

Assurance Argument

Southwestern Oklahoma State University - OK

Review date: 10/5/2020

1 - Mission

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

1.A - Core Component 1.A

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

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

Argument

1.A.1. Southwestern Oklahoma State University ([SWOSU](#)) updated its Mission Statement in 2019 to state:

"Southwestern Oklahoma State University supports students and community through its integration of effective teaching, scholarly and creative endeavors, and civic engagement."

This Mission Statement is a core component of the SWOSU Strategic Plan. The Statement was developed through a process established over two decades ago, when then-President Dr. Joe Anna Hibler convened the Planning and Resource Council. In 1998, this body authored SWOSU's [first strategic plan](#). Since then, SWOSU has developed four strategic plans. Each planning process has conscientiously reflected SWOSU's campus culture, [history](#), traditions, and prior plans. Furthermore, each plan has sought to define SWOSU's Mission, Values, and Vision Statements in terms that are positive, feasible, and in alignment with the mission and goals of the university's coordinating board -- the Oklahoma State Regents of Higher Education (OSRHE) -- and governing board -- the Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO).

The current [process for strategic planning](#) involves stakeholder input, survey analyses, goal implementation and revision, task force assembly, and writing teams. Strategic plans developed and implemented within the timeframe of the current HLC review include the [2012-17 Strategic Plan](#) and the current [2018-23 Strategic Plan](#).

A [Strategic Planning Task Force](#) was responsible for the design and implementation of the 2018-2023 Strategic Plan. The Task Force consisted of a Strategic Planning Executive Committee led by

the Associate Provost. Subcommittees spanned the four defined goals of the Strategic Plan. As in previous planning efforts, the Task Force facilitated an open and collaborative [process](#) that sought input from a variety of sources, including faculty, staff, administrators, regents, students, alumni, donors, emeriti, and community members. The Strategic Planning Executive Committee developed, publicized, and conducted three successive surveys of these stakeholder groups. Respondents were asked to review the goals and mission of the 2012-2017 Strategic Plan and recommend improvements. After each survey, the Committee convened, analyzed [survey results](#), and used other input to guide their strategic plan revisions.

The current Mission Statement, developed in tandem with the 2018-2023 Strategic Plan, was [approved by the Strategic Planning Executive Committee](#) in November, 2018. The Statement was announced to the SWOSU Executive Council in January 2019, and approved by [approved by RUSO](#) in April, 2019. Although OSRHE does not require institutions to submit mission statement changes for approval, the Regents [acknowledged](#) RUSO's approval and confirmed that the new Mission Statement sustains SWOSU's roles as a regional university within the context of OSRHE policy. As the final step in the adoption of the new Mission Statement, SWOSU submitted a [Substantive Change Application](#) to HLC, which [approved](#) the revision on September 13, 2019.

1.A.2. SWOSU regularly seeks feedback on the university's Mission, Vision, and Values Statements. The solicitation of feedback has been an essential step in the development of each SWOSU strategic plan ([1998-2003](#), [2004-2010](#), [2012-2017](#), and [2018-2023](#)). As part of the development of the 2018-2023 Strategic Plan, a task force sought feedback from stakeholders in Fall 2018. The task force surveyed stakeholders to assess whether they believed the previous Mission, Vision, and Values Statements still aligned with SWOSU's mission as an institution of higher learning in western Oklahoma. The analysis of these surveys led to the creation of the [Pathways to Excellence Strategic Plan](#), which charges the university to accomplish its mission through:

- Ensuring a safe, accessible, non-discriminating, nurturing learning environment;
- Preparing students to be leaders and responsible citizens;
- Cultivating cultural, intellectual, and economic development for the local, national and global community;
- Providing strong programs of study leading to a variety of degrees, from associate to doctoral;
- Strengthening the university's areas of study, nationally-accredited programs, general education curriculum, service learning and experiential learning activities;
- Giving students opportunities to engage in research and creative activities in order to develop social skills, knowledge, and cultural appreciation, allowing lifelong contribution of students and alumni to society.

This current Mission Statement builds on its immediate predecessor by streamlining the statement and clarifying its points. In addition, the Strategic Planning Task Force used input from several stakeholders to [develop action points](#) that support continued emphasis on areas highlighted in the Mission Statement. For example, [Strategic Goal Two](#), which focuses on student achievement of educational and professional goals, includes action points focused on professional development for students in classes and workshops, enhancing service-learning opportunities, and facilitating more internship, study abroad, and undergraduate research experiences.

The two most recent Mission Statement iterations stand in contrast to the Mission Statement that came out of the 2004-2010 strategic planning process. The most significant changes are the priority given to coordination between the Weatherford campus and Sayre location, SWOSU's strong focus on "service and experiential learning activities," the importance of sustaining SWOSU's "safe,

accessible, non-discriminating, nurturing environment,” and serving communities. These changes reflect the goals of recent university strategic plans. For example, Goal Five in the 2012-2017 Strategic Plan emphasized the full integration of the Sayre campus into the overall university, [Strategic Goal One](#) focused on concrete efforts to retain students, and [Strategic Goal Four](#) focused on strengthening bonds between the university and the community.

Funding allocations are key indicators of SWOSU’s realized emphases as they relate to the mission. The latest [FY18 expenditures by function](#) reflect the teaching-based mission, with instruction (52.3%), scholarships and fellowships (14.9%), and student services (9.3%) together accounting for more than three-fourths of the budget. [Similar percentages](#) may be seen in SWOSU budgets since 2010.

The 2018-2023 Strategic Plan includes action points under [Strategic Goals Three and Four](#) that support this budget distribution. These action points involve increasing institutional alignment of the SWOSU Foundation to support academic and administrative units, increasing external funding through employee initiatives, and providing enhanced resources to support faculty, staff, and administrators via higher salaries and the expansion of opportunities for training and professional development.

1.A.3. SWOSU’s Mission, Vision, and Values Statements describe the nature, scope, and intended constituents of the services provided by the university. [SWOSU’s Mission Statement](#) defines the nature of the institution’s goal to support “students and community through its integration of effective teaching, scholarly and creative endeavors, and civic engagement.” SWOSU’s Values Statement embraces the scope of this mission by acknowledging that SWOSU faculty and staff are guided by a shared commitment to

- students,
- achievement,
- knowledge, and
- respect.

The 2018-2023 Strategic Plan translates these values into actionable points, with particular emphasis on Strategic Goal One: Cultivate effective methods to attract, develop, and retain students.

SWOSU’s admission practices and [standards](#), per the Mission Statement, meet the needs of and provide higher education offerings and services to students in western Oklahoma, throughout the state, the nation, and internationally. Nearly 88% of SWOSU’s undergraduate and graduate students are Oklahoma residents, with a majority of these students coming from the [western half of the state](#). This strongly demonstrates the widespread recognition of SWOSU’s steadfast commitment to serving the western Oklahoma region. In addition, SWOSU has bolstered programs that provide opportunities for diverse groups of students to matriculate, including [first-generation college students](#); [adult students](#) who are 21 years or older; veterans; [concurrently enrolled high school students](#); Native American students; and [international students](#).

SWOSU is committed to promoting a global outlook and cultural literacy as part of a student’s experience, as evidenced by point four of the [Values Statement](#): “SWOSU faculty and staff are guided by a shared commitment to...respect, by fostering a safe, healthy, and diverse intellectual, cultural, and social environment that encourages emotional well-being.”

1.A.4. SWOSU’s [Mission Statement](#) identifies the primary goal of the university as “support[ing]

students and community through its integration of effective teaching, scholarly and creative endeavors, and civic engagement.” This commitment is reflected in the institutional [Vision Statement](#): “SWOSU will foster an inclusive environment that inspires intellectual excellence, responsible citizenship, professional development, and personal growth.”

The university’s areas of study, [nationally accredited programs](#), general education curriculum, service and experiential learning activities, and student activities and organizations are consistent with this stated mission. They provide students with opportunities to obtain these targeted skills, knowledge, and cultural appreciation. To that end, SWOSU's offerings span a variety of programs spanning the arts and humanities, natural and social sciences, professional and technical programs, pharmacy, and other healthcare fields. The [undergraduate and graduate catalogs](#) provide a comprehensive list of majors and programs: 10 Associate's degrees, 41 Bachelor's degrees, 8 Master's degrees, 1 Doctoral program, and 50 minors.

Each of these programs is required to describe in annual and five-year reports how it aligns with the university's mission and detail how this alignment is evaluated.

SWOSU’s commitment to accessible education for diverse populations of students is evident in admission rates and enrollment profile. As western Oklahoma has grown more diverse, SWOSU's efforts to recruit from these populations have likewise grown. According to the 2019 Fact Book, enrollment trends demonstrate increasing diversity in [race and ethnicity](#), [gender](#), and [age](#) since 2011. As mentioned previously, the majority of SWOSU's students come from Oklahoma, and the western half of Oklahoma in particular. Nonetheless, the student body has geographic diversity, with students from 75 of 77 counties in Oklahoma, 39 states, and 20 countries. Overall, the admission rate for new freshmen was 91.5% in 2018, which remains relatively consistent with previous years' admittance rates.

The University provides a number of services in which the institution supports students. The following is a partial list of services, each of which is further described in an [overview document](#):

- Financial support services include [Student Financial Services](#) and the [Veterans Affairs Office](#).
- Academic and student support services include [The Reach Higher FlexFinish Program](#), [OK-LSAMP STEM Scholars](#), [University Honors Program](#), [President’s Leadership Class](#), [Assessment Center](#), [SWOSU Libraries](#), the [International Student Affairs Office](#), academic advisors within departments and programs, the [Office of Retention Management](#), [Dean of Students](#), [Information Technology Services](#), [Student Success Center](#) (SSC), discipline-specific [departmental tutoring](#), the [Writing Center](#), [Upswing](#), and [Career Services](#).
- Well-being (psychological and physical) support services include the [Center for Health and Well-Being](#) and the [Wellness Center](#).
- First year student support programs include the [New Student Orientation \(NSO\)](#) program, [Camp Duke](#), the [SWOSUConnect](#) first-year experience course, and [SWOSU Serves](#).

1.A.5. SWOSU makes its Mission, Vision, and Values Statements available online and in print. The university's website publishes these statements on a [Strategic Plan webpage](#) linked on the main website. In addition, these statements are included in the annually published [undergraduate](#) and [graduate catalogs](#) as well as special reports, including strategic plans. Individual colleges and programs may develop Mission Statements, [Strategic Plans](#), and outcome statements linked to SWOSU's mission; these statements are also included in the undergraduate and graduate catalogs. [Standing banners](#) are rotated throughout the campus and plaques with the Mission and Strategic Goals are placed in key locations in buildings throughout the campus. Mission Statements

for student service entities such as the [Center for Health and Well-Being](#) and the [Assessment Center](#) can be found on their webpages. Students are provided documents with the SWOSU Mission Statement during their New Student Orientation, and the New Faculty Orientation includes discussion about Mission Statement and Strategic Plan.

The Mission Statement is also communicated through SWOSU's planning and budgeting priorities. The [Planning Flowchart](#) illustrates how the mission and strategic goals are integrated into planning from departments to administration.

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1.B - Core Component 1.B

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

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

Argument

1.B.1. SWOSU demonstrates commitment to an educational role that serves the public, as expressed in its [Mission Statement](#): *SWOSU supports students and community through its integration of effective teaching, scholarly and creative endeavors, and civic engagement.*

SWOSU first serves its community through vital and relevant educational offerings and programs, as described in the 2018-2023 Strategic Plan. SWOSU is a public regional university that provides access to quality higher education to all students, educates these students to meet their educational and professional goals, prepares these students to be responsible citizens, and develops a well-educated workforce to serve the needs of the public. Deliberations of the [Administrative Council](#), [Staff Council](#), and [Faculty Senate](#) provide evidence that the focus of the university is to support students and the public.

SWOSU's admissions policy, variety of programs, and multiple methods of course and program delivery ensure that every student has broad access to the university wherever the student is located and whenever they need the access. [Admissions criteria](#) demonstrate that the university provides levels of admission based on a combination of test scores and high school GPA. Residence Life maintains several [residence halls](#) for [on-campus living options](#). Students who need support to succeed at the university level have access to [several support services](#). The university responds to input from [advisory boards](#) and other communication from the public to keep existing programs relevant or [develop new programs](#) that meet workforce and community needs.

SWOSU also pursues its public service mission through outreach and engagement programs. Examples include:

- **External organization resources:** Community organizations use SWOSU's resources to host public events ranging from concerts to [workshops](#) for the benefit of the public. The university links students and businesses through the [Career Service's](#) career fairs and internship programs. The Pioneer Cellular Event Center (PCEC), a [collaborative effort](#) between the university and the City of Weatherford, offers [events open to the public](#) and has brought [nearly \\$19 million](#) in revenue to the local economy in six years.
- **Education:** [Upward Bound](#), the [Southwestern Interscholastic Meet](#), [summer camps](#), History Day, and [robotics competitions](#) provide free resources to K-12 students in the area and state. [Concurrent enrollment](#) opportunities allow high school juniors and seniors to complete

general education courses. The university was awarded a USDA [Rural Utilities System Distance Education grant](#) to place technology in 11 area school districts to enhance distance education access for students and adults. The university offers many [continuing education](#) opportunities to area residents.

