

Assurance Argument

Northeastern State University - OK

Review date: 10/18/2021

1 - Mission

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

1.A - Core Component 1.A

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

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

Argument

NSU's [mission, focused mission statement, vision, and values](#) articulate the institution's purposes and aspirations. These are publicly available on the university website, on posters in campus buildings, and in the [NSU Catalogs](#), the [NSU Fact Book](#), and other documents. They are in the [Faculty Handbook](#), the [Student Handbook](#), and are introduced during [New Employee Orientation](#).

Mission Statement

Founded on the rich educational heritage of the Cherokee Nation, the campuses of Northeastern State University provide its diverse communities with lifelong learning through a broad array of undergraduate, graduate, and professional doctoral degree programs. With high expectations for student success, the University provides quality teaching, challenging curricula, research and scholarly activities, immersive learning opportunities, and service to local and professional communities. The institution's dedicated faculty and staff offer a service-oriented, supportive learning environment where students prepare to achieve professional and personal success in a multicultural and global society.

Focused Mission Statement

We empower students, faculty, staff and the community to reach their full intellectual and human potential by creating and expanding a culture of learning, discovery, and diversity.

Vision Statement

Northeastern State University shapes the future of its region as the educational partner of choice, setting a standard of excellence by serving the intellectual, cultural, social, and economic needs of the University's diverse communities.

Values

Integrity, Collaboration, Creativity, Leadership, Excellence, Community, Diversity

The mission statement undergirds NSU's [Strategic Plan](#), academic programming, budgeting, marketing plans, and other institutional operations. The mission statement is also the foundation for [Destination 2023 \(D-23\)](#), NSU's ten-year roadmap that addresses the institutional purpose, values, goals, plans, and other priorities.

1.A.1. NSU's mission was established through a university and community-involved process and is reviewed regularly (2013, 2015, and 2019) during [strategic plan](#) updates. University and community input is collected through committee meetings, [brown bag luncheons](#), and college and departmental [advisory panels](#) which include external constituents and employers. NSU invites public comments via NSU's website [Strategic Planning Feedback Form](#).

During the update process, departments, colleges, and the [Strategic Planning Committee](#) review the mission and vision statements, institutional values and goals, projected growth, revenue sources, budget allocations, and persistence, completion, retention, and graduation rates. The overarching goal is to maintain currency and relevancy of the mission, initiatives, and supporting actions in light of challenges presented by evolving societal and global demands.

The Strategic Planning Committee recommends any needed changes to the Cabinet who reviews and approves. As an added layer of oversight, NSU's governing board, the [Regional University System of Oklahoma](#) (RUSO) requires a [bi-annual evaluation of the president](#) who submits the strategic plan and mission as part of that review.

1.A.2. As a regional institution, NSU provides educational opportunities to individuals in rural and urban parts of Oklahoma who might not otherwise have access to a college education. The institution focuses primarily on teaching, applied research, and service to both the academy and constituent communities.

NSU's [program offerings](#) highlight degrees and majors that support the communities, tribes, and regions it serves. These range from business degrees that staff businesses and manufacturers; science and health degrees that prepare graduates who serve their communities through resource management or health care; education degrees, mental health, and social work degrees that

support schools and social agencies; and liberal arts degrees that improve citizens' quality of life, maintain tribal cultures, and enhance the area's cultural endeavors.

Faculty scholarly activities and service connect to the region and community. A sampling of [faculty scholarly activities](#) demonstrates that NSU faculty research often relates to area business and tribal needs. Concurrently, faculty also serve in [leadership and service roles](#) in their local communities.

As an institution dedicated to serving underrepresented students, NSU enjoys several recognitions for educational quality, scholarship, service, economic development and community service. Recent accolades include

- Recognized as the “[Number 1 producer of Native American degrees](#)” by the 24th Annual Winds of Change College Issue,
- Winner of the 2018 [AACTE Best Practice Award for the Innovative Use of Technology](#),
- [Ranked one of the Best Online Colleges and Programs in Oklahoma by Best Colleges \(2018\) and U.S News & World Report \(2019\), and](#)
- [Ranked 37th of 490 institutions for safest campus in America by National Council for Home Safety and Security.](#)
- [One of top 200 colleges for indigenous students \(American Indian Science and Engineering Society\).](#)

1.A.3. NSU's mission acknowledges it provides "its diverse communities with lifelong learning through a broad array of undergraduate, graduate, and professional doctoral degree programs." In addition to locally-focused research mentioned earlier, NSU incorporates [immersive learning](#) opportunities and [service](#) opportunities that impact students, local, and professional communities.

1.A.4. In combination with the academic programs detailed earlier, NSU also provides services to assist a student population which could be characterized as "at risk" in terms of degree completion. NSU serves significant percentages of first generation students, students with financial need ([93% of first-time, full-time students receive financial aid; 53% receive Pell](#)), [adult students aged 25 and over](#), and students from [underrepresented, minority populations](#) (51%). These data ([Factbook 2019-20](#)) emphasize the importance of empowering students, no matter their age or background, to reach their full potential.

NSU's academic colleges offer:

- 1 professional [Doctorate of Optometry](#) degree,
- [25 graduate degrees](#) (total does not include 1 degree in suspension / teach out),
- [59 undergraduate degrees](#),

- [11 undergraduate certificates](#) of proficiency, and
- [21 graduate certificates](#) of proficiency.

As noted in the Fact Book 2019-20, NSU conferred [1,912 degrees in AY 19-20](#).

The [College of Extended Learning](#) partners with academic colleges to offer select, accelerated, credit-based programs and non-credit continuing education classes to serve the community. In addition, the College of Extended Learning also partners in:

- [Reach Higher](#), a statewide initiative designed to help working adults complete their bachelor's degree in [Organizational Leadership](#).
- [Riverhawks Scholars](#), a Comprehensive Transition Program for individuals with intellectual disabilities,
- The [Advanced Placement® Summer Institute](#), a partnership with the Oklahoma State Department of Education to provide challenging classes designed to improve K-12 teacher performance in the classroom, and
- The [CLEET Reserve Academy](#), a partnership with the State of Oklahoma to provide certification of Oklahoma reserve law enforcement officers.

To ensure students have opportunities to succeed, NSU provides a number of supports and interventions for students who may be first-generation or who may have life events that place them at risk for leaving before finishing their degree. These supports are explained in more detail in Criterion 3 but include advising and faculty mentoring; student support services such as early alert systems, career services, emergency funding, tutoring, and veterans' services; as well as immersive learning and student engagement activities.

1.A.5. NSU's mission, vision, and values are publicly available and communicated through a variety of means articulated earlier. In a 2014 [Foundation Feasibility Survey](#), 98% of respondents believe in NSU's mission statement and that NSU is achieving its mission (n=1,374).

While communication of the mission, vision, values is important, the application of those concepts in the communities NSU serves is equally important. A few examples include

- NSU received President Obama's [Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll Award](#) for six consecutive years (2010-2015).
- According to the 2019 NSSE survey, [57% of first-year student respondents](#) (n=151) reported that some, most or all of their courses had a community-based project. Similarly, in that same survey, [56% of seniors](#) (n=446 respondents) reported spending time working in the community or volunteering. During the 2020-21 academic year, NSU students logged more than [9,000 hours](#) in co-curricular service in projects. Other projects include
 - [MLK Day of Service](#)
 - [Special Olympics](#)

- [Summer Academies](#), and
- [The Big Event](#).

NSU is passionate about engaging communities, both regionally [and globally](#), to enhance educational, economic, and cultural development. Examples below highlight NSU's efforts to engage in the community:

- NSU is a board member for the [Northeastern Oklahoma Regional Association](#) (NORA) and sponsors the [annual conference](#) where more than 327 attendees from 14 counties meet to promote economic development;
- NSU's [Sequoyah Institute](#) fosters cultural enrichment and promotes experiencing and understanding fine arts;
- The annual [Larry Adair Lectureship](#) series facilitates sharing of diverse perspectives in politics, government, and public policy to raise student interest in public affairs and community engagement;
- The [NSU Jazz Lab](#) features jazz and blues musicians and sponsors the region's longest running jazz festival; and
- Campus administrators serve on local economic boards, arts councils and chambers of commerce.

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1.B - Core Component 1.B

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

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

Argument

1.B.1. As a four-year, public institution, Northeastern State University is committed to the public good. Its [mission statement](#) recognizes NSU's commitment to quality education and "service to local and professional communities" and its values include collaboration through partnerships that promote educational and economic success as well as diversity ensuring the "rights of individuals and equal access to educational and enrichment experiences, respecting cultural differences, and ensuring equal opportunity." In 2021 on its website, [U.S. News](#) ranked NSU:

- 93rd (tie) for Regional Universities in the west;
- 87th (tie) in top performers in social mobility; and
- 48th (tie) in the Top Public School in the U.S.

Additional examples that illustrate NSU's public focus include the following:

- Approved by the Department of Defense since 2012 for [military tuition assistance](#) and recognized by [Viqtory](#) (2021) and [College Recon](#) (2020) as a [military friendly, "yellow ribbon" school](#);
- Offers [free tax assistance for low income families](#) (since 1980);
- Offers [visual](#) and [performing arts](#) for the general public to enjoy; and
- Offers free tutoring, reading assistance, and computer access to K-12 students ([NSU's Cappi Wadley Reading and Technology Center](#)).

NSU supports the public good by partnering with state, tribal, and business leaders to improve educational and cultural opportunities for the community. Some examples include:

- [Green Country's Cultural & Historical Preservation Initiative](#), a collaboration with state, tribal and regional entities designed to preserve local history and artifacts in Oklahoma;
- [The Tulsa Transfer Project Collaboration](#), a community initiative to increase the number of post-secondary credentials in the Tulsa metropolitan area;
- Collaboration among NSU, Tulsa Community College, and Broken Arrow Public Schools to offer the [Early College program](#) on NSU's Broken Arrow campus;

- [Concurrent enrollment opportunities](#) for high school juniors and seniors;
- [Youth camps and educational opportunities](#); and
- The [Tulsa County Sheriff's Office degree completion program](#).

Affordable and Accessible. NSU offers affordable and accessible programs to area residents who otherwise might not attain a degree.

- Low [cost of attendance](#) - less than \$20,000 per year for on campus, in-state students;
- [Flexible scheduling](#) with face-to-face, blended, evening, weekend, and online classes,
- [Availability of online programs](#);
- Membership in the [National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements](#) (NC-SARA) which attests to program quality and transfer reciprocity of online classes; and
- A [99% acceptance rate](#) according to US News.

Commitment to Community Service. NSU's commitment to community engagement is embedded in many degree programs with structured opportunities to practice skills learned in the classroom. The [2019 President's Report](#) evidences NSU's commitment to the public good through:

- Membership in nine regional and state chambers of commerce complemented by numerous memberships in community organizations and cultural development programs;
- 11 vision centers that serve 60,000 patients annually;
- 3 speech-language centers that assist more than 2,600 individuals annually;
- 2 reading clinics that assist pre K-12 students;
- More than 33 annual community service events; and
- An impact of nearly \$30M in the region through the Manufacturing Alliance, Small Business Alliance, OK Center for Rural Development, Oklahoma Small Business Center, and Northeast Oklahoma Regional Alliance.

Service to Local and Professional Communities. Northeastern State University enjoys strong community connections and a positive relationship with its host communities of [Tahlequah](#), [Muskogee](#), [Broken Arrow](#), and the entire northeastern Oklahoma metropolitan statistical area. Tahlequah hosts the main campus and has been the center of higher education in the region since its origins as the Cherokee Female Seminary, founded in 1846 and moved to its current location in 1889. The Oklahoma legislature purchased the Seminary property in 1909 and created Northeastern State Normal School. Classes have been held in Seminary Hall for more than 130 years.

The Muskogee campus opened in 1993 and houses many of NSU's health profession programs. Several advancements have been supported by individual donors who funded specialized space such as the [Occupational Therapy laboratory](#) and the [City of Muskogee Foundation](#) which provided seed monies to develop programming.

The [Broken Arrow campus](#) was created in 2001 by a dedicated city-wide sales tax and expanded allocation of Broken Arrow's share in the Tulsa County Vision 2025 sales tax. In return, the

campus hosts community events at no cost. Everyone from the Chamber of Commerce to hospitals and public schools utilize the campus and its resources.

1.B.2. NSU's legislatively mandated mission ([Oklahoma State Statute 70](#)) is to provide high-quality education within the region. As a public institution, NSU does not answer to investors, a parent organization, or other external interests. Accordingly, public educational responsibilities take priority over external financial concerns or interests.

Furthermore, NSU's [two governing boards](#) - the [Regional University System of Oklahoma](#), (formally BOROC) which oversees operations, and the [Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education](#), which oversees academic policies - strive to ensure financial integrity and educational quality through a series of checks and balances. NSU makes proposals to the governing boards related to curriculum changes, budget requests, and revisions to the mission statement or strategic plan. In turn, the governing boards review and approve the requests.

This structure provides governing board review and oversight consistent with their constitutional authority ([OSRHE, Article 13A](#); [RUSO, Article 13B](#)) and maintains daily operation oversight authority with the President and his Vice-Presidents. By balancing fiscal, educational, and fiduciary obligations between NSU and state-level governing boards, NSU can operate with autonomy day-to-day.

1.B.3. NSU's [Mission Statement](#) reflects NSU's commitment to "diverse communities and service to local and professional communities" through a "service-oriented, supportive learning environment where students prepare to achieve professional and personal success in a multicultural and global society." This commitment to external constituencies and communities of interest is reflected in NSU's [Value Statements](#), and NSU actively pursues community and academic partnerships including the following:

- Participating in [2+2 Smart Choice partnerships](#) with two-year colleges to provide seamless transfer of college-credit hours;
- Creating [community advisory boards](#) to provide input on programs, employment opportunities, and employer / community needs; and
- Designing [new program and course offerings](#) that fit the needs of students and the community.

These efforts, coupled with NSU's [immersive learning](#), [service-learning](#), and [community engagement opportunities](#), further evidence that NSU identifies and responds to diverse external constituencies and communities of interest within the region.

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1.C - Core Component 1.C

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

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

Argument

1.C.1. NSU encourages a variety of curricular and co-curricular learning activities, programs, and experiences that reinforce NSU's mission and values and prepare students for informed citizenship and workplace success. More specifically, NSU

- Encourages civic participation through annual [Constitution Day](#) activities, [voter registration](#) activities, and student organizations such as the [Model United Nations](#) and [Oklahoma Intercollegiate Legislature](#);
- Offers study abroad [grants and scholarships](#) including [faculty-led study abroad trips](#) to destinations such as Belize, Brazil, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ireland, Scotland, England, Japan, Paris, Russia, Honduras, Israel, and its first "Study at Sea" F19 cruise adventure, which are evaluated by [end-of-semester course evaluations](#);
- Belongs to the [International Student Exchange Programs](#) (ISEP), a membership program that offers [study abroad opportunities](#) and [internships](#) in more than [50 countries](#);
- Co-sponsors [Tulsa Workplace: Interns for Good](#) to benefit NSU students and the business community;
- Sponsors [service learning opportunities](#) such as:
 - [optometry students providing free eye examinations and glasses](#),
 - [health professions students supporting Court Appointed Special Advocates \(CASA\) and foster children](#),
 - serves at [community health fair days](#) such as the biannual "Hispanic Health Fair Day;" and
- Sponsors [Undergraduate Research Day](#), an annual event that celebrates [student-faculty research experiences](#), scholarly activities, and faculty mentor support;
- Hosts an annual days of service including [MLK Day of Service](#) and [Big Event](#) day with approximately 300-400 faculty, staff, and students servicing in regional communities;
- Recognizes more than [75 student professional clubs, organizations, and honor societies](#);
- Belongs to the NCAA Division II collegiate athletics ([NSU Factbook](#)) offering
 - Men's sports that include baseball, basketball, football, golf, and soccer.
 - Women's sports that include basketball, golf, soccer, softball, and tennis.

- Sponsors [Career Fairs](#) and [Networking Opportunities](#) through [Career Services](#).

1.C.2. NSU acknowledges its role in a multicultural society which is reflected in NSU's Mission Statement and Diversity Core Value. Similarly, [Strategic Goal 4](#) acknowledges NSU's duty to "honor our heritage as the cultural center of the region." In tandem, these documents demonstrate NSU's understanding and commitment to fulfilling the needs presented by a diverse and ever-changing, multicultural society.

Addressing the Needs of a Diverse Society. NSU fulfills its role in a multicultural society by offering programs, student support services, and university activities that foster diversity and understanding of cultural differences (see 1.A.3, and 3.B.4). NSU's [Office of Diversity and Inclusion](#) seeks to "cultivate and sustain an inclusive and welcoming campus." Multiple programs and entities support students from a variety of backgrounds and seek to advocate education and equity. A glance at a recent Alumni publication, [Imprints](#), highlights NSU's connections to underrepresented groups (tribal & low SES), tribal governments, and diversity in the arts (Joy Harjo, poet laureate) and sciences (NASA).

Reflecting its historical connections to the Cherokee Nation and other Oklahoma tribes, NSU has strong programming for Native American students. NSU's [Center for Tribal Studies](#) serves as the central resource on campus for bridging communication between tribal nations and the university while serving [Oklahoma's 39 Native American tribes](#). Other cultural outreach programs and organizations geared to this population include:

- [The Annual Indigenous Leadership Summit](#);
- [Native American Support Center](#) (Title III NASNTI grant); and
- [The Symposium on the American Indian](#) (cultural celebration)

These programs contribute to NSU's distinction as having the highest number of full-time undergraduate American Indian students of any higher education institution in the nation ([2020 American Indian Profile](#)). In addition, NSU is recognized as:

- The [Number 1 producer of Native American degrees](#) as noted by College XPress.
- The top academic institution in the U.S. serving American Indians representing more than 30 Native American tribes, according to the [American Indian Profile](#).

In addition to strong Native American representation, NSU's students, faculty, and staff populations include individuals from other diverse backgrounds and interests. Other examples of the institution's commitment to diversity include the following:

- More than [15 student organizations](#) that support individuals from diverse backgrounds including various cultural, gender, social, religious interests, and learning differences;
- [Teaching and Urban Reform Network \(TURN\)](#) which prepares teachers for urban areas; and

- [Linking Educators Academically Rural Network \(LEARN\)](#) which prepares teachers for rural areas.

For the past eight years, the Tulsa Chamber of Commerce has recognized NSU with the [MOSAIC Award](#) as one of the “top 25 organizations with an inclusive workplace culture in the region.”

1.C.3. NSU believes lifelong learning begins with a diverse student population and the first contact of future leaders takes place at local elementary, intermediate, and high schools. As such, NSU showcases [art exhibitions](#) of elementary, intermediate, grade students and invites [KIPP Academy](#) junior high students to attend regular college classroom presentations at NSU.

NSU's commitment to diversity is evidenced in its diverse student population. Recent publications provide evidence of student population diversity:

- [30 different American Indian tribes](#) (FA20 data-American Indian Profile publication)
- [45 different international countries](#) (2019-20 Factbook)
- [51% minority population](#) (5-year average, 2019-20 Factbook)
 - 49% - Caucasian
 - 36% - American Indian/Alaskan Native
(includes Multi-Racial self-identifying as American Indian),
 - 5% - Black or African American
 - 6% - Hispanic/Latino
 - 2% - Asian/Pacific Islander
 - 2% - Nonresident alien
- [Male/Female distribution](#) (2019-20 Factbook)
 - 63% Women
 - 37% Men
- [In-state vs. out-of-state distribution](#) (2019-20 Factbook)
 - 91% Students from Oklahoma
 - 6% Out-of-State students
 - 3% International (from 45 different countries)

Diverse Faculty. NSU takes pride in a diverse faculty that is characterized by diverse backgrounds, ideas and perspectives. According to [NSU at a Glance](#), NSU's faculty diversity is represented as follows:

- 56% Women
- 44% Men
- 26% Minority
- 45% Tenured (IPEDS HR survey)
- 63% With highest degree in field

Diverse Curriculum Offerings. Class offerings further evidence NSU's commitment to diversity. Within the [general education sequence](#), one learning outcome is to prepare students "to become globally-aware citizens through an understanding and appreciation of human and cultural diversity." Some classes which address human and cultural diversity include:

- Ancient Cultures,
- Cherokee Cultural Heritage,
- Comparative Religions,
- Global Economic Geography,
- Intercultural Communication,
- Seven Foreign Languages,
- Theater Appreciation, and
- World Regional Geography.

Similarly, [numerous majors and minors emphasize diversity](#). Some examples include:

- [American Indian Studies](#), B.A..
- American Sign Language (minor),
- American Studies (M.A.),
- Cherokee Cultural Studies, (B.A.)
- Cherokee Education, (B.A. Ed.)
- Counseling (M.S.),
- [Global Studies](#) (minor)
- [Spanish](#), (BA)
- [Special Education – Autism Spectrum Disorders](#) (M.S. Ed.), and
- [Women and Gender Studies](#) (minor).

Beyond these specific majors, most majors and minors address aspects of diversity in gender, race, ethnicity, culture, language, religion, socio-economic status, exceptionalities, sexual orientation, and geographical area (see 3.B.3 for more information).

Diverse Student Organizations. NSU supports [more than 100 active student organizations](#) that cover a broad spectrum of interests including fraternities, sororities, religious groups, ethnic associations, academic clubs, honor societies, service organizations, political clubs, social groups, and professional societies.

Diverse Cultural Activities. NSU also supports a variety of diverse and culturally-related annual events. Some examples include:

- [Black History Month](#),
- [Domestic Violence Month](#),
- [American Indian Heritage Month](#),
- [Women's History Month](#),
- [Faculty-led study abroad programs](#),
- [Indigenous Leadership Summit](#),
- [Larry Adair Leadership Series](#), and
- The [Symposium on the American Indian](#).

Broad Definition of Diversity. NSU further recognizes that diversity is defined in multiple ways:

- Student Needs
 - The [Tahlequah campus](#) accommodates the traditional student who desires a residential experience, and
 - The [Muskogee](#) and the [Broken Arrow branch campus](#) locations are commuter sites.
- Academic Preparation
 - NSU sponsors [Educational Talent Search Camps](#) designed to assist middle and high school students to develop skills needed for career and academic pursuits.
- Economic Background
 - The [TRIO Student Support Services](#) program provides support to low-income Americans who desire to enter college. Funded under Title IV, this program provides funding for the Educational Talent Search, Upward Bound, Student Support Services, and McNair.

Student Services. A variety of student services support students from diverse backgrounds and learning needs including:

- [Disability Services](#),
- [Counseling Services](#),
- [Perkins Funding](#), and
- [Veteran Programs](#).

A number of [required and optional training programs](#) designed to raise awareness of diverse individual needs are available and annually monitored by [Human Resources](#). This oversight promotes compliance with federal laws such as sexual harassment, FERPA, ADA, and Title IX.

Equally important, NSU analyzes [IPEDS data](#) to determine if retention and graduation rates mirror the diversity of student enrollment and the surrounding community. Similarly, the [Office of Institutional Effectiveness](#) and college deans use this and other such data outcomes to assess needs for diversity-focused programming.

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1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary

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

Summary

NSU's Strategic Planning Committee, the two governing boards, and various other NSU committees annually review the strategic plan as well as the mission, vision, and value statements through an iterative, university and community-wide collaborative revision process. The Mission Statement and supporting documents are publicly articulated on the NSU website and disseminated via e-mail, hard copy publications, and during university, college, and departmental meetings.

The Mission Statement drives development of the Strategic Plan, Marketing Plan, Master Plan, Capital Improvements, and curriculum offerings. Programs, policies and procedures, community events, and activities for students, faculty, staff, and the public reflect NSU's commitment to provide quality education, student support services, and community service. Consequently, NSU's academic programs, enrollment strategies, student support services, planning, and budgeting processes align with NSU's mission, vision, and value statements.

These activities, combined with goals provided by Destination 2023 and the Strategic Plan 2015-2023, support NSU's fulfillment of its mission to meet the diverse educational challenges of an ever-changing and globally competitive environment.

Sources

There are no sources.

2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

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

2.A - Core Component 2.A

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

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

Argument

2.A.1. As detailed in criterion 1.A. NSU develops its mission through a university and community-wide process. After approval by the Strategic Planning Committee and the Cabinet, the President refers changes to the mission to NSU's [two governing boards, Regional University System of Oklahoma \(RUSO\)](#), and the [Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education \(OSRHE\)](#). These governing boards annually review NSU's budget and any proposed changes to NSU's mission, strategic plan, and supporting documents.

2.A.2. Oversight by NSU's two governing boards and various [accrediting agencies](#) serve to ensure integrity, transparency, and ethical practices in teaching, learning, fiscal operations, and auxiliary functions (see 1.D.2 and 2.C.1). NSU has adopted policies and procedures which articulate expectations regarding ethical and responsible conduct, beginning with the core value statement for Integrity.

NSU models integrity through ethical and intellectual behaviors and practices by advancing honesty, human dignity, and accountability.

Integrity and ethical behavior policies are published in the [Faculty Handbook](#), [Student Handbook](#), the [Employment Handbook](#), and on the NSU website. Updated through the [University Policy process and procedures](#), these policies address:

- [Academic Freedom](#),
- [Appeal Processes](#),
- [Clery Act](#),
- [Conflict of Interest](#),
- [Copyright](#),
- [Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action](#),

- [FERPA](#),
- [FMLA](#),
- [Grade Appeals](#),
- [Grievance Procedures](#),
- [Hiring Practices](#),
- [Human and Animal Research](#),
- [Institutional Research](#),
- [Intellectual Property](#),
- [Promotion and Tenure](#),
- [Purchasing Procedures](#), and
- [Student Code of Conduct](#).

NSU complies with mandatory [Title IX](#) annual training requirements for faculty and staff. Additional evidence of commitment to integrity and ethical behavior include:

- Copyright - [Information Technology Services](#), the [NSU Libraries](#), and the [Center for Teaching and Learning](#) publish, support, and monitor policies related to the use of copyrighted materials. These procedures comply with RUSO's [Patent and Copyright policies](#) and are published in the [Student Handbook](#), [Faculty Handbook](#), and on the NSU website.
- Grant Expenditures - The Office of Research Administration (aka Grants and Contracts) monitors and distributes all grant funds, conducts a [final audit of grant expenditures](#), coordinates and maintains copies of reports required by outside funding sources, and ensures integrity in the funding process.
- Research - NSU follows the guidelines of the [Office of Research Integrity](#) (ORI) of the U.S. Public Health Service regarding ethical conduct of research and investigations of [allegations of research misconduct](#). The Assistant Vice president for Academic Affairs is the designated [Research Integrity Officer](#) (RIO) at NSU. The Provost is the designated [Deciding Official](#) (DO) for any investigation of research misconduct. The [RIO](#) is responsible for ethical issues involving all research and extramural funding activities at NSU and oversees the [Institutional Review Board](#) and the [Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee](#).
- Athletics - NSU is a member of the [National Collegiate Athletic Association](#) (NCAA) and the [Mid-America Intercollegiate Athletics Association](#) and complies with [athletic regulations](#). To ensure compliance, the [NSU Athletic Committee](#) regularly monitors and audits NSU's sports programs.

Finally, RUSO maintains an anonymous, online tip line called [EthicsPoint](#). This service facilitates discrete and confidential reporting of any unethical, illegal, or otherwise inappropriate behavior ([RUSO EthicsPoint Letter](#)). Any [EthicsPoint](#) complaints, regardless of their nature, must be thoroughly investigated ([EthicsPoint FAQs](#)).

Integrity in Fiscal Operations. NSU subscribes to integrity and transparency in fiscal matters by including a broad cross-section of employees and students in the budgeting process. This

allows budgets to be built from the bottom up and creates understanding and commitment to the budgeting process.

Once submitted, the budget is reviewed by the [Budget Oversight Committee](#) to ensure alignment with NSU's mission and [Strategic Plan](#). Then, the proposed budget is reviewed by the [Cabinet](#), which includes the Vice Presidents for each administrative unit. Upon approval, the budget is sent to the [Regional University System of Oklahoma](#) (RUSO) and the [Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education](#) (OSRHE) for final approval, thereby creating an independent review that further serves to ensure integrity.

External Audits. RUSO requires the use of an outside, independent accounting firm, currently [Hinkle & Company](#), to conduct a legislatively-mandated state audit of financial reports. In accordance with [RUSO Policy 2.6.1](#), the accounting firm is rotated every five years. NSU consistently receives unqualified audits which means the financial statements are presented fairly, conform to accepted accounting principles, and contain "no findings to report." For transparency, NSU files the audited [financial reports](#) with its governing boards and publishes it on the NSU website. NSU also conducts two annual internal audits (performed by the [Oklahoma Office of Management and Enterprise Services](#) (OMES) and [Crawford and Associates](#)).

Integrity in Administration. NSU strives to ensure integrity in administration and operations. Examples include:

- The [Office of Human Resources](#) provides information and training on policies concerning fairness, integrity, ethics, fair labor standards, equal opportunity, affirmative action, sexual harassment, privacy rights, and access to public records;
- NSU pursues fair and ethical practices when admitting, enrolling, and securing student financial assistance (see [Strategic Enrollment Plan](#)). As a public entity, the university adheres to [Title IV financial aid regulations](#) and the [National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators \(NASFAA\) Code of Conduct](#);
- NSU publishes financial policies, such as [accounts receivable](#), [travel](#), [faculty development funding](#), and [grant guidelines](#) on the NSU website.

Integrity in Marketing. The [Office of Communications and Marketing](#) is the steward for the NSU brand and coordinates integrity in marketing and advertising (see [Media Policy Guidelines](#)). The department:

- Oversees compliance with federal and state marketing regulations,
- Reviews advertising materials prior to publication, and
- Promotes accuracy, integrity, and federal compliance in university marketing materials.

These processes serve to ensure integrity in public communications (see 2.B).

Integrity in Academic Programs. Prior to adding program or curricular offerings, NSU must obtain governing board approval. Because the governing boards are public agencies, meetings

are subject to the [Oklahoma's Open Meetings Act](#) and [Oklahoma's Open Records Act](#), further ensuring transparency and integrity.

Many academic programs are accredited by discipline specific, external accrediting agencies (see 4.A.5). This further ensures integrity and rigor in curriculum offerings. In addition, the NSU [Student Handbook](#) addresses issues such as academic honesty and grade appeals.

Student Rights and Responsibilities. [Student Affairs](#) works to foster a fair and ethical campus environment. [Student Rights](#) are prominently displayed on the NSU website and in the [Student Handbook](#). This website also includes:

- [The Code of Student Conduct](#),
- [Grievance Procedures](#),
- [Title IX](#),
- [Disciplinary Procedures and Appeals](#),
- [Confidentiality](#), and
- [Disability Services](#).

Information Technology Services (ITS) serves to ensure integrity of NSU's website and online support system, including the network and servers. Working with the [University Technology Committee](#), ITS implements policies such as:

- [User's Privileges and Responsibilities](#), and
- [Protection of passwords and user information](#).

Contractual Partnerships. NSU's [President may approve contracts less than \\$150 thousand or less](#) with all contracts greater than \$50 thousand, reported to RUSO. Contracts greater than \$150 thousand require RUSO approval. Without specific written consent, no individual other than the President may sign contractual obligations ([RUSO Policy 2.3.1](#) and NSU's [Contracts Administration Policy](#)).

Bookstore services are outsourced to [Barnes and Noble](#), and primary food service is outsourced to [Sodexo](#). In addition, [NSU's Purchasing Department](#) trains budget managers on the use of [purchasing cards](#), and the [contract bid process](#) is disclosed on NSU's website.

NSU Foundation. The [NSU Foundation](#) operates with the highest level of integrity ([Foundation-Bylaws](#)). To ensure integrity, an external [CPA](#) annually audits foundation assets and expenditures as evidenced by the [Foundation-Audit](#). The [Foundation Audit Committee](#), consisting of at least three trustees, makes discretionary recommendations for rotation of the CPA based on input and guidance from RUSO.

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2.B - Core Component 2.B

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

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

Argument

2.B.1. NSU publishes [academic offerings](#), [class schedules](#), [employee directory](#), and [student catalogs](#) on its website. In addition, NSU's website and [student handbook](#) provide easy accessibility to the following student consumer information and policies:

- [HLC Mark of Affiliation](#),
- [Specialty Accreditations](#),
- [Admission Policies](#),
- [Cost Calculator: Tuition and Fees](#),
- [Net Price Calculator](#)
- [Financial Aid](#) information and [Student Loans](#)
- [Bursar and Student Account Information](#),
- [Housing Information](#),
- [Student Disability Services](#)
- [CLERY Act](#) (Student Right to Know)
- [FERPA](#)
- [Colleges and Departments](#)

College, department, and program landing pages contain customized information about program requirements, accreditation and credential information, immersive learning, research, student organizations, and career opportunities. Catalogs are updated annually with current program offerings, course descriptions, plans of study, academic policy information, accreditation relationships, tuition and fees, and faculty listings. In addition, [goNSU](#) and [DegreeWorks](#) provide online student access to bursar bills, holds, and degree audits.

The [NSU at a Glance](#) webpage offers quick information about NSU's student profile, enrollment, and class size while the [HLC Outcomes and Information](#) page provides links to information about credential test pass rates, retention rates, completion / graduation rates, and other pertinent information.

2.B.2. NSU endeavors to document efforts to provide quality educational opportunities, student support services, and community service by fostering and supporting inquiry, creativity, practice, community service, and social responsibility. Information is shared through the website, social media, and regular publications distributed to the public at large. By accessing these documents, readers find compelling evidence that NSU makes a positive difference in the lives of its students, employees, and surrounding communities.

A hallmark of NSU's student experience is participating in immersive learning experiences that enrich and transform. Degree programs provide structured, curricular [immersive learning experiences](#) related to the field of study. [Co-curricular activities](#) provide opportunities for leadership and participation in areas of interest that align with NSU's mission. These activities further serve to foster social awareness and responsibility while encouraging curiosity and engagement, thus cultivating an environment of learning and exploration.

NSU supports educational research through its annual [Undergraduate Research Day](#) and participates in the state's [Research Day](#) each year. The institution encourages faculty-student scholarly interactions by funding faculty research which emphasizes [mentoring students](#). NSU's [Honors Program](#) provides further opportunities for exceptional students to complete research with faculty mentors.

Students and employees alike participate in [civic engagement activities](#) that benefit the communities NSU serves. As the exhibit details, during each MLK National Day of Service, hundreds of volunteers assist with community service projects and similar activities occur on the 9-11 Day of Service. Each year, the [President's annual report](#) highlights partnerships among NSU and its communities.

As part of Oklahoma's public institution system, NSU contributes to the economic prosperity of the state. According to the [President's 2019 Annual Report](#), universities return \$9.40 for every \$1.00 invested. These benefits are reflected in joint ventures such as [Optometry clinics](#) with the Cherokee Nation, new programming with the [Grand River Dam Authority](#), and the [Tulsa Higher Education Consortium](#), a new endeavor to increase the number of baccalaureate degrees in the Tulsa metropolitan area.

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2.C - Core Component 2.C

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

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

Argument

2.C.1. NSU benefits from the oversight of [two publicly-appointed governing boards](#), [RUSO](#) and [OSRHE](#). Both are [constitutionally created](#) and provide oversight and guidance for Oklahoma higher academic institutions. Although the boards have different functions, both serve to preserve and enhance NSU's mission.

As the state's higher education coordinating board, OSRHE issues all degrees earned, approves program curricula, prescribes academic standards, establishes student fees, allocates funds to each institution for operation and maintenance, and sets standards for state accreditation ([OSRHE Policy Manual](#)).

In contrast, RUSO makes rules and regulations to govern the University, to employ persons, to own and maintain property, and to authorize the purchase of equipment, supplies, and capital improvements ([RUSO Policy Manual](#)). Through this design, the RUSO board grants the President authority to manage all facets of the university's finances, personnel, curricula, and day-to-day operations (see [RUSO Policy Manual](#), p. 30).

RUSO regularly conducts board meetings at NSU on a rotating basis. Although OSRHE meets monthly in Oklahoma City, the [Chancellor for Oklahoma Higher Education](#) and several staff members have visited all three NSU campus locations within the past three years.

2.C.2. OSRHE and RUSO follow [state statutes](#) when reviewing or approving proposals for academic offerings, marketing, research, or expansions. For example, [OSRHE Policy 3.4.4](#)

requires publication and notice related to significant curriculum changes that affect the general public or other Oklahoma academic institutions. This process allows opportunities for public comment related to academic proposals or requested resolutions.

OSRHE and RUSO representatives, legislative leaders, and the Governor regularly visit NSU, host community meetings, and invite business leaders to discuss academic matters related to NSU. Major visits include the following:

- [Governor Mary Fallin](#) visited the Broken Arrow campus to support the Complete College America Initiative,
- [Chancellor Glen Johnson discussed legislative affairs](#) on the Muskogee campus, and
- Numerous legislators and business leaders converged at the Tahlequah campus to discuss evolving technology and the globally competitive economy during the annual [Northeastern Oklahoma Regional Association Annual Conference](#).

2.C.3. The OSRHE and RUSO websites allow immediate access to [board directories](#), [meeting dates](#), and [agendas](#) as required by the Oklahoma Open Meeting Act. This encourages public input related to matters of academic concern and facilitates review of reasonable and relevant interests of internal and external constituents concerning higher education academic matters.

2.C.4. [OSRHE](#) and [RUSO](#) are public boards with rotating board members, which minimizes the possibility of undue influence of donors, elected officials, or other external interests. In addition, board members must abide by rules established by the [Oklahoma Ethics Commission](#) for all Oklahoma employees and board members. Administrative policies address board ethics and operational procedures to ensure the public good (e.g. [RUSO Policy Manual](#), Chapter 1).

[OSRHE](#) is the coordinating board for all state higher education institutions in Oklahoma, established through the [Oklahoma Constitution, Article XIII-A](#). [OSRHE's board consists of nine members](#) appointed by the Governor and approved by the Senate, with one member's term expiring each year. This rotating structure fosters independence from internal or external interests.

[RUSO](#) oversees the six state-supported regional universities. [RUSO's constitutional board consists of nine members](#), eight of whom are appointed by the Governor from across the state and approved by the Senate. The ninth member, the State Superintendent for Public Instruction, is elected by Oklahoma voters. As with OSRHE, this representative structure serves to ensure independence from internal or external interests.

2.C.5. As noted, NSU's two governing boards set rules and regulations for Oklahoma higher education institutions. However, the [daily management and administration of NSU](#) is delegated

to the university President, who is appointed by the [RUSO Board of Regents](#) following a national job search.

NSU's [organizational framework](#) consists of the President, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Vice President for Administration and Finance, Vice President for University Relations, and Vice President for Student Affairs. These individuals comprise the [President's Cabinet](#), which meets weekly while a broader membership [Executive Council](#) meets monthly to provide guidance related to policy-making, planning, and NSU's overall direction. In day-to-day management and planning, NSU's leaders rely upon [Destination 2023](#), the [Strategic Plan 2015-2023](#), and the [Master Plan](#) which contain goals necessary to achieve NSU's mission and vision through the year 2023. They provide guidance for programming, marketing plans, and capital improvements.

The Provost oversees Academic Affairs with direct reports that include the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs, all academic deans, branch campus deans, the Executive Director of Libraries, and directors of academic-related centers and services. Faculty provide front line oversight for academic matters, including program and course delivery, assessing classroom performance, [Academic Planning](#), and day-to-day advising (see 3.A.1). The vice presidents for Student Affairs, Administration and Finance, and University Relations oversee the business and administrative functions of the institution.

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2.D - Core Component 2.D

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

Argument

2.D. NSU recognizes that true acquisition of knowledge depends upon academic freedom, creativity, and truth in learning. As such, NSU encourages academic freedom in research, scholarship, and classroom instruction as detailed in the following NSU documents:

- Manual of Policies and Procedures: The [Freedom of Speech \(Expressive Activities\)](#) policy was approved in 2011.
- [Faculty Handbook: Section 3.8 Academic Responsibility Statements](#) includes a section on academic freedom. Faculty members are “entitled to freedom regarding research and in the publication of the results, subject to the adequate performance of instructional and non-instructional duties,” and “faculty members are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, but faculty should be objective.”
- [Student Handbook](#): The Student Handbook and NSU's website outline policies on [Expressive Activities](#): NSU “encourages the free exchange of ideas. The University will protect the rights of freedom of speech, expression, petition, and peaceful assembly as set forth in the U.S. Constitution.” This includes general public use of public forums.
- [Acceptable Computer and Network Use Policy](#): NSU “encourages, supports, and protects freedom of expression and an open environment to pursue scholarly inquiry and to share information.”

Further evidence of academic and expressive freedom is reflected by [NSU's Collegial Governance Policy](#), diverse array of [student organizations](#) and [university committees](#), and diverse curriculum.

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2.E - Core Component 2.E

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

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

Argument

2.E.1. NSU's [Core Values](#) acknowledges a duty for responsible acquisition, discovery, and application of knowledge. As stated in the Integrity core value, "NSU models integrity through ethical and intellectual behaviors and practices by advancing honesty, human dignity, and accountability."

The [Responsible Conduct of Research Policy](#) outlines expectations related to acquisition, discovery, and application of knowledge. NSU's designated Research Integrity Officer is the Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs who reports annually to the [Office of Research Integrity](#) of the U.S. Public Health Service. The RIO provides oversight for these units:

- [Institutional Review Board](#) (IRB),
- [Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee](#) (IACUC), and
- [Office of Research and Sponsored Programs](#) (grant applications).

NSU policy requires student researchers to complete [Responsible Conduct of Research training](#) at each level of participation - bachelors, masters, and doctoral levels. NSU uses [Epigeum](#), an online training experience through Oxford University Press, to ensure consistent training. NSU has a policy and procedure to investigate [allegations of research misconduct](#) as well as a policy on [intellectual property](#) in Appendix D of the Faculty Handbook.

2.E.2. NSU's [Research and Sponsored Programs](#) office (pre-award) and [Grants and Contracts](#) office (post-award) supports researchers in their efforts to compliance with grant regulations and fiscal responsibility. Webpage links provide training information, funding policies, and other helpful resources about budget development, grant development, and statistics use. NSU's Center for Teaching and Learning and the NSU Libraries also provide professional development related to use of [copyrighted materials](#) and [legal issues](#).

In addition to the committees and units mentioned earlier, the [Faculty Research Committee](#) and [Undergraduate Research Day](#) working groups also support research and scholarly activity at NSU. The Office of Grants and Contracts Administration reports to the Vice President for Administration and Finance and provides [financial oversight, management, and compliance of externally sponsored programs](#).

2.E.3. Student conduct expectations are published in the [Student Handbook](#), available on the [Student Conduct and Development](#) website. This document clearly defines plagiarism, academic integrity, and other acts of academic dishonesty including falsification of records. The institution uses a [standard syllabus template](#), which also references academic misconduct.

NSU endeavors to provide instruction and support for students, so that unintentional issues in academic honesty can be corrected. English composition classes train students in the proper use of scholarly research and citation formats, and librarians provide [regular workshops](#). The importance of academic integrity is also addressed in the freshman-level [University Strategies](#) course. Undergraduate and graduate classes further reinforce these skills and ethical values. In addition, NSU [libraries](#) and campus [writing centers](#) offer training sessions and individual assistance in citation format and proper use of online databases.

For faculty, the Center for Teaching and Learning provides assistance in tools that prevent and detect academic dishonesty such as:

- [Respondus LockDown Browser and Monitor](#), and
- [SafeAssign](#) (Blackboard's plagiarism detector).

2.E.4. Allegations of academic dishonesty or deceitful research practices are taken seriously. The [Student Handbook](#), [syllabus template](#), and the [NSU website](#) set forth policies related to academic honesty, integrity, and the [Student Code of Conduct](#). Faculty publish and enforce these policies in [course syllabi](#) with support of the department chair and college dean. NSU has a formal [grade appeal process](#) which is shared by college deans and available on the Academic Affairs Student Resources website. Students violating the academic integrity policies are subject to disciplinary action that may include grade reduction, formal or informal reprimand, removal from the class, or removal from the University. Students may file grievances or concerns through the ["Report a Concern"](#) link found at the bottom of each web page.

In the case of research integrity, the RIO is responsible for oversight of ethical issues related to research involving human subjects or animals, informed consent, conflicts of interest, and research that involves external organizations. Concerns are reported to the RIO who reviews, and when necessary, initiates an [inquiry committee](#).

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2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary

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

Summary

NSU's website is a comprehensive source of institutional information for students, faculty, staff, and community members. Policies and processes addressing integrity, fairness, and ethical practices in financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions are published in electronic and hardcopy format. Administrators and marketing routinely review materials and policies to ensure integrity and uniformity.

Within its internal policies and procedures, NSU has a series of checks and balances to ensure the institution acts ethically and with integrity. An additional layer of oversight is provided by NSU's two legislatively created governing boards. Although the boards provide oversight, they allow sufficient autonomy for NSU to oversee day-to-day operations. This balance of oversight and autonomy affords freedom of expression, creativity, and the pursuit of truth in academic endeavors, thereby allowing faculty, students, and staff to work and learn responsibly.

Sources

There are no sources.

3 - Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources and Support

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

3.A - Core Component 3.A

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

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

Argument

3.A.1. Courses and programs are current and require levels of student performance appropriate to the credential awarded. NSU offers a variety of educational opportunities through credit and non-credit programs, which are consistent with its [mission](#) as a regional university. These offerings are approved by NSU's two governing boards, [RUSO](#) and [OSRHE](#). Program currency and rigor are ensured by external program review and facilitated by the curricular change processes. Having multiple perspectives regarding a program's content and outcomes results in stronger programs that meet student and employer needs.

As published on the [NSU at a Glance Website](#), NSU offers [one professional Doctorate of Optometry degree](#), [26 masters degrees](#), and [59 undergraduate degrees](#). NSU has increased the number of accelerated degree programs and certificates to help meet workforce needs for credentialed employees, with [11 undergraduate certificates](#), [21 graduate certificates](#), and [14 Accelerated Bachelor's to Master's](#) degree programs.

NSU also offers a variety of credit and non-credit classes through the [College of Extended Learning](#). These classes are tailored for non-traditional learners with most classes offered through online, blended, or short-term formats. For example, the [B.S. in Criminal Justice](#) offers online and blended courses on a flexible schedule to support working adults.

Program Review. Every academic program is reviewed regularly on a cycle that reflects either the OSRHE five-year program review process or a specialized accreditor's cycle ([OSRHE Policy 3.7.4](#)). For the five-year reviews, criteria include mission centrality, program vitality, program

objectives and goals, and quality indicators including faculty, student performances, and resources. NSU uses external reviewers from like institutions or aspirational programs. Program faculty conduct a [self-study](#), and external reviewers read that self-study, conduct a [virtual visit](#) with students, faculty, and administrators, and compile a [final report](#) addressing program strengths and areas for improvement. [Executive summaries](#) and program documents are submitted to RUSO and OSRHE each fall.

A number of NSU programs have earned [specialty accreditations](#) and follow the criteria and review cycle determined by the accreditor. These specialty accreditations, combined with annual reporting of student learning outcomes (see 3.A.2), further ensures currency and rigor of curriculum offerings.

Curricular Change Process. When faculty decide, as a result of program review or annual assessment reviews, to create [new programs](#), [delete programs](#), or make [substantive modifications](#), the department submits a proposal. As outlined in the [Curriculum and Program Change Process](#), proposals are reviewed and approved first internally at the department, college, and institution, and then submitted to RUSO and OSRHE. Proposals which impact graduate-level or teacher education curricula are directed to those entities prior to consideration by the University Curriculum Committee.

3.A.2. Program and course student learning outcomes (SLOs) are differentiated by degree-level and reviewed as part of the curriculum development and annual assessment report processes. Proposal forms require submission of course-level SLOs ([samples](#)) and program-level SLOs ([samples](#)). Course proposals utilize general [guidelines for course-level rigor](#) to convey course depth and expectations. Each year in the program's annual report, faculty review and update, if needed, student learning outcomes. SLOs are included on the program's page in the [catalog](#) and course learning outcomes are included in the [syllabus](#).

