

Northeastern State University - OK

HLC ID 1625

OPEN PATHWAY: Mid-Cycle Review

Visit Date: 1/15/2016

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Context and Nature of Review

Visit Date

1/15/2016

Mid-Cycle Reviews include:

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

Reaffirmation Reviews include:

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

Scope of Review

- Mid-Cycle Review

There are no forms assigned.

Institutional Context

NSU is Oklahoma's fourth-largest public 4 year university and one of the six regional institutions governed by the Regional University System of Oklahoma. The university has an enrollment of 5,478 full time (5,001 undergraduate and 477 graduate) and 2,798 part time (2,043 undergraduate, 755 graduate) students. The institute values gender equity and the percentage of women enrolled at the university is 62.7% compared to 37.3 % men. The percentage of women in faculty ranks is 51% compared to 49%men. NSU serves its region well with 91.9% students being from Oklahoma. 84 percent of the undergraduate classes have fewer than 30 students and 97% of undergraduate classes have fewer than 50 students. NSU offers 54 undergraduate programs/majors and 24 graduate programs providing ample educational opportunities to its constituents.

NSU is an Open Pathway institution and is undergoing the mid cycle review of its HLC accreditation. There were five members of the review team and they all reviewed online documents submitted by the institution to arrive at decisions related to NSU's mid-cycle accreditation status.

Interactions with Constituencies

The documents submitted by the institution were reviewed. Several links to additional information were provided within the self study report. Upon review, several additional documents related to general education were requested and were supplied promptly.

Additional Documents

There are no additional documents reviewed.

1 - Mission

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

1.A - Core Component 1.A

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

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

Rating

Met

Evidence

The institution is well served by its recently updated mission and strategic plan which was developed over a two year period through a widely disseminated and participative process. The plan was completed in fall 2015 and incorporated university and community-wide input by several stake holders. Also, 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 in 2015. This is evidence of an institution developing its mission through an engaged and participative process.

The university fulfills its mission of serving its constituents by offering diverse academic programs such as 1 professional Doctorate of Optometry degree, 24 graduate degrees, 55 undergraduate degrees, 3 undergraduate certificates of proficiency, and 4 graduate certificates of proficiency through seven academic colleges: 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 colleges and programs fulfill academic needs of the region.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

None

1.B - Core Component 1.B

The mission is articulated publicly.

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

Rating

Met

Evidence

The institution understands its rich educational heritage of the Cherokee Nation and its mission to provide life long learning opportunities to its diverse communities through a broad array of undergraduate, graduate, and professional doctoral degree programs. It also utilizes several resources such as the NSU website, e-mail distribution lists, campus-wide meetings, and hard copy brochures and pamphlets to disseminate the statement to all stake holders.

The mission statement of the institution clearly describes the extent of its emphasis through a synergy with the Destination 2023 document supporting the Governor's commitment to "Complete College America" and by emphasizing the institution's commitment to quality education, student support services, and community engagement. Further evidence of public understanding of the university's mission is reflected in the use of the Mission Statement, Vision Statement, Core Values, Master Plan, Capital Improvements Plan, D-23, Complete College America, and supporting unit plans to develop an integrated master planning model designed to provide quality education throughout the region through 2023.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

1.C - Core Component 1.C

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

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

Rating

Met

Evidence

NSU's commitment to diversity is indicated in its mission statement, especially in its commitment to serve American Indian student population. Establishment of the "Indigenous Scholars Development Center," whose primary role is to enhance academic performance, retention and graduation rates of American Indians and total NSU student body, is an example of NSU's commitment to diversity.

NSU fulfills its role in a multicultural society by fostering an environment of success for all and by offering several cultural outreach programs such as 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 to its diverse group of students.

Recognition of NSU as having the highest number of American Indian students of any higher education institution in the nation and being recognized among the top academic institutions 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) are some of the demonstrable evidence of its commitment to diversity.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

1.D - Core Component 1.D

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

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

Rating

Met

Evidence

NSU understands its commitment to public good by offering affordable programs at an extremely low tuition and fees of only \$5,285 per academic year, by offering flexible class schedules offering face-to-face, blended, weekend, and online classes, and by providing 69% of full time NSU students some type of need-based financial aid and through its commitment to diversity. In addition to affordability, NSU's commitment to accessibility of higher education is reflected in the fact that the admittance rate for new freshman applicants is 92% and the admittance rate for transfer applicants is 98%.

Several recognitions such as the President Obama's Higher Education Service Honor Roll award for the past five consecutive years, selection of NSU as one of the top 25 organizations in the region with an inclusive workplace culture for the past three years, listed as top 15% of schools nationwide for embracing student veterans (for the fifth year in a row), receiving the Tree Campus USA Award in recognition of urban forest management for four consecutive years are a few examples of NSU's role in serving its region in an exemplary manner.

NSU's understanding of its role to serve its region is also reflected in its willingness to offer programs such as The Oklahoma Center for Rural Development at NSU-Tahlequah, The Oklahoma Manufacturing Alliance at NSU-BA, and its collaboration with WorkForce Oklahoma and Arkansas Department of Workforce Services to offer degree programs designed to support employment needs.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

None.

1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary

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

Evidence

The mission of NSU has been developed in an engaged and participative environment where all stake holders were given an opportunity to provide input. The mission is aligned with NSU's D23 document and the Governor's Complete College America plan, which provides a rationale for systematic and synergistic long term planning. The mission of NSU is understood well by internal as well external stake holders and provides a strong commitment to diversity. The university understands its role in providing an affordable and accessible education to its region and has evidence to substantiate its commitment to public good.