- **Recreation:** SWOSU operates [Crowder Lake](#) as an outreach component of its Parks and Recreation Management Department. Crowder Lake offers public camping, fishing, boating, and other outdoor activities.
- **Cultural events.** The university hosts many events open to the public, including [Panorama events](#), [concerts](#), and [theatre productions](#).
- **Testing.** The university's [Assessment Center](#) is available to students and the general public for a variety of exams, including Pearson's VUE Certification.
- **Service:** The College of Pharmacy operates the [Rural Health Center](#) (RHC). The RHC builds an avenue for information and develops programs for community-based healthcare services collaborating with local pharmacies and hospitals. [Service learning](#) initiatives at SWOSU serve the public. The Fall 2018 semester saw the inaugural [SWOSU Serves](#) event, in which students collectively volunteer in service activities that benefit local community organizations.

The [Business Enterprise Center](#) (BEC) benefits the public in its [services for businesses and communities](#). The primary goal of the BEC is “increasing the economic vitality of western Oklahoma. The role of the university extends beyond the classroom and our priority is to provide regional businesses and communities with the people and tools they need to succeed.” The BEC accomplishes this through offering the following opportunities to individuals and businesses: [business start-up, training, and consulting programs](#); economic impact studies and intern programs; and continuing education and personal development workshops and classes.

The [SWOSU libraries](#)' extensive collection of scholarly and research materials is open to the public, including print and digital books; [Digital Commons](#) of university records; online databases containing thousands of journals, newspapers, and magazines; and multimedia resources for the arts, sciences, and humanities. The libraries maintain an expansive and popular SWOSU history collection, and will soon open an archive dedicated to the papers of Weatherford-born astronaut and retired Air Force officer Thomas P. Stafford.

1.B.2. SWOSU's [continuous improvement efforts](#), [planning processes](#), [assessment plan](#), and [strategic plan review process](#) fully focus on the institution's educational responsibilities and not any external interest. SWOSU operates within the RUSO and OSRHE systems as a separate institution, with the primary purpose of serving students and the public within its service area. The university does not remit funds to investors, RUSO, or OSRHE. The university is accountable to students and the public, and therefore strives to offer affordable tuition and fees in programs that lead to career program entry.

Strategic decisions are made based on how they will help the university fulfill its educational responsibilities. For example, the university responded to [suggestions received following the 2010 comprehensive visit](#) from the Higher Learning Commission peer review team's [with responses](#) that are directly linked to the university's mission. The primary focus of the university is its obligation to students as a learning and teaching institution. Several recent university initiatives make this focus on learning and teaching clear, including the creation of the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL), the establishment of the [Instructional Excellence Academy](#) to encourage and support faculty innovation, and SWOSU's membership in the [State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement](#) (SARA) to promote quality and rigor in online courses.

SWOSU ensures its facilities, finances, and university standards support its educational mission. Physical plant supervisors and campus safety coordinators ensure compliance with federal and state regulations on campus. [Renovations to campus facilities and infrastructure](#) over the last decade have been guided by SWOSU's [Capital Master Plan](#), which recognizes that serving the institution's academic, athletic, and social needs are important components of SWOSU's educational responsibilities. A [long-term viability study](#) provides insight into SWOSU's sustainability of its efforts.

The financial management of the university reflects a singular commitment to the university's educational responsibilities. In the [FY 2020 university budget summary](#), more than three-fourths of the budget was accounted for by instruction (53.2%), scholarships and fellowships (14.6%), and student services (9.3%). This shows that SWOSU is strongly committed to the support of instruction as well as the financial support of students, faculty, and staff in the shared instructional mission. The university engages in seeking methods to make the university more affordable and thus more accessible. For example, a committee sought methods to make [course material and textbook](#) access easier and cheaper for students.

1.B.3. SWOSU communicates in many ways with external constituencies and responds to their needs within the scope of SWOSU's [Mission and Strategic Plan](#). SWOSU's Mission Statement states that the institution *supports students and community through its integration of effective teaching, scholarly and creative endeavors, and civic engagement*. Additionally, Goal 4 of the Strategic Plan charges the university to "foster quality programs that meet the needs of students and the local, state, national, and global community."

The university's Public Relations and Marketing Office oversees many methods of communication with off-campus audiences, including [press releases](#) and SWOSU's [Facebook account](#), [Twitter account](#), [Instagram account](#), and [YouTube account](#).

SWOSU maintains relations with the SWOSU Foundation, Inc. and the Foundation's two subsidiary Associations, the Alumni Association and the Athletic Association. Since 1965, the Alumni Association has published [Echoes from the Hill](#), a magazine dedicated to alumni, emeriti, and friends. The SWOSU Foundation, Inc. also communicates with these stakeholders via Facebook accounts for the [SWOSU Foundation and Alumni](#) and [Athletic Association](#), a Twitter account for the [SWOSU Foundation and Alumni](#), postal mailings, and in-person events, such as [Homecoming](#) and [SWOSU Near You!](#) gatherings.

Several departments, offices, and organizations on campus communicate through social media accounts, blogs, and [newsletters](#).

The university participates in the legislative process by communicating with [state legislators](#). It invites all area legislators to an annual luncheon to discuss SWOSU and higher education, and participates in Higher Education Day at the State Capitol.

The university facilitates meetings with both university and program-specific advisory boards such as the [College of Pharmacy Dean's Council](#). These boards provide the university with feedback on how to better meet the needs of external constituencies and the public.

University marketing materials are distributed at many off-campus events, including a SWOSU exhibit booth at the annual [Oklahoma State Fair](#).

The university welcomes external constituencies to attend educational and social events on campus, including [athletic events](#), Panorama performances, music performances and festivals such as the university [Jazz Festival](#), theatre productions, and the [Westview Writer's Festival](#). The university hosts several educational on-campus competitions and events for K-12 students in the region, including speech and debate tournaments, [graphic design contests](#), History Day, the [Timed WARP](#) (Writing and Research Project), and the [Southwestern Interscholastic Meet](#) (SWIM). SWIM is an annual event that brings hundreds of students to campus from around the state to compete in a variety of academic subjects. The 2019 SWIM event was the 106th anniversary of the meet. Many camps are held throughout the year; these strengthen the relationship among SWOSU, K-12 students and students' families. Camps hosted by SWOSU include [Bull Pup](#) camps during Homecoming, the [Southwest Alliance for Girls' Enrichment in Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts/Humanities, and Mathematics \(SAGE STEAM\) Camp](#), and a variety of [music and athletic camps](#).

Many external constituencies choose SWOSU's facilities to host events, including high school football games, banquets in the Student Union Ballroom, and the Weatherford Arts Council's [Summer Arts Academy](#) for first through eighth graders.

The [PCEC](#) is a major indicator that SWOSU is responsive to the needs of its external constituencies. The PCEC is a project conceptualized by SWOSU and the City of Weatherford as part of Weatherford's "Vision 2020" strategic plan. Partial funding was provided by Weatherford voters' endorsement of the "Yes! Weatherford" sales tax initiative. The PCEC hosts SWOSU athletic events, as well as [community events](#) hosted by the City of Weatherford, businesses, and other private entities. The PCEC also provides public services, such as hosting a [free medical clinic](#). In 2018, the PCEC was used for several weeks as a [Fire Incident Command Center](#) and staging area by the U.S. Forestry Service while the department fought severe wildfires throughout western Oklahoma. Several crews of out-of-state firefighters deployed to the Weatherford area to fight these wildfires, and SWOSU provided them with [temporary housing in Mann Hall](#). Weatherford residents recognize the benefits of the PCEC. In June, 2020, voters passed an extension of the "Yes! Weatherford" sales tax to help SWOSU fund expansions of rural healthcare initiatives.

The university utilizes storefront space on Main Street for the [SWOSU Museum](#), which offers visitors an overview of SWOSU's history, as well as publicizes the university's academic excellence, athletic achievements, and service contributions. The university further answers community needs by providing the offices and meeting space in the building for the Weatherford Chamber of Commerce.

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1.C - Core Component 1.C

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

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

Argument

1.C.1. SWOSU prepares students for success as informed citizens of the world and supports activities that move toward this goal. The [Mission Statement's narrative](#) states that SWOSU pursues its mission by "preparing students to be leaders and responsible citizens" and "cultivating cultural, intellectual, and economic development for the local, national, and global community." SWOSU's [general education objectives](#) state that "Graduates should leave SWOSU with a broad knowledge of the social and natural world, a keen sense of self, an awareness of their membership in a global society, and an understanding of what it means to be thoughtful and responsible citizens." Within the GE Objectives are goals for broad curricular content and the master of the professional skills and aptitudes embodied in the 5C's and R. These are the foundation of SWOSU's belief that "Empowered citizens must challenge preconceptions, assess the validity of evidence, ask thoughtful questions, and propose defensible answers." The SWOSU general education curriculum represents "our commitment to nurturing these skills, capabilities, and habits."

To operationalize the university's mission and GE Objectives, the university offers the following methods to prepare students for informed citizenship and workplace success:

- **Service learning:** Engagement in course-based activities that promote civic engagement begins immediately for students. The first-year experience course, [SWOSUConnect](#), includes a [service learning component](#) that culminates with the community-wide [SWOSU Serves](#) event. Opportunities for course-based civic engagement are sustained through a dedicated [Service Learning program](#) that supports and highlights courses with service components.
- **Experiential learning.** SWOSU provides experiential learning opportunities for students in a number of ways. Classes and organizations participate in activities such as [Constitution Week](#). Professional courses incorporate field experiences in programs such as Computer Science, Allied Health Sciences, and Music Therapy. For example, field experiences with a [manufacturing company](#), [tractor-trailer manufacturer](#), [oil and gas company](#), and [National Aeronautics and Space Administration](#) (NASA) enhance educational opportunities for students. Allied Health Services require designated periods of practical application devoted to serving an [apprenticeship](#) within a health care facility. Similarly, music therapy students complete [weekly field study sessions](#) at sites throughout Oklahoma. Programs such as those in the School of Business and Technology include [capstone courses](#) that give students the opportunity to synthesize and apply the experiences, knowledge, and skills developed over the

course of their college career.

Leadership opportunities. The [President's Leadership Class](#) recognizes outstanding incoming students and supports their development as leaders. Monthly meetings with the President and [enriching outreach and educational activities](#) provide Leadership Class students with a deeper understanding of the history and political structure of the United States and the world. The [Guard Officer Leadership Development \(GOLD\) Program](#) is a leadership program available to Oklahoma Army National Guard (OKARNG) Soldiers who attend SWOSU. The program was created in 2007 as a collaboration between OKARNG and SWOSU to develop future federally commissioned officers for the OKARNG.

Research. Applied and basic research activities supplement learning in the classroom and foster academic curiosity and intellectual growth. For the past 26 years, the [SWOSU Research and Scholarly Activity Fair](#) showcases student and faculty research activities throughout the university. In addition, many students present at [Oklahoma Research Day](#) as well as at regional and national conferences. Students publish their work as individual authors or co-authors with faculty in publications such as the school newspaper *The Southwestern* (the university's newspaper), the literary journal *Westview: A Journal of Western Oklahoma*, and the *Administrative Issues Journal*.

Co-curricular structure. SWOSU's co-curricular efforts are embedded in all areas of campus life. The Vice President for Student Affairs directs a [co-curricular student engagement model](#) that has specific mission objectives, outcomes, connections to the university's mission, and an assessment cycle. Co-curricular opportunities include [student organization service events](#), service learning and other high-impact practices within courses and academic programs, more than [90 student organizations](#), [intercollegiate](#) and [intramural athletics](#), and [study abroad opportunities](#).

1.C.2. SWOSU provides activities and processes that support a diverse campus population. This is achieved through a variety of offices, initiatives, and procedures.

Within its [Vision Statement](#), SWOSU is dedicated to "cultural inclusion and diversity." The general education [learning objectives](#) state that upon completion of the GE program, students are expected to be able to accomplish the following:

Think critically about issues such as globalization, sustainability, multiculturalism, political and governmental context, privilege, difference/similarity, prejudice and discrimination within a global context.

Exhibit knowledge of a variety of cultures, including both majority and non-majority groups, and their interconnectedness within U.S. and global society.

Departments submit [reports](#) detailing how their GE course offerings address these outcomes. The SWOSU Assessment Center [tracks](#) how many GE courses address multicultural and diversity concepts.

SWOSU's [Enrollment by Diversity](#) table and chart highlight the growing diversity of the student population and the impetus for expanded multicultural services. The Hispanic student population has grown from 5% in 2010 to more than 10% in 2019. Over the same period, the percentage of Caucasian students has decreased from 77% to 64%.

SWOSU has established the following offices and positions since the previous HLC review in an effort to comprehensively support our students, faculty, and staff:

[International Student Affairs](#), staffed by an International Student Affairs Director, International Student Affairs Specialist, and graduate assistants; the Office of Multicultural Outreach, staffed by a graduate assistant; a faculty member whose primary teaching duties are students who require instruction in English as a Second Language (ESL).

To meet the higher education needs of western Oklahoma's growing Hispanic population, SWOSU promotes its programs and financial aid options in Spanish. Partnerships between the Spanish Program in the [Department of Language and Literature](#) and the Westcentral Oklahoma Literacy Coalition, as well as the presence of The Language Company on the SWOSU campus, support non-native English speaking students and community members.

SWOSU receives funding from the Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation in Science, Mathematics, Engineering, and Technology ([OK-LSAMP](#)). This program supports the recruitment and retention of under-represented students with additional mentorship, research, and travel opportunities.

In Fall 2018, SWOSU was awarded a five-year, [\\$2.1 million grant](#) from the U.S. Department of Education to expand and enhance offerings for low income and at-risk students. Part of the Strengthening Institutions Program, this grant supports the [SSC](#), which focuses on improving retention and graduation rates among at-risk students.

The Dean of Students Office demonstrates inclusivity and equitable treatment of students while providing enrichment opportunities, including:

- [Direct work](#) with students, faculty, and staff to meet the needs of any person who requires [disability support](#).

- Publicity of [student diversity events](#).

- Sponsorship of annual diversity activities such as [Black History Month](#) and [Hispanic Heritage Month](#).

- Staffing and financial support for the following organizations:

- Asian American Students Association
- Black Student Union
- Hispanic American Leadership Organization
- Gender and Sexual Minorities Project
- Native American Student Association
- Saudi Arabian Student Organization
- Spanish Club
- SWOSU African Student Association
- SWOSU International Student Association
- World Language and Culture Association

SWOSU's Registrar assists students eligible for [veteran's education benefits](#). A Coordinator of Enrollment and Veteran Affairs aids eligible students seeking enrollment assistance.

The SWOSU [International Student Affairs Office](#) fulfills two roles: Supporting international students and providing global opportunities for domestic SWOSU students. Opportunities include [international student exchange programs](#) and [international study experiences](#) facilitated by SWOSU's international institutional partners. The office also organizes [student events](#) open to the public. An action point in SWOSU Strategic Plan is to sustain an international student population of at least 5%

of the overall student population; at present it is 3.3%. SWOSU's enrollment includes [164 international students from 30 different countries](#). Special sections of the Freshman Orientation course are offered to ease the transition of new international students to life in a new environment. Sections of the courses Fundamentals of English, Composition I and Composition II are offered to ensure that international students build a solid foundation of college-level English reading and communication skills.

The [SWOSUConnect first-year experience course](#) required of all incoming freshmen and transfer students [addresses](#) understanding and working with people from a variety of cultural backgrounds as well as expanding personal horizons to experience new places, people, events, and cultures.

[Minors](#) in International Studies, Spanish, Women's Studies, and World Languages also focus on the importance of understanding one's place in an interconnected global community. [Study Abroad](#) programs offer enhanced educational and cultural opportunities for SWOSU students in art, literature, music, language, business, and economics.

[Established in 2006](#), the [Cheyenne-Arapaho Tribal College](#) (CATC) offered Associate of Science degrees in Tribal Administration, Children's Teachers, American Indian Studies, and General Studies, graduating 55 students from 2006-2015. The [CATC closed](#) following the end of the 2014-2015 academic year due to the withdrawal of funding by the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes. Students enrolled in associate degrees offered through the CATC were placed under the guidance of the Retention Management Coordinator, who advised them on the completion of their degrees. The university fosters a celebration of the Native American culture and facilitates events such as [intertribal powwows](#).

1.C.3. SWOSU's Strategic Plan and associated policies and processes fosters a climate of respect among all students, faculty, staff, and administrators.

As stated in the Strategic Plan's [Values Statement](#), "[o]ur faculty, staff, and administration are committed to fostering a safe, healthy, and diverse intellectual, cultural, and social environment for student success." University policies, training sessions, and campus events strive to support this statement.

SWOSU supports peaceful assembly and demonstrations. A [campus expression policy](#) has been developed and published to ensure interested parties are aware of SWOSU's commitment to constitutionally protected expression, while sustaining a culture of respect and learning on campus. In 2019, this policy was updated in 2019 in response to a new [Oklahoma law](#) codifying the rights of spontaneous demonstrators.

The [SWOSU Faculty Handbook](#) includes this statement on [professional behavior](#): "SWOSU faculty members should aspire to cultivate a respectful and collegial work environment by encouraging all members of the university community (faculty, students, administration, staff, and visitors) to treat each other with courtesy and respect."

Student Affairs also supports this expectation of mutual respect by incorporating the Strategic Plan's [Values Statement](#) section on fostering "a safe, healthy, and diverse intellectual, cultural, and social environment that encourages emotional well-being" into its [Core Values](#). The Student Handbook's [Student Code of Conduct](#) states that "SWOSU provides students with a safe learning environment that is conducive to academic success. The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to sustain policies and procedures that support student development."

Mandatory orientation trainings for university faculty and staff includes sessions on diversity. One example of this training is [New Faculty Orientation](#), which establishes SWOSU's expectations for diversity and includes specific training on international student support. University documents reinforce this commitment to diversity. For example, the [Faculty Handbook](#) states that demeaning actions or comments "based on an individual's race, color, ethnicity, national origin, gender, age, religion, disability, political affiliation, veteran status or any other legally-protected characteristic will not be tolerated." Likewise, the Faculty, Staff, and Student Handbooks include this [statement of prohibition on discrimination](#): "SWOSU does not discriminate against any individual based on race, color, religion, national origin, age, gender, qualified disability, sexual orientation, genetic information or veteran status in any of its policies, practices or procedures."

The monthly [Brown Bag Lecture Series](#) and other professional development programs provide information and opportunities for discussion about fostering a climate of respect from a range of diverse perspectives. For example, the Dean of Students hosted for faculty and staff a three-tiered program on [Diversity and Inclusion](#) in spring 2020. [Videos and resources](#) from these trainings are maintained online by CETL.

Mandatory training provided by Human Resources for employees upon hiring and annually thereafter emphasize the importance of respecting diverse populations at SWOSU. Faculty, staff, administrators, and students are required to complete [Title IX training](#) every year. This Title IX training is reinforced by materials promoting student safety and well-being displayed in public spaces on campus.

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1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary

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

Summary

As a member of the Regional University System of Oklahoma, SWOSU is dedicated to providing effective and innovative teaching, research, and service opportunities in an accessible learning environment that serves Oklahoma and the region. Moreover, SWOSU is a locus of educational, economic, and cultural activity in western Oklahoma. These attributes enable SWOSU to impart learning and values to its current students, future learners, and alumni. SWOSU embraces the Mission Statement published on its website, reinforces it with Vision and Values Statements, and conducts a continuous strategic planning process dedicated to the support of curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular activities that encourage the development of professional skills and the appreciation of diverse cultural opportunities.

Sources

There are no sources.

2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

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

2.A - Core Component 2.A

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

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

Argument

2.A.1. Southwestern Oklahoma State University (SWOSU) developed its current Mission Statement as part of its [2018-2023 Strategic Plan](#). The Statement was [adopted by SWOSU's governing board](#) in 2019. The Mission Statement is: *Southwestern Oklahoma State University supports students and community through its integration of effective teaching, scholarly and creative endeavors, and civic engagement*. The [Planning Flowchart](#) shows that the Statement and Strategic Goals constitute the foundation of the university's assessment, budgeting, and decision-making processes.

Each higher education institution in Oklahoma is overseen by two controlling boards: a governing board and a coordinating board. SWOSU's governing board is the [Regional University System of Oklahoma](#) (RUSO). The coordinating board is the [Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education](#) (OSRHE). OSRHE has coordinating control for all institutions in Oklahoma, but RUSO is directly responsible for the operation and management of SWOSU.

OSRHE: These regents have constitutional responsibility for establishing standards, granting degrees, setting fees, determining budget needs, and allocating funds to all public institutions of higher education, both senior and junior. In addition, OSRHE has constitutional authority for planning and coordinating all postsecondary institutions, both public and private.

RUSO has ultimate legal and fiduciary responsibility for SWOSU. However, RUSO delegates many powers and duties to each regional university's president. RUSO is responsible for approving the school's mission, strategic goals, objectives, and the establishment of policies related to programs and services. [RUSO's authority](#) for the supervision, management, and control of the regional universities is established by [Section 3510 of Title 70 of the Oklahoma Statutes](#). [These Statutes](#) can be found on RUSO's website.

SWOSU recently revised its Mission Statement and Strategic Plan in a [process](#) described in Criterion One. RUSO approved SWOSU's Mission Statement in [April 2019](#). OSRHE acknowledged the revised Statement with a [letter of support](#). HLC approved SWOSU's revised Mission Statement in [August, 2019](#).

2.A.2. The 2018-2023 Strategic Plan's [Values Statement](#) includes the charge that "We guide our

actions by fairness, honesty, and integrity as we meet our obligations through prudent use of the resources entrusted to us." SWOSU applies this commitment to integrity into its financial, academic, human resources, and auxiliary functions.

An [Executive Compliance Committee](#) meets monthly to review and improve specific methods of ensuring overall integrity and institutional compliance with internal and external policies. [Minutes](#) show that topics discussed range from Title IV audits to the university alcohol policy.

Financial Integrity: Ultimate oversight and overall financial policy are within the purview of RUSO. Under RUSO's supervision, SWOSU maintains an internal system of checks to ensure the integrity of its fiscal operations. An [external analysis](#) in 2020 showed SWOSU's financial fiscal stability and long-term viability.

RUSO: [RUSO policy](#) states that, "The Board, vested by law with ultimate accountability for the supervision, management and control of the universities it governs, will provide for internal and external auditing and other financial reporting." Per [this policy](#), SWOSU submits financial reports after RUSO meetings in February and June. [RUSO policy](#) and [Oklahoma statutes](#) ensure that board members avoid financial conflicts of interest. RUSO's regents meet monthly; a [schedule of and minutes for](#) audit and/or finance committee meetings can be found on RUSO's website.

Conflicts of interest: SWOSU has internal policies prohibiting financial conflicts of interest. Conflict of interest policies can be found in both the [Faculty](#) and [Staff Handbooks](#) and in the [Office of Sponsored Programs \(OSP\) policies](#).

Audits: As an agency of the State of Oklahoma, the university completes annual internal and external audits. The audits from [2017](#), [2018](#), and [2019](#) have shown compliance with all processes and regulations. SWOSU programs receiving federal funding undergo additional federal audits.

Compliance with state and federal financial regulations: SWOSU's financial policies and documentation demonstrate the compliance of RUSO and SWOSU with state and federal regulations. [RUSO's policy](#) is that each university president is responsible for ensuring the maintenance of processes and procedures for the use of funds. The [Vice President for Administration and Finance](#) is accountable to SWOSU's President for ensuring transactions comply with RUSO's policies. [Internal budget control policies](#) are published on Business Services' webpages.

Bond rating: SWOSU is a state agency and therefore does not have an institutional bond rating. The university is a political subdivision of the State of Oklahoma, which has an [Aa2 credit rating and a stable outlook](#).

Day-to-day financial function integrity: SWOSU has internal procedures and oversight by fixed chains of command to ensure financial integrity. For funds spent at the budget unit level, requisition forms pass through layers of approval to ensure that funds are used appropriately.

Foundation integrity: In accord with state and federal law, SWOSU entrusts philanthropic gifts to the SWOSU Foundation, Inc. This independent non-profit entity has served as SWOSU's primary institutionally-affiliated foundation for more than 40 years. The Foundation solicits, stewards, and disburses private funding on behalf of and for the benefit of SWOSU in accordance with its [Bylaws](#) and [Governance Policies](#). The Foundation is operated and staffed by the SWOSU Office of Institutional Advancement pursuant to the annually reviewed and renewed [Memorandum of Understanding \(MOU\)](#) between SWOSU and the Foundation. The Foundation is a separate and distinct nonprofit entity with an independent governing board. The Foundation affirms its role as a supporting entity to SWOSU by ensuring that trustees are

aware that they do not have a governing role at the university.

Academic Integrity: The university has established appropriate procedures and chains of command for various academic planning to ensure integrity in academics.

Faculty Credentials: All faculty are [credentialed](#) through the same process and standards without regard to rank or instructional site.

Faculty Review: The Faculty Handbook describes the procedures for [promotion, tenure, continuance, and post-tenure review](#). These procedures are reviewed for integrity each year. A Promotion/Tenure Appeals Committee and an Appellate Committee on the Dismissal of Tenured Faculty make recommendations to the President. The [duties of these committees](#) are described in the Faculty Handbook.

Student Policies: The Student Handbook contains [student policies, resources, a code of conduct, and explanatory information on key topics](#) such as academic dishonesty, plagiarism, and computer use.

Student Grievance: SWOSU's website publishes the [policies](#) and [procedures](#) by which all students may file grievances. The Academic Appeals Committee reviews the grievances of students who believe they received grades in violation of a course's syllabus. The Academic Suspension Appeals Council serves as an appellate committee on student academic suspension status. Both committees include student representatives.

FERPA: The Dean of Students oversees the university's compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Information about FERPA is provided to students during New Student Orientation (NSO); faculty and staff receive this information during new employee orientations and workshops.

Academic Dishonesty: The Student Handbook explains rules and expectations for academic honesty, the [interventions for academic dishonesty](#) available to instructors and academic officers, and the right to appeal such penalties to the Committee on Student Conduct.

Human Resources Integrity: The following documentation describes resources and ongoing training related to integrity issues and ethical behavior for all employees:

Hiring Processes: Hiring qualifications and procedures for faculty and staff follow well-established guidelines to ensure compliance with university, state, and federal policy.

Handbooks: The [Faculty](#) and [Staff Handbooks](#) inform employees of their rights and responsibilities. Additionally, the Office of Human Resources maintains [policy](#) and [support webpages](#).

Training: The Office of Human Resources provides [ongoing training](#) for all employees. This includes annual training on Title IX and fair employment practices.

Prevention of Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual Assault: Title IX oversight is the responsibility of the Dean of Students and Human Resources. SWOSU's EEO statement is published on [Human Resource's webpage](#): "SWOSU does not discriminate against any individual based on race, color, religion, national origin, age, gender, qualified disability, sexual orientation, genetic information or veteran status in any of its policies, practices or procedures." The Assistant Vice President for Human Resources handles all inquiries regarding non-discrimination policies. These policies are explained by Human Resources staff to new employees during [new employee orientations](#) and included in all handbooks. The Dean of Students publishes [Title IX information and training resources](#) that emphasize that violations of these policies are not tolerated.

EthicsPoint: [EthicsPoint](#) is a service provided by RUSO that encourages students, staff,

administrators, and other stakeholders to confidentially report activities that they believe to be unethical, illegal, or otherwise in violation of established policies.

Auxiliary Functions integrity: The Vice President for Administration and Finance oversees SWOSU's auxiliary functions and ensures that these units comply with university policy and state and federal requirements. Examples of auxiliary function integrity processes include:

Dining Services: The university operates its own food services functions. All staff are familiarized with the Staff Handbook, including the Handbook's customer service and non-discrimination policies.

Residence Life: Staff undergo training upon hiring and regularly thereafter. Residents of university housing must abide by the signed housing agreement, the [Residence Life Handbook](#), and the [Student Code of Conduct](#). The Residence Life Handbook outlines security guidelines, the complaint process, and conduct policies for residents.

Bookstore: In 2020, the university assumed operation of the bookstore from the previous tenant. In compliance with federal policy, the SWOSU bookstore identifies which textbooks are required for each course section and assists students with acquiring these titles.

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2.B - Core Component 2.B

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

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

Argument

2.B.1. SWOSU presents itself clearly, completely, and accurately through the information it provides to the public.

SWOSU's [website](#) is open and accessible to all. The following information is published on the site:

Academic offerings: The [Course Catalog](#), [degree directory](#), [Undergraduate Catalog](#), and [Graduate Catalog](#) provide course and program information. [Degree plans and suggested course schedules](#) for specific programs are listed individually in online catalogs and on each department's [webpages](#).

Faculty and staff: The university [lists full-time faculty and their academic credentials](#) in its catalogs. The [personnel directory](#) provides contact information for faculty, staff, and administrators.

Requirements: [Enrollment Management](#) publishes requirements for prospective students. Information in the [View Book](#) is reviewed and updated annually to ensure that the document is current and accurate. The catalogs provide information about course-level and program-level requirements. General education requirements for all degrees are described in the [Undergraduate Catalog](#).

Accreditation relationships: Accreditation information, including contact information for program accreditors, is available in the [Undergraduate Catalog](#) and on [SWOSU's Accreditation webpage](#). The [accreditation page](#) displays the Higher Learning Commission's Mark of Affiliation; the Mark is linked to the [HLC webpage](#) where SWOSU's accreditation status can be viewed. Additional accreditation documents are located on this webpage.

Governance structure: The [organizational chart](#) provides an overview of SWOSU's governance structure. A [planning flowchart](#) conveys the relationships among decision-making units.

Costs to students: The SWOSU website was updated in 2020 to more clearly present [cost information](#) to prospective and current students. These webpages include links to detailed information on highlight information on [SWOSU's costs](#), [available scholarships and grants](#), [payment plans](#), and a [net price calculator](#). The university's Consumer Information webpage offers additional information, such as [costs associated with the verification of student identity](#).

All handbooks and promotional material, such as the [Viewbook](#) for prospective students, are reviewed and updated at least annually to ensure accuracy and completeness.

2.B.2. SWOSU ensures the reports and representations it shares with the public contain accurate information and valid evidence.

At the institutional level, [all information for public release](#), whether published by SWOSU or distributed to media outlets, is vetted and overseen by the Vice President for Public Relations and Marketing. This office also oversees compliance with a licensing program to prevent the unauthorized use of SWOSU's logos and insignias.

External [audits](#) and [financial analysis](#) provide objective evidence to verify claims of SWOSU about its financial stability.

The Office of Institutional Research verifies the accuracy and compliance of all institutional data, including the annual [SWOSU Fact Book](#), [Assessment Center webpages](#), and the data transmitted to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Data available on the Institutional Research webpage includes the Fact Book, a [common data set](#), [graduation report](#), and [full IPEDS feedback report](#).

Claims and evidence pertaining to research, student organizations, athletic academic services, service learning, and economic development are compiled and verified by individual departments:

[Presence information](#) on student organizations, compiled by the Dean of Students
[Athletic Academic Success and Graduation](#), compiled by the Athletic Department
[Service Learning Annual Report](#), compiled by the Director of Service Learning
[Annual Research and Grant Report](#), published by the OSP
[Annual Business Enterprise Report](#), published by the Business Enterprise Center

University news and event information disseminated through SWOSU's website keeps students and employees informed and fosters community engagement. Community engagement initiatives include the formation of community partnerships, the inclusion of service learning into the curriculum, and the promotion of [cultural](#), [entertainment](#), and [scholarly campus events](#) to the public. Individual faculty support community engagement through extramural and independent volunteer and community service activities such as participation in Rotary International, Kiwanis, food banks, and Chamber of Commerce committees, such as the Weatherford Arts Council. Faculty document their service activities, as these activities are an important component in the evaluation of faculty for continuance, tenure, and promotion. The Vice President for Public Relations and Marketing utilizes campus-wide emails and social media to keep SWOSU students and employees apprised of university news and events, and his office assesses engagement with SWOSU's social media presence through data analytics.

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2.C - Core Component 2.C

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

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

Argument

2.C.1. The governing board of SWOSU is the [Regional University System of Oklahoma](#) (RUSO). Its members are qualified state leaders appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Oklahoma Senate. These appointed members serve nine-year staggered terms.

The board's powers and duties are established in the Oklahoma State Constitution [Article 13B, Section 2](#). These include the supervision, management, and control of six regional public universities. Eight appointed members represent multi-county regions in order for all Oklahoma counties [to be represented](#) by the board. The ninth RUSO board member is the State Superintendent of Education. RUSO policy states that no more than two members can be of the same profession, vocation, or occupation. [Biographies](#) for each board member are published on RUSO's website.

Board members [complete OSRHE-required continuing education](#) in order to carry out the duties and responsibilities associated with service on the board.

The board meets the legal and fiduciary responsibilities outlined in its [management responsibility statement](#) through [monthly meetings](#). A central RUSO office supports the regents as they fulfill additional responsibilities and obligations.

2.C.2. RUSO's mission is "to provide higher education programs for Oklahoma universities and service to eligible students in the university service areas and generally to ensure educational opportunities in the preparation of students to succeed in a global society." RUSO's actions reflect these priorities with regard to supporting SWOSU.

RUSO holds regular meetings to conduct business pertaining to the universities it governs. These meetings comply with the Oklahoma Open Meeting Act. The meetings follow an [agenda](#) assembled by the Executive Director in collaboration with the Chair of the Board. SWOSU may place items on RUSO's agenda. [Minutes](#) of each meeting (including attachments) are published on RUSO's website.

The RUSO Policy Manual highlights [four goals](#) that guide the board's actions:

1. Leadership, including the selection of the President and oversight of administrative, academic, fiscal and student affairs at SWOSU;
2. Effectiveness, including provision of workable policies and regulations, encouragement of retention of highly-qualified faculty and students, and the increase of goodwill with the general public and state legislature;
3. Excellence, including the unique role and mission of SWOSU; and
4. Accountability, including internal and external auditing, review of accreditation reports, measurement of key performance indicators, and approval of mission changes.

2.C.3. RUSO has established policies that ensure the relevant interests of the regional universities' internal and external constituencies are supported.

The board has several [standing committees](#) that evaluate recommendations received from the institutions it governs. These standing committees report their deliberations during the committee report portion of RUSO's monthly meetings.

With regard to the [reappointment of university presidents](#), the board weighs the input of university administrators, faculty, staff, students and their families, alumni, and community stakeholders. The board also requires each university president to report on [five-year trends](#) and assess the strength of their institution's relationships with relevant constituencies. Additionally, university administrators report to the board about events and news to facilitate a continual dialogue between RUSO and the university.

With regard to external constituencies, board members are community leaders who are actively seek to understand and communicate the needs and interests of their constituents for the improvement of regional universities.

In a further effort to be responsive to the needs of external constituents, the board has partnered with its universities to analyze and publicize student outcomes. This project, known as the [RUSO Dashboard](#), provides an “objective lens” to identify key outputs of the regional university system. For example, the [Oklahoma Higher Education Employment & Median Annual Earnings](#) table shows that students who graduate from RUSO universities have higher median earnings than graduates from Oklahoma's two comprehensive public universities.

2.C.4. The governing board ensures its independence from undue influence through the adoption and enforcement of clear and unbiased policies, and by having a rotating board constituted of members with diverse professional backgrounds. Though board members are appointed by the governor, each board member serves a nine-year term, exceeding the maximum eight-year term of any governor. This ensures that even Oklahoma's highest elected official is unable to exert undue influence upon the board. RUSO board members can only be removed for causes outlined in [Title 70 of the Oklahoma Constitution](#).

Board members [cannot be employed](#) by nor enter into any contract or business transaction involving a financial consideration with any RUSO governed university. Likewise, board members are [ineligible](#) to be an officer, supervisor, president, instructor, or employee at any of the senior regional universities for a two-year period following the expiration of the members' term.

Because the Board oversees six separate institutions, Board members are not involved with donations to individual universities, and are therefore free from potentially inappropriate donor influence.

The Board preserves the independence of its decisions with respect to the stewardship of facilities by following the Public Competitive Bidding Act for [construction projects](#).

2.C.5. Though the RUSO Board of Regents governs SWOSU, the board delegates day-to-day oversight of the university to its President. SWOSU's President is the chief executive of the institution and is responsible for its administration. Accordingly, the President is responsible for employment decisions, including the discipline and termination of faculty, administrators, and staff. The President is required to promptly report to the board decisions concerning [employment, promotion, changes of rank, salary adjustments](#), and other matters pertaining to the operation of the university.

The board delegates to faculty the delivery academic information, and holds faculty accountable for the same. The board [defines the responsibilities of faculty](#) to be teaching, research, continuing education, and service to the institution and public. The board ensures that the [academic freedom](#) of faculty is upheld, and likewise holds the faculty accountable for the responsible exercise of this freedom. SWOSU's [Faculty Handbook](#) describes the shared governance of academic issues between the faculty and administrators. The [RUSO Policy Manual](#) is the authority for how governance is shared between the board and university administrators.

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2.D - Core Component 2.D

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

Argument

2.D. SWOSU supports academic freedom and freedom of expression for all its stakeholders.

Campus Expression

In accordance with Oklahoma statute, the [SWOSU Campus Expression Policy](#) was updated in August, 2019. Each year, the university submits the required [Expressive Speech Annual Report](#) to Oklahoma's governor and legislature. In 2019, SWOSU reported no barriers or disruptions of free speech in 2019.

Faculty

Faculty members are assured of academic freedom in their research, as well as in the classroom. SWOSU incorporates into its Faculty Handbook the Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO) Policy Manual's academic freedom guidelines. Academic freedom is considered by SWOSU to be an additional assurance to rights of expression regarding teaching and research. SWOSU administrators are charged with protecting, defending, and promoting academic freedom. Faculty decide upon their own research areas and choose the areas in which they wish to develop as instructors. Department faculty determine course and program student learning outcomes. Within the courses, faculty have the freedom to choose any appropriate teaching method and assessment.

Academic freedom is inextricably tied to faculty's academic responsibilities. Faculty members are expected to be professional and respectful toward others' opinions and ideas. Faculty members are encouraged to guide students in their pursuit of learning and foster independence of thought. SWOSU faculty are supported by SWOSU through resources such as the [Faculty Commons](#) as they enhance and increase knowledge of their subject areas and teaching methods. Faculty promotion, as well as [tuition reimbursement](#) for professional development costs and continuing education tuition, encourage [recognition, reward, and scholarly pursuit](#). Faculty are expected to continually engage in scholarly activity throughout their careers, both during the tenure process and after. All faculty undergo a periodic [performance review](#); a key part of this review is an evaluation of how each faculty member's accomplishments meet the expectation of continued scholarly activity.

To ensure that academic freedom is upheld, SWOSU has [grievance policies and procedures](#) that any faculty member may utilize.

Students

As stated in the [2018-23 Strategic Plan](#) Mission Statement, *SWOSU supports students and community through its integration of effective teaching, scholarly and creative endeavors, and civic engagement.*

SWOSU supports and protects students' [right for to engage](#) in constitutionally protected speech, expression and assembly. According to the Student Handbook, these rights may be limited or restricted with respect to time, place or manner; however, these rights may not be restricted with respect to the ideas nor perspectives of the speaker.

Students are able to enroll in a wide variety of courses, therefore offering them many opportunities to survey a variety of disciplines in depth. This facilitates students' informed decision-making with regard to the selection of a major. Additionally, the [general education curriculum](#) provide many opportunities for students to broaden and deepen their knowledge in the fields of language and written communication, mathematics and quantitative reasoning, life and physical sciences, humanities and diversity, and computer proficiency.

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2.E - Core Component 2.E

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

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

Argument

2.E.1. The Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) has the primary responsibility for compliance of faculty, staff, and students with ethical and legal guidelines concerning funding, conduct, and reporting of research activities. The primary document for these policies is the [SWOSU Grant Writing Guide](#). The processes described in the guide establish an oversight framework that facilitates compliance.

University committees and institutional review boards provide oversight of specific aspects of research integrity; these include the [Protection of Human Subjects Committee](#), the [Animal Care and Use Committee](#), the [Bio-Safety Committee](#), the [Safety Committee](#), and the Radiation Safety Committee. There are [established policies](#) that guide each committee in its role to assure compliance with federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines.

All faculty, staff, and students taking part in federally funded research are required received Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) training. This requirement is met via various [training modes](#), including online learning and in-person workshops. The development of a two-hour course titled "Scientific Ethics" has received [grant support](#) and will be added in the near future as a regular SWOSU course. This new course will meet all institutional, National Science Foundation, and National Institutes of Health guidelines.

Researchers applying for federal grants must follow federal regulations regarding any possible financial conflict of interest. This requires applicants to make full disclosure of any financial conflicts that might influence their research. It is SWOSU policy that the university [be made aware of such conflicts](#) so that the conflicts may be managed or eliminated.

Lastly, several policies address [fiscal accountability](#). SWOSU Business Services works closely with the OSP to educate researchers about [financial issues](#) such as research-related or grant-funded travel. Business Services oversees all post-award [monetary transactions](#) such as time and effort considerations.

2.E.2. SWOSU support services, which ensure the integrity of faculty, student, and staff research, are largely provided by the offices and committees discussed above. The OSP reviews all grant proposals to ensure compliance with budgetary and ethical guidelines prior to submission to the funding

agency. Additional compliance and integrity guidance includes the following:

[SWOSU Grant Writing Guide](#)

Business Services and OSP review all financial transactions to help researchers comply with regulations and ethical guidelines.

The Intellectual Property Committee (IPC), guided by the [Intellectual Property Policy](#) (IPP), reviews copyright or patent claims by faculty, staff, and students to ensure that contributors are recognized and that the university and inventors receive fair treatment and compensation.

2.E.3. Students receive guidance on research ethics and the ethical use of information sources. Students are taught to conduct research ethically via a number of methods.

All [course syllabi](#) contain information about cheating and plagiarism. The [Student Handbook's Section IV Academic Issues](#) provides additional guidance on academic integrity. [Copyright and plagiarism awareness student resources](#) can be found SWOSU's website, along with the [University Plagiarism Policy](#) and a [PowerPoint presentation](#).

The [TurnItIn Tool](#) for the Canvas learning management system provides students with an online plagiarism detection tool finding application that they can use prior to submitting any written work. Additional academic misconduct concerns are addressed in the [Academic Dishonesty Policy](#) and the [Reproduction of Copyrighted Materials Policy](#).

Additional resources that encourage ethical research and writing practices include:

Writing Center tutors who have received training on how to impart the importance of research ethics and the proper use of sources to the students their assist;
SWOSUConnect first-year experience course, which features a session taught by library faculty on use of information resources; and,
General education courses, which incorporate modules on ethical research and use of information.

As previously described, students in federally-funded research projects are trained in Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) through on-line modules and in-person workshops. This training will become a component of the new “Scientific Ethics” course. In addition, capstone courses include modules on RCR.

2.E.4. SWOSU enforces its policies for academic honesty and integrity.

Research Misconduct: When misconduct is suspected, an investigation is conducted by the University Research and Scholarly Activity Committee (URSAC), rather than the department or program. This ensures consistency across the university. URSAC's role in the enforcement of policies prohibiting misconduct in research and scholarly activity is delineated in the Committee's [Policy and Procedures for Responding to Misconduct in Research and Scholarly Activities](#). This document incorporates the best practices of other universities, the NIH, and the NSF.

Allegations of research misconduct are reported to the provost. The Provost appoints a research integrity officer who convenes an investigative committee. Safeguards protect both the whistleblower and the respondent. There have been no reports of research misconduct at SWOSU in the past 10 years.

Student Academic Misconduct: Student cheating, plagiarism, and other academic integrity issues

are addressed in the [Student Code of Conduct](#) within the Student Handbook. Potential interventions for confirmed student misconduct include failure on an assignment, failure of a course, removal from a program, and dismissal from the university. SWOSU maintains a policy to [verify the identity of students](#) who complete online assignments and exams.

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2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary

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

Summary

SWOSU's motto is "The Focus is You." This motto is embraced by administrators, faculty, and staff as they together strive to focus on the development of students as contributors to their communities and as leaders in their future professions. The university's policies reflect the values of its stakeholders and governing bodies. These policies are readily available through the university's website, social media presence, and Canvas learning modules. The policies, procedures, and integrity statements of the institution and governing board are broadly communicated in print and online, and discussed in the context of numerous courses.

The [Faculty](#), [Staff](#), and [Student](#) Handbooks set forth expectations for all members of the SWOSU community. Established procedures encourage input from each group about their respective handbooks. SWOSU employees embrace the duty of all higher education professionals to be models of integrity in their respective disciplines and programs. At SWOSU, the focus is on the student as a whole person; therefore, integrity, ethics, and responsibility are recognized and nurtured as the foundation of a well-rounded liberal arts education.

Sources

There are no sources.

3 - Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources and Support

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

3.A - Core Component 3.A

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

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

Argument

3.A.1. The programs of Southwestern Oklahoma State University ([SWOSU](#)) described in the [undergraduate](#) and [graduate](#) catalog are reviewed for currency and appropriateness to the credential awarded. The institution's courses and programs correspond to the designated proficiencies of degrees at the associate's, bachelor's, and graduate levels as defined by the [Institutional Student Learning Outcomes](#) (ISLOs). These outcomes are based on the Lumina Foundation's [Degree Qualifications Profile](#).

Methods in which SWOSU ensures that the levels of student performance are appropriate include the following:

Full-time faculty are [credentialed experts](#) in their fields, have full authority over curriculum, and develop clearly defined program and course student learning outcomes that define the scope and level of work for each program.

Each college has a faculty curriculum committee. The college curriculum committees review course additions, changes, and deletions through a [program credit assignment procedure](#) that assesses for appropriate student performance and outcomes.

SWOSU's [credit hour policy](#) adheres to [Oklahoma State Regents of Higher Education](#) (OSRHE) and federal requirements for credit hours.

Several programs have [advisory boards](#) that provide input about current trends in their respective professions and the competencies graduates will require to succeed.

The [review of academic courses and programs](#) comprises outcome assessment policies and procedures that ensure course and program currency and appropriate level of instruction. These include:

[University Assessment Executive Summary Plan](#). The implementation of this plan is overseen by the Assessment Committee. This plan describes the policies and procedures for entry level,

general education, and degree program outcomes at all levels (associate, bachelor, master, and professional).

Accreditation Reports (for nationally accredited programs). SWOSU offers [14 nationally accredited degree programs](#). These degree programs are assessed by each program's accrediting agency. The rigor of national program accreditation ensures that courses are current and that the required levels of student performance are appropriate.

Five-Year Program Reviews (for the institution's non-accredited programs). All degree programs are reviewed on a five-year cycle, per OSRHE policy. This policy establishes minimum standards for productivity and other quantitative measures to ensure that departments demonstrate correspondence between program expectations and student performance. Since 2010, the university has discontinued 12 degree and certificate programs that did not meet appropriate benchmarks.

[Annual Student Assessment Report](#) (ASAR) (for individual program reports). The Assessment Center requires departments to consider yearly course and program updates through the [Student Learning Assessment Report for Academic Degree Programs and Options](#). In this report, department chairs identify key student learner outcomes (SLOs) and assessments for their program's majors. Reflecting upon assessment results of SLOs gives academic departments an opportunity to gauge the effectiveness of instructional strategies, and to modify these strategies for continuous improvement.

Results from the Assessment Center's [Alumni Survey](#) provide strong evidence that SWOSU's academic programs produce graduates who are prepared for the workforce. Results from the 2018 survey of graduates of SWOSU's four colleges indicated that 92% of the respondents were employed full time and 4% were employed half time. Over 70% of the respondents indicated that they were employed in their discipline, 13% had undergone a career change, and 13% had never been employed in their baccalaureate discipline. Additionally, 74% had attained certification or licensure in their field.

3.A.2. SWOSU clearly articulates [ISLOs](#) at each degree level - associate, baccalaureate, and graduate/professional. These comprehensive statements describe proficiencies that SWOSU graduates will possess, regardless of academic program of study. Since the five learning domains are comprehensive in nature, it is appropriate for each ISLO to be addressed by diverse instructional strategies at the academic program level.

In 2016, as a component of continued professional development suggested in the [HLC Final Recommendations of 2010](#), a Degree Qualifications Profile assessment coach provided faculty and staff with guidance on general education assessment, program assessment, assessment rubrics, and a general assessment overview. The DQP provides faculty members with a resource that defines student proficiencies at each degree level. This model has been incorporated into the [Academic Degree Programs and Options](#) assessment template.

Learning goals are articulated on the [university's student learning document](#), [department webpages](#), [degree plans](#), and [syllabi](#).

SWOSU provides faculty with [resources and training](#) to develop course and program learning goals that use [Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning Domains](#) and other methodologies. Teaching and Learning Coordinators in the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) work with faculty to develop [syllabi](#) based on example templates, create rubrics, and connect assignments with learning outcomes.

SWOSU courses may combine both undergraduate and graduate sections. The [Ellucian Colleague system](#) identifies course sections as baccalaureate or graduate level and provides safeguards so that students are enrolled in appropriate course sections. All graduate students are enrolled in a 5000-level course section and have a corresponding syllabus with appropriate graduate student learner outcomes. An [example syllabus](#) from the School of Business shows differentiation between undergraduate and graduate outcomes in such a course.

Documentation of learning goals is centralized through the SWOSU Assessment Center. [Reporting templates](#) are provided annually for general education assessment, academic degree programs and options assessment, and co-curricular assessment. Report data includes student learner outcomes, criteria for successful attainment of the outcomes, and whether or not the criteria was met. Data also reflects whether the SLO is a general education objective and, if so, how the two are linked. A final reflective component allows instructors to evaluate both strengths and weaknesses of the assessment and identify a continuous improvement plan.

3.A.3. Regardless of delivery mode or location, all programs fulfill the same requirements for program review and assessment of student learning outcomes. As described above, academic departments identify program-specific learning outcomes for annual Assessment Center reports and program reviews; this is detailed in Section III of the [ASAR](#) and other reporting methods. Examples of measures include the successful completion of state accreditation assessments and national licensure exams. These measures are the same regardless of whether the courses or programs are provided in-person or through virtual methods. Student assessment data is reported on the [Student Learning Assessment Report for Academic Degree Programs](#).

Program quality begins with the employment of highly qualified faculty members. The [Faculty Credentialing Policy and Procedure](#) applies to all faculty regardless of where they teach or in what mode they teach. Faculty may be deemed qualified based on academic credentials, tested experience, or a combination of both. Regardless of the location where they teach, faculty report to academic department chairs on the Weatherford campus.

Learning outcomes for students in all modes of delivery and at all locations are reviewed through the processes described in 3.A.1. When courses and programs are created or updated, they go through a [process](#) that includes examination to verify rigor, student learning outcomes, and the level of student performance appropriate to the credential awarded.

[CETL](#) ensures consistent quality across all modes of delivery and at all locations by providing equal support to all faculty and students. [Faculty Commons](#) is an online resource center that contains a variety of resources for teaching in all settings. CETL provides [syllabi templates](#), [workshops](#) in teaching and learning, and other print and video support for all faculty. CETL also provides [resources](#) to facilitate student success, regardless of where or how students are enrolled in coursework. All students have access to the Canvas Auxiliary course [Resources for Student Success](#). Course modules include Canvas Orientation for Students, Understanding and Preventing Plagiarism (with a guide to the Turn-It-In plagiarism detection service), and Upswing tutoring (SWOSU's free 24/7 online tutoring service and writing center).

Distance Education

The university provides instruction through distance education, as outlined in the [Policy for Distance Education](#). This term is inclusive of online, webinar, blended, and self-paced courses. Definitions for distance education courses, as well as expectations for instructors, active learning, and academic

integrity are included in this policy.

Before developing an online course, each instructor undergoes CETL training, including completion of the one-hour online course [Certification of Instructors to Teach Distance Education Courses](#). This is followed by the more in-depth online course [Distance Education Rubric Training Course](#). After certification, instructors may access the CETL-provided [Green Course](#). This is a model course shell that fully satisfies the rubric for evaluating online/blended/webinar courses. Instructors use this model course as a reference as they develop their own courses.

The [Online/Webinar Course Development Rubric](#) is available in Faculty Commons to assist course developers. This rubric addresses course overview and introduction, setting learning objectives and goals, assessing and measuring, selection of instructional materials, suggestions for course activities and learner interaction, course technology, and student resources. When course development is complete, the course is self-evaluated by the instructor and then sent to the instructor's chair. Once the course has the chair's approval, the course is submitted to a CETL reviewer for final approval. Online courses are reviewed annually using a [Significant Change Form](#). If significant course changes have been made, the developer submits an updated rubric to initiate the course re-evaluation process.

Faculty Commons also publishes rubrics for [blended](#) and [self-paced courses](#). The development and approval processes follow the same format as described above.

When courses are offered in both face-to-face and distance modalities, student learning outcomes remain the same; this is verified by the department chair. If a traditional course is modified to be delivered virtually, the department chair verifies that the student learner outcomes and academic rigor of the course remain unchanged.

CETL is committed to supporting students in the online learning environment as well. The Canvas course [Succeeding in an Online Class](#) offers modules on topics such as successful study strategies, communicating online, online student ethics, technological preparedness, and SWOSU resources for online learners. Students receive a certificate of completion upon finishing all course modules.

Dual Credit

Each course offered as dual credit enrollment must have the same learning outcomes as the sections taught at all locations. Instructors in dual-credit courses are credentialed through the same process, expected to use a master syllabus approved by the department, utilize approved textbooks, and conduct course-wide assessments.

Consistency of Quality and Learning Goals Across All Locations

In November 2018, SWOSU hosted an HLC Multi-Location Visit and prepared a [Multi-Location Visit Peer Review Report](#) for the external peer reviewer. During this visit the reviewer assessed consistency between the main Weatherford site and the Sayre and Fort Cobb locations. The Sayre location is the home of the College of Associate and Applied Programs. Approximately 350 students attend classes at this location. SWOSU operates another location at the Caddo-Kiowa Technology Center in Fort Cobb. Two Associate in Applied Science programs, Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) and the Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA), are offered at this location. These programs operate under contracts between Caddo Kiowa Technology Center and SWOSU. These contracts were approved by HLC in 2016. The [HLC Multi-Location Visit Peer Report](#) indicates that SWOSU has demonstrated success in overseeing at least three locations by receiving “adequate” marks on all

visit criteria. The peer reviewer concluded, “Overall, the pattern of this institution’s operations at its additional locations appears to be adequate, and no further review or monitoring by the Higher Learning Commission is necessary.”

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3.B - Core Component 3.B

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

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

Argument

3.B.1. The purposes, content, and [intended learning objectives](#) of SWOSU's general education requirements are articulated in its undergraduate catalog and are appropriate to SWOSU's mission, educational offerings, and degree levels. The purpose of the GE program is to "prepare students for the challenges and opportunities of life beyond the university experience." The outcomes are designed to encourage students to "think critically, creatively, and independently. They will need to adapt, to recognize opportunities, and to engage with the world around them. Empowered citizens must challenge preconceptions, assess the validity of evidence, ask thoughtful questions, and propose defensible answers." Students receive information about the program and its philosophy through several methods, including a module in SWOSUConnect, the university's first-year experience course.

The SWOSU general education curriculum is reviewed by OSRHE to ensure alignment with [OSRHE's core curriculum standards](#). Revisions to the GE Curriculum to align with the university's Mission Statement and Strategic Plan were approved by the General Education Committee and OSRHE in 2019. By completing the general education curriculum, students demonstrate proficiency in five areas:

Communication and Computer Literacy
Scientific and Quantitative Reasoning
Aesthetic Experience, History, and Humanities
Social Groups, Social Issues, Cultures, and Globalization
Intellectual and Professional Aptitudes

These elements enable the university to meet the Mission and Strategic Plan Vision Statement, "SWOSU will foster an inclusive environment that inspires intellectual excellence, responsible citizenship, professional development and personal growth." The GE areas directly correlate to

Strategic Plan Goal 2: *Promote student achievement of educational and professional goals* and Strategic Plan Goal 4: *Foster quality programs that meet the needs of students and the local, state, national, and global community.*

General education courses are assessed on a three-year cycle that is facilitated by the SWOSU Assessment Center. This evaluation cycle was implemented to [address the Final Recommendations](#) in HLC's [2010 accreditation report](#). Faculty who teach within the GE program utilize a [reporting template](#) that gives them the opportunity to select sub-goal criteria and identify corresponding student learner outcomes. The General Education committee reviews the general education assessment reports and related [mapping documents](#), and recommends changes to outcomes, goals, or practices to ensure courses are aligned with SWOSU's Mission Statement and degree levels.

3.B.2. SWOSU's general education requirements are founded in the belief that "graduates should leave SWOSU with a broad knowledge of the social and natural world, a keen sense of self, an awareness of their membership in a global society, and an understanding of what it means to be thoughtful and responsible citizens."

The framework for SWOSU's general education program is established by the OSRHE; by OSRHE definition, "the general education curriculum provides broad exposure to multiple disciplines and emphasizes the learning of facts, values, understandings, skills, attitudes, and appreciations believed to be meaningful concerns that are common to all students by virtue of their involvement as human beings living in a global society." The minimum number of credit hours to fulfill the GE requirement is 40.

SWOSU's [general education objectives](#) state that students shall demonstrate competency in the five areas mentioned in Section 3.B.1. The student learner outcomes for general education courses are defined by the university, but outcomes are addressed at the course level by the academic departments. These outcomes are reviewed by the General Education Committee to ensure alignment with the university's Mission Statement and OSRHE GE framework. A [mapping document](#) tracks how each GE objective is met in SWOSU's GE curriculum.

Instructors of GE courses choose student learner outcomes based upon at least one the first four GE goals. Goal Five, "Intellectual and Professional Aptitudes," has been further refined to include what SWOSU has termed the *5Cs and R*: critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, community connection, communication, and relevance. GE instructors also designate one or more of the 5Cs and R as a learning outcome in their course. CETL facilitates faculty interaction to understand, design, and incorporate the 5Cs and R into classroom instruction. As part of the [Instructional Excellence Academy](#), participants engage with their peers during informative interactive sessions to incorporate the 5Cs and R into instructional design. This peer-led instruction, termed Brown Bag Seminars, is held at noon and is open to all faculty and staff.

3.B.3. SWOSU's [Human/Cultural/Social Diversity Policy](#) expresses the university's commitment to providing students with growth opportunities and the skills necessary to succeed in a multicultural world. Goal Four of the SWOSU GE Curriculum links general education offerings with better understanding of "social groups, social issues, cultures, and globalization." Courses approved to satisfy this requirement have documented student learner outcomes that correlate with GE Goal Four. As part of the SWOSU [GE Curriculum](#), undergraduate students are required to complete a minimum of 12 credit hours in the humanities and social sciences. Additionally, students must satisfy any diversity requirement within their college or their major program. These diversity requirements correspond to the Civic and Global Learning Domain of the [Institutional Student Learning Outcomes](#)

(ISLOs), which states that "students will engage in civic and global inquiry by integrating academic knowledge with community engagement activities." University programs are increasing the availability of diversity-related studies, including the formation of a [Women's Studies minor](#).

Co-curricular activities further enhance students' diverse learning opportunities. As part of the co-curricular educational process, the Dean of Students has formalized student activity fee budgets to assist student organizations in their efforts to promote human and cultural diversity. The Coordinator of Student Activities assists students and faculty sponsors as they engage the larger student body in [cultural interactions](#). Several organizations, including the Southwestern International Student Association, Black Student Union, Hispanic American Leadership Organization, World Language and Culture Association, Native American Student Association, Spanish Club, Asian American Association, Saudi Arabian Club, and Southwestern African Student Association, produce [multiple events](#) throughout the year.

In the past decade, the university has established the positions of Multicultural Program Coordinator and [International Student Affairs Director](#). Their offices have created several initiatives to provide students of all backgrounds with growth opportunities and lifelong skills. Faculty have many opportunities through the Brown Bag Seminar Series and CETL training to develop methods of continued betterment and progression of everyone in the SWOSU community.

The Dean of Students has created a multi-tiered [Diversity and Inclusion Professional Development Program](#) that encourages faculty and staff to make SWOSU a welcoming place for all.

Results from the 2018 [National Survey of Student Engagement](#) (NSSE) provide evidence that senior students' perceptions are positive with regard to *discussions with diverse others* (NSSE question 8a-d). Results from the [2016 Student Satisfaction Inventory](#) (SSI) also reflect positive responses regarding *responsiveness to diverse populations* (SSI questions 84-89). An [overview](#) of the results of both assessments is provided by the Assessment Center.

The university's service learning initiatives also contribute to diverse experiential education. SWOSU's [Service Learning mission](#) strives to increase students' collaboration and communication skills to meet the needs of community partners. In 2018, seniors' responses to the NSSE indicated an increasing number of courses incorporating community-based projects. Also in 2018, SWOSU added a service learning component to the SWOSUConnect first-year experience to ensure that freshmen students are introduced to this high-impact practice. Two student learner outcomes were identified for this first-year project: 1) *Students will engage in service-learning activity and reflection in order to develop a better understanding of the SWOSU/Weatherford community* and 2) *Students will describe what they have learned about themselves as it relates to a growing sense of civic identity*. Nearly 600 freshmen participated in SWOSU Serves, a day of service, on October 12th, 2019.

[Final recommendations from the HLC comprehensive evaluation visit](#) of 2010 stated that the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribal College (CATC) should "explore sources of funding other than the tribe's resources" and that CATC should secure status as an independent university. Unfortunately, the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribe chose to defund the tribal college in Fall 2016. SWOSU conducted in a teach-out program for the five remaining CATC students through the Coordinator of Retention Management and the Vice President for Student Affairs. The university continues to support Native American students through the Dean of Students, the Multicultural Program Coordinator, and the Coordinator of Student Activities.

3.B.4. Scholarly and creative pursuits are a prominent theme in the university's Mission Statement:

"SWOSU supports students and community through its integration of effective teaching, scholarly and creative endeavors, and civic engagement." This emphasis is also reflected in SWOSU's core values. SWOSU's [Strategic Plan](#) discussed the work undertaken to provide students with "opportunities to engage in research and creative activities in order to develop social skills, knowledge, and cultural appreciation, allowing lifelong contribution of students and alumni to society." A sample College of Arts & Sciences [newsletter](#) highlights scholarly and creative works from students and faculty. Each year, one faculty member is selected to receive the [Bernhardt Academic Excellence Award](#). The award was established to make possible special recognition of faculty who have exhibited exceptional achievement in teaching, scholarship, and service.

The Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) publishes an annual [report](#) of extramural and intramural activity. The funding rate of extramural activity for fiscal years 2013-2017 averaged 83%. During this period, 172 faculty and staff members collaborated to earn 346 total awards that exceeded \$22 million. Over the same period, supplemental assistance for intramural activities involved 41 students and 112 faculty members. An annual average of \$47,000 was awarded for organized research across the Colleges of Arts and Sciences, Pharmacy, and Professional and Graduate Studies. OSP highlights research activity in [The Source newsletter](#).

In addition to teaching and service, faculty members are evaluated for promotion and tenure based upon their [scholarly activities](#). Examples of scholarly activities include research, contributions to textbooks, refereed journal articles, scholarly papers, grants and contracts, exhibits, musical compositions, musical arrangements, performances, construction design, curriculum development/innovations, works of art, editing/reviewing, professional development, and student mentoring. Faculty travel to state, national, and international conferences to present research and contribute to discovery of knowledge. Travel funds come from department budgets, OSP grants, and academic enhancement fees (AEF), which are course fees that are distributed directly to colleges and departments. The SWOSU Libraries host [Digital Commons](#), a cloud-based repository for publishing, showcasing, and globally disseminating faculty research.

Students are [encouraged to conduct research](#) in areas of study across the university. Examples of recognition for student research and creative activity include [psychology](#), [chemistry](#), [biology](#), and [art](#). For 46 years, the university has hosted the [SWOSU Research and Scholarly Activity Fair](#). OSP promotes student research in its newsletters. The [April 2019](#) issue highlights student research presented at Oklahoma Research Day. SWOSU was the host institution for Oklahoma Research Day in 2019 and 2020; these events brought over 800 student researchers and faculty sponsors to the Weatherford campus.

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3.C - Core Component 3.C

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

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

Argument

3.C.1. SWOSU strives to ensure that the overall composition of its faculty and staff reflects the diversity of Oklahoma and the region, and recognizes that it has opportunities for improvement in this area.

[Oklahoma's 2018 demographics](#) indicate ethnicities of 74% White, 11% Hispanic/Latino, 7% Black or African American, 9% American Indian or Alaska Native, and 6% two or more races. The university student demographic is reflective of this data, becoming more diverse since 2010. According to the [2019 Fact Book](#), changes in the number of Hispanic/Latino and Non-resident students account for this growing diversity, rising from 5% to 10% and 1% to 4%, respectively. The percentage of students identifying as two or more races has risen from 4% in 2011 (the first year of documentation) to 9%. Other ethnicities represented in the student body are Black or African American (4%), American Indian or Alaska Native (4%), Asian (3%) and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (0.1%). During this time, there was a decline in the Caucasian student population from 77% to 64%. The percentage of students who are female continues to grow, rising from 57% in 2010 to 62% in 2019.

Fifty-three percent of the full-time faculty are [female](#) and thus in general alignment with the student population. The larger challenge is ethnic diversity. According to the [2019 IPEDS data](#), 84% of faculty are White, 2% are Hispanic/Latinio, 6% are Asian, 2% are American Indian or Alaska Native, 1% are Black or African American, 1% are two or more races, and 1% are nonresident aliens. Employee diversity has remained relatively stable in both full-time and part-time positions: 87% are White, 4% are Hispanic/Latino, and 4% are Two or More Races (not Hispanic). The

university continues to seek applicants who will help the university's employee composition reflect the student body. SWOSU is an [Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action](#) institution that follows all applicable laws. The university subscribes to diversity and inclusion job listing services to help recruit a diverse applicant pool. Departments are making deliberate efforts to build faculty rosters that more closely reflect the composition of the student body. For example, the Engineering Physics Department reported in its [Five-Year Program Review](#) that the lack of faculty diversity was a weakness. Over the next year, the department doubled the number of female faculty.

The [Diversity and Inclusion Professional Development Program](#) is an initiative launched by the university in 2020. Participating faculty, administration, and staff members attend events and participate in discussions on issues such as equity, unconscious (implicit) bias, intersectionality, and privilege. Participants in this program often serve on search committees and in hiring capacities. In addition, all faculty, administration, and staff complete extensive Title IX training that includes modules on diversity considerations in hiring practices.

3.C.2. Data from the SWOSU Fact Book shows that in the past 10 years, SWOSU has sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty members to carry out its mission. The ratio of full-time student equivalent enrollment to full-time instructional faculty has ranged from 20 to 1 to 24 to 1. In Fall 2019, the ratio was 22 to 1. The yearly [IPEDS report](#) shows that SWOSU maintains adequate numbers of both full-time and part-time (adjunct) faculty -- 203 overall -- to support oversight and delivery of curriculum. Indeed, SWOSU enjoys a high level of continuity of faculty members, as illustrated in the [full-time faculty rank data](#). Tenured faculty members at associate professor and full professor ranks remain stable at approximately 42% annually.

The Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO) Policy Manual's [faculty load section](#) states that “a full-time faculty member should generally carry an instructional load of twenty-four (24) to twenty-seven (27) hours per academic year and a non-instructional equivalent load of nine (9) to twelve (12) hours per academic year so the full-time load would be the equivalent of thirty-six (36) hours per academic year.” Non-instructional duties include student advising, service to the university, and scholarly activity. Faculty serve on search committees, make recommendations for graduate assistantship positions, and determine academic qualifications of new and adjunct faculty.

The university is committed to a [faculty credentialing policy](#). Credentials is verified by the department chair/associate dean, academic dean, and Provost.

Faculty members are directly responsible for course and program curricular changes and [assessment](#), which originate in academic departments. Each college has a faculty Curriculum Committee. Program changes, such as a new minor, must have the approval of both department and college committees.

Faculty members are supported in their assessment of student learning by the SWOSU Assessment Committee. [This committee](#) includes faculty membership from across the university's colleges and ensures implementation of the [University Assessment Executive Summary Plan](#). The Assessment Committee and accredited departments are further supported by the [Assessment Center](#), the centralized hub for data collection. The Center provides data on multiple assessments, including course/general education/academic program/co-curricular assessments, continuous improvement reports, and exit survey results.

3.C.3. To ensure that all instructors are appropriately qualified, SWOSU maintains faculty credentialing policies and procedures, per [HLC's 2016 criteria](#). SWOSU's credentialing

policy applies to voluntary, part-time, dual credit (concurrent), adjunct, full-time temporary, non-tenure track, tenure track, and tenured faculty. The policy is the same at all locations. For example, [the agreement between SWOSU and Caddo Kiowa Technology Center](#) specifies that faculty at that location undergo the same review and promotion process as faculty at the main location.

Faculty may be deemed qualified based on academic credentials, tested experience, or a combination of both. A completed [Faculty Credentialing Form](#) and direct evidence is submitted to the Vice President for Academic Affairs for all faculty prior to employment for inclusion in their academic file. Direct evidence including a curriculum vita, official academic transcripts and, if required, a document highlighting tested experience, must be submitted before faculty credentials are verified.

Faculty must be credentialed in every discipline in which they teach. Credentialing for adjunct and dual credit instructors follows the same guidelines as full-time faculty; i.e., the same form is completed and approved for every discipline in which they teach.

The [faculty population](#) consists of instructors (33%), assistant professors (25%), associate professors (22%) and professors (20%). Faculty who teach online courses are credentialed in the same manner as those who teach traditional courses. Additionally, faculty who wish to teach online [complete training](#) to be approved to develop and deliver online courses.

A detailed list of graduate level faculty can be found in the [Graduate Catalog](#) along with department, rank, and degrees completed, and institutions where degrees were granted. Graduate faculty are credentialed to the same standard as undergraduate faculty. They must have completed a degree at a level higher than that which they teach or have other relevant experience that qualifies them to teach at the graduate level.

3.C.4. The process and frequency of faculty review is detailed in the Faculty Handbook and is based on rank and years of service. To make the evaluation process more objective, the Faculty Senate has restructured the process twice in the past 20 years.

Non-tenure track faculty members with less than five years of service are evaluated annually in the continuance procedure.

At the discretion of the department, non-tenure track faculty members with five or more years of service may be reviewed annually, but must be reviewed at least every third year.

Tenure-track faculty members are evaluated annually in the continuance procedure.

Tenured faculty members may be reviewed annually and must be reviewed at least every third year.

All first year faculty receive an information-only (in most circumstances) evaluation from their chair or associate dean. This evaluation occurs after the first full semester of service.

A standardized method of evaluating adjunct faculty is in development. Some departments such as the [Department of Nursing](#) have formalized processes. By Spring 2021, all departments will evaluate adjunct faculty using either a [standardized form](#) or the one developed within their department and in accordance with their accrediting agency if applicable.

[Continuance procedures](#) are also detailed in the Faculty Handbook. During the continuance process, faculty members are reviewed based on course/instructor evaluations, a peer review, and their curriculum vitae. The academic unit committee, chair, associate dean, and dean have the opportunity to recommend the faculty member for continuance or non-continuance.

Tenured faculty members undergo [post-tenure review](#) as described in the Faculty Handbook. Tenured faculty members are reviewed based on their curriculum vitae and course instructor evaluations by the Academic Unit Review Committee (composed of other tenured faculty) and the faculty member's department chair or associate dean. An unsatisfactory review will result in a written plan of improvement and re-evaluation the following year.

Adjunct faculty are evaluated by the department chair after each course taught. Department faculty can be involved in the evaluation, especially if the course is a general education course with standard learning outcomes. Student evaluations are included in the assessment.

[Course/instructor evaluations](#) are required for all courses each semester. Evaluations are anonymously completed by students using the EvaluationKit application within the Canvas Learning Management System. The course/instructor evaluations specifically address such areas as clear presentation of material, choice of text and materials, classroom control and management, enthusiasm, availability, fairness, respect, and timeliness with grading. Students may also include comments. Evaluation numbers and comments are used as a component of faculty evaluation in first-year faculty review, continuance, promotion and tenure, and post-tenure review. Instructors have the opportunity to self-evaluate their course using the Instructor's Course Evaluation form.

3.C.5. The assurance that instructors are current in their disciplines begins with the regular evaluation of all faculty. This provides a continuous improvement process that guides departments in ensuring that faculty are adept at teaching their discipline and effective student advisors. The [Criteria for Evaluation for Promotion/Tenure](#) in the Faculty Handbook states that "involvement and performance in such endeavors will receive the greatest emphasis in evaluations."

[CETL](#) is the nexus for faculty professional development support, as the Center supports the effective combination of teaching, research, and creativity. CETL provides educational services, complete with [specialized departmental and individual support](#). One instructional technology specialist and two Teaching and Learning Coordinators conduct [department workshops](#) on topics such teaching and learning strategies, classroom pedagogies, assessment, reading and writing, learning with technology, principles of instructional design, leadership, research, and classroom management. CETL provides [weekly professional development opportunities](#) and maintains a [Faculty Commons page](#) that hosts [videos of past workshops](#) and resources such as [course development rubrics](#).

The [Excellence in Teaching and Learning Committee](#) works with CETL to foster a dialogue about teaching strategies and methods. The [Faculty Development Committee](#) provides additional professional development. These include Brown Bag Seminar Series presentations over a variety of topics and methods. Faculty are also provided with training each semester on [advising](#) students.

Department travel funds, academic enhancement fees, and [Faculty Development Awards](#) from the OSP are used for faculty travel to state, national, and international conferences to present research and learn best practices for teaching. Additional funds support specific training objectives, such as the Transformative Learning Workshop.

All new faculty participate in a two-day [New Faculty Orientation](#) workshop. All faculty attend the [Fall Workshop](#) at the beginning of the fall semester.

Quality Initiative Project

A notable professional development project implemented by the university was the Three Pillars

Course Transformation Project (2016-2018). Developed by the Associate Provost, the purpose of the Three Pillars Method was to advance students' deep learning, intellectual development, and professional skills in general education and academic program courses. The method was approved by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) as the SWOSU's Quality Initiative Project. The process of transforming courses was done in [five cycles](#). Faculty registered their courses for transformation with CETL, which had put structures in place to support course developers. Over a two-and-half year period, 45 courses were transformed using the [Three Pillars Method Booklet](#). While the priority was transforming undergraduate general education courses, faculty were also allowed to transform non-general education courses. The transformation of each course was followed by implementation (i.e., teaching the course) and an assessment of students' performance. The most prominent benefit of the Three Pillars Course Transformation Project was improved pedagogies for teaching in traditional and distance settings. The [final report](#) concluded that the course transformations resulted in improved student performance.

Upon conclusion of the Three Pillars Project, CETL developed the [Southwestern Instructional Excellence Academy \(SWIEA\)](#), a year-long training program in which SWOSU faculty learn to improve courses and increase student learning. The Academy had a successful pilot year in 2019 and initiated its third class in March 2020, with a total of 34 faculty members participating thus far. The SWIEA program has proven to be a popular professional development opportunity for all faculty. Participants present the [5Cs and R Luncheon Series](#) for peer faculty members, demonstrating ideas for incorporating creativity, critical thinking, community engagement, communication, collaboration, and relevance into their courses.

3.C.6. The Faculty Handbook details the policies concerning [instructor accessibility](#). Full-time faculty are expected to be available to students at least 10 regular office hours each week. Part-time faculty are required to keep a proportionate number of office hours. The Faculty Handbook requires that office hours be posted on or near the faculty member's office door. It is recommended that office hours be maintained in both mornings and afternoons. Office hours may also be virtual in the case of online or distance education classes. The [course syllabus template](#) requires instructors to provide their students with an office hours schedule.

3.C.7. The employment of staff is managed by SWOSU [Human Resources](#) using the Bulldog Works Employee Applicant Tracking online application. The Bulldog Works system stores job descriptions for all staff positions. Each description includes duties, expectations, and qualifications. Applications are submitted online and are processed by HR to ensure minimum qualifications are met before the applications are reviewed by screening committees. Screening committees work collaboratively with the hiring supervisor to identify highly qualified candidates.

[New Employee Orientation](#) is offered quarterly by HR. This two-day session familiarizes new staff members with HR and Information Technology Services (ITS) policies. Employees also receive presentations from employees in Student Affairs, Public Relations, the Libraries, Public Safety, Staff Council, and Bulldog Wellness Committee. Employees also complete [training as required by law](#). [Advisor training](#) and an [advising handbook](#) are provided to staff who serve as advisors. All tutors and graduate assistants hired through the Office of Retention Management, the Student Success Center (SSC), the Writing Center, and individual departments are required to meet appropriate qualifications and undergo training upon hiring. Individual student support service units have annual training for their employees. For example, Student Financial Services provides training annually and the Registrar's office holds training events weekly.

Unit overviews in the [Student Affairs Annual Assessment Report](#) detail how staff members providing

co-curricular activities are supported, ranging from conference attendance to an annual student affairs retreat.

Full-time professional staff are affiliated with state, regional, and national organizations specific to their expertise and are provided with professional development/travel allocations in their department budgets. Results from the [National Survey of Student Engagement](#), the [Student Satisfaction Inventory](#), the [Student Satisfaction section of the Annual Student Assessment Report \(ASAR\)](#), and [Student Affairs Co-Curricular Annual Assessment Report](#) indicate that students are satisfied with SWOSU's support services.

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3.D - Core Component 3.D

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

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

Argument

3.D.1. Prospective students and their families are introduced to SWOSU's support services in [promotional materials](#) and [upon application](#) to the university. The support SWOSU provides to all students is well-suited to their needs throughout their university careers.

All first-time students receive information about support services at [New Student Orientation](#) (NSO) sessions. At each session, students are immersed in activities that facilitate a smooth transition to university life.

New students complete the SWOSUConnect first-year experience course during their first semester. In conjunction with offices in Student Affairs and the Provost, the NSO coordinator develops the course curriculum to ensure consistency across the 30+ sections taught each year. Course modules include campus resources, campus involvement and service learning, growth mindset, diversity, career planning, test-taking tips, money management, academic planning, violence prevention, opinions and debate, alcohol awareness, and library services. The [evolution of this class](#) highlights its continuous improvement and attentiveness to students' needs. SWOSU also offers SWOSUConnect sections taught by the Director of International Student Affairs specifically for international students.

One measure of the effectiveness of NSO and the first-year experience course is the Ruffalo Noel-Levitz [Student Satisfaction Inventory](#) (SSI), administered every other year to sophomore, junior, and graduate students. SSI satisfaction responses range from a score of 1 (very dissatisfied) to 7 (very satisfied). In 2016 and 2018, SWOSU students reported more satisfaction than students at other four-year public colleges. Responses for the indicator "New student orientation services help students adjust to college" improved from 5.48 in 2016 to 5.80 in 2018; both scores significantly exceeded the national four-year public college score of 5.22.

The [Student Handbook](#) and the [Current Student webpage](#) describe the array of student support services, many of which are part of the [Co-curricular Engagement strategies](#). These include the following:

[Assessment Center](#)
[Auxiliary/Food Services](#)

[Bursar](#)
[Campus Police](#)
[Career Services](#)
[Center for Health and Well-being](#)
[Dean of Students](#)
[Human Resources](#)
[Information Technology Services](#)
[Residence Life](#)
[Student Financial Services](#)
[Veterans' services](#)
[Wellness Center and Intramurals](#)
[Writing Center](#)

The Dean of Students serves as the university's [compliance officer](#) and advises [students in need of accommodation](#). For faculty, he provides assistance and guidance on how to best provide the necessary accommodations.

The [Co-Curricular Annual Assessment Report](#) details the effectiveness of several support offices. The state of campus support activities are also detailed in various reports, such as the [Campus Crime Report](#) and the [Drug-Free and Schools Campuses Act biennial report](#).

The Center for Health and Well-being provides health and counseling services. The university partnered with the [JED Foundation](#) in 2017 to develop a systematic approach to student mental health, and substance use and suicide prevention efforts. The result is a [stepped care model](#) that uses the resources of the university's health and counseling staff, local health care providers, and online providers.

Student academic support services range from department-level tutoring to university-wide efforts. These include:

The [Office of Retention Management](#), which operates the [Early Alert](#) response system, supports alternatively-admitted students, coordinates a College Success course for academically at-risk students, and oversees retention efforts.

The [SSC](#), a Title III-grant funded program that provides academic counseling, success strategies, and workspaces.

[Reach Higher](#), a degree completion program for returning students.

SWOSU's level of student support is assessed in part by the [National Survey of Student Engagement](#) (NSSE), administered annually to freshmen and seniors. NSSE ratings are on a four-point scale, ranging from 1 (very little/never) to 4 (very much/very often).

When asked "How much does your institution emphasize providing support to help students succeed academically?," the mean of freshmen/senior responses was 3.1/3.0.

When asked "How much does your institution emphasize using learning support services (tutoring services, writing center, etc.)?," the mean responses were 3.1/3.1. Both sets of scores meet or exceed the Oklahoma statistical comparison.

Freshmen responses on the NSSE indicate that students discussed career plans with a faculty member with the same frequency as comparison classes. As expected, the mean of the responses increased with senior students (2.3 to 2.7).

Senior respondents indicated that they also worked with a faculty member on activities other

than coursework (e.g., committees, student groups) and also discussed academic performance with a faculty member. Reported means were 2.1 and 2.2, respectively, which exceed state and national averages.

3.D.2. SWOSU provides comprehensive support to incoming freshmen and continuing students.

Multiple NSO sessions are held each spring and summer to welcome incoming classes of freshmen, as described in section 3.D.1. The Provost, Vice President for Student Affairs, Enrollment Management, and the Assessment Center review the provision of support to entering students and collaborate with academic departments in [justifying changes](#). The NSO office works with the Assessment Center to provide advisors with [Developmental Course Placement Guidelines](#), aligned with [OSRHE policy](#). These guidelines ensure that students are enrolled in the appropriate course for mathematics, English, and, when necessary, reading. Additionally, SWOSU has begun implementing recommendations from the OSRHE Math Taskforce to align required general education mathematics courses with meta-majors. Students with academic deficiencies indicated by ACT content subscores may have those deficiencies cleared if their high school grade point average (GPA) is 3.25 or higher. If a student's high school GPA is too low, then ACT subscores guide the student's course placement. Students whose GPA and/or standardized test scores place them in developmental courses may take computerized placement tests through the Assessment Center. The [placement guidelines](#) show the minimum score in each subject area needed to remove the developmental classification.

Prep for College Math and Fundamentals of English are courses for students who have a high school GPA below a 3.25 and scores 15 or below on their ACT subscores for math or English. The courses address basic skills in mathematics and English that must be mastered in order to successfully complete college-level coursework. Students who complete these skill-builder courses progress to the general education course. The general education course is taken in conjunction with a co-requisite support course. Under the direction of OSRHE's [Complete College America](#) initiative, SWOSU has implemented the co-requisite model for remediation in mathematics and English. Students a high school GPA below 3.25 and an ACT subscore of 16-18 in mathematics or English are enrolled in a general education course in conjunction with the support course. An example of these GE and support course pairings is ENGL 1113 English Composition I and ENGL 0132 English Composition Support. Data reported in the [Three Pillars Evidence Booklet update](#) shows that in the second year of co-requisites (2018-2019), failure rates in Composition I and II [decreased in comparison](#) with rates prior to the implementation of co-requisite courses.

In fall 2018 SWOSU was awarded a \$2.1 million Title III Strengthening Institutions grant from the U.S. Department of Education to develop the [SSC](#). The mission of the SSC is to increase student retention and empower students to successfully progress through their chosen field of study to program completion. The SSC targets four areas to improve retention and graduation rates:

1. Improvement of advising resources and processes for freshman students
2. Early identification of at-risk students early through an improved student information system
3. Creation of sustainable electronic resources for students through early alert and degree audit programs
4. Provision of academic coaching and peer mentoring to at-risk students

The Office of Retention Management oversees the [College Success course](#), a one-credit support course for students who are alternatively admitted to the institution, based on their high school grade point average or ACT score. College Success focuses on skills such as time-management, organization, and campus resources. The course is available to any SWOSU students, but is required

for students who do not meet university admissions requirements, as well as those returning from an academic suspension. In addition to course content, class assignments in College Success are designed to familiarize students with their faculty advisor, course instructors, and university policies. Students are required to complete one-on-one mentor meetings with trained graduate assistants to address academic challenges that the student is facing, as well as to identify and bolster the student's strengths. [Results show](#) that students who successfully complete this course succeed in other courses.

3.D.3. SWOSU has structures in place to provide students with appropriate academic advising. Advising is done primarily by faculty members who teach courses within the advisee's major. In some departments with large numbers of majors, the university employs full-time advisors/program coordinators. Advisors mentor students toward completion of their chosen academic degree. This philosophy aligns with values, vision, and mission of the university to provide an environment for student success. At the determination of department chairs, faculty are assigned advising loads. [Training](#) is available for faculty advisors beginning with [new faculty orientation](#) and continuing through the academic year as university policies are implemented or updated. The [Advising Handbook](#) is published online and readily available for faculty consultation.

SWOSU's advising programs are proactive. The [Office of Retention Management](#) (ORM) supports to both academic advisors and students with regard to academic policies and advising best practices. The ORM is responsible for offering academic support services to students on the Early Alert grade report. The Early Alert report is initiated by the Registrar, with particular focus on students in general education courses. Instructors are asked to post grades for students earning a D, F, or U at week five of the semester. At week six, each student with unsatisfactory grades is contacted by ORM and directed to university resources available that will help the student improve. Typical interventions include one-on-one mentor meetings with a graduate assistant. In addition to the Early Alert system, faculty are encouraged to refer students individually to the ORM whenever student support services and referrals to campus resources are needed.

In fall 2019, SWOSU implemented a new enterprise resource and planning (ERP) system. A key component of the new ERP system is an improved enrollment management application. The application -- Colleague Self-Service -- enables faculty to offer students better designed course schedules and simplifies verification that students are progressing toward graduation. The system also makes it easier for junior and seniors to self-enroll with the guidance of an advisor; it will soon include automatic degree audits. All advisors are trained in the use of the system; a [Canvas page](#) serves as a training resource hub.

3.D.4. SWOSU addresses its mission of integrating effective teaching, scholarly, and creative endeavors by providing the necessary infrastructure and resources. Examples of this infrastructure and these resources include:

Technological infrastructure: As previously discussed, [CETL](#) supports students and faculty members by creating a campus culture that values excellence in [teaching](#), learning, research, and the [use of technology](#) to advance learning. Multiple services are centralized in CETL for efficiency. [ITS](#) updates technology in workspaces and labs on a rotating basis.

Assessment resources: The Assessment Center, as noted previously, provides another avenue of integrated services that guide departments in linking [student learner outcomes](#) to curriculum, instruction, and co-curricular activities.

Libraries: [SWOSU Libraries](#) include the Al Harris Library in Weatherford and Oscar McMahan Library at the Sayre location. The Caddo Kiowa Technology Center also houses a

library for students pursuing the Occupational Therapist Assistant and Physical Therapy Assistant degrees. The libraries provide services based on technology, monograph collections, subject specific databases and a strong instructional program. The Library Instruction Program is based on the Association of College and Research Libraries' (ACRL) Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education. The libraries average between 80 and 100 instructional sessions in the fall and spring semesters. Undergraduate library instruction enables students to acquire essential information literacy skills; i.e. to evaluate information sources, to effectively and ethically make use of intellectual works, and to identify when additional help is needed to effectively answer research questions. The second floor of the Al Harris Library is undergoing an extensive renovation that will provide enhanced large and small group study spaces and add new spaces for the preservation, study, and digitization of history materials (for example, the collected papers of Apollo-Soyuz mission commander Thomas P. Stafford).

Scientific laboratories: The renovation of the Chemistry, Pharmacy, and Physics (CPP) Building modernized faculty offices and upgraded laboratory spaces. A previous investment of over \$1 million in state-of-the-art instrumentation targeted both laboratory coursework as well as an extensive faculty/undergraduate research program. Over 6,500 square feet is dedicated to laboratory space. The Department of Biological Sciences has nine dedicated teaching laboratories and five dedicated research laboratories, several of which have been recently renovated to improve capabilities and safety. Recent updates include new stereo and compound microscopes, an inverted fluorescence microscope, a -80 degree (Celsius) freezer, a 3D printer, water quality meters, and microbiology equipment. Updates to Department of Engineering Technology's equipment include 3D printers, robotics trainers, computer numerical control (CNC) