seems to be at the heart of Northwest's DEI with a focus on bridging town-gown relations and understanding of diversity; creating awareness and desire for inclusion; and increasing the number of diverse individuals on campus through targeted recruitment efforts. An example of deliberate initiatives to increase diversity on campus includes the example of a recent search for a faculty member, and as a result of DEI assisting the Human Resources Office, search committee, and Provost with identification and recruitment efforts, a faculty member from a non-majority group was successfully hired.

Twenty-four percent of Northwest's student population is domestic under-represented or international

students, and the Office of International Programs and Study Abroad works to increase international and domestic student participation in activities and study abroad. In addition, the International Flag-Raising Ceremony that occurs during Homecoming celebrates Northwest's international community and includes 54 different home country flags.

One purpose of the DEI is to give diverse individuals on campus a "sense of belonging" and in addition to those efforts stated above, DEI hosts affinity groups comprised of individuals with shared interests and common goals, including the Association of Black Employees who mentor students and new staff. In addition to DEI efforts, faculty members have started to infuse diversity and global citizenship into their curriculum by teaching about empathy, social justice, civility, and inclusion. An example of a faculty-led initiative related to the curriculum, is the Department of Recreation's current exploration of a diversity and equity minor. Further, students are taught about diversity in a variety of ways, including during First-Year Orientation and co-curricular events such as a poverty simulation and a diversity Speakers Series that were established specifically to raise the awareness of students around diversity issues.

The Office of Residential Life supports gender neutral housing, a variety of diverse learning communities, pet-friendly residence halls, first-year housing options, a free food pantry, and sustainability efforts. In addition, Residential Life has diversity goals and funds a Building Relationships and Integrating Diverse Growth Experiences (BRIDGEs) position that serves approximately 200 students. This position facilitates diversity education through programming and resources.

Finally, the Office of Equity and Accessibility provides assistance and support services to students in need of ADA accommodations, and monitors Title IX compliance by employing an Accessibility Coordinator and an Equity Coordinator/Title IX Investigator.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

1.D - Core Component 1.D

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

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

Rating

Met

Evidence

Northwest was founded in 1905 and is deeply integrated into Maryville, a town of approximately 12,000 people in northwest Missouri. The campus has the honor of being the designated Missouri Arboretum, and it continues its original mandate to provide the region with academics, research, and service programming. These three areas collectively provide evidence that Northwest understands its role in collaborating with national, state, and local communities.

The team review indicates that the BOR connect decisions, policies, actions, and fiscal responsibilities to the Northwest mission and strategic plan by focusing on the institution's core competencies and strategic objectives. A recent economic impact study states in part that, "in FY14, Northwest Missouri State University's $102.7 million in payroll and operations spending, together with the spending of its students and visitors as well as the added productivity of former students, created $617.5 million in added regional income." Northwest boasts that it is the primary source of education and a trained workforce in the region. The university appears to be a good steward of public funds, providing previous audits as evidence.

Northwest takes pride in its increased enrollment of 8.2% overall and 9.3% for first-year students; a retention rate of 78% fall 2018 which is up from 73.5% fall 2017; a graduation rate that is in the 89th percentile; and career placement rates of 97% for undergraduate and 99% for graduate students. Clearly, Northwest's track record provides evidence that students are the priority of the institution.

In addition, Northwest engages the community in a variety of ways throughout the year. For example, the institution is involved in activities and events such as the Special Olympics; city-wide recycling efforts; university-sponsored forums, trainings, lectures, workshops, and conferences; hosting athletic events; and partnering with the Chamber of Commerce, City of Maryville, and Maryville Public Safety. In addition, faculty members cited numerous ways that their scholarly research, student service-learning projects, and student volunteer opportunities in the community all serve the public good.

The development of academic programs and courses is consistent with the priorities and goals of the

institution. All new academic programs and courses are submitted, reviewed, evaluated, and approved by the institution's curriculum review process, a robust and rigorous process that was explained in detail to the team. This helps insure that the university's programs and curricula serve the public good.

The institution partners with the Northwest Foundation, a non-profit charitable organization, through a five-year "Evergreen Agreement", which establishes community engagement as a public purpose. This agreement was recently revised and approved by the Northwest BOR in June 2018. Further, the university is currently engaged in a comprehensive campaign, "Forever Green", to raise funds for the Agricultural Learning Center; Chairs and Professorships; Scholarships; and the Hughes Field House. In addition, it was noted that all 11 academic units work with an advisory council, to keep programs and courses relevant, seek advice about needs and changes in a particular field of study or industry, and assist students with employment opportunities after graduation.

Northwest is also involved with key national organizations including AGB, AASCU, and Educause. In addition, it is part of the CBHE and MDHE which coordinate the Missouri higher education plan that guides the sector. The Northwest president is a member of the Council on Public Higher Education, along with the presidents and chancellors of Missouri's 13 public four-year universities, which collectively serve about 150,000 students. Also, Northwest is involved in the "Top 10 x 20 Plan" and the "2030 Plan", both of which are focused on education initiatives in the state. Finally, Northwest has 43 admission articulation agreements that provide transparency to students who want to transfer earned credits to the university from other post-secondary institutions.

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.

Evidence

Northwest Missouri State University (Northwest) is one of 80 post-secondary institutions in Missouri, serves approximately 6,800 students, and is designated a moderately selective university. The university's mission statement indicates that the institution, "focuses on student success - every student, every day." The current mission statement was approved by the Board of Regents (BOR) on October 29, 2010, after a campus process that was inclusive of a variety of university constituents including faculty, staff, students, and administrators, and was reaffirmed in spring 2018 by the Extended Leadership Team (ELT), a group of 50 campus representatives, during an annual strategic planning meeting. Northwest's mission documents are made public in a variety of ways, and are typically published with the university's vision, core values, and core competencies to provide context to internal and external constituents. Responsibility for fulfilling the mission is dispersed broadly across campus, starting with the Board of Regents, president, his leadership team (NLT), and the Extended Leadership Team (ELT).

Northwest provides students with a variety of academic programs that are approved by the Missouri Department of Higher Education (MDHE) and the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). Program reviews are internal and systematic, occurring on a five year rotation, and are submitted to and reviewed by the Missouri Department of Higher Education (MDHE) and the Coordinating Board of Higher Education (CBHE). Those programs that are accredited by outside accrediting agencies are externally reviewed, and all are currently in good standing. Northwest also offers a variety of student support services in recognition of the needs of particular students/groups served by the institution. The university's planning and budgeting priorities align with and support the mission and the university's strategic plan and objectives.

Strategic Objective 3 (SO3) encompasses diversity, equity, and inclusion. The Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) was established in 2016, and is led by a vice president who reports directly to the president. Northwest also provides the region with academics, research, and service programming, and engages the community in a variety of ways throughout the year in support of its focus on the public good. It was clear to the team that at Northwest students take priority and that it is a mission-driven institution, as evidenced by its increased enrollment of 8.2% overall and 9.3% for first-year students; a retention rate of 78% fall 2018 which is up from 73.5% fall 2017; a graduation rate that is in the 89th percentile; career placement rates of 97% for undergraduate and 99% for graduate students; and student satisfaction rates above national and regional comparison groups.

2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

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

2.A - Core Component 2.A

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

Rating

Met

Evidence

Northwest Missouri State University (Northwest) has developed appropriate policies related to ethical and responsible conduct of employees. These include an academic integrity policy, linked to the online catalog. The institution also has policies intended to protect the financial assets of the institution, including limited delegation of authority for executives to enter into contracts, a policy on appropriate use of computing resources, and regular reporting to the Board of Regents on the financial condition of the institution.

The university has appropriate policies addressing ethical conduct of employees, including a conflict of interest policy and Board of Regents (BOR) bylaws that include a conflict of interest provision. The BOR also sign a conflict of interest document. In addition, the university has a policy intended to protect whistle-blowers, and the student handbook and faculty handbook provide further information of university expectations regarding integrity and ethical conduct.

Evidence these policies are followed and enforced came from discussions in campus meetings and additional information provided by the institution. For example, the institution provided a list of academic integrity violations in different programs over several years, and the types of sanctions that were imposed. At a campus meeting, an institutional representative described the implementation of the campus policy on mandatory GPA minimums for graduate students. In addition, the university provided written documentation that other policies are followed, including grade appeals and permission to register for full classes.

One area of concern was the repeated notices the institution received for not meeting requirements related to financial aid. While the violations did not appear to be pervasive, and the findings were considered closed, the fact that some of the violations were repeated suggests a need for additional institutional attention in this area.

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 with regard to its programs, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, control, and accreditation relationships.

Rating

Met

Evidence

Northwest presents detailed information about each of its majors on separate webpages, including the placement rate for each program. There is also information about admissions requirements for programs on those same websites. In addition, there is a list of faculty members linked on the university website that includes program and degree level attained by each employee. Further, the university has a net price calculator and tuition information on its website. As described on its website, Northwest is a public, state university with its own Board of Regents. The university has a description of regional accreditation, and the accreditation process posted online, along with descriptions of individualized specialized accreditations associated with university programs. The HLC Mark of Affiliation is displayed on the website and is found under the "Accreditation" link with a list of other accrediting agencies including ACBSP, ACEND, CAEP, COAPRT, MSBE, NAEYC, and NASM. Program endorsements and other organizational affiliations, such as AACTE, are also clearly listed on this site.

One area where there was a lack of clarity was in the number of majors offered by the University. In the HLC Institutional Status Report (from July 20th, 2018), Northwest listed 95 undergraduate majors and 27 masters degrees. The University website, however, lists more than 120 undergraduate majors (https://www.nwmissouri.edu/admissions/index.htm) and 37 graduate majors (https://www.nwmissouri.edu/graduate/index.htm). Campus meetings clarified that the distinction was related to concentrations being considered separate majors on the campus website, while a major with several concentrations was considered as just a single major for HLC purposes. The university should consider the use of a single definition for a major, to better serve the institution in terms of clarity, accuracy, and transparency.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.C - Core Component 2.C

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

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

Rating

Met

Evidence

A review of Board of Regents (BOR) meeting agendas indicates that the BOR is focused on appropriate priorities, including curricula review, enrollment, hiring of faculty and staff, review of university finances, revision of university policies, review and approval of contracts, and other relevant matters.

The assurance argument describes various means by which the BOR gain input during board meetings, including through publications and reports, and a variety of other mechanisms. The BOR meeting minutes indicate there are regular reports to the BOR from the administration, students, faculty, and other stakeholders. In addition, it was noted during two campus meetings that the BOR also gains input through regular work sessions, which frequently include students, faculty, and other internal and external stakeholders.

In terms of the independence of the BOR, the assurance argument highlights the confidentiality clause in their bylaws, along with the requirements for composition of the BOR to have balance in terms of political affiliation. Also mentioned in the assurance argument is an agreement with the Foundation to help avoid any untoward influence of donors, by clarifying the relationship between the university and the Foundation. During a campus meeting, several members indicated that the deliberations about the university avoided politics and were solely focused on the benefit of students.

The bylaws of the BOR specifically delegate operational responsibility for the university to the president and his designees, including contracts up to certain dollar amounts. During a meeting with the BOR, members indicated that they did not delve into detailed management issues, but instead focused their work on broader institutional issues. This perspective was confirmed during campus meetings where university employees indicated that the BOR was not involved in day-to-day management of the university.

Faculty oversight of the curricula was supported through a recent Board Resolution (#9581, which is

provided in the Addendum) that delegates certain curricular approval to the president and his designees. This delegation dovetails with campus procedures that demonstrate the nature of faculty oversight of the curricula through an involved process for curriculum approval and curriculum elimination. As described in a campus open forum, these procedures for developing or modifying curricula typically start as a faculty initiative, and then go through an approval process that involves the department and several faculty committees, prior to submission for administrative review and BOR review, if necessary.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.D - Core Component 2.D

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

Rating

Met

Evidence

The University uses the AAUP definition for academic freedom, as listed in the faculty handbook and posted in the assurance argument. Freedom of expression policies for students are also listed in the student handbook. As required by statute, the institution follows the Missouri Campus Free Expression Act in setting campus policies related to public speech.

At a campus meeting, faculty and staff responded to Northwest's pursuit of truth in teaching and learning. These responses included the central role that truth plays in the general education Core curriculum, where students consistently grapple with issues relating to evidence, perspective, and truth. In addition, the Core curriculum focuses on critical thinking which ultimately impinges on how students ferret out accurate understanding of the world. Faculty members indicated that many courses in the majors explicitly focus on evidence-based practice, expecting students to be guided by research rather than anecdote, including someone telling them what they should do. Finally, a faculty member indicated that university support for faculty scholarship and student research is an explicit affirmation of the commitment of the university to the pursuit of truth.

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, students and staff.

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

Rating

Met With Concerns

Evidence

As described in the assurance argument, the university has an institutional review board and an animal welfare committee to ensure that research involving humans or animals is conducted ethically. However, based on a review of the Northwest website (https://www.nwmissouri.edu/fsenate/committee.htm) there are currently several vacancies in the animal welfare committee, suggesting a group that is not very active.

The responsible conduct of scholarly research is vetted through the tenure and promotion review process for tenure-track faculty. The library provides resources to students regarding research practices according to the description in the assurance argument, and based on a review of the library website.

Northwest has a policy on academic integrity that includes a section on the ethical use of information resources. This policy is reinforced in a First-Year Experience course and is available through librarians and online tutorials, including an academic integrity tutorial. This was demonstrated through review of a syllabus from the First-Year Experience course, and a link to library resources regarding ethical use of information.

The university has a code of academic integrity, that is required to be referenced in every syllabus. The code includes enforcement provisions, and evidence that the code is enforced includes a summary of complaints filed against students. In total, 96 complaints were filed in a recent year, and a variety of sanctions were applied to these complaints, indicating that the university does enforce its academic integrity policy. The university continues to review its policies and procedures regarding academic integrity.

In the past, the Learning and Teaching Center provided training on the ethical conduct of research. Based on information provided in a campus meeting, however, this training has not been conducted recently, and there appears to be no campus-wide process to ensure that faculty, staff, or students receive appropriate training in research integrity. The university has a policy on research misconduct, but it is not clear how faculty and students are made aware of this policy, or the availability of training to help ensure that students and employees conduct research within the constraints of the policy. Institutional attention should be directed to ensure that appropriate training is available. Because of

the modest number of grants currently at the university, this is an opportune time to identify and implement training related to research integrity. In part, because of the lack of evidence relating to this Sub-Component, this Core Component is considered met with concerns.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

The team recommends an Interim Monitoring report that addresses the concerns to be embedded in the institution's Year 4 Review.

2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary

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

Evidence

Northwest has developed appropriate policies related to ethical and responsible conduct of employees, and clear evidence was provided that these policies are being followed. In general, the university presents itself clearly to its students and the public, yet one area for consideration is whether the definition of a major should be consistent for both HLC and the public. The Board of Regents is focused on appropriate priorities and gains feedback from stakeholders in a variety of ways. Appropriate faculty oversight of the curriculum was substantiated through documentation and campus interviews.

The university uses the AAUP definition for academic freedom, as listed in the faculty handbook and posted in the assurance argument. The institution follows the Missouri Campus Free Expression Act in setting campus policies related to public speech. In addition, the university has appropriate review boards to ensure that research involving humans or animals is conducted ethically, and the library provides resources regarding research practices according to the description in the assurance argument.