NSU's hierarchy of degrees is as follows:

- [Certificate programs](#). Certificates are a program of study that do not lead to an academic degree. Certificates can be awarded at the undergraduate or graduate-level, embedded within degree programs, such as the graduate-level [American Indian Leadership](#) certificate embedded in the Leadership, M.S., or stand alone, such as the [Emergency Management and Planning](#) certificate.
- [Baccalaureate degrees](#). NSU requires 124 credit hours for a bachelor's degree, exceeding OSRHE requirements of 120 credit hours. Because OSRHE does not allow physical education activity credits to count toward baccalaureate degrees, NSU meets OSRHE minimum requirements while including physical education / health courses, which are important to the well-being of constituents. Degree components include a general education curriculum common for all students, a major area of study, electives, and immersive learning experiences, such as completion of an internship, a teaching practicum, or a capstone course.

- [Master's Degrees](#) - NSU requires advanced learning outcomes for graduate students. Graduate programs require extensive research-based papers, creative projects, and/or graduate research methodology courses. Similarly, course content is more advanced theoretically and methodologically than undergraduate courses. All [graduate programs](#) require a synthesis project: thesis, practicum, capstone, or clinical experience.
- [Doctor of Optometry](#) – NSU's doctorate program is nationally recognized for excellence and is one of only 23 colleges of optometry in the United States. The [College of Optometry](#) is a member of the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry and is accredited by the [Accreditation Council on Optometric Education](#). Learning outcomes focus on research, analysis, skills, and a residency-based program that culminates in the [Optometry National Board Licensing Exam](#) (see 4.A.6).

3.A.3. NSU ensures the uniformity and rigor of its course offerings using both internal and external benchmarks. To ensure external alignment in course content with other state universities, faculty participate in OSRHE's annual [Course Equivalency Project](#) in which course content and the transfer matrix are updated system-wide. For example, the [matrix for psychology](#) shows which of NSU's courses (highlighted), including Introduction to Psychology, transfer to and from other institutions. To be added to the course equivalency tables, courses must contain the required student learning outcomes identified by state faculty committees.

Internally, NSU uses several mechanisms to ensure uniform and rigorous expectations for all courses. [New course](#) or [program](#) proposals must include catalog information, a rationale for how the course meets or exceeds course-level expectations, which includes information about the course's place in the curricular sequence, learning objectives, prerequisite and co-requisite information, and the names of faculty qualified to teach the course. The articulation of these requirements ensures uniformity and rigor of the course and its place within the larger program. As detailed earlier, several internal committees review proposals before they are sent for approval from RUSO and OSRHE, steps which also serve as mechanisms for quality and consistency. Upon final approval, new courses and programs are added to the NSU [catalog](#).

[OSRHE policy 3.19.3](#) defines a semester-hour as 800 instructional minutes (50 minutes per week for 16 weeks), and laboratory credit not to exceed one-half the instructional rate. NSU follows these policies to calculate consistently course calendars and [schedule credit hours](#).

To help ensure consistency of credit across various delivery modes and locations, NSU utilizes the federal definition of credit hour which is found on course syllabi ([template](#)) and in the [catalog](#):

The federal definition of a credit hour requires one hour of instruction time and two hours of out-of-class student work per credit per week [34 CFR 600.2]. By multiplying the number of credit hours a course is worth by three clock hours' instruction / preparation time, you can determine the minimum average per week for "time on task." For example, in a 3-credit online course, you should plan on a minimum average of 9 hours per week of "time on task." In online

or blended courses, the “traditional” credit hour contact hours are defined by the number of hours of “time on task.” Time on task includes any time that students spend interacting with course materials and participating in learning activities, including but not limited to readings, projects, assignments, videos, student-student or student-professor interaction, and exams.

NSU faculty frequently teach on multiple campuses using either synchronous web-conferencing or rotating sessions across campuses, so that all students have face-to-face time with the faculty member, no matter the campus. Faculty use the same syllabus and student learning outcomes whether courses are taught in person or online. How those outcomes are achieved may vary slightly due to delivery mode, but faculty endeavor to keep the course sections equal.

To better understand how faculty apply "time on task," NSU undertook a study of [instructional equivalencies](#) in 2019-2020, developing an Instructional Activity spreadsheet, collecting pilot data in fall 2019, and requesting that faculty report course activities across all delivery methods in spring 2020. Even though the full implementation has been slowed by COVID-related impacts on faculty time, the tool development and study prompted important discussion among faculty about how best to ensure equivalent student engagement across all delivery methods. Next steps will include sharing data results, potential tool revision, and integrating this tool with training conducted by the Center for Teaching and Learning related to online course design.

Student evaluations provide evidence of course relevance and rigor. In [spring 2020](#), the campus-wide average rating for the 21-item instrument was 4.18 or above (on a five-point scale) which corresponds with a rating between "Agree" and "Strongly Agree." The average rating in response to the item, "*Overall, this instructor was an effective teacher*" was 4.36 corresponding to "Agree." The highest average rating was for the item indicating that instructors had high expectations of student learning, (item 4, M=4.55). NSU evaluates all courses each semester with the exception of internships and other arranged courses that are evaluated through alternate means at the internship site (see also Criterion 4). Faculty and department chairs use course evaluations to compare student perceptions of different delivery modes or locations by examining information at the section level.

When considering equivalency of prior learning, the College of Extended Learning facilitates the portfolio assessment component of NSU's [Prior Learning Assessment](#) policy. This [policy](#) requires faculty with content expertise to evaluate portfolios to determine their equivalency with the NSU course outcomes. Other prior learning assessments, which are nationally normed, include CLEP tests, DANTES, and ACE recommendations.

NSU participates in [concurrent enrollment](#) (dual enrollment) with area high schools, according to [OSRHE Policy](#). High school juniors and seniors are permitted to take NSU classes if they meet admissions criteria and curricular requirements for enrollment. To ensure rigor and quality, only NSU faculty teach concurrent enrollment classes. While some students come to the Tahlequah campus to participate in courses, many more are taught by NSU faculty who travel to the high school to teach. For example, in 2019-2020, NSU provided [15 courses to area high schools](#) with enrollments of 273 students in fall 2019 and 303 in spring 2020 according to the [OSRHE Annual Institutional Degree Completion Report](#) for that time period.

While NSU has transfer articulation agreements with its community college partners, NSU has no contractual arrangements for class instruction and no consortial agreements.

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3.B - Core Component 3.B

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

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

Argument

3.B.1. The General Education (GE) program provides the foundation for NSU's educational [mission](#). As a state institution, [NSU's GE program](#) complies with OSRHE [Academic Policy 3.15.6](#). Consequently, the [GE Student Learning Outcomes](#) create a "foundation for richer lives, careers, and citizenship" that supports NSU's educational mission as a regional university. These learning outcomes have been [mapped to the courses](#) where they are primarily introduced and are aligned with the [Degrees of Excellence](#).

The [GE course requirements](#) cover the broad areas of math, written and oral communication, social and behavioral sciences, global perspectives, life skills, humanities, natural sciences, and university studies. General Education requirements are articulated in the [undergraduate catalog](#), and when specific courses can be used to also meet program prerequisites or requirements, on [program pages](#). Specific learning outcomes are identified in [GE course syllabi](#).

General Education Oversight. The [General Education Committee](#) includes representatives from each department or content area found in the GE program as well as representatives from Advising, Library, Academic Affairs, Registrar's Office, and Institutional Effectiveness. A student representative rounds out the group. These individuals typically meet regularly to consider course additions / deletions to general education as well as review the overall program in light of learning outcomes and assessment data. The GE Committee often works in concert with the [Student Learning and Assessment Committee](#) when considering assessment data from GE courses.

GE Curriculum Revision. By participating in the [HLC Assessment Academy](#), NSU explored ways to assess General Education and determined that its original instruments were not well aligned with the learning outcomes, curriculum, or NSU's student population. NSU revised the student learning outcomes for General Education and other core classes, implemented [Degrees of Excellence](#) as possible measures of construct validity of NSU's Core Values, and identified [non-cognitive variables](#) [slide 12] that might affect persistence and completion rates. NSU began the move away from the ETS Proficiency Profile instrument to more authentic assessments embedded within the course. These changes create a foundation for better supporting and evaluating student success in NSU's undergraduate programs.

Over the years, the General Education Committee has approved adjustments to NSU's General Education program. As a result of a [substantive 2015 review](#), pieces of a larger recalibration came before the committee to accomplish both institutional needs as well as OSRHE initiatives. These changes were approved by the committee in [February, 2016](#) at the institutional level in fall 2016 before moving to ultimate approval by OSRHE in spring 2017. They became effective in fall 2017.

- Removed UNIV 2091 General Education Capstone since assessment activities are now course embedded;
- Reduced required hours for Global Perspectives from 6 hours to 3 hours to help transfer students who lack an associate's degree;
- Removed sub-categories from Humanities to provide more choice for students; and
- Redesigned the University Strategies course from two-hour to three-hour with a focus on meta-majors and math pathways to align with OSRHE initiatives.

Other non-substantive changes involved revising course selections within categories over the years ([minutes](#)).

- Addition of MUS 2533 Rock & Roll History and MUS 2743 Jazz Appreciation to Humanities (01.25.16)
- Addition of BIOL 1013 Introductory Biology I and BIOL 1013 Introductory Biology I Lab to replace BIOL 1123 Evolution and Diversity and BIOL 1131 Investigative Laboratory. (02.29.16)
- Additions of WGS 2123 Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies to Humanities (10.31.16)
- Removal of HFS courses no longer offered due to program suspension. (11.14.18)
- Replace MSU 2743 Jazz Appreciation with MUS 2523 American Popular Music Appreciation (09.21.20)

Aligned with this substantial revision, Academic Affairs and Student Affairs worked together to implement [Welcome Week](#). This week helps freshmen transition to college, particularly important since NSU serves a large first-generation student population. Facilitated by the University Strategies [peer instructors](#), the week includes a range of [required activities](#) designed to help students begin a successful academic career, as well as [optional social events](#). [Welcome Week](#) is paired with [University Strategies](#) and a [Common Read](#). The [Common Read](#), open to the entire campus community, and required for students in University Strategies, encourages critical

thinking and social interaction among students across campus. Ninety percent of students who have completed the [Welcome Week Survey](#) have indicated that Welcome Week made them feel like part of the NSU Community and more prepared for college and the first semester of classes. The institution hopes that Welcome Week will positively impact retention, and with the completion of the fourth year of Welcome Week, more data will be available for a four and five-year graduation assessment.

3.B.2. As mentioned earlier, NSU's general education framework is grounded in NSU's [mission](#) and structured to meet OSRHE expectations in terms of "appreciating and understanding diverse cultures and heritages, mastering multiple modes of inquiry, reasoning, and critical thinking, effectively analyzing and communicating information, and recognizing the importance of creativity and values to the human spirit" ([OSRHE Policy 3.15.6](#)). At the same time that NSU began the HLC Assessment Academy (2012), it began exploring implementation of the Lumina Degree Qualifications Profile as an [AASCU Red Balloon project](#) and for potential adoption. The [alignment](#) with NSU's mission and values was an important consideration. Eventually, NSU modified the Lumina outcomes to become NSU's [Degrees of Excellence](#), which is in use today and serves as the overarching set of learning outcomes for students graduating from NSU.

The general education program focuses on Degrees of Excellence [Outcome #1 Intellectual Skills](#), which all students need to achieve the broad, integrative knowledge and the specialized knowledge to reach their full intellectual and human potential.

3.B.3. NSU's [mission statement](#) emphasizes human and cultural diversity. It acknowledges NSU's beginnings based on the "rich educational heritage of the Cherokee Nation," and its duty to "provide its diverse communities with lifelong learning through a broad array of undergraduate, graduate, and professional doctoral degree programs." Diversity is one of NSU's seven core [values](#), "NSU values diversity and empowerment by promoting the rights of individuals and equal access to educational and enrichment experiences, respecting cultural differences, and ensuring equal opportunity." This dedication to diversity is reflected in the composition of the student, faculty, and staff populations, services designed to support a diverse student body, and a variety of class offerings that support diversity (see 1.C.2 and 3.B.4).

Diverse Populations. As documented in the [2020 Annual President's Report](#), NSU serves students who are diverse in age and experience. Almost 40% of undergraduates are 25 years old or older; conversely, more than 350 high school students take courses concurrently. NSU is proud to serve 334 students using [Veterans Affairs benefits](#). In 2019-20, 1,343 new transfer students transferred in [98,488 credit hours](#). NSU meets the needs of students who balance work, families, and life by offering classes on three campuses and in multiple delivery methods. Of the [9,075 students](#), 7,131 of them took at least one course in Tahlequah, 5,085 in Broken Arrow, 1,164 in Muskogee and 7,154 online.

NSU students are ethnically and culturally diverse, with half of the student population identifying as a race or ethnicity [other than Caucasian](#). Over 35% of NSU's student body identifies as [American Indian](#) with 90% identifying as Cherokee, Muscogee (Creek), Choctaw, Chickasaw, Osage, and 10% other tribes. NSU's student population includes out-of-state students (5.5%) as well as international students (2.5%) representing 30 countries.

NSU hosts a comprehensive transition program for individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities. The [Riverhawk Scholars Program](#) (RSP) provides a college-like experience leading to a certificate with a focus on social skills, academic enhancement, and employment outcomes. RSP students work with peer mentors who help with socialization and physical fitness, and they audit traditional university classes. Program classes focus on job skills and independent living. RSP students live in campus housing with their age peers and participate in internships as well as job shadowing both on and off campus.

Recognitions for Commitment to Diversity. NSU has earned many accolades for its commitment to diversity. As detailed in the most recent [President's report](#), College Factual 2020 ranked NSU [in the top 10 percent](#) for ethnic diversity. NSU is proud of its reputation for serving the American Indian population. The 24th Annual Winds of Change College Issue recognized NSU as the [top four-year college](#) awarding degrees to indigenous students and the highest number of undergraduate indigenous students. NSU is ranked [first in four-year colleges](#) awarding baccalaureate degrees to American Indians and [number one](#) for serving Native American full-time undergraduates. The American Indian Science and Engineering Society listed NSU in the [top 200 colleges](#) for Indigenous Students.

The Tulsa Chamber of Commerce's Diversity Business Council (MOSAIC) identified NSU as one of the 5 Star Recipients in the top inclusive workplace cultures in [2015](#), [2016](#), [2017](#), [2018](#) and [2020](#). No award was given in 2019. Businesses honored with this title have gone above and beyond to support diversity. Award recipients were selected based on five key factors: CEO commitment, diversity supplier policies, people, internal policies that support and create equity, and community outreach that supports diverse groups, organizations, and programs in the region.

Enhancing Opportunities and Skills. NSU provides students opportunities to develop the skills needed to live and work in a multicultural world (see 1.C). These opportunities come through both curricular and co-curricular experiences.

Curricular Experiences. NSU offers unique academic programming that prepares students to live and work in a multicultural world. Curricular examples include:

- 3 required hours of Global Perspectives in General Education. Students choose from courses in a variety of categories including international and native languages, American Indian studies, world geography, international politics, and world literature, customs, and societies.
- 3 required hours of Humanities in General Education. These courses expand students' awareness of the arts and humanities across time and cultures.

NSU offers unique academic programs that prepare students to live and work in a multicultural world (see 1.C). Examples include:

- [American Indian Studies, B.A.](#)
- [Asian Studies \(minor\)](#)
- [Cherokee Cultural Studies, B.A.](#)
- [Counseling, M.S.](#)
- [International Business Management, B.B.A.](#)
- [Special Education - Mild-Moderate Disorders, B.S.Ed](#)
- [Special Education – Autism Spectrum Disorders, M.S. Ed.](#)
- [Women's and Gender Studies \(minor\)](#)

According to [2020 NSSE data](#), NSU's Global Learning module responses were similar to peer institutions with an effect size of at least .3 in magnitude.

Library. [NSU Libraries](#) demonstrate an ongoing commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion by providing a diverse collection of material and programming. Databases, book and film collections, resource guides, displays, and special events reflect and support individuals from diverse backgrounds, belief systems and identities. In addition to resource displays in support of diverse and minority populations, recent library events included a book talk titled “[The Earth Memory Compass](#)” on Navajo history; “[Constructions of Feminine Identity in the Catholic Tradition: Inventing Women](#),” an author talk; and a film screening of [Neither Wolf Nor Dog](#) based on the best-selling novel by Native American author Kent Nerburn. Resource and Instruction aides—LibGuides—include subject areas such as the [History of Native American Women](#). Book titles held by NSU include a robust collection on [Race and Identity](#) and the Special Collections department holds a wide array of Native American historical documents and cultural artifacts. Diverse resources outside NSU’s collections are available from around the world via InterLibrary Loan.

On the co-curricular side, NSU's students have access to events and activities that emphasize diversity and respect for different cultures. From these lectures and activities, students learn perspectives that differ from their own and how one's life experiences shape those perspectives. Examples include:

- [Annual Symposium on the American Indian](#). As it has for 48 years, NSU sponsors the Annual Symposium on the American Indian. During this event, students make presentations, conduct research, participate in a Powwow, and attend lectures and seminars focusing on indigenous languages and culture revitalization.
- [Larry Adair Lectureship](#). This lecture, established to honor former Oklahoma Speaker of the House, seeks to raise awareness in public affairs. Recent topics include systemic racism in the judicial system, civil rights activism, Native American history and racism, racial issues in Oklahoma, the Tulsa Race Massacre, and more.
- [Willis Lectureship](#). In 2021, this lecture addressed the timely remembrance of Tulsa's Black Wall Street and the Tulsa Race Massacre.

Other Initiatives and Programs that Support Diversity. NSU receives a broad array of grant awards that support initiatives and programs that strengthen diversity. A few of the many examples include [Restoring and Reclaiming Indigenous Agriculture](#), [Enabling Self-sufficiency in Single Mothers](#) [students], [Native American Support Center](#), and [TRIO - Student Support Services](#). Students recently launched the new podcast [Native Narrative, The Future is Indigenous](#). The NSU Foundation and Alumni Association hosted a panel discussion [Becoming Anti-Racist](#) with a diverse group of alumni.

3.B.4 NSU's [student to faculty ratio](#) of 17 to 1 fosters relationships and circumstances for students to work directly with faculty in scholarly activities. Within programs, students have several opportunities to demonstrate creative and scholarly expertise.

Student Scholarly and Creative Activities.

[Immersive learning experiences](#) span the academic colleges and get students into the community and engaged in their future professions. At NSU, students work side-by-side with faculty on high level research projects, [presenting their results](#) and [submitting their research for publication](#) (see highlighted text), working on [community projects](#) with an [acclaimed artist](#), and [mastering hands-on learning techniques in the classroom](#).

Many degree programs include an [internship](#), [practicum](#), or [capstone experience](#). Individual faculty also provide [course-embedded immersive learning experiences](#). Several faculty described their [immersive learning experiences](#) in the [Alumni publication](#) *Imprints*.

External partners also provide research opportunities, such as the [Grand River Dam Authority Research Fellowship for students](#). There are a number of academic college or institution-wide opportunities for students to engage in immersive learning experiences, including a few examples listed here:

- [Student poster displays](#),
- [National History Day](#),
- [Moot Court Competition](#),
- [Model United Nations](#), and
- [Presentations at professional conferences](#).

[NSU Undergraduate Research Day](#) is an annual event, now in its 19th year, to honor excellence in research, scholarship, and creativity by showcasing the endeavors of undergraduates. Two hundred twenty-eight students and their faculty mentors participated in [Undergraduate Research Day between 2015-2020 \(p. 2\)](#) including the [2020 virtual event](#).

[Oklahoma Research Day](#) further exemplifies NSU's commitment to experiential and immersive learning. During this event, students showcase research, creative works, and scholarly activity mentored by faculty sponsors. NSU takes a contingent of students, faculty and staff each year, ranging from [204 participants](#) in 2014 at UCO (two hours travel time) to approximately 50

faculty, staff, and students at [SWOSU](#) (more than four hours travel time) to participate with approximately 32 presenting posters at the event. The free event is open to faculty, staff, and students from the state's regional universities. Academic Affairs prints presenters' posters and provides transportation for participants.

[Research Day at the Capitol](#). Institutions nominate one outstanding research project conducted by an undergraduate to participate in Research Day at the State Capitol. In 2019, a [NSU student won first place](#) in the Regional University and Community College Category.

Through NSU's music, art, drama, and creative writing programs, students have the opportunity to share their talents with constituent communities, as well as practice career skills. [Examples](#) include dramatic and musical productions, art exhibitions, and publishing of short stories and poems.

Faculty Scholarly and Creative Activities

On the faculty side, NSU subscribes to the [Boyer Model](#) for its retention, tenure, and promotion processes. This model encourages [faculty mentors](#) to engage students in scholarship, creative work, research, and the discovery of knowledge. Evaluations for tenure or promotion address excellence in scholarly activities and contribution to the institution and profession, as well as effective classroom teaching and performance of non-teaching semi-administrative or administrative duties.

Faculty report having over 270 books, book chapters, journal articles, and conference proceedings accepted for publication or published in [AY 2019-20](#) and completing nearly 100 [performances, exhibitions, and other creative works](#) the same year. Thirty-four faculty members [applied for internal and external funding](#) (please note that evidence provided includes staff).

NSU provides financial support for faculty's scholarship and creative work. Competitive, internal [Faculty Research Grants](#) are available for full-time faculty at all ranks, and are geared toward providing seed money for early career faculty and funding for projects that may not be funded through other avenues. [Faculty Development Grants](#) provide travel funding for conference presentations or serving in a leadership role that requires conference attendance.

The Center for Teaching and Learning provides [faculty awards](#) to support the development of [Open Educational Resources](#), implementation of [immersive learning experiences](#), and innovative use of [classroom technology for teaching and learning](#). NSU President Dr. Steve Turner established the President's Ambassadors Network (PAN) in 2013 to support [professional development, scholarship, and community engagement opportunities](#) for NSU faculty and staff for projects not otherwise supported by the university.

[Research and Sponsored Programs](#) (RASP) manages Faculty Research Grants and helps faculty through the application and award process for external funding. RASP reviews potential funding opportunities and sends [discipline-specific notices](#) to the academic deans to share with faculty. The [Office of Research Administration](#) (aka Grants and Contracts) works with faculty post-

award to ensure that external grants are administered in accordance with policy and funds are spent and reported appropriately. In AY 2019-20, NSU researchers were awarded over \$3.7 million in [internal and external grants](#) (p. 51).

NSU supports faculty creativity and scholarship in other ways. The Faculty Council hosts the [HAWK Talks presentation series](#) in which faculty [present their research](#) to the NSU community. Faculty learn from each other and support each other in research through the [Faculty Research Group](#).

Awards and Recognition. NSU recognizes faculty who contribute to scholarship, creative work and the discovery of knowledge through a variety of venues. Some awards for faculty's extraordinary merit include the three annual [Circle of Excellence Awards](#): Circle of Excellence Award for [Teaching](#), Circle of Excellence Award for [Research](#), and Circle of Excellence Award for [Service](#). The [faculty select](#) one faculty member each year per category from student and colleague nominations.

NSU also publishes outstanding faculty and student accomplishments in the [Academic Times](#) and [Reflections](#), NSU's official newsletter. Individual faculty are highlighted in the [Academic Spotlight](#), a video interview with notable individuals. [Faculty and students'](#) notable achievements are also highlighted in the President's Report. NSU Libraries regularly display faculty and staff scholarship and works of art.

The state's [DaVinci Institute](#) encourages and recognizes creativity and critical thinking in the state through the [DaVinci Fellowship](#) for creative projects, the [DaVinci Creativity in Education Fellowship](#), a faculty award recognizing creativity in the classroom, and the [DaVinci Scholar](#), a preservice teacher in the last two years of their program. NSU has a long tradition of [DaVinci Fellows and Scholars](#), with two Fellows, one Creativity in Education Fellow, and two Scholars selected from the institution in 2021.

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3.C - Core Component 3.C

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

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

Argument

3.C.1. NSU serves a racially and ethnically diverse student body, and the institution makes efforts to have a racially and ethnically diverse faculty and staff as well. According to [IPEDS human resources data](#), Full-time Instructional Staff ([IPEDS-A3](#)), NSU has a total of 285 instructional staff as of November 2020 with 48% men. The race / ethnicity breakdown is as follows:

- 204 White (71.6%)
- 22 Two or more races (7.7%)
- 18 Nonresident alien (6.3%)
- 18 American Indian / Alaska Native (6.3%)
- 12 Asian (4.2%)
- 6 Hispanic / Latino (2.1%)
- 4 Black / African American (1.4%)
- 1 Race / ethnicity unknown (.3%)

NSU's part-time instructional staff ([IPEDS, Part D](#)) is slightly more diverse with 67.2% identifying as white and 32.8% as minority or two or more races. The institution is increasing the

diversity of instructional staff as 9 of the 19 new instructional staff hired in 2019-20 identified as belonging to a minority group or two or more races ([IPEDS, Part H](#)).

The non-instructional full-time staff population (n=522) has similar race / ethnicity demographics ([IPEDS-Part B](#)):

- 342 White (65.5%)
- 86 American Indian / Alaska Native (16.5%)
- 53 Two or more races (10.2%)
- 13 Black / African American (2.5%)
- 12 Hispanic / Latino (2.3%)
- 7 Race / ethnicity unknown (1.3%)
- 5 Nonresident alien (1%)
- 4 Asian (.7%)

NSU's commitment to non-discriminatory, equitable hiring practices and attracting and retaining a diverse workforce is articulated in the [Staff Hiring Guide](#), the [Faculty Search Guide](#). Recruitment and hiring practices for all employees are documented in the [Employment Handbook](#). The [Employing Internationals: Policy and Procedures](#) provides guidance to hiring managers for employing non-resident, non-immigrant persons.

The [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force](#) was formed in August and held an initial retreat and is planning activities. Members of the existing Diversity and Equitable Practices Task Force met to discuss the [potential direction](#) and [focus](#) for this group.

3.C.2 The number of faculty has remained relatively steady, averaging [282 full-time and 148 part-time](#) faculty over the past four years using Common Data Set. The institution has a [student-to-faculty ratio of 17:1](#); [81% of undergraduate classes have fewer than 30 students](#), and [98% of undergraduate classes have fewer than 50 students](#).

NSU has an appropriate mix of new and seasoned faculty who provide both fresh perspectives and wisdom and institutional memory. [NSU faculty have an average of 10 years of service at the institution](#) and [61% of NSU full-time faculty have more than 5 years of service](#). Just over [45% of faculty were tenured](#) (p. 10) in 2019. [Faculty classification percentages](#) are as follows:

- 25% - Professor
- 25% - Associate Professor
- 36% - Assistant Professor
- 13% - Instructor
- 1% - Lecturer

This diversity in longevity and professional rank fosters the incorporation of multiple perspectives in terms of curriculum and student performance expectations (see 4.A).

As outlined in the Faculty Handbook (section [4.0 Full-Time Faculty Workload](#)), faculty are responsible for delivering quality instruction, engaging in scholarly activities, and supporting the institution and profession through service. In accordance with [RUSO policy](#) (3-1a), full-time faculty members typically have an instructional load of 24 to 27 hours per academic year and a non-instructional equivalent load of 9 to 12 hours per academic year. Therefore, a full-time load is the equivalent of thirty-six 36 hours per academic year (Faculty Handbook, 4.1), and is generally split evenly between the fall and spring semesters.

Deans may make recommendations for faculty overload to the Provost who has the final approval. Overload is typically restricted to three credit hours per semester. The overload limits and approval process ensure that faculty have sufficient time to engage in student mentoring, curriculum and assessment activities, scholarly pursuits, and service.

In [program and department meetings](#), faculty regularly discuss curriculum and student learning assessment results, proposing changes, and adjustments as needed. With completion of the [HLC Assessment Academy and the HLC Persistence and Completion Academy](#), NSU's assessment culture has evolved and the importance of assessment is a focus for all faculty (see 3.D.2).

3.C.3. NSU has established [policies and procedures](#) to verify the qualifications of all instructional staff in alignment with HLC guidelines and [RUSO Policy 3.3.d](#). NSU's hiring practices, articulated in the [Faculty Search Guide](#) and [Cornerstone Hiring Manager/Reviewer User Guide](#), promote the selection of highly qualified individuals. A screening committee (p. 6) reviews and verifies credentials during the selection process. Potential candidates are interviewed by the screening committee, department chair, dean or associate dean, and a representative from Academic Affairs. Through this process, a [variety of perspectives](#) are brought to bear on the functional qualifications of faculty candidates (see 5.A.4).

After receiving the hiring recommendation from the screening committee, the dean inputs hiring information into the Cornerstone software which generates an [employment offer letter](#). Candidates then sign the letter which informs them of the need for original transcripts from all institutions attended. If credit was earned outside the United States, Canada, or U.K., prospective faculty will also need to submit a course by course transcription (i.e. WES - World Education Services or comparable service). NSU verifies the credentials of prospective faculty members prior to hiring to ensure that degrees or graduate work relate to the faculty member's assignment. Once hired, the [Office of Academic Affairs maintains documentation](#) of each faculty member's employment documents and transcripts.

Adjunct hires are done on a semester-by-semester basis from a pool of content specialists. Adjuncts are typically area practitioners who have expertise in the particular course content. Many adjuncts have taught several years at the university. Adjuncts must provide the same documentation of degrees and experience as full-time faculty hires.

NSU's practice is to hire faculty with terminal degrees ([policy](#), [email](#)) although ABD candidates or those with master's degrees and exceptional qualifications are considered on a temporary

basis. Occasionally, instructors with skilled experience (e.g. ropes course certification, American Sign Language certification) are hired to fulfill particular needs. Tenure-track faculty hired on a conditional basis are monitored and supported by deans and department chairs towards completion of the terminal degree.

The [Faculty Handbook Section 3.2.3](#) outlines faculty qualifications and states that the minimal qualifications for professor, associate professor, and assistant professor shall be an earned doctorate degree by a regionally accredited institution or an equivalent for a degree received in another country. Non-doctorate, terminal degrees, such as a Masters of Fine Arts, are considered equivalent to the doctorate degree. Those with non-terminal master's degrees are designated as instructors.

[Graduate Faculty Status](#). To ensure quality and continually improve the quality of NSU's graduate programs, only approved graduate faculty may teach graduate courses or serve on the [Graduate Council](#). The Graduate Dean and Graduate Council review an individual's application, current resume reflecting scholarly activity, and recommendations from the appropriate department chair and college dean before adding the individual to the Graduate Faculty.

For concurrent enrollment (dual enrollment) courses taught in area high schools, NSU's practice is to use either full-time faculty or experienced adjuncts. These expectations are detailed in the [MOU agreement](#) for districts (section 5), and all instructors meet HLC expectations of a [minimum of a master's degree](#) in the field.

[College of Extended Learning \(CEL\)](#) - Faculty teaching accelerated CEL college credit classes go through the same selection process as any other NSU faculty member.

NSU has no contractual or consortial agreements involving instruction.

3.C.4. NSU uses a multi-phased approach for instructor evaluation with components that include student perspectives on courses and peer committee and administrator review of scholarly and service contributions.

Effective teaching is central to NSU's mission, and the institution seeks student input on course effectiveness. Students evaluate all classes taught by faculty, including adjuncts. These evaluations serve as a diagnostic tool to improve instruction. Evaluations are anonymous, completed online, and managed through NSU's Blackboard survey function through AY 2019-20. In an effort to better monitor response rates and intersect with faculty databases, the institution conducted a [pilot effort](#) of administering course evaluations through the EvaluationKIT platform in summer 2020, and continued use of the platform through 2020-21.

Through spring 2020, the [questionnaire](#) included 21 Likert-scale, four constructed response, and five demographic items, and an overall rating of instructor effectiveness. In summer 2020, a [subcommittee of the Faculty Council](#) recommended to the Provost a revised set of course evaluation questions designed to measure effective teaching, increase student participation, and

educate end users about the reliability and validity of the data from the evaluations (faculty and administrators). As a result of the subcommittee's work, [ten Likert-scale questions](#) and four constructed responses were piloted during the AY 2020-21 academic year. [Course evaluation results](#) are readily available to faculty at the end of each semester and reviewed by department chairs, college deans, and the Provost/Vice President of Academic Affairs.

On average over the past three years, students evaluate 174 faculty each summer, 400 each fall, and 379 each spring. In [Spring 2020](#), students completed 4,385 [course evaluations](#), providing data on 1,100 classes taught by 381 faculty. The average rating for every item was at least 4.18 on a five-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*), which corresponds with a rating between “Agree” and “Strongly Agree.” Question 21 asks students to indicate the degree to which they agree with the statement that the instructor was an effective teacher. The average rating for this item for all faculty was 4.36.

Course evaluations are an important component to annual faculty evaluations and tenure / promotion processes. As per [RUSO Policy 3.3.5](#) and the [Faculty Handbook \(Section 3.3\)](#), every non-tenured faculty member, regardless of appointment type, is evaluated annually and provided a [copy of that evaluation](#). Notifications of reappointment or non-reappointment are sent out by March 1. Tenured faculty are reviewed a minimum of every three years (Faculty Handbook, Section 3.3.2). Post-tenure reviews include preparation of an extended curriculum vitae that highlights activities in teaching, scholarship, and service to the institution and the profession ([Faculty Handbook 3.3.1](#) and [3.3.2](#)).

NSU subscribes to the [Boyer Model of Scholarship](#) (Appendix C.C.2) for its retention, tenure, and promotion (RTP) processes (see 1.B.2 and 3.B.5). RTP reviews are conducted by tenured faculty, the department chair, dean, and provost. Eligible faculty submit a [portfolio providing evidence](#) of [achievement in four evaluation areas](#): effective teaching, scholarly or creative achievement, contributions to the institution and profession, and performance of non-teaching administrative or semi-administrative duties (if applicable). Faculty are evaluated using the [departmental guidelines](#) that articulate the specific expectations for the four evaluation areas [for the discipline](#).

Only approved graduate faculty may teach graduate courses, advise graduate students, serve as thesis and capstone mentors, and serve on the Graduate Council. Graduate faculty status is conferred by the Graduate Dean and Graduate Council after review of the faculty's [credentials and scholarly activity](#) (section 3.2.3f) (p. 15).

In addition, faculty are also eligible for [salary changes](#) (if the budget permits), sabbaticals and professional development leave (Faculty Handbook, [Section 6](#)).

3.C.5. The Boyer Model ([Appendix C.C.2](#)) encourages professional development, peer review, scholarship, and research for retention, tenure, and promotion (see 1.B.2 and 3.C.4). NSU supports faculty in attaining Boyer Model expectations by providing a number of resources and

opportunities that promote professional development. As such, faculty are able to maintain currency and proficiency in their disciplines.

New Faculty Orientation. New faculty participate in a [faculty orientation \(2020 schedule\)](#) that addresses topics such as:

- NSU's student populations,
- Student support services,
- Syllabi and student learning objectives,
- Technology tools and support, and
- Faculty support and instructional services.

Pedagogical Professional Development. NSU supports the sharing of teaching techniques and scholarly endeavors in pedagogy by hosting its own professional development activities. The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) hosts a conference-style [Community and Collaboration Day](#) (CCD) during each fall semester, with external guest speakers such as Walt Gmelch, George Kuh, Marie Baehr, and faculty and staff presentations. Recent [CCD topics](#) included using high impact practices, mentoring faculty, using Zoom effectively for instruction, and Open Educational Resources. The past two years, CTL partnered with the Executive Director of Assessment to focus on aspects of the assessment cycle in place of the typical CCD format.

CTL also offers [professional development workshops](#) throughout the year. Recent workshop titles include “Are your Students Cheating?”, “Time Saver: Using Respondus”, “Innovative Teaching During COVID 19”, and “Embedding Videos.” CTL offers both in-person and online training to ensure familiarity with Blackboard, software packages, and classroom technology.

CTL provides three types of faculty funding awards to support teaching and learning in the areas of [immersive learning](#), [classroom technology innovations](#), and [Open Educational Resources \(OER\)](#) development.

Faculty who teach online or blended classes are required to complete NSU's [Online Educators training](#), established in 2013. The [Online Education Certification](#) consists of two online training courses that are based on the Quality Matters pedagogy. Online Educators Certification 1 (OEC-1) addresses how to navigate through the Blackboard learning management system and OEC-2 covers pedagogy, course design, and incorporating Quality Matters standards. From 2017 to 2020, 115 faculty completed OEC 1 and 16 faculty completed OEC 2.

Faculty who attain Online Educators Certification and complete the Quality Matters Applying the Rubric Course are eligible to serve as [Online Educator Peer Mentors and Course Reviewers](#). These individuals provide peer assistance and review online classes. NSU also provides funds for full-time faculty who wish to obtain Quality Matters (QM) Certification. The [Applying the Quality Matters Rubric](#) course prepares faculty with tools needed to use the [QM Rubric](#) in designing and evaluating online courses. The [Quality Matters Peer Reviewer Course](#) prepares experienced online faculty to become QM Certified Peer Reviewers.

Nine faculty are QM Peer Reviewers, one is a QM Master Reviewer, and 125 faculty have completed Applying the Quality Matters Rubric course.

In 2020, NSU also hosted the [Transforming the Teaching & Learning Environment](#) virtual conference, and offered free registration to faculty, and because of its membership in the [Online Consortium of Oklahoma](#), NSU faculty have access to a range of activities including the Oklahoma Learning Innovations summit and professional development courses.

Research and Scholarship Support. Faculty are afforded teaching and research support through a number of avenues. All faculty are eligible for financial support to travel, present, and keep current in their fields. This funding comes from a variety of sources. First, each college has funds derived from student fees, and a portion of those support faculty professional development. Second, faculty may apply for Faculty Development Awards. [Faculty Development Awards](#) proportionally allocates \$36,000 by college in travel funds for faculty presenting at professional conferences or serving in leadership roles that requires them to attend the conference. Any funds not used at the college level by March are pooled, and faculty may apply to use these funds to attend a conference without the restriction of having to present or serve in a leadership role.

When funding is not otherwise provided by the university, faculty and staff may apply for the [President's Ambassadors Network](#) funding for professional development and other projects.

Two other opportunities for professional development exist through the institution's memberships in external organizations: [DaVinci Institute](#) and the [Council on Undergraduate Research](#). These organizations provide access to professional development on creativity and research respectively.

The Faculty Research Committee distributes \$57,000 of internal funding each year in [Faculty Research Grants](#) on a competitive basis. The [Office of Research and Sponsored Programs](#) provides support for faculty [seeking external funding](#). NSU researchers were awarded over \$3.7 million in [internal and external grants](#) in AY 2019-20 (p. 51).

Faculty who have earned a doctorate are eligible to apply for a [sabbatical](#) (section 6.2) of up to one year for the purpose of "continued professional growth and new or renewed intellectual achievement through study, research, writing, and travel." Sabbaticals for a full year are paid at half salary, and those for less than a year are pro-rated.

3.C.6. NSU faculty are readily available to assist students. Faculty-student interaction is facilitated by regular office hours. The standardized syllabus template requires faculty to list their [office hours and contact information](#). Additionally, the standardized Blackboard template includes a place for faculty to add their [contact information](#). Full-time faculty maintain a minimum of eight regular office hours during the fall and spring semesters in accordance with

[Faculty Handbook Section 4.8](#) and part-time faculty keep a number of office hours proportional to their teaching load.

The [online employee directory](#) can be searched by first and last name, department, and title. The online directory interacts with the faculty activity database Digital Measures, and displays information that faculty enter into their [Digital Measures profile](#), such as Education, Research Interests, Teaching Interests, Professional Activities, and Courses Taught.

Students view their instructors as accessible, rating the course evaluation item “my instructor was available for consultation” as [4.48 on a 5.00 scale](#); [90% of students responded “agree” or “strongly agree.”](#) Faculty monitor e-mail on a timely basis, and many maintain virtual offices on Zoom, which readily affords online access to faculty. Faculty are sensitive to the differing needs of today’s diverse students and use a variety of tools to communicate with students including the Blackboard tools such as announcements, discussion boards and gradebook, video and chat features of the Zoom web conferencing platform, and Google Hangouts tool in NSU email system. The increased use of social media provides alternative venues for communication. Some [social media platforms](#) that faculty use to engage and communicate with students include [Twitter](#), [GroupMe](#) (p. 2), [Facebook](#) (p. 3), [Goodreads](#), and [Instagram](#).

Beyond communication tools, faculty encourage student inquiry and [immersive learning](#) through sponsorship of [internships](#), [joint research](#), and [scholarly publications](#) (see 1.B.2 and 3.B.4). NSU supports [career counseling](#), independent study projects, [Study Abroad opportunities](#), collaborative research and scholarly articles, undergraduate honors classes, and thesis committees. Faculty also encourage student inquiry by participating as sponsors for more than [160 student organizations](#) (see 1.A.1). These organizations further serve to bring faculty into personal contact with students who may not be enrolled in a faculty member’s class.

3.C.7 NSU hires [well-qualified staff members](#) must meet the expectations, experience, and educational qualifications needed to prepare them for their positions. [Staff screening and interviewing practices](#) are similar to those for prospective faculty members (see 3.C.1). Once hired, staff members complete staff orientation, participate in on-the-job training, attend [specialty training sessions](#) and are [annually evaluated](#). In addition, the [Center for Teaching and Learning](#) provides in-person and online training for staff members for technology needs.

Staff who work directly with students in roles such as advising, financial aid support, and co-curricular activities are required to have a minimum of a bachelor's degree or master's degree, depending on the position. NSU uses standardized position descriptions ([examples](#)) that outline the major duties, position complexity, minimum qualifications, and other key information for each position to better ensure a clear understanding of the role.

NSU’s [Advising Center](#) provides undergraduate and students with personalized academic advising with well-qualified staff. Graduate students are advised by the Graduate College and their faculty mentors. The advising professional development committee spearheads internal opportunities, typically one full day per semester ([example](#)) and [summer Advising Academies](#).

This committee also encourages collaboration on regional and national presentations and poster submissions to [OACADA](#) and [NACADA](#). NSU's advising team is active at both the state and national level by hosting conferences, [presenting posters and full-session presentations](#). NSU's Executive Director has served on the OACADA steering committee and one advisor from the College of Liberal Arts serves as a member-at-large.

Academic advisors participated in an OSRHE-funded [Reach Higher Coach Connect](#) academic coaching workshop in 2019, with 11 additional advisors scheduled to participate in the same workshop in March 2020, cancelled due to COVID-19. In lieu of this opportunity, the Academic Advisors planned a year-long, [collaborative development opportunity](#) for all advising staff utilizing *An Introduction to Coaching Skills: A Practical Guide* (Van Nieuwerburgh, 2017). This development opportunity is advisor-led, guided by those who participated in the original coaching workshop, and is required of all advisors to participate in open forum discussion and activities on a monthly basis. Administrative support staff participate in the **Administrative Support Network**, which hosts a monthly meeting of administrative assistants in the division on a professional development topic.

[Student Affairs](#) staff are supported and encouraged to participate in [professional organizations and to present at relevant conferences](#) (see pgs. 6-7). Student Affairs hosts an annual [Professional Development Day](#), and presentations are provided by internal leaders of the division as well as invited external guests. In addition, divisional leaders participate in the [Student Affairs Leadership Team \(SALT\)](#). At SALT, various professional development presentations cover topics such as CAS Reviews and program assessments.

[Student Disability Services](#) staff participate in training by agencies such as the Association of Higher Education and Disability [AHEAD](#) and [PaperClip Communications](#), thereby providing up-to-date disability awareness programs, support, and training for the campus community.

[Office of International Programs](#) staff participate in conferences and training through organizations such as [NAFSA: Association of International Educators](#), [ICE](#), [Education USA](#), and Asia-Pacific Association for International Education [APAIE](#). These [activities](#) allow them to better assist international students and scholars with university admission requirements, visas, academic orientation, academic support, and cultural acclimation.

All tutors are hired and trained by each respective department, and there is an accessible presence for [all tutoring services on one website](#). A [tutoring schedule](#) is distributed to students from their respective advisor during week three of each semester. NSU's [Student Success Coordinator](#), housed in the University Advising Center, facilitates this process and serves as the administrator for [tutor.com](#), NSU's online tutoring service.

New [Student Financial Aid](#) employees begin their training by completing the [Federal Student Aid \(FSA\) Coach Fundamentals](#), online training modules includes 7 modules, 36 lessons, and 7 assessments (and must score 80% or better for each module assessment). Staff also participate in various state and national workshops and conferences including the [Federal Student Aid \(FSA\) Conference](#), [Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education \(OSRHE\) - State Regents Scholarships and Grants Workshop](#), [National Association of Student Financial Aid](#)

[Administrators \(NASFAA\) Training](#), [Oklahoma Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators \(OASFAA\) Conference](#), [Southwest Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators \(SWASFAA\) Training](#), and [National Student Employment Association \(NSEA\) Training](#).

Professional development funding is available through departmental budgets and the [President's Ambassadors Network \(PAN\)](#). In the last five years, PAN has provided over [\\$29,000](#) to staff for various development activities.

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3.D - Core Component 3.D

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

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

Argument

3.D.1. NSU provides excellent student support that considers students' backgrounds, academic preparation levels, and predictors of academic success. For some students, these services start when recruiters connect with high school students [in person or online](#). During these visits, prospective students learn about NSU, college life, admission requirements, financial aid, and how to apply for scholarships.

NSU provides special care to assist prospective and new students and guard against feelings of being lost or overwhelmed by the higher education environment. Specific examples follow:

- [Diversity Programs](#) recruit and engage students from underrepresented populations. This assistance ranges from providing recruitment events, assistance with the ACT preparation and application procedures, to student engagement activities ranging from clubs and special events described throughout this argument.
- [Veterans Services](#), [veteran's lounges](#) on Tahlequah and Broken Arrow campuses, and an [ROTC](#) unit provide a natural gathering point for active duty and veteran students.
- The [Center for Admissions and Student Enrollment \(CASE\)](#) building is a "one-stop-enrollment center providing students easy access to enrollment-related services including Admissions and Recruitment, Registrar, Career Services, Enrollment Services, and Transfer Student Services. Similar services are available at the Broken Arrow campus to assist transfer students.
- [SOAR](#) (Student Orientation, Advising, and Registration), is a one-day, conference-style [mandatory orientation](#) session where new students learn about the campus and tools that they need to be successful, meet with professional advisors, and enroll.
- [Full-time, professional advisors](#) provide pre-enrollment support by explaining admission requirements, financial aid, academic programs, and providing enrollment guidance.

- [Rookie Bridge Camp](#) provides an intensive freshman orientation prior to the first day of classes and helps new students acclimate to college life.
- Faculty and staff welcome students as they move to residence halls during [Student Move in Day](#).
- [Welcome Week activities](#) occur prior to the start of the semester and offer information on student support services, student associations, and numerous social, recreational, and academic events on the Tahlequah campus. On the Broken Arrow campus with its non-traditional, commuter population, students may choose evening or Saturday Welcome Week sessions.
- [SmartChoice partnerships](#) facilitate transfer of classes from [two year colleges](#) to NSU,
- [Transfer Days](#) and [Transfer Student Orientation](#) allow prospective transfer students meet advisors, admissions staff, faculty, and college representatives in one location.
- [University Housing](#) staff assist with housing options, resident hall life, and roommate needs throughout the year.
- An online [Net Price Calculator](#) provides tuition information and a preliminary estimate of federal, state, and institutional aid eligibility.
- The [English as a Second Language Program](#) provides year-round eight-week sessions of intensive English instruction to prepare non-native speakers for admission to higher education.

Ongoing Student Support. NSU offers programs and support services designed to support students throughout their time at NSU. The institution broadly organizes these [services](#) into learning assistance (see 3.D.2), financial services, advising, campus connections, health and wellness, technical support, and career services. The [Student Support Services web page](#) provides an overview of these services and direct links to each of these broad areas and more specific services in each category.

Financial Services and Resources. According to the 2019-20 Factbook, in AY18-19, 93% of first-time, full-time students received some form of [financial aid](#) which is typical for NSU's student population. Aid awarded to undergraduate students was almost [\\$58,000,000 and aid to all students was over \\$71,000,000](#). Of full-time incoming freshmen, 68% were awarded [state grants, scholarships, or waivers](#). The FY20 President's Report detailed that tribal scholarships awarded to 1,582 students exceeded [\\$5,000,000](#) 2018-19.

NSU's [Light the Way Emergency Scholarship Fund](#) "is designed to assist undergraduate and graduate students in times of crisis, in order to help them maintain enrollment." [Rowdy's Resource Room](#) on the Tahlequah campus provides non-perishable food, school supplies, and gently used clothing to students with these needs. The Broken Arrow campus also has a food and supply pantry for students there, and at the Muskogee campus, the student body works within the community to support those resources.

The [Office of Student Financial Services](#) maintains a comprehensive website that provides up-to-date information about [financial aid and scholarship opportunities](#). Students are assigned to a [particular financial aid counselor](#) for continuity. In addition, the [Net Price Calculator](#) allows prospective students to calculate the tuition and housing costs while obtaining a preliminary estimate of federal, state, and institutional aid eligibility.

Advising. Undergraduate students are assigned a [professional advisor](#) and a [faculty mentor](#) in their academic college in NSU's dual advising model. The professional advisors have expertise in the particular [group they serve](#): undeclared students, majors in each of the four academic colleges, transfer students, and Reach Higher students returning to finish a degree. Graduate students are advised by the [Graduate College and faculty mentors](#) (p. 17) (See 3.D.3 for more information).

Campus Connections. NSU offers many additional learning opportunities and activities that challenge students to become socially connected, civically engaged, professionally prepared, culturally aware, and personally accountable. These include leadership, student voluntary services programs, Greek life, and [over 100 active student organizations](#), including six [American Indian student organizations](#) (p. 18). Some examples include:

- [International Student Organization](#),
- [First Generation Student Organization](#),
- [Northeastern Association of Student Social Workers](#),
- [Physician Assistant Student Association](#), and
- [Stonewall Equality Alliance](#).

Health and Wellness. Students who are physically and mentally healthy are better able to focus on academics. [Student Health Services](#) provide sick and wellness related appointments at clinics on the Tahlequah campus and at locations near the Broken Arrow and Muskogee campuses, and NSU pays the student copayments. Students may make an appointment for free in-person or online counseling with [HawkReach Student Counseling Services](#). The NSU Police recently partnered with the area non-profit CREOKS to allow officers to [connect students in crisis with a mental health professional](#) through a secure link on an iPad. NSU's commitment to supporting students' health was recognized with an [Award in Excellence](#) from the Oklahoma State Department of Health for being a 2019 Oklahoma Certified Healthy Campus.

The Tahlequah campus [fitness center](#) is open seven days a week when campus is open and the campus has multiple gyms and outdoor sport areas for students, faculty, and the community. Broken Arrow students may use the fitness facilities at a nearby community college at no charge, thanks to a partnership with the institution. The Broken Arrow campus also boasts a disc golf course and links to [66 miles of biking and pedestrian trails](#).

Technical Support. The [IT Service Desk](#) provides technical assistance with NSU login, email, and other computer issues seven days a week from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Students can request help by phone, email, the online portal, or by walking in. The Registrar's Office [assists students with goNSU](#). Students who need help with Blackboard submit a ticket through the Help Desk's online portal and are assisted by the IT staff or NSU Online staff.

NSU accommodates today's technologically adept society through a viable, [mobile-friendly and easy to-navigate website](#). NSU also connects with students, alumni, and the community through social media avenues such as [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Pinterest](#). For example, students may take a [virtual campus tour](#) or view information related to [tuition](#), [housing](#),

[admissions](#), [majors](#), [transfer of credits](#), [student organizations](#), [student support services](#), [advising](#), or [community service opportunities](#).

Career Services. The [Office of Career Services](#) promotes student learning and development by assisting and inspiring students to develop, evaluate, and create lifetime career and academic plans. The [2020 President's Annual Report](#) reported that in AY 2019-20, [Career Services](#) posted 18,847 jobs, provided 5,848 contacts with potential employees, conducted 2,914 career assessments, and sponsored 89 career service events. Career Services also provides [free business cards to students](#), [assistance preparing resumes and cover letters](#), and [one-on-one career counseling](#). In 2018-19, 85% of respondents to the [Graduation Outcomes Survey](#) of those graduating with baccalaureate degrees were [employed full time or part-time, seeking additional education, volunteering, or engaged in military service](#) (see also 4.B.2). Those employed reported average salaries ranging from [\\$34,243 \(Education\)](#) to [\\$42,788 \(Business and Technology\)](#).

3.D.2. NSU provides learning support and preparatory instruction to accommodate the academic needs of all NSU students. Assessment and student support processes assist incoming students, transfer students, online students, and specific sub-populations of students.

Learning Support. NSU provides [in-person tutoring services](#) in math, science, communication, Spanish, and a lab committed to supporting English Language Learners. The [Writing Center](#) offers one-on-one appointments designed to assist with citation formats, classroom presentations, and writing assignments. Students may access up to 10 free hours of [online tutoring](#) per semester in all subject areas.

Faculty share concerns regarding attendance or academic performance through the [Academic Early Alert System](#). Advisors or another member of the student success team will follow up with the student with support and resources.

NSU serves a diverse student body. Several offices provide targeted support for these groups. [Student Disability Services](#) provides or arranges reasonable accommodations and services for students who self-identify as needing services. The [Honors Program](#) accommodates academically-talented students who desire to work with distinguished faculty, conduct research, and participate in co-curricular cultural experiences. The [Native American Support Center](#) offers peer mentoring, tutoring, and cultural and academic workshops. Students who are first generation, meet income guidelines, have a documented disability, and who have an academic need qualify for [TRIO Student Support Services](#). TRIO offers academic advising, one-on-one tutoring, career counseling, and a number of other services.

Preparatory Instruction. A variety of measures help place students in learning experiences appropriate for the amount of academic support they need. [Entry Level Assessment and Placement](#) is first determined by ACT sub-scores or SAT subject test scores. When scores meet or exceed the cut scores, students are placed in college-level courses.

When the ACT or SAT scores fall below the minimum, high school GPA for English, math, and reading are considered next. Students who meet the GPA requirements are placed in college-level classes, and those who do not take secondary placement tests: the College Board's Accuplacer Next Generation English Test for English, [Accuplacer Next Generation Reading Test](#) for reading (beginning in 2019-20), and a locally developed instrument for mathematics. Students who [meet the secondary placement requirements](#) of high school GPA or the placement tests may take a developmental course, but are encouraged to take college-level math and English courses with co-requisites. Students not achieving the [minimum criteria](#) are required to take developmental courses. Students who are required to take developmental courses may re-test twice with one week between each attempt in an effort to meet the required score.

Students requiring remediation may be placed either in developmental, 0-level courses or co-requisite workshops that allow students to take college-level courses with additional support. The [Summer Bridge](#) program provides students the opportunity to clear curricular deficiencies prior to the fall semester start. [Table A](#) in the Annual Assessment of Student Assessment summarizes the minimum requirements and placement process. The [Developmental Education Committee](#) monitors [developmental courses and support systems](#).

Placement Program Assessment. Between Summer 2018 and Spring 2019, 619 students took a total of 1,342 placement tests. After secondary placement, [37% were placed in college courses and 63% in remediation](#). [Pass rates](#) are reported by semester. For non-credit courses, students may either earn a passing grade in the class or a passing score on the placement test. Pass rates for math ranged from a low of 57.4% for the fall MATH 0123, Elementary Algebra to 71.4% for spring MATH 0133, Intermediate Algebra. English pass rates ranged from 62.1% for ENGL 0123 Writing Enhancement to 73.7% for spring ENGL 0113 Reading Enhancement.

Pass rates for students needing remediation who enrolled in the co-requisite courses were 75% for fall and 63% in spring for English. These pass rates were [similar to students who were not deficient](#). For the math co-requisite options, [55% passed in fall and 71% in spring for Applied Mathematics, and 64% passed in both fall and spring](#) for the College Algebra co-requisites. An online algebra tutorial is available on all campus computers and resident hall laboratories to support students. Based on these findings, advisors will encourage students to enroll in the co-requisite option when they are eligible.

To participate in the [Honors Program](#), incoming freshmen must meet the eligibility criteria:

- Have an ACT composite of 30 or higher with a high school GPA of 3.5 or higher.
- Have an ACT composite of 29 with a high school GPA of 3.65 or higher.
- Have an ACT composite of 28 with a high school GPA of 3.8 or higher.
- Have a high school class ranking within the upper 10%.

Transfer students or other NSU students apply to the Honors Council for admission.

3.D.3. NSU offers academic and career advising services for all students. Jointly, professional advisors and faculty provide insight into degree options and career opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students.

NSU uses a [dual advising model](#) (p. 2) of [full-time, professional academic advisors](#) and faculty advisors (faculty mentors) for undergraduate students. The professional advisors include University Advisors who work with students who are undeclared, Academic Advisors in each of the four undergraduate academic colleges assigned to declared majors, advisors dedicated to help [transfer students](#) (p. 3), [Reach Higher students](#) (p. 9), and those enrolled in the [College of Extended Learning](#) (p. 9). [University and Academic Advisors](#) help students with student life questions, enrollment information, and degree and academic requirements. [Faculty mentors](#) share career-specific information and internship and research opportunities.

Undergraduate students are assigned an academic advisor when they first enroll. Freshmen are required to attend a [pre-registration advising session](#) to make sure they get off to a good start. Advisors encourage students to declare a major in their first semester. Once students declare a major, they are assigned to a faculty mentor. Graduate students are [advised through the Graduate College and are assigned a faculty advisor](#) (p. 17).

The goal of the advising model is to maximize the opportunities for productive contact among students, professional advisors, and faculty members ([Dual Advising Survey](#)). Since implementation, students reported a [high degree of satisfaction](#) with advising service (M = 4.72, 1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). This high degree of student satisfaction may be attributed to personalized, one-on-one support in areas such as course selection, choice of major, General Education requirements, student support services, and referrals to faculty for specific class questions.

Student-Athlete Advising. Coaches monitor athletes to ensure academic success, and work with the Assistant Athletic Director for Academic Services with concerns. They seek additional student support for athletes whose midterm grade in a class drops below a “C.” Additionally, the Academic Advising Training Manual provides advisors with specific information on how to [advise student-athletes](#) (p. 108). Forty-three NSU student-athletes received the [D2ADA Academic Achievement Award](#) for the 2019-20 athletic season for earning a minimum cumulative 3.5 GPA and meeting other criteria.

DegreeWorks and GoNSU. [Degree Works](#) and [GoNSU](#) (Banner) are used in conjunction with advising. Degree Works allows students to track their progress toward degree completion and GoNSU allows students to [add and drop classes](#), [access transcripts](#), and a number of [other actions](#) via the web. This convenient access is important for all students, especially non-traditional students, many of whom are employed or have families.

3.D.4. NSU maintains the infrastructure and resources necessary to support effective teaching and learning. The technological infrastructure, the laboratories for science, computer and industrial technology, and the library are appropriate for program and class offerings.

Technology Infrastructure. NSU is part of the state's [ONENET Oklahoma system](#), a telecommunications and information network for education and government which supports high-speed internet access and monitoring. This infrastructure supports the delivery of courses among campuses through video conferencing and online course delivery.

NSU has adopted a four-year rotating replacement schedule for computers, providing faculty, staff, and students with access to current equipment. Similarly, campus software licenses ensure student access to software in the classroom and in [45 computer labs](#). Specialized software, supporting particular programs and majors, can be requested and loaded in particular labs. All faculty and students have access to [Adobe Suite](#) software. [Respondus](#) offers robust proctoring options to maintain academic integrity.

NSU recently migrated its website to a new platform, [Omni Launch](#), to provide the institution a more resilient website in a cloud-based, vendor-monitored solution. Wireless capabilities in all academic buildings further support student research and classroom instruction.

NSU classrooms are equipped with [computers, digital projectors, internet connections, and interactive Smartboards](#) (26 in Tahlequah, 30 in Broken Arrow, and 7 in Muskogee); [web-conferencing](#) (17 Tahlequah, 10 Broken Arrow, 3 Muskogee) rooms are available on all campus locations, and during the recent pandemic, many classrooms were equipped with portable microphones and document cameras to allow both face-to-face and online, synchronous classes. Faculty have access to a learning management system ([Blackboard](#)) for all classes, regardless of whether the class is online, blended, or in-person (see 3.A.3). The [NSU Help Desk](#) provides technical assistance in person, by phone, and via email 7 days a week from 7 a.m. until 11 p.m. Students also enjoy wireless internet and printer access in [university housing facilities](#).

The Tahlequah and Broken Arrow campuses have physical [library](#) spaces with dedicated faculty, staff, print collections, and extensive online collections (see 1.A.3). Muskogee students are served by interlibrary loan if needed materials are not available online. The [library holdings](#) include subscriptions to 237 databases, 4352 serials, as well as owning 128915 media, and 425,010 digital and print books. Students also have access to [online and call-in library services](#) and use of the "Ask the Librarian" Chatbot.

Clinical, Laboratory, and Performing Spaces. NSU has sufficient laboratory space to support programs such as those in the natural sciences, mathematics, and computer science (maintaining more than 50 teaching and research labs, including cadaver labs, on each of three campuses). NSU provides clinical laboratories for health care, optometry, occupational therapy, [speech pathology](#), counseling, and teaching programs. Nursing students work with the hands-on software [Shadow Health](#) that simulates "live" patient assessment. Using [Sentinel U](#), nursing students participate in a virtual community, learn about disaster preparedness, and complete a home safety assessment. NSU has over 300 site contracts with nursing homes, schools, hospitals, and other medical facilities to support programs in health professions.

NSU offers the only [VEX Robotics program](#) with a fully equipped robotics labs at both the Tahlequah and Broken Arrow campuses that provide those in the teacher preparation program access to experience how robotics teaches critical thinking and problem solving.

NSU's [Counseling, M.S.](#) program has space with appropriate sound systems to allow monitoring of counselors in training at both the Broken Arrow and Tahlequah campuses.

Performing arts programs have access to studio and practice spaces in the [Performing Arts Center](#) and other venues. For example, NSU provides a [Jazz Lab](#), an [NSU Playhouse](#) for dance and theater, [gallery space](#) for artists, and library space for historical displays of faculty publications.

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3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary

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

Summary

No matter the delivery mode, NSU offers a quality education with appropriate rigor and support for students. Using the Degrees of Excellence as a guiding foundation, NSU's programs incorporate a general education program that aligns with the institution's mission, content majors that are regularly and externally reviewed, and immersive learning experiences.

NSU's recruitment, promotion, and tenure procedures recruit and secure talented, devoted, and appropriately credentialed faculty. Once hired, NSU supports faculty with adequate resources, new technologies, and development opportunities necessary to effectively engage today's technologically-advanced and culturally diverse student population.

NSU has built on its experiences in HLC's Assessment Academy, Persistence and Completion Academy, and Quality Initiative to improve services and experiences for its student population. NSU has incorporated new efforts addressing non-cognitive variables for retention in terms of student support, co-requisite remediation, and onboarding activities to help students start their college experiences on the right foot. These initiatives, aligned with NSU's Strategic Plan, affirm the institution's commitment to quality education, student support, community service, and data-driven decisions.

Faculty encourage students to collaborate on research and student inquiry, thereby providing a platform to strengthen communication skills and excellence in scholarship. Supported by a well-trained and highly-qualified staff, NSU offers a vibrant and enriched learning environment well-suited to satisfy the needs of a diverse and globally competitive student population. Consistent with its community values, NSU fulfills its mission by providing high quality education, student support, and community service through a variety of curriculum offerings, co-curricular programs, and community engagement activities.

Sources

There are no sources.

4 - Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

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

4.A - Core Component 4.A

The institution ensures the quality of its educational offerings.

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

Argument

4.A.1 Faculty, departments, colleges, the institution, and NSU's [two governing boards](#) are responsible for the quality and rigor of NSU's educational programs. These boards require periodic internal and external review of educational programs. The review process provides consistent evaluation of every program's effectiveness and quality in alignment with NSU's mission and strategic plan. In addition, many programs have [specialized accreditation](#), meet licensing and certification requirements, and undergo internal and external reviews conducted by peer reviewers.

Internal Reviews

Academic Affairs Report. NSU degree programs [annually](#) review both student learning assessment data and degree completion initiatives. Every June, each academic college and support unit submits an annual academic affairs report to the Provost. These are compiled for the

President and the Regents. These internal audits provide a rigorous self-assessment of mission-driven functions, such as the unit's degree completion agenda, priorities as they relate to the institution and unit strategic plans, learning outcomes, use of technology, faculty or staff accomplishments, and community impact. Example reports include the [College of Business and Technology](#), the [Gregg Wadley College of Science and Health Professions](#), the [Center for Tribal Studies](#), the [John Vaughan Library](#), and [Advising Support Services](#).

Curriculum Review. The curriculum review process includes both internal and external reviews for program or course creation/modification. All [substantive](#) curriculum proposals (e.g. program modifications) are subject to an extensive internal review and approval by both governing boards. [Non-substantive](#) curriculum proposals (e.g. course modifications) are reviewed internally without board approval. Curriculum proposals require a data-informed rationale aligning with student and stakeholder needs. Proposals are approved by college faculty, relevant Councils (e.g. Teacher Education Council), the [University Curriculum Committee](#), and the Provost prior to the President's request for approval by NSU's two governing boards.

Assessment Review. Pursuant to the NSU Institutional Assessment Plan, academic departments complete an [annual assessment of student learning outcomes](#) (detailed in 4.B.) Analysis and findings from the annual assessment reports are used to support curriculum proposals as well as the annual academic affairs report. This internal report serves as a collection point for completing the [OSRHE Assessment](#) Report due each fall.

Student Support and Co-Curricular. The Division of Student Affairs engages in program review using the [Council for Academic Standards \(CAS\) model](#). Skyfactor Benchworks (formerly EBI) campus-wide surveys, launched every 3-years, evaluate student satisfaction in multiple areas including [Campus Climate](#) and [Advising](#) (see 4.B.1). [Division offices](#) review [program evaluations](#) which are distributed in an [Annual Division Report](#).

External Reviews

Program Reviews. The Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs oversees the processes of external academic program review. NSU degree programs engage in two primary types of multi-year external review: General review by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE) and specialized accreditation reviews. Academic Affairs maintains a [schedule](#) for each academic program review as well as an [internal timeline](#) for program completion of the review processes.

Pursuant to OSRHE policy, non-specialty accredited programs undergo an intensive five-year program review. Programs complete a [self-study](#) examining all aspects of the program including student demand (measured through program headcount and student credit hour production) and program completion (measured through degrees conferred). Programs work with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness for [current and historical program data](#). An external subject matter expert is contracted to conduct the review, either through an on-campus visit, or virtually as conditions allow. The reviewer's report, along with an executive summary and response prepared by the program, is submitted to OSRHE for review. Recent representative undergraduate and graduate five-year program reviews are:

- [History, BA](#),
- [Art, BFA](#),
- [Technology, BT](#),
- [Leadership, MS](#), and
- [English, MA](#)

Specialty accredited programs complete a comprehensive audit per their accreditation cycle, using the reporting format and procedures prescribed by the accreditor. Representative specialty accredited program reviews are:

- [College of Education CAEP Site Visit Report](#),
- [College of Business ACBSP Reaffirmation Letter](#), and
- [Physician's Assistant Studies ARC-PA Action Letter](#)

Academic Prioritization. In 2018, faculty, department chairs, and college deans participated in an [Academic Prioritization](#) exercise with Gray Associates, an external consulting firm. In a two-day retreat, participants reviewed data provided by Gray that identified the [best potential programs](#) to serve NSU's communities and assessed currently offered programs based on student demand, employment, strategic fit, and competitive intensity.

NSU acts on the findings and recommendations of this rigorous review process. For example, the Academic Prioritization process identified Sport and Fitness Administration/Management as a potential program. The NSU Health and Kinesiology faculty collaborated with faculty from the College of Business and Technology to revise an existing degree program to offer Health Education and Sport Science, M.S. with Sport Administration/Management and Health Education options.

Numerous programs used the Academic Prioritization data, as well as program review data, to add embedded and stackable credential certificates to existing bachelor and master degree programs. Examples include the undergraduate certificates in Geographic Information Systems and Human Resource Management and the graduate certificates in Data Analytics and Public Health.

Advisory Boards. Program utilize [advisory boards and panels](#) of external experts and practitioners to provide input into programs and their efficacy. These individuals weigh in on everything from assessment instruments and results to recruitment efforts, to program curriculum. Their input help faculty and staff maintain relevancy in NSU's programs and offerings.

4.A.2. NSU follows [OSRHE Policy 3.11](#) governing the evaluation of transcripts, including credit awarded as a result of transfer, experiential learning, and prior learning assessment. For example, the Registrar's office refers all credit not previously articulated to the department chair who evaluates credit equivalency including [credit transfer from out-of-state academic institutions](#) (see 4.A.3), experiential and [military credit](#), and [prior learning credit](#). If recommended by the

department, the registrar further reviews the request and originating institution and makes a final determination related to transcribing transfer credit. NSU performs a [final degree check](#) prior to granting any degree. Students, academic advisors, faculty, and staff utilize [Degree Works](#) to track student progress through degree completion and to maintain course transfer and articulation. Through this multilevel quality control process, NSU ensures that graduates meet the guidelines and policies set forth by OSRHE, RUSO, and HLC.

Experiential Learning. Faculty (with oversight by department chairs and the approval of college deans) oversee experiential learning experiences, whether they consist of [internships](#), [study abroad trips](#), [field trips](#), student engaged [research](#), or [immersive learning opportunities](#). Department leadership periodically reviews experiential learning classes, especially during the retention, tenure, or promotion processes. This oversight ensures currency, quality, and rigor of such offerings. Credit for experiential learning that is not NSU-based is evaluated according to the prior learning credit policy and procedure that follows.

Prior Learning Credit. [OSRHE Policy 3.16](#) details the regulations for awarding credit for prior learning, and NSU has developed its own [policy and procedure](#) to implement this policy. NSU accepts credit validated through the following means: American Council on Education (ACE), National College Credit Recommendation Service (CCRS), standardized examinations including Advanced Placement, CLEP, DANTES, and International Baccalaureate diploma higher level courses. In addition, department chairs and deans review requests for [prior learning credit](#) earned through student portfolios following CAEL guidelines, institutional assessments, and industry, technical, and other assessments. According to OSRHE policy, the amount of prior learning credit may not exceed one-fourth of the total semester hours required for graduation or a maximum of 30 hours.

As outlined in [NSU's Prior Learning Assessment Policy](#), students prepare a documentation portfolio designed to evaluate an applicant's knowledge, skill, training, or expertise in a given discipline or field. The department chair or faculty content specialist reviews the request for prior learning credit, and the registrar issues final approval to transcript any recommended prior learning credit under the authority of the Provost / Vice President for Academic Affairs.

4.A.3. NSU follows [OSHRE Policy Section 3.11.3](#) governing transfer student admission and credit transfer. [Transfer policies](#) are communicated in the catalog, and advisors and department chairs are conversant on those policies to better serve NSU's transfer population. To qualify for transfer, credit hours must have been earned at an institution accredited by an organization recognized by the U.S. Department of Education for the purpose of accrediting institutions of higher education.

In-State Credit Transfer. College credit transfer for in-state accredited institutions is simplified by the [OSRHE Course Equivalency Transfer Guide](#). This online transfer guide lists equivalent courses for Oklahoma higher education institutions. OSRHE coordinates regular, state-wide faculty review of the courses on the matrix, and an institution's course must include all required course learning outcomes to be included on the matrix.

NSU maintains [transfer articulation agreements](#) with several community colleges within our service area to facilitate the seamless transfer of coursework. These are developed and reviewed by faculty within representative programs and are approved by each institution. They are reviewed on a regular basis for currency.

Out-of-State Credit Transfer. Department chairs (with college dean oversight) review and recommend decisions for [transfer of out-of-state credit requests](#). Then, the registrar reviews and provides final approval prior to transcribing the credit hours. Questions or concerns are discussed with Academic Affairs prior to transcription. To qualify for transfer, the credit hours:

- Must have been earned at an academic institution fully accredited by an accrediting agency recognized by the USDE, and
- Must be measurable and comparable to a course offered at NSU in terms of credit hours, content, instruction level, attendance, examinations, and grading system.

On a case-by-case, NSU may approve credit for courses not offered at NSU; however, such courses must be approved by the department chair and the final decision to transcript transfer credit rests with the Registrar acting under the authority of the Provost. Often these courses serve as general electives in degrees.

4.A.4. Each academic department maintains primary authority to determine and oversee academic programs and course offerings. This includes course prerequisites, oversight of course rigor, establishment of student learning outcomes, expectations for student learning, and maintaining access to adequate learning resources with the assistance of professional librarians and technology support. Each department makes changes as needed based on periodic reviews of [course evaluations](#), [specialized accreditation criteria](#), and [external program reviews](#) in accordance with university, college, and departmental guidelines. NSU has no academic consortial agreements and maintains control over the curriculum and the qualifications of those who teach it.

Faculty, college deans, specialized University Councils where relevant, the University Curriculum Committee ([minutes](#)), the Provost/President, and the State Regents [approve curriculum changes](#). During the Academic Prioritization Process, college deans and the Provost review sustainability and viability of academic programs. This multi-layered approval process contributes to program currency, integrity, and rigor while assuring that any requested changes support NSU's mission as a regional university (See 4.A.1.).

Academic Quality and Course Rigor. NSU uses a standardized [course-level characteristics](#) definition that faculty reference when they develop new courses and provide a rationale for the [course levels / prerequisites](#). Faculty members ensure course rigor through quality class instruction, alignment of learning objectives, and appropriate assessment methodology. Department chairs further monitor quality and rigor through periodic class reviews, [student course evaluations](#), [faculty evaluations](#) (p. 16), [standardized syllabi](#), and collaborative participation in the academic program review process, the curriculum development and

modification process (both described in 4.A.1), and student learning assessment process (see 4.B).

Undergraduate and graduate program quality is further ensured through student learning assessment analysis as well as comprehensive multi-year program reviews (see 4.A.5 and 4.B.2). Many undergraduate program offerings require completion of state or national competency exams. For example, teacher preparation programs utilize the [OSAT exam](#) (p. 8) to assess student competency in required subject areas. The [Chemistry](#) program utilizes the ETS field test to assess student learning in the core program competencies. Additionally, many undergraduate programs offer immersive and integrative experiences such as [internships](#), [practicum](#), or [capstones](#).

NSU requires higher skills and learning outcomes for graduate students. Many graduate programs require a research paper, creative project, or a graduate research methodology course. Similarly, course content is substantively more advanced and methodologically more sophisticated than typically required of undergraduates. All master's degrees have a thesis or capstone, practicum, or clinic experience, and many programs have achieved specialty program accreditation (see 4.A.5).

Online Class Rigor. Online courses follow the same review and assessment policies in place for in-person classes. [Syllabi are standardized and uniform](#) for both [face-to-face](#) and [online](#) classes. This uniformity ensures equivalent learning opportunities, rigor, and quality of online classes. Adding another layer of quality control, pursuant to NSU's [online educator policy](#), all faculty teaching online classes must complete the [online educator certification training](#) and online classes are encouraged to be submitted to the [Online Peer-Reviewers](#) for NSU certification (see 3.A.3 and 3.C.5).

Faculty Qualifications. Northeastern State University seeks to attract and retain highly qualified employees. According to the [2020-21 Common Data Set](#), 81% of full-time faculty possess doctorates or terminal degrees. Faculty are assigned courses based on their areas of expertise and skill in delivering course content. Permanent faculty have priority for course assignments; however, department chairs have access to a cadre of highly qualified adjuncts who have graduate-level degrees and professional experiences that enrich the learning experience.

In addition, faculty and deans determine faculty qualifications needed to teach certain courses. For example, faculty must complete [Online Educator Certification Training](#) prior to teaching online classes (see 3.C.4) and graduate faculty must be approved by the [Graduate Council](#) in order to teach graduate-level courses ([Graduate Council Minutes](#)).

Graduate Faculty Qualification. [Graduate Faculty qualifications](#) include a terminal degree, minimum rank of assistant professor or approved clinical or adjunct status, and tangible evidence of scholarship and research. The [Graduate Council](#) approves prospective applicants based on degree credential, scholarship (peer-reviewed publications), and research accomplishments, or specialized subject matter or clinical expertise. Graduate faculty status is granted for a maximum of five years requiring reapplication once the term expires.

Dual Credit Courses. In accordance with [OSRHE Policy 3.10](#), 11th and 12th grade students are permitted to earn [dual credit](#) for college-level coursework to meet high school requirements (called concurrent enrollment in Oklahoma). High school students must meet NSU admission requirements, and many take classes with college freshmen and sophomore students, thereby ensuring equivalent learning outcomes. NSU faculty travel to high schools where dual credit courses are taught. As such, the collegiate experience for dual credit course offerings is ensured by the rigor of the course, the qualifications of faculty, and student readiness for college.

It should also be noted that in 2013, Oklahoma placed second on the [HLC Segment and Composite Rankings of States on Dual Credit Policy Provisions](#) (p. 34). As the [fourth largest public four-year institution of higher learning in Oklahoma](#), this further evidences NSU's dedication to quality and rigor related to dual credit course offerings.

4.A.5. NSU values specialty accreditations and supports programs seeking national accreditation through the dedication of time, expertise, and monetary resources. National accreditation of many NSU programs communicates the rigor and currency of its degree programs to potential and current students and constituents. The University encourages any academic program that can obtain external accreditation to seek that mark of distinction as a measure of the quality of our academic offerings.

Many of NSU's academic programs and units are periodically reviewed for accreditation by [national or regional organizations](#). Some examples include the following:

- [Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing \(ACEN\)](#),
- [Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics \(ACEND\)](#),
- [Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education](#),
- [Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant](#),
- [Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs](#),
- [Council for the Accreditation of Education Preparation \(CAEP\)](#),
- [Council on Optometric Education \(ACOE\)](#),
- [Council of Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs](#),
- [Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech and Language Pathology](#),
- [Council on Social Work Education](#),
- [National Accrediting Agency for Clinical Laboratory Sciences](#), and
- [National Association of Schools of Music](#).

NSU's most recent accreditations include the [Social Work, MSW](#) full initial accreditation in July 2021 by the Council on Social Work Education. In March 2019, the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP) reaffirmed the [College of Business and Technology](#) business administration programs. Similarly, in May 2019, the Accreditation Council of the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) re-affirmed the [College of Education](#) accreditation at the initial-licensure level with the graduate programs scheduled for review in November 2021. In July 2020, the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA) granted provisional status to the inaugural [NSU Physician](#)

[Assistant](#) cohort. To date, 43 NSU programs have earned specialty accreditations. These examples demonstrate NSU's desire to meet the highest academic standards, to attract highly qualified students and prepare them for professional service, research, and scholarly activities.

4.A.6 NSU evaluates the success of its graduates through several means. The Office of Career services administers the [Graduation Outcomes Survey](#) annually. The survey, which includes both undergraduate and graduate students, tracks employment status and plans, average salary, employment location, and related items. In 2019, 859 respondents completed the survey for a 60% response rate. The data indicated that 85% of the respondents were either employed part-time or full-time, seeking additional education, engaged in volunteer service, or engaged in military service. NSU also participates in the OSRHE and RUSO studies on educational attainment community impact multiple years after graduation. For example, 80.97% of NSU graduates in 2014 were employed in Oklahoma 5-years after graduation. The Outcomes Survey also indicates that in addition to seeking employment after graduation, 22% of graduating seniors revealed an intent to pursue graduate level studies.

Program faculty monitor credential pass rates, retention, and graduate rates, looking for potential barriers and how to help students succeed. [Civitas Illume](#) software provides information for these areas, and faculty work closely with Advisement to construct queries to find insights regarding students success or lack thereof.

Additionally, [several degree programs](#) that prepare students for licensure track student pass rates, and these program analyze their results for continuous improvement. These include:

- [Counseling](#)
- [Didactic Program in Dietetics](#)
- [Education Preparation Programs](#)
- [Medical Laboratory Science](#)
- [Occupational Therapy \(NBCOT\)](#)
- [Physician Assistant](#) (new program -no test scores available)
- [Optometry](#) (NBEO)
- [Social Work](#)
- [Speech Language Pathology](#)

Many NSU degree programs include passage of a comprehensive licensure exam, or licensure preparation exam, as a required or elective component for degree completion. Students in the CACREP accredited Counseling program must pass the Counselor Preparation Comprehensive Examination (CPCE). Teacher candidates must demonstrate an eligible college entrance exam score or pass the Oklahoma General Education Test (OGET). Students in the Accounting and Financial Analysis Program are encouraged to pass a certification exam related to their specialty as their culminating degree experience.

Student success is due, in part, to NSU's commitment to meeting students where they are in terms of preparation and supports as well as its [immersive learning elements](#). For example, many

programs require [internships](#), [clinics](#), [practica](#), [residency programs](#), or [research projects](#) as graduation requirements (see 4.B.2).

The academic colleges are encouraged to work with advisory boards consisting of students, alumni, employers, and community members. For example, the [College of Business and Technology](#), and several [departments](#) within the college, host Advisory Boards which meet several times a year to ensure the needs of the business community are met. They recommend changes in curriculum offerings, support internship opportunities, and facilitate networking among students and community leaders, thereby enabling a smooth transition of NSU students into the business community.

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness publishes the NSU Fact Book, the [Common Data Set](#), [IPEDS Data Feedback Reports](#), [NSSE](#), and [Annual Assessment Reports](#) on its [website](#). Such data sharing enhances responsibility for quality and rigor of academic programs.

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4.B - Core Component 4.B

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

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

Argument

4.B.1 The university's [mission](#) and [vision](#) support the institutional priorities of academic and scholarly excellence, student development and success, and institutional effectiveness through dynamic assessment and measurement. Guided by these priorities, NSU established an infrastructure to sustain excellence through a culture of assessment and continuous improvement. This framework begins with the [Degrees of Excellence](#) (DOE) institutional learning outcomes.

The DOE articulates expectations for students' success and provides an inclusive framework for an educational experience emphasizing lifelong learning, intellectual growth, citizenship, and social responsibility. These outcomes build upon the Lumina Foundation's [Degree Qualifications Profile](#) and reflect NSU's heritage, mission, vision, and values. The DOE outcomes allow NSU stakeholders to understand the connections between the NSU educational experience and cultivated skill sets needed after graduation. They also provide a foundation for meaningful assessment at the institutional level. These outcomes provide evidence of student learning as well as data which can be used to improve institutional communication, professional practices, and educational quality. The DOE institutional learning outcomes are summarized into five areas:

1. *Intellectual skills* – emphasizing analytic inquiry, information literacy, engaging diverse perspectives, quantitative fluency, and communication fluency.
2. *Integrative knowledge* – emphasizing the ability to produce, independently or collaboratively, an investigative, creative, or practical work that draws on specific theories, evidence, tools, and methods from diverse perspectives.
3. *Specialized knowledge in the major* – emphasizing student competency in the program outcomes of the major field(s) of study.
4. *Capstone Experience in the Baccalaureate Degree* – emphasizing the integration of the major with baccalaureate degree expectations reflecting the intersection of academic and post-baccalaureate settings.

5. *Citizenship* – emphasizing leadership and engagement, experiential learning, cultural foundations, and personal and career development.

Assessment Governance. The Office of Academic Affairs, through the Executive Director for Planning and Assessment, coordinates student learning and institutional assessment in collaboration with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. These offices work closely with the Student Learning and Assessment Committee, the General Education Committee, the office of Testing Services, college assessment coordinators, department chairs, and Student Affairs assessment coordinators. In furtherance of an integrated assessment culture, NSU operates a shared model of assessment responsibility.

NSU's assessment infrastructure is also guided by the state's coordinating board, the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE). OSRHE policy on student assessment and remediation ([3.20](#)) requires institutions [to assess and annually report](#) the following four categories: (1) entry level to determine academic preparation and course placement; (2) general education assessment; (3) academic program learning outcomes assessment; and (4) student engagement and satisfaction.

Entry Level Assessment and Course Placement. NSU assesses students for remediation and appropriate course placement beginning with ACT subtest scores. If the entering student does not meet the ACT criteria (minimum score of 19 on individual ACT sub-tests in English, math, and reading), secondary assessment measures such as high school GPA in the subject and/or testing are considered. Students with deficiencies remediate through completion of developmental coursework, or co-requisite coursework, or sufficient scores on post-course placements tests. Placement test data as well as developmental, co-requisite, and college-level course data are reviewed by the [Developmental Education Committee](#).

The Developmental Education Committee meets each semester to review student success data for developmental education courses and to recommend modifications to remediation processes as data or state policy indicate. [Examples of the committee's work](#) include expanding remediation processes to include co-requisite courses, reviewing entry-level assessment tools beyond ACT testing, and considering changes to address immediate circumstances such as COVID impact on developmental course offerings and post-testing.

General Education Assessment. The [General Education Committee](#) oversees the General Education curriculum at NSU, providing advice and suggesting changes as needed. This committee, along with the Student Learning and Assessment Committee, reviews assessment data and makes recommendations regarding assessment of the General Education curriculum. The [general education learning outcomes](#) align to the DOE. Outcome assessments are embedded in general education courses and include the following examples:

- pre-post testing in [biology](#), [political science](#), and [history](#);
- performance assessment in speech [communications](#); and
- [composition assessment](#) using standard rubrics.

Faculty use the [General Education Assessment Form](#) to report the results annually to the General Education Committee who review them each fall. Results are also summarized for the [OSRHE annual assessment report](#) submitted each December.

Program Learning Outcomes Assessment. Program outcomes align primarily to DOE outcome #3, specialized knowledge in the major. Faculty complete a program [assessment plan](#) which aligns program learning outcomes with DOE components and specialty accreditation standards where appropriate, a curriculum matrix aligning outcomes to required courses, and an assessment map identifying the course or experience where each outcome is assessed and the expected performance benchmarks. Assessment results are [reported](#) annually to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and reviewed by the Student Learning Assessment Committee. Program learning outcome data are also included in the annual OSRHE assessment report.

Student Engagement and Satisfaction. NSU assesses student engagement and satisfaction at key points.

- The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is administered to freshmen and seniors in the spring term. The [NSSE results](#) and an [institutional summary](#) are shared with [academic](#) and [student support](#) units.
- Advising services are assessed using an internally-developed [instrument](#) periodically. The assessment sub-committee of the Executive Advising Committee reviews the data.
- Each semester, students are invited to [evaluate](#) every course in which they are enrolled, providing further evidence of student satisfaction. Data from course evaluations are available to [faculty members](#), [department chairs](#), and [deans](#). Faculty use data from course evaluations to improve courses ([sample section summary](#)) and include them in annual and promotion/tenure review documents.

Presently, co-curricular offerings are assessed using either internally-developed instruments or nationally-normed, standardized instruments. For example, the Division of Student Affairs assesses several engagement activities as well as services provided.

- Co-curricular activities such as the [Student Orientation Advising and Registration \(SOAR\)](#) sessions for all incoming freshmen are assessed and modified each season based on student and participant feedback.
- Similarly, students participating in [Welcome Week](#) activities are invited to complete a survey [with results](#) used to improve the next year's offerings.

Student Affairs also assesses student satisfaction, unit programming, and campus climate through Council for the Advancement of Higher Education (CAS) standards and Skyfactor EBI benchmark assessments. Units using CAS standards include [Career Services](#) and [Outreach Prevention](#). Several non-academic departments, including [Counseling Services](#) and [Student Disability Services](#) administer EBI assessment surveys on a regular cycle. Results are compared to a cohort of similar institutions within the NSU Carnegie classification. Units review their respective EBI results and make improvements as needed (see 4.B.2).

The increased focus on co-curricular programming highlights the need for a more systematic assessment strategy demonstrating alignment to the NSU mission and DOE. In 2020-21, NSU amended the institutional assessment plan to [include co-curricular assessment expectations](#) (p. 8). Faculty and staff involved in continuously offered co-curricular programming, such as the examples listed above, will complete a [co-curricular assessment plan](#) and [annual report](#) to the Student Learning and Assessment Committee who will review them as part of the regular assessment cycle. Feedback will be shared with Academic Affairs and Student Affairs. The revised policy will be implemented in the AY 21-22 assessment cycle. During the SU2021 term, NSU hosted the co-curricular Summer Bridge Academy. Program leaders used the new assessment strategy to complete the [Summer Bridge co-curricular assessment plan](#) prior to the program. Assessment results were discussed in the inaugural [Summer Bridge co-curricular assessment report](#).

A Culture of Continuous Improvement. NSU fosters a culture of continuous improvement through collaboration, communication, and development. Each academic college provides release time to a [Student Learning Assessment Coordinator](#). This ex-officio position on the Student Learning and Assessment Committee assists faculty and administrators within their respective colleges.

Additionally, the Student Learning Assessment Committee, Executive Director for Planning and Assessment, the Center for Teaching and Learning, and Academic Affairs provide resources and host various assessment-related professional development activities.

- [Assessment Resources](#) are available for faculty access on the Academic Assessment and the Center for Teaching and Learning websites.
- [Assessment Handbook](#) and [videos](#).
- [Workshops on using Chalk and Wire](#) (p. 2), NSU's assessment management system.
- An [assessment focus](#) for the 2019 annual pre-semester professional development day, Community and Collaboration Day. The second Annual Assessment Day was held at the beginning of the fall [2020](#) semester utilizing Zoom technology. Each event included a conversation with assessment experts and table top exercises where participants could apply the main discussion points to their own assessment strategies and findings. [Assessment data](#) for each event indicated that faculty appreciated the opportunity to engage with their colleagues and discuss their assessment findings.
- Various assessment workshops that include a [co-curricular focus](#).

NSU will continue providing professional development opportunities that address faculty and professional staff needs.

4.B.2 The student learning outcome assessment process (4.B.1) and the academic program review processes (4.A.1) establish an infrastructure for data-informed decisions. In accordance with NSU's Strategic Goal of ensuring institutional effectiveness through continuous improvement, all units rely on assessment data to advance student learning and opportunities for growth. Recent examples include the following:

Improving Course Placement & Developmental Education. Data indicated that student placement in zero-credit, remedial courses negatively impacted retention, and it was difficult to move the needle year over year to improve those results. As part of its Persistence and Completion project, NSU developed a [co-requisite model](#) for remediating entry-level academic deficiencies. Beginning in fall 2017 (p. 5), students within a specific range on the appropriate placement test for English and math can elect to enroll in the college-level course with a required co-requisite lab. The [2017-18 annual assessment report](#) summarizes this effort.

In addition, periodic adjustments to cut-off scores, entry-level assessment instruments, and changing Accuplacer versions are data-based and recommended by the Developmental Education Committee ([sample](#))

Improving General Education. General education courses are reviewed annually by the responsible faculty and departments while the entire general education curriculum is evaluated every five years. Notable examples of data-informed improvements to the general education curriculum are provided below.

- Math faculty worked with department chairs, program faculty, and advisors across the institution to develop four math pathways, implemented in 2017. The [NSU math pathways](#) follow a meta-major model, allowing students to select math courses that will better align with their major curriculum. As part of the process, faculty and program leaders reviewed and revised [student learning outcomes](#) and developed two new general education courses, MATH 1313 Elementary Statistics and MATH 1523 Functions and Change. Program leadership, upon reviewing assessment data by the course and course SLOs, determined the [appropriate math course for each major](#). These efforts supported a state-wide initiative to expand math course choices.
- Faculty teaching the [educational technology course](#), a required general education course for all teacher candidates, developed assessments to assess digital citizenship. The Modeling Digital Citizenship assignment began in 2019. Faculty continue to compile data for analysis over time.
- During the [2018-19 assessment cycle](#), English Composition faculty identified the need for a uniform assessment instrument aligning to the general education outcomes. They developed a reflective essay and piloted the new instrument in select sections. The instrument was utilized in all Comp I & II sections beginning in the [2019-2020](#) assessment cycle. Data collection and refinement based upon the findings continue.
- [Changes](#) to the credit-hour requirement for Global Perspectives category from six to three credit hours and elimination of the sub-categories in the Humanities category became effective fall 2017. Transfer students had been negatively impacted by the original GE curriculum structure, and the changes better align NSU's requirements with area feeder institutions.

Improving Degree Programs. The annual assessment review and five-year program review processes provide structured opportunities to examine student learning and program effectiveness in terms of currency, rigor, and sustainability (see 3.B.2, 4.B.1, and 4.B.4). The annual reports of student assessment activity provide many examples of program modifications

planned or implemented based upon assessment results. Please see the [2017-18](#), [2018-19](#), and [2019-20](#) OSRHE assessment reports for summaries. Notable examples are provided below.

- [Accounting, BBA assessment data](#) indicated that students struggled to achieve the desired competency level in comprehension of taxation principles. The faculty are developing a project/scenario-based approach incorporating tax return applications.
- [Chemistry faculty](#) revised learning outcomes in 2019 and aligned them to the ETS major field test and ACS DUCK exam. The program continues to collect data and refine the assessment strategy.
- [Health and Physical Education faculty](#) reviewed cumulative assessment data and recognized that their core curriculum did not include sufficient preparation for a specific subarea on a required state licensure exam. Faculty added a course to the core curriculum.
- [History faculty](#) identified a competency variance over time for students in a specific course. The course, as part of the general education and major curriculum, is taught by several faculty and adjuncts. Faculty met and agreed on common material and revised the assessment instrument.

Improving Student Engagement & Satisfaction. Over the past ten years, NSU has undertaken several initiatives to improve student engagement outcomes and satisfaction. These initiatives arise from data review and are designed to address an issue or concern that impacts student success including the following:

- Sustaining Student Success was NSU's [Quality Initiative](#) that focused on student mindsets, identifying potential impediments to individual goals, and implementing practices to help students persist and achieve their goals. Retention percentage rates for first-time students in the low 60s prompted faculty and staff to develop a survey to ascertain how students described a successful academic experience. The [Student-Defined Success](#) survey, administered to freshmen and transfer students, provides academic and student support personnel with vital information on student goals and perceptions of success in degree attainment. The data provided a foundation for significant revisions to the University Strategies course, Welcome Week activities, as well as transfer intake and advising. A new [first-generation student organization](#) started in spring 2019 and continues today.
- The [Tulsa Transfer Project](#) was a collaborative effort with Tulsa Community College and four-year institutions in the Tulsa metropolitan area. Supported with funding from the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation, a Tulsa-based philanthropic organization, participants used the John N. Gardner Institute's Foundations of Excellence (FoE) process to identify ways to improve transfer outcomes. Changes evolving from that project include highlighting the importance of transfer students during [National Transfer Week](#), updating and improving [2+2 agreement templates](#), and changes to NSU's [Transfer Student Services Office](#). NSU continues to work on its priority list toward improving transfer experiences.
- NSU utilizes the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) as a measure of student engagement. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness summarizes the [NSSE Frequency](#)

[and Statistical Comparison Report](#) for campus use. The reports are considered and discussed at the [Academic Council](#), the [Retention Committee](#), and the [First Year Experience Committee](#) to identify areas where students may need additional assistance. 2019 NSSE results (pre-COVID) indicate that NSU successfully engages freshmen in their transition to a collegiate academic experience with 94% of freshmen surveyed report that NSU provides learning support services for student success. Ninety-four percent (94%) believe NSU provides opportunities to be socially involved, and 59% participate in co-curricular activities.

- Co-curricular programs such as [Welcome Week](#) and [SOAR](#) utilize assessment data to enhance the student experience, for example, rearranging the order of programming and scheduling smaller group sessions. The Office of [Career Services](#) utilizes assessment data to ensure their programming is offered in times and via delivery methods that maximize student participation. A recent effort, the [Summer Bridge](#) program was designed to help freshmen remediate curricular deficiencies prior to fall semester start. The program served 15 students in the summer 2020 program (virtually due to COVID) with seven students successfully completing and enrolling in college level courses in fall 2020.
- [University Advising](#) utilized student satisfaction data to develop monthly professional development and coaching opportunities for advisors. [Advising appointment data](#) was assessed using Civitas Impact. The office is reviewing the data during AY 2122.
- The [Library](#) developed a [Library Assessment Task Force](#) to produce a comprehensive information literacy assessment plan. The plan will include a standard instruction assessment tool to be implemented in University Strategies.

4.B.3. The institution endeavors to conduct its assessment practices according to best practice and in ways that students find authentic to their learning. Assessment committee compositions are intentional and include representation characterized by a breadth of perspectives and broad scope of experiences. Assessment processes involve multiple reviewers, multiple measures and iterative cycles that provide a broad picture of student knowledge and skill development over time, rather than a single snapshot.

Faculty have primary responsibility for assessment of student learning outcomes and recommendations for program or curriculum changes. Instructional and other relevant staff members review student learning objectives, assessment methodology, and assessment data during the annual assessment reporting process (4B1), as well as during the curriculum review cycle (4A1) to assure rigor and currency of course offerings. NSU faculty and staff employ a variety of direct and indirect assessment processes to strengthen curriculum, enrich programs, enhance student learning, and improve instruction.

Multiple Measures. As described earlier, entry-level assessment has undergone changes in the past ten years. Originally relying on a single measure, ACT or SAT scores, NSU now utilizes multiple placement measures to provide each student the opportunity to try and succeed.

Secondary tests opportunities utilizing other types of tests, such as those in the Accuplacer product line, have been added. NSU utilizes the online *AccuplacerNext Generation English and Reading* tests, and an institutionally developed test for math to appropriately place students whose ACT scores were substandard or indicated a deficiency in preparation for college-level work.

During the 2019-20 academic year, [534 enrolled NSU students required placement testing](#) (2019-20 Annual Report of Student Assessment Activity), with many being assessed in more than one area. These data represent the third assessment cycle of the fully implemented co-requisite model for remediating entry-level academic deficiencies. Students within a specific range on the appropriate placement test may elect to enroll in the college level course with a required co-requisite lab. NSU administers more placement assessments in mathematics than any other area. Average success rates (fall and spring) in remedial courses range from 62.5% in the zero-credit entry remediation math course to 75.2% in the co-requisite math course.

Other placement changes include the use of high school GPA for screening after the institution conducted an [internal data review](#) to determine the most appropriate GPA for its population. The institution also piloted ALEKS during summer 2020 as a potential placement test, but the sample size was limited due to few students participating in Summer Bridge due to COVID.

Direct and Course-Embedded Assessments. Examples of direct assessment are found in both general education and program-specific courses. The [General Education Committee](#) supervised full implementation of course-embedded assessments to measure student learning for the outcomes and objectives in any General Education category. General education faculty employ a variety of assessment measures ranging from performance assessments, pre/post assessments, to more traditional essays and objective assessments.

[Degree programs](#) utilize these course-embedded assessments as well as [licensure tests](#) and portfolio projects. Assessments connected with experiential learning experiences vary by program and frequently reflect specialized accreditation standards. For example,

- [Physician Assistant Rubrics](#)
- Teacher Education Rubrics for [Lesson Observation](#) and [Secondary Methods](#).
- [Occupational Therapy Assessments](#)
- [M.S. Library Media](#) and [MBA](#) assessments are embedded throughout the curriculum using Anthology Portfolio.

Every degree program is expected to utilize an assessment plan to guide assessment strategies, and programs [routinely meet and discuss assessment results](#).

Indirect Assessments. Acknowledging the difficulty of assessing concepts such as dispositions and mindsets, the institution uses indirect assessments to attempt to capture perceptions through surveys. For example, [student course evaluations](#) measure student satisfaction with instructor effectiveness. These data are used primarily to assess effectiveness of [teaching and learning in tenure, and promotion reviews](#) as well as a review of student learning outcomes and course presentation to improve clarity and overall student performance.

Mentioned earlier, the [Student Defined Success survey](#), administered to freshmen and transfer students, provides academic and student support personnel with vital information on student goals and perceptions of success in degree attainment. The data provided a foundation for revisions to the University Strategies course, Welcome Week activities, as well as transfer intake and advising.

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is administered annually to freshman and senior students. The data is reviewed by multiple committees in both [Academic](#) and [Student Affairs](#).

Career Services administers a [student graduation survey](#) at the end of the fall, spring, and summer terms. The student-reported data include information such as the top employers, average earnings, and the relationship of the degree earned to the position. In 2018-19, 859 graduates completed the survey. Results indicate that [85%](#) of respondents were employed, seeking continued education, engaged in volunteer service, or engaged in military service. Programs may include specialized questions for their majors. The Graduate College uses the survey to gather evidence on the [graduate student experience](#).

Other institutional units such as the [NSU Alumni and Foundation offices](#), [Housing](#), [Food Services](#), the [Book Store](#), and [Information Technology](#) also utilize assessments such as participant surveys.

Staff Support & Infrastructure

The [Office of Institutional Effectiveness \(IE\)](#) assists with generation, compilation, interpretation, and distribution of institutional data required by the review template as well as additional data [requested by deans or chairs](#) during the Program Review processes (see 4A1). Additionally, IE prepares reports for Cabinet as well as [institutional committees](#) charged with improving the student experience.

Similarly, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness shares [enrollment](#), [retention](#), and [graduation](#) data through periodic emails to campus leaders. These data impact decisions related to frequency of course offerings, baseline enrollment, and enrollment projections, all of which influence retention, persistence, completion, and graduation rates.

Administration of student course evaluations the the NSSE are also the responsibility of Institutional Effectiveness.

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4.C - Core Component 4.C

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

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

Argument

4.C.1. [Destination 2023](#) and the [Strategic Plan 2015-2023](#) establish goals to improve student retention, persistence, and completion rates through the year 2023. The aspirational goals stated in [Destination 2023: Measures of Progress](#) (p.15) are:

- To increase base student enrollment headcount to 11,000 by fall 2023,
- To increase degrees conferred by 34.5% from 1,787 degrees (in FY-2011) to 2,477 in FY-2023 (a 3.5% average increase per year),
- To average a 8.3% annual increase in transfer students,
- To achieve a 9.3% increase in retention for first-time, full-time students from first to second year from 62.7% in fall 2011 to 72% percent by 2019, and
- To achieve a 5% annual increase in new graduate students from 1,064 in 2012 to 1,650 in 2023.

Within this institutional framework, each individual college and department set enrollment targets to support [D-23 goals](#) (p. 29) These college and department goals are annually reviewed by deans, department heads, and administrators to determine progress in achieving D-23 and Strategic Plan 2015-2023 goals. A sample annual report for each college follows.

- [College of Business and Technology](#),
- [College of Education](#),
- [College of Liberal Arts](#),
- [College of Optometry](#), and
- [Greg Wadley College of Science and Health Professions](#).

In addition to D23 targets, NSU engages in retention planning for specific student populations with the general goal of increasing retention for that population. Representative examples include the following.

- **Native American Students.** NSU recognizes its unique role in serving Native American students. In 2016, NSU was awarded a NASNTI Title III grant to implement the [Native American Student Support Center](#) (NASC), with a [focus on retaining](#) Native students through mentoring, peer support, intrusive advising, and tutoring services. A [NASC APR](#) report indicates improved retention and overall GPAs for those served.
- **Students in Remedial Coursework.** Noting the high number of freshmen who were slowed by curricular deficiencies and the need to take zero-level courses, NSU fully implemented and refined a [supplemental instruction program](#) allowing students to remediate deficiencies through while enrolled in college-level courses.
- **Transfer students.** This student population comprises approximately 60% of NSU's new undergraduate cohort each academic year. NSU participated in the [Gardner Institute Foundations of Excellence Tulsa Transfer Project](#), which focused on the overall transfer experience in the effort to retain transfer students through graduation. NSU prioritized targeted areas of improvement aligned to student retention such as the publication articulated transfer agreements and streamlining access to transfer student resources.
- **Stop Outs.** Students stop out, often for reasons beyond our control. However, NSU recognizes the importance of attempting to re-engage with students to return and complete their degree. NSU is participating in [Degrees When Due](#), an initiative targeting undergraduate students capable of completion, clearing barriers to return. Similar efforts are undertaken by the Graduate College, [identifying graduate student stop-outs](#).

In the wake of the pandemic, declining high school populations, increased competition among institutions, and the rising cost of education, retention goals are fluid. To focus attention and resources, foster collaboration in an “all hands on deck” approach, and assist in data collection and analysis, NSU created the [Retention Specialist](#) position, the [Retention Committee](#), and the [First Year Experience Committee](#). The Retention Specialist position supports the efforts of various committees to [address current or predicted retention concerns](#). The Retention Committee is charged with coordinating institutional retention efforts, increasing persistence gains, and [advising the Cabinet](#) on retention issues. The First Year Experience Committee is charged with analyzing and reporting on first year retention. As D23 approaches its sunset date, the Retention committee has reviewed [retention data](#) and tasked three [sub-groups](#) with developing future institutional retention goals for Cabinet consideration.

As a result of these and other such initiatives, in 2021, [U.S. News & World Report: Best Colleges](#) ranked NSU in the top 100 schools in the category of Best Regional University (West), Top Public Schools, and Top Performers on Social Mobility. Specific indicators of performance reviewed by U.S. News included:

- Undergraduate academic reputation (based on survey opinions),
- Graduation and freshman retention rates,

- Class sizes,
- Faculty terminal degrees,
- Student-to-faculty ratios, and
- Percentage of full-time faculty.

4.C.2. Defining baseline goals for student retention, persistence, and completion is essential in order to achieve national recognition as outlined in 4.B.1. NSU considers the following benchmarks for admissions, graduation, retention, and completion:

- A [66% retention rate](#) for full-time, first-time bachelor's degree seeking students (IPEDS F19 to F20),
- A [33% six-year graduation rate](#) for students entering fall 2013 (IPEDS)
- A [99% admission rate](#) for 1,529 freshman applicants fall 2019 (IPEDS)
- A [17 to 1 student-to-faculty](#) ratio (IPEDS),
- [26% of faculty represent minority groups](#),
- [56% of faculty are women](#),
- [81% of full-time faculty](#) possess the highest terminal degree offered in their field of study (CDS),
- [82.2% of incoming F20 freshmen received financial aid, 97% of need was met for incoming students who were awarded any need-based aid](#) (CDS); and
- [An 8.9% federal student loan default rate](#) (DOE).

NSU's participation in the [HLC Assessment Academy](#), the [HLC Persistence and Completion Academy](#), participation in the [Gardner Institute Foundations of Excellence Transfer Initiative](#), along with the implementation of the NSU [Quality Initiatives](#) curated a culture of assessment focused on identifying factors that affect student persistence and completion rates and developing initiatives to improve student performance (see 3.A.1-2, 4.B.1, and 4.C.1).

Standard Retention Reports. NSU collects data on student retention through a number of means. Standard annual retention reports, prepared for the Cabinet, include retention data for several NSU student populations. In addition the Cabinet and relevant NSU committees review [student hold data](#), [academic and financial aid status](#), [withdrawal reports](#) including student reasons when provided, the [number of semesters a student spends per classification](#), [historical headcount data per degree program](#), [historical new student data per program](#), and [historical student credit hour data](#), among others. These data led to adjustments of the [debt threshold](#) students could owe before they could no longer enroll, examination of barrier courses or course sequencing using Civitas data (see below), and recruitment plans (e.g. [CBT Annual report](#)) directed at low enrollment programs.

Early Intervention Data. NSU serves a significant number of at-risk students (e.g. first-generation, transfer, returning adults) and recognizes the importance of early and consistent intervention and support. NSU utilizes multiple systems to identify at-risk students and target initiatives. [Maxient](#) is currently utilized to [refer students in need of additional support](#), a replacement for the previous system, Map-Works. Faculty are encouraged to report concerns to the NSU Student Success Coordinator, or the appropriate supporting office depending on the nature of the referral. [Data](#), such as the number and type of referrals, common student needs, and

point in time during the semester that most referrals are made, among other factors, provide insight into faculty interactions with at-risk students, a foundation for [nudge campaigns](#), and a rich discussion point for relevant committees and academic leadership.

In 2017, NSU implemented [Civitas](#), a predictive analytics software that identifies student persistence predictors from analyzing several years of NSU student information and learning management systems variables. NSU students are compared to the model and ranked by risk on various markers. NSU uses this data to support targeted retention initiatives (4C3). For example, a [2019 comparison](#) (p. 17) of actual persistence to predicted results indicated that 81% of our non-persisting students were captured in the two lowest risk quartiles. A module within the Civitas suite, Civitas Impact, analyzes the effectiveness of retention initiatives. The Retention Committee recently discussed a report on [the impact of the fully implemented NSU Advising model](#) at NSU (see 4C3). The NSU Retention Specialist and Retention Committee are identifying initiatives with a sufficient sample size for analysis.

State, National, and External Data. Significant efforts are made to collect [IPEDS Outcomes Data](#) on NSU graduates. These data provide insight into how well the University is fulfilling student, community, and employer needs. They also provide NSU with retention, completion, and graduation information used to determine curriculum needs during the Academic Review Process (4A1). Additionally, the [CSRDE Graduation and Retention Survey](#) disaggregates data by gender and race ethnicity to provide administrators information about potential gaps in retention and graduation rates.

Program level data. Specially accredited programs, such as the [M.S. Counseling](#), [M.S. Social Work](#), and [teacher preparation programs](#) collect data relevant to retention discussions within their respective departments. Additionally, in preparation for this report, [faculty and program leaders were surveyed about retention](#) initiatives and data collected. The report from that survey indicates broad engagement in retention planning and engagement on the part of the academic programs.

4.C.3. NSU analyzes retention, persistence, and completion data in order to implement new initiatives. NSU uses [Civitas Student](#) predictive analytics software to identify student groups who were less likely to persist than the overall student population. Initially, the retention committee accepted the responsibility of managing periodic nudge campaigns in fall 2017, forming a smaller sub-committee to develop an annual plan and create content in spring 2018. Multiple student populations were identified with one-off "nudge" (email) campaigns designed to affect the student groups' mindset about their experience or belief that they mattered to the institution. After reviewing the [initiative's success](#), in 2020-2021, NSU [altered the approach](#) to identify one undergraduate student population, whereby an increase in 10% year-to-year retention of the select group could increase overall student retention by 1%. [Nudges](#) related to mindset or mattering are sent 3-5 times at strategic points throughout each semester and will be assessed after the fall 2021 census.

Civitas Student has also been used to identify potential retention issues surrounding academic standing. The system provides an opportunity for [mentoring outreach](#). For example, in spring

2020, the Retention Committee members engaged with at-risk students who fell within the low and very low persistence category, providing connection and tutoring resources. In another example, Civitas identified students on the cusp of probation, those in the 2.0 - 2.25 cumulative GPA range, as being at a similar risk of leaving the institution as those who were already on academic probation. The Student Success Coordinator previously required academic planning and success workshops only for students on academic probation. Based on the retention data, NSU began offering [academic success workshops](#) to this at-risk group in fall 2020 and will assess the impact once a reasonable sample size has been established.

Civitas *Student* identifies the variables predictive of student success by academic program. The Retention specialist and academic advisors work with [undergraduate](#) and [graduate](#) degree programs and colleges to discuss those predictors and suggest outreach efforts. Civitas has identified alignment between courses taken and degree program requirements as a significant powerful predictor for retention. Academic Advisors work closely with department chairs in each respective college to address enrollment concerns, course rotations, and the like. In 2020, all department chairs contributed to the [advising course rotation project](#), outlining all courses within each degree program and semester/campus offerings to ensure better advisement of students and establish university-wide accountability on course offerings for the purpose of on-time degree completion.

The Retention Specialist works with Academic Affairs and Student Affairs to address current or predicted retention concerns. The Retention Specialist, in conjunction with the First-Year Experience and Retention Committees, developed the [Student Success Initiative Inventory](#), identifying over 100 student success initiatives at NSU occurring in all areas. Those with student data are in the process of being [assessed](#) to reveal the impact each initiative has on student persistence through Civitas Impact; those without data are being encouraged to collect student data for better assessment.

The Retention Specialist is working with the Retention Committee and Civitas *Courses*, a module within the Civitas suite that assists NSU to understand how a student's grade in specific courses signals the student's success at NSU, which begins conversations to identify opportunities for student and faculty support. For example, the [Health and Human Performance](#) program reviewed *Courses* data indicating that students enrolling in HED 1113 who earn a B or higher have an above-average likelihood of persistence compared to other students in this course. The performance target for student learning outcomes in this course was set at 80%. Civitas *Courses* was recently used to evaluate student grades across [University Strategies sections](#) and the association on the student success. University Strategies faculty and leadership will review these data and recommendations at the end of the Fall 2021 term.

With the Retention Specialist in position, and experience in the opportunities presented through Civitas utilization, the NSU Advising Center is offering [Civitas training](#) on leveraging Civitas data to identify barriers to student success and resources to address those issues.

Further evidence of data-driven decisions and actions related to retention, persistence, and completion include:

- Implementation of the [Summer Bridge](#) program for students requiring remediation in reading, math, or English.
- Implementation of [faculty mentoring program](#) for all students specifically designed to improve student success rates.
- Implementation of several campaigns targeting trigger points that disrupt student success. These include campaigns initiated by [degree programs](#), the Retention Committee (e.g. the [academic holds awareness campaign](#) or [at-risk mentor outreach campaign](#)), and the [Native American Student Support Center](#).

4.C.4. NSU's commitment to effective data collection and use begins with the [Office of Institutional Effectiveness](#). This commitment to readily accessible data serves the institution as it makes data-informed decisions regarding student retention, persistence, and completion. NSU follows a regular reporting and data collection cycle that involves not only national reports such as IPEDS, Common Data Set and NSSE, but also [state reports](#) including Academic Plan/Degree Completion Plans, Academic Program Review, Low Productivity Reports, Policy Reporting (includes remediation and admission, retention data), Post Audit Reports, Student Assessment Reports, Concurrent Enrollment, and Teacher Education Admission Study. These data provide faculty and professional staff the opportunity to review data and identify ways to improve approaches.

For student retention, persistence, and completion, Institutional Effectiveness uses IPEDS definitions for six-year retention rates, six-year graduation rates, and six-year transfer-out rates.

Data related to retention, persistence, and completion are collected regularly and inform decisions about NSU administrative processes, curriculum, co-curricular efforts, and assessment practices. These data are reported to the Cabinet, academic leadership, relevant committees, and to external stakeholders such as the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education and the Regional University System of Oklahoma. Although Destination 2023 views degree completion as the ultimate goal, NSU recognizes that goal can only be achieved by increasing recruiting, persistence, completion and, ultimately, graduation rates. This is accomplished by implementation of initiatives designed to improve student success. For example, NSU is a member of the [Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange](#) (CSRDE). As a member, NSU is better equipped to track student cohorts, including non-traditional students with jobs and families, beyond the traditional four and six-year graduation categories. Outcomes assessment related to persistence and completion is most often based on nationally recognized best practices. Some examples of nationally recognized formats published on the NSU website include:

- [IPEDs](#) annual reports,
- OSRHE annual [assessment reports](#),
- The [NSSE](#) Results,
- The [NSU Fact Book](#), and
- The [Common Data Set](#).

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4.S - Criterion 4 - Summary

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

Summary

NSU actively seeks to use institutional data to make informed decisions regarding initiatives that affect student retention, persistence, and completion rates. This is best evidenced by NSU's successful completion of the HLC Assessment Academy and the second year in the HLC Persistence and Completion Academy.

Faculty, administration, and staff work collaboratively to develop and maintain quality educational opportunities and a supportive learning environment that promotes engagement and persistence. Enhanced data collection and data-informed decisions have supported this work. Collectively, these efforts combine to improve retention, persistence, and completion rates.

Sources

There are no sources.

5 - Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning

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

5.A - Core Component 5.A

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

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

Argument

5.A.1. NSU has a formal [collegial governance policy](#), and its leadership and committee structures promote shared governance and allow for input by impacted constituents across the institution. NSU has more than [40 standing committees](#) that include broad representation of faculty, staff, and students as well as community representation when appropriate (see below). Committees meet regularly according to their bylaws or university charge. Many committees such as the [Faculty Development Committee](#), [Faculty Research Committee](#), and [Institutional Research Board](#) maintain individual websites where users can find policies and forms.

Shared Governance in the Planning Process. Departments, colleges, and student organizations participate in planning processes within their own units and at the institutional level through representation on the groups below.

- [President's Cabinet](#)
- [Executive Council](#)
- [Academic Council](#)
- [Faculty Council](#)
- [Staff Council](#)
- [Graduate Council](#)
- [Student Government Association](#), and
- [Strategic Planning Committee](#).

Budget Planning. Each spring, units present their needs to the appropriate Vice President. Needs are aligned with the unit's strategic plan, the institution's strategic plan, and NSU's mission, vision, and values. Vice Presidents prioritize requests within their areas and bring those to the institutional level. The [Budget Oversight Committee](#) reviews annual enrollment data and projected enrollments, tuition and fee data, fixed costs data, projected state appropriations, and estimates a budget. At its budget retreat in May, Cabinet finalizes tuition and budget requests to [RUSO and OSRHE](#) governing boards.

Curriculum Planning. Collaborative planning is evident in [curriculum processes](#) for new programs and existing program modifications. For [new programs](#), deans and program faculty conduct needs assessments that consider budgets, marketing plans, capital improvements, the Master Plan, and community requests prior to proposal submission. Once approved at the department and college level, the [University Curriculum Committee \(UCC\)](#) reviews proposals to ensure sustainability and alignment with NSU's mission ([minutes](#)). Then, the Provost and President review and approve proposed changes prior to submission to RUSO and OSRHE for final review and approval. With this process, NSU collectively determines the sustainability of existing and newly proposed academic programs.

Policy Creation & Implementation. No matter the origination point, planning and policies are vetted through multiple points to gain input from all impacted constituents. For day-to-day administration, the [Cabinet](#) is the deciding body. NSU's [University Policy Committee](#) considers university-wide policies and serves as a resource to departments regarding policy development and implementation. This committee reviews, recommends, and forwards policies to the Cabinet for final approval ([minutes](#)). After final approval, the appropriate VP notifies those impacted of change, new policy, or update, and it is posted on the [Manual of Administrative Policy and Procedure](#) website.

For matters of broader scope such as large fiscal purchases, personnel policies, or curriculum matters, [RUSO & OSRHE](#) are the final points of review. Constitutionally created, these boards ensure effective leadership and ongoing collaboration. The primary roles of the two boards are as follows:

- RUSO promulgates governance rules and regulations that provide operational and management policy for the six regional institutions in Oklahoma, including NSU. Areas of responsibility include personnel, salaries, duties; service contracts and fiscal practices, property purchases and capital expenditures; budgeting and purchasing. They also approve curriculum requests prior to OSRHE.
- OSRHE promulgates rules and regulations related to institutional functions; academic standards; degree requirements; student admissions; program and course delivery modalities, etc. OSRHE allocates lump sum funds to state institutions and provides final approval for tuition and fee requests annually.

5.A.2. NSU uses data outcomes to reach informed decisions involving all aspects of the institution. NSU's [Office of Institutional Effectiveness](#) facilitates data collection, analysis, and sharing for a variety of regular and ad hoc reports used by the institution for decision-making.

A variety of process require administrators, faculty, and staff to review data and make data-informed decisions. These include the following:

- [College](#) and [unit annual reports](#) completed at the end of each academic year.
- Annual [Assessment Reports](#) which summarize assessment activities at course placement, general education, program outcomes, and completion. These are used internally and submitted to OSRHE.
- [New curriculum processes](#) that require a market analysis, student enrollment projections, five-year budget projections, and other relevant data analysis.
- [Institutional program reviews](#) (5-year rotation) for each academic program not accredited by a specialty accreditor. The program review includes data analysis of:
 - Alignment to NSU's mission and goals,
 - Strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities,
 - Alignment with constituent needs and expectations,
 - Attainment of core class student learning outcomes,
 - Analysis of capstone assessment results,
 - End-of-course student evaluations,
 - Class rotation enrollment analysis, and
 - Overall budget analysis including effective use of resources.
- [Post-Audit Reports](#) for new programs and [Low Productivity Reports](#) required by OSRHE. These reports draw attention to program viability and resource usage.
- Annual [Academic Reports/Degree Completion](#) plans submitted to OSRHE that summarize the previous year's activities in degree completion as well as future plans.
- [Policy Reporting](#) requirements which include data on academic reprieves, suspensions, remediation, etc.
- [Undergraduate Recruitment Plan](#)

NSU's data-informed culture is due, in part, to expectations established by the boards. In addition to the items mentioned above, RUSO and OSRHE expect institutions to consider:

- [Performance-based State Allocations](#) that focus on:
 - Attainment of Complete College America (CCA) goals,
 - Program accreditation,
 - Retention rates,
 - Graduation rates, and
 - Number of certificates/degrees conferred.
- [OSRHE's high school data projections](#) inform recruiting, marketing, and budgeting as well as concurrent enrollment student projections.

NSU also makes use of market information provided by third-party, external agents such as [Gray and Associates](#) predictive analytics for programming and Google search analytics.

5.A.3. NSU has organizational structures that include not only internal, but also external constituents in decision-making processes.

- The [Executive Council](#) provides a forum to share information among the Cabinet, university committees, faculty, and staff, thus supporting a comprehensive view of institutional needs. Members include the following:
 - Staff Council Chair,
 - Director of Public Safety,
 - Faculty Council President,
 - Special Assistant to the President,
 - Director of Athletics,
 - Director of Development, and the
 - Northeastern Student Government Association President.
- The [Academic Council](#) addresses issues related to academics. The Provost/VPAA and leaders of academic units including the following participate:
 - Deans of each college and branch campuses,
 - Directors of academic support units such as the Library, Center for Teaching and Learning, Center for Tribal Studies, Advising Center, Institutional Effectiveness, and Registrar,
 - Academic Affairs staff, and
 - Representatives from Faculty Council, Staff Council, Communication and Marketing, Information Technology, and Student Affairs.
- The [Faculty Council](#) is the elected, representative body of NSU faculty and serves as a collective voice in shared leadership ([minutes](#)).
- The [Staff Council](#) promotes [communication and cooperation](#) among staff, faculty, and administration ([minutes](#)).
- The Student Government Association meets to discuss legislation that affects students, allocates funding to student organizations, and meets with the Cabinet to discuss issues of mutual concern.
- The [Strategic Planning Committee](#) meets regularly to review and update the strategic plan.
- The NSU [Foundation and Alumni Association](#) are actively involved in NSU's long-term planning and growth strategy.

Student representatives are included in the following [committees](#): American Democracy Project, American Indian Heritage, Athletics, Black Heritage, Budget Oversight, Commencement, Enrollment Correction, Financial Aid Appeals, First Year Experience, General Education, Graduate Council, Healthy Campus, Library, Miss Northeastern, Publications, Retention, Strategic Planning, Student Conduct Appeals, Student Learning and Assessment, Teacher

Education Council, University Academic Advising, University Curriculum, and University Technology Council.

External representatives can be found on the following committees: Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (attending veterinarian, community member at large), Institutional Review Board (community member at large), and Teacher Education Council (3-4 practitioners).

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5.B - Core Component 5.B

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

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

Argument

5.B.1. NSU achieves its mission, vision, goals, and strategic plan by hiring and training qualified faculty and staff sufficient to support existing and anticipated academic programs and course offerings. According to the most recent [IPEDS Human Resources](#) data report, NSU has 285 full-time, instructional staff and 807 full-time, non-instructional staff across categories ranging from archivists and librarians to student affairs staff to computer/IT staff to healthcare practitioners to service and transportation occupations.

These individuals are located across the three campuses and support the teaching and learning mission of the institution, whether for face-to-face instruction or online. NSU duplicates services across campuses or uses technology such as Zoom to provide [online student support services](#) in advisement, tutoring, technology support and training, financial aid, student engagement, and health and wellness for those unable to come to campus.

As evidenced by the [Staff Hiring Guide](#), applicants must meet minimum hiring qualifications in the [published job description](#). In addition, NSU requires:

- [A standardized employment application](#),
- [Background check](#), and
- [Transcript and/or resume](#) (for certain positions).

NSU conducts [national searches](#) for faculty and key staff positions and local searches for most hourly positions. Once a position is properly [advertised](#), [hiring committees screen potential candidates](#), and selected candidates are interviewed by multiple layers of employees (see 3.A.1). [Faculty credential policies](#) ensure that instructors are highly qualified with a [master's or doctorate](#) in the teaching field. Otherwise, hiring administrators must provide a [justification](#) as to why this individual is qualified through other means to teach at the baccalaureate or graduate level.

Onboarding, Training, and Performance Reviews. Employees complete a [New Hire Orientation Checklist](#) and the following trainings:

- [Title IX Training](#)
- [Drug Free Workplace](#)
- [ADA](#)
- [FERPA](#)
- [Affirmative Action EEO Policy](#)
- [Banner Training Manual](#)

Staff also participate in probationary and annual [Employee Performance Evaluations](#) as described in the [Employment Manual](#).

Retaining Qualified Faculty and Staff. NSU recognizes staff accomplishments through awards including the [Model the Way](#), [Rising Star](#), and [STAR](#) awards. Staff have the opportunity for professional development using funds in unit budgets or grants through the [President's Ambassador's Network](#). NSU's monthly [Academic Times](#) publication shares faculty and staff accomplishments throughout the year.

NSU carefully manages its limited budget resources and in recent years has been able to offer a [mid-year salary increase](#) in 2018-19 as well as annual stipends despite state funding levels comprising less and less of the total budget (e.g. 31% FY17 to 25% in FY20).

NSU recruits capable faculty who possess qualifications necessary to fulfill student expectations and institutional values (see 3.A.3).

- [81% of full-time faculty possess doctorates or terminal degrees](#) (CDS)
- [18% possess a master's degree, but not terminal degrees in their field of study](#) (CDS)
- [Student to faculty ratio is 17:1](#) (IPEDS)

NSU also encourages continual development of faculty and staff by offering a [50% tuition waiver for employees](#) who enroll in college credit classes, and allowing them the opportunity to make up working hours missed while attending approved classes.

Technical Infrastructure and Support. The [technical infrastructure](#) is sufficient to meet current needs and projected growth. NSU's network is comprised of:

- Over 1,000 wireless access points,
- 268 virtual servers,
- Over 10,000 network ports, firewalls, and core switches, and
- Cisco UCS computer, and Netapp storage.

The Tahlequah campus, with its residence halls, has a 10 Gbps connection, Muskogee a 1 Gbps connection, and Broken Arrow a 1 Gbps connection. [OneNet](#), the state's network provider services these connections. NSU has a virtual private network for off-campus access, and a MPLS tunnel among campuses to ensure speed and data security. This functionality also

supports web communication and instruction originating from any campus in case of an emergency in accordance with NSU's [Emergency Operations Plan](#). The Tahlequah data center has enough battery backup so that the equipment stays on until the automated natural gas generator begins to produce power.

From a service perspective, Information Technology Services (ITS) uses a ticket management tool to track, route, and resolve service tickets collected through the Help-Desk's online, call-in, virtual chat, and face-to-face requests. Ticket counts and other metrics ensure the ITS team is meeting constituent needs. NSU's technological teaching and learning technology tools include:

- High speed computers, wireless internet, Smartboard technology, and digital projectors and document cameras in classrooms,
- Wireless internet across campuses and residence halls, and
- Hardware repair services and free software (such as Microsoft Office 365, Adobe Creative Cloud, Google suite, etc.).

NSU has a total of 3,201 computers with 2,476 desktop computers and 725 laptops. Computers are leased and [refreshed on a four-year cycle](#). All legacy video conferencing classrooms have been converted from hardware-based systems to web-based conferencing using ZOOM as the primary platform. These rooms typically have two cameras, student and faculty microphones, ceiling speakers, and multiple projectors or monitors.

All software is current, internet access is protected by two firewalls, and NSU requires user agreements and timely password changes.

5.B.2. [NSU's Focused Mission](#) is to "empower students, faculty, staff and the community to reach their full intellectual and human potential by creating and expanding a culture of learning, discovery, and diversity." NSU's organizational design, budget allocations, resources, and workforce align with this mission.

For example, [Destination 2023 \(D-23\)](#), NSU's roadmap to planning, marketing, resource allocation, and student retention efforts complies with its mandate as a public institution to provide quality education within the region as well as OSRHE's [Complete College America goals](#). The institution carefully considers new programming in light of regional needs and often in conjunction with area businesses and organizations. For example, NSU secured a \$900K grant from the [City of Muskogee](#) to implement the Occupational Therapy program and partnerships with the [Creek and Cherokee Nations](#) helped establish the Physician's Assistant Program (see 5.A.3). Recent additions of [embedded certificates](#) allow new credentials to be offered within existing resources. Similarly, goals for enrollment, persistence, and completion are monitored on a semester-by-semester basis according to the [Undergraduate Recruitment Plan](#).

Fiscal Approach. NSU is fiscally conservative and has the resources to achieve its goals in programming and services.

- The [total net position of the University increased \\$3.2 million](#) during fiscal year 2020.
 - This increase was a result of a reduction in non-current lease obligation payable, decrease in capital assets, and increase in restricted cash and cash equivalents.
- [NSU's administrative cost ratio is 7.6%](#), well below the 13% allowed by OSRHE policy.
- [NSU's net reserve ratio was 13.99%](#), well above RUSO's targeted minimum reserve of 8.3% and HLC's targeted minimum of 10%.
- NSU enjoys a healthy [primary reserve ratio of 0.45 \(FY18-19\) and 0.45 \(FY17-18\)](#).
- NSU's [CFI was 2.4 \(FY18-19\) and 2.7 \(FY17-18\)](#), within HLC's "Above the Zone" range of 1.1 to 10.0.

Resource Management. Consistent with [Master Plan](#) and [capital improvements budget](#), NSU monitors budgets and expenses closely. [Business Affairs](#) trains [account sponsors](#) on [Budget Management Procedures](#), and Banner access allows account sponsors to routinely monitor department expenses.

NSU has taken steps throughout the years to reduce expenses. Some examples include:

- Installing energy efficient lights, new roofs, and airlocks to make buildings more [energy efficient](#),
- Implementing a shared printer/copier program that reduces paper and toner costs, and
- Replacing outdated HVAC systems with more energy efficient systems.

Master Planning and Physical Resources. The Master Plan exemplifies careful planning of capital projects and physical resources. Building and renovation projects are designed to enhance the quality of teaching, to support developments in technology, to ensure campus safety, to improve the physical environment, and to promote an overall sense of community engagement. The Master Plan evidences careful planning and budgeting as follows:

- Analysis of space needs for [Tahlequah](#), [Broken Arrow](#), and [Muskogee](#),
- Construction of the [NSU Events Center](#),
- Opening of a [low-vision optometry clinic at NSU-BA](#),
- Expansion of the [RiverHawks Wellness \(fitness\) Center](#),
- Construction of a [new residence hall](#), and

- Remodeling of the [Tahlequah campus library](#) to Learning Commons, currently in progress.

5.B.3. The [Budget and Accounting Office](#), under the direction of the Vice President for Administration and Finance, oversees NSU's annual operating budgets. The budget cycle begins in early spring with colleges and administrative units preparing requests for each Vice President. Simultaneously, the [Budget Oversight Committee](#) reviews data regarding enrollment projections, revenue expectations, and projected expenses. Once internal parameters are established, Vice Presidents prioritize their requests, and the [President's Cabinet](#) reviews and initiates a formal budget request for the new fiscal year.

Through this process, annual budgets are built from the “bottom up,” thereby affording academic colleges and institutional departments input in the [budget process](#). This university-wide process promotes understanding and commitment to budgeting and fiscal planning processes.

As noted, the budget is maintained through Banner, and new budget numbers are input the first week of July. The Budget Office regularly reviews account expenditures to ensure adherence to the University's resource plan. At the close of the fiscal year, An independent, certified accounting firm conducts an annual audit of NSU finances (see [RUSO Policy 2.8.1](#)). The annual audit is filed with RUSO and OSRHE and published on NSU's website. The independent accounting firm is rotated every five years to ensure integrity in the review process (see 2.A).

5.B.4. After OSRHE approves its appropriation in June, NSU allocates the appropriation across the institution to meet its student opportunity and success goals. To promote transparency, the President sends an annual [Budget Letter](#) to all employees explaining the budget process and [allocation request](#).

NSU's fiscal allocations are weighted toward instruction and student success each year. As published in the [2019-2020 NSU Fact Book](#), FY19 allocations were as follows:

- 56% Instruction
- 11% Student Services
- 10% Other Core Expenses*
- 9% Academic support
- 8% Institutional support
- 6% Research

**Other core expenses include scholarships and fellowships, net of discounts and allowances, and other expenses.*

Revenue resources include the following:

- 37% Tuition and Fees
- 27% State Appropriations
- 23% Government Grants and contracts
- 10% Other Core Revenues*
- 2% Private gifts, grants, and contracts
- 1% Investment Income

**Other core revenues include federal appropriates, sales and services of educational activities; other operating and non-operating sources, and other revenues and additions (e.g. capital appropriations, capital grants and gifts, etc.)*

Community Support. Community support and commitment is critical during economic downturns when state allocations are reduced. In recent years, NSU has focused on fund raising activities to offset diminishing state funds. In FY19, [fund raising dollars increased over the prior year](#) by \$2 million (FY19 \$38M vs. FY18 \$36M) as a result of the NSU Foundation's capital campaign, [Preserve our Past, ENSURE Our Future](#). Overall, the campaign raised more than \$27 million over a five-year period with most of the funds supporting student scholarships. The NSU Foundation is also subject to an [annual audit](#).

By locating new funding sources, judicious use of resources, and improved budgeting, NSU maintains and continues to enhance educational offerings, even though state allocations have been reduced over the past five years.

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5.C - Core Component 5.C

The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning and improvement.

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

Argument

NSU's planning processes are systematic, consultative, and responsive to internal and external constituencies. They involve collaboration among academic programs and units that provide services to support student learning. Campus-wide input and sharing allow the President and executive officers to recommend specific action items to address constituent needs. In turn, they regularly inform constituencies of plans, trends, and priorities. NSU's boards serve as the final approval of programmatic, fiscal, and capital plans.

5.C.1. Allocation. NSU engages in systematic and integrated planning to ensure judicious resource allocation for goals in accordance with its mission, vision, and values as well as the [Strategic Plan](#). Strategic Goal 6: *Ensure institutional effectiveness through continuous improvement* articulates the importance of continuous improvement for NSU.

To meet Strategic Goal 6, NSU commits to being innovative and responsive to competitive, market, and economic conditions. Recent examples of this innovation and responsiveness include the following:

- Increased the number of programs delivered electronically to meet the needs of working and/or place-bound adults. Over the past five years, NSU has added 36 programs and certificates by electronic delivery to total [55 degrees and certificates available online](#).
- Improved student housing options on the Tahlequah campus by building Cobb Hall. This need was articulated by students in focus groups and surveys.
- Expanded [health occupation programming](#), particularly on the Muskogee campus.

As mentioned in 5.B., NSU's primary resource allocation is aligned with its instructional focus with more than 65% of its annual allocations supporting instruction and academic support according to the [2019-20 Factbook](#).

5.C.2. Linkage. NSU requires data-informed decision-making for academic, operational, planning, and budgetary proposals. For instance, regular [program review](#) using external reviewers or [specialty accreditations](#) evaluate existing offerings in light of student enrollments, growth projections, class offerings, budget projections, assessment methodology, and an analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the program. Programs report student learning outcomes from course and [program assessments annually](#).

In the spirit of continuous improvement, special projects help determine the efficacy of NSU's practices on student outcomes. In recent years, these include the following:

- [HLC Assessment Academy](#) led to improvements in [assessment processes](#) for General Education through course-embedded assessments, common assignments and rubrics, and curricular maps.
- [HLC Persistence and Completion Academy](#) evaluated the efficacy of co-requisite remediation and explored non-cognitive variables that might impact retention. Academy [results](#) led NSU to expand its remedial/developmental programming to a co-requisite model and develop a [Student-Defined Success Survey](#) to facilitate outreach and targeted support resources for students.
- [NSU's Quality Initiative](#) focused students' educational mindsets and goals, identifying potential impediments and implementing practices to help students persist and achieve their goals. The [QI project](#) impacted several processes, programming, and curriculum for first-time freshmen and transfer students including revision and alignment of Welcome Week programming and the UNIV 1003 University Strategies curriculum. A new focus highlights university services in areas of professional skills development, tutoring and mentoring, and money management/financial literacy. The QI process impacted budget and organization structures as NSU purchased and continues to maintain technology tools to support the collection and use of data to inform decisions. The university also invested in personnel to work with these tools. NSU presented its QI project at the [2019 HLC conference](#).

These and other endeavors are supported by the [Office of Institutional Effectiveness](#) which provides data and other institutional reports on the NSU website. Each unit is expected to operationalize the Strategic Plan in its planning, and these plans are reported annually. For example, the [OSRHE annual report](#) summarizes how academic plans for the coming year align with NSU's strategic goals.

Synergistic budgeting and planning processes are vital as state appropriations diminish. Despite reductions, NSU works to improve student services and offer new programs through careful planning and budget review, resulting in the following changes:

- The addition of eight new baccalaureate programs in fields such as Creative Writing, Cyber Security, Homeland Security, Applied Physics, and Freshwater Sciences,
- Five new graduate programs in fields such as Physician Assistant Studies, M.S., Public Health, M.S. and Special Education - Autism Spectrum Disorders, M.Ed.,
- Twenty-eight new credit-based certificates, both embedded and stand-alone,
- A 19.9% increase in Foundation Assets (2018 vs. 2019),
- Creation of a cost-recovery curriculum through the College of Extended Learning.

5.C.3. NSU subscribes to an inclusive [collegial governance policy](#) where faculty, staff, students, administrators, and external constituents participate in planning, budgeting, marketing, and resource allocation (see 1.A., 2.A).

NSU's [Strategic Planning Committee](#) includes membership across NSU's campuses and all aspects of the institution: Academic Affairs including colleges, departments, libraries; Faculty Council; Student Affairs including Enrollment Management, Title IX, Athletics; student support units including the Center for Tribal Studies and International Student Services; Student Government; and administrative units including branch campuses, the Foundation, and Communication and Marketing. These representatives are charged with communicating input and decisions between the committee and their constituents.

At the program and department level, external constituencies have frequent input into programming and priorities. These include:

- Use of university, college, and department specific [advisory boards](#) (consisting of students, faculty, staff, and community leaders)
- Partnerships with the Cherokee Nation resulting in Cherokee and Indigenous Studies offerings,
- [Cherokee Nation](#) donation of \$4M to renovate Seminary Hall and create a Cherokee Museum,
- Support from the Cherokee Nation, Tulsa County Child Welfare Services, Green Country Behavior Services in Muskogee for the [Social Work, M.S.W.](#) program approved in 2017.
- Partnering with business and community leaders to offer practice-based, experiential learning opportunities through [internships](#) and program practica.

NSU promotes transparency and community input by publishing reports on the Institutional Effectiveness webpage and committee minutes ([samples](#)) on the NSU website and M-Drive .

5.C.4. NSU allocates resources with clear knowledge of current capacity coupled with the possible impact of fluctuations in sources of revenue (See 1.A and 5.B). For example, the Provost, Vice President for Student Affairs, and college deans track [enrollment numbers](#) and closely monitor [projected revenue streams](#). Similarly, the President, VP of Finance, and deans monitor economic and legislative trends that might affect future state allocations.

A recent [budget presentation](#) to the RUSO board highlights the understanding of revenue and enrollment that undergirds NSU's planning process. This 2020-21 budget addresses both expected changes such as rising fixed costs - faculty promotions, health insurance, and library periodicals - and unexpected influences such as COVID-19 - CARES ACT funding (new funding) and enrollment declines (funding decreases). These details are also regularly shared with external communities through the [local paper](#).

Careful planning and budgeting compensate for diminishing state allocations. State funding has decreased every year for the past six years, and [NSU has absorbed more than \\$10 million in cuts](#) since FY15. In actuality, NSU is operating with less state funding that it did 10 years ago. Despite fluctuations in enrollment, reduced state allocations, and variable economic trends, NSU maintains a healthy [primary reserve ratio](#) of 0.45 (FY19) and CFI ratios of 2.4 (FY19) and 2.7 (2018).

5.C.5. NSU's Strategic Goal 2 states, "*NSU recognizes the need to “secure and sustain the resources necessary to maximize the University’s capacity for excellence by engaging in responsible stewardship of its resources, embracing cost containment and cost avoidance practices.”* NSU plans carefully for evolving environments.

To accommodate the educational needs of an ever changing, global society, many programs offer [flexible scheduling](#) including weekend, evening, and compressed formats such as 8-week courses. These flexible schedules, coupled with a variety of [delivery methods](#), accommodate working students, students in the military, or students who otherwise cannot come to campus.

To accommodate working adults with college hours but no college degree, NSU facilitates the [Organizational Leadership, B.S.](#) (Reach Higher Program), a statewide initiative to help them complete a bachelor’s degree (see 1.A.2). Similarly, NSU is a [NC-SARA member](#), thus facilitating course and program reciprocity (see 3.A.3).

Mentioned earlier, Information Technology Services anticipates needed upgrades to provide students optimum learning experiences. NSU follows a policy of [rotating computer replacements](#) every four years to manage costs. Recently, NSU increased the number of mobile hotspots, improved bandwidth capabilities, and upgraded classroom technology and virtual conferencing to mitigate challenges related to COVID shifts for F2F and synchronous online learning environments.

Vice presidents, deans, department chairs, and other leaders judiciously allocate resources for recruiting, marketing, and student support in accordance with enrollment and graduation numbers. In addition, NSU actively [solicits external funding](#) (\$12.M) that supplements state allocations and Foundation donations.

5.C.6. NSU's leaders are tasked with implementing plans and procedures to ensure continuous improvement in operations and student outcomes. These procedures include:

- In his [June budget letter](#), the President provides the campus community details regarding the final decisions that Cabinet presented to the board.
- College deans and account sponsors meet regularly with supervisors to discuss strategies for fulfilling short-term and long-term unit goals.
- Aligned with the Master Plan, recent capital projects underway are described in the [Note from the Provost](#):
 - Wilson Hall Student Housing - renovation
 - Seminary Hall - renovation
 - Cherokee Nation National Museum - \$1 million donation by the Cherokee Nation,
 - Event Center - wiring renovation
 - Fine Arts Center - new HVAC
 - Ongoing - Framing, roofing, paint, gutters, window replacements, floor repairs, and sidewalk replacement
- As a result of the Quality Initiative, hired Student Success Coordinator to track [early alert notices](#).
- Revised [undergraduate advisement structure](#) to change lines of authority.
 - While college advisors are still housed in their respective colleges, all advisors are now under the authority of the Executive Director of University Advising.
 - This change resulted in more consistency with [training](#), improved coverage, and professionalism.
 - 91% of [students surveyed](#) reported overall satisfaction with the revised advising process.

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5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary

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

Summary

NSU's resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of educational offerings, and respond to educational needs and services as required by the region it represents. NSU allocates resources in accordance with RUSO and OSRHE guidelines with the primary purpose to support NSU's mission. In times of scarce legislative allocations, NSU meets these commitments through the dedication and support provided by NSU employees, students, alumni, and community leaders. Through collaborative, data-informed processes, NSU continues to improve upon the "quality educational track record" referenced by the HLC site visit team in the 2012 and 2016 HLC Accreditation Team Reports.

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