2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

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

2.A - Core Component 2.A

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

Rating

Met

Evidence

NSU maintains a deep commitment to integrity and ethical conduct as evidenced by its core value statements as well as a number of documents including faculty, student, and employee handbooks. A comprehensive list of policies and processes are provided by NSU demonstrating the comprehensive scope of NSU's approach and assurance to integrity in all aspects of its operations.

Fiscal operations at NSU applies multiple budgeting and financial process to uphold its commitment to appropriately managing the resources of the institution. The Budget Oversight Committee is comprised of members from administration, faculty, staff, and student body, which ensures the alignment between NSU's budget and mission and strategic plan. Financial audits are conducted under the guideline of RUSO policy and NSU bi-annual internal audits. In addition to financial operations, NSU presented abundant evidence that demonstrate its integrity in other areas, such as administration, marketing, and athletics. Clear policies are presented in contractual partnerships and the operation of the NSU Foundation.

NSU presents and maintains appropriate and adequate policies and processes to foster a fair and ethical campus environment, and to ensure student rights.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.B - Core Component 2.B

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

Rating

Met

Evidence

NSU provided convincing evidence to demonstrate 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. A review of several evidence files, such as admission policies, specialized accreditation, institutional data, and housing information, indicates of high level of clarity in presenting critical information to students and the general public.

It is laudable that NSU made great effort and investment to re-design its entire website. The initiative was based on suggestions from HLC's review in 2012. NSU's new website provides more visually-inviting, interactive, and more streamlined structure for users. Curriculum information, degree requirements, other program information, and student consumer information is easily accessible through NSU's website.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.C - Core Component 2.C

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

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

Rating

Met

Evidence

At the state level, NSU is governed by two publicly-appointed boards, OSRHE and RUSO, which oversee legislative mandated aspects of higher education. Evidence does indicate the two boards maintain respective functions. From the evidence provided, it is unable to determine whether the two boards work in sync to provide greatest benefits to the institution.

As evidenced by files linked in its argument, the two Boards meet regularly to ensure that all member institutions, including NSU, are in compliance with appropriate policies and procedures. It is quite evident that both Boards have a good understanding about and connection with NSU. RUSO meetings are frequently held on NSU campus, whereas OSRHE chancellor and staff members have paid visits to NSU campuses in recent years.

Within the parameters established by the two governing boards, NSU does maintain sufficient autonomy to govern the university's daily operations in finances, personnel, and academic activities at the institutional level. RUSO's policy document clearly states that "The University Presidents are the chief executive officers of the universities to which they have been appointed and are responsible for the internal administration thereof" (Section 1.25.1). NSU's president, along with 35 university committees, makes daily operational decisions satisfactorily and effectively.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.D - Core Component 2.D

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

Rating

Met

Evidence

An array of evidence provided by NSU points to the institution's commitment to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning, starting from its core values. Academic freedom and freedom of expression are presented clearly in faculty handbook and student bill of rights respectively. Additional evidence on freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth is provided through NSU's collegial governance policy and computer and network use policy, and is sufficient.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.E - Core Component 2.E

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

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

Rating

Met

Evidence

Several entities, including NSU's IRB, UAWC, and Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP), provide effective oversight and support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff, and students. Offices such as HR, ORSP, Library, and Center for Teaching and Learning are also involved in ongoing trainings related to ethical conduct and integrity. Sufficient evidence in ethical conduct is provided through publications, websites, and policy documents that cover areas of digital access, classroom behaviors, and standardized syllabi.

Students are offered guidance in the ethical use of information resources through freshman English classes and a freshman-level University Strategies course. NSU's uniform course syllabus template prescribes standard language on academic misconduct. Additional information on copyright, intellectual property, and FERPA is found on NSU's website. Faculty, department chairs, college deans, and a designated research integrity officer are the primary personnel to enforce policy and practice on academic honesty and integrity.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary

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

Evidence

Comprehensive evidence at multiple levels and from different units of NSU have clearly demonstrated the institutional commitment to ethical and responsible behaviors in teaching, learning, research, finance, and administration. This commitment is presented in a number of ways starting from policies established by two state-level governing boards all the way to policies, procedures, and practice at different areas of the campus. The newly designed website, along with other published materials, provides a thorough and easily accessible information to students and the general public. NSU maintains sufficient autonomy in making daily operational decisions.

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

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

3.A - Core Component 3.A

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

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

Rating

Met

Evidence

NSU has one doctoral program that is accredited by the Accreditation Council on Optometric Education, twenty-four graduate programs, fifty-five undergraduate programs, four graduate certificates, and three undergraduate certificates. Credit and non-credit courses are also offered through the NSU College of Extended Learning, and in fact one of their programs was recently honored with the "Excellence in Best Programming" award at the 2015 Learning Resources Network (LERN) Conference. NSU academic programs are linked to the NSU mission and are approved by two governing boards, the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE) and the Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO). Many NSU programs have specialized accreditation. Program review and assessment at NSU are thorough and rigorous, and the process is regulated and monitored by OSRHE Policy 3.7. All programs are prioritized regarding which should be sustained, nurtured, added, or dissolved. Department faculty, the University Curriculum Committee, and the Academic Affairs are charged and authorized with program review. The NSU Program Change Flowchart depicts the process for changing an established program, and once the change occurs it goes through the University Curriculum Committee for review and approval, finally landing with the Regents for their approval. The Academic Priority Spreadsheet, coupled with the Program Value and Quality Matrix, provide a valuable tool to NSU to prioritize their programs, including whether they should grow and invest, sustain, or revise a program. NSU participated in the HLC Assessment Academy in 2012 to restructure their General Education Curriculum. Course assessments are now connected to the NSU Student Learning Outcomes which include written and oral communication, humanities, social and behavioral sciences, natural sciences, quantitative analysis, life skills, and global perspectives. NSU also has a strong alumni network that includes many prominent graduates, including five Oklahoma university presidents, seven state house representatives, two state senators,

one chief of the Cherokee Nation, and Carrie Underwood, to name a few. Alumni are also represented on NSU advisory councils and boards, and support the institution financially with contributions. Course evaluations from fall 2015 indicate that students are pleased with NSU's academic courses and program faculty – no survey category scored lower than 4.0 on a 5.0 scale. The student survey included quantitative and qualitative questions.

NSU offers certificates, bachelors and masters degrees, and one doctoral degree, each requiring different levels of rigor appropriate to the program of study. For example, 120 hours are required for bachelor degree programs including a common General Education curriculum for all NSU students. NSU syllabi are standardized and include pertinent information that assists students in achieving course goals. The Degrees of Excellence initiative spearheaded by the NSU Provost in 2014 establishes Student Learning Outcomes for bachelor degree programs based on Lumina's DQP and AACU's LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes. In addition, online courses are certified through the CTL and there is extensive training for faculty members who teach online. Online courses are part of the regular course and program review process at NSU. Quality Matters (QM), a national faculty-centered peer review process is used to certify online courses and components, and train instructors, and standardized QM rubrics are used in each course. Finally, students are given the opportunity to evaluate courses and instructors at the end of the course.

NSU has established multiple layers of scrutiny to assure quality and consistency within programs and across multiple course delivery systems. Courses taught online and on ground appear to meet the same requirements, syllabi are identical based on a university syllabus template, learning outcomes are uniform, and the review of programs and courses is identical. A variety of individuals and groups confirm rigor, provide oversight, or have the opportunity to weigh-in on the curriculum, including faculty, chairs, deans, students, UCC, and community members. In addition, OSRHE sponsors an annual "Course Equivalency Project" to update course content and transfer matrices system-wide. This process assures students are able to seamlessly transfer credits within the Oklahoma system of higher education. Regarding faculty teaching at NSU, 98% of faculty have a graduate degree, 53% a doctoral degree, and 77% hold the highest degree in their field. NSU's Online Education Certification (OEC) includes several layers of training and certification for full and part-time online instructors including OEC1, OEC2, and Quality Matters. Regarding Quality Matters, NSU has 16 certified peer reviewers, 3 master reviewers, and 121 Quality Matters certifications. The goal is for all online courses to be certified by 2019. NSU is a member of the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) and participates in online SARA, which facilitates college credit transfer among other states that are members. Online courses must meet SARA standards and be reviewed by the Southern Regional Education Board's Electronic Campus. Blackboard is the course management system used at NSU for all online, ITV, and blended courses. Student support services include a variety of vehicles for communicating with students. For example, face-to-face tutoring, online training videos, online and hard copy library resources, etc. By all accounts, it appears that online students are provided with nearly identical services as on ground students. NSU has typical guidelines for undergraduate and graduate course credit transfer, and those guidelines are made available to the public by way of the NSU website. In addition, concurrent enrollment policies are in keeping with industry standards and all courses are taught by NSU faculty members. CLEP exams are also accepted at NSU for college credit. Guidelines and requirements are on the NSU website. Regarding the Common Data Set, NSU has a 67.7% student retention rate. Destination 2023 (D23) and the NSU strategic plan are both focused on improving retention, persistence, and graduate rates. The average GPA of students entering NSU is 3.36, and 80% of entering first-year freshman students have a GPA at or above 3.0, and 82% of admitted students were in the top ½ of their high school graduating class. The ACT without a writing component, rigor of the high school attended, class rank, GPA, and test scores are almost exclusively used for admittance into

NSU. In-state undergraduate tuition at NSU is \$4,162.50 and out of state undergraduate tuition is \$11,512.50. Fees are \$1,122.00, and an undergraduate in state credit is \$138.75 and out of state credit is \$383.75. The majority of NSU first-time, first-year students apply for some type of aid (822 of 891) – 584 are awarded financial aid, 533 are awarded need-based aid, 177 are awarded non-need based aid, and the average aid package is \$10,560.00

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.B - Core Component 3.B

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

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

Rating

Met

Evidence

A new general education program was established at NSU in 2010 using ETS's MAPP instrument as a program assessment tool. NSU's general education program complies with OSRHE requirements, and general education outcomes are based on the HLC framework that an NSU team implemented as a result of attending the HLC Assessment Academy. NSU is in the second year of the HLC Persistence and Completion Academy. During the HLC Assessment Academy the NSU team focused on data collection and review, and sharing of data outcomes. A general education committee is in place at NSU and the curriculum appears appropriate for the institution. In addition, transferability of general education courses is required, as noted in the OSRHE Transfer Guide, and NSU meets those transfer standards.

General education syllabi are standardized, and as a result of the HLC Assessment Academy NSU is committed to creating a culture of assessment on campus. Information provided indicates that the General Education Committee reviews general education student learning outcomes annually and that the entire General Education curriculum is reviewed through the university's five-year program review process.

NSU implements the Boyer Model in regard to faculty retention, tenure, and promotion, and encourages faculty members to participate in immersive learning and research with their students. Students have several opportunities to showcase their research at events such as Research Day at the State Capitol, the American Indian Symposium, and Oklahoma Research Day which NSU hosted in

2015 and where 225 NSU students showcased poster presentations. NSU students are able to self-evaluate and programs use this information to improve programs and courses. General education SLOs were refined due to participation in the HLC Assessment Academy, and 80% of students surveyed mastered revised SLOs.

NSU has a long and connected history with the Cherokee Nation and its mission and core values include a commitment to that population and other diverse populations. The NSU student body includes 44% minority students and 19% of faculty are also diverse. The university has been recognized with awards and honors including for creating an inclusive workplace culture (Tulsa Chamber of Commerce) and for being the number one producer of Native American degrees in the nation (21st Annual Winds of Change college Edition Magazine). NSU students, faculty, and staff are able to participate in a variety of events on and off campus focusing on diversity topics and issues such as the MLK Day of Service and the American Indian Symposium. The NSU curriculum provides courses that address diversity issues and diverse communities including Asian Studies, American Indian Studies, and Cherokee Cultural Studies. In addition, the library contains holdings that address fields such as Multicultural Education including collections focusing on Native Americans.

As mentioned earlier, NSU adheres to the tenets of the Boyer Model for retention, tenure, and promotion. Faculty members are given multiple opportunities to read about, discuss, and learn about the Boyer Model, including during "Community and Collaboration Days", in the Faculty Handbook, and a variety of organized campus discussions. The faculty promotion and tenure process is closely aligned with the Boyer philosophy. Eighty-seven percent of NSU faculty feel that they "have the resources they need to do their job" as indicated in the 2015 Employee Engagement Survey. NSU provides several opportunities for faculty members to obtain outside funding through the Faculty Research Grants, Faculty Development Grants, Service Learning Grants, and Teaching and Learning Grants. In addition, faculty members are bestowed with awards and honors for teaching, research, and service through the NSU Circle of Excellence Awards – honorees have a brick or plaque placed outside of Seminary Hall in their name to mark their achievement.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.C - Core Component 3.C

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

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

Rating

Met

Evidence

NSU is ranked the best regional college in Oklahoma in 2014 and 2015, and was ranked 34th in top public schools and 84th in best regional university by the U.S. News and World Report of Best U.S. Colleges. The university has 340 FT and 270 PT faculty, 63% of FT faculty have been at NSU five or more years, and 77% of FT faculty hold the highest degree in field. The Boyer model is used in the promotion and tenure process at NSU. Teaching, scholarship, and service are emphasized. NSU provides faculty with examples of evidence as they build their tenure and promotion portfolios, which is advantageous. Hiring practices appear thorough and are typical for the industry and all requirements are published in the NSU Faculty Search Guide. Background checks are required and an online search portal keeps applicants in the loop about their application from job posting to search committee to hire. Multiple individuals on campus interview each candidate allowing for much input into the process. NSU faculty members are 21% minority and there is a 16:1 faculty to student ratio. Regarding accessibility, the NSU 2015 College Portrait indicates that 90% of graduating seniors reported that faculty are prompt with feedback on tests and assignments. There is also high satisfaction among students regarding group learning experiences in the classroom. Regarding active learning experiences, 4% of NSU students participate in study abroad, 14% participated in community service, 17% worked on research projects with a faculty member, 41% participated in an internship, field experience, etc., 86% gave course presentations, and 69% indicated that had quality interactions with their advisor. Online courses at NSU are capped at 35 students, and 79% of undergraduate courses have fewer than 30 students.

NSU indicates that it verifies faculty credentials using HLC and RUSO Policy 3.1.2 which include requirements such as faculty must hold a degree from a regionally accredited or internationally recognized institution. NSU faculty members teach Dual Enrollment Courses.

Non-tenured faculty members are annually reviewed, and reappointment/non-reappointment letters must be sent to faculty members by March 1. Tenured faculty reviews occur a minimum of every three years. Faculty reviews are conducted by tenured department faculty members – guidelines for review are published in RUSO Policy 3.3.5 and are outlined in the NSU Faculty Handbook (3.3.1 and 3.3.2). Annual faculty evaluations for non-tenured faculty members are required. The 2015 Employment Engagement Survey indicates that 75% of all NSU employees participated in a performance review in the past 12 months. Reviews also occur for other reasons, including salary and merit increases, graduate faculty status, and research grants. In addition, anonymous student course evaluations are required online through the Blackboard course management system at NSU. The course evaluation includes 21 Likert Scale questions, and the results are reviewed by the department chair, dean, and provost during the tenure and promotion process.

NSU uses the Boyer Model to assess faculty members and a new faculty orientation is provided by the CTL to inform new faculty members about the Boyer Model. There are a variety of opportunities at NSU for faculty members to participate in group and individual professional development activities university-wide in addition to departments and divisions. For example, the NSU CTL offers year-round workshops, conferences, and trainings for faculty members that include such topics as “writing good tests”, “assessment and research”, “using plagiarism software”, and “creating podcasts and blogs”. Faculty members are also supported with grants, awards, and tuition waivers. Quality Matters certification also enables certified faculty members at NSU to serve as peer mentors and course reviewers.

NSU provided evidence that faculty members connect with students in a variety of ways including in person, by phone, and online. All NSU syllabi require faculty to post contact information that includes their office hours and office hours are dependent on their teaching load. In addition, faculty office hours are spelled-out in the NSU Faculty Handbook (4.8). For example, full-time faculty members must hold office hours 8 hours/week/academic semester and 5 hours/week/summer. Timely communication, which includes email monitoring is expected of NSU faculty members and is clearly stated in the Faculty Handbook. In addition, the review indicated that many faculty members use Facebook and Instagram to communicate with students. The 2015 College Portrait indicates that 90% of student respondents stated that they received timely feedback from faculty.

Staff have similar hiring practices and requirements as do faculty hires. In addition, new staff are provided with an orientation, various trainings, and an annual evaluation, and they are also able to use the same CTL services provided to faculty members. In addition, staff are provided with a variety of professional development opportunities throughout the year both on and off campus. NSU uses a dual-advising model. There are 27 full-time professional advisors at NSU with at least one advisor assigned to each College. An Advising Survey indicates positive results and that the primary interaction between an advisor and student was face-to-face. The Student Academic Success Center (SASC) opened in October of 2012, to “enhance academic performance of students” and its primary purpose is information, referral, and follow-up regarding academic and co-curricular activities. The SASC coordinates a variety of offices including the Writing Center, Career Center, TRIO programs, Language Labs, and the Counseling Center. Data indicate that SASC staff provided 5,937 hours of tutoring, 1,128 free hours of counseling, 2,600 supervised internship hours at the NSU Vision Center, and 80,000 hours of supervised community service. Much like faculty members, NSU staff are provided with funding for professional development in their specialized area, which would include staff in areas such as residential life, writing center, wellness center, disability services, and study

abroad. In addition, staff are given a 50% reduction in tuition costs. NSU implements a variety of surveys to assess staff performance and student satisfaction, including an Advising survey, Senior survey, Alumni survey, course evaluation surveys, and American Indian survey, to name a few. The NSU 2015 College Portrait reveals that 92% of students believe that the university emphasizes student academic success.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.D - Core Component 3.D

The institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching.

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

Rating

Met

Evidence

Thirty-three percent of NSU students are first-generation college students. Student support takes many shapes using a variety of strategies, offices, and individuals on campus including diversity programs that assist with admission (evidence provided regarding diversity was for faculty and staff), the Center for Admissions and Student Enrollment that includes Career Services and the Registrar, the Student Orientation, Advising, and Registration (SOAR) program for first-time freshman, Rookie Bridge Camp, Mandatory Orientation, 2+2 Partnership with Tulsa Community College. Transfer Student Orientation (email of 7/29/15 indicates this option was still being discussed), and the Online New Price Calculator which is a wonderful and transparent resource for students. A list of support services was provided for review, but little information about data was included. For example, the Early Alert System, Faculty/Alumni Mentors program, President's Leadership Class, Honors Program, and a variety of other programs sounded interesting, but it is difficult to evaluate effectiveness of the programs without data. NSU was named to President Obama's Service Honor Roll from 2011-2015 for clocking 93,000 annual community service hours. In addition, there are 100 active student organizations at NSU. Ninety percent of beginning full-time undergraduates receive some form of financial aid or scholarship, 69% receive some form of needs-based financial assistance.

NSU conducts entry-level assessment and placement of students. For example, during the 2013-2014 academic year the Accuplacer test placed 922 students in remediation courses due to low ACT scores. Since forty-four percent of incoming freshmen at NSU require remediation and remedial classes are held 5 days a week by the same instructor to maintain continuity and connection with the students. In addition, the Writeplacer is also used as a writing exam, but no information or data was provided. Finally, Supplemental Instruction was also mentioned as a support service, which is a for-credit course that was started in 2015, and is taken by students with their developmental courses, but it is too soon for an assessment of that course. General Education program requires a Capstone activity that

reviews learning from the beginning to the end of the experience. Student satisfaction surveys are administered to freshman and seniors, and the NSSE survey is administered as well. Data from the surveys is used to improve curriculum and programs. Seventy-six percent of NSU graduates are employed and 32% plan to enroll in graduate school. NSU uses a Program Outcomes Assessment form to record assessment results in major areas of study each June. The form records SLOs, number of students assessed, learning activities, assessment instruments, requests for institutional services.

NSU has used a Dual-Advising model since 2013, whereby 27 professional advisors work with faculty advisors to advise students at different stages of their academic career. Professional advisors work with new incoming students, while faculty advisors work with students in areas such as course choice, declaration of a major, and career choices. Freshman are given an advisor upon enrollment and attend a pre-registration advising session where they are encouraged to declare a major. A dual-advising survey indicated that 91% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with their advising experience at NSU. The CASE Building is dedicated to providing students with a one-stop center where they can register, work with financial aid counselors, and meet with faculty in one location several times during the year. Student-athletes are advised by their coaches who also monitor their academic progress. If grades drop below a "C" student support services are provided. NSU reports that the average GPA of an NSU student-athlete is 2.9, and that 54% of student-athletes have a GPA of 3.0 or better. Non-traditional students account for 41% of the undergraduate population. To serve this population NSU offers DegreeWorks and GoNSU, both portals that students can access from anywhere to review transcripts and track progress toward degree completion.

NSU is part of the ONENET Oklahoma system, a network for education and government that delivers high-speed internet access and monitoring. Campus computers are rotated every three years and classrooms are equipped with current and updated technology. NSU has 38 computer labs on campus. The NSU website search engine was recently updated to provide easier navigation and mobile application displays. NSU boasts state-of-the-art facilities and technology infrastructure, including classrooms equipped with computers, studios and practice space, ITV classrooms, lab space, high-speed internet connections, and projectors. In addition, NSU states that 35% of their classrooms have interactive smartboards.

Students are provided with research training and assistance in a variety of formats through Comp I and II, and in the University Strategies course. In addition, faculty are encouraged to recruit students on joint research projects. Finally, NSU has 65 paid GA positions many of which are dedicated to assisting with research. NSU was honored with the OSRHE 2015 Spotlight Award for "excellence in promoting current and future undergraduate research endeavors." Undergraduate Research Day and Oklahoma Research Day sees about 300 students present their research. Professional librarians assist with student research in person, by phone, and online. In addition, the library provides online training videos and a research guide to NSU students. The CTL offers research-related training that students are able to access.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.E - Core Component 3.E

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

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

Rating

Met

Evidence

NSU considers its immersive and experiential learning components the hallmark of its curricular and co-curricular offerings, and has tied those hallmarks to its mission and vision. For example, NSU is committed to its transfer agreements allowing community college students to transfer seamlessly into NSU, Chamber partnerships, dual-credit course offerings for high school students to prepare them for university work, student organizations that provide students with 100 organizations to choose from regarding service in addition to a variety of service learning and community service activities. Learning occurs inside and outside of the classroom, and students are given the opportunity to make connections between academics, social life, and work life. Co-curricular activities include work study, clinical experiences (reading, vision, nursing, education) graduate assistantships, joint faculty research (research days), performing arts, field trips (birding with an NSU ornithologist), and Collegiate Officer Program (hands-on training as a police officer while earning degree in Criminal Justice). Community service activities include the Special Olympics, summer academies, optometry volunteer opportunities, reading clinics for K-12 students (university students tutor and read to young students), robotics, and National Day of Service (NSU planted trees for the 20th anniversary of the Oklahoma bombing). Student organizations provide NSU students with 100 different opportunities to participate in a variety of activities including the Honor Society, Jazz Lab, Student Newspaper, and fraternities and sororities. Along with academics, NSU students have a rich array of co-curricular activities to participate in on and off campus.

NSU solicits input regarding student and community needs and provided a variety of Advisory Board minutes and examples of constituent feedback including how that feedback is used to inform new programs and improve current programs. For example, the Legal Studies degree program was offered as a sample of constituent input and provided evidence of their claim. A variety of opportunities, in addition to those already mentioned, are available for students to participate in and belong to including student government, art galleries on campus, and TRIO programs including talent search, Upward Bound, and McNair Scholars. In addition, immersive learning occurs through work study, residential assistantships, graduate assistantships, internships, and research days, to name a few.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary

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

Evidence

NSU provided ample information and evidence, in a variety of formats, to support its argument and claims regarding teaching and learning at the institution. The university's degree programs are appropriate and assist the university in fulfilling its mission. Faculty and students are given multiple opportunities throughout the year for intellectual inquiry through a variety of university sponsored workshops, conferences, and trainings such as research symposiums and activities hosted by the Center for Teaching and Learning. The faculty and staff provide student advising and support and all indications support student satisfaction with NSU, their academic programs, and the faculty and staff. Student learning is assessed throughout a student's educational program and assessment results are used to improve programming including General Education. All NSU academic programs are assessed systematically on a five-year rotating basis, and NSU has participated in the HLC Assessment Academy and is in the second year of the HLC Persistence and Completion Academy. It is clear to the HLC review team that NSU administrators, faculty members, and staff are committed to offering students a high quality education both on-ground and on-line, and that the teaching faculty are adequately prepared and credentialed to teach.

4 - Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

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

4.A - Core Component 4.A

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

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

Rating

Met

Evidence

Northeastern State University maintains a five year cycle of program review for its academic programs. Evidence presented by the university shows this review process includes areas of emphasis such as the program's relation to the institution's mission, program objectives and goals, learning outcomes, indicators of academic quality, production of graduates, duplication of programs offered by other institutions, student demand for the program, and resources used by the program.

OSRHE, the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, has established policies governing the admission of transfer students, transfer of credit both from in state and out of state institutions, and the awarding of credit for experiential learning and granting of credit for prior learning. Northeastern

State, as a member of the OSRHE system, follows those guidelines.

The faculty, through academic departments, provide leadership in the maintenance of academic quality by determining course pre-requisites and rigor, student learning outcomes, and the maintenance of adequate learning resources. This is accomplished through the academic prioritization process, external reviews, and the institution's program review process. Evidence presented by Northeastern indicates that the same level of quality offered in face-to-face courses on campus is carried throughout on-line, dual credit, and off-campus offerings through the same review processes. In addition, standardization of syllabi, learning outcomes, and rigor across learning platforms ensures uniformity of quality and student experience.

Northeastern State maintains specialized external accreditation in ten academic fields, particularly those that require external certification of graduates before seeking career opportunities (i.e. nursing and teacher education). The results of specialized accreditation are circulated internally by the relevant department chairs to deans and university administration for review.

The university tracks the activities of its graduates to determine the viability of its academic programs in the employment market. Evidence presented indicates that 76% of former students were employed upon graduation with an additional 32% having an intent to pursue graduate studies. The institution states that this employment and graduate school aspiration rate is due to the university focusing on internships, practicums, residency requirements, and student research in several of its academic programs. Northeastern State utilizes employment survey data and the input of external program advisory boards to ensure its academic programs are meeting the needs of employers.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

4.B - Core Component 4.B

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

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

Rating

Met

Evidence

Since it was first established in 1989, Northeastern State University's assessment program has developed into a multi-faceted process for establishing outcomes and assessing student learning that involves the institution's faculty, administrative offices, and governing bodies. Course-level assessment data is collected by the academic department and sent annually to the college dean for inclusion in a report compiled for the Oklahoma State Regents of Higher Education. In addition, program assessment processes and data are monitored by the university's Committee on Student Learning and Assessment, a broad-based group with representation from academic colleges, students, and administrative offices (i.e. institutional effectiveness). Through its monitoring process, the committee makes recommendations for changes to both the process and outcomes. Curricular changes proposed by the department as a result of assessment outcomes are reviewed and approved by the University Curriculum Committee.

In addition to its standard process for assessing student learning outcomes, the institution has instituted several additional practices that assess learning, including: pre and post tests; student course evaluations; monitoring of enrollment trends of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness; course portfolios, capstone exams, and senior thesis; as well as standardized exams required by many programs to gauge learning compared to national norms.

The university demonstrates its capacity to utilize assessment data to improve the quality of its academic programs. For example, Northeastern State recently utilized data collected through its assessment program to evaluate and realign its student learning outcomes in all general education and most core courses on campus. Each of the four academic colleges has a student learning coordinator that assists academic departments with the development of assessment goals, measuring outcomes, and interpreting the results to improve academic quality. These initiatives result in assessment data that is used to make changes to the curriculum to improve academic quality over time.

In addition to actively participating in institutional assessment programs, Northeastern State

presented evidence that points to broad participation by faculty on accrediting bodies and professional boards that gives the institution insight into upcoming accreditation and licensure changes for its academic programs.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

4.C - Core Component 4.C

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

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

Rating

Met

Evidence

Northeastern State has put forward an ambitious plan to increase retention, persistence, and degree completion known as Destination 2023. This plan is designed to establish "reasonable and practical goals to increase growth in the number of students who earn degrees from NSU." Through this plan, the university has proposed to: increase the number of degrees awarded by 34.5% to 2,447 degrees by 2023; increase first to second year retention by 9.3%; and increase the institution's six-year graduation rate by 9.7% to 40% by 2023. If these retention, persistence, and completion goals are met, NSU aims at having an enrollment of 11,000 students by 2023. The institution's strategic plans and academic college plans support this initiative. While the current status of these initiatives were not presented in the assurance argument, the presence of such goals and plans indicate an institutional commitment to improving retention, persistence, and completion.

Through its assessment program, the institution collects a large amount of data related to retention, persistence, and completion. One of the challenges identified is the analysis of this data to provide meaningful insight into how to improve these three benchmarks. To that end, Northeastern State has improved its use of databases to improve retention, persistence, and completion. For example, the College of Business and Technology and the College of Education worked together to utilize the Chalk and Wire assessment and digital portfolio system. Such collaborative efforts allow the two colleges to compare data across a similar platform for more efficient and effective analysis outcomes. The university as a whole has also committed to purchasing predictive analytics software to aid in decision making and program improvement using data.

The data driven decision making process has impacted retention, persistence, and completion rates

positively. One point of evidence cited by the institution was the restructuring of the general education curriculum to address courses that often are impediments to persistence and completion by improving student success in those courses. A new model of academic advising, known as "dual shared advising" has improved retention as has an on-line tutoring program and a new early alert system to flag at-risk students for intervention by the academic affairs and student affairs team.

NSU demonstrates best practices in tracking retention, persistence, and completion by participating in the IPEDS annual report process, the College Portrait program, and utilization of the Common Data Set. These three practices are widely used in higher education and allow NSU to benchmark themselves to peer institutions regionally and nationally.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

4.S - Criterion 4 - Summary

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

Evidence

Northeastern State has developed collaborative, integrated processes for program review and assessment. These processes compliment the university's specialized accreditations and are validated by data collected on the employment status of its graduates and their matriculation into graduate and professional schools. NSU has worked diligently to standardize and coordinate learning outcomes, particularly in its general education program and core courses. Assessment data collected is used to inform decision making about curricular and program improvements that are evaluated and approved through the university's committee structure and administration. Finally, through the adoption of Destination 2023, Northeastern State has demonstrated a commitment to improving retention, persistence, and completion rates by collecting and analyzing data to enhance academic programs and support services to increase the number of academic credentials awarded.

5 - Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

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

5.A - Core Component 5.A

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

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

Rating

Met

Evidence

The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education's (OSRHE) policy includes the requirements that institutions must follow for Academic Program Reviews. The results of these reviews are utilized by the Regents to make decisions regarding "...program initiation, expansion, contraction, consolidation and termination as well as reallocation of resources..." NSU's University Planning Group (UPG)-now called the Strategic Planning Committee-provides information and data to identify priorities in the University's programs. The process allows NSU to make recommendations and decisions about programs' effectiveness and continuation.

NSU's planning documents demonstrate that attention is paid to emerging factors such as technology, demographic shifts, and globalization. This is most evident in the planning effort, *Strategic Plan 2015-2023*, and *Destination 2023*. During the planning process, the University identified a major economic factor during economic downturns that must be considered: State allocations have been reduced over the past years and are still declining. As a result, NSU is taking action to increase its voice in state and national forums. The University also engaged in a process that focused on resource acquisition, reducing expenditures, and careful alignment of existing resources with recognized needs.

Although NSU has the highest enrollment rate of American Indians of any regional comprehensive

university in the country, it recognizes the need to anticipate the challenges and opportunities provided by changing state and national demographics and emerging groups of new learners.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

5.B - Core Component 5.B

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

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

Rating

Met

Evidence

Guided by its recently revised mission, NSU identifies its constituencies and serves them in ways that a culture of learning, discovery, and diversity is valued. Additionally, leadership at NSU allows more transparency in all processes, especially in the budgeting process, such that a heightened awareness of personal and departmental accountability drives all. The open communication for budgeting has created enhanced confidence and trust across campus and departmental lines.

The Office of Academic Affairs leads and coordinates assessment activities and the resulting reports. Members of the University Planning Group (UPG)-now called the Strategic Planning Committee are appointed by the Cabinet and are actively engaged with the Cabinet, the Councils, and other groups. The UPG encourages, evaluates and reviews current projects that are connected to the University Strategic Plan. The University Action Projects always include milestones to ensure the goals are met. The Strategic Plan 2015-2023 guides recruitment and retention activities and sets goals for these areas. The University has developed an environment of improvement which includes program reviews and low productivity reports. These documents provide the rationale for curriculum and program changes.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

5.C - Core Component 5.C

The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.

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

Rating

Met

Evidence

Courses, both face-to-face and online, are evaluated using evaluation forms administered by the Center for Teaching and Learning. The same evaluation forms are used regardless of the mode of delivery. Results of the evaluations are given to faculty members and college administrators in a timely fashion to allow faculty to use the data to make changes or revisions to their courses in time for the next semester. This constitutes an evidence of utilizing feedback to facilitate continuous improvement.

NSU values the importance of assessment. For example, professors are evaluated through forms provided to students, with data being used by deans to advise faculty members in their development efforts and progress toward tenure or promotion. Similarly, administrators are evaluated by forms developed by the Faculty Council. Other internal evaluations are assisted through resources provided by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. This exchange of data provides a good example of collaborative assessment practices in a shared governance environment.

NSU is committed to developing and assessing student learning outcomes. Every academic college at NSU has a Student Learning Outcomes Coordinator to supervise and oversee the assessment of programs. NSU also participates in the Quality Matters Program, which is an assessment review process for online and blended classes. Quality Matters reviewers utilize a scoring rubric used to provide feedback and constructive criticism of classes. The assessment rubric incorporates national standards of best practices and research.

The non-academic units are assessing the effectiveness of their programs and services. Under the leadership of the Vice President for Students Affairs, the student affairs units are assessing the effectiveness and outcomes of their services using the CAS Standards to guide their work. The Student Affairs units make revisions to their programs, processes, and activities as a result of the

assessments. These processes demonstrate that assessment is embedded into the basic fabric of NSU and is used to make decisions and continuous improvement.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

5.D - Core Component 5.D

The institution works systematically to improve its performance.

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

Rating

Met

Evidence

Evaluations of student satisfaction include exit interviews and alumni satisfaction surveys. The results of these evaluations are shared with faculty and administrators and used to make revisions to student support and student services programs and activities. Membership in the NSU Alumni Association has grown significantly since the last comprehensive visit in 2012. Evaluations are also conducted which compare student outcomes in face-to-face courses with distance courses. The results of these comparisons are used by faculty and administrators to assess the effectiveness of each mode of delivery in meeting the goals of student learning. The Center for Teaching and Learning offers focused professional development activities for faculty to help improve assessment activities.

The Curriculum and Educational Policies Committee-now called the University Curriculum Committee-meets at least twice per year to review any curricular issues, on-campus changes, and requests to the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE). The Committee promotes continuous improvements in addressing discipline-specific certification requirements, new course and program development, and changes in admissions requirements.

The University participates in state-mandated, five-year reviews of academic programs for quality and viability. Reviews involve internal and external reviewers and contribute to programmatic improvement. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness participates in the Commission's Assessment Academy.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary

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

Evidence

All colleges and departments periodically review their respective strategic plans, ensuring alignment and progress toward meeting the mission, vision, and goals set forth in the University's strategic plan 2015-2023. The UPC, deans, and chairs participated in this process to ensure the alignment of the implementation of the strategic plan with university operations. The University anticipates the varied needs of current and emerging learning groups through programs and resources for its residential and off campus students at the Tahlequah campus and for more "non-traditional" learning groups through distance education programs and programs at the Broken Arrow and Muskogee campuses. The University also works to meet emerging needs and trends through such activities as articulation agreements with other higher education institutions and degree completion programs for adult learners. In addition, the capital planning process was reviewed in an effort to support the needs of individual colleges and units in meeting their particular strategic plan.

Planning processes involve representation from faculty, staff and students. The University gathers input regarding regional and state needs from citizens, business leaders, community leaders and organizations, state-wide organizations, and government entities. The University has employed outside consultants to help it identify its regional identity.

NSU has positioned itself to allow for new and creative revenue streams. External grant funding is a natural source of potential income, and NSU has increased its focus in this area. The University also aligned with tribal governments to pool resources and offer mutually beneficial educational opportunities. In addition, NSU has created and nurtured important partnerships in external and private sector revenue streams.

Review Dashboard

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

Review Summary

Conclusion

NSU is an institution which understands its rich educational heritage of the Cherokee Nation, providing diverse communities with lifelong educational opportunities through several undergraduate and graduate programs. The university is active in disseminating its mission to its stake holders and has policies and procedures in place to run an efficient institution. The institution has the support of its stakeholders and is financially sustainable.

Though NSU is very successful in recruiting and serving American Indian/Alaskan Native students, it will be well served by addressing recruitment issues related to other minorities including African Americans, Asians, and Hispanics.

Overall, NSU is serving its students and faculty well and needs to be commended for its mission, vision, and values.

Overall Recommendations

Criteria For Accreditation

Met

Pathways Recommendation

Eligible to choose

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.