Northwest has a policy on academic integrity that includes a section on the ethical use of information resources. This policy is reinforced in a First-Year Experience course and is available through librarians and online tutorials, including an academic integrity tutorial. The university has a Code of academic integrity, that is required to be referenced in every syllabus. The Code is enforced, with a substantial number of students cited for academic integrity violations each year.

One area needing attention involves the notices the institution has received for not meeting requirements related to financial aid on more than one occasion. In addition, institutional attention is required to ensure that training for faculty, staff, and students is provided regarding the ethical conduct of research.

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

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

3.A - Core Component 3.A

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

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

Rating

Met With Concerns

Evidence

The curriculum design and revision procedure at Northwest follows a defined, faculty-initiated, process shown in the Curriculum Development Workflow. As verified during the Criteria 3 and 4 open forum, curricular development (and refinement) typically starts with an environmental scan that, in several units, also includes input from industry advisory boards regarding course content and rigor. Subsequent reviews, refinements, and approvals are managed by the Faculty Senate and its committees, including the Designated Curriculum Matters (DCM) Committee, the Council on Teacher Education (COTE), and for graduate-level education the faculty Graduate Council. Academic programs potentially impacted by curricular change, such as those offering service courses, have an opportunity to review proposals using Northwest's online submittal process. Administrative approvals are required from the provost and the Board of Regents (BOR). Several units are externally accredited (Accreditation Council of Business Schools and Programs(ACBSP), Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND), Council for the Accreditation for Parks, Recreation, Tourism & Related Professions (COAPRT), National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), and the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM); regulatory bodies like the Missouri Department of Higher Education (MDHE) and the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) provide curricular guidelines, and the MDHE conducts the final approval step for new and significantly modified program proposals.

Northwest measures student proficiencies associated with its general education program using the nationally-normed ETS Proficiency Profile as described in the institution's Assessment of Core Proficiencies. Northwest has exceeded the Missouri State (60%) benchmark since the 2012-2014

(60.89%) measured cohort; scores have steadily increased reaching 73.6% for the 2015-2017 cohort.

As demonstrated in Learning Outcomes documents, Northwest's programs (degrees) have learning outcomes, although learning outcomes for certificate programs were not found in the assurance argument. As shown in the Northwest dashboard, the university aggregates learning outcomes and aligns assessment of those outcomes to institutional learning outcomes (ILO). As would be expected in a new effort to comprehensively define and assess learning outcomes, there is inconsistency across units in the sophistication of the stated outcomes; the techniques proposed or used to assess outcomes; and the completeness of the assessment process.

Northwest has not provided evidence that it suitably differentiates graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate, and certificate programs by how it assesses or treats course and program learning outcomes (LOs). In fact, aggregation of program LOs into ILOs appears to occur across graduate and undergraduate programs; such aggregation ignores the different levels of achievements that should be expected in undergraduate vs. graduate programs.

While Northwest's Graduate School Statement of Mission contains goals for graduate programs, this Core Component is met with concerns in part because the team was unable to find evidence articulating Northwest's separate and distinct treatment and assessment of learning goals for graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate, and certificate programs. Northwest should work towards collaboratively agreeing upon clear ways to differentiate expected learning levels between broad program/credential types (undergraduate, graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate, and certificates) and then formally articulate those differences.

Northwest states that program and course-level Learning Outcomes are the same regardless of delivery mode. Northwest's Dual Credit program is accredited by the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (http://www.nacep.org) which, in part, documents that, "college courses offered in the high school are of the same quality and rigor as the courses offered on-campus at the sponsoring college or university..." Although Quality Matters is used to design online coursework, this Core Component is also met with concerns in part because there is no evidence of assessments comparing efficacy and quality of learning outcome achievements among delivery methods (online, blended, and face-to-face). It is in Northwest's best interest to become more systematic by documenting, when possible, that there are equivalent high-quality achievement outcomes for all coursework regardless of delivery modality.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

The team recommends an Interim Monitoring report that addresses the concerns to be embedded in the institution's Year 4 Review.

3.B - Core Component 3.B

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

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

Rating

Met

Evidence

Northwest fulfills its obligation to have a general education program appropriate to its mission, educational offerings, and degree levels by aligning its program, called the Northwest Core, with statewide expectations for universities of its type. As such, Northwest's program meets the Transfer Guidelines for Student Transfer and Articulation among Missouri Colleges and Universities as outlined by the Missouri Coordinating Board for Higher Education (CBHE). As confirmed during faculty and administrator discussions, the Core has Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) that align with the Basic Competencies articulated by the state plan. In addition, and to meet requirements associated with the articulation agreement, the Northwest Core has disciplinary content with sufficient credit hours to align with the state plan.

The undergraduate catalog outlines the philosophy and approach for general education at Northwest. In meeting the required state-level learning outcomes (Core 42 - Core 42 Knowledge Areas), Northwest demonstrates a commitment to imparting broad knowledge and intellectual concepts that furthermore develop skills and attitudes Northwest faculty believe every student should obtain, such as valuing; managing information; communication; and critical thinking. During faculty discussions and as noted in the catalog, Northwest specifies additional learning outcomes in the areas of diversity, equity, and inclusion; teamwork; and leadership. Northwest's general education learning outcomes are further aligned and derived from a framework developed by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, Career Readiness for the New College Graduate: A Definition and Competencies.

Program-level learning outcomes, detailed in the Learning Outcomes documents, demonstrate broad application of learning outcomes in the Northwest Core that relate to engaging students in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information, creative work, and adaptable-skill development. In addition, Northwest is committed to a Profession-Based Learning program, outlined in a Profession-Based Learning White Paper, that is being implemented by way of curricular components, co-curricular engagement, internship opportunities and capstone experiences. Faculty noted that industry advisory boards are used extensively in curricular development, evaluation, and improvement.

During faculty forums and with institutional administrators, it was confirmed that tenure track faculty are expected to participate in scholarship, creative work, and research as appropriate to their discipline. As stated in the Northwest Faculty Handbook (Chapter 2), "ranked faculty are responsible to allot time for scholarship/creative activities in the normal work week." Annual evaluation forms and faculty reporting procedures indicate Northwest's intentional approach in expecting faculty involvement in creative activity.

Northwest has intentionally included an institutional learning outcome related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) not otherwise as well developed in state standards. Northwest states that DEI is primarily implemented in courses across the five knowledge areas of the Core and that humanities and fine arts coursework is used to emphasize their focus on diversity. Administrators confirmed that in fall 2017, 91.77% of students completing Core course assessments of DEI were rated proficient.

The Core has learning objectives that provide the foundational framework to allow all students to engage in scholarly activity. Faculty and students noted opportunities to engage in undergraduate research. The Funded Student Creative/Scholarly Research document outlines funding provided by Northwest to support these activities.

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

Rating

Met

Evidence

As recorded for fall semester 2017, Northwest had 229 full-time and 63 part-time faculty (IPEDS) representing a student-faculty ratio of 21:1. Students noted during a forum that class sizes were appropriate and relatively small; Northwest documents in Undergraduate Class Size that there are no classes over 100 students and that the vast majority of class sections have < 30 students.

As described in other areas of the assurance argument (Core Components 3 and 4) and as highlighted by faculty and administrators during open fora, Northwest faculty are extensively involved and have sufficient time and resources to participate in shared governance associated with all academic matters. These include, in part, all areas of instruction, student assessment, curriculum development, curriculum approval (via Faculty Senate Committees), and curricular assessment.

Northwest has a policy for assessing faculty credentials relative to their instructional responsibilities (Associate Provost Council Policy for Reviewing and Assuring Appropriate Credentials). Administrators reported all existing faculty and subsequent new-hires were/are evaluated using a standardized verification form. New employees are required to submit all transcripts for assessment immediately upon hire, including those responsible for dual credit programs. As a note, HLC approved an extension to Northwest until the 2022 Year 4 Review to provide faculty credential reporting

Northwest has a standardized online evaluation process for faculty and administrators to submit their

annual outcomes/impact and subsequent year goals. A review of annual faculty evaluation forms (Evaluation of Titled Faculty, Evaluation of Ranked Faculty) demonstrated Northwest's flexible, yet systematized evaluation process. Consistent with its mission and institutional type, Northwest's evaluation of faculty is heavily weighted towards instructional performance, with teaching and teaching-related professional development consisting of 50-70% of an evaluation score for ranked faculty members and 70-90% for titled faculty. Northwest faculty reported that adequate institutional resources are available to support faculty travel to scholarly meetings and/or to attend workshops sponsored by Northwest's Learning and Teaching Center. Faculty noted during the drop-in session, and the institution's annual evaluation forms document, a requirement that they participate in peer teaching observer training and that each faculty member must be peer reviewed at least once every three years.

Students reported that faculty are extremely accessible; the Northwest faculty handbook (Chapter 2) specifically states that faculty, "must post a schedule of at least seven office hours each week for consultation with students and advisees..." and must otherwise be "...responsive to students' communications..." Northwest actively uses an academic communication platform (Starfish) to convey messages to students regarding academic progress (11,546 messages in 2017-2018). Students also use this platform to make academic appointments (3,096 student appointments in 2017-2018). This platform is in addition to communications sent by way of Northwest's learning management system.

All of Northwest's professional academic advisors are members of, and have access to, professional development content developed by, the National Academic Advisement Association. As noted by one academic advisor, each is required to have a master's degree with previous experience working with students. During the staff drop-in session, staff, including the HR director, reported that there was a competitive hiring process designed to seek highly qualified staff in all areas of the institution.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.D - Core Component 3.D

The institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching.

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

Rating

Met

Evidence

Northwest has an infrastructure to provide student support across a range of student demographics. During the student drop-in session, students outlined how Northwest expects participation in student support services, and specific classwork, for students identified as needing additional support. These services include Northwest's Academic Recovery Program, Academic Success Coaching, TRIO, the Student Success Center, and Student-Athlete Success Program.

Students also noted that there was free tutoring available, including from peers who had scored well and were recommended by instructors for most lower-division classwork. Tutoring can take place within the Student Success Center or online using the Zoom platform. For select courses, a commercial tutoring service is also available by way of a tab within the LMS (Canvas). Students highlighted the availability of the commercial tutoring service late at night. Students also confirmed the availability of support from a writing center and math lab, and indicated that both met their expectations for support. Furthermore, students praised the availability of medical support services, including mental health and counseling services. Student support services are accessible, well-resourced, non-threatening, well-utilized, and non-stigmatizing.

Academic advising is available from faculty and professional advisors. The advising interaction is tailored to individual student needs and entrance characteristics. For example, as described by a faculty member, the School of Agriculture provides a first-year student with a professional advisor and faculty co-advisor and most students are transitioned to the faculty advisor after their first year. Success coaches/coaching is optionally available for all students, and required for select students participating in an academic recovery plan.

As noted during a facilities tour, classrooms, laboratory (teaching and research), and field/greenhouse

facilities are relatively modern and functional. Northwest provides a laptop for all on-site students, and students and faculty reported that there was adequate instructional technology and learning support. Northwest administrators and faculty members confirmed that student fees generate nearly $3 million annually towards implementing their master plan, with additional instructional and equipment investments made by way of its Academic Equipment Fund (approximately $1.1 million) and Northwest Foundation resources.

Students and faculty members noted during the fora that Northwest uses its staff and online library resources to provide support for accessing research and information resources including citation and research guides. A specific institutional learning objective, Managing Information, is addressed by Northwest's general education program, the Northwest Core. As shown in Northwest's Program Review Dashboard (webfocus), students were assessed over 10,000 times during the semester and Northwest recorded an 87.99% proficiency rate associated with the Managing Information outcome. In addition, all undergraduate degree programs include a digital literacy component, and the assurance argument states that the Math Lab provides guidance in quantitative analysis techniques, the Writing Center assists with research writing, and the Institutional Review Board provides guidance to students conducting human subjects research.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.E - Core Component 3.E

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

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

Rating

Met

Evidence

Northwest offers a full range of co-curricular activities, including 150 student organizations that include interest and discipline-specific organizations, fraternities, sororities, and faith-based organizations. Students reported high satisfaction with and high participation rates in student organizations, and students from the student senate noted that their co-curricular experiences were highly meaningful and provided opportunities for personal growth. Northwest's Division of Service and Engagement links the campus to community-service opportunities, and student senators discussed with team members the valuable leadership opportunities offered via participation in that group as well as others. Northwest offers students, currently in pilot-stage, the opportunity to document learning and competencies obtained by way of their co-curricular participation (the BearCat Link involvement portal). Student success administrators noted that this new co-curricular transcript project, linked to ILOs, is also intended to be pre-populated with coursework-related experiences including options for direct student input based on experiences gained through participation in other student organizations.

Northwest has a stated mission that focuses on student success. Its strategic plan has many elements that reinforce that mission, including three Strategic Objectives (academic programming and strategic enrollment; learning and college completion; and diversity, equity and inclusion) that directly impact students. The remaining two Strategic Objectives (high performance culture, and organizational viability) focus on making Northwest a capable and functioning organization focused on high performance across its mission areas.

Faculty, students, staff, and administrators spoke favorably of their student-focused mission and documented a student placement rate (further education or employment) of 97.5% of survey responders for undergraduates and 99.8% for graduate students. Northwest has had a first-year to sophomore retention rate of 78% for full-time students and 67% for part time students (IPEDS fall 2016-2017) and an overall graduation rate of ~50% (IPEDS fall 2016-2017). Northwest's Regents spoke highly of their efforts to make certain that, "63.5% of Northwest's budget is spent on the core educational mission."

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary

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

Evidence

Northwest faculty are extensively involved and have sufficient time and resources to participate in shared governance associated with all academic matters. Northwest's curriculum design and revision procedure follows a defined, faculty-initiated process. Administrative approvals are required from the provost and the Board of Regents (BOR), and state level approvals are also required. Several of Northwest's programs are externally accredited and all are in good standing with those accrediting bodies. Northwest's degree programs, with the possible exception of certificate programs, have stated learning outcomes linked to institutional learning outcomes. Northwest fulfills its obligation to have a general education program appropriate to its mission, educational offerings, and degree levels by aligning its program, called the Northwest Core, with statewide expectations for universities of its type. However, Northwest has not provided evidence that it has separate and distinct institutional learning outcomes nor a broad statement of distinct goals for graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate, and certificate programs.

Northwest faculty and staff are qualified and are evaluated annually based on their position description and goals. Academic advising is available from faculty and professional advisors, Northwest faculty members are accessible to students in their courses, a variety of tutoring services are available, and the university provides comprehensive student support services. Classrooms, laboratory, and field/greenhouse facilities are relatively modern and functional. Northwest provides a laptop for all on-site students, and there is adequate instructional technology and learning support.

Northwest offers a full range of co-curricular activities, including 150 student organizations. The university provides opportunities for students to document their experiences by way of a co-curricular transcript

Criterion 3 is, in part, met with concern because the team was unable to find an articulation of distinct institutional learning goals for its broad credential types (undergraduate, graduate, post-baccalaureate, and post-graduate degrees and certificates). Although the Graduate School Statement of Mission does contain graduate goals, Northwest faculty and administrators should work collaboratively to develop clear and distinct goals for all broad credential types. Also contributing to the met with concern rating, Northwest has not verified nor documented that the quality of its programs are consistent across all modes of delivery (online, face-2-face, and blended). The university is encouraged to implement appropriate assessment strategies that will both ensure learning outcomes are the same for all delivery modes and that the resulting student outcomes are equivalent.

4 - Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

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

4.A - Core Component 4.A

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

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

Rating

Met

Evidence

Northwest switched from a system where all programs were reviewed once in five years to reviewing 20% of the programs every year. This change ensures that program reviews are ongoing with a 5-year review and improvement cycle for every program.

The university's use of a scorecard for program review ensures that data and information guide the review process. The scorecard also ensures that multiple aspects of a program such as demand for the program, program learning outcomes, retention and graduation rates, graduate placement, adequacy of instructional resources, alumni and employee feedback, and accreditation status are considered in the program review. The review process starts with a self-study conducted by a designated group of

faculty. The discipline faculty then rate the program and prepare planned actions for improving the program using the institution's planning document known as 4-UP to track the actions. This evaluation and the improvement plan are reviewed by the assistant provost, provost, faculty senate president, and chair of the Faculty Assessment Committee. The cycle from preparation of the self-study to this evaluation is about 2 years. After this evaluation, the resource needs for, and the progress made on, the action items are reviewed in the annual program reviews that occur during the remaining three years of the 5-year program review cycle. Discussions with the faculty at the open forum and focus area discussions indicate that faculty members have embraced the program review process and find it beneficial in making regular, data driven improvements to the quality and relevance of the programs it offers.

Northwest's Credit Unit and Program Length Policy provides clear guidelines for the hours associated with courses and credits hours that are transcripted. Discussions with faculty members and academic leaders during the visit, and review of Northwest's Graduate Catalog demonstrate clear policy for the course numbering system (100, 200, etc.).

The assurance argument indicates that consideration of new courses starts with a proposal from the discipline faculty. This proposal is evaluated by the academic unit, the associate provosts, the Faculty Senate Curriculum Degree Requirements (CDR) Committee, the full Faculty Senate, the provost, president, and finally the Board of Regents. Courses that are open for graduate credit (500, 600 level) are reviewed by the Graduate Council; courses that belong in the Northwest Core are reviewed by the Designated Curricular Matters (DCM) Committee; and courses related to teacher education are reviewed by the Committee on Teacher Education (COTE). During the visit it was observed that the course and program change process has recently been improved with the addition of Smart Catalog software to help manage the information flow in the process. This automation assures that all relevant information will always be provided and that the proposal is automatically forwarded to the relevant persons or committees.

The undergraduate catalog provides clear guidelines for the requirements that apply to credit transfers from international baccalaureate programs, AP courses, General Education Certificate (GCE), College Level Examination Program (CLEP), and dual credit courses. The assurance argument indicates that Northwest has clear credit transfer policies that apply to credits earned from 2-year and other 4-year institutions. In April 2018 Northwest implemented the Northwest Transfer Equivalency System that uses its past transfer history to catalog equivalency of courses. Northwest's general education core adheres to state law (Missouri Revised Statutes § 178.787) that requires transferability of the Core 42 across all Missouri 2-year and 4-year institutions.

The Coordinating Board for Higher Education (CBHE) and Missouri state law (Missouri Revised Statutes § 167.223) govern dual credit policies. In keeping with the guidelines provided by CBHE, Northwest sought, and is accredited by the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP) for dual credit courses. The university follows instructor eligibility guidelines as well as oversight by discipline faculty to assure the quality of instruction in dual credit courses.

From the evidence argument it is clear Northwest follows common Faculty Hiring Policies and Procedures maintained by the Office of the Provost and a standard process for all faculty hires. The institution was granted an extension by HLC, until September 1, 2022, to become compliant with the faculty qualification requirement.

Northwest has seven programs with specialized accreditation; all of these are in good standing with the accreditors. In addition, Northwest is currently pursuing accreditation for its Dietetics and Nursing programs. The program scorecard, used for program review, includes a check on the accreditation

status of a program. In addition, any new program addition requests are required to discuss available specialized accreditations and the appropriateness of seeking such accreditation. This requirement points to Northwest's commitment to external validation of its specialized programs.

The assurance argument and discussions with staff from Institutional Research and Career Services indicate that Northwest collects data on the employment status of graduates within six months of graduation. The response rate for the survey is quite high, at 89.2%, due to efforts made by Career Services in maintaining the accuracy of contact information and two follow up phone calls to non-responders. The inclusion of the relevance of the program and graduate placement information in the program review process indicates that Northwest considers the value of the degree to career prospects in its evaluation of its programs. The 2015-16 graduate placement data shows that Northwest graduates have over 95% placement in jobs, continuing education, or internships.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

4.B - Core Component 4.B

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

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

Rating

Met With Concerns

Evidence

Northwest has seven institutional learning outcomes (ILOs) at the university level for both curricular and co-curricular programs including communicating; critical thinking; managing information; valuing; diversity, equity and inclusion; teamwork; and leadership.

The same ILOs are also used for the Northwest Core, the university's general education program. The team learned during the faculty forums that the development of the course learning objectives (LOs), indicators, and measurement of the LOs for the Northwest Core included discussions among the faculty as well as oversight and support from the DCM Committee of the faculty senate.

Northwest undertook a Quality Initiative (QI) focused on creating program and course LOs. From fall 2016 to spring 2017 Northwest faculty worked on creating program and course LOs that align with the ILOs. Faculty were provided training in developing measurable goals and in using Canvas tools to submit LOs data. Feedback on the program and course LOs was provided by the provost, provost's council, and faculty governance. The program reviews and 4-UPs in the past two years have focused primarily on evaluation of the outcome measures and their alignment with the ILOs (and less on the outcome data). Discussions with faculty, staff, and academic leaders point to enthusiasm among all to make progress in identifying LOs. The team was provided examples from various programs, including Agricultural Sciences, English, Computer Sciences and Information Systems, and Recreational Sciences, regarding the process used, types of outcomes identified, and how some program outcomes are aligned with University learning while others are more specific to the program. A few programs have yet to complete this process.

Discussions in faculty forums indicate that measurements of course LOs are based on deliverables in courses. Assessment of student achievement in these LOs are uploaded in Canvas, thus minimizing effort and errors, while also enabling easy aggregation of the data from course LOs, to program LOs, to ILOs. The Learning and Teaching Center (LTC) has dedicated a portion of its resources to support program faculty in developing outcomes and using the Canvas to measure and input assessment data.

Discussions with Northwest leaders, staff, and faculty indicate that Institutional Research (IR) has developed processes for aggregating measures for program LOs and university LOs. These assessment data are available in the Program Dashboard along with other program measures such as retention, graduation, and enrollment.

Since fall 2017 program LOs were measured by way of Canvas. The assurance argument provides examples of the use of achievement in LOs for curricular improvements. For example, the self-study for the Dietetics program demonstrates that results from the program and course LOs resulted in changes in course content and the addition of a new course. Discussions at the forums indicate that many programs have been using the initial assessment data to discuss student learning and curricular changes. Program faculty regularly access the dashboard for assessment data, in addition to other program data.

Northwest's co-curricular activities also use the same seven university level LOs. Discussions with staff in Student Affairs indicate that measurements of these LOs in co-curricular activities are based on deliverables such as reflection memos submitted by the students.

Discussions during our visit and the QI report indicate that Northwest has followed some very good practices in its endeavor to develop, implement, and use data from assessment of student learning systems. A significant portion of the faculty were involved in developing LOs; also development of LOs at the program and course level were driven by discipline faculty who are most knowledgeable in the specific skills and content; course deliverables are used to assess student learning; an already familiar LMS is used to upload and share data; assessment data is made quickly available to all faculty; and existing resources such as the LTC and IR have been used to support the process and for faculty development.

Based on the assurance argument and the institution's QI report, the team has a few concerns around Northwest's assurance of student learning process.

- Learning Outcomes: The QI report indicates that some programs have struggled with creating common program LOs; these programs will continue to work on developing LOs and alignment with the ILOs. Also, the QI points to concerns expressed by chairs and directors specifically about the validity of the assessment data; whether these are issues related to the efficacy of the LOs, measurement, or struggles with the use of Canvas tools is not clear at this point, and more data gathering and analysis is planned. A review of the program assessment plans (Learning Outcomes Document) helped the team identify programs with clear, measurable LOs (for example on pages 14, 84, 312) that would provide useful models as other programs seek to improve their LOs.
- Measurement Scale: The team also noted variation in the scale of measure used. Outcomes are most often measured at 2 levels (met or did not meet expectations) as indicated in the QI report. There were a few programs that had more nuanced scales (3 levels: Master, Proficient, Not Proficient; and 4 levels: Novice, Apprentice, Practitioner, Expert). A scale of more than 2 levels could provide a more nuanced look at student achievement and help programs seek ways to help a greater percentage of students achieve mastery of LOs than just meet the expectations. Northwest should start a conversation about what might be an appropriate scale that would sustainably guide curricular improvement, as student achievement improves as programs improve.
- Aggregation Issues: LO data is aggregated from course level to program level to institution level. First, a considerable amount of detailed understanding of student learning could be lost as more nuanced data is aggregated into just two levels. Second, it is not clear why the Program Dashboards provide LOs aggregated at the 11-unit (Schools/ Colleges) levels, rather than at the

program level. Finally, aggregation also appears to occur across graduate and undergraduate programs; such aggregation ignores the different levels of achievements that should be expected in undergraduate vs. graduate programs.

It is evident from the campus conversations that data is being collected, and is, to some extent, used to ensure Northwest is delivering high quality learning experiences. The above list of concerns points to the fact that there is still work to be done regarding the assessment system and use of data. It is to encourage more focused work on Northwest's assessment processes that this element of Criterion 4 is evaluated by the team as met with concerns. As the institution works towards improving its assessment of student learning process, it will be beneficial for evaluation of outcomes assessment plans and processes to be more focused and performed independent of program review. Such a focused evaluation could enable highlighting, sharing, and learning from some of the best practices in assurance of student learning that already exists at Northwest, leading to more robust assessment plans and processes for a greater number of Northwest's programs.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

The team recommends an Interim Monitoring report that addresses the concerns to be embedded in the institution's Year 4 Review.

4.C - Core Component 4.C

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

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

Rating

Met

Evidence

Northwest's goals for retention and graduation are related to its second strategic objective, learning and college completion. The goals are set in a 3-year planning horizon. Discussions with the provost clarified that the retention goals are set based on best practices and comparisons to national and state standards, as well as peer institutions. The quality of the incoming class also contributes to the goal. For example, the provost pointed out that the large size of the incoming first-year class could indicate a larger variation in the quality and commitment of the students, resulting in a lower retention rates.

Northwest regularly collects data on retention and graduation. These data are collected at the program, unit, and university level. Since 2015 retention and graduation data are made available to all academic leaders, faculty, and leadership by way of the Program Dashboard. In addition to the graduation data, Northwest has started using Student Achievement Measures (SAM) which tracks students as they move through other institutions.

Northwest tracks student retention data over time; comparisons to the goal are also made. Achievements against goals are color coded as green (exceeding goals), yellow (within 20% below goals), and red (more than 20% below goals) to identify performance at the university, unit, and program levels. The program review scorecard includes analysis of retention as well as enrollment data as provided by Institutional Research (IR) by way of the Program Dashboard.

Analysis of retention and graduation data has led to actions to improve retention rates. Observing flat, and less than desirable retention rates, in 2015 Northwest piloted the first-year experience, student success coaching model, and started using professional advisors instead of faculty advisors. These

actions led to an increase in retention rate from 70% to 73.24% in 2016. The success of the First-Year Experience program resulted in expanding the First-Year Experience to include all first-year students. In addition, Living and Academic Learning Communities (LALC) were also piloted in 2016 for business, agriculture, and natural sciences programs.

Northwest includes retention and graduation rates in its program review. Units use the retention information and comparison of program retention rate to the university rate to identify action items. For example, the BS in Computer Science program, based on its low retention rate, included the action to, "work with the Institutional Research Office to better understand the retention patterns in our first three programming courses (Computer Programming I, Computer Programming II, and Data Structures)" as an action item in its 2015 program review.

Northwest uses industry-standard processes and definitions for collecting retention and graduation data. Data on retention and graduation rates are included in the Program Dashboard to provide easy and consistent access to retention, graduation, and enrollment data to faculty and staff to use for analysis and goal setting.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring 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.

Evidence

Northwest maintains a 5-year review and improvement cycle for every program using a structured process that involves discipline faculty; a shared governance structure; feedback on goals set; and monitoring of progress towards goals. A scorecard that ensures evaluation of multiple aspects of a program is also used in the review process. Consideration of curricular changes originates from the discipline faculty, is evaluated through a shared governance structure, and uses the Smart Catalog software to help manage the information flow in the process.

The university also has clearly stated credit transfer policies to apply to credits earned from 2-year and other 4-year institutions, AP courses, General Education Certificate (GCE), College Level Examination Program (CLEP), and dual credit courses. Northwest's general education core adheres to state law (Missouri Revised Statutes § 178.787). The university has seven programs with specialized accreditation and all are in good standing with accreditors. Northwest is also currently pursuing accreditation for two programs. Northwest collects data on the employment status of graduates within six months of graduation. The 2015 - 2016 graduate placement data indicates that Northwest graduates have over 95% placement in jobs, continuing education, or internships.

Northwest has seven institutional learning outcomes (ILOs) at the university level and uses the same for the Northwest core general education program. From fall 2016 to spring 2017 Northwest faculty worked on creating program and course LOs that align with the ILOs using a Quality Initiative (QI). While most of the programs have created LOs, a few programs have not completed this process. Since fall 2017, program LOs were measured by way of Canvas. Aggregation of LOs across courses, and then programs, and making them available on the Program Dashboard is supported by Institutional Research. The assurance argument provides examples of the use of achievement in LOs for curricular improvements. Northwest has followed some very good practices, such as involvement of a large number of faculty, use of Canvas to collect data, making the data quickly and easily available to faculty, and effective use of existing resources such as IR, LTC, and the governance structure.

The institution's co-curricular activities also use the same seven university level LOs. Discussions with staff in Student Affairs indicate that measurements of these LOs in co-curricular activities are based on deliverables such as reflection memos submitted by the students.

Based on the assurance argument and the institution's QI report, the team believes that there is still work to be done regarding the assessment system and use of data. The program assessment plans contain some programs with clear, measurable LOs and more nuanced measurement scales that would provide useful models as other programs seek to improve their LOs. Northwest also may benefit from more carefully considering how it aggregates the data. It is to encourage more focused work on Northwest's assessment processes that this element of Criterion 4 is evaluated by the team as met with concerns. Sharing and learning from some of the best practices in assurance of student learning that already exist at Northwest could lead to more robust assessment plans and processes for an even greater number of Northwest's programs.

Northwest's retention goals are set based on best practices and comparisons to national and state standards, as well as peer institutions and assessment of the incoming class. Northwest regularly collects data on retention and graduation and uses the data in program reviews and evaluations. Analysis of retention and graduation data has led to actions to improve student experience. Analysis of retention rates has led to the implementation of first-year experience, the student success coaching model, use of professional advisors, and piloting of Living and Academic Learning Communities (LALC) for some units. Individual programs also have used retention information and comparison of program retention rates to the university rates to identify action items. Data on retention and graduation rates are included in the Program Dashboard to provide easy and consistent access to retention, graduation, and enrollment data to faculty and staff to use for analysis and goal setting.

