

1.A - Core Component 1.A

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

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

Argument

1.A.1

NSU most recently updated its mission and strategic plan in the fall 2015. This marked the culmination of a two-year, iterative process that included university and community-wide input. In late spring 2015, NSU's two governing boards, the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE) and the Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO), reviewed and approved the proposed Mission Statement and Strategic Plan 2015-2023. During the fall 2015 opening meeting, President Turner announced approval of the new Mission Statement and Strategic Plan with the goal of aligning college and departmental mission statements by mid-spring of 2016.

The Revision Process

In fall 2013, President Turner and the President's Cabinet appointed a Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) to revise NSU's mission statement and supporting documents. SPC members included faculty, staff, administrators, students, alumni, and community members. The SPC met during 2014 and 2015 to develop a mission statement and strategic plan representative of the entire university community. Through this iterative process, the revised Mission Statement and Strategic Plan reflect changes necessary to meet the challenges presented by evolving technology and an ever-changing global economy through the year 2023.

Transparency and Inclusion

During the revision process, President Turner, the President's Cabinet, and SPC members conducted a series of brown bag strategic-planning events on each campus and within the community (see Executive Council Meeting Minutes). These events were designed to solicit input, guidance, and support from internal and external constituents. The SPC posted drafts of the revised mission and strategic plan on NSU's Strategic Planning Website and invited public comment through an online, strategic planning community feedback form. The SPC also sent e-mails to campus and community members, and conducted campus and community-wide employee meetings to discuss proposed changes.

The SPC and Cabinet carefully reviewed and approved each proposed revision. In late spring 2015, OSRHE and RUSO approved NSU's revised Mission Statement and Strategic Plan 2015-2023. Once approved, the Mission Statement and supporting documents were published:

- On the NSU website,
- Through e-mail distribution lists,
- During campus-wide meetings, and
- In hard copy brochures and pamphlets.

This extensive revision process built consensus and support for a mission statement well suited to the campus culture and designed to meet community needs through the year 2023.

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.

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.

One cornerstone document for revision of the Mission Statement and Strategic Plan was Destination 2023 (D-23). Created in 2013, D-23 is NSU's ten-year roadmap for degree completion success. D-23's Measures of Progress contains metrics of success composed of college and unit annual goals designed to meet the Governor's goals in Complete College America through the year 2023. As such, the Strategic Plan 2015-2023 and Destination 2023 serve as the foundation for university-wide planning, budgeting, and institutional operations. Jointly, these documents align and support NSU's mission to provide quality education, student support, and community service to the region through the year 2023.

1.A.2

NSU's academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile align with NSU's Mission. For example, NSU's seven academic colleges offer a variety of educational opportunities through credit and non-credit programs that are consistent with its educational mission as a regional university. NSU's colleges are as follows:

- College of Business & Technology,

- College of Education,
- College of Liberal Arts,
- College of Extended Learning,
- College of Optometry,
- College of Science & Health Professions, and
- Graduate College.

These seven academic colleges offer:

- 1 professional Doctorate of Optometry degree,
- 24 graduate degrees,
- 55 undergraduate degrees,
- 3 undergraduate certificates of proficiency, and
- 4 graduate certificates of proficiency.

In addition, the College of Extended Learning (CEL) targets non-traditional students, such as the 148,501 individuals in Tulsa, who have some college, but have not completed a college degree. By offering online college credit and continuing education classes, CEL attracts non-traditional students who otherwise might not have considered taking college classes.

NSU is one of nine academic institutions that partner in Oklahoma's Reach Higher Program, a statewide initiative designed to help working adults complete their bachelor's degree. This program, coupled with NSU's Reading Centers, Writing Centers, Mathematics Tutoring Center, and English as a Second Language Center, are designed to meet the educational demands of traditional, non-traditional, and international students within the region.

Providing Quality Education and Community Service within the Region

To appreciate NSU's enrollment profile, one must first understand that NSU was founded on the rich educational heritage of the Cherokee Nation. This heritage originated in 1846 with the establishment of a National Male Seminary and National Female Seminary. In 1909, Oklahoma purchased property and designated the institution as a normal school for training of teachers. Today, NSU is recognized as a regional university with an international reputation for quality education and community service. As the fourth largest university in Oklahoma, NSU was:

- Named the "Best Regional University" by *Oklahoma Living Magazine* readers (2014),
- Ranked 34th place for Top Public Schools by U.S. News & World Report (2014),

- Recognized as the “Number 1 producer of Native American degrees” by the 21st Annual Winds of Change College Issue with the highest number of American Indian students (36%),
- Recognized as one of Oklahoma’s Top 20 organizations with an inclusive workplace culture by Tulsa Chamber of Commerce’s diversity committee (MOSAIC) for three years in a row (2013-2015),
- Ranked 29th Best Colleges and Universities for Veterans by *U.S. News & World Report* (2014), and
- Recipient of President Obama’s Higher Education Service Honor Roll Award five years in a row (2011-2015).

Common Data Set

The Common Data Set for 2014-2015 reflects 8,332 students. The distribution is as follows:

- 5,054 Full-time undergraduate
- 2,063 Part-time undergraduate
- 7,117 Total undergraduate

- 454 Full-time graduate
- 761 Part-time graduate
- 1,215 Total graduate

- 8,332 Total Students

The 2015 College Portrait reflects that NSU conferred 28 optometry degrees, 319 master’s degrees, and 1,378 bachelor’s degrees in AY 2014-2015, thereby fulfilling NSU’s primary mission “to provide its diverse communities with lifelong learning through a broad array of undergraduate, graduate, and professional doctoral degree programs.”

Regional University of Choice

IPEDS, College Results Online (CRO), NSU at a Glance, the Common Data Set (CDS), the 2015 President's Report (PR), the 2014 Annual Assessment Report (AAR), the 2015 College Portrait (CP), and the 2015 College-Portrait-Comparison-Chart (CPC) further evidence strides made towards accomplishing NSU’s Vision Statement to “shape 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.”

- 16:1 student-to-faculty ratio (CP),
- 79% of undergraduate classes have fewer than 30 students (CP),
- Flexible class formats with 5,895 students (60%) taking at least one online class (PR),

- Open arms acceptance for underrepresented students with an admission rates of 92% for new freshman applicants and 98% for transfer applicants (CP),
- A 4.46 rating on a 5.0 scale for overall student satisfaction with class instruction on spring 2014 end-of-semester class surveys (AAR),
- Low in-state tuition and fees of only \$5,547 per academic year (CP),
- A low, federal three-year cohort student loan default rate of 13.9%.
- An average indebtedness of only 21 dollars at graduation (CPC)
- Housing facilities that accommodate 70% of all entering freshman and 16% of all undergraduate students (CP),
- 62% of students returned after 1 year (CPC),
- 85% of full-time transfer students graduated or were still enrolled after two years (CP), and
- Scholarships, grants, or financial aid for 69% of all full-time undergraduate students (PR).

Student Support Services

NSU recognizes that quality student support services are essential to a positive student learning environment (see 3.D.1-5). As noted in the 2015 President's Report, student support services for FY14-15 included:

- 1,128 free hours of counseling services,
- 5,937 hours of free tutoring sessions,
- 5,963 marketing contacts with potential employers,
- 1,121 career assessments,
- 70 career service events,
- 20,189 jobs posted for students, and
- 91,260 credit hours transferred from other academic institutions.

In addition, NSU offers more than 100 active student organizations. This broad array of student organizations further provides a platform for student academic success. Some educationally-oriented student associations include the:

- American Indian Business Leaders,
- Association of American Educators,
- Optometric Student Association, and
- Physical Education Majors Club.

For a more complete list, see student organizations.

Additional student support services that focus on acclimation and student engagement include the following:

- Library Services provides 42,500 online textbooks through EBSCO, online journal access, inter-library loan, meeting rooms, research and computer assistance, training classes, support for distance education students, and traditional library services;
- NSU's Veterans Service ranked 29th place in *U.S. News & World Report* for Best Colleges for Veterans in 2014 and is classified as a "Yellow Ribbon School" for the GI bill;
- Student Orientation, Advising, and Registration (SOAR) accommodates the needs of new students by providing a one-stop center of support;
- Rookie Bridge Camp provides an intensive orientation for incoming students;
- The Light the Way Emergency Fund provides financial assistance for students in times of crisis;
- Faculty and Alumni Mentoring provides guidance and assistance for new students;
- Greek Life provides social support for new students; and
- The Big Event affords an opportunity for students and employees to engage in community service.

NSU recognizes that academic advising and faculty interaction contribute to student success. Evidence of such support includes:

- NSU subscribes to a "dual (shared) advising model" where 29 full-time, professional advisors provide guidance related to class enrollment, financial aid, and student services (see Dual Advising -Cabinet Minutes). Faculty supplement advisors by providing guidance related to the unique nature of individual classes, career opportunities, internships, and networking opportunities (see 3.D.3);
- Degree Works and GoNSU affords online student access to degree plans, grades, and transcripts allowing students to track progress towards graduation, prepare alternate graduation plans, register for classes, and apply for graduation;
- NSU's teacher education and business programs utilize Chalk & Wire, an electronic portfolio and assessment system to track competency achievement and learning experiences;
- Students collaborate with faculty (41% of seniors participating in internships, co-ops, field experiences, student teachings, or clinical placements);

- NSU's Student Code of Conduct protects NSU's core values by fostering a safe and secure learning environment; and
- The Student Handbook outlines student rights related to enrollment, grades, absences, disability services, student records, financial obligations, harassment, and student conduct.

In addition, NSU actively supports co-curricular opportunities by fostering and supporting faculty development in service learning, collaboration and partnerships, community service, immersive learning opportunities, and research (see 3.E.1-2).

1.A.3

NSU receives 36% of its budget from state appropriations and is legislatively mandated as a state institution to align planning, budgeting, and marketing efforts to support NSU's educational mission. Accordingly, NSU solicits input from faculty, staff, students, alumni and community members during the planning, marketing, and budgeting processes (see 2.A and 5.C.1).

Shared Governance in Planning

Departments, colleges, and student organizations also share in the planning process (see 2.A). Some such participants include the:

- President's Cabinet,
- Executive Council,
- Academic Council,
- Chairs' Council,
- Faculty Council,
- Staff Council,
- Graduate Council,
- Student Government Association,
- University Technology Committee, and
- Strategic Planning Committee.

Another prime example of collaborative planning is Academic Prioritization of curriculum and program offerings. College Deans and select faculty conduct a thorough needs assessment considering community requests, budgets, marketing plans, capital improvements, and the Master Plan prior to submitting proposals for curriculum changes. These program and

curriculum changes are reflected in Academic Prioritization Spreadsheets submitted to Academic Affairs for consideration (see 1.C.2 and 3.A.1).

In addition, collaborative planning is evidenced during the Annual Program Review Process. Faculty, chairs, and deans consider proposals for program and curriculum changes. Any proposed changes are reviewed by the University Curriculum Committee (formerly the Curriculum and Educational Policy Committee -CEPC) to ensure sustainability and alignment with NSU's Mission Statement. If approved by the UCC, the Provost reviews and approves requests prior to the President requesting approval from RUSO and OSRHE.

Shared Responsibility in Budget Allocations

Institutional departments participate in the budget process and have responsibility over unit budgets. This distributed responsibility enhances transparency and generate awareness of how individual departments must work together to achieve NSU's mission. Furthermore, it enhances university-wide commitment to marketing, soliciting external funding, and improving student persistence and completion rates.

State Allocations

NSU's synergistic budgeting and planning processes are vital in that state appropriations continue to be reduced with a projected reduction of 3% in 2016. Despite such reductions, NSU continues to improve student services and offer new programs through careful planning and improved budget alignment. This is evidenced by:

- The addition of new programs such as Occupational Therapy (BS), the Physician's Assistant program (MS), and Special Education - Autism Spectrum Disorders (M.Ed.) in the past three years,
- A 17.8% increase in alumni and employee contributions, endowments, and community contributions (FY14 over FY13),
- Creation of a cost-recovery curriculum through the College of Extended Learning (see 1.A.1),
- The implementation of Making Place Matter, an innovative initiative designed to improve the economic and overall well-being of the NSU community through regional stewardship, and
- The successful launch of the Degrees of Excellence (formerly the Lumina Red Balloon Project) to improve student learning.

The Master Plan

NSU's Master Plan offers a long-range vision that actively supports NSU's Mission Statement (see Master Plan FAQs). It is a single, unified plan that accommodates the unique identity of NSU's four access points (Tahlequah, Broken Arrow, Muskogee, and online), but

leaves room for flexibility and informal planning. Published on NSU's website, the Master Plan promotes:

- Developing a campus environment that encourages innovation, cultivates student success, and remains rooted in NSU's cultural heritage,
- Improving the student experience by renovating existing facilities and constructing new buildings,
- Encouraging transparency and inclusion in planning efforts by engaging a variety of perspectives from internal and external constituents,
- Anticipating changes in academic priorities, pedagogy, technology, funding models, and student expectations,
- Promoting sustainability on new projects by conserving natural resources and embracing natural features as amenities, and
- Preserving the heritage structures and open spaces that define NSU's unique identity.

Capital Improvement Projects

Capital improvement projects further accommodate student needs and facilitate academic success. Some recent Capital Projects published on the NSU website include:

- \$15M for construction of a 344 bed housing unit and renovation of two existing housing units,
- \$14.4M for construction of 78,280 square foot multipurpose event center,
- \$650K for construction of a new parking lot, and
- \$1.7M for the main library renovation project.

These and other such projects support NSU's Mission Statement to provide quality education throughout the region.

Cost-Saving Initiatives

With repetitive cuts in state appropriations, NSU recognizes that every penny counts. Consequently, departments and colleges strive to maximize utilization of scarce resources without adversely affecting the quality of education or student services. Evidence of cost-savings initiatives include:

- The Green Computer initiative (turning off computers when not in use) saves approximately \$224K each year;

- Geothermal heating and cooling provided by 443 wells on the NSU-BA Campus annually saves an estimated \$180K;
- Reduced costs through project designs and recycling initiatives such as the Dream Machine recycling program (see 5.A.1), and
- Maintaining low administrative costs of 8.2% (well below the OSRHE threshold of 13%).Undergraduate-Majors

1.B - Core Component 1.B

The mission is articulated publicly.

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

Argument

1.B.1

NSU recently revised its Mission Statement in 2015 after a two-year iterative, revision process that included input from both internal and external constituents (see 1.A). The mission is publicly articulated in numerous supporting documents:

- The Vision Statement identifies NSU 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,”
- The Strategic Plan 2015-23 contains institutional priorities designed “to sustain the standard of excellence upon which NSU’s mission was developed, the following are identified as institutional priorities,”

- Value Statements recognize the importance of integrity, collaboration, creativity, leadership, excellence, collaboration and diversity,
- Strategic Goals advance NSU's mission to provide quality education, student support services, and community service within the region, and
- Destination 2023, NSU's ten-year roadmap for degree completion success, contains university goals that gauge progress in attaining NSU's Mission Statement and Strategic Goals through the year 2023.

Public Dissemination

Once approved by NSU's two governing boards, the new Mission Statement and supporting documents were published in electronic and hard copy format for public dissemination (see 1.A.1). In addition to the Strategic Planning Website, NSU:

- Publishes the Mission Statement in the NSU Catalog and Student Handbook,
- Publishes a President's Annual Report which highlights success stories and attainment of NSU's mission and strategic goals,
- Publishes annual reports, including the Annual Report of Student Assessment, to RUSO and OSRHE reflecting achievement of Mission Statement goals, and
- Distributes print copies of the Mission Statement and Strategic Plan 2015-2023 campus-wide and to external constituencies for review.

Internal Dissemination

Students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community members actively participated in revision of the Mission Statement (see 1.A). Consequently, they understand the importance of the mission, vision, core values, and strategic plan in relationship to curriculum offerings, allocation of budget resources, and long-range planning as evidenced by the Master Plan (see 5.C).

These documents guide all facets of student experiences, including the classroom, the sports field, study abroad programs, student organizations, work-study positions, and internships. They set forth a comprehensive, integrated plan that lays the foundation for student and university development from first year convocation through graduation.

Destination 2023

Destination 2023 (D-23) helped lay the foundation for revision of NSU's Mission Statement (see 1.A). It is a dynamic, ten-year plan that articulates NSU's vision for:

- Strengthening academic and co-curricular programs,
- Maintaining financial stability, and
- Developing new ventures that reinforce NSU's Mission Statement and Strategic Plan.

In addition, D-23 contains university and unit goals necessary to meet the Governor's commitment to Complete College America (see 4.C.1). It reaffirms NSU's mission to provide quality education, student support services, and community service throughout the region.

Consequently, the Mission Statement, Vision Statement, Core Values, Master Plan, Capital Improvements Plan, D-23, Complete College America, and supporting unit plans are interwoven and reflect an integrated planning model designed to provide quality education throughout the region through 2023.

1.B.2

NSU's mission is current (see 1.A). President Turner announced NSU's revised Mission Statement and Strategic Plan at the 2015 fall opening meeting with the goal of aligning college and department mission statements by mid-spring 2016.

Measures of Success

The primary emphasis of NSU's revised Mission Statement is quality education, student support services, and community service to the region. To accomplish this, NSU tailors marketing, financial planning, and budgeting processes to support and align with the NSU's mission and strategic goals (see 1.A.3). For example, D-23's Measures of Progress contain annual goals for college and support unit goals designed to improve persistence, completion, and graduation rates as well as staffing and faculty ratios, faculty accomplishments, and overall performance of the university.

In addition, the importance of teaching, scholarly activities, and service that support NSU's mission is highlighted throughout NSU's processes for review, promotion and tenure. "Faculty must demonstrate the ways in which they adhere to the Boyer Model as they complete their Professional Portfolio and during evaluation meetings with college administrators" (2012 Site Visit Report). Since the site visit, NSU has established mentoring committees that provide support and guidance for non-tenured faculty members during the tenure process.

NSU provides faculty with additional professional development, training and support platforms:

- The Center for Teaching and Learning offers online and in-person training opportunities, technology support, funding opportunities for research and scholarship, and campus conferences dedicated to sharing of best practices,
- Research and Sponsored Programs assists faculty in locating and securing external grant opportunities,
- Release time provides the opportunity to pursue special scholarly or community engagement projects, and
- Technology tools such as Chalk and Wire and Digital Measures (pilot stage) serve as platforms to memorialize faculty accomplishments (see Faculty Council Minutes).

Furthermore, NSU publicly recognizes faculty and staff accomplishments. Some examples include:

- The Circle of Excellence Award recognizes three faculty members for excellence in teaching, research, and service,
- The DaVinci Institute consistently recognizes NSU faculty for “creativity in higher education,”
- The President's Model the Way Award recognizes faculty and staff who exemplify service above self, tireless effort to promote the Mission Statement, and a sense of community and collegiality among fellow employees,
- The President's Ambassador's Network recognizes faculty and staff who aspire to enhance professional development,
- The Centurion Award honors alumni, faculty, staff, and students who significantly impact the NSU community,
- Academic Times, a monthly newsletter published by Academic Affairs, highlights accomplishments throughout the year, and
- The library publicly displays creative works of art, published books, and peer-reviewed articles.

Faculty-Student Interaction

Student course evaluations reflect attainment of NSU’s Mission Statement to provide quality education within the region. According to the Annual Regents Assessment FY-14, university instructors received an overall rating of 4.42 (F13) and 4.46 (SP14) on a scale of 5.0 on the question, “The instructor was an effective teacher.”

NSU’s 16:1 student-to-faculty ratio promotes student interaction and faculty availability. In addition, 79% of undergraduate classes have fewer than 30 students.

Faculty also use a variety of digital tools to stimulate student interaction. Some examples include:

- Online virtual offices,
- E-mail,
- Virtual chat rooms,
- Web-conferencing software,
- Blogs,
- Facebook, and
- Instagram.

Creativity and Lifelong Learning

NSU's Core Value of Creativity further evidences NSU's commitment to "creativity through exploration, innovation, critical inquiry, and intellectual freedom." This dedication to creativity and academic freedom is reflected in the Faculty Handbook that protects the intellectual freedom "to perform research in areas that may be considered controversial, while preserving the right to intellectual property."

NSU's value statements further affirm commitment to "providing quality education, lifelong learning, the ongoing exchange of ideas, and creative activity." This is evidenced by experiential and immersive learning opportunities such as internships, clinics, practicums, and continuing education opportunities that enhance critical thinking, problem solving skills, scholarship, and creative activity (see 3.E.2).

On a more basic level, the undergraduate general education curriculum is designed to be both broad and inclusive. It is designed to develop students capable of acquiring, discovering, creating, and applying knowledge responsibly, thereby fulfilling NSU's mission to facilitate civic and professional leadership that persists long after graduation (see 3.B.1-2).

Evidence of Research, Scholarship, and Creativity

Success in research is evidenced by increased internal and external grant funding. In FY13-14, NSU submitted 65 external grant proposals and received \$9.7M in awards (compared to \$284K received ten years ago in FY04-05). It also represents a \$5.3M increase over the \$4.4M received in FY12-13 (a 20% increase).

Internal commitment to research is evidenced by NSU's sponsorship of Oklahoma Research Day. In 2015, 227 of the 1,383 attendees (16%) attending this statewide conference were NSU students (see 3.B.3). In addition, NSU's sponsors its own Undergraduate Research Day each year. More than 75 NSU students presented posters and made presentations during NSU's Undergraduate Research Day.

Community Service and Economic Development

NSU has received President Obama's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll Award for the past five consecutive years (2011-2015). Being selected for this award clearly evidences commitment to Making Place Matter for the University and the surrounding community.

To receive this prestigious award, NSU employees and students annually devote more than 80K hours to community service each year. In fact, 53% of NSU students participate in community service or volunteer work by their senior year. Four such community service projects include

the:

- Special Olympics,
- Summer Academies,
- The Big Event, and

- National Day of Service.

NSU is also 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 NORA Annual Conference where community leaders, academicians, and state legislators identify ways to promote Making Place Matter;
- NSU's Sequoyah Institute strives to develop, foster, and provide cultural enrichment beyond the classroom and promote the experience and understanding of the fine arts;
- The Larry Adair Lectureship Series sponsors an annual forum to facilitate diverse opinions addressing politics, government, and public policy in an attempt to improve the regional economy and raise student interest in public affairs and community engagement;
- The Battenfield-Carletti Distinguished Entrepreneur Lecture invites NSU alumni to campus to share their entrepreneurial experiences with NSU students;
- The NSU Jazz Lab brings in a diverse group of musicians that specialize in blues and jazz and sponsors one of the nation's longest running jazz festivals;
- The Community Outreach and Recruitment Efforts (CORE) is a collaboration with Alumni Services designed to involve NSU alumni with recruitment and outreach efforts; and
- Campus administrators serve on local economic boards, arts councils and chambers of commerce.

Cultural Purpose and Diversity

NSU cultivates cultural diversity by providing access to more than 100 active student organizations that bridge the social life of students with academic endeavors. These student organizations 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.

In addition, NSU celebrates diversity with a broad array of annual events. Four such examples include:

- The Symposium on the American Indian (now in its 44th year),
- Martin Luther King Jr. Day,
- The Big Event, and

- The World Fair (exposure to different cultures throughout the world).

Cultural diversity is further enhanced through faculty-led study abroad programs. Participation in study abroad programs increased 50% in FY 14-15 over the prior year, accommodating more than 315 students. Past destinations include Amsterdam, Belize, Brazil, Chile, China, Cuba, England, Germany, Ireland, Poland, Prague, and Thailand. NSU also participates in programs offered by CIEE, EF Tours, and Authentic Europe.

More NSU students choose to study abroad for a semester. This is facilitated through partnerships with universities in Japan, Canada, Wales, and other countries. For example, NSU supports the China Ambassador Program and the Confucius Institute, both of which encourage student exchange programs.

NSU is the first Oklahoma institution to become a member of the International Student Exchange Program (ISEP). This allows reciprocity of study abroad programs with over 300 member institutions in 42 different countries.

Immersive Learning Opportunities

NSU supports experiential and immersive learning opportunities designed to enhance creativity and social responsibility (see 1.B.2 and 3.E.2). For example, students intern for a wide variety of community agencies, health care facilities, businesses, law firms, law enforcement agencies, and local high schools. In addition to internships, many NSU students participate in:

- Clinical experiences,
- Practicums,
- Mentored research,
- Capstone experiences,
- Honors programs, and
- Service-learning projects.

Criterion 1.B.3

NSU's primary Mission Statement is to provide quality education, student support services, and community service to the region. It acknowledges a duty to provide a "broad array of undergraduate, graduate, and professional doctoral degree programs" to a diverse student population by providing "quality teaching, challenging curricula, research and scholarly activities, immersive learning opportunities, and service to local and professional communities" (see 1.A.1). This mission is reflected in supporting documents as follows:

- The Vision Statement recognizes that NSU “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,”
- The Strategic Plan 2015-23 identifies NSU’s duty to “embrace a mission that empowers its constituents to reach their full intellectual and human potential... by sustaining a culture of learning, discovery and diversity," and "serves as a cultural destination for its region,” and
- Destination 2023 establishes metrics of success for persistence, completion, and graduation rates through the year 2023.

Coupled with NSU’s Core Values and Strategic Goals, these documents fully articulate NSU’s Mission Statement to prepare students to be socially responsible and academically prepared to succeed in a globally competitive and culturally diverse economy.

Identifying Internal and External Constituents

NSU supports internal constituents (faculty, students, and staff) by providing a stimulating and safe environment for discipline-specific, interactive, and immersive learning (see 3.C.5). NSU fulfills its commitment to external constituents (state, national, and international communities) by providing high-quality educational opportunities, rich cultural development, service learning, and community service for all members of the NSU community (see 1.A.2). This is accomplished, in part, by partnerships, and collaboration coupled with institutional funding for Faculty Development, Service Learning, and Research Grants that create immersive learning opportunities for faculty, students, and graduate assistants (see 3.B.5).

Success Stories

NSU fulfills its Mission Statement to provide quality education, student services, and community service in the region. This is evidenced in that NSU was:

- Ranked the “Best Regional University” in Oklahoma by Oklahoma Living Magazine readers in 2014 and 2015,
- Ranked “34th place for Top Public Schools” in the United States by *U.S. News & World Report* in 2014,
- Recognized as the “Number 1 producer of Native American degrees” by the 21st Annual Winds of Change College Issue in 2013 and 2014,
- Recognized as one of Oklahoma’s Top 25 organizations with an inclusive workplace culture by the Tulsa Chamber of Commerce,
- Ranked 29th Best Colleges and Universities for Veterans by *U.S. News & World Report* in 2014,

- Membership as a “Yellow Ribbon School” for the GI bill, and
- Selected to receive President Obama’s Higher Education Service Honor Roll Award five years in a row.

1.C - Core Component 1.C

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

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

Argument

1.C.1

NSU acknowledges its role in a multicultural society. This is evidenced by the Mission Statement as follows:

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," and NSU'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".

Commitment to diversity is also reflected in NSU’s Catalog, Student Handbook, Faculty Handbook, Core Values, and Strategic Goals. For example, NSU’s "Diversity" Core Value acknowledges that “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.” 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 in many different ways. This is best evidenced by offering programs, student support services, and university activities that foster diversity and understanding of cultural differences (see 1.A.3, 1.C.2, and 3.B.4). One such program is NSU’s Indigenous Scholars Development Center whose mission is to increase academic

performance, retention and graduation rates of American Indian students and to “enhance the educational and professional opportunities of NSU students.” Other cultural outreach programs that emphasize diversity include the:

- Rural vision clinics,
- Teaching and Urban Reform Network (TURN),
- Leading Educators Academically Rural Network (LEARN),
- Program internships in ethnically and socio-economically diverse settings,
- The Cherokee Promise Scholarship program,
- Center for Tribal Studies, and
- The Symposium on the American Indian.

These programs contribute to NSU’s distinction as having the highest number of American Indian students of any higher education institution in the nation. In addition, NSU is recognized as:

- The top academic institution in the U.S. serving American Indians representing more than 30 Native American tribes according to the 21st Annual Winds of Change College Issue, 2013 and 2014 editions, and
- The Number 1 producer of Native American degrees in the United States as noted by RUSO (2014 and 2015).

As stated by the Tulsa Chamber of Commerce, NSU has “gone above and beyond to support diversity.” This recognition culminated in NSU's receipt of the MOSAIC Chamber of Commerce Award recognizing NSU as one of the “top 25 organizations with an inclusive workplace culture in the region” for three consecutive years (see 3.B.4).

1.C.2

Lifelong learning begins with diversity and first contact. First contact generally occurs at local elementary, intermediate, and high schools. By recruiting at these early years, NSU has attained a five-year minority enrollment rate of approximately 47% (see 1.C.1).

NSU’s students represent 30 American Indian tribes and more than 50 different countries across the world. The 2014-15 IPEDS profile reveals diversity as follows:

- 61% Women
- 39% Men
- 92% Students from Oklahoma
- 6% Out-of-State students

- 2% International
- 53% Caucasian
- 32% American Indian/Alaskan Native (including 10% of the 11% Multi-Racial classification who self-identify as American Indian),
- 5% Black or African American
- 5% Hispanic/Latino
- 2% Asian/Pacific Islander
- 2% Nonresident alien

Equally important, NSU analyzes IPEDS data to determine if retention and graduation rates mirror the diversity of student enrollment and the surrounding community. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness and college deans use this and other such data outcomes to assess needs for diversity-focused course offerings during the Academic Prioritization Process as outlined in the Academic Prioritization Spreadsheet (see 1.C.2).

Diverse Faculty

Diversity of faculty is critical in terms of creativity and academic freedom. According to the College Portrait faculty diversity statistics are as follows:

- 51% women faculty, and
- 21% faculty of color.

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 general education classes which address human and cultural diversity include:

- American Indian Studies,
- Cherokee Cultural History,
- Comparative Religions,
- Intercultural Communication,
- Language Courses,
- Theater Appreciation,
- World Literature, and
- World Geography.

Similarly, numerous majors and minors emphasize diversity. Some examples include:

- American Sign Language (minor),
- American Studies (M.A.),
- Cherokee Cultural Studies,
- Cherokee Education,
- Cherokee Language,
- Counseling (M.S.),
- International Business,
- Spanish,
- Spanish Education,
- Special Education – Autism Spectrum Disorders (M.S. Ed.),
- Special Education – Mild-Moderate Disorders (B.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 for a detailed listing).

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 (see 1.A.2).

Diverse Cultural Activities

NSU also supports a variety of diverse and culturally-related annual events (see 1.A.2). Some examples include:

- Domestic Violence Month,
- International Student Awareness Day,
- M.L. King Service Day,

- The World Fair (cultural awareness),
- Rookie Bridge Camp (college transition program),
- Faculty-led study abroad programs, and
- The Symposium on the American Indian (see 1.C.1).

Differing Definitions of Diversity

NSU further recognizes that diversity may be defined in many different ways. This is evidenced as follows:

- Diversity of Student Lifestyles -The Tahlequah campus accommodates the traditional student who desires a residential experience while the Muskogee Campus and the Broken Arrow Campus are commuter sites. Although each campus caters to different constituents, all three locations are united through one uniform Mission Statement;
- Academic Preparation Diversity - NSU sponsors two Educational Talent Search Camps designed to assist middle and high school students to develop skills needed for career and academic pursuits; and
- Economic Diversity - 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.

Diverse Student Services

A variety of student services support students characterized by diverse backgrounds and learning needs. Five examples include:

- Disability Services,
- Counseling Services,
- Perkins funding,
- Performing Arts Series, and
- Veteran Programs.

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

1.D - Core Component 1.D

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

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

Argument

1.D.1

NSU's Mission Statement recognizes NSU's commitment to quality education and "service to local and professional communities." For example, NSU was ranked 36th for contribution to the public good by Washington Monthly Magazine (2015). The ranking criteria were based on U.S. Department of Education data indicators that measure whether universities are fulfilling the social expectations of society by providing opportunities for upward mobility. These criteria included:

- Social mobility - recruiting and graduating low-income students,
- Research - producing cutting-edge scholarships and doctoral degrees, and
- Service that encourages students to give something back to their country.

Additional evidence of commitment to the public good is reflected in the 2014 President's Annual Report as follows:

- The Corporation for National Community Service selected NSU to receive President Obama's Higher Education Service Honor Roll award for the past five consecutive years,
- The Tulsa Regional Chamber of Commerce recognized NSU as one of the top 25 organizations in the region with an inclusive workplace culture for each of the past three years,
- G.I. Jobs 2015 List of Military Friendly Schools ranked NSU in the top 15% of schools nationwide for embracing student veterans (for the fifth year in a row).
- The Arbor Day Foundation honored NSU with the Tree Campus USA Award in recognition of urban forest management for four consecutive years,

- NSU's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program (offered since 1980),
- NSU's Performing Arts Series of quality entertainment, and
- Three NSU graduates were finalists for Oklahoma's Teacher of the Year Award (2014).

NSU also offers the following programs that support the public good:

- The Oklahoma Center for Rural Development at NSU-Tahlequah,
- The Oklahoma Manufacturing Alliance at NSU-BA, and
- Collaboration with WorkForce Oklahoma and Arkansas Department of Workforce Services to offer degree programs designed to support employment needs.

Affordable and Accessible Education

NSU further demonstrates its commitment to the public good by providing affordable and accessible education within the region, globally through online class offerings, and internationally through study abroad programs. As evidenced by the 2015 President's Report (PR), the College Portrait (CP), and the College Portrait Comparison Chart (CPC), NSU offers:

- A broad array of undergraduate, graduate, and doctorate programs (PR),
- Extremely low tuition and fees of only \$5,285 per academic year (CPC),
- Flexible class schedules offering face-to-face, blended, weekend, and online classes (PR),
- 69% of full time NSU students receive some type of need-based financial aid (PR), and
- 11% of seniors spent at least 6 hours per week participating in co-curricular activities such as student organizations and intramural sports (CP),
- 41% of seniors participated in an internship, co-op, field experience, student teaching, or clinical placement (CP),
- 92% admittance rate for freshman and 98% admittance rate for transfer applicants (CP).

Student Services and faculty members offer a broad array of immersive learning opportunities throughout the curriculum. During internships, students prepare business plans, draft legal documents, film documentaries, and design website programs. Students also participate in field experiences, practicums, faculty-led study abroad programs, and various seminars that serve to improve student performance and promote the public good. NSU supports these experiential and immersive learning activities by providing faculty grants for service learning, innovative teaching, and research.

Career Services maintains an interactive website where prospective employers and students exchange employment information and secure internship opportunities. In addition, alumni mentors provide networking opportunities for incoming freshmen.

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 2015 President's Report further evidences NSU's commitment to the public good through:

- Membership in 9 regional and state chambers of commerce complemented by numerous memberships in community organizations and cultural development programs,
- 11 vision centers that accommodate 60,000 patients annually,
- 3 speech-language centers that offer services to more than 2,600 individuals annually,
- 2 reading clinics that assist more than 1,190 pre K-12 students,
- 81,039 hours of community service and volunteer hours,
- More than 33 annual community service events, and
- An impact of nearly \$30M through the Manufacturing Alliance, Small Business Alliance, OK Center for Rural Development, Oklahoma Small Business Center, and Northeast Oklahoma Regional Alliance.

In fact, 53% of NSU students participate in community service activities prior to graduation (see 1.B.2).

Commitment to Public Schools

NSU establishes close working relationships with area elementary, junior high, and high schools. Evidence of these partnerships includes:

- College simulation classes taught at the Union Collegiate Academy, KIPP, and Edison Junior High School,
- Reading and math tutoring for K-12 students offered through NSU's Wadley Center Tutoring Services, the Broken Arrow Reading Clinic, and Broken Arrow Mathematics Clinic,
- Summer camps for kids, and
- Active participation in Concurrent Enrollment programs for high school juniors and seniors.

Commitment to the Community

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 facilitates more than 160 community events each year. Everyone from the chamber of commerce to hospitals and public schools utilize the campus and its resources.

However, community service is common for any NSU campus location. For example, the Muskogee satellite campus with a student population of 1,021 students sponsored more than 75 public events in FY14-15 (see Muskogee Events List). These events ranged from the Higher Education Chancellor's Legislative Session to the Oklahoma Black History Research Project.

1.D.2

NSU's primary mission 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. As such, educational responsibilities take priority over external financial concerns.

NSU and its governing boards, the Regional University System of Oklahoma and the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, strive to ensure financial integrity and educational quality through a series of checks and balances (see 2.A and 2.C.1). For example, the Provost monitors academic budget allocations, oversees the Academic Prioritization Process, and orchestrates academic operations on a daily basis. In turn, each vice president provides a similar oversight for each unit. NSU's two governing boards provide a second layer of oversight by further reviewing these processes.

This symbiotic relationship is further evidenced in the Academic Prioritization and budget processes. 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.

Admittedly, this structure serves to limit governing board power to review and oversight which is consistent with their legislatively-mandated authority. However, it also serves to balance fiscal, educational, and fiduciary obligations between NSU and state-level governing boards, thereby allowing NSU to operate with autonomy over day-to-day operations (see 2.C.1 and 2.C.3).

1.D.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 as follows:

- **Collaboration:** NSU engages in collaboration through partnerships to create learning opportunities and promote educational and economic success.

- **Excellence:** NSU pursues excellence by continually improving individually and as a community.

NSU actively pursues these Value Statements through community and academic partnerships. This is evidenced by:

- Participating in 2+2 Smart Choice partnerships with two-year colleges to provide seamless transfer of college-credit hours,
- Providing internships, clinics, and practicums for local employers and community service agencies,
- Creating community advisory boards to provide input on employment screening committees, 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 public service opportunities, further evidence that NSU identifies and responds to diverse external constituencies and communities of interest within the region.

1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary

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

Summary

NSU recently revised its mission, vision, value statements, and strategic plan in fall 2015 after a two-year iterative, university, and community-wide collaborative revision process. The revised Mission Statement and supporting documents are clearly and publicly articulated on the NSU website and have been 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, processes, 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. Through these activities, combined with measurable metrics provided by Destination 2023 and the Strategic Plan 2015-2023, NSU will continue to fulfill its Mission Statement to meet the diverse educational challenges of an ever-changing and globally competitive environment.

2.A - Core Component 2.A

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

Argument

NSU acts with integrity and is committed to fair and responsible conduct. Oversight by NSU's two governing boards, Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE) and the Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO), and various accrediting agencies serve to ensure transparency and ethical practices in teaching, learning, and university administration (see 1.D.2 and 2.C.1). This oversight serves to ensure integrity in academic programs, fiscal operations, and auxiliary functions at NSU.

NSU has adopted several ethical policies and procedures which articulate expectations in regards to ethical and responsible conduct. For example, NSU's Value Statements address integrity as follows:

- Core Value - Integrity: NSU models integrity through ethical and intellectual behaviors and practices by advancing honesty, human dignity, and accountability.

Integrity and ethical behavior policies are routinely updated and published in the Faculty Handbook, Student Handbook, the Employment Handbook, and on the NSU website. 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,
- Student Code of Conduct, and
- Title IX.

Additional evidence of commitment to integrity and ethical behavior include:

- Copyright - Information Technology Services, the NSU Library, 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 Faculty Handbook, the Student Handbook, and on the NSU website;
- Grant Expenditures - The Office of Grants and Contracts Administration 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) following any investigation of possible 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.

In addition, 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. It also serves to create 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 Statement and Strategic Plan. Then, the proposed budget is reviewed by the Cabinet which includes the Vice President for Administration and Finance. Upon approval, the budget is sent to RUSO and OSRHE for final approval, thereby creating an independent review that further serves to ensure integrity. This budget process creates university-wide involvement and shared trust in the budgeting process.

External Audits

The Regional University System of Oklahoma requires the use of an outside, independent accounting firm, currently Arledge & Associates, P.C., to conduct a legislatively-mandated state audit of NSU's 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 audit with NSU's two 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).

Fair and ethical behavior is also an expectation for all athletic endeavors. 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.

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.
- Department heads, program coordinators, and the Budget Oversight Committee oversee and monitor budget expenditures to ensure they are aligned with state finance and purchasing regulations; and

- 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

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

Although NSU's President may approve contracts for \$150K or less, all contracts greater than \$50K must be reported to RUSO. Contractual agreements for more than \$150K require RUSO approval. Without specific written consent, no individual other than the President may sign contractual obligations in accordance with 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.

2.B - Core Component 2.B

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

Argument

NSU's website clearly and comprehensively presents institutional information to students, employees, and the public. Some such examples include the following:

- HLC Mark of Affiliation,
- Admission Policies,
- Cost Calculator: Tuition and Fees,
- Colleges and Departments,

- Degrees and Majors,
- Specialized Accreditation,
- NSU at a Glance,
- Financial Aid,
- Housing Information,
- Bursar and Student Account Information,
- Academic FAQs, and
- CLERY Act (Student Right to Know) Information.

In addition, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness publishes institutional data online that includes the:

- Annual Regents Assessment Report,
- Common Data Set,
- IPEDS,
- NSSE, and
- The College Portrait.

Website Redesign

NSU's redesign of the website allows for a more efficient search methodology that readily accommodates cell phones and tablet applications. Webpages are updated as needed, some on a daily basis. NSU also communicates timely information through:

- Media releases,
- RiverHawks Weekly (student newspaper),
- Academic Times (faculty and staff newsletter),
- The Green and White Network (Alumni Newsletter),
- Blogs,
- Facebook,
- Instagram, and

- Twitter.

NSU's Facebook has more than 17,000 followers and receives more than 100,000 weekly hits. Similarly, Instagram has 2,878 followers with more than 1,750 posts.

Communications and Marketing

The Office of Communication and Marketing acts as the steward for marketing and news releases. This office coordinates creation of brochures, flyers, web graphics, and newsletters. It also oversees accuracy, integrity, and federal compliance in university communications (See 2.A).

Curriculum and Class Offerings

NSU publishes degree requirements, class schedules, faculty information, and student catalogs (undergraduate and graduate) on its website. The website also contains information related to:

- Specialty accreditation,
- Study abroad programs,
- Immersive learning, and
- Research opportunities.

Individual college and departmental landing pages supplement the institutional pages with specific information about academic programs, program accreditation, and career opportunities. Catalogs are updated annually to reflect the most recent program offerings.

The online undergraduate and graduate catalogs provide similar information including degree programs, class descriptions, certificate requirements, plans of study, tuition and fees, and accreditation relationships.

Student Consumer Information and Degree Plans

NSU publishes general institution information and student consumer information (such as financial aid, student loans, privacy, and disability services) on the NSU website. The NSU at a Glance website reflects NSU's student profile, enrollment, class size, housing, and other vital student consumer information. NSU also publishes Student Outcomes which includes pass rates, retention rates, completion/graduation rates, transfer rates, and employment rates on the website.

NSU publishes an online Net Price Calculator that provides personalized information related to tuition, fees, housing costs, and (optional) guaranteed tuition rates. The site also provides financial aid information, tips for managing an award, and loan counseling.

In addition, goNSU and Degree Works provide online student access to degree audit plans that track progress toward degree completion, all from the comfort of a student's living room.

2.C - Core Component 2.C

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

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

Argument

2.C.1

NSU benefits from the oversight of two publicly-appointed governing boards, OSRHE and RUSO. Both are legislatively created and serve to provide oversight and guidance for Oklahoma higher academic institutions. Although the two boards have different functions, both serve to preserve and enhance NSU's Mission Statement.

OSRHE issues all degrees earned, approves curricula and courses of study, 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 at the University, to construct all buildings, and to authorize the purchase of equipment, supplies, and capital improvements (RUSO Policy Manual).

Through this design, NSU maintains authority to govern all facets of the university's finances, personnel, curricula, and day-to-day operations (see RUSO Policy Manual 1.25). This is evidenced in that:

- NSU conducts a thorough budget process prior to submitting final budget requests to OSRHE and RUSO for final approval,
- NSU reviews and approves capital improvements prior to requesting approval from RUSO,
- NSU conducts a thorough Academic Prioritization Process prior to requesting approval from OSRHE, and
- NSU oversees daily operations including staffing and operational needs.

Although the President maintains governance over day-to day operations of the University, NSU subscribes to Collegial Governance.

Both OSRHE and RUSO provide oversight as legislatively mandated, and RUSO regularly conducts board meetings at NSU on a rotating basis. Although OSRHE meets 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 resolutions related to NSU's academic offerings, marketing plan, research, or proposed expansions. For example, OSRHE Policy 3.4.4 requires publication and notice related to any significant curriculum changes that affect the general public or other Oklahoma academic institutions. This process allows an opportunity for public comment and recommendation for changes related to academic proposals or requested resolutions.

OSRHE and RUSO websites allow instant access to governing board staff directories, meeting dates, and agendas as required by the Oklahoma Open Meeting Act. This encourages public opinion related to matters of academic concern. It also facilitates review of reasonable and relevant interests of internal and external constituents concerning higher education academic matters.

Representatives of two governing boards, legislative leaders, and the Governor regularly visit NSU, host community meetings, and invite business leaders to discuss academic matters related to NSU. Major visits during 2015 include the following:

- Governor Mary Fallin visited to support economic development of the region,
- Chancellor Glen Johnson discussed legislative affairs on the Muskogee campus (see 2.C.1), 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 (see 1.B.2).

2.C.3

Both OSRHE and RUSO are public boards with rotating board structures that minimize the possibility of undue influence of donors, elected officials, or other external interests. Both governing boards have differing responsibilities, but both are constitutionally mandated to preserve NSU's educational mission. In addition, OSRHE and RUSO board members must abide by ethical standards and sign a conflict of interest statement that includes abstention, disclosure of interest, and determination of quorum guidelines. Consequently, the two governing boards are well suited to act in the best interests of NSU.

The Oklahoma-State-Regents-for-Higher-Education (OSRHE) is the coordinating board for all state higher education institutions in Oklahoma and is sanctioned with legal authority 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.

Similarly, the Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO) oversees the six state-supported regional universities. RUSO's constitutional board consists of nine members, eight of whom are appointed by the Governor and approved by the senate. The ninth member, the state superintendent, is elected by Oklahoma voters. As with OSRHE, this legislatively-mandated rotating structure serves to ensure independence from internal or external interests.

2.C.4

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 (NSU-Organizational-Chart). 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, satellite campus deans, the Executive Director of Libraries, and directors of academic-related centers and services (Academic Affairs Organizational Chart). President Turner also established a President's Cabinet and an Executive Council that provide guidance related to policy-making, planning, and the overall future direction of NSU.

In day-to-day management and planning, NSU's President and administration rely upon Destination 2023, the Strategic Plan 2015-2023, and the Master Plan. These documents contain annual goals necessary to achieve NSU's mission, vision, and value statements through the year 2023. They provide guidance for marketing plans, capital improvements, and long-range planning goals.

College and unit budgeting must align with these documents (see 2.A and 5.C.1). In addition, OSRHE reviews and approves NSU's budget, but does not dictate unit or college allocations (see 5.A.1).

On a more practical level, faculty provide front line oversight for academic matters, including institutional planning and delivery, assessing classroom performance, Academic Prioritization, and day-to-day advising (see 3.A.1). Faculty participate in planning, marketing, and budgeting processes (see 1.C.2 and 3.A.1). They also conduct peer-to-peer class evaluations of colleagues during the retention, tenure and promotion process (see 3.B.5 and 3.C.3).

2.D - Core Component 2.D

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

Argument

NSU recognizes that true acquisition of knowledge depends upon academic freedom, creativity, and truth in learning. As such, NSU encourages academic freedom research, scholarship, and classroom instruction. Evidence is as follows:

- Core Value: Creativity: NSU advances creativity through exploration, innovation, critical inquiry, and intellectual freedom.
- Academic Freedom: Faculty Handbook: 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 Bill of Rights, Article VII: Freedom of Expression: Students at NSU have "the right to engage in expressive activities, including protests, picketing, or other free speech acts."
- 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.
- 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 freedom is reflected by NSU's Collegial Governance Policy, diverse array of student organizations and university committees, diverse curriculum offerings, diverse course offerings, and commitment to the Boyer Model for retention, tenure, and promotion considerations (1.C.2 and 3.D.3).

In addition, the Faculty Handbook acknowledges academic and intellectual freedom “to perform research in areas that may be considered controversial, while preserving the right to intellectual property.” As stated in NSU's Expressive Activities, public areas and classroom space may be reserved for free speech and political campaigns. This commitment to academic and intellectual freedom serves to promote diversity in scholarship and research.

Academic freedom is evidenced in choice of books by faculty and chairs, diverse curriculum and program offerings, willingness to accept differing perspectives in the classroom, and NSU's commitment to understanding and accepting diversity in ideas, cultures, and beliefs (see 1.C.1 and 1.C.2). It is further evidenced by faculty, staff, and student participation in NSU's governance and the Academic Prioritization process (see 1.C).

2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary

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

Summary

NSU's website is the most 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. In addition, administrators and marketing routinely review advertising, marketing materials, and policies to ensure integrity and uniformity.

A second 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 allowing faculty, students, and staff to work and learn responsibly.

3.A - Core Component 3.A

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

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

Argument

3.A.1

NSU offers a variety of educational opportunities through credit and non-credit programs that are consistent with its mission as a regional university. These offerings support NSU's educational mission and are approved by NSU's two governing boards, OSRHE and RUSO. As published on the NSU at a Glance Website, NSU offers:

- 1 professional Doctorate of Optometry degree,
- 24 graduate degrees,
- 55 undergraduate degrees,
- 3 undergraduate certificates of proficiency, and
- 4 graduate certificates of proficiency.

In addition, NSU offers a variety of credit and non-credit classes through the College of Extended Learning. These classes are tailored for today's fast-paced world with most classes being offered online, blended, or short-term format. For example, the Healthcare Administration program is designed for the working adult by offering flexible, 8-week, online class formats. As evidence of quality, the Learning Resources Network (LERN) recognized Healthcare Administration with the Best Programming Category award in 2015 (selected from more than 100 nominations from four countries).

Program Currency and Rigor

OSRHE Policy 3.7 establishes the procedure for Academic Program Reviews. Following these guidelines, department chairs and faculty conduct an Internal Program Review and Assessment of Major Programs as part of Academic Prioritization Review Process to determine programs to sustain, nurture, add, or dissolve. As programs are updated, faculty members on the University Curriculum Committee (formerly the Curriculum and Educational Policies Committee or CEPC) conduct a thorough review of proposed changes, complete program modification forms as required by OSRHE Policy 3.4, and submit requests for program changes to the Regents.

Through Academic Prioritization, NSU identifies long-term goals (generally three to five year plans) related to academic program changes (see the Academic Prioritization Spreadsheet) and addresses potential, quality, and value of proposed changes (see the PVQ Matrix).

Generally, the Academic Prioritization processes start with a Program Review at department level where faculty, chairs, and deans review existing and proposed program and curriculum offerings (see Assessment in the Major Report - Chemistry). If approved by the faculty, chairs and the college dean, the University Curriculum Committee (UCC) reviews the proposed changes for alignment with NSU's mission. If approved by the UCC, the Provost reviews and approves requests prior to submission to the President who requests final approval from OSRHE and RUSO. Accordingly, the results of these academic processes are utilized by OSRHE and RUSO to make decisions regarding program initiation, expansion, contraction, consolidation and termination as well as reallocation of resources.

NSU's Potential, Quality, and Value (PVQ) Matrix

To facilitate Academic Prioritization, NSU developed a uniform matrix that assesses potential, quality, and value (PVQ) ratings of program and course offerings. Although the PVQ Matrix form is no longer required for curriculum changes, it set forth six factors that are routinely considered during the Academic Prioritization Review Process. They include:

- Centrality to and consistency with NSU's mission,
- External and internal demand for the program,
- Program inputs and outcomes,
- Program productivity for the past three fall semesters, and
- Cost and academic efficiency.

General Education Assessment

As a member of the HLC Assessment Academy, NSU restructured the General Education Curriculum in 2012. As a result, the General Education Committee and the Student Learning and Assessment Committee worked together to embed assessment of Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) into designated courses (for a full listing, see the General Education SLOs section in the undergraduate catalog).

These General Education SLOs are reinforced in upper and graduate level classes. Though this integrated learning process, students master General Education SLOs, thereby creating a culture of lifelong learning that lasts long after graduation.

Graduate Program Offerings

The graduate college subscribes to the same Program Review Process as used for undergraduate programs. For example, the new Physician's Assistant and proposed Master's in Social Work programs were submitted to RUSO and OSRHE for final approval only after a thorough review by college faculty, the college dean, the UCC, the Provost, and the President. During this process, currency and rigor are reviewed, thereby differentiating Student Learning Objectives for graduate-level program and course offerings.

Dedicated and Supportive Alumni

Contributions and accomplishments of 56,188 active alumni in northeastern Oklahoma further evidence the quality and rigor of NSU curriculum offerings. For example, NSU has a reputation for providing quality teachers for the Oklahoma and surrounding states. Similarly, five Oklahoma university presidents, seven state House of Representatives, two State Senators, the Cherokee Nation Principal Chief, and several business leaders and business owners are NSU graduates who actively support NSU.

Another alumni, American Idol winner Carrie Underwood frequently visits NSU and stages cameo appearances that attract and inspire NSU students. Most recently, she appeared at the December 2014 Emerald Ball where she helped raise \$47K for student scholarships sponsored by the NSU Foundation (see 5.A.1).

Equally important, dedicated alumni serve on NSU advisory committees and make financial contributions to the University. As revealed in the 2015 College Portrait, 92% of graduating seniors believe NSU emphasizes providing support to help students succeed and 87% report that NSU courses challenged them to do their best work most of the time.

Student Class Evaluations

Student evaluations further gauge currency and rigor of class offerings. The fall 2014 Class Evaluation Summary Overview identified overall student satisfaction with classroom instruction as 4.29 on a 5.0 scale. There was no category where ratings fell below 4.11 (Class Evaluation Spreadsheet).

Specialized Program Accreditation

Many NSU programs receive specialized accreditation (see 4.A.5). This specialized accreditation, combined with annual governing board review, further serves to ensure currency and rigor of curriculum offerings.

3.A.2

NSU's annual Program Review and Academic Prioritization Review Process serve to ensure currency, quality, and rigor of curriculum offerings (see 3.A.1). The processes are designed to articulate and differentiate student learning objectives, goals, and activities for various levels of program and curriculum offerings. In accordance with OSRHE Policy Manual guidelines, NSU's hierarchy of degrees is as follows:

- Certificate Programs – Certificates are awarded for an organized program of study that does not lead to an academic degree;
- Bachelor's Degrees – Oklahoma requires completion of 120 credit hours for a bachelor's degree. These credit hours include a general education curriculum common for all students, a major area of study, a broad array of electives, and immersive learning experiences such as completion of an internship, a teaching practicum, or a capstone course;

- Master's Degrees - NSU requires higher skills and learning outcomes for graduate students. Many graduate programs require an extensive research-based paper, creative project, or graduate research methodology course. Similarly, course content is substantively more advanced and methodologically more sophisticated than typically required of undergraduates. For example, the option of a thesis, practicum, capstone exam, or clinical experience is offered in all graduate programs;
- Doctor of Optometry – NSU's doctorate program is nationally recognized for excellence and is one of only 21 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).

NSU's policies and procedures further ensure the appropriate level of student learning objectives exists for undergraduate, graduate, post baccalaureate, postgraduate, and certificate programs. Examples include:

- The annual Program Review Process (3.A.1),
- Curriculum approval by OSRHE (2.C.1) ,
- Standardized syllabi templates,
- The Degrees of Excellence initiative that refined student learning objectives,
- Required training to teach online classes (3.A.3),
- Regular review of online courses (3.A.3),
- Voluntary certification of online classes (3.A.3),
- End-of-course surveys, and
- Specialized program accreditation.

Through these processes, quality assurance mechanisms become routine and ensure academic quality and rigor.

3.A.3

NSU ensures consistency in quality and rigor regardless of class format (face to face, online, or blended) or location (main campus, additional campus locations, or dual credit).

Annual Review of Curriculum Offerings

Department chairs, faculty, and deans annually review rigor and currency of curriculum offerings during the annual Program Review Process (see 3.A.1). This review process includes changes in

curriculum offerings as well as delivery modes and site locations. During the Program Review Process, faculty and chairs review data summaries and solicit input from students and community leaders to determine currency, need, and rigor of program offerings. In accordance with Faculty Handbook 11.1.8, the UCC, Provost, and President must approve curriculum change proposals prior to submission to the State Regents for approval.

Uniformity and Rigor of Course Offerings

NSU ensures uniformity and rigor of its course offerings across all delivery systems both externally and internally. For external alignment, faculty participate in OSRHE's annual Course Equivalency Project where course content and the transfer matrix are updated system-wide.

Internally, NSU uses several mechanisms to ensure uniform and rigorous expectations for all courses. Faculty outline the course level expectations including course content, student background knowledge, instructional design, and scholarly activity expectations when proposing any new course or program proposal. Upon final approval, course numbers descriptions, including any prerequisites, are published in the NSU catalog.

Standardized syllabi serve to establish common learning outcomes and course expectations for courses with multiple sections and delivery modes. These are developed and maintained by respective departments with an emphasis on clearly stated student learning objectives and course expectations. Six such syllabi include:

- Writing Enhancement
- Algebra
- English
- English Composition
- Education Clinical Internship
- World Music

Qualified Faculty

NSU's faculty and staff are appropriately credentialed to provide quality education and student support services. This is evidenced as follows:

- 98% of full-time faculty possess graduate degrees,
- 77% possess the highest academic degree in their field of study,
- 63% of full-time faculty have more than 5 years of service, and

- The mean average of service years is 10 years (which serves to preserve institutional memory, yet provide for fresh perspectives from new faculty members).

NSU is a member of the Quality Matters (QM) consortium, and faculty are qualified to deliver online course offerings. To date, NSU faculty are QM certified as follows:

- 16 faculty are certified QM Peer Reviewers,
- 3 faculty are certified QM Master Reviewers,
- 121 faculty are QM certified, and
- Many have served as Subject Matter Experts for QM reviews.

Faculty also serve on peer review committees that establish standards for NSU online classes and Online Educator Certification.

Online Educator Certification (OEC)

NSU requires full and part-time faculty to complete online training prior to teaching an online class. Online Educators Certification 1 covers the basics necessary to navigate the Blackboard online platform. Online Educators Certification 2 covers course design and QM standards. Upon completion, faculty receive Online Educator Certification as online course instructors.

NSU implemented systematic review and certification of online courses in the fall of 2015. Three NSU-QM peer reviewers evaluate online courses for compliance with QM standards, thereby ensuring equivalent learning opportunities for online classes as identified in traditional in-person classes. The goal is to have all online classes certified by fall 2019.

In addition, department chairs and deans periodically review syllabi and courses to ensure learning objectives are met for online, in-person, and short format class offerings.

Online Class Reciprocity Authorized by SARA

With the approval of OSRHE and under the auspices of Oklahoma's membership in the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA), NSU participates with member institutions in the online State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA). This facilitates transfer of college credit among member states.

NSU is also a member of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) Electronic Campus, an electronic marketplace for distance courses offered. This membership further ensures quality and rigor as online class offerings are reviewed by SREB and must meet SARA standards of excellence as a condition of membership.

Blackboard Platform and Enhanced Communications

NSU makes no distinction between courses delivered in-person or through various distance learning formats (online, ITV, and blended). To facilitate active learning, NSU provides Blackboard course shells for all NSU classes that include tabs for the:

- Course name,
- Course description,
- Syllabi,
- Contact information,
- Office hours,
- An online gradebook,
- Discussion boards,
- Blogs, and
- Federally required information.

NSU faculty are also sensitive to the differing needs of today's diverse array of students. To accommodate student communications, faculty use a variety of the following:

- Web conferencing,
- Skype,
- Blackboard Collaborate,
- Instant Messaging,
- Virtual Offices,
- Discussion Boards,
- Facebook,
- Blogs, and
- Instagram.

Student Support Services

NSU provides a broad array of student support services for both online and in-person classes. Some examples include:

- Online and face-to-face tutoring,
- Online training videos,
- An online and call-in Help Desk,
- Online and call-in library services,
- Online and hard copy library resources, and
- Online and call-in student counseling services.

Uniform Transfer of Credit Hours

NSU transfers credit hours from other Oklahoma and out-of-state academic institutions in accordance with OSRHE's Course Transfer Guidelines (4.A.3). If a course is not listed in the OSRHE Course Equivalency Transfer Table, department chairs with dean oversight, review the requested credit transfer to determine if rigor and content meet NSU standards. These guidelines

for transfer of academic credit are published in the undergraduate catalog located on the NSU website (see OSRHE Policy 3.10.3).

Graduate transfer credit guidelines are published in the graduate catalog and on the NSU website. The department chair may approve no more than nine transfer credit hours for any student, and no credit is awarded for classes receiving a grade lower than a "B".

Concurrent Enrollment (Dual Enrollment)

NSU complies with OSRHE Concurrent Enrollment Policies. High school juniors and seniors are permitted to take NSU classes if they meet admissions criteria. Students participating in the concurrent enrollment program may only enroll if they have met the curricular requirements for college admission and enrollment. To ensure rigor and quality, only NSU faculty teach concurrent enrollment classes.

College Level Examination Program

NSU allows students to take standardized CLEP exams to earn college credit. NSU verifies identification and proctors CLEP exams.

Contractual Arrangements

NSU has no contractual arrangements for class instruction.

Consortial Agreements

NSU has no consortial agreements.

3.B - Core Component 3.B

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

1. The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings, and degree levels of the institution.
2. The institution articulates the purposes, content, and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements. The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.

3. Every degree program offered by the institution engages students in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information; in mastering modes of inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.
4. The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity of the world in which students live and work.
5. The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their programs and the institution's mission.

Argument

3.B.1

As a state institution, NSU's General Education program complies with OSRHE Academic Policy Manual Section 3.14.6. Consequently, the General Education Outcomes are designed to create a "foundation for richer lives, careers, and citizenship" that supports NSU's educational mission as a regional university. They cover the broad areas of English, math, science, fine arts, social sciences, and physical education.

To insure currency and rigor, General Education Learning Objectives and Outcomes are reviewed by the General Education Committee. The General Education Curriculum culminates in a General Education Capstone Course that gauges competence and further prepares individuals for upper and graduate-level classes while polishing analytical skills needed to succeed in an ever-changing, globally competitive economy. The course also includes a national exam, and the results are used to evaluate the general education student learning objectives and course sequence.

Because OSRHE policies drive General Education Curriculum requirements for Oklahoma academic institutions, they promote uniform transferability of classes as set forth in the OSRHE Transfer Guide.

General Education Oversight

The General Education program provides the foundation for NSU's educational mission. The Student Assessment and Learning Committee and the General Education Committee periodically review General Education Classes for currency and rigor (see 3.A.1 and 3.A.2). In addition, upper and graduate-level course objectives are designed to reinforce and integrate the desired General Education student learning objectives.

HLC Assessment Academy

During membership in the HLC Assessment Academy, NSU focused on data collection, review, and sharing of data outcomes. NSU used data outcomes to:

- Revise student learning objectives for General Education and other core classes,

- Implement Degrees of Excellence as possible measures of construct validity of NSU's Core Values, and
- Identify non-cognitive variables that might affect persistence and completion rates.

Jointly, these processes create a foundation for student success in any of NSU's undergraduate, graduate, or professional degree programs.

3.B.2

Although OSRHE sets the basic General Education Outcomes, NSU tailors these outcomes to more measurable terms, determines what classes satisfy these objectives, and aligns appropriate learning activities and assessment methodology. As such, NSU determines the purpose, content, and objectives of its General Education Curriculum.

To maintain uniformity and rigor, General Education Syllabi are standardized. Course numbers, class descriptions, and credit hours are published online in the NSU undergraduate catalog.

Assessment Academy

During the HLC Assessment Academy, NSU attended a number of HLC training sessions with HLC mentors, senior scholars, and peer institutions. As such, membership nurtured a culture of assessment that encourages performance-based student learning objectives, as well as alignment of course learning activities and assessment methodology. It also encouraged development and review of alignment documents to reinforce General Education Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) in upper and graduate-level classes. This process serves to further refine student analytical skills and inspire a desire for lifelong learning that transcends the academic experience.

The General Education Committee, which is made of up faculty from each general education content area and staff who work with freshmen, annually review the General Education SLOs for currency and rigor (GE Template). The committee also reviews and discusses data collected from the previous year's activities.

3.B.3

NSU subscribes to the Boyer Model for its retention, tenure, and promotion processes. This model encourages faculty to engage students in the acquisition and discovery of knowledge. It encourages faculty to create immersive learning and cutting-edge research activities that transform traditional classroom learning outcomes into action. At NSU, students work side-by-side with faculty in high-level research projects, jam with music legends such as Doc Severinsen, learn classical art techniques with world-renowned artists, and master hands-on learning techniques in the classroom.

Immersive Learning and Capstone Experiences

Many degree programs include an internship, practicum, or capstone experience. Although requirements slightly differ, capstone courses generally require students to take a comprehensive exam or develop a professional portfolio that requires:

- Researching and collecting certain types of information,
- Analyzing and synthesizing scholarly articles,
- Creating an original contribution to the educational community,
- Writing a scholarly article, and
- Communicating in a reflective manner about an immersive learning opportunity.

Pre-and-Post Self-Evaluation Assessments

NSU also engages students in reflective inquiry through self-evaluations. Many courses require students to complete pre-and-post self-evaluation assessments that reflect integration and understanding of knowledge. Pre-and post-tests are recorded, and students are able to chart progress before, during, and after the class (see Student Assessment Activity Report).

This methodology is recently being tested in University Strategies and other courses. For example, the fall 2015 University Strategy pre-and post-test assessments revealed improvement after NSU refined General Education SLOs due to membership in the HLC Assessment Academy (80% of students surveyed (n=756) mastered the revised learning objectives). Furthermore, NSU continues to revise and refine its courses and processes based on data collected through all assessment processes.

Oklahoma Research Day

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. In 2015, NSU enjoyed the highest percentage of participants among all Oklahoma universities (16%) at Oklahoma Research Day (n=225 of 1,383 participants). NSU's 225 poster presentations set the bar for academic excellence by addressing topics such as:

- Impact Behavior of First-Time and Developmental Students,
- Susceptibility of Burkholderia Cepacia Complex Isotopes from Cystic Fibrosis Patients,
- Molecular Farming: Biodegradable Plastics,
- Social and Political Empowerment of Women in the MENA and Sub-Saharan Africa, and
- A Proteomic Approach to Analyze Novel InteractiCons of Mcm10 in DNA Damage Repair Pathway.

American Indian Symposium

As it does each year, NSU sponsors the Annual Symposium on the American Indian. During this event, students make presentations, conduct research, participate in musical concerts and a Powwow, and attend lectures and seminars focusing on indigenous languages and culture revitalization.

Program Reviews and Academic Prioritization

Every academic department participates in an annual Program Review that augments the Academic Prioritization Process, thereby addressing rigor and currency of course offerings (see 3.A.1). These processes serve to refine curriculum to more adequately meet the ever changing, globally competitive needs of society.

3.B.4

NSU's Mission Statement emphasizes human and cultural diversity. It acknowledges NSU's "rich educational heritage of the Cherokee Nation," and NSU's duty to "provide its diverse communities with lifelong learning through a broad array of undergraduate, graduate, and professional doctoral degree programs."

NSU's Core Values further highlight diversity as follows:

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 emphasized both in terms of the compositions of the student, faculty, and staff populations as well as academic freedom in research, scholarly activities in the classroom, and a variety of diverse class offerings (see 1.C.2 and 3.B.4).

Awards for Diversity

The Tulsa Chamber of Commerce's Diversity Business Council (MOSAIC) named NSU as one of the "top 25 organizations (in Oklahoma) with an inclusive workplace culture in the region" in 2013, 2014, and 2015. As stated by the Chamber, "Businesses honored with this title have gone above and beyond to support diversity." Award recipients were selected based on five key factors:

- CEO commitment,
- Supplier diversity,
- Internal policies,
- Diverse people, and
- Public outreach and awareness.

The 21st Annual Winds of Change College Issue also recognized NSU as the “Number 1 producer of Native American degrees.”

The 2015 President’s Report further evidences NSU’s commitment to human and cultural diversity (see 1.C.2). Some examples include:

- Racial diversity – 44% of NSU’s student population are minorities. NSU enjoys the highest number of American Indians of any higher learning academic institution in the United States;
- Financial diversity – 69% of full-time NSU students received some type of need-based financial aid;
- Diversity in course delivery options – 60% of NSU students take at least one online course and many request weekend or eight-week classes to accommodate work schedules;
- Cultural diversity – 32% of NSU students are Native American (including 10% of Multi-Racial students identifying as Native American), 4.1% Hispanic, 2.1% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1.6% international students.

Initiatives and Programs that Support Diversity

NSU receives a broad array of grant awards that support various initiatives and programs that strengthen diversity. Five examples include:

- The MLK (Martin Luther King) Day of Service Award,
- The 2015 Symposium on the American Indian,
- The Alliance for Minority Participation,
- Arts of Indigenous Cultures, and
- NASNTI Indigenous Scholar Development Center.

Diversity in Curriculum Offerings

NSU offers unique academic programs that directly address diversity (see 1.C). Examples include:

- American Indian Studies,
- Asian Studies (minor),
- Cherokee Cultural Studies,

- Counseling (M.S.)
- Special Education – Autism Spectrum Disorders (M.S. Ed.),
- Special Education – Mild-Moderate Disorders (B.S. Ed), and
- Women and Gender Studies (minor).

General Education classes also emphasize diversity (see 1.C). Some examples include:

- Cherokee Cultural Heritage,
- Comparative Religions,
- Intercultural Communication,
- Language Courses,
- Theater Appreciation,
- World Literature, and
- World Geography.

Other classes further emphasize diversity (see 1.C). Some examples include:

- Adolescent Development,
- Aging Processes and Long Term Care,
- African American Writers,
- Applied Psychology,
- Children and Individuals with Exceptionalities,
- Comparative Religion,
- Feminist and Social Activism,
- Global Humanities,
- Human Diversity and Social Work,
- Human Rights,
- Individuals with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders,
- Latino Cultures,

- Religion and Spirituality,
- Russian-Culture.
- Special Education, and
- World Music.

Library Collection Diversity

NSU libraries take pride in offering a diverse library collection as evidenced by multicultural-educational-resources and an extensive Native American collection that includes an original Cherokee treaty signed by Stand Waite. In addition, the Tahlequah Library recently hosted "Native Words, Native Warriors," a Smithsonian exhibit of World War I and II Native American code talkers. These resources and collections evidence NSU's ongoing commitment to diversity.

Resources to support all program endeavors in working with individuals from diverse backgrounds and characterized by diverse belief systems, ability levels, and socio-economic levels are available on all campuses through online databases and daily cross-campus courier services.

Diversity in Student Services

NSU is committed to diversity in student service accommodations. In addition to ADA accommodations, NSU offers counseling, tutoring, and veterans' services as well as an array of other disability services designed to create an open and accessible learning environment.

3.B.5

NSU subscribes to the Boyer Model for its faculty retention, tenure, and promotion processes. Evaluations for tenure or promotion address excellence in:

- Effective classroom teaching,
- Scholarly activities,
- Contribution to the institution and profession, and
- Performance of non-teaching semi-administrative or administrative duties.

The Boyer model also encourages faculty to recruit NSU students to assist in scholarship, creative work, research, and the discovery of knowledge. Some additional examples of faculty mentoring and sponsorship include the:

- Faculty Mentors,
- Student poster displays,
- National History Day,

- Moot Court Competition,
- Model United Nations,
- Research Day at the State Capitol,
- Oklahoma Research Day, and
- Presentations at professional conferences.

NSU Supports Research and Scholarly Activity

NSU faculty and staff authored more than 185 books, peer-reviewed articles, and conference papers in FY14-15 (see Deans' Reports listed in 4.B.1). To assist in these scholarly endeavors, NSU provides:

- Faculty Research Grants,
- Faculty Development Grants (presentations at seminars and conferences),
- Service Learning Grants (for innovative service learning activities in the classroom), and
- Teaching and Learning Grants (for innovative technology in the classroom).

As evidenced by the Employment Engagement Survey (2015), 87% of faculty and staff agree they have the resources they need to do their jobs. As a result, the 2015 College Portrait reveals that 92% of seniors surveyed believe NSU emphasizes providing support to help students succeed academically.

Awards and Recognition

NSU recognizes faculty members who achieve tenure or promotion as well as faculty members of extraordinary merit (see 1.B.2). Some awards for extraordinary merit include the:

- Circle of Excellence Award for Teaching,
- Circle of Excellence Award for Research, and
- Circle of Excellence Award for Service.

NSU also publishes outstanding accomplishments in the Academic Times and Reflections Newsletter. The NSU libraries regularly display faculty and staff scholarship and works of art.

3.C - Core Component 3.C

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

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

Argument

3.C.1

NSU faculty and professional staff work diligently to achieve NSU's mission of providing high-quality educational programs, student support, and community service to the region. This is evidenced by NSU's recognition as the "Best Regional University in Oklahoma" by Oklahoma Living Magazine for the past two years in a row. In 2014, *U.S. News & World Report: Best Colleges* ranked NSU:

- 34th place for Top Public Schools,
- 29th place for Best Colleges for Veterans, and
- 84th place for Best Regional Universities.

This recognition is due, in part, to NSU's well-qualified faculty and staff. This is evidenced as follows:

- The number of full-time faculty has remained steady, averaging 340 full-time and 270 part-time faculty over the past four years,
- 63% of NSU full-time faculty have more than 5 years of service,
- 98% of full-time faculty possess graduate degrees, and

- 75% of full-time faculty possess the highest terminal degree offered in their field of study.

As outlined in the Faculty Handbook, faculty have responsibility for delivering quality instruction, engaging in scholarly activities, and supporting the institution and profession through service. Any faculty overloads must be approved by the program chair with dean oversight, thereby freeing faculty to conduct research, scholarly pursuits and service activities.

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).

Hiring Practices and Verification of Credentials

NSU's hiring practices contained in the Staff Hiring Guide, Faculty Search Guide, and NSU's Employment Application System Improvement (EASI) System are designed to promote the selection of highly qualified individuals. For example, a screening committee reviews and verifies credentials during the selection process. Potential candidates are interviewed by:

- The screening committee,
- Department chair,
- Academic Dean or Associate Dean, and
- President, Provost, or Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Through this thorough process, a variety of perspectives are brought to bear on the functional qualifications of faculty candidates (see 5.A.4).

NSU's practice is to hire faculty with terminal degrees although ABD candidates or those with graduate degrees and exceptional qualifications are considered on a temporary basis. If hired on a conditional basis, deans and department chairs support and monitor the progress toward completion of the terminal degree.

Diversified Faculty

NSU has a healthy combination of new and seasoned faculty who provide fresh perspectives anchored in wisdom and institutional memory. 63% of faculty have over five years of service, and the mean average is 9.7 years of service. Faculty classifications are as follows:

- 23% - Professor
- 19% - Associate Professor
- 33%- Assistant Professor
- 24% - Instructor
- 1% - Lecturer

The College Portrait Comparison Chart, further evidences diversity:

- 51% of faculty are female, and
- 21% of faculty are minority.

This diversity serves to provide a broad foundation for oversight of curriculum development and establishing expectations for student performance (see 4.A.).

Accessible Faculty

NSU faculty are readily available to assist students. In fact, 90% of seniors reported that faculty members provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments. In addition, NSU offers:

- A student-to-faculty ratio of 16:1,
- Enrollment is capped at 35 students or less for most online classes,
- 79% of undergraduate classes have fewer than 30 students.

Faculty-student interaction is facilitated by regular office hours, and some faculty maintain virtual offices on Blackboard (see 3.C.5).

3.C.2

NSU follows the policies and procedures promulgated by HLC and the RUSO Policy 3.1.2 regarding faculty credentials. NSU verifies the credentials of prospective faculty members prior to hiring. This process includes reference checks and review of official transcripts (see RUSO Manual 3.2.3). Once hired, the Office of Academic Affairs maintains documentation such as employment applications, resumes, and transcripts.

Faculty are required to possess a master's degree in their subject area or skilled professional experience (such as scuba or firearms instructors). In accordance with RUSO Policy 3.2.2, degrees must be awarded by a regionally accredited or internationally-recognized institution. Faculty Handbook Section 3.2.3 outlines faculty qualifications:

- Professor - An earned doctorate degree awarded by a regionally accredited or internationally recognized institution. The rank of professor may be awarded to individuals who have completed a non-doctoral terminal degree program requiring a minimum of 60 graduate hours.
- Associate Professor - An earned doctorate degree awarded by a regionally accredited or internationally recognized institution. The rank of associate professor may be awarded to individuals who have completed a non-doctoral terminal degree program requiring a minimum of 60 graduate hours.
- Assistant Professor - An earned doctorate degree awarded by a regionally accredited or internationally recognized institution. The rank of assistant professor may be awarded to individuals who have completed all requirements in a doctoral program except the

dissertation (or equivalent requirement) or have completed a non-doctoral terminal degree program requiring a minimum of 60 graduate hours

- Instructor - An earned master's degree awarded by a regionally accredited or internationally recognized institution.
- Others - Personnel who are not subject to assignment of rank (such as special instructors, lecturers, graduate assistants, adjunct instructors, part-time instructors, or other title).
- Graduate Faculty Status - In order to ensure and continually improve the quality of NSU's graduate programs, only approved graduate faculty may teach graduate courses or serve on the Graduate Council. Graduate faculty status is conferred upon faculty following a review by the Graduate Dean and Graduate Council of an individual's application, current resume reflecting scholarly activity, and recommendations from the appropriate department chair and college dean.
- Emeritus Status: RUSO, at its discretion, may honor recommendations of University presidents to grant retired faculty members emeritus status after retirement. Emeritus status is only conferred to retiring faculty who have served NSU for at least ten years.

Faculty credentials for specialty programs are monitored for compliance with HLC and RUSO guidelines. These include:

- Concurrent (Dual) enrollment - Concurrent enrollment classes are taught by NSU faculty, thereby ensuring RUSO guidelines are met.
- Consortial or contractual agreements - NSU has no consortial or contractual teaching agreements.
- College of Extended Learning - Faculty teaching CEL college credit classes go through the same selection process as any other NSU faculty member, thereby complying with RUSO guidelines.

3.C.3

Effective teaching is central to NSU's mission. As per RUSO Policy 3.3.5, every non-tenured faculty member, regardless of appointment type, is evaluated annually. Notifications of reappointment or non-reappointment are sent out by March 1. Tenured faculty are reviewed a minimum of every three years. Post-tenure reviews include preparation of faculty portfolio that highlights activities in teaching, scholarship and service to the institution and the profession (Faculty Handbook 3.3.1 and 3.3.2).

Faculty Evaluations

NSU subscribes to the Boyer Model for its retention, tenure, and promotion processes (see 1.B.2 and 3.B.5). RTP reviews are conducted by tenured faculty, the department chair, dean, and Provost. According to the Employment Engagement Survey (2015), 75% of all NSU employees

have participated in a performance review in the past 12 months. Tenured faculty are evaluated at least every three years.

In addition, faculty are periodically reviewed for the following purposes:

- Salary and merit increases,
- Graduate faculty status,
- Faculty Research Grants,
- Faculty Development Funds, and
- Release time.

Student Evaluations

Students evaluate all classes taught by NSU faculty, including adjuncts. The main purpose of course evaluations is to serve as a diagnostic tool to improve instruction. The evaluations are anonymous, completed online, and managed through NSU's Blackboard survey function. The survey includes 21 Likert-scale items and question 21 is an overall rating of instructor effectiveness (1-to-5 scale). Results are readily available to faculty and reviewed by the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs, college deans, and department chairs.

Students evaluate more than 350 faculty each semester. Question 21, overall faculty effectiveness and quality of instruction, was 4.29 (F-15) based on a 5.0 scale. No category on the course evaluations fell below a 4.11 rating (Class Evaluations Summary and Spreadsheet).

3.C.4

The Boyer Model encourages professional development, peer review, scholarship, and research for retention, tenure, and promotion (see 1.B.2 and 3.C.2). NSU supports faculty in attaining Boyer standards 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

NSU encourages professional development. For example, new faculty participate in a faculty orientation that addresses university opportunities and orientation topics such as:

- Human Resources information,
- NSU Student Support Services,
- Professional development opportunities,
- Syllabi and student learning objectives,
- Technology tools and support, and
- Title IX.

Professional Development

NSU supports the sharing of teaching techniques and scholarly endeavors in pedagogy by hosting its own professional development activities. Faculty are also encouraged to attend professional seminars and Community and Collaboration Day during the fall and spring semesters. Some recent Community and Collaboration Days Training Topics included:

- Technology Solutions for Research Collaboration,
- The Few, the Proud, the Published,
- Fulbright,
- Best Practices in Service Learning, and
- Alumni and Faculty Mentoring.

Center for Teaching and Learning

The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) offers professional development workshops throughout the year. The CTL posts workshop and conference training materials on the CTL website and publishes a CTL Excellence in Teaching and Learning Newsletter. Some recent training topics include:

- Writing Good Test Questions,
- Student Portfolios,
- Excel and Mail Merge,
- Plagiarism Software,
- Podcasts and Blogs,
- SPSS, and
- Video Editing.

CTL also offers in-person and online training workshops designed to ensure familiarity with Blackboard, software, and classroom technology.

Faculty Support

Faculty are afforded professional development funds on a competitive basis. Some examples include:

- Faculty Development Awards - \$54,000 is annually set aside for faculty who desire to present a paper at a conference,
- Faculty Research Grants – The Faculty Research Committee annually awards \$57,000 for research grants on a competitive basis,
- Service Learning Grants– Faculty may receive up to \$1,000 to support inclusion of innovative service learning activities in the classroom,
- Teaching and Learning Grants – Faculty may receive up to \$1,000 to support innovative technology in the classroom, and
- Employee Tuition Discount - Full-time employees are entitled to a 50% tuition discount.

According to the 2015 Employment Engagement Survey, 87% of faculty and staff agree that they have the resources they need to do their job.

Quality Matters Certification

NSU provides funds for full-time employees who desire to obtain Quality Matters (QM) Certification. QM courses include:

- Applying the Quality Matters Rubric – Prepares faculty with tools needed to use the QM Rubric in designing and evaluating online courses, and
- Quality Matters Peer Reviewer Course – Prepares experienced online faculty to become QM Certified Peer Reviewers.

To date, 16 faculty are QM Peer Reviewers, 3 are QM Master Reviewers, and 121 faculty have completed Applying the Quality Matters Rubric course (see 3.B).

Online Educators Certification and Online Course Reviews

Faculty who teach online or blended classes are required to be certified as Online Educators (see 3.A.3). The Online Education Certification consists of two online training courses that are based on the Quality Matters pedagogy:

- Online Educators Certification 1 (OEC-1) covers training to navigate through the Blackboard online system, and
- Online Educators Certification 2 (OEC-2) covers course design and QM standards.

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 review online classes submitted by faculty who desire NSU certification for online classes.

3.C.5

NSU faculty are readily available to students in person, online, and by telephone. Faculty contact information is published on the online faculty directory and outside faculty offices. In addition, standardized syllabi require faculty contact information, office hours, and class times.

Full-time faculty maintain regular office hours in accordance with Faculty Handbook Section 4.8, and part-time faculty must keep a number of office hours proportional to their teaching load.

Timely Communications

Faculty monitor e-mail on a timely basis, and many maintain virtual offices on Blackboard. This readily affords online access to faculty. Additional communication tools used by faculty include:

- The Blackboard online gradebook,
- Blackboard online discussion boards,
- Blogs,
- Blackboard Collaborate, and
- Instant Messaging.

In addition, many faculty are active on Facebook, Instagram, and other social media platforms. According to the College Portrait, 90% of seniors reported that faculty members provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments.

Immersive Learning

Faculty encourage student inquiry and and immersive learning thorough sponsorship of internships, practicums, joint research, and scholarly publications (see 3.B.3). This is evidenced by NSU's support of:

- Career counseling,
- Independent study projects,
- Study Abroad opportunities,
- Collaborative research and scholarly articles,
- Undergraduate honors classes, and
- Thesis committees.

Student Organization Sponsors

Faculty also encourage student inquiry by participating as sponsors for more than 100 student organizations (see 1.A.1 and 3.D.5). 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.6

NSU hires well-qualified staff members. 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 (see 3.C.4).

Staff Support

NSU provides training for staff members. For example, NSU conducted an extremely productive university-wide seminar primarily for staff employees in 2014. Professional speakers from the Walt Disney Institute paved the way for the creation of a campus-wide initiative where employees adopted the "I care, therefore I will" motto. During the training, employees learned how to create a safe environment, provide for a caring experience, be timely with responses, improve communications, and become a model of consistency. These principles were

subsequently incorporated into the Strategic Plan as Dedication to Service and Quality Standards.

Student Support Services

NSU's staff members provide a broad array of student support services. For example, NSU made a tremendous investment in 2012 to hire 27 full-time advisors to provide professional advising Monday through Friday from 8-5. Since implementation, this "dual advising model" has been extremely successful (see 3.D.3). It provides high-touch, personalized advising from entry to matriculation. Students are encouraged to declare a major their first semester and regularly meet with advisors. The advisors are well-qualified, attending both internal and external professional development training provided by organizations such as the National Oklahoma Advising Association (NACADA) and the Oklahoma Advising Association (OCADA). In fact, NSU hosted the OCADA annual conference in 2014 and 2015.

The Student Academic Success Center

The Student Academic Success Center (SASC) refers students to additional student support services. The President's Annual Report 2015 evidences support services rendered as follows:

- 5,937 hours of free face-to-face tutoring,
- A Second Languages Lab,
- A Writing Center,
- SmarThinking online tutoring,
- An indigenous Scholar Development Center,
and
- TRIO services.

The President's Annual Report (2015) highlights additional student support services as follows:

- The Hawk Reach Counseling Center provided 1,128 free hours of counseling services by Hawk Reach counselors including a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor, and a Licensed Professional Counselor who regularly participate in professional development activities to maintain their licenses,
- Student internships in 11 Vision Centers that served 60,000 patients and 3 Speech-Language Pathology Clinics that provided 2,600 hours of community service, and
- Service learning opportunities that resulted in more than 80K hours of community service.

NSU also provides financial assistance and co-curricular activities. Those who work in offices that support these activities have access to professional development geared to their areas of expertise through state and national organizations. Examples include:

- The Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid annually provides more than \$73 million in financial aid with 69% of NSU students receiving some need-based financial aid,
- The Writing Center assists students who wish to develop their writing skills,
- Housing and Residence Life ensures student engagement in curricular and co-curricular activities that boost student success by providing a Resident Assistant for each resident hall,
- The Fitness Center employs health majors who assist students and NSU employees with state-of-the-art equipment and personalized training needs,
- Student Disability Services participate in training by statewide agencies such as ABLE Tech and the Oklahoma Schools for the Blind, thereby providing up-to-date disability awareness programs, support, and training for the campus community,
- International Programs employees attend development activities such as CIEE or EF Study Abroad conferences and assist international students and scholars with university admission requirements, visas, academic orientation, academic support (e.g., mentoring, advising, etc.), and cultural acclimation,
- The Center for Teaching and Learning offers ongoing support and professional development related to systems such as Blackboard, Microsoft Office, and e-mail services, and
- The Office of Veterans Affairs is a Yellow Ribbon School (providing GI Bill opportunities). The G.I. Jobs 2014 List of Military Friendly Schools ranked NSU in the top 20% of schools nationwide for embracing America's student veterans, and U.S. News and World Report ranked NSU 29th in the category "Best Colleges for Veterans" in 2014.

To supplement professional development opportunities, NSU offers a 50% reduction in tuition for up to six credit hours for enrollment in NSU courses each term.

Overall Student Satisfaction with Support Services

According to the College Portrait, 92% of seniors believe NSU emphasizes providing support to help students succeed academically. Some surveys used by NSU to gauge student satisfaction include:

- Advising Surveys,
- Senior Surveys,

- Alumni Surveys,
- Graduation Surveys,
- Student Class Evaluations,
- American Indian Survey,
- Learning Outcomes Assessment,
- Undergraduate Outcomes Survey,
- Employment Outcomes Survey,
- College Results Online, and
- National Survey of Student Engagement.

Career Services facilitates networking and career opportunities. According to the President's Annual Report 2015, Career Services provided:

- 1,121 career services events,
- 1,121 career assessments,
- 20,189 job postings, and
- 5,963 contacts with registered employers.

Consequently, NSU assesses degrees of student satisfaction in order to implement appropriate student support measures.

3.D - Core Component 3.D

The institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching.

1. The institution provides student support services suited to the needs of its student populations.
2. The institution provides for learning support and preparatory instruction to address the academic needs of its students. It has a process for directing entering students to courses and programs for which the students are adequately prepared.
3. The institution provides academic advising suited to its programs and the needs of its students.
4. The institution provides to students and instructors the infrastructure and resources necessary to support effective teaching and learning (technological infrastructure,

scientific laboratories, libraries, performance spaces, clinical practice sites, museum collections, as appropriate to the institution's offerings).

5. The institution provides to students guidance in the effective use of research and information resources.

Argument

3.D.1

NSU provides excellent support for student learning and effective teaching. This support takes into account their backgrounds, academic preparation levels, and predictors of academic success.

For some students, these services start when recruiters visit local high schools. During these visits, prospective students learn about NSU, college life, admission requirements, financial aid, and how to apply for scholarships.

Given that approximately 33% of NSU's students represent the first-generation of the family to attend college, NSU provides special care to assist students and guard against feelings of being lost or overwhelmed by the higher education environment. Some examples include:

- Diversity Programs that target recruiting of underrepresented minority high school students and provide assistance with the ACT and application procedures,
- Veterans Recruiting Services and an ROTC unit provide a natural gathering point for military-oriented students,
- A newly renovated CASE Building that is a "one-stop-enrollment center,"
- Student Orientation, Advising, and Registration (SOAR) where faculty, advisors, and administrators gather to provide information and assistance in one location,
- Full-time Advisors who provide pre-enrollment support by explaining admission requirements, financial aid, academic programs, and 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,
- Mandatory orientation sessions for new students,
- Faculty and staff who welcome students as they move to residence halls during Student Move-in Day,
- Welcome Week activities that offer information on student support services, student associations, and numerous social, recreational, and academic events on campus,

- 2+2 SmartChoice partnerships that facilitate transfer of classes from two year colleges to NSU,
- Transfer Days and Transfer Student Orientation where 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, and
- An online Net Price Calculator provides tuition information and a preliminary estimate of federal, state, and institutional aid eligibility.

Ongoing Student Support

NSU offers a number of programs and support services designed to help students enhance study and leadership skills, explore potential careers, and engage diverse cultures and the local community. Student support services include actively-engaged faculty, state-of-the-art classrooms, professional counseling services (HawkReach), support for research and information needs, a student early alert system through the Student Academic Success Center, and mandatory tutoring in certain developmental courses. Additional services and programs include:

- Faculty and Alumni Mentors assist new students who desire academic support during their first year,
- The Office of Student Financial Services provides up-to-date online information related to tuition, fees, financial aid, and scholarships at NSU,
- The President's Leadership Class polishes leadership characteristics,
- The Honors Program accommodates academically-talented students who desire to work with distinguished faculty, conduct research, and participate in co-curricular cultural experiences,
- The Office-of-International-Programs serves as a cultural exchange center, publishes a newsletter (International Matters), sponsors an International World Fair, and provides advising services on issues such as immigration compliance, IRS, and Social Security,
- The English as a Second Language Program provides year-round eight-week sessions of intensive English instruction,
- Career Services provides personalized support for students desiring to polish resumes and interviewing skills (see 3.C.6),
- The Writing Lab offers one-on-one appointments designed to assist with citation formats, classroom presentations, and writing assignments,

- The Department of Public Safety provides year round services, including an emergency messaging service, by officers who are certified by the State of Oklahoma,
- The Violence Prevention Office offers victim services and violence prevention initiatives that focus on national awareness campaigns such as sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking,
- The Student Health Services and Clinic provides ambulatory medical services and patient education,
- The Fitness Center is designed with state-of-the-art equipment for health and recreational needs, and
- The NSU Help Desk assists with Blackboard access and technology issues.

Student Services also provides student and community support. As evidenced by the 2015 President's Report, Student Services provided:

- 5,937 hours of free tutoring,
- 1,128 hours of counseling through Hawk Reach Counseling Services,
- Assistance transferring 91,260 credit hours from other academic institutions, and
- More than 93,000 hours of annual community service (resulting in NSU being named to President Obama's Service Honor Roll for the past five consecutive years - 2011-2015).

In addition, Student Services coordinates:

- The Annual Awards Ceremonies,
- Student volunteering,
- Lecture series,
- Health, alcohol, and drug education,
- Public safety (Violence Against Women grants),
- Emergency preparedness,
- Greek life, and
- Disability services.

Student Associations

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 more than 100 active student organizations. Some examples include:

- Optometric Student Association,
- American Federation of Teachers,

- International Student Association,
- Physical Education Majors Club,
- Psychology Club, and
- Rho Theta Sigma Honor Society.

Financial Support

The 2015 College-Portrait-Comparison-Chart reveals that 90% of beginning full-time undergraduate students receive some form of financial aid or scholarships. The 2015 President's Report further reveals:

- 69% of all full-time undergraduate students received some type of need-based financial aid,
- NSU awarded approximately \$73 million in financial aid in 2014,
- NSU awarded more than \$4.2M to more than half of NSU's Native American student population (1,357 of 2,519 Native American students), and
- NSU created a new "Light the Way Emergency Scholarship Fund" designed for students in times of crisis.

The Office of Student Financial Services maintains a comprehensive website that provides up-to-date information about financial aid and scholarship opportunities. 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.

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. According to the 2015 President's Report, Career Services provided:

- 21,189 job postings,
- 5,963 marketing contacts with potential employers,
- 70 career service events, and
- 1,121 career assessments (creating uploading resumes, polishing interviewing skills, locating internships, and providing service learning opportunities).

Social Media

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, blogs, Wikis, YouTube, LinkedIn, and Instant Messaging. 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.

3.D.2

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

Learning Support, Academic Preparation, and Student Evaluation

Membership in the HLC Assessment Academy and the HLC Persistence and Completion Academy strengthened NSU's culture of assessment and student support services (see 4.B.1). For example, every student entering NSU is evaluated to ensure course placement that is appropriate to the student's academic strengths and needs. Some tools used for learning support, academic preparation and student evaluation include:

- Entry Level Assessment and Placement - ACT scores, GPA, and curricular requirements (such as 15 high school units);
- Accuplacer CPT (secondary placement) - AccuPlacer tests appropriately place students whose ACT scores indicate a deficiency in preparation for college-level work. The FY13-14 Annual Report of Student Assessment reveals that 922 students required placement due to ACT scores. Many required assistance in more than one academic area (with mathematics outnumbering other assessment areas). Success rates in developmental courses ranged from a low of 54.6% in Math 0133 (Intermediate Algebra) to a high of 70% in ENGL 0123 (Writing Enhancement);
- Writeplacer (English proficiency) - writing exam to evaluate organization, structure, grammar, spelling, and critical thinking skills;
- Supplemental Instruction - Due to the large number of students being placed in zero-credit, developmental courses, NSU piloted a supplemental instruction course in fall 2015 that is credit-bearing and taken concurrently with the developmental course. The program is new; however, initial faculty comments indicate that the supplemental is improving performance rates in developmental courses;
- General Education: ETS Proficiency Profile - NSU uses the ETS Proficiency Profile to evaluate General Education competencies. The FY13-14 Annual Report of Student Assessment reveals that NSU's ETS Proficiency Profile was on par with national mean scores (FY13 - 436.03; SP14 - 434.7);
- Student Satisfaction: Freshman Survey, Senior Survey, NSSE Entry-Level Assessment - NSU uses these instruments to measure student satisfaction. For example, the 2015 College Portrait reveals that 76% of NSU graduates are employed and 32% plan to enroll in graduate school (see 4.B.2).
- Freshman Survey - 757 students completed the Freshman Survey through their University Strategies class in fall 2015. Data outcomes revealed 33% of entering freshmen were first

generation college students (which is a consideration in determining class sizes and student support services).

Program Assessment

Program coordinators complete a Programs Outcomes Assessment standardized form that records assessment results in the major area of study each June. These reports include assessment of student learning outcomes, the numbers of students assessed, learning activities, assessment instruments, requests for institutional services, and are annually compiled by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness.

In addition, program coordinators use license examination results, pre-and post-tests, and course-embedded assessments to assess student learning outcomes. This assessment reviews resulted in positive curricular changes in all but four undergraduate programs in AY 2014-2015.

3.D.3

NSU offers academic, vocational, and personal advising services for all students. This includes unique programs for freshmen, honor students, and student athletes. Jointly, professional advisors and faculty provide insight as to enrollment options and career opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students.

Dual Advising

A major shift in advising took place in 2013 when NSU implemented a dual (shared) advising model and hired 27 professional, full-time advisors whose sole role is to advise students (see 1.A.2). University advisors handle new students while academic advisors focus on class choice and declaration of a major, thus creating a dual advising model. Faculty supplement the professional advisors, especially in the classroom and with career choices.

The dual advising model is aggressive in that students are assigned an advisor when they first enroll. Freshmen are required to attend a preregistration advising session, and advisors encourage students to declare a major in their first semester.

The goal of the advising model is to maximize the opportunities for productive contact among students, professional advisors, and faculty members. Since implementation, 91% of students advised report satisfaction with the advising services. This overwhelming degree of student satisfaction may be attributed to personalized, one-on-one support in areas such as:

- Course selection,
- Choice of major,
- Understanding General Education requirements,
- Student support services, and
- Referrals to faculty for specific class questions.

Centralized Registration and Orientation

NSU also redesigned its registration and orientation processes. The redesign provides a “one stop shopping center” where a team of registrars, advisors, financial aid consultants, and faculty meet in one location, multiple times a year, to assist students with any needs that might arise.

Student-Athlete Advising

Coaches monitor athletes to ensure student academic success. They seek additional student support for athletes whose midterm grade in a class drops below a “C.” The average GPA of student athletes in 2014 was 2.9 on a 4.0 scale with 54% attaining a 3.0 or better.

Advising Nontraditional Students

41.7% of NSU’s undergraduate students are 25 and older. This indicates that more students are employed and have families. To accommodate busy lifestyles, Degree Works allows students to track progress toward degree completion and GoNSU allows students to access transcripts and view degree plans while at home, work, or school.

Advising and Job Placement

The 2014 President's Annual Report reveals that Career Services posted 60,785 jobs online, performed 1,030 career assessments, and sponsored 139 career service events. As a result, the 2015 College Portrait reveals that 76% of NSU graduates were employed upon graduation (see 4.B.2).

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.

Technological 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. Wireless capabilities in all academic buildings further support student research and classroom instruction.

NSU has adopted a three-year rotation schedule for computers, thereby providing faculty, staff, and students with access to current equipment. Similarly, campus software licenses ensure student access to needed software in the classroom and in 38 computer labs. Specialized software, supporting particular programs and majors, can be requested and loaded in particular labs.

NSU recently updated its website search engine to improve currency and efficiency of website navigation. In addition, NSU redesigned the website to properly display on mobile phone applications, thereby accommodating on-the-go, more technologically-advanced students (see 2.B).

NSU is also the home to state-of-the-art resources, facilities, and infrastructure. Some examples are as follows:

- NSU classrooms are equipped with computers, digital projectors, internet connections, and approximately 35% are equipped with interactive smartboards;
- ITV classrooms and web-conferencing rooms are available on all campus locations;
- Faculty have access to a Blackboard shell for all classes, regardless of whether the class is online, blended, or in-person (see 3.A.3);
- Each campus location enjoys a library with dedicated staff, print collections, and extensive online collections (see 1.A.3);
- NSU has sufficient laboratory space to support programs such as science, computer, and allied health programs (maintaining more than 26 such support labs);
- NSU provides clinical laboratories for health care, optometry, occupational therapy, speech pathology, counseling, and teaching programs. Nursing students work with hands-on software that simulates “live” patient assessment (Shadow Health);
- NSU offers the only VEX Robotics program (fully equipped robotics labs) in the nation;
- Many programs have access to studio and practice spaces. For example, NSU provides a Jazz Lab, an NSU Playhouse for dance and theater, Gallery space for artists, and library space for historical displays faculty publications;
- Teacher candidates work with peers and K-12 students to enhance critical thinking, decision making, and problem solving using STEM objectives; and
- The NSU Help Desk provides technical assistance in person, by phone, and via e-mail 7 days a week from 7 a.m. until 11 p.m.

Students also enjoy wireless internet and printer access in university housing facilities.

3.D.5

NSU provides guidance and support for student research and information services. For example freshmen complete research training and learn citation format in University Strategies and Composition I and II courses. Students in upper division and graduate courses frequently collaborate with faculty and librarians to design presentations, write scholarly articles, and conduct research.

NSU faculty also mentor students conducting research. For example, more than 300 NSU students presented evidence of research projects in 2015 during Undergraduate Research Day and Oklahoma Research Day (see 1.B.2 and 3.B.3).

In addition, the Boyer Model encourages faculty to recruit students for faculty research projects. This relationship is evidenced on budget requests when faculty apply for Faculty Research Grants (see 3.C.4). It is further evidenced by 66 graduate assistants who assist with research grants, prepare labs, and teach undergraduate research classes.

Library Research

Professional librarians are available in person, by telephone, and online to assist with research needs. They provide assistance with library research, library reserves, search methodology, and class-related research needs.

In addition, the library offers a wide array of online training videos and research guides. Some examples include:

- Research tutorials,
- Researching articles and databases,
- Research guides for specific courses,
- Finding electronic reserves,
- Search engines, and
- Citation formats.

Computer Lab Research Assistance

Certain computer labs are staffed with technical consultants who provide student technical assistance. In other labs and at home, students use the NSU Help Line to connect with technology staff that assist with software, research, and Blackboard questions.

Center for Teaching and Learning

The Center for Teaching and Learning offers research-related training classes. Sample examples include:

- SPSS,
- Checkbox Survey Tool,
- Google Forms,
- Survey Monkey,
- MS Excel, and
- Problem Solving Skills.

As evidenced, NSU has a well-defined support network to facilitate the intellectual growth and social maturation of its students in a safe and healthy environment. Dedicated faculty and staff

work in partnerships with students to create lifelong learning experiences that prepare students for success in an extremely competitive, global economy.

3.E - Core Component 3.E

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

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

Argument

3.E.1

NSU fulfills its mission to provide quality education, student support services, and community service by fostering and supporting inquiry, creativity, practice, community service, and social responsibility. A hallmark of the NSU Mission and Strategic Plan is the hands-on, real-world, experiential and immersive learning experiences that enrich and transform our students' academic careers (see 1.B.2 and

3.E.2). NSU fulfills its Mission by:

- Encouraging excellence in acquisition, discovery, and application of knowledge,
- Promoting collaboration and partnerships among students, faculty, alumni, the community, and other higher learning institutions,
- Providing faculty development opportunities,
- Encouraging participation in professional and student organizations,
- Striving for excellence in scholarship,
- Encouraging community service, and
- Providing foundations for research that spark creativity and enrich society.

NSU students learn both inside and outside the classroom. By providing a rich variety of co-curricular learning activities such as internships, mentored research, honors programs, practicum, and service learning, NSU enhances student learning and demonstrates the connections between the academic, social, and employment life. These activities further serve to foster social awareness and responsibility while encouraging curiosity and engagement, thus cultivating a lifelong environment of learning and exploration.

NSU's co-curricular activities contribute to educational experiences of its students. Additional examples include:

- Career service training,
- Clinics,
- Hands-on research projects,
- Thesis requirements,
- Performances in the arts and theater,
- Field Trips,
- ROTC,
- Collegiate Officer Program (COPS),
- Optometry Clinics,
- Student Portfolios, and
- Athlete Training Education Programs.

Community Service

Community service also enhances leadership and communication skills while serving community needs. Some examples include:

- Special Olympics,
- Gear-Up,
- Regional Summit meetings,
- Summer academies,
- Optometry volunteer services for low-income families,
- Reading Clinics for K-12 students,

- Robotics Competition with K-12 students, and
- National Day of Service.

On National Day of Service, approximately 300 volunteers annually assist with community beautification projects. These and other community service activities resulted in NSU's receipt of President Obama's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll Award for the past five consecutive years (see 1.B.2).

Student Organizations

NSU sponsors more than 100 active student organizations that enrich student learning outside the classroom (see 3.D.1). Some co-curricular organizations activities that contribute to overall educational quality include:

- Honor societies,
- The President's Leadership Class,
- Lecture series,
- The Jazz Lab,
- Student Newspaper,
- Book club,
- Intercollegiate athletics,
- Learned Societies (Art, Speech, Drama, Debate, Music), and
- Fraternities and Sororities.

These and other such co-curricular activities allow students to relax and socialize while enhancing cultural and educational awareness.

3.E.2

NSU's mission acknowledges an implicit agreement to provide academic and service learning opportunities both inside and outside the classroom. NSU meets this responsibility by soliciting input regarding student desires and community needs. From such surveys, NSU has developed leadership opportunities in;

- Student Government Association,
- Student organizations,
- Campus activity,

- TRIO Student Support Services, and
- Enriched classes such as the Honors Program and President's Leadership Class.

NSU also offers Immersive Learning opportunities where students use university expertise and guidance to enhance community, economic, and business development. Some examples include:

- Work study opportunities,
- Resident Assistants,
- Internships, practicums, and clinic opportunities,
- Community service projects,
- Campus diversity programs,
- Civic Engagement Council opportunities,
- Volunteer tutors and note takers for Student Disability Services,
- Upper class students who assist new students during Welcome Week and Rookie Bridge Camp, and
- RiverHawks Impacting Student Enrollment (RISE), an organization dedicated to community service, and

In addition, NSU offers immersive learning through:

- Institutional diversity programs that fosters a safe and welcoming environment on campus,
- An Indigenous Scholar Development Center that provides support programs for students of various racial, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds, and
- Study Abroad opportunities.

NSU further demonstrates fulfillment of its mission as follows:

- NSU is devoted to economic development as evidenced by a total regional impact of \$260 million where the estimated return on investment is \$3.56 for every \$1 of ~~standing~~ **standing**,
- Success in research is evidenced by sponsorship of Oklahoma Research Day and NSU Undergraduate Research Day (see 3.B.3).

- The College of Extended Learning targets a more non-traditional audience by offering online college credit and continuing education classes to students who otherwise might not have considered taking college classes (see 1.A.2).

NSU also provides graduate assistant opportunities to more than 65 students who teach classes and assist faculty with research projects.

3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary

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

Summary

NSU takes pride in recruitment, promotion, and tenure procedures that 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 is equally proud of having successfully completed HLC's Assessment Academy and the second year of HLC's Persistence and Completion Academy. These initiatives, coupled with Academic Prioritization, D-23, and the Strategic Plan 2015-23, affirm NSU'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 fulfils 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.

4.A - Core Component 4.A

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

1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews.
2. The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning, or relies on the evaluation of responsible third parties.

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

Argument

4.A.1

Faculty, departments, colleges, the University, and NSU's two governing boards demonstrate responsibility for quality and rigor of NSU's educational programs. In addition, many programs enjoy specialized accreditation, meet licensing and certification requirements, and undergo internal and external reviews conducted by peer reviewers.

Program Review and Academic Prioritization

NSU's two governing boards, OSRHE and RUSO, require periodic internal and external reviews of educational programs offered by Oklahoma academic institutions. This is accomplished during NSU's Program Review and Academic Prioritization processes as well as five-year program reviews. These processes are specifically designed to ensure currency, rigor, and quality of program and course offerings.

Faculty, department chairs, and college deans participate in the Academic Prioritization Process (see 1.D.2 and 3.A.1). Any recommended program or curriculum changes are approved by college faculty, the University Curriculum Committee (formerly CEPC), and the Provost prior to the President's request for approval from NSU's two governing boards, OSRHE and RUSO.

The goal to accomplish during Academic Prioritization is to identify:

- New programs to grow/invest,
- Programs to sustain, revise, and realign,
- Programs to implement in the next three years,
- New online program offerings, and
- Uniform imperatives for all programs.

Of course, faculty and department chairs review existing and new course offerings during the annual Program Review Process. If approved, the department chair presents a program assessment report to the dean that includes a thorough analysis of sustainability of any new program or course offerings. The Program Review Template includes information based on key assessment data, community needs, class enrollment trends, required budget and support services, as well as student enrollment projections and revenue estimates.

NSU routinely conducts student and community surveys in an effort to guide curriculum decisions. Ten examples of outcomes data and assessment tools selected from the Destination 2023 university assessment list include:

- The ETS Proficiency Profile for General Education classes,
- NSU's Institutional Assessment Plan,
- Student end of semester course evaluations,
- Accuplacer placement tests for English and Math,
- Alumni Surveys,
- The CSRDE Graduation and Retention Survey,
- Center for Tribal Studies Surveys,
- The College Board Survey,
- The College Portrait, and
- Undergraduate First Destination Outcomes Survey

Department chairs, deans, and administrators also review results from specialized program accreditation, certification exams, and external and internal program reviews that further ensure quality and rigor of program offerings (see 3.A.1). OSRHE Policy Section 3 requires five-year academic program reviews and Section 3.7 requires low productivity reports for any academic programs that fail to meet five-year average minimum requirements for graduates or headcount.

4.A.2

NSU follows OSRHE Policy 3.10 related to evaluation of transcripts, including credit awards for credit transfer, experiential learning, and prior learning assessment. For example, the department chair (with oversight of the dean) reviews all student requests for transcript of credit, including transfer of credit from out-of-state academic institutions (see 4.A.3), experiential credit, and prior learning credit. If approved by the college, the registrar further reviews the request and makes a final determination related to transcript of the transfer credit. In addition, a final degree check is performed by NSU prior to granting any degree. 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 of department chairs and college dean's approval) oversee experiential learning experiences, whether they consist of internships, study abroad trips, field trips, research, or service learning opportunities. Department chairs periodically review experiential learning

classes, especially during the retention, tenure, or promotion processes. This oversight ensures currency, quality, and rigor of such offerings.

Prior Learning Credit

Department chairs and deans review and approve requests for prior learning credit including CLEP exams, DANTES Subject Standardized Tests, Advanced Placement, and credit for military training. 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 certain discipline or field. The department chair reviews the request for prior learning credit, and the registrar issues final approval to transcript any requested prior learning credit. Then, a final audit of degree requirements is performed prior to graduation.

4.A.3

NSU follows OSHRE Policy Section 3.10.3 related to admission of transfer students and transfer of college credit. To ensure accuracy and integrity, students do not officially graduate until NSU performs a final audit of degree requirements.

In-State Credit Transfer

Transfer of college credit for in-state, accredited academic institutions is simplified by the OSRHE Course Equivalency Transfer Guide. This online transfer guide lists equivalent course transfer numbers for Oklahoma higher education academic institutions. To qualify for transfer, the credit hours must have been earned at an institution fully accredited within the association of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).

Out-of-State Credit Transfer

The department chair (with college dean oversight) approves transfer of out-of-state credit requests. Then, the registrar reviews and provides final approval prior to transcript of the credit transfer request. To qualify for transfer, the credit hours:

- Must have been earned at an academic institution fully accredited by an accrediting agency within CHEA, 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 credit rests with the Registrar.

As stated in the undergraduate catalog, a student must not be on academic or disciplinary suspension during the transfer credit process. In addition, students do not officially graduate until NSU performs a final audit of degree requirements.

4.A.4

Each academic department maintains primary authority to determine and oversee academic programs and course offerings. This includes determination of prerequisites for courses, oversight of course rigor, establishment of student learning outcomes, setting expectations for student learning, and maintaining access to learning resources with the assistance of professional librarians and technology support. Each department makes changes as needed based on regular reviews of course evaluations, specialized accreditation criteria, and external program reviews in accordance with university, college, and departmental guidelines.

Faculty, college deans, the UCC, the Provost and the State Regents approve curriculum changes as part of the Annual Program Review Process. During the Academic Prioritization Process, college deans and the Provost review sustainability and viability of academic programs (4.A.1). This multi-layered approval process contributes to program currency, integrity and rigor while assuring any requested changes support NSU's Mission Statement.

Academic Quality and Course Rigor

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, standardized syllabi, and collaborative participation in the Academic Program Review Process. College deans and administrators monitor data on grade distribution, academic engagement, critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and immersive learning.

Undergraduate and graduate program quality is further ensured through internal and external reviews (see 4.A.5 and 4.B.2). Many undergraduate program offerings require completion of nationwide comprehensive exams, internships, practicums, or capstone experiences. In addition, graduate programs require completion of a thesis, practicum, or clinic experience, and many programs have achieved specialized program accreditation (see 4.A.5).

Online Class Rigor

Online courses follow the same Program Review and Academic Prioritization processes as are required 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, faculty teaching online classes must complete online training and online classes must 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. 98% of full-time faculty possess graduate degrees, and 77% possess a terminal degree in their field of study (See 1.B.2. and 3.B.3). 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 not only graduate-level degrees, but also professional experiences that enrich the learning experience.

In addition, faculty, deans, and various committees determine faculty qualifications to teach certain courses. For example, faculty must complete Online Educator 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 Faculty Qualification

Graduate Faculty Qualifications include a terminal degree, minimum rank of assistant professor, and tangible evidence of scholarship and research. The Graduate Council approves prospective applicants based on degree credential, scholarship (peer-reviewed publications), and research accomplishments. Graduate faculty status is granted for a maximum of five years requiring reapplication once the term expires.

Furthermore, 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 the option of a thesis, practicum, capstone exam, or clinical experience.

Learning Resources

NSU is dedicated to providing quality learning resources to students, faculty, and staff. For example:

- The Blackboard Learning Management System provides access to the library resources, online tutoring, and other student support systems.
- The three campus libraries offer in-person and online library services, convenient library hours, and **professional research assistance**, and
- NSU libraries contain more than 225 student and public use computers, wireless internet, laptop and video checkout, an inter-library loan program, document delivery services, library assistance, and free research tutorials.

Secure Online Access

Information Technology Services provides secure online information access through:

- Automatic generation of user accounts upon verification of student, faculty, or administrative status,
- Automatic termination of user accounts when individuals leave the University, and
- Up-to-date firewalls and intrusion detection systems.

NSU also uses passwords, lock-down browsers, and cameras to monitor user identity and academic integrity for online courses.

Dual Credit Courses

In accordance with OSRHE-Policy-Manual 3.6.5, 11th and 12th grade students are permitted to receive dual credit for college-level coursework (called concurrent enrollment in Oklahoma). High school students must meet NSU admission requirements, and many take classes at NSU 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 Oklahoma placed second on the HLC Segment and Composite Rankings of States on Dual Credit Policy Provisions. 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 external evaluations and supports programs that seek 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.

Specialized Accreditation

Most of NSU's academic units are periodically reviewed for accreditation by national or regional organizations. Some examples include the:

- Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN),
- Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND),
- Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs Accreditation,
- 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.

In July 2015, NSU's Master of Science in Counseling achieved accreditation by the Council of Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). Achieving CACREP accreditation demonstrates NSU's desire to meet the highest academic standards, to attract highly qualified students and prepare them for professional service, research, and scholarly activities.

Licensing/Professional Exams

Oklahoma requires certification or licensing for programs such as education and optometry. Some such passage rates in 2014 are as follows:

- 100% passage rate for students taking the Oklahoma General Education Test (OGET),
- 99% passage rate for NSU students taking the Oklahoma Professional Teaching Examination (OPTE),
- 100% passage rate for NSU students taking the Optometry National Board Licensing Exam.

In addition, NSU students achieved a 100% pass rate for the Counselor Preparation Comprehensive Examination (CPCE information) after receiving CACREP accreditation in 2015.

4.A.6

According to the 2015 College Portrait, 76% of graduating seniors were employed upon graduation. In addition, 32% of graduating seniors revealed intent to pursue graduate level studies.

This high rate of success is due, in part, to NSU's immersive learning and community service programs. For example, many programs require internships, clinics, practicums, residency programs, or research projects as graduation requirements (see 4.B.2).

NSU tracks students after graduation through alumni surveys, National Student Clearinghouse reports, and various social media tools. For example, NSU's Facebook page has 17K followers and receives 100K hits per week, and Instagram enjoys 2K followers (a 400% increase over last year).

NSU also uses surveys and assessment of data to track graduation success:

- Colleges use employment survey data to identify job trends when determining curriculum needs during the Academic Prioritization process;
- The College of Business and Technology Advisory Board meets several times a year to ensure the needs of the business community are met. This group recommends and reviews changes in curriculum offerings, supports internship opportunities, and facilitates networking among students and community leaders, thereby facilitating a smooth transition of NSU students into the business community, and
- The Graduate College tracks program admissions, degree plans filed, and completion rates,
- NSU uses various surveys and assessment tools to determine honors class entry, employment rates, and assessment needs for job fairs.

To readily facilitate sharing of data outcomes, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness publishes reports such as the College Portrait, Common Data Set, IPEDS, NSSE, Annual Assessment Reports, and other such reports on its website.

Such data sharing enhances responsibility for quality and rigor of academic programs. It leads to more programs applying for specialized accreditation and improved certification rates, thereby ensuring rigor and currency of curriculum offerings.

4.B - Core Component 4.B

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

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

Argument

4.B.1

NSU's Mission Statement clearly defines NSU's duty as a public academic institution to "provide its diverse communities with lifelong learning through a broad array of undergraduate, graduate, and professional doctoral degree programs" (see 1.A.1). As stated in NSU's Value Statements, NSU must provide these degree programs with:

- Integrity,
- Collaboration,
- Creativity,
- Leadership,
- Excellence,
- Communication, and
- Diversity (see 5.A.3).

In addition, NSU's Strategic Goals emphasize NSU's duty to ensure academic excellence, cultural heritage, creativity, and institutional effectiveness while providing quality education throughout the region (see 5.A.3).

Embedded in NSU's Mission, Vision, and Value Statements are the broad learning outcomes NSU ascribes to for all students. Preparing students to civically engaged citizens for success in a globally-competitive economy is a primary objective. As set forth in the Dedication to Quality and Service Statement contained in NSU's Strategic Plan, NSU advocates and practices commitment to creating a caring environment, promoting safety, responding in a timely manner, and being consistent. To sustain standards of excellence, the following are identified in the Strategic Plan as Institutional Priorities:

- Academic and scholarly excellence,
- Student development and success,
- Enrollment, persistence, and successful completion,
- Campus facilities and resources,
- Funding and advancement,
- Economic development and community stewardship,
- Honoring institutional heritage, and
- Institutional Effectiveness through dynamic assessment and measurement.

As stated in Destination 2023, NSU seeks to develop students who:

- Demonstrate integrity and professional ethics,
- Collaborate with others to reach educational and economic goals,
- Demonstrate creativity through exploration and critical inquiry as well as a willingness to innovate and protect intellectual freedom,
- Seek continuous improvement and strive toward excellence,
- Communicate clearly and respect the free-flow of information,
- Value individuals from diverse backgrounds, cultures and perspectives, and
- Seek to lead and serve others.

These broad goals are embedded into programs and initiatives, and align with the Lumina Degrees of Excellence. Through the work of the Student Learning and Assessment Committee, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, and co-curricular units, NSU tracks and monitors progress toward these broad institutional goals.

A Culture of Assessment

The 2012 HLC Reaccreditation Team Report recognized NSU's "culture of assessment" evidenced by "clearly stated student learning outcomes set forth in the annual OSRHE Assessment Report, admittance to the HLC Assessment Academy," and "launch of the Red Balloon initiatives." The HLC Team Report further noted that "through the University Curriculum Committee, faculty review and revise the curriculum, student learning outcomes, and review and recommend new academic programs."

These processes have continued and improved since the 2012 HLC site visit. For example, NSU completed the HLC Assessment Academy resulting in evaluation and realignment of student learning outcomes for General Education courses and most core classes (see 3.A.1 and 3.B.2). The Red Balloon initiative has evolved into the Lumina Foundation Degrees of Excellence initiative and the annual Program Review and Academic Prioritization process have been streamlined and refined (see 3.A.1). Student Learning Objectives have been identified for General Education classes and most core (required) classes (see 3.A.1).

In addition, the Student Learning and Assessment Committee routinely monitors Program Outcomes Assessment Processes and makes recommendations for any necessary changes (see 3.D.). This committee analyzes data, shares assessment summary sheets, and serves as a valuable resource for academic units and the Lumina Foundation Degrees of Excellence initiative.

Similarly, every department reports assessment results and accomplishments to the college dean for compilation of the Deans reports each spring. With this data, the Deans complete an annual Deans' Reports that are used to compile the Annual Report of Student Assessment Activity for the State Regents (See 3.B.1 and 3.B.2). Some recent Deans' Reports are listed below:

- College of Business & Technology,
- College of Education,
- College of Extended Learning,
- College of Liberal Arts,
- College of Optometry,
- College of Science & Health Professions, and the
- Graduate College.

In addition, the Center for Tribal Studies and Library also file annual reports.

4.B.2

NSU has clearly established processes for assessment of student learning, achievement of learning goals, and assessment of learning outcomes. For example, the Academic Prioritization Process provides a platform for deans to review sustainability and viability of new program offerings (see 3.B.2 and 4.B.1). The annual Program Review Process provides an opportunity to examine student learning outcomes, course offerings, and program offerings for currency, rigor, and sustainability (see 3.B.2, 4.B.1, and 4.B.4). These processes are used to revise curriculum, update course learning objectives and outcomes, and tweak pedagogy. As a further layer of oversight, the University Curriculum Committee and the Provost review all curriculum change requests prior to submission to NSU's two governing boards, OSRHE and RUSO.

Assessment and Sharing of Data

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness (IE) assists with generation, compilation, interpretation, and distribution of institutional data requested by deans or chairs during the Academic Prioritization and Program Review processes. Some data outcomes that are often reviewed during these processes include:

- Annual OSRHE Report of Student Assessment Activity,
- Standardized exams,
- End-of-semester student evaluations, and
- Class Enrollment Trends.

Similarly, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness shares enrollment, retention, and graduation data through periodic e-mails to the entire campus. This data is used to determine assessment of student learning, frequency of course offerings, and baseline enrollment and future student enrollment projections, all of which influence student learning, retention, persistence, completion, and graduation rates.

Program and Curriculum Assessment

Departments complete Program Review and regularly conduct internal and external reviews of academic programs as part of the Academic Prioritization process (see 4.A.5). These processes often lead to evaluation and realignment of student learning objectives. For example, membership in the HLC Assessment Academy led to realignment of student learning objectives for General Education and most core classes (see 3.A.1).

Similarly, the College of Business and Technology (CBT) uses a Student Outcomes Coordinator and a Technology Core Committee to assist department chairs and faculty in ongoing assessment of student learning programs. As noted in CBT's "Using Student Outcomes Assessment Data for Improvement" report, "the development of learning outcomes is actually

contingent upon the performance objectives that stakeholders desire in college graduates, i.e., what attributes, knowledge, and skills faculty and potential employers expect from someone with an MBA or BBA degree in a given major." The College of Education also has an Assessment Coordinator.

Standardized Exams

Many programs require completion of standardized comprehensive exams that gauge performance based on national exams. The Annual Report of Student Assessment Activity reflects a full listing of standardized exams. Some examples include:

- ACAT Student Learning Outcomes Assessment – Criminal Justice, History, Psychology,
- ACEN – Nursing,
- ACTFL – Cherokee Education, Spanish,
- ASHA – Speech-Language Pathology,
- Certification Exam for Oklahoma Educators,
- CPCE - Counseling,
- ETS Field Assessments – Biology, Business, Chemistry, Computer Science, Management, Mathematics,
- MSAE – Substance Abuse Counseling, and
- The Optometry National Board Examiners.

In addition, many programs require completion of internships, portfolios, residency program, research papers, thesis, capstone exams, and senior seminar courses.

Writing Proficiency

NSU analyzes the ETS Proficiency Profile to improve General Education Curriculum. Similarly, NSU analyzes ETS writing proficiency scores to place and prepare NSU students for the more difficult upper and graduate-level classes.

Graduation Surveys and NSSE

NSU administers graduation surveys each year in accordance with the College Scorecard initiative. In 2014, 660 graduates completed College Scorecard surveys for a response rate of 43.2%. As a result, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness is currently reviewing options to increase survey responses.

NSU also uses the Annual Report of Student Assessment Activity Report as a guideline for change. The 2014 Assessment Report revealed that pass rates for zero level math and English remains fairly consistent. As a result, NSU implemented English and math lab pilot initiatives designed to improve pass rates. Although newly implemented, faculty anticipate report improvement in pass rates based on class performance (see 3.B.3).

According to the 2015 College Portrait, 76% of were employed upon graduation and 32% plan to pursue graduate studies. These positive percentages are due, in part, to the fact that Career Services posted 20,189 job opportunities online, assisted 1,121 students with career assessments, and sponsored 70 Career Services events in AY 2014-2015.

The 2015 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) indicates NSU is successful in transitioning freshmen to the academic experience in that 98% of freshmen surveyed report that NSU provides learning support services for student success, 92% believe NSU provides opportunities to be socially involved, and 54% participate in co-curricular activities. .

4.B.3

NSU believes that assessment processes serve as to enrich program and curricular review, enhance learning outcomes, and improve instruction. NSU's assessment plan was first implemented in 1989 in response to OSRHE's shift to more outcomes-based reporting system. These assessment processes have improved throughout the years with the most recent refinement resulting in membership in the HLC Assessment Academy and the HLC Persistence and Completion Academy.

As required by OSRHE Policy 3.19, NSU's 2014 Annual Report of Student Assessment Activity reveals that assessment processes are used to guide program and institutional change. The Program Outcomes Assessment section of the report reveals that most academic programs are measuring student learning gains in the major. Standardized syllabi are used for multiple sections and four Student Learning Coordinators have been recruited to assist programs with developing goals, writing and measuring student learning objectives and interpreting the results.

OSRHE Academic Affairs Procedures Handbook Section 3.7 and even contains a department-by-department summary analysis of accomplishments and challenges. For example, the establishment of the General Education Committee as a standing committee reinforces the importance of their work not only in constructing and maintaining a rigorous general education curriculum, but also as a mechanism for reviewing the currency of courses and monitoring assessment activities.

The 2014 Annual Report of Student Assessment Activity reveals use of assessment processes as follows:

- NSU accomplishes Entry-Level Assessment by using AccuPlacer tests to appropriately place students whose ACT scores are substandard or indicated a deficiency in preparation for college-level work. Nearly 80 percent of NSU first-time freshmen require some level

of developmental work resulting in NSU's pilot test of credit-bearing supplemental instruction courses to mitigate the time lost in non-credit bearing courses;

- The ETS Proficiency Profile evaluates general education competencies. In an effort to provide a more broad-based picture of student performance, the General Education Committee supervised pilot efforts in 2014 for course-embedded assessments to measure student learning for the outcomes and objectives in each General Education category;
- Program coordinators use standardized license examinations, pre and post-tests, and course-embedded assessments to assess student learning outcomes. These processes resulted in substantial curricular changes in nearly all academic programs in 2014-2015;
- Student course evaluations measure student satisfaction with instructor effectiveness. These data outcomes are used for retention, tenure, and promotion reviews as well as redesign of student learning objectives to improve clarity and overall student performance.
- The Freshman Survey provides important demographic data to more readily facilitate programming and instructional support. For example, the 2014 survey reveals that 33% of freshmen were first generation college students and 50% needed financial support; and
- As a result of a five-year Title III grant, NSU's Student Academic Success Center advisors oversee NSU's early alert system and follow-up on faculty referrals.

As noted, the Annual Report of Student Assessment Activity contains a department-by-department analysis of how assessment processes and learning outcomes are used to guide program and institutional changes. Ten examples of data listed in the report that are used to assess learning outcomes include:

- Alumni Surveys
- Capstone Tests
- Proficiency Profile Comparisons
- National Assessment Exams
- Remediation Report
- Placement Test for Mathematics and English
- Senior Survey
- Student Satisfaction Surveys
- Success Rates in Developmental Courses
- Writeplacer

4.B.4

NSU acquires new ideas by attending Higher Learning Commission's Annual Conference and participating in HLC's Assessment Academy and HLC Persistence and Completion Academy. These activities provide exposure to models and best practices employed at other academic institutions. For example, membership in the HLC academies resulted in application

of best practices related to data acquisition and data assessment related to persistence and completion rates (see 4.C.2).

In addition, NSU acquires new ideas and best practices by serving as peer reviewers and directors on professional boards. Some examples include:

- HLC Peer Reviewers (4 faculty and administrators),
- HLC Persistence and Completion Academy Mentor (1 faculty),
- Quality Matters Peer Reviewers (16 faculty),
- Quality Matters Master Reviewers (3 faculty),
- International Literacy Association (my SPA) Graduate Program Reviewer (1 faculty),
- CAEP (NCATE) Reviewer/Accreditor (3 faculty),
- Board of Examiners Accreditor for the State of Oklahoma (1 faculty),
- CLEET Curriculum Review Board (1 faculty),
- Quality Matters Certified Employees (121 faculty and staff), and
- Numerous faculty and staff participate as board members and peer reviewers for professional organizations and academic associations.

Membership in these organizations provide exposure to new ideas and best practices related to particular disciplines. In addition, faculty, staff, and administrators also attend specialized seminars and leadership conferences in order to share information and learn about best practices in higher education.

Participation and Staff in Assessment Processes

All assessment processes involve use of multiple reviewers, multiple measures and iterative cycles that provide a broad assessment of student knowledge and skill development over time, rather than a single snapshot. Faculty are the front line when it comes to assessment of student learning outcomes and recommendations for program or curriculum changes. Faculty and department chairs review:

- Student learning objectives, assessment methodology, and learning outcomes during the annual Program Review Process to assure rigor and currency of course offerings,
- Assessment outcomes data contained in the Annual Report of Student Assessment Activity (see 5.B.3),
- Program assessment data (such as student surveys, employer surveys, job market surveys, and student course evaluations), and

- Business and community needs provided by advisory groups.

Through these processes, the Student Learning and Assessment Committee is working with departments and programs to map outcomes and courses. Programs under national accreditation expectations already have complete maps and can describe in detail their learning outcomes and assessment activities that measure outcomes. Programs that do not fall under a national accreditation are working to complete similar alignment charts.

For nonacademic units, NSU utilizes instruments such as the EBI Assessment Survey (now Skyfactor) to evaluate student satisfaction with Student Affairs, Enrollment, and Auxiliary Enterprises. Such surveys assess and compare student perspectives to similar institutions and Carnegie classifications. NSU also uses internally-designed surveys for longitudinal comparisons.

4.C - Core Component 4.C

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

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

Argument

4.C.1

Destination 2023 and the Strategic Plan 2015-2023 establish goals designed to improve student retention, persistence, and completion rates through the year 2023. The overarching enrollment goals stated in Destination 2023: Measures of Progress 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 (see D-23 Snapshots). 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.

NSU further refined platforms of success for graduation, persistence, and completion as a member of the HLC Assessment Academy and the HLC Persistence and Completion Academy. For example, noting the high number of freshmen who were slowed by curricular deficiencies and the need to take zero-level courses, NSU piloted a credit-bearing, supplemental instruction course that allows students to earn credit while receiving additional, instructional support.

Another factor influencing completion rates was student misinformation related to degree requirements. To address this issue, NSU added additional advisors, new degree audit software, and more intrusive communications regarding timelines and deadlines have been implemented to address this issue (see 3.D.3).

As a result of these and other such initiatives, U.S. News & World Report: Best Colleges (2014) ranked NSU 34th place for Top Public Schools and 84th place for Best Regional Universities. 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.

Student satisfaction and success also affect retention, completion, and graduation rates. Some success factors are as follows:

- The 2015 College Portrait reveals that 76% of graduating seniors are employed and 32%of graduates plan to pursue graduate-level studies,

- NSU was named “Best Regional University” by *Oklahoma Living* magazine readers (2014),
- Two of three recipients of the 2014 Oklahoma Teacher of the Year award were NSU graduates, and
- NSU students frequently receive the prestigious Gates Millennium Scholarship.

4.B.2

Defining baseline goals for student retention, persistence, and completion is essential in order to achieve national recognition as outlined in 4.B.1. For example, the 2014-2015 Common Data Set reveals the following benchmarks for admissions, graduation, retention, and completion:

- The fall-13 to fall-14 retention rate of full-time, first-time bachelor’s degree seeking students was 60.7%,
- NSU’s six-year graduation rate for students entering fall 2008 (graduating by 2014) was 31.1% (with a four-year graduation rate of 13.4%),
- The admission rate for 1,957 freshman applicants was 75%,
- The 2014 admission rate for 1,683 transfer applicants was 77%,
- 20.2% of faculty represent minority groups,
- 50.1% of faculty are women,
- 94% of full-time faculty possess graduate degrees, and 75% possess the highest terminal degree offered in their field of study,
- NSU enjoys a student-to-faculty ratio of 16:1,
- 94% of *incoming* F14 freshmen received financial aid, and
- The student loan default rate was 13.9%.

Effective improvement requires accurate and comprehensive data analysis regarding students, their needs, and the factors that affect persistence and completion. NSU’s participation in the HLC Assessment Academy and the HLC Persistence and Completion Academy developed a culture of assessment dedicated to identifying factors that affect student persistence and completion rates and identifying initiatives to improve student performance (see 3.A.1-2, 4.B.1, and 4.C.1). Most importantly, NSU was able to identify and improve use of databases that are predictors of persistence and completion rates. As a result, NSU plans acquisition of predictive analytics software in 2016 that is capable of multivariate analysis of multiple factors that simultaneously affect retention and completion rates.

NSU also implemented new software tools to gather assessment artifacts. For example, the College of Business and Technology has joined the College of Education in its use of Chalk and Wire (assessment and digital portfolio software).

Effective improvement is also demonstrated by NSU's annual Program Outcomes Assessment and Academic Prioritization processes (see A.1.3 and 3.A.1). During these processes, departments not only review curriculum offerings, but also student persistence and completion rates in individual class offerings.

Specialized accreditation further provides an opportunity to evaluate departmental processes (see 4.A.5). For example, the College of Education collected and analyzed data in preparation for the 2011 NCATE (CAEP) Accreditation Site Visit. The May 2012 NCATE Accreditation Action Report revealed "no areas for improvement."

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Self Study also evidences data collection and analysis related to retention, persistence, and completion. These data outcomes are reflected in the Social Work Course Competency Assessment that reflects quality and rigor of curriculum offerings.

Non-Cognitive Variables

Given the number of at-risk populations that NSU serves (e.g. first-generation, transfer, returning adults), faculty, staff, and administrators recognize the importance of non-cognitive variables affecting persistence and completion rates. NSU uses the MAP-Works early alert and monitoring system to identify first and second-year at-risk students through surveys that evaluate non-cognitive factors related to student performance. This allows NSU to align support systems to improve student success. Some of these non-cognitive predictors of success include factors such as the degree of homesickness, class attendance, and hours devoted to class study (Note: Map-Works will be replaced with Beacon in spring 2016).

Quality Class Instruction

Course evaluations gauge student satisfaction with factors that affect persistence and completion rates. These evaluations are distributed online through Blackboard's survey instrument to all classes offered during the fall and spring semesters. .

Graduate Outcome Data

Significant efforts have been 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 Prioritization Process. As a response to the College Scorecard initiative, NSU is attempting to obtain 100% participation in the undergraduate outcomes survey.

Data Analysis of Persistence and Completion

As is warranted by strong data analysis practices, NSU uses multiple tools when assessing persistence and completion rates. These tools include:

- The CSRDE Graduation and Retention Survey disaggregates data by gender and race ethnicity to provide administrators information about potential gaps in service or completion rates;
- The Developmental Education Committee reviews student retention information about those who take developmental classes. These data are used to make adjustments in programs as well as class placement decisions; and
- Enrollment Management reviews retention of first-time full-time cohorts to determine yield of recruitment and admission efforts.

Future plans are for Institutional Effectiveness to develop reports on retention and graduation rates as well as time to completion by program.

4.C.3

NSU analyzes retention, persistence, and completion data in order to implement new initiatives. Evidence of data-driven decisions related to retention, persistence, and completion include:

- Restructuring of General Education Curriculum to improve student success rates in GE classes that directly affect persistence and completion rates in upper and graduate level classes (see 3.A.1).
- Implementation of a proactive Dual-Shared Advising Model that contributed to positive persistence and completion rates for first time full-time students with 57.5% graduating or still enrolled after four years for 2008-2012 and 49.1% graduating within six years for 2008-2014 (see the 2015 College Portrait),
- Modification of Rookie Bridge Camp to more adequately prepare new students for university and academic expectations, and
- Implementation of faculty and alumni mentor programs for first-year students specifically designed to improve student success rates.

Additional examples of persistence and completion initiatives based on data analysis include:

- Implementation of the MAP-Works early alert and monitoring system to identify first and second-year at-risk students (see 4.C.2),
- Acquisition of Degree Works to facilitate academic advising, transfer articulation, and degree plans thereby facilitating online review of curriculum requirements to plot a plan leading to graduation,

- Access to the goNSU website allows student access to mid-term grades and unofficial transcripts,
- Access to SmarThinking Online Tutoring provides free tutoring in math, reading, writing, communication, chemistry, physics, and other subjects, and
- Proactive advising where 27 professional advisors telephone or e-mail students who, for whatever reason, did not enroll for a semester or failed to enroll two weeks prior to next semester's classes contribute to improved increases persistence and completion rates,

In addition, NSU training programs target student persistence and completion rates. For example, new faculty attend a faculty orientation that provides training on syllabi, student learning objectives, student services, Banner, student support systems, and NSU's history, culture, and student populations. Faculty also attend Community and Collaboration Days (each semester) where they select training classes designed to improve student success.

4.C.4.

NSU's commitment to effective data collection and use has been reinforced with the evolution from a minimally staffed Institutional Research office to a new Office of Institutional Effectiveness that is led by a full-time executive director and three full-time data analysts. This strengthened commitment to more readily accessible data will serve the institution as it makes data-driven decisions regarding student retention, persistence, and completion.

NSU actively engages in best practices related to student retention, persistence, and completion. This is evidenced by NSU's completion of the HLC Assessment Academy and second year of the HLC Persistence and Completion Academy (*see* 4.B.1 and 4.B.2). It is further evidenced in that:

- 1 faculty member, 2 deans, and the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs are HLC Peer Reviewers,
- 1 faculty member is a Mentor for the HLC Persistence and Completion Academy,
- 3 faculty are Quality Matters Master Peer Reviewers,
- 16 faculty are Quality Matters Peer Reviewers, and
- 121 faculty have completed Quality Matters training.

Data related to retention, persistence and completion are collected regularly and inform decisions about NSU administrative processes, curriculum, co-curricular efforts, and assessment practices. 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.

But, 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 College Portrait,
- The NSU Fact Book, and
- The Common Data Set.

Improvement through Best Practices and Data Analysis

As evidenced, NSU uses institutional data to implement best practice initiatives. College deans closely track student progress, including D's, F's, and withdrawal rates. Then, best practice initiatives are designed to improve persistence and completion rates. For example, NSU identified at-risk students in English and Math classes during membership in the HLC Assessment Academy (see 3.A.1 and 3.B.1). As part of a 2015 pilot initiative, NSU implemented remedial math and English labs and requires students to attend classes five days a week with the same instructor. This program is designed to support students who otherwise might not complete English or math required classes (see 4.B.3).

In addition, student surveys identified non-cognitive variables such as finances and health as two reasons for withdrawal from courses. In response, NSU established the Light the Way Emergency Fund that provides financial assistance for students in times of crisis.

These and other such initiatives evidence NSU's commitment to best practices and implementation of student success platforms that are based on data assessment and outcomes.

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.

5.A - Core Component 5.A

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

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

Argument

5.A.1

NSU has the resources and infrastructures to support existing educational programs (see A.1.2). Through careful resource allocation and long-range planning, NSU will even be able to implement new educational programs and support systems necessary to ensure student success well into the future. Evidence of long-range planning and a strong resource base includes:

- The Mission Statement, Destination 2023, and the Strategic Plan 2015-2023 collective serve to chart NSU's future through the year 2023,
- NSU's Master Plan represents the ten-year budget that projects student numbers, staff needs, capital expenditures, space needs, and other expenses through the year 2023,
- NSU's CFI is 2.3% (FY14-15),
- 57.5% of students graduated or still enrolled after four years for 2009-2013 (see 1.A.2),
- 84.5% of transfer students graduated or still enrolled after 2 years,
- A low federal three-year cohort student loan default rate of 13.9,
- Addition of six new degree programs in the past two years (see 5.A.3), and
- Continued expansion and new capital projects (see 1.A.3).

NSU has a capable faculty with qualifications necessary to fulfill student expectation (see 3.A.3). NSU averages 340 full-time faculty supplemented by approximately 270 adjuncts. 98% of full-time faculty possess graduate degrees, and 77% possess the highest terminal degree offered in their field of study.

NSU maintains a low administrative ratio of only 8.2% of budget when compared to the OSRHE limit of 13%. Similarly, judicious allocation of resources allowed NSU to gradually increase all faculty and staff salaries to 90% of the CUPA regional averages by 2015, thereby allowing improved retention of qualified employees.

Fiscal Resources

NSU's FY15-16 budget, as approved by OSRHE, is \$87,627,999. According to the 2015 Annual President's Report, the major categories of revenue sources are:

- 36% - State appropriations,
- 25% - Tuition and fees, and
- 24% - Grants and contracts.

NSU's Statement of Net Position is healthy. The Arledge & Associates Reed Audit (FY14-15) reflects:

- \$91.4M - Net Investment in Capital Assets, Net of Debt (equity in property, plant, and equipment),

- \$16.3M - Expendable restricted net position (available, but earmarked as determined by donors and/or external entities), and
- \$51.8M - Unrestricted net position.

Equally important, NSU's primary reserve ratio is 0.57 (FY14-15). In addition, NSU's CFI is 2.3 and the three-year rolling average is 2.0 (CFI Comparison Chart).

Resource Management

State allocations have been reduced over the past five years as Oklahoma experiences budget shortfalls. To ensure educational quality, careful long-range planning is essential. This is evidenced in the Strategic Plan 2015-2023, Destination 2023, the Master Plan, and the Capital Improvements Plan.

Consistent with long-range planning, NSU monitors budgets and expenses very closely. Business Affairs (Accounting Services) trains account sponsors on Budget Management Procedures that are published on the NSU website. The account sponsors routinely monitor expenses and access current budget data through Banner. They must approve expenditures prior to entry into Banner, and Banner will not allow an account sponsor to exceed available funds.

NSU has taken steps to reduce budget expenses (see 1.A). Additional cost-saving initiatives implemented in 2014-15 include:

- Installing energy efficient lights,
- Installing new roofs and airlocks to make buildings more energy efficient,
- Encouraging recycling efforts,
- Implementing Green Computing (turning off computers and lights),
- Implementing a printer/copier program that reduces paper and toner costs, and
- Replacing outdated computers with more energy efficient computers (generally on a 3-year basis).

University-Wide Budgeting

The Budget Office, under the direction of the Vice President for Administration and Finance, is responsible for development and oversight of NSU's annual operating budgets. Requests for appropriations are submitted to OSRHE. In preparation for NSU's Annual Operating Budget, the President's Cabinet receives recommendations from NSU's Budget Oversight Committee regarding enrollment projections, revenue expectations, and projected expenses. Once internal parameters are in place, the President's Cabinet initiates a request for budgets for the new fiscal year. With this, departments begin to develop fiscal year proposals.

Through this process, annual budgets are built from the “bottom up,” thereby affording academic colleges and institutional departments more input, control, and oversight in the budget process (see 2.A). As such, budgeting is a university-wide process that promotes understanding and commitment to NSU’s budgeting and fiscal planning processes. It also allows colleges and departments to align budgets to best support quality education and student services in order to accomplish NSU’s Mission Statement.

The budget is structured and maintained through the automated Banner System. Departments are responsible for monitoring respective budgeted allocations. Periodic reviews by the Budget Office ensure close adherence to the University’s resource plan. At the close of the fiscal year, the University is subject to a financial statement audit by an independent certified public accounting firm. The results of the annual audit are presented to OSRHE and RUSO and made public on NSU’s website.

Master Planning and Physical Resources

The Master Plan exemplifies careful planning of capital projects and physical resources. Building and renovation projects are carefully 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 through:

- 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 fitness center,
- Construction of a new residence hall,
- Remodeling of the Tahlequah campus library, and
- Reconstruction of parking lots.

The Master Plan, community support, and small project account support academic growth. For example, NSU secured a \$900K grant from the City of Muskogee to implement the Occupational Therapy program in 2014 and solidified partnerships with the Creek and Cherokee Nations to implement the Physician’s Assistant Program in 2016 (see 5.A.3). Similarly, careful management of resources by the Facilities Management team provided space for Nutritional Sciences and the new robotics program as well as space to accommodate NSU’s Dual Advising Model.

Technological Resources

The Strategic Plan 2015-2023, Destination 2023, and the Master Plan align and support NSU's technological infrastructure with NSU's Mission Statement. Evidence of ongoing technological support includes:

- Wired and wireless internet facilities at all three campus locations,
- High speed computers, internet access, DVD players, and digital projectors in classrooms,
- Smartboard technology in more than 35% of NSU classrooms,
- Wireless internet and computer study rooms in residence halls,
- Hardware repair services and free software (such as Microsoft Office), and
- An online, face-to-face, and call-in Help Desk.

The technological infrastructure is sufficient to meet current needs and projected growth. Information Services has developed a multi-year replacement plan for hardware and other equipment. Currently, Information Services maintains more than:

- 175 servers,
- 250 switches,
- 2,950 desktop computers,
- 700 laptops, and
- 170 tablets (see Bandwidth and Servers).

NSU uses Blackboard 9.1 as the current Learning Management System which supports course and program delivery on all campus locations and online environments. All software is current, and the campus is protected by two firewalls (see Network Services).

Bandwidth connection capability is as follows:

- Tahlequah – 2 GB
- Broken Arrow – 1 GB
- Muskogee – 100 MB

In addition, the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) and Information Technology Services (ITS) develop and test new technology and technological infrastructures. Most recently, NSU implemented Blackboard Collaborate, a communication platform designed to support online teaching where faculty can simultaneously communicate through video and audio with 16 remote locations.

Technological Security

Information Technology Services provides state-of-the-art security systems such as firewalls, VIPRE virus software, user agreements, and password security protection (see 2.E.1 and

4.A.4). In addition, Technology Services oversees backup and recovery procedures in the event of disasters, controls access to NSU computer equipment, and oversees destruction of equipment.

Library and Computer Lab Support

NSU libraries house 222 student/public-use computers, 6 study rooms, and 4 specialty computer labs for on-campus computing needs. All three campus locations offer classrooms with computer transmission or ITV capabilities. In addition, NSU libraries allow faculty, staff, and students to check-out SLR cameras, video cameras, mobile projectors, and audiovisual equipment. NSU also provides free software (such as Microsoft Office) for students and faculty.

Disability Access

NSU publishes guidelines related to ADA requirements in student syllabi and on the NSU website. These accommodations are coordinated and facilitated by the Office of Student Affairs-Student Disability Services (see 3.C.6).

Human Capital

In 2012, President Turner pledged to increase all faculty and staff salaries to 90% of salary averages paid by comparable academic institutions within the region. Using data derived from Condrey and Associates for staff and CUPA-HR faculty surveys, NSU has achieved this goal. This salary adjustment allows NSU to attract and retain more qualified staff and faculty members.

Long-Range Planning

NSU carefully plans for increases in NSU's student population. Evidenced by NSU's Strategic Plan 2015-2023 and Destination 2023, NSU's goals are to:

- Increase student enrollment headcount to 11,000 by fall 2023,
- Average a 8.3% annual increase in transfer students,
- Achieve a 9.3% increase in retention for first-time, full-time students from first to second year, and
- Achieve a 5% annual increase in new graduate students each year.

These University goals are supported by college and unit goals that align with and support D-23 and the Strategic Plan (see D-23 goals and D-23 snapshots). These University, college, and unit goals support NSU's Mission Statement and are taken into considering budget and capital project requests.

5.A.2

NSU prepares budgets in accordance with guidelines set forth by its two governing boards, OSRHE and RUSO. Prior to state allocations, OSRHE and RUSO must approve final budget and capital project requests for Oklahoma's public academic institutions. This uniform budget approval process serves to fund all state academic institutions in accordance with guidelines and allocations as set forth by the Oklahoma legislature.

As such, NSU does not allocate resources to non-educational, elective purposes to the detriment of academic objectives. In fact, NSU allocations are designed to support educational purposes. For example, academic affairs, business affairs, student affairs, enrollment management, marketing, and technology all serve to support the academic purposes of the University.

Ensuring Quality Education

NSU receives approximately 36% of its budget from state legislative allocations. Judicious allocation of state allocations is evidenced by NSU's national recognition as a high quality academic institution. In 2014, U.S. News & World Report recognized NSU as a Best Regional College, a Top Public School, and a Best College for Veterans. Some factors evaluated by U.S. News included the following:

- A low student-to-faculty ratio of 18 to 1 in 2014; (16 to 1 student-to-faculty ratio in 2015),
- High quality education evidenced by specialized accreditation and licensing exam passage rates,
- Low tuition and fees of only \$5,547 per academic year,
- High degrees of student satisfaction as evidenced by end-of-class student surveys, and
- Other factors (such as the cost per student comparison chart).

Foundation Support

NSU enjoys support of dedicated alumni and friends of the university. As a separate entity, the NSU Foundation provides student scholarships and direct support for educational objectives (Foundation-Bylaws). According to the 2014 Foundation Annual Report, foundation assets were up \$3.5M for a total Foundation basis of \$23M, a 46.6% increase compared to \$15M in FY10 and a 17.8% increase over the \$19.6M in 2013 (see Ensure our Future Campaign Results).

In addition, alumni serve on NSU advisory groups and financially support the Foundation. This enabled the Foundation to distribute over \$693K through 855 scholarships in 2014 (a 39.7% increase compared to FY10). Examples of Foundation scholarships include:

- The Larry Adair Scholarship,
- EPIC Teaching Internships,

- Honors Students,
- Light the Way Emergency Fund, and
- The President's Leadership Class.

Revenues and expenditures are publicly disclosed in an annual Foundation-Audit that is compiled by an independent CPA.

5.A.3

NSU's mission to provide quality education, student support, and community service for the region is realistic in light of NSU's organization, resources, and opportunities. This is evidenced by NSU's national and regional recognition for academic quality, student support, and community service (see 1.A.2 and 1.B.2).

It is also evidenced by NSU's planning documents, such as Destination 2023 and the Strategic Plan 2015-2023. Each contain measurable goals designed to gauge student growth and resource needs through the year 2023 (see 4.C.1). These documents address emerging trends in technology, demographic shifts, and globalization of the region (see 1.A.3). They are the foundation that aligns NSU's organizational structure, resources, and opportunities.

Revision of the Mission Statement

NSU most recently revised its mission in 2015 (see 1.A). During this two-year revision process (2013-2015), the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) relied upon Destination 2023 (NSU's ten-year road map to degree completion success) as a foundation for the revision process (see 1.A.1-3). This led to refinement of NSU's mission, strategic plan, and goals to better accommodate changing technology and globally competitive needs of NSU students. This university and community-wide process culminated in the revised mission, vision and core values supported by a Strategic Plan 2015-2023 that acknowledges NSU's duty to:

- Provide quality education, student support, and community service to the region,
- Create and sustain an institutional environment that supports continuous assessment and improvement, and
- Sustain a culture of diversity that "honors our Native American genesis while serving our multicultural and global population."

Alignment of Value Statements and Strategic Goals

NSU's Core Values reflect alignment with NSU's Mission to provide quality education, student support, and community service within the region. These Core Values are:

- Integrity,
- Collaboration,

- Creativity,
- Leadership,
- Excellence,
- Communication, and
- Diversity.

Similarly, the Strategic Goals contained in the Strategic Plan support NSU's Mission. The Strategic Goals include commitment to:

1. Advance a culture of academic excellence and student success,
2. Secure and sustain the resources necessary to maximize the University's capacity for excellence,
3. Support economic development and community stewardship at the local, tribal and regional levels,
4. Honor our heritage as the cultural center of the region,
5. Engage in creativity and innovation, and
6. Ensure institutional effectiveness through continuous improvement.

Alignment of Financial Resources

NSU's two governing boards, OSRHE and RUSO, approved NSU's revised mission statement and supporting documents in 2015. Likewise, OSRHE approves NSU's operating budget, and RUSO approves the rules and regulations that govern NSU's daily operations.

This combined oversight, coupled with internal and external audits, serves to ensure alignment of budgets and allocation of resources with NSU's mission statement and strategic plan. For example, NSU's budget is primarily allocated as follows:

- 52.0% - Instruction,
- 13.3% - Operations and Maintenance,
- 9.8% - Student Services,
- 8.4% - Institutional Support,
- 8.3% - Academic Support,
- 6.9% - Scholarships and Fellowships,
- 1.1% - Research, and
- 0.4% - Public Service.

Decisions for new programs and support initiatives take into consideration budget factors. For example, new program requests include information related to faculty, equipment, technology, library resources, and potential student enrollment numbers required to support the program.

Shared-Governance

As noted, the Mission Statement and Strategic Plan 2015-2023 were created through a thorough, two-year collaborative process (see 1.A). President Turner created a Strategic Planning Committee, consisting of faculty, staff, administrators, students, and community leaders, with the task of revising NSU's mission and supporting documents.

The initial drafts were communicated throughout the University and community:

- During brown bag luncheons,
- Through e-mails, and
- Publication on NSU's website.

This community-wide, iterative process was designed to nurture and refine NSU's mission and vision while supporting economic development within the region. As such, NSU employees participated in development of and are dedicated to carrying out NSU's Mission Statement.

In addition, NSU conducted Disney Institute Training for all employees in 2014 to determine what values are most important to NSU. Attendees drafted a pledge to create a caring culture that reflects the mission and values of NSU. This pledge reflects commitment to:

- Promote achievement of academic, career and life goals through individualized guidance and advising,
- Promote diversity and multi-cultural experiences,
- Project a positive image and attitude,
- Assist others to accomplish their goals,
- Put safety first and hold students, faculty and staff accountable,
- Be responsive to the NSU community in a timely manner,
- Facilitate consistent processes and information, and
- Take responsibility for the efficient use of university resources and inspire others to do the same.

These pledges of support were subsequently incorporated into NSU's Strategic Goal.

Community Support

Community-wide support and commitment is critical during economic downturns when state allocations are reduced. In response, NSU has focused on community support and fund raising activities. This is evidenced in that fund raising dollars for 2014 were up 12% over the prior year (\$9.7M in FY13-14 vs. \$8.6K in FY12-13).

Community support is evidenced by community service on advisory boards and financial support. In addition, many of NSU's graduates teach as adjuncts. Similarly, a \$900K grant from the City of Muskogee led to a new Occupational Therapy program in 2014, and partnerships with the Creek and Cherokee Nations led to a new Physician's Assistant program in 2016 (see 5.C.4).

The Broken Arrow Campus was built in 2001 with dedicated tax dollars and allocation of county-based resources in 2001. Further community support through Tulsa's Vision 2025 sales tax led to funding of three additional buildings. Within the past four years, external funding has led sponsorship of the Lesley L. Walls Vision Center and classrooms sponsored by community businesses. Similarly, the Broken Arrow Chamber of Commerce raised more than \$90K in Foundation-Scholarships for NSU scholarships in 2014.

5.A.4

NSU's Staff Hiring Guide outlines minimum hiring qualifications for staff positions. To formally apply for a position, NSU requires:

- Standardized employment application,
- Letter of application,
- Background check, and
- Transcript and/or resume (for certain positions).

NSU also conducts national searches for faculty and key staff 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).

Staff Training

Once hired, employees must attend a new hire orientation and complete Title IX and other Human Relations training (3.C.1 and 3.C.6). All staff go through a New Hire Orientation, and NSU provides a variety of training opportunities for staff (see 1.B.2, 2.A.1, and 3.A.3). For example, the Center for Teaching and Learning and Information Technology Services offers courses such as:

- Problem Solving Skills,
- Microsoft Office,
- SPSS,
- Grant Writing Skills, and
- Creating Mailing Lists.

Staff Development

NSU provides seminars and training designed for staff. This is evidenced by the Walt Disney Institute Training provided in 2014 (see 3.C.4). In addition, NSU offers staff rotation opportunities, tuition waivers, and recognition through faculty service awards (such as the Star, Rising Star, and Model the Way Awards).

NSU also offers employee wellness training programs designed to improve the physical, mental, and emotional health of employees. Some such training programs include:

- Exercise programs,
- Wellness incentives,
- Health coaching,
- Diabetic news,
- Nutrition articles/consulting, and
- Drug and alcohol education.

5.A.5

OSRHE provides NSU with state allocations that drive the budgeting process. Prior to allocation, colleges and non-academic units present budget needs to the Provost and Vice President for Administration and Finance for consideration. The final budget is approved by the State Regents and expenditures are monitored at the department and college levels with oversight by Vice Presidents, the Provost, and the President of NSU.

In order to ensure transparency, President Turner sends an annual President's Budget Letter to all employees explaining the budget process and allocations by the State Regents.

External Audit

As required by RUSO Policy 2.8.1, an outside, independent accounting firm conducts an annual audit of NSU finances. These audited financial statements are filed with OSRHE and RUSO, published on the NSU website, and the accounting firm is rotated every five years to ensure integrity in the review process (see 2.A).

Internal Measures

NSU meets the challenges presented by continued decreases in state funding by increasing revenues and monitoring expenses. For example, NSU has launched campaigns in FY14-15 to:

- Recruit more international and graduate students,
- Raise private funds through the NSU Foundation and capital campaign, and
- Increase the number of grant applications.

Similarly, NSU has focused on identifying ways to more effectively and efficiently use limited resources (see 1.A.3 and 5.A.1). Additional examples include:

- Improved alignment of financial aid and scholarships with student needs,
- Modernizing buildings to decrease electrical and heating costs, and
- Attaining LEED certification when possible for new and renovated buildings.

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

5.B - Core Component 5.B

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

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

Argument

5.B.1

As a state-assisted institution, NSU maintains close relationships with the Oklahoma State Legislature and NSU's two legislatively-created governing boards, ORSHE and RUSO. As public entities, State Regents for ORSHE and RUSO post their biographies and contact information on respective websites. These two governing agencies provide governance and oversight that ensure effective leadership and collaboration processes are in place to fulfill NSU's Mission Statement. Their primary roles are as follows:

- ORSHE approves program and course offerings as well as NSU's budget (see 2.C.1-4),
- RUSO promulgates rules and regulations that provide guidance for the six regional institutions in Oklahoma.

Consequently, ORSHE policies address degrees earned, curricula, academic standards, and allocates funds to state institutions. As such, NSU submits curriculum change proposals first to RUSO for local board approval and then to ORSHE for final, state-level approval.

RUSO policies address rules and regulations related to governance of the University, employment practices including tenure and promotion, capital initiatives, and purchases of

equipment, supplies and capital improvements. As such, NSU must submit any capital improvement requests to RUSO prior to acquisition.

Policy Making

In accordance with OSRHE policies, NSU annually collaborates with other Oklahoma higher education academic institutions to develop uniform, statewide policies related to transfer of credit, General Education requirements, and college credit for Advanced Placement scores. With governing board oversight, NSU and other academic institutions determine policies best suited to fulfill legislative mandates to provide quality education throughout the state of Oklahoma.

Annual Reports

Both governing boards maintain frequent contact with NSU. For example, both boards require annual reports that reflect compliance with legislative mandates and evidence attainment of NSU's educational mission and fiscal responsibility. In addition, RUSO regents frequently conduct board meetings at NSU. Similarly, the Chancellor and OSHRE representatives have visited NSU's three locations during the past three years (see 2.C.). Through frequent contact, site visits, annual reports, and legislatively-mandated approval processes, the two governing boards provide oversight for NSU's financial, academic, and legal policies while allowing NSU to maintain autonomy over day-to-day operations.

5.B.2

As a public institution, NSU does not answer to investors. Instead, oversight is provided by NSU's two governing boards and the Oklahoma legislature. However, NSU retains control of day-to-day operations, academic offerings, and budget allocations. This is evidenced by:

- University and community-wide collaboration and revision of NSU's Mission Statement and Strategic Plan (see 1.A),
- Use of community and business advisory committees to create marketing plans and determine program and curriculum offerings,
- Active alumni that support the NSU Foundation and provide guidance in marketing and program needs.

Day-to-Day Operations

RUSO hires NSU's President after conducting a national search (see 2.C.4). Once hired, the President is responsible for day-to-day administration of the University with guidance and support provided by the President's Cabinet. The Cabinet consists of the senior management team, including the:

- President,
- Provost/VP for Academic Affairs,
- Vice President for Business and Finance,

- Vice President for Student Affairs, and
- Vice President for University Relations.

The Cabinet meets weekly and serves as NSU's official policy-making body.

Shared Governance

NSU subscribes to Collegial Governance. This effort to involve internal and external constituents in decision-making is evidenced by policies and governing bodies set forth in the NSU catalog, faculty handbook, and staff handbook.

- The Executive Council provides an important venue to share information that informs the Cabinet and allows for a comprehensive view of institutional needs. Members include the Special Assistant to the President, Athletic Director, Foundation Executive Director, Faculty Council President, Staff Council Chair, Director of Public Safety, Student Government Association President, and members of the Cabinet;
- The Faculty Council is the elected, representative body of the NSU Faculty Association designed to facilitate democratic participation in policy development;
- The Staff Council is the elected, representative body of NSU full-time, non-faculty employees and serves as a collective voice in shared leadership; and
- 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.

More than 35 university committees and more than 100 student organizations assist in NSU's day-to-day governance, marketing, budgeting, and long-term planning processes (see 5.B.3). In addition, the NSU Foundation and Alumni Association are actively involved in NSU's long-term planning and growth strategy.

5.B.3.

NSU subscribes to active participation and shared governance in setting academic requirements, policy, and processes (see 5.B.2.). This is evidenced by NSU's inclusive structures such as the:

- President's Cabinet,
- Executive Council,
- Academic Council,
- Faculty Council,
- University Curriculum Committee,

- Budget Oversight Committee,
- Staff Council,
- Department Chairs Council,
- Student Government Association, and
- Other governing bodies set forth in the NSU organizational chart.

This administrative structure facilitates shared governance and collaborative input on university-wide decisions. This is evidenced by:

- NSU's university-wide budgeting process (see 5.A),
- The inclusive Academic Prioritization process,
- University and community-wide involvement in revision of NSU's Mission Statement (see 1.A),
- College and departmental pledges to support Destination 2023,
- Creation of university values at the Disney Institute Training Session, and
- University and community-wide creation of the Strategic Plan 2015-2023 (see 1.A).

This structure further serves to ensure that allocation of resources align with NSU's Mission Statement.

For example, the budget is approved by multiple layers of NSU employees and the Cabinet prior to submission to OSRHE for final approval (see 5.A). Once approved, account sponsors monitor expenditures and budget allocations. The Office of Business Affairs regularly reviews expenditures and investigates any irregularities or variances that might occur. Budget expenditures and annual reports are sent to OSRHE and RUSO to further ensure fiscal oversight and transparency. In addition, an independent public accounting firm audits NSU's financial reports each year and the financial reports are published on the NSU website.

This shared governance and collaboration in academic and fiscal processes serve best align policies and resources with NSU's Mission Statement objectives.

5.C - Core Component 5.C

The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.

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

Argument

NSU engages in systematic and integrated planning. This is evidenced by alignment of resources with NSU's Mission Statement to provide quality education, student support, and community service to the region. Foundation documents such as Destination 2023, the Strategic Plan 2015-2023, the Master Plan, and the Capital Improvements Plan serve as the cornerstones for success that support recruitment, persistence, completion, and graduation rates through the year 2023. They provide the platform required to meet degree requirements set forth by Complete College America (see 1.A).

NSU's leadership structure and administrative procedures are designed to support NSU's Mission Statement. College deans and account sponsors regularly meet to discuss strategy and resource needs. The President's Cabinet, Executive Council, Faculty Council, Staff Council, and the Student Government Association provide an additional layer of guidance and support. Through this inclusive process, employees, students, and community members participate in and share responsibility for planning, budgeting, and resource allocation (see 1.A., 2.A, and 5.C).

NSU operationalizes its Strategic Plan. For example, marketing, budgeting, and operations are based upon long-range planning documents such as Destination 2023, Strategic Plan 2015-2023, the Master Plan, and the Capital Improvements Plan. In tandem, administrative procedures are in place to ensure fiscal resources are aligned with Mission Statement and Strategic Plan objectives.

Fiscal Resource Alignment

In accordance with NSU's Mission, fiscal resources are allocated primarily for instruction. Additional resources are allocated on a needs basis for recruiting, marketing, and student support. For example, the Vice President for Student Affairs closely tracks enrollment and graduation numbers, college deans track program and class enrollment numbers and the Vice President for Administration and Finance closely monitors sales tax receipts as well as other projected revenues. Through such data-based analysis, allocations for support services are based on an understanding of current capacity and emerging factors.

University-wide Budgeting

The budget is built from the bottom up (see 1.A). This serves to best align limited resources based upon a needs assessment by each member of the leadership structure. By building the budget from the bottom up, employees participate in and gain a better understanding of the budget process. As such, employees understand the role the Strategic Plan 2015-2023, Master Plan, and Destination 2023 play in the budgeting process.

5.C.2

NSU fulfills its mission to provide quality education to the region. Having successfully completed the HLC Assessment Academy, NSU recognizes the value of linking assessment of student learning to operations, planning, and budgeting. This is evidenced by an Academic Prioritization Process that requires careful analysis of faculty, staff, library, classroom, and budget needs coupled with five-year revenue projections prior to submitting any new program or curriculum requests.

Supported by NSU's Office of Institutional Effectiveness and the Student Learning and Assessment Committee, assessment processes for academic and non-academic departments follow a similar pattern. Colleges and individual units develop strategic goals and objectives that identify annual goals designed to ascertain progress. For example, advisors set schedules and ask students to evaluate advising sessions, and the results are used to improve processes and interactions. Similarly, student course evaluations provide data related to faculty instruction and are aggregated to reveal patterns and possible opportunities for improvement. All units, including the bookstore, housing, enrollment management, and reading clinics, conduct similar assessment and use data outcomes to improve.

This is partially a result of NSU's membership in HLC's Persistence and Completion Academy. As a member, NSU developed a culture of assessment and is committed to data-driven decisions related not only to persistence and completion initiatives, but almost all operational processes (see 4.B). This culture of assessment is further evidenced by college and unit goals set forth in Destination 2023. It is also evidenced by specialized program accreditation and NSU's tracking processes related to license exams, certification exams, and capstone exams (see 4.A and 4.B). Combined with the annual Academic Prioritization Process, these processes are designed to gauge overall success in achieving NSU's Mission Statement and Strategic Plan.

As evidenced by more than 35 University Committees and more than 100 student organizations, NSU allocates budget resources to support services that support student academic success. This is evidenced by the long-range planning by colleges and support units contained in Destination 2023, the Strategic Plan 2015-2025, Degrees of Excellence, the Capital Improvements Plan, and the Master Plan.

To facilitate the planning process, NSU is planning acquisition of software acquisitions that automates, streamlines, and aligns the budget process more strategically with planning and assessment. This will further serve to link assessment of student learning and evaluation of operations to planning and budgeting processes.

5.C.3

The planning process encompasses not only internal constituents, but also external constituents. This is evidenced by:

- The inclusive nature of the two-year revision process for the Mission Statement and Strategic Plan 2015-2023 (see 1.A.1), and
- The pledges of support by colleges and units defined by metrics of success as set forth in Destination 2023: Measures of Progress.

These two long-range planning documents were drafted through a two-year revision process built upon university and community-wide collaboration (see 1.A, 1.B, and 5.A).

Such inclusive planning is commonplace for NSU. NSU includes university and community representatives on budget committees, marketing committees, Academic Prioritization committees, hiring committees, and numerous other committees. NSU also promotes transparency and solicits community-wide input by publishing reports and committee minutes on the NSU website.

Some specific examples of NSU's inclusion of internal and external constituents in the planning process include:

- Use of university, college, and department specific advisory groups (consisting of students, faculty, staff, and community leaders) during the Academic Prioritization and hiring processes,
- Partnerships with the Cherokee Nation resulting in Cherokee language course offerings,
- A \$900K grant from the City of Muskogee that started the Occupational Therapy program in 2014,
- Partnerships with the Creek and Cherokee Nations that resulted in the new Physician's Assistant Program in Muskogee (2016),
- Hiring community leaders with graduate degrees to assist as adjuncts, and
- Partnering with business leaders to offer practice-based experiential learning opportunities through internships and practicums.

5.C.4

As noted in 1.A.3, NSU allocates resources on the basis of a sound understanding of current capacity coupled with the possible impact of fluctuations in sources of revenue. For example, the Vice President for Student Affairs closely tracks enrollment numbers, college deans track program and class enrollment numbers and the Vice President for Administration and Finance closely monitor projected revenue streams. Similarly, the President and all members of the

University closely monitor economic and legislative trends that might affect state allocations. Through such data-based analysis, budget allocations and long-range planning are based on an understanding of current capacity and emerging factors.

As evidence, NSU's long-range plans such as Destination 2023 and the Strategic Plan 2015-2023 are designed to gauge progress in meeting recruiting, persistence, completion, and graduation goals through the year 2023. These plans, coupled with the Master Plan and Capital Improvements Plan, serve as the foundational documents for budget requests and allocations. In addition, NSU's inclusive budgeting process anticipates factors such as continually reduced state revenue allocations, fluctuations in enrollment numbers, improvement in graduation numbers, and the dynamics of a decreased state revenue taxes due to all time low gasoline rates and a somewhat depressed economy within the region (see 1.A.1 and 5.A.1).

Evidence of long term strategic planning is exemplified by NSU's newest program offerings during times of reduced state allocations. For example, the Occupational Therapy program was possible due to a \$900K grant from the City of Muskogee Foundation, and the Physician's Assistant Program was possible due to partnerships with the Creek and Cherokee Nations. Federal grants also facilitated addition of a new greenhouse in support of cancer, stroke and cardiovascular disease research and the new pediatrics and plinth labs on the Muskogee campus.

NSU has strategically increased online, blended, and weekend course offerings to accommodate NSU's rapidly growing, non-traditional student body (i.e., students with jobs and families). These students require flexible class formats as evidenced by the fact that 70% percent of NSU students take at least one online course.

In addition, NSU actively recruits international students from China, Saudi Arabia, Kenya, Brazil, and other countries. These recruiting activities, coupled with NSU's membership in the International Student Exchange Program (see 1.B.2), lead to diverse cultural exchange opportunities for NSU students.

Efforts such as these serve to compensate for reduced state allocations. In addition, NSU plans for fluctuations in enrollment, reduced state allocations, and variable economic trends by maintaining a healthy primary reserve ratio of 0.57 (FY14) and CFI of 2.3 (FY14) with a three-year rolling average of 2.0 (CFI Comparison Chart).

5.C.5

NSU recognizes that the planning process must anticipate emerging factors such as technology, demographic shifts, and globalization (see 5.B.4). As stated in Strategic Goal 2, 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."

Many NSU students are employed and support families (see 4.B.4). NSU's average student age for undergraduate students is 26, and the average age at commuter satellite campus locations is

30. To accommodate this shift in demographics, NSU offers flexible weekend, evening, and online course offerings. NSU is also a member of the Reach Higher Program, a statewide initiative designed to help working adults complete a bachelor's degree (see 1.A.2).and recently joined NC-SARA to more readily facilitate transfer of online class offerings among member states (see 3.A.3). In addition, NSU has improved:

- Search engine capabilities,
- Mobile device access,
- Bandwidth capabilities, and
- Blackboard Collaborate (synchronous, face-to-face dialogue between students and faculty).

These changes, coupled with improved student support services, accommodate students who may be relocated overseas due to military or business obligations. For example, NSU students can even complete a Master's Degree while serving in the military overseas.

These flexible formats, data assessment, and long-range planning efforts are due, in part, to NSU's membership in HLC's Assessment Academy and Persistence and Completion Academy. It is reflected in planning documents such as Destination 2023, the Strategic Plan, the Master Plan, and the Capital Improvements Plan. It is also reflected in the annual Academic Prioritization process that takes into consideration fluctuations in student demographics and the economy.

Information Technology Services has been instrumental in supporting these processes. Many faculty and administrators use Skype, Blackboard Collaborate, or Instant Messaging to avert the need for students or employees to travel to campus locations. In addition, many professors attend online video conferences, further reducing travel expenditures.

Data analysis further serves to align valuable resources as best suited to meet NSU's mission, vision, and core values. Through D-23's metrics of success and Strategic Plan goals, NSU better allocates resources and assures compliance with annual reporting requirements for the Department of Education, accrediting agencies, licensing and certification authorities, RUSO, and OSRHE.

In addition, NSU reviews data outcomes, emerging trends, technologies, and innovations prior to the Academic Prioritization Process and prior to training initiatives, acquisition of teaching technologies, implementation of learning management systems, and planning for capital improvements (see 1.B.3 and 3.A.1).

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness supports outcomes assessment and planning efforts by collecting institutional data to track and predict emerging factors such as economic fluctuations and changing student demographic shifts. To more effectively analyze data, NSU is currently evaluating predictive analytics software capable of multivariate analysis, thereby facilitating

improved persistence and completion initiatives and better alignment of resources for long-range strategic plans. Acquisition of such software is scheduled in 2016.

In addition, institutional planning anticipates emerging factors in that:

- The Office of Institutional Effectiveness reports admissions and enrollment data,
- Student academic success is monitored through an Early Warning System,
- Career Services compiles employment data to gauge future employment opportunities for current and future students,
- Admissions and Recruitment tracks weekly, monthly, and annual data related to new student recruitment and enrollment, and
- NSU, through the Northeastern Oklahoma Regional Association, creates a regional plan designed to enhance civic engagement and coordinate outreach services in northeastern Oklahoma (see 1.B.2).

5.D - Core Component 5.D

The institution works systematically to improve its performance.

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

Argument

5.D.1

NSU successfully completed the HLC Assessment Academy in 2014 and is in the second year of the HLC Persistence and Completion Academy. Membership in these two academies led to heightened awareness of the value of data outcomes when implementing initiatives related to recruiting, retention, completion, and graduation rates (see 3.B.2 and 4.B.1). This heightened awareness of assessment drives alignment of budget allocations, curriculum offerings, capital expenditures, and operational performance to best achieve NSU's Mission and Strategic Plan (see 1.A.3 and 1.C.2).

NSU works to systematically improve performance. This is evidenced through systematic and integrated planning that result in long-range plans such as Destination 2023 and the Strategic Plan 2015-2023. These two documents, coupled with the Master Plan and Capital Improvements

Plan, are designed to chart NSU's progress in attaining recruiting, persistence, completion, and graduation goals through the year 2023. As such, they directly support and align with NSU's Mission, Vision, Core Values, and Strategic Goals.

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness analyzes data, fulfills state and national reporting requirements, and provides a myriad of reports to the college deans and student support services (see 4.A.6, 2.B, and 4.B.2). These written reports provide data related to enrollment, retention, and completion, thereby facilitating judicious alignment of scarce budget resources with mission objectives. Through this dynamic process, account sponsors are able to adjust budgets and modify strategic plans according to fluctuating economic variables, thereby advancing NSU's Mission to provide quality education, student support, and community service to the region.

5.D.2

NSU is aware that data analysis is essential when it comes to an informed decision making process. This was emphasized in both the HLC Assessment Academy and the Persistence and Completion Academy. For example, student focus group surveys in 2012 revealed frustration with NSU's faculty advising system. This led to implementation of a dual-shared advising model where 27 professional, full-time advisors are available 8:30-5:30 Monday through Friday, but work flexible schedules and set individual appoints to accommodate complex schedules of working students (see 3.D.3). Since implementation, 91% of students surveyed reported overall satisfaction with the new advising process.

A second outcome of the HLC Assessment Academy was redesign of General Education learning objectives (GE-SLOs) based upon student performance and community focus group input (see 3.A.1 and 3.B.1). Consequently, the GE-SLOs were realigned to more adequately mirror the needs of the business community and better prepare students for success.

Furthermore, faculty input resulted in modification of NSU's Academic Prioritization Process. As a result, the process is more streamlined, thereby expediting the approval process.

Academy membership led to improved sharing of data outcomes and refinement of support processes. As a result, NSU created an Office of Institutional Effectiveness with an Executive Director and three research staff. Consequently, NSU employees have improved access to data outcomes, thereby cultivating greater awareness of NSU processes and initiatives as well as improved awareness of the budget process and alignment of fiscal resources.

Currently, Institutional Effectiveness is working with Information Technology Services on projects to improve processes and procedures for requesting, processing, and distributing data outcomes. The projects include plans to update server and security structures, create more standardized reports, and provide authorized end users the ability to run unassisted reports when appropriate. These processes will lead to improved sharing of data outcomes such as grade distributions, credit hour reports, and degree conferral lists, much of which will be available on shared drives or the NSU secure portal.

5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary

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

Summary

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 OSRHE and RUSO guidelines with the primary purpose to support NSU's Mission. In times of scarce legislative allocations, NSU is able to meet 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 Ten-Year Reaccreditation Peer Review Report.