5 - Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

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

5.A - Core Component 5.A

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

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

Rating

Met

Evidence

Northwest Missouri State University (Northwest) has the fiscal and human resources to support its operations. The CFI ratio dropped slightly in 2017 to 2.7, but remains an indicator of financial strength. There are no material weaknesses in the audits.

The institution has the physical and technological infrastructure sufficient to support its operations. Although average age of the physical plant is only 14.76 years, a Facility Condition Index score was rather high at 37, indicating the extent of deferred maintenance on campus. In 2016 the students voted to include a master plan fee to address some of the facilities issues. These funds have been used for a variety of projects including renovations to residence halls. In addition, the Northwest Foundation campaign "Forever Green" raised funds to support a new field house opening in 2018. A tour of facilities during the visit provided additional evidence of new projects related to addressing deferred maintenance and new construction of the field house. The Master Plan provided evidence of the overall plan for deferred maintenance and new facilities. The Board of Regents (BOR) discussion highlighted their ability to be flexible in the Master Plan, moving Roberta Hall up in priority, as an example.

Technology infrastructure is sufficient to support operations.The campus tour affirmed the technology

infrastructure and wireless coverage necessary to support students and faculty. One weakness identified in the assurance argument involved a lack of qualified applicants in the region to fill needed IT positions. The assurance argument cited a need to support IT staff when well qualified individuals in the region may be hard to hire. Campus discussions illuminated the potential for professional development or other training when those experience gaps are identified. Further conversations gave some evidence of internal professional development in the form of on-the-job training and mentoring, Banner conferences, and connections with Banner user groups. IT does not support the learning management system; therefore, professional development is focused on Banner support and support of the technology infrastructure.

Northwest is part of the State of Missouri educational system, but does not disburse revenue to a superordinate entity. However, the institution is dependent on state allocations to support the operation and those state appropriations have been cut in recent years. Coupled with a decline in overall enrollment, the institution has had to implement some cost cutting and cost containment measures to remain financially stable. Faculty and staff salaries were frozen for FY18, but did see increases and market adjustments for FY19. The CFO explained the budgeting process when looking at salaries, and the Northwest Leadership Team (NLT) does its best to preserve funds dedicated to salaries and holds those cuts as a last resort. Those cuts could not be avoided in FY18. Other resources have been reallocated or reprioritized, but there was not definitive explanation of these manipulations presented in the assurance argument. The campus visit yielded more information about some of these maneuvers, including leaving positions vacant or reallocating positions to other departments. One example was a need for more personnel in the Institutional Research (IR) office. Rather than hire new lines, two positions were reallocated from IT and the Education department to manage the increased workload in IR. A general notation of outsourcing resulted in an $822,500 savings, but no notation of specific outsourced projects or services. Positive notes related to the financial health of the institution include a 2.4% increase in retention from 2016 to 2017 and a 20.4% increase in online graduate enrollment over the projected amount. In conversation with the CFO, this increase in online enrollment was attributed, in part, to the partnership with Academic Partnerships.

The goals incorporated into mission statements are realistic in light of the institution's organization, resources, and opportunities. The mission critical goals are aligned with the strategic plan focusing on, "delivering high quality learning experiences, protect access and affordability, value our faculty and staff, preserve long-term viability, build for the future." Conversations with multiple campus community members including the NLT, the BOR, the CFO, and the Criteria 1, 2, and 5 group meetings, all affirmed and attested to these goals and gave evidence that they guide the institutional decision making around resources and opportunities. While there is still work to be done regarding the assessment system and use of data, it is evident from the campus conversations that data is being collected and used to some extent to ensure they are delivering high quality learning experiences. The CFO explained that the state of Missouri allows for a higher percentage tuition increase, but they have not raised rates to the maximum of those percentages to protect costs for students. The CFO also explained making faculty and salaries a priority to value faculty and staff. The master plan is evidence of the focus on both long term viability and building for the future to maintain and sustain the campus infrastructure. Conversations with groups meeting for Criteria 1 and 2 explained the Curriculum and Degree Requirements committee work as the means to both grow and modify the current curricula and eliminate programs to remain viable and build for the future. This process has recently been improved with the addition of Smart Catalog software to help manage the information flow in the process.

The institution's staff in all areas are appropriately qualified and trained. The assurance argument outlined the hiring process. In the drop in session for staff there was a lengthy discussion about professional development and support for staff. There are training and webinar opportunities in a

variety of areas and campus-wide offerings include "career pathing" as a way to provide education and training for staff to learn about general career growth and leadership skills. In addition, staff are allowed to take up to 6 hours of undergraduate coursework per year and get up to 96 hours of release time if a course time conflicts with their workday.

The institution has processes in place for budgeting and for monitoring expenses. The assurance argument outlined a data analysis and decision making process based on metrics and aligned with the strategic goals. Northwest provided little direct evidence of the decision making in the assurance system. During the campus visit, Northwest provided additional information in conversations with faculty and staff and access to the institutional dashboard system that provided more evidence of the use of data for decision making. It is evident from the dashboards and conversation with faculty and staff that referenced the use of the dashboards, that data is accessible across campus, including budget information. Conversations with the CFO, faculty, and staff referenced FY18 as a particularly difficult budget year due to reductions in state funding and adjustments that had to be made throughout the year to balance the budget. These adjustments and mid-year corrections stabilized the budget for FY18. The People, Finance, and Operations committee of the BOR also receives monthly financial statements to monitor the budget and expenses throughout the year.

One area of concern for the institution is the level of direct evidence provided to the team in the assurance argument. Much of the information and evidence for this Core Component was gathered during the campus visit. In the future, the team encourages institutional leadership to identify and link evidence within the assurance system to demonstrate how policies and procedures are implemented on campus.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

5.B - Core Component 5.B

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

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

Rating

Met

Evidence

The Board of Regents (BOR) is the governing board of the institution. The board members learn about the institution through an on-boarding process that includes information about all aspects of the institution, organizational chart, academic programs, etc. A copy of the manual for this on-boarding was provided as evidence. The board reviews financial statements and information on a regular schedule and approves the annual budget in accordance with state guidelines and standards. A copy of monthly balance statements and quarterly investment reports were included as evidence.

During the campus visit, many of the BOR members who interacted with the visiting team identified themselves as alumni of the institution with a strong feeling of loyalty to the institution and a desire to give back with their service on the Board. The BOR described its decision making process related to academic policies during the visit. Most academic decisions are approved based on the recommendations of faculty as they work through the governance system. Rarely does the BOR make program recommendations, but it was at the suggestion of the BOR that the institution brought back a nursing program with the addition of the RN to BSN program.

There are multiple layers of leadership. The BOR is the main governing board. The direct oversight and management of the campus is the responsibility of the president and the Northwest Leadership Team (NLT). A larger body of 50 representatives from across campus make up the Extended Leadership Team (ELT). Faculty, staff, and students also have administrative bodies that are part of the governance system. Faculty senate and staff council executive committees are also members of the ELT. Each level of this structure has different responsibilities. The NLT sets policies, the ELT is responsible for strategic direction and identifying mission critical priorities, the faculty senate has curriculum authority, and the staff council represents staff in communication across the campus community in matters concerning employees. Each of these groups meets on a regular schedule and communicates back to its respective internal constituents.

Administration, faculty, staff, and students are involved in setting academic requirements, policy, and processes primarily through the ELT structure as it applies to the strategic plan according to the focus group discussion on governance. According to the same focus group, the faculty senate aligned priorities to the strategic plan and submits an annual report from faculty senate to the ELT as part of strategic planning. A copy of a faculty senate report was not provided as evidence, only description of the report in the group meeting. Staff council has a similar process to the faculty to provide input to the ELT.

Governance was a focus area of conversation during the team visit. In that meeting, representatives from faculty senate, staff council, the ELT, and the NLT elaborated on the governance system and decision making process at the university. The ELT drives strategic planning and the faculty senate has been involved in that process "from the beginning." Faculty and staff expressed feelings of inclusiveness and significant collaboration in the decision making process. Meeting participants made multiple references to the budget revisions and adjustments in FY18 to highlight how the campus collaborated to make difficult decisions and maintain fidelity to the strategic goals. It was during this time that the mission critical criteria were developed to "guide financial decisions about how to move forward." Students expressed their satisfaction with "having a seat at the table" with the BOR and used the example of a recent student conduct policy that was sent back for revision as an example of students voices being heard by the administration in policy making.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

5.C - Core Component 5.C

The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.

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

Rating

Met

Evidence

Strategic planning is the central point of most systemic and integrated planning at Northwest. The Extended Leadership Team (ELT) is the main point of contact for strategic planning. The ELT meets annually to work on strategic planning. According to focus area discussions on governance, the ELT meets 4-5 times per year with the May meeting being a three day meeting that works to set strategic priorities for the following year. These priorities are sent to the NLT for budget building purposes. Multiple constituent groups on campus discussed the budget priorities aligning with the strategic plan. If an idea for a new program or other resource allocation was deemed not to be aligned with the strategic plan, it was likely not to be funded according to the Criterion 5 discussion group. As part of the evaluation of operations, Northwest provided evidence of environmental scans including SWOT analysis, the 4-UP process for academic units, and dashboard data provided for the Board of Regents. Documentation of all of these analyses were provided in the assurance argument and supported through conversations with focus area meetings on governance and Criterion 5.

In addition, when the Curriculum and Degree Requirements (CDR) Committee reviews programs that could face closure due to low enrollment by state standards, if the program is deemed "mission critical" that program can avoid closure. In the open forum on Criterion 5, faculty explained the CDR process. The Missouri Department of Higher Education sets a minimum standard of 10 for program enrollment; however, they allow institutions to appeal for programs that do not meet that standard if the program is deemed "mission critical." Northwest was able to keep its geography program based on its importance to the general education program as "mission critical."

The Campus Master Plan is also aligned to strategic goals. The four guiding principles of the master plan align with the strategic objectives. The visiting team was able to tour many new and renovated spaces as evidence of this plan being enacted including the newly constructed Hughes Field House with classroom spaces planned into the athletic facility to add classroom capacity for enrollment

growth. This new building also accomplishes Organizational Visibility as it was constructed with a funding partner in the city of Maryville allowing the city and wider community use of the space throughout the year free of charge.

In a focus area conversation about institutional effectiveness, participants explained that assessment of student learning outcomes is still a new process, with only one year of implementation. Institutional leaders recognize the weakness in this area. There is much data collection on campus, but less effective use of assessment data that can be directly correlated to operations, planning, and budgeting beyond the individual school or department. Some instances of hiring and budgeting for faculty lines was connected to program outcomes, and examples were provided in group discussions. If a position is vacated, the department is not guaranteed a direct replacement, but program objectives and outcomes data are used to make decisions at the NLT level as to whether a position will be replaced or if those resources will be allocated to a program with higher need based on the same data and information.

Strategic planning processes are at the center of planning for Northwest. The strategic goals encompass the institution as a whole and all constituent groups: BOR, administration, faculty, staff, and students referenced the strategic goals as the guide for the institution. All programs have external constituent groups such as advisory councils or professional boards that serve academic programs as a place to connect with the community. Programs use those groups to consult on matters of curriculum or experiences related to the industries or professions they represent and incorporate that feedback for programmatic change.

Facilities planning was another area where both internal and external constituent groups were considered in planning processes, The Hughes Field House was built with funding from the city and planned to allow city events and community use as well as use by students, faculty, and staff. Three classroom spaces were included in the design to allow for enrollment growth and additional classroom space for the academic program as well as classroom and meeting space for athletic teams. These areas were part of the facilities tour and were outlined in the master plan document.

Institutional planning begins in the spring with the ELT meeting to review strategic goals and direction. This kicks off a planning and budgeting cycle that lasts nearly the entire academic year when the final budget is submitted to the BOR in early June according to the CFO. The institution is aware of its capacity. Northwest had a history of primarily offering courses in a traditional face-to-face on campus environment. They made it a goal to move towards 80% face-to-face and 20% online to increase capacity and meet more students through a variety of delivery modes according to the Provost in the institutional effectiveness focus area meeting. The CFO reported that it was the growth in online enrollment that led to much of the improvement in enrollment for FY19 to date.

Multi-year budget projections provided in the assurance argument and follow up conversations with the CFO gave evidence to the fact that the institution is aware of the current political climate and, as much as possible, Northwest is planning for fluctuations in state support. Initial multi-year projections are written based on the status quo and generally without including tuition increases. Decision making follows as more information is gathered on enrollment projections based on the mix of delivery modes, scholarship funds, and state appropriations according to the CFO.

There is evidence that Northwest has responded to emerging factors such as technology and globalization in the growth of its online programs and partnership with Academic Partnerships. The enrollment profile has shifted to more online students as the population of international students has declined. According to the CFO, in years past there was a large population of students from China who would come to Northwest to study computer science. As that population has declined, due to the

current political climate, Northwest shifted its focus to grow its online offerings and that decision has exceeded enrollment projections, helping to offset what was lost in international enrollment.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

5.D - Core Component 5.D

The institution works systematically to improve its performance.

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

Rating

Met

Evidence

The institution has developed many processes and points of data collection related to its operations. Northwest provided the team access to the institutional suite of dashboards that are used across campus to document performance. These dashboards were cited by multiple constituents as important and valuable information. Many faculty members cited access to these dashboards as helpful for both decision making and creating transparency between faculty and administration.

The institution is early in the development of its processes and procedures to use as a feedback loop for institutional improvement. Northwest has several components for data collection including BOR dashboards, academic program review, 4-UPs, and the Northwest Performance System (NPS). Through this data collection Northwest aims to improve institutional effectiveness and capabilities. One positive example of learning from data collection and analysis to improve operations has been the institutional effort to improve retention. Following an analysis of retention data, measures were put into place that included the expansion of the Student Success Center and tutoring services as evidenced by both the physical space for the Center as part of the facilities tour and the increase in retention rates as a measure of increased effectiveness. In addition, the resource allocation for success coaches and professional academic advising for all first-year students were cited in the governance focus area discussion as support for this initiative.

Several campus conversations shed light on the need for growth in the area of working systematically to improve performance. Northwest has several processes in place to gather data and identify metrics for decision making, yet few of these processes have a history of implementation long enough to have enough traction to become ongoing, systemic, and reliable. The visiting team encourages the institution to continue to move beyond collecting data to documenting the use of that data for performance improvement in all areas of operation.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary

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

Evidence

"Northwest Missouri State University focuses on student success - every student, every day" and has the resources, structures, and processes sufficient to fulfill this mission. The institution focuses on the quality of its educational offering through the strategic planning process and the use of dashboards, 4-UPs, and the Northwest Performance System to monitor the quality of educational offerings.

University leadership monitors its budget to the best of their ability in light of fluctuations in state funding and volatility in areas such as international student recruitment. The institution plans for the future as evidenced by the growth in the online programs and the master plan for campus infrastructure that both addresses deferred maintenance and new construction, and the multi-year budget projections.

Northwest has several processes in place to gather data and identify metrics for decision making, yet few of these processes have a history of implementation long enough to have enough traction to become ongoing, systemic, and reliable. The visiting team encourages the institution to continue to move beyond collecting data to documenting the use of that data for performance improvement in all areas of operation.

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.D	Core Component 1.D	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 With Concerns
2.S	Criterion 2 - Summary	
3	Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support	
3.A	Core Component 3.A	Met With Concerns
3.B	Core Component 3.B	Met
3.C	Core Component 3.C	Met
3.D	Core Component 3.D	Met
3.E	Core Component 3.E	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 With Concerns
4.C	Core Component 4.C	Met
4.S	Criterion 4 - Summary	
5	Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness	
5.A	Core Component 5.A	Met
5.B	Core Component 5.B	Met
5.C	Core Component 5.C	Met
5.D	Core Component 5.D	Met
5.S	Criterion 5 - Summary	

Review Summary

Interim Report(s) Required

Due Date
9/1/2022

Report Focus
The team is recommending an interim report to be embedded in the institution's Year 4 Review, and has specific recommendations related to the three Core Components that were met with concern.

First, regarding Core Component 2.E., the notices the institution has received for not meeting requirements related to financial aid, on more than one occasion, are troubling. The institution is encouraged to implement corrective measures in this area. In addition, institutional attention is required to ensure that training for faculty, staff, and students, regarding the ethical conduct of research, is provided systematically and then monitored.

Second, regarding Core Component 3.A., the team was unable to find an articulation of distinct institutional learning goals for its broad credential types including graduate, post-baccalaureate, and post-graduate degrees and certificates. The undergraduate learning outcomes appear to be applied to all credential types. Although the Graduate School statement of mission does contain graduate goals, Northwest faculty and administrators are encouraged to work collaboratively to develop clear and distinct goals for all broad credential types. Also, Northwest has not verified or documented that the quality of its programs are consistent across all modes of delivery (online, face-to-face, and blended). The university should implement appropriate assessment strategies that will both ensure learning outcomes are the same for all delivery modes and that the resulting student outcomes are equivalent.

Third, regarding Core Component 4.B., based on the assurance argument and the institution's QI report, the team believes there is still work to be done regarding the institution's assessment system and use of data. The program assessment plans contain some programs with clear, measurable learning outcomes (LOs) and more nuanced measurement scales that could provide useful models as other programs seek to improve their LOs. Northwest also may benefit from more carefully considering how it aggregates its data, which would encourage more focused work on assessment processes. Sharing and learning from some of the best practices in assurance of student learning that already exists at Northwest could lead to more robust assessment plans and processes for a greater number of Northwest's programs.

Conclusion

The visiting team of five members from the HLC Peer Corps concluded that three Core Components were met with concern during the Open Pathway Re-accreditation Review conducted on-site at Northwest Missouri State University on October 15 and 16, 2018. The three Core Components identified as met with concern are 2.E., 3.A., and 4.B. Our concerns and recommendations are included in the Interim Report section, however, the team has three additional comments.

First, it was noted by all team members during the review that the evidence provided in the institution's assurance argument was sparse. We had to request additional evidence prior to the visit, which was quickly uploaded by the ALO to the Addendum section of the assurance site, and once on campus, we requested more evidence, which was

also quickly provided to the team. The institution had what we needed, when we asked, so it was not a matter of evidence availability, but seemed to be a matter of infusing the evidence into the report up-front. For the next review, Northwest is encouraged to provide plentiful evidence in their report, particularly because the Year 4 Review will not be conducted on site and the next review team will need all pertinent evidence in the report to accurately confirm progress. Evidence needs to be prominent, targeted, and infused into each Core Component, particularly the three that were met with concern.

Second, it was noted by all team members that Northwest is gathering data, on many fronts, and it is data connected to its strategic plan and priorities, yet there was some concern about whether or not the data and results are systematically used to make institutional improvement. There was lack of evidence that demonstrated that this was the case.

Finally, it is worth noting that the institution has a new provost, who together with the president and the institution's leadership teams, is designing, creating, and implementing many new systems, structures, and processes on campus. Together, the president and provost form an impressive leadership team, clearly and unequivocally respected by all constituent groups on campus for their commitment to the institution, students, and performance-based outcomes and focus. This leadership team will benefit from more time to implement their campus-wide strategies and vision, which is another reason why the team is recommending the Interim Report be embedded into the Year 4 Review.

Given the above, the team's hope is that Northwest take to heart our recommendations, including reporting on progress on the Core Components that were met with concern, during their scheduled Year 4 Review in 2022. The team is recommending that the Interim Report be embedded in the Year 4 Review and that the institution remain on the Open Pathway until that review determines there has/has not been progress made, particularly in the areas noted above. We are making this recommendation because we recognize that Northwest is in the process of designing and developing many new internal systems and structures, while also currently operationalizing many new systems, structures, and processes that have recently been created and implemented. As such, it is the team's recommendation that the university needs more time to gather, analyze, and report outcome data across all institutional levels, and demonstrate how it is using that information to improve. A final note to the next review team is that faculty credentials should also be reviewed in 2022, as Northwest was given an extension by the HLC until that time. As such, this visiting team did not fully scrutinize faculty credentials.

To conclude, while an Interim Report is recommended to be embedded in the Year 4 Review, the visiting team believes Northwest has the capacity and enthusiastic willingness to continually improve. The Board of Regents, administrators, faculty, staff, and students are all committed to and supportive of Northwest's leadership team and we believe the outcome is promising given some time to grow and operationalize its systems.

Overall Recommendations

Criteria For Accreditation
Met With Concerns

Sanctions Recommendation
No Sanction

Pathways Recommendation
Eligible to choose

Federal Compliance Worksheet for Evaluation Teams

Evaluation of Federal Compliance Components

The team reviews each item identified in the *Federal Compliance Filing by Institutions* (FCFI) and documents its findings in the appropriate spaces below. Teams should expect institutions to address these requirements with brief narrative responses and provide supporting documentation where necessary. Generally, if the team finds in the course of this review that there are substantive issues related to the institution's ability to fulfill the Criteria for Accreditation, such issues should be raised in the appropriate parts of the Assurance Review or Comprehensive Quality Review.

This worksheet is to be completed by the peer review team or a Federal Compliance reviewer in relation to the federal requirements. The team should refer to the *Federal Compliance Overview* for information about applicable HLC policies and explanations of each requirement.

Peer reviewers are expected to supply a rationale for each section of the Federal Compliance Evaluation.

The worksheet becomes an appendix in the team report. If the team recommends monitoring on a Federal Compliance Requirement in the form of a report or focused visit, the recommendation should be included in the Federal Compliance monitoring sections below and added to the appropriate section of the Assurance Review or Comprehensive Quality Review.

Institution under review: Northwest Missouri State University

Please indicate who completed this worksheet:

☐ Evaluation team

☒ Federal Compliance reviewer

To be completed by the Evaluation Team Chair if a Federal Compliance reviewer conducted this part of the evaluation:

Name: Benjamin Young

☐ I confirm that the Evaluation Team reviewed the findings provided in this worksheet.

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Assignment of Credits, Program Length and Tuition
(See FCFI Questions 1–3 and Appendix A)

1. Complete the *[Team Worksheet for Evaluating an Institution's Assignment of Credit Hours and Clock Hours](#)*. Submit the completed worksheet with this form.

   - Identify the institution's principal degree levels and the number of credit hours for degrees at each level (see the institution's Appendix A if necessary). The following minimum number of credit hours should apply at a semester institution:

     o Associate's degrees = 60 hours

     o Bachelor's degrees = 120 hours

     o Master's or other degrees beyond the bachelor's = At least 30 hours beyond the bachelor's degree

   - Note that 1 quarter hour = 0.67 semester hour.

   - Any exceptions to this requirement must be explained and justified.

   - Review any differences in tuition reported for different programs and the rationale provided for such differences.

2. Check the response that reflects the evaluation team or Federal Compliance reviewer's conclusions after reviewing this component of Federal Compliance:

   ☒ The institution meets HLC's requirements.

   ☐ The institution meets HLC's requirements, but additional monitoring is recommended.

   ☐ The institution does not meet HLC's requirements and additional monitoring is recommended.

   ☐ The Federal Compliance reviewer/evaluation team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

Rationale:

All materials provided by the University demonstrates that the institution has a policy for awarding credit and stating the expected rigor for students to earn said credit.   The University operates on a semester academic calendar with 50 percent of its courses web enhanced.   Its degrees, undergraduate and graduate, meet Higher Learning Commission standards for degree attainment. Bachelor degrees require at least 124 credit hours, master's degree range from 30 to 33 credit hours, and specialist degree earners must have at least 32 credit hours beyond the master's degree. The doctoral cooperative degree, awarded by the University of Missouri-Columbia, requires 76 credit hours beyond the bachelor's level. The course syllabi reviewed were consistent with University policies and procedures.   The University has one competency-based program in its portfolio but has yet to offer the graduate degree in Master of Art in Strategic Communication as of Fall 2018.   Finally, the

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Federal Compliance Filing listed the programs approved by the University Board of Regents for fee differential for FY 2018, including graduate and specialty programs.

Additional monitoring, if any:

Institutional Records of Student Complaints
(See FCFI Questions 4–7 and Appendixes B and C)

1. Verify that the institution has documented a process for addressing student complaints and appears to by systematically processing such complaints, as evidenced by the data on student complaints since the last comprehensive evaluation.

   - Review the process that the institution uses to manage complaints, its complaints policy and procedure, and the history of complaints received and resolved since the last comprehensive evaluation by HLC.

   - Determine whether the institution has a process to review and resolve complaints in a timely manner.

   - Verify that the evidence shows that the institution can, and does, follow this process and that it is able to integrate any relevant findings from this process into improvements in services or in teaching and learning.

   - Advise the institution of any improvements that might be appropriate.

   - Consider whether the record of student complaints indicates any pattern of complaints or otherwise raises concerns about the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation or Assumed Practices.

2. Check the response that reflects the team's conclusions after reviewing this component of Federal Compliance:

   ☒ The institution meets HLC's requirements.

   ☐ The institution meets HLC's requirements, but additional monitoring is recommended.

   ☐ The institution does not meet HLC's requirements and additional monitoring is recommended.

   ☐ The Federal Compliance reviewer/evaluation team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

Rationale:

The University has a process for handling student complaints that operates on a comment card system. This process, dating back to 1995, encourages currently enrolled students and stakeholders to register their formal complaints and concerns as well as express ideas and positive feedback using the online comment card system. Further, the University documents letters, emails, and telephone calls it receives through the same comment card system.

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These complaints go directly to the President's Office and are forwarded to the appropriate Northwest Leadership Team (NLT) member for review and response. The NTL member is charged with the responsibility of following up on the complaint and communicating the action, or actions, if any, to the Presidents' Office. Based on information gleaned from Appendix C in the Federal Compliance Filing, the University fielded 377 formal complaints across the major sectors of the University in FY14-18 and resolved a total of 283, a rate of 75 percent. The majority of the complaints were resolved in the President and Provost offices. The reviewer took note that the University's process allows for the target of the grievance to appeal the outcome. Student complaints are reviewed annually to ensure fair and legal practice are followed and frequent areas of concern thoroughly investigated to eliminate poor practice. Last, University stakeholders are made aware that if they believe their complaint has not been addressed to their satisfaction, they are appeal to the Missouri Department of Higher Education which has an established complaint policy that allows grieving parties to file their complaint at the state level.

Additional monitoring, if any:

Publication of Transfer Policies
(See FCFI Questions 8–10 and Appendixes D–F)

1. Verify that the institution has demonstrated it is appropriately disclosing its transfer policies to students and to the public. Policies should contain information about the criteria the institution uses to make transfer decisions.

   - Review the institution's transfer policies.

   - Review any articulation agreements the institution has in place, including articulation agreements at the institution level and for specific programs and how the institution publicly discloses information about those articulation agreements.

   - Consider where the institution discloses these policies (e.g., in its catalog, on its website) and how easily current and prospective students can access that information.

   - Determine whether the disclosed information clearly explains any articulation arrangements the institution has with other institutions. The information the institution provides to students should explain any program-specific articulation agreements in place and should clearly identify program-specific articulation agreements as such. Also, the information the institution provides should include whether the articulation agreement anticipates that the institution (1) accepts credits from the other institution(s) in the articulation agreement; (2) sends credits to the other institution(s) in the articulation agreements; (3) both offers and accepts credits with the institution(s) in the articulation agreement; and (4) what specific credits articulate through the agreement (e.g., general education only; pre-professional nursing courses only; etc.). Note that the institution need not make public the entire articulation agreement, but it needs to make public to students relevant information about these agreements so that they can better plan their education.

   - Verify that the institution has an appropriate process to align the disclosed transfer policies with the criteria and procedures used by the institution in making transfer decisions.

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2. Check the response that reflects the team's conclusions after reviewing this component of Federal Compliance:

☒ The institution meets HLC's requirements.

☐ The institution meets HLC's requirements, but additional monitoring is recommended.

☐ The institution does not meet HLC's requirements and additional monitoring is recommended.

☐ The Federal Compliance reviewer/evaluation team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

Rationale:

The University's transfer policies are provided in Appendix D and on the University's website and in the catalog. Applicable transfer policies are as follows: Credit Transfer Guidelines for Student Transfer and Articulation Among Missouri Colleges and Universities; Northwest Transfer Equivalency System; Northwest Transfer of Credit Policy; Virtual Transfer Admission Brochure; Transfer Admissions Website; Northwest – Kansas City Website; Dual Credit Website; and Undergraduate Catalog.

Articulation agreements are placed on the University's website. It was noted that beginning Fall 2019, and in accordance with the Missouri Higher Education Core Curriculum Act, the state of Missouri will create a core library of general education courses guaranteed to transfer between all Missouri public institutions in the same manner to fulfill the 42-hour General Education requirement. The current policy, set to expire within one year, permits agreements to only articulate the extent to which Northwest accepted credits from other institutions. The reviewer considers the new policy a step forward in serving the transfer needs of students coming to and transferring from Northwest Missouri State University.

Moreover, the University has a Designated Transfer Officer who is responsible for staying abreast of all transfer policies at the state and institutional levels. There is also at the University a Transfer Coordinator and Transfer Specialist, activist positions that provide checks and balances on how the transfer into and away from the University works. Appendix F provides the University's guidelines for how it chooses to accept transfer credits and clarifies how it enters into articulation agreements with other institutions. Currently, it has 44 articulation agreements (mostly with community colleges) with 34 percent with institutions in Missouri and 34 percent with the neighboring state of Iowa. The University's website contains information about the articulation agreements.

Additional monitoring, if any:

Practices for Verification of Student Identity
(See FCFI Questions 11–16 and Appendix G)

1. Confirm that the institution verifies the identity of students who participate in courses or programs provided through distance or correspondence education. Confirm that it appropriately discloses

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additional fees related to verification to students, and that the method of verification makes reasonable efforts to protect students' privacy.

- Determine how the institution verifies that the student who enrolls in a course is the same student who submits assignments, takes exams and earns a final grade. The team should ensure that the institution's approach respects student privacy.

- Check that any costs related to verification (e.g., fees associated with test proctoring) and charged directly to students are explained to the students prior to enrollment in distance or correspondence courses.

2. Check the response that reflects the team's conclusions after reviewing this component of Federal Compliance:

☒ The institution meets HLC's requirements.

☐ The institution meets HLC's requirements, but additional monitoring is recommended.

☐ The institution does not meet HLC's requirements and additional monitoring is recommended.

☐ The Federal Compliance reviewer/evaluation team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

Rationale:

The University follows common practice by providing online students with a unique User ID (referred to as the "S" number) and a unique student identification number. The Federal Compliance Filing describes the array of services available to students via the University portal (MyNorthwest). The reviewer found and read the Northwest Acceptable Use Policy asking students to keep their passwords confidential. Assistance is provided via a HelpDesk for those students needing to reset passwords or experiencing difficulty accessing the system. Students are advised before enrollment in online courses of the additional costs for web-based and distance learning courses published in the tuition and fees section of the 2017-2018 catalog. Basically, students taking web-based courses are charged an additional $40 per credit hour and an additional $10 per credit hour for blended courses. Distance education courses taken at the Northwest-Kansas City site are charged an additional $30 per credit hour. Tuition and fees are also posted on the Bursar Office home page.

Additional monitoring, if any:

Title IV Program Responsibilities
(See FCFI Questions 17–24 and Appendixes H–Q)

1. This requirement has several components the institution must address.

- The team should verify that the following requirements are met:

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o **General Program Requirements.** The institution has provided HLC with information about the fulfillment of its Title IV program responsibilities, particularly findings from any review activities by the Department of Education. It has, as necessary, addressed any issues the Department has raised regarding the institution's fulfillment of its responsibilities.

o **Financial Responsibility Requirements.** The institution has provided HLC with information about the Department's review of composite ratios and financial audits. It has, as necessary, addressed any issues the Department has raised regarding the institution's fulfillment of its responsibilities in this area. (Note that the team should also be commenting under Criterion 5 if an institution has significant issues with financial responsibility as demonstrated through ratios that are below acceptable levels or other financial responsibility findings by its auditor.)

o **Default Rates.** The institution has provided HLC with information about its three-year default rate. It has a responsible program to work with students to minimize default rates. It has, as necessary, addressed any issues the Department has raised regarding the institution's fulfillment of its responsibilities in this area. Note that for 2012 and thereafter, institutions and teams should be using the three-year default rate based on revised default rate data published by the Department in September 2012; if the institution does not provide the default rate for three years leading up to the comprehensive evaluation visit, the team should contact the HLC staff.

o **Campus Crime Information, Athletic Participation and Financial Aid, and Related Disclosures.** The institution has provided HLC with information about its disclosures. It has demonstrated, and the team has reviewed, the institution's policies and practices for ensuring compliance with these regulations.

o **Student Right to Know/Equity in Athletics.** The institution has provided HLC with information about its disclosures. It has demonstrated, and the team has reviewed, the institution's policies and practices for ensuring compliance with these regulations. The disclosures are accurate and provide appropriate information to students. (Note that the team should also be commenting under Criterion 2, Core Component 2.A if the team determines that the disclosures are not accurate or appropriate.)

o **Satisfactory Academic Progress and Attendance Policies.** The institution has provided HLC with information about its policies and practices for ensuring compliance with these regulations. The institution has demonstrated that the policies and practices meet state or federal requirements and that the institution is appropriately applying these policies and practices to students. In most cases, teams should verify that these policies exist and are available to students, typically in the course catalog or student handbook and online. Note that HLC does not necessarily require that the institution take attendance unless required to do so by state or federal regulations but does anticipate that institutional attendance policies will provide information to students about attendance at the institution.

o **Contractual Relationships.** The institution has presented a list of its contractual relationships related to its academic programs and evidence of its compliance with HLC policies requiring notification or approval for contractual relationships. (If the team learns that the institution has a contractual relationship that may require HLC approval and has not received HLC approval, the team must require that the

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institution complete and file the change request form as soon as possible. The team should direct the institution to review the Substantive Change Application for Programs Offered Through Contractual Arrangements on HLC's website for more information.)

- o **Consortial Relationships.** The institution has presented a list of its consortial relationships related to its academic programs and evidence of its compliance with HLC policies requiring notification or approval for consortial relationships. (If the team learns that the institution has a consortial relationship that may require HLC approval and has not received HLC approval, the team must require that the institution complete and file the form as soon as possible. The team should direct the institution to review the Substantive Change Application for Programs Offered Through Consortial Arrangements on HLC's website for more information.)

- Review all of the information that the institution discloses having to do with its Title IV program responsibilities.

- Determine whether the Department has raised any issues related to the institution's compliance or whether the institution's auditor has raised any issues in the A-133 about the institution's compliance, and also look to see how carefully and effectively the institution handles its Title IV responsibilities.

- If the institution has been cited or is not handling these responsibilities effectively, indicate that finding within the Federal Compliance portion of the team report and whether the institution appears to be moving forward with the corrective action that the Department has determined to be appropriate.

- If issues have been raised concerning the institution's compliance, decide whether these issues relate to the institution's ability to satisfy the Criteria for Accreditation, particularly with regard to whether its disclosures to students are candid and complete and demonstrate appropriate integrity *(Core Components 2.A and 2.B)*.

2. Check the response that reflects the team's conclusions after reviewing this component of Federal Compliance:

☒ The institution meets HLC's requirements.

☐ The institution meets HLC's requirements, but additional monitoring is recommended.

☐ The institution does not meet HLC's requirements and additional monitoring is recommended.

☐ The Federal Compliance reviewer/evaluation team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

Rationale:

The University's was recertified for Title IV eligibility in October, 2012. The University has not been audited or inspected by the United States Department of Education (DOE) since its last comprehensive visit by the Higher Learning Commission in 2012. It most recent Title IV Program Review was conducted September 15-17, 2015. A sample of 15 files were pulled

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for review. Northwest Missouri State University, an institution with 47 percent of the student body receiving Title IV aid, was cited for noncompliance in five areas: Late NSLDS Enrollment Reporting, Federal Funds Not Identified, Consumer Information, Gainful Employment Reporting, and Failure to Comply with Required Drug and Alcohol Abuse Education and Prevention Program Requirements. The University disagreed with the first finding; concurred with the remaining four. Ultimately, all of the concerns were addressed by the University to the DOE's satisfaction. A thorough review of the three most recent OMB Curricular A-133 reports, ending FY2015, 2016, and 2017, identified a total of six findings (four in FY2015 addressed in audit findings ending June 30, 2016 and two in FY2016 addressed in audit findings ending June 30, 2017). Based on evidence in the Assurance Argument, Federal Compliance Filing, the reviewer concluded the University met its obligation to DOE.

The University has submitted its reapplication for the DOE Program Participation Agreement on June 30, 2018, which is necessary for the institution's continued participation in any Title IV and HEA Program. Currently, the University participates in the following programs: Pell Grant, Federal Family Education Loan, Direct PLUS Loan, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant, Federal Work-Study, and Perkins Loans.   Student default rates were provided for the past three years (FY2012--7.8; FY2013--8.0; and FY2014--8.1).   These rates fall below the threshold to trigger preventive measures (such as a default management plan) even though the University did acknowledge a slight increase over the past three years.

As it pertains to reporting of campus crime, athletic eligibility, and financial aid statistics, the University identified champions in each area whose position seems appropriate for their areas of assigned responsibility and reporting.   In response to HLC's request for documentation about any federal investigation related to the aforementioned areas of reporting, the University chronicled an incident that occurred in April 2016 and the actions taken to investigate and resolve the matter. The reviewer's assessment of the incident affirmed the University acted quickly and appropriately in adhering to its own policies and procedures in this case.   It also made reference to what it learned from this experience about which policies and procedures needed modification in order to conform to the best legal practices.

With regard to responsibility for ensuring that consumer information/student right to know data is routinely disclosed, published, and accurate, the University provided a list of administrators who bear the responsibility in their areas of supervision. Based on the administrators' listed titles, they are appropriated tasked with this responsibility. Appendix N provides the list of policies and websites for consumers to access the information. Appendix O lists websites where student academic progress and student attendance policies are housed.

The University does not have any contractual or consortial relationships (per Appendices P and Q).

Additional monitoring, if any:

Required Information for Students and the Public
(See FCFI Questions 25–27 and Appendixes R and S)

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1. Verify that the institution publishes accurate, timely and appropriate information on institutional programs, fees, policies and related required information. Verify that the institution provides this required information in the course catalog and student handbook and on its website.

2. Check the response that reflects the team's conclusions after reviewing this component of Federal Compliance:

    ☒ The institution meets HLC's requirements.

    ☐ The institution meets HLC's requirements, but additional monitoring is recommended.

    ☐ The institution does not meet HLC's requirements and additional monitoring is recommended.

    ☐ The Federal Compliance reviewer/evaluation team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

Rationale:

Based on the reviewer's examination of the University's website and Federal Compliance Filing, all required information related to academic programs, tuition and fees, financial aid, and general consumer information is readily available.   In addition to consumer information, the Federal Compliance Filing included the website for the University Policy Library (houses all University policies by designated category) and Privacy Issues (housed on the Registrar's home page).

Here are the steps outlined by the University to ensure accurate, timely and appropriate required information for current and prospective students is developed and shared.

- Consumer Information Page

    Each semester, the Associate Provost, the Manager of Communication and the Director of Financial Assistance meet to discuss potential updates to this website. These meetings help ensure that the materials comply with federal student aid policies and follow guidelines. Once this website is updated an email notification is sent to all students.

- Course Catalogs

    Course catalogs are currently revised on an annual basis through the registrar's office. This editing cycle includes changes made based on curricular proposals and editorial changes from departments. The Academic Services Assistant ensures that all approved changes are added to the catalog.

- Student Handbooks

    Student handbooks are updated every summer semester. The Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs and Vice President Student Affairs lead this process. All students are provided with a link and attachment via email after census data is collected every fall semester.

Additional monitoring, if any:

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Advertising and Recruitment Materials and Other Public Information
(See FCFI Questions 28–31 and Appendixes T and U)

1. Verify that the institution has documented that it provides accurate, timely and appropriately detailed information to current and prospective students and the public about its accreditation status with HLC and other agencies as well as about its programs, locations and policies.

   - Review the institution's disclosure about its accreditation status with HLC to determine whether the information it provides is accurate, complete and appropriately formatted and contains HLC's web address.

   - Review the institution's disclosures about its relationship with other accrediting agencies for accuracy and for appropriate consumer information, particularly regarding the link between specialized/professional accreditation and the licensure necessary for employment in many professional or specialized areas.

   - Review the institution's catalog, brochures, recruiting materials, website and information provided by the institution's advisors or counselors to determine whether the institution provides accurate, timely and appropriate information to current and prospective students about its programs, locations and policies.

   - Verify that the institution correctly displays the Mark of Affiliation on its website.

2. Check the response that reflects the team's conclusions after reviewing this component of Federal Compliance:

   ☒ The institution meets HLC's requirements.

   ☐ The institution meets HLC's requirements, but additional monitoring is recommended.

   ☐ The institution does not meet HLC's requirements and additional monitoring is recommended.

   ☐ The Federal Compliance reviewer/evaluation team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

Rationale:

The University's website provided information about its relationships with the Higher Learning Commission and Missouri Department of Higher Education. The HLC Mark of Affiliation can be found at https://www.nwmissouri.edu/aboutus/accreditation.htm.   The website also presents the University's seven Institutional Learning Outcomes and lists seven specialized accreditations, one program endorsement, and four departmental memberships.   Appendix T and the University's website contain a sample of recruitment and marketing materials representative of all segments of the student body and faculty-staff. The materials are attractive, reflecting a common theme in terms of color of materials and style. In addition, the materials display diversity in terms of race/ethnicity and gender.   While folk of color are

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prominently displayed, the University enrollment figures point to a smaller number of students and faculty-staff of color.

Here are the sections of the University's website that contain advertising and recruiting information:

• Homepage: www.nwmissouri.edu

• Academics: www.nwmissouri.edu/academics/

• Admissions: www.nwmissouri.edu/admissions/

• Graduate School: www.nwmissouri.edu/graduate/

• Northwest-Kansas City: www.nwmissouri.edu/kc/

• Northwest Online: www.nwmissouri.edu/online/

• International students: www.nwmissouri.edu/admissions/apply/international/

• Media Center: www.nwmissouri.edu/media/

• Consumer information: www.nwmissouri.edu/facts/consumerinfo.htm

• Financial assistance: www.nwmissouri.edu/finaid/

• Bursar: www.nwmissouri.edu/bursar/tuitionandfees.htm

• Career Placement: https://www.nwmissouri.edu/career/Post-Grad-Data.htm

The University described in Appendix U the measures it takes to identify its recruiting markets and to ensure its ads are accurate and timely.   Basically, it uses multiple approaches: purchasing advertising spots based on recruiting data supplied by its Career Services and Institutional Research offices, impose standards regarding the University's brand under the watch of Marketing and Communication, and mining social media contacts by Marketing and Communication.   The reviewer considers these approaches practical and common in higher education settings.

Additional monitoring, if any:

Review of Student Outcome Data
(See FCFI Questions 32−35 and Appendix V)

1. Review the student outcome data the institution collects to determine whether they are appropriate and sufficient based on the kinds of academic programs the institution offers and the students it serves.

   • Determine whether the institution uses this information effectively to make decisions about planning, academic program review, assessment of student learning, consideration of institutional effectiveness and other topics.

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- Review the institution's explanation of its use of information from the College Scorecard, including student retention and completion and the loan repayment rate.

2. Check the response that reflects the team's conclusions after reviewing this component of Federal Compliance:

☒ The institution meets HLC's requirements.

☐ The institution meets HLC's requirements, but additional monitoring is recommended.

☐ The institution does not meet HLC's requirements and additional monitoring is recommended.

☐ The Federal Compliance reviewer/evaluation team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

Rationale:

The University collects information regarding student outcomes from its learning management system, Northwest Online (CANVAS). Institutional learning outcomes, general education requirements, and program-level outcomes are built into the learning management system. Course outcomes, then, are aligned with program, general education, and institutional learning outcomes. The University's assessment system opts to pull student outcome data at the end of each trimester. Outcome data is presented in dashboard form allowing faculty to track data for programs over time and to measure program effectiveness for the five-year Academic Program Review cycle. Appendix V provides a snapshot of the types of student outcome data available to stakeholders. Significant data include retention rates by school/department, graduation rates by program, graduation rates by race/ethnicity and gender, and placement rates by program, department/school, and student level. The DOE's College Scorecard, referenced in the Federal Compliance Filing, provides comparison data. Last, the University's makes use of pertinent student outcomes data in program review, assessment of student learning, and institutional effectiveness.   Institutional learning outcomes serve as the foundation for the design and delivery of each course and included in the common course syllabus.   It has been reported in the Filing that faculty scrub the student outcome data to identify areas warranting update and change.   In addition, there is an establish protocol for academic program review (20 percent of each unit's programs are reviewed each year as part of the five-year cycle).   This requirement, aided by the University's own Curriculum Scorecard, assists faculty in aligning their program goals with University wide goals in terms of retention, graduation, placement, and compliance with stakeholder input.   Overall, the University fulfills this requirement.

Additional monitoring, if any:

Publication of Student Outcome Data
(See FCFI Questions 36–38)

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1. Verify that the institution makes student outcome data available and easily accessible to the public. Data may be provided at the institutional or departmental level or both, but the institution must disclose student outcome data that address the broad variety of its programs.

    - Verify that student outcome data are made available to the public on the institution's website—for instance, linked to from the institution's home page, included within the top three levels of the website or easily found through a search of related terms on the website—and are clearly labeled as such.

    - Determine whether the publication of these data accurately reflects the range of programs at the institution.

2. Check the response that reflects the team's conclusions after reviewing this component of Federal Compliance:

    ☒ The institution meets HLC's requirements.

    ☐ The institution meets HLC's requirements, but additional monitoring is recommended.

    ☐ The institution does not meet HLC's requirements and additional monitoring is recommended.

    ☐ The Federal Compliance reviewer/evaluation team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

Rationale:

The university makes student outcomes data available to internal and external constituents. Retention and placement data are provided by program. Here are the links that contain student outcomes data:

- Consumer Information Page: https://www.nwmissouri.edu/facts/consumerinfo.htm

- Graduation Rates: https://www.nwmissouri.edu/services/ir/consumer/graduation.htm

- Placement Rates: https://www.nwmissouri.edu/career/Post-Grad-Data.htm

- Retention Rates: https://www.nwmissouri.edu/services/ir/consumer/retention.htm

Additional monitoring, if any:

Standing With State and Other Accrediting Agencies
(See FCFI Questions 39–40 and Appendixes W and X)

1. Verify that the institution discloses accurately to the public and HLC its relationship with any other specialized, professional or institutional accreditors and with all governing or coordinating bodies in states in which the institution may have a presence.

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The team should consider any potential implications for accreditation by HLC of a sanction or loss of status by the institution with any other accrediting agency or of loss of authorization in any state.

Note: If the team is recommending initial or continued status, and the institution is now or has been in the past five years under sanction or show-cause with, or has received an adverse action (i.e., withdrawal, suspension, denial or termination) from, any other federally recognized specialized or institutional accreditor or a state entity, then the team must explain the sanction or adverse action of the other agency in the body of the assurance section of the team report and provide its rationale for recommending HLC status in light of this action.

- Review the list of relationships the institution has with all other accreditors and state governing or coordinating bodies, along with the evaluation reports, action letters and interim monitoring plans issued by each accrediting agency.

- Verify that the institution's standing with state agencies and accrediting bodies is appropriately disclosed to students.

- Determine whether this information provides any indication about the institution's capacity to meet HLC's Criteria for Accreditation. Should the team learn that the institution is at risk of losing, or has lost, its degree or program authorization in any state in which it meets state presence requirements, it should contact the HLC staff liaison immediately.

2. Check the response that reflects the team's conclusions after reviewing this component of Federal Compliance:

☒ The institution meets HLC's requirements.

☐ The institution meets HLC's requirements, but additional monitoring is recommended.

☐ The institution does not meet HLC's requirements and additional monitoring is recommended.

☐ The Federal Compliance reviewer/evaluation team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

Rationale:

The University is in good standing with the following programs:

- ACBSP – Accreditation Council of Business Schools and Programs Master in Business Administration

- ACEND – Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics Dietetics Program

- COAPRT – Council for the Accreditation for Parks, Recreation, Tourism & Related Professions Bachelor of Science in Recreation

- NAEYC – National Association for the Education of Young Children Phyllis and Richard Leet Center for Children and Families

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- NASM – National Association of Schools of Music Department of Fine and Performing Arts

- NCATE/CAEP – National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), as operated by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) Professional Education Unit

The University has been provisionally approved for the following programs:

- B.A. Media Studies

- B.S. Degree in Radiologic Sciences (St. Luke's College of Radiologic Technology)

- B.S. Emergency Disaster Management (name changed from Comprehensive Crisis Response Feb 2014)

- B.S. Chemistry with 3 options

- B.S. Mass Media • B.A. Writing - Options in Creative Writing and Publishing

- B.A./B.S. Communication at Northwest-Kansas City

- B.A./B.S. Communication • B.A./B.S. Liberal Arts and Sciences

- B.A./B.S. Mathematics non-comprehensive majors

- B.F.A. Graphic Design

- B.S. Business Management 2+2 completion at Metropolitan Community College

- B.S. Comprehensive Crisis Management

- B.S. Cyber-security

- B.S. Data Sciences

- B.S. Human Services

- B.S. Applied Health Science

- B.S. Computer Science completion at Northwest-Kansas City

- B.S. Criminology

- B.S. Marketing completion at Metropolitan Community College

- B.S. Organizational Behavior/Human Resource Management

- B.S. Physics

- B.S. Political Science with three emphases

- B.S. Psychology at Northwest-Kansas City

- B.S. Writing - Option in Professional Writing

- B.S.Ed. Early Childhood at Maryville and Northwest-Kansas City

- B.S.Ed. Elementary Education 2+2 completion at Northwest-Kansas City

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- B.S.Ed. Elementary Education 2+2 completion at Metropolitan Community College

- B.S.Ed. Special Education completion at Northwest-Kansas City

- Elementary Math Specialist Graduate Certificate

- M.A. Strategic Communication

- M.A. Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

- M.B.A. Emphases in HR, Marketing, Business Decisions/Analytics

- M.S. Mathematics

- M.S. Sport and Exercise Psychology

- M.S. Information Systems

- M.S. Ed. Curriculum and Instruction

- M.S. Ed. Educational Leadership: K-12

- M.S. Ed. Teaching: Mathematics at St. Joseph / Northwest-Kansas City

- Single Semester Writing Certificate

- Special Education Administrator Certificate

The University makes its standing with state agencies and accrediting bodies to students online through the Northwest Consumer Information page and Accreditation website.

> Additional monitoring, if any:

Public Notification of Opportunity to Comment
(FCFI Questions 41–43 and Appendix Y)

1. Verify that the institution has made an appropriate and timely effort to solicit third-party comments. The team should evaluate any comments received and complete any necessary follow-up on issues raised in these comments.

   Note: If the team has determined that any issues raised by third-party comments relate to the team's review of the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation, it must discuss this information and its analysis in the body of the assurance section of the team report.

   - Review information about the public disclosure of the upcoming visit, including copies of the institution's notices, to determine whether the institution made an appropriate and timely effort to notify the public and seek comments.

   - Evaluate the comments to determine whether the team needs to follow up on any issues through its interviews and review of documentation during the visit process.

2. Check the response that reflects the team's conclusions after reviewing this component of Federal Compliance:

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☒ The institution meets HLC's requirements.

☐ The institution meets HLC's requirements, but additional monitoring is recommended.

☐ The institution does not meet HLC's requirements and additional monitoring is recommended.

☐ The Federal Compliance reviewer/evaluation team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

Rationale:

The University invited public comments for the comprehensive visit on August 1, 2018 via news release that was placed on its website. The news release, viewed by the reviewer, asked invitees to respond by August 15, 2018, gave the dates for the visit, and contained the link that goes directly to the Higher Learning Commission with any responses.   All students, alumni, donors, and community residents received the notification to comment via email, social media, and traditional media. Traditional media that were used included the Northwest Missourian, the Maryville Forum, and the Nodaway News. The reviewer believes sufficient efforts were made to inform constituents of the upcoming visit.

Additional monitoring, if any:

Competency-Based Programs Including Direct Assessment Programs/Faculty-Student Engagement
(See FCFI Questions 44–47)

1. Verify that students and faculty in any direct assessment or competency-based programs offered by the institution have regular and substantive interactions: the faculty and students communicate on some regular basis that is at least equivalent to contact in a traditional classroom, and that in the tasks mastered to assure competency, faculty and students interact about critical thinking, analytical skills, and written and oral communication abilities, as well as about core ideas, important theories, current knowledge, etc. (Also, confirm that the institution has explained the credit hour equivalencies for these programs in the credit hour sections of the Federal Compliance Filing.)

   - Review the list of direct assessment or competency-based programs offered by the institution.

   - Determine whether the institution has effective methods for ensuring that faculty in these programs regularly communicate and interact with students about the subject matter of the course.

   - Determine whether the institution has effective methods for ensuring that faculty and students in these programs interact about key skills and ideas in the students' mastery of tasks to assure competency.

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2. Check the response that reflects the team's conclusions after reviewing this component of Federal Compliance:

☒ The institution meets HLC's requirements.

☐ The institution meets HLC's requirements, but additional monitoring is recommended.

☐ The institution does not meet HLC's requirements and additional monitoring is recommended.

☐ The Federal Compliance reviewer/evaluation team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

Rationale:

The University indicated a new competency-based program, the Master of Art in Strategic Communication, that has been approved by MDHE and HLC. A pilot of four students started taking courses fall 2018. Once the pilot is evaluated, and improvements are made based on the evaluation (if necessary), the program will be rolled-out in its entirety. An online search of the 2018-2019 Graduate Catalog lists the degree. The graduate degree program is described as a 32-hour, online competency-based program. Admissions standards, completion requirements, enrollment specifications, grading guidelines, and course titles and numbers are included in the program description. The background information provided in the Federal Compliance Filing conformed to the expectations (contained in a PowerPoint presentation) shared with peer reviewers during a session offered by Karen Solinski and Jeff Rosen at the HLC Annual Conference 2016.

Additional monitoring, if any:

Institutional Materials Related to Federal Compliance Reviewed by the Team

Provide a list of materials reviewed here:

Northwest Missouri State University Federal Compliance Filing

Northwest Missouri State University Assurance Argument & Evidence File

Northwest Missouri State University website and multiple links

Missouri Department of Higher Education website

United States Department of Education website—College Scorecard

Appendix A: Worksheet for Institutions on the Assignment of Credit Hours and Clock Hours

Appendix B: Institutional Complaint Policy and Procedures, and Web Address

Appendix C: Complaints Received Since Last Comprehensive Evaluation and Their Resolutions

Appendix D: Published Transfer Policies

Appendix E: List of Articulation Agreements, and Web Addresses

Appendix F: Evidence that Decisions Regarding Transfer Align with Disclosed Policy

Appendix G: Disclosures of Additional Costs Related to Verification, and Web Address

Appendix H: Most recent Program Review and Other Inspector or Audit Reports since Last Comprehensive Evaluation

Appendix I: Correspondence with the Department of Education and Other Documents Explaining the Institution's General Program Responsibilities

Appendix J: Correspondence with the Department of Education and Other Documents Explaining the Institution's Actions in Response to Concern (No Submissions Necessary)

Appendix K: Correspondence with the Department of Education Related to Default Rates and Any Required Default Rate Management Plan (No Submissions Necessary)

Appendix L: Samples of Loan Agreement and Disclosure Information (No Submissions Necessary)

Appendix M: Disclosures to Students about Campus Crime Information, Athletic Participation and Financial Aid, and Web Address

Appendix N: Disclosures to Students Required by Student Right to Know/Equity in Athletic Responsibilities, and Web Address

Appendix O: Disclosures to Students about Satisfactory Academic Progress and Attendance Policies, and Web Address

Appendix P: List of Contractual Relationships (No Submissions Necessary)

Appendix Q: List of Consortial Relationships (No Submissions Necessary)

Appendix R: Course Catalogs and Student Handbook

Appendix S: Policies and Procedures to Ensure Required Information is Accurate, Timely and Appropriate

Appendix T: Advertising and Recruiting Materials

Appendix U: Policies and Procedures to Ensure Advertising and Recruiting Information is Accurate, Timely and Appropriate

Appendix V: Types of Student Outcomes Data Available to the Institution

Appendix W: Comprehensive Evaluation Reports and Action Letters From and Interim Monitoring Prepared for Institutional and Specialized Accrediting Agencies

Appendix X: Sample Disclosures of Institution's Standing with State Agencies and Accrediting Bodies, and Web Address

Appendix Y: Notices of Opportunity to Comment

PowerPoint Presentation: Competency-Based Education and Direct Assessment: The Approval Protocol/The Review Process, HLC Annual Conference 2016, Solinski & Rosen

Sample of Course Syllabi

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HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

Team Worksheet for Evaluating an Institution's Assignment of Credit Hours and Clock Hours

Institution Under Review: Northwest Missouri State University

Review the *Worksheet for Institutions on the Assignment of Credit Hours and Clock Hours*, including all supplemental materials. Applicable sections and supplements are referenced in the corresponding sections and questions below.

Part 1. Institutional Calendar, Term Length and Type of Credit

Instructions

Review Section 1 of Appendix A. Verify that the institution has calendar and term lengths within the range of good practice in higher education.

Responses

A.   Answer the Following Question

1. Are the institution's calendar and term lengths, including non-standard terms, within the range of good practice in higher education? Do they contribute to an academic environment in which students receive a rigorous and thorough education?

    ☒ Yes   ☐ No

    Comments:

    The University's calendar and term lengths, including flexible sessions, are within the range of good practice for higher education institutions.   The University has 16 week fall and spring semester with on start date. For these two semesters, there are compressed sessions of eight week for land based courses and seven week for online courses. Both compressed sessions have two start times.   With regard to the summer term, labeled trimester, there are five different term lengths: two week, four week, eight week, 12 week, and 14 week. Summer has four different start dates.   The University submitted attachments to its Federal Compliance Filing for recent terms showing the number of credit hours awarded and instructional time by course format. The academic calendar is readily available on the University's website.

B.   Recommend HLC Follow-Up, If Appropriate

Is any HLC follow-up required related to the institution's calendar and term length practices?

☐ Yes   ☒ No

Rationale:

Identify the type of HLC monitoring required and the due date:

Part 2. Policy and Practices on Assignment of Credit Hours

Instructions

Review Sections 2–4 of the *Worksheet for Institutions on the Assignment of Credit Hours and Clock Hours*, including supplemental materials as noted below. In assessing the appropriateness of the credit allocations provided by the institution the team should complete the following steps. The outcomes of the team's review should be reflected in its responses below.

1. **Format of Courses and Number of Credits Awarded.** Review the *Form for Reporting an Overview of Credit Hour Allocations and Instructional Time for Courses* (Supplement A1 to the *Worksheet for Institutions*) completed by the institution, which provides an overview of credit hour assignments across institutional offerings and delivery formats.

2. Scan the course descriptions in the catalog and the number of credit hours assigned for courses in different departments at the institution (see Supplements B1 and B2 to *Worksheet for Institutions*, as applicable).

   • At semester-based institutions courses will be typically be from two to four credit hours (or approximately five quarter hours) and extend approximately 14–16 weeks (or approximately 10 weeks for a quarter). The descriptions in the catalog should reflect courses that are appropriately rigorous and have collegiate expectations for objectives and workload. Identify courses/disciplines that seem to depart markedly from these expectations.

   • Institutions may have courses that are in compressed format, self-paced, or otherwise alternatively structured. Credit assignments should be reasonable. (For example, as a full-time load for a traditional semester is typically 15 credits, it might be expected that the norm for a full-time load in a five-week term is 5 credits; therefore, a single five-week course awarding 10 credits would be subject to inquiry and justification.)

   • Teams should be sure to scan across disciplines, delivery mode and types of academic activities.

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- Federal regulations allow for an institution to have two credit-hour awards: one award for Title IV purposes and following the federal definition and one for the purpose of defining progression in and completion of an academic program at that institution. HLC procedure also permits this approach.

3. Scan course schedules to determine how frequently courses meet each week and what other scheduled activities are required for each course (see Supplement B3 to *Worksheet for Institutions*). Pay particular attention to alternatively structured or other courses completed in a short period of time or with less frequently scheduled interaction between student and instructor that have particularly high credit hour assignments.

4. Sampling. Teams will need to sample some number of degree programs based on the headcount at the institution and the range of programs it offers.

   - For the programs sampled, the team should review syllabi and intended learning outcomes for several courses, identify the contact hours for each course, and review expectations for homework or work outside of instructional time.

   - At a minimum, teams should anticipate sampling at least a few programs at each degree level.

   - For institutions with several different academic calendars or terms or with a wide range of academic programs, the team should expand the sample size appropriately to ensure that it is paying careful attention to alternative format and compressed and accelerated courses.

   - Where the institution offers the same course in more than one format, the team is advised to sample across the various formats to test for consistency.

5. **Direct Assessment or Competency-Based Programs.** Review the information provided by the institution regarding any direct assessment or competency-based programs that it offers, with regard to the learning objectives, policies and procedures for credit allocation, and processes for review and improvement in these programs.

6. **Policy on Credit Hours and Total Credit Hour Generation.** With reference to the institutional policies on the assignment of credit provided in Supplement A2 to *Worksheet for Institutions*, consider the following questions:

   - Does the institution's policy for awarding credit address all the delivery formats employed by the institution?

   - Does that policy address the amount of instructional or contact time assigned and homework typically expected of a student with regard to credit hours earned?

   - For institutions with courses in alternative formats or with less instructional and homework time than would be typically expected, does that policy also equate credit hours with intended

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learning outcomes and student achievement that could be reasonably achieved by a student in the time frame allotted for the course?

- Is the policy reasonable within the federal definition as well as within the range of good practice in higher education? (Note that HLC will expect that credit hour policies at public institutions that meet state regulatory requirements or are dictated by the state will likely meet federal definitions as well.)

- If so, is the institution's assignment of credit to courses reflective of its policy on the award of credit?

- Do the number of credits taken by typical undergraduate and graduate students, as well as the number of students earning more than the typical number of credits, fall within the range of good practice in higher education?

7. If the answers to the above questions lead the team to conclude that there may be a problem with the credit hours awarded the team should recommend the following:

- If the problem involves a poor or insufficiently detailed institutional policy, the team should call for a revised policy as soon as possible by requiring a monitoring report within no more than one year that demonstrates the institution has a revised policy and provides evidence of implementation.

- If the team identifies an application problem and that problem is isolated to a few courses or a single department, division or learning format, the team should call for follow-up activities (a monitoring report or focused evaluation) to ensure that the problems are corrected within no more than one year.

- If the team identifies systematic noncompliance across the institution with regard to the award of credit, the team should notify the HLC staff immediately and work with staff members to design appropriate follow-up activities. HLC shall understand systematic noncompliance to mean that the institution lacks any policies to determine the award of academic credit or that there is an inappropriate award of institutional credit not in conformity with the policies established by the institution or with commonly accepted practices in higher education across multiple programs or divisions or affecting significant numbers of students.

Worksheet on Assignment of Credit Hours
A.   Identify the Sample Courses and Programs Reviewed by the Team

Programs Reviewed:

- Bachelor of Arts

- Bachelor of Science in Education

- Bachelor of Science in Nursing Completion Program

- Master of Business Administration

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- Master of Science in Education

Sample Course Syllabi Reviewed:

- Diagnostic and Corrective Reading, 2 credit hours

- The Ecology of Teaching and Learning, 1 credit hour

- Macroeconomics for Business Managers, 3 credit hours

- Recreation Operations Management, 3 credit hours

- Computer Science Graduate Directed Project-II, 3 credit hours (online)

- Spreadsheet Applications, 1 credit hour

- Computers and Information Technology, 3 credit hours

- History of the Theatre I, 3 credit hours

- Fundamentals of Oral Communication, 3 credit hours

- Fundamentals of Oral Communication, 3 credit hours (hybrid)

- Physical Chemistry I, 3 credit hours

- Introduction to Web Publishing, 3 credit hours

- Professional Media Writing, 3 credit hours

- Music in the Elementary School, 2 credit hours

- General Statistics, 3 credit hours

- Online General Statistics, 3 credit hours (online, self-paced)

- Design with Fibers, 3 credit hours

- Entomology, 3 credit hours

- Principles of Biology, 3 credit hours

- General Biology Lecture Online , 3 credit hours (online)

- General Biology Lecture, 3 credit hours

- Precision Ag for Production, 3 credit hours

- Soil and Water Conservation, 3 credit hours

- Greenhouse Crop Production, 3 credit hours

- Plant Science, 4 credit hours

B.   Answer the Following Questions

1. Institutional Policies on Credit Hours

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a. Does the institution's policy for awarding credit address all the delivery formats employed by the institution? (Note that for this question and the questions that follow an institution may have a single comprehensive policy or multiple policies.)

☒ Yes   ☐ No

Comments:

The University does have a clear policy on how it awards credit for traditional land-based, online, and blended format courses. The one competency-based program describes how credit will be evaluated and awarded.

b. Does that policy relate the amount of instructional or contact time provided and homework typically expected of a student to the credit hours awarded for the classes offered in the delivery formats offered by the institution? (Note that an institution's policy must go beyond simply stating that it awards credit solely based on assessment of student learning and should also reference instructional time.)

☒ Yes   ☐ No

Comments:

Northwest Missouri State University calculates credit hours on the semester basis using the standard Carnegie unit. A credit hour is awarded for 750 minutes of formal instruction with the expectation the student will work or engage in academic related activities twice that amount of time.

c. For institutions with non-traditional courses in alternative formats or with less instructional and homework time than would be typically expected, does that policy equate credit hours with intended learning outcomes and student achievement that could be reasonably achieved by a student in the time frame and utilizing the activities allotted for the course?

☒ Yes   ☐ No

Comments:

Based on my review of the syllabi received from the University, and a scanning of course descriptions in graduate and undergraduate catalogs, the policy is followed for non-traditional courses. The review of syllabi showed a common theme among teaching faculty in that they linked course assignments to the seven Institutional Learning Outcomes and program goals.

d. Is the policy reasonable within the federal definition as well as within the range of good practice in higher education? (Note that HLC will expect that credit hour policies at public institutions that meet state regulatory requirements or are dictated by the state will likely meet federal definitions as well.)

☒ Yes   ☐ No

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Comments:

The University's policy matches federal and state requirements and represents best practice.

2. Application of Policies

   a. Are the course descriptions and syllabi in the sample academic programs reviewed by the team appropriate and reflective of the institution's policy on the award of credit? (Note that HLC will expect that credit hour policies at public institutions that meet state regulatory requirements or are dictated by the state will likely meet federal definitions as well.)

     ☒ Yes   ☐ No

     Comments:

     The review of sample syllabi confirmed that the University's credit hour policy is consistently applied across teaching formats and terms.

   b. Are the learning outcomes in the sample reviewed by the team appropriate to the courses and programs reviewed and in keeping with the institution's policy on the award of credit?

     ☒ Yes   ☐ No

     Comments:

     Yes, a sample demonstrated adherence to University policy.

   c. If the institution offers any alternative-delivery or compressed-format courses or programs, are the course descriptions and syllabi for those courses appropriate and reflective of the institution's policy on the award of academic credit?

     ☒ Yes   ☐ No

     Comments:

     University policy is consistently followed.

   d. If the institution offers alternative-delivery or compressed-format courses or programs, are the learning outcomes reviewed by the team appropriate to the courses and programs reviewed and in keeping with the institution's policy on the award of credit? Are the learning outcomes reasonable for students to fulfill in the time allocated, such that the allocation of credit is justified?

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☒ Yes   ☐ No

Comments:

e. Is the institution's actual assignment of credit to courses and programs across the institution reflective of its policy on the award of credit and reasonable and appropriate within commonly accepted practice in higher education?

☒ Yes   ☐ No

Comments:

The application of the University's policy for assigning credit to courses and programs is reflective of sound practice in higher education.

C. Recommend HLC Follow-up, If Appropriate

Review the responses provided in this worksheet. If the team has responded "no" to any of the questions above, the team will need to assign HLC follow-up to assure that the institution comes into compliance with expectations regarding the assignment of credit hours.

Is any HLC follow-up required related to the institution's credit hour policies and practices?

☐ Yes   ☒ No

Rationale:

Identify the type of HLC monitoring required and the due date:

D. Systematic Noncompliance in One or More Educational Programs With HLC Policies Regarding the Credit Hour

Did the team find systematic noncompliance in one or more education programs with HLC policies regarding the credit hour?

☐ Yes   ☒ No

Identify the findings:

Rationale:

Part 3. Clock Hours

Instructions

Review Section 5 of *Worksheet for Institutions*, including Supplements A3–A6. Before completing the worksheet below, answer the following question:

> Does the institution offer any degree or certificate programs in clock hours or programs that must be reported to the Department of Education in clock hours for Title IV purposes even though students may earn credit hours for graduation from these programs?

☐ Yes   ☒ No

If the answer is "Yes," complete the "Worksheet on Clock Hours."

Note: This worksheet is <u>not</u> intended for teams to evaluate whether an institution has assigned credit hours relative to contact hours in accordance with the Carnegie definition of the credit hour. This worksheet solely addresses those programs reported to the Department of Education in clock hours for Title IV purposes.

Non-degree programs subject to clock hour requirements (for which an institution is required to measure student progress in clock hours for federal or state purposes or for graduates to apply for licensure) are not subject to the credit hour definitions per se but will need to provide conversions to semester or quarter hours for Title IV purposes. Clock hour programs might include teacher education, nursing or other programs in licensed fields.

Federal regulations require that these programs follow the federal formula listed below. If there are no deficiencies identified by the accrediting agency in the institution's overall policy for awarding semester or quarter credit, the accrediting agency may provide permission for the institution to provide less instruction so long as the student's work outside class in addition to direct instruction meets the applicable quantitative clock hour requirements noted below.

> Federal Formula for Minimum Number of Clock Hours of Instruction (34 CFR §668.8):
>
> 1 semester or trimester hour must include at least 37.5 clock hours of instruction
> 1 quarter hour must include at least 25 clock hours of instruction
>
> Note that the institution may have a lower rate if the institution's requirement for student work outside of class combined with the actual clock hours of instruction equals the above formula provided that a semester/trimester hour includes at least 30 clock hours of actual instruction and a quarter hour includes at least 20 semester hours.

Worksheet on Clock Hours
A.   Answer the Following Questions

> 1. Does the institution's credit-to-clock-hour formula match the federal formula?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

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Comments:

2. If the credit-to-clock-hour conversion numbers are less than the federal formula, indicate what specific requirements there are, if any, for student work outside of class.

3. Did the team determine that the institution's credit hour policies are reasonable within the federal definition as well as within the range of good practice in higher education? (Note that if the team answers "No" to this question, it should recommend follow-up monitoring in section C below.)

☐ Yes   ☐ No

Comments:

4. Did the team determine in reviewing the assignment of credit to courses and programs across the institution that it was reflective of the institution's policy on the award of credit and reasonable and appropriate within commonly accepted practice in higher education?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

Comments:

B.   Does the team approve variations, if any, from the federal formula in the institution's credit-to-clock-hour conversion?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

C.   Recommend HLC Follow-up, If Appropriate

Is any HLC follow-up required related to the institution's clock hour policies and practices?

☐ Yes   ☒ No

Rationale:

Identify the type of HLC monitoring required and the due date:

HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

Institutional Status and Requirements Worksheet

INSTITUTION and STATE:	Northwest Missouri State University, MO
TYPE OF REVIEW:	Open Pathway Comprehensive Evaluation
DESCRIPTION OF REVIEW:	The institution was granted an extension until September 1, 2022 to become compliant to the faculty qualification requirement. HLC will review that the institution is in compliance with the faculty qualification requirement at the comprehensive evaluation following the extension date. Comprehensive evaluation includes a Federal Compliance reviewer: Dr. Benjamin Young.
DATES OF REVIEW:	10/15/2018 - 10/16/2018

☐ No Change in Institutional Status and Requirements

Accreditation Status

Nature of Institution

Control: Public

Recommended Change: No Change

Degrees Awarded: Associates, Bachelors, Masters, Specialist

Recommended Change: No Change

Reaffirmation of Accreditation:

Year of Last Reaffirmation of Accreditation: 2011 - 2012

Year of Next Reaffirmation of Accreditation: 2018 - 2019

Recommended Change: 2028 – 2029

Accreditation Stipulations

General:

Prior Commission approval is required for substantive change as stated in Commission policy.

Recommended Change: No Change

HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

Institutional Status and Requirements Worksheet

Additional Location:

Prior HLC approval required.

Recommended Change: No Change

Distance and Correspondence Courses and Programs:

Approved for distance education courses and programs. The institution has not been approved for correspondence education.

Recommended Change: No Change

Direct Assessment:

Approval for credit-based competency-based education is limited to the Master of Arts in Strategic Communication.

Recommended Change: No Change

Accreditation Events

Accreditation Pathway   Open Pathway

Recommended Change: Eligible to Choose

Upcoming Events

Additional Location   11/13/2018
Confirmation Visit:

Independence School District Administration Center, Independence, MO, 64050

Recommended Change: No Change

Monitoring

Upcoming Events

None

Recommended Change: Interim report <u>embedded</u> in Year 4 Assurance Review (2022-2023 Academic Year); A report focused on Core Components 2E (faculty/staff training related to research integrity), 3A (Learning Goals), and 4B (Assessment).

Institutional Data

Educational Programs		**Recommended Change:**
Undergraduate		
Certificate	6	_____

Institutional Status and Requirements Worksheet

Associate Degrees	1	_____
Baccalaureate Degrees	95	_____
Graduate		
Master's Degrees	27	_____
Specialist Degrees	3	_____
Doctoral Degrees	0	_____

Extended Operations

Branch Campuses

None

Recommended Change: No Change

Additional Locations

Independence School District Administration Center, 201 N. Forest Avenue, Independence, MO, 64050 - Active

Northwest Kansas City Center , 6889 North Oak Trafficway, Gladstone, MO, 64118 - Active

Recommended Change: No Change

Correspondence Education

None

Recommended Change: No Change

Distance Delivery

13.0201 - Bilingual and Multilingual Education, Certificate, Certificate English Language Learners

13.0201 - Bilingual and Multilingual Education, Master, M.S.Ed. English Language Learners

13.0501 - Educational/Instructional Technology, Master, MS - Instructional Technology

13.1007 - Education/Teaching of Individuals with Multiple Disabilities, Master, M.S.Ed. Special Education

13.1299 - Teacher Education and Professional Development, Specific Levels and Methods, Other, Certificate, eTeaching Certificate (Grad)

13.1321 - Computer Teacher Education, Certificate, Certificate (grad) Instructional Technology

45.0799 - Geography, Other, Certificate, Certificate (grad) in GIS

45.0799 - Geography, Other, Master, M.S. GIS

52.0201 - Business Administration and Management, General, Bachelor, B.S. Business

Institutional Status and Requirements Worksheet

Management

52.0201 - Business Administration and Management, General, Master, MBA: Master of Business Administration-General

52.1401 - Marketing/Marketing Management, General, Bachelor, B.S. Marketing

Contractual Arrangements

None

Recommended Change: No Change

Consortial Arrangements

None

Recommended Change: No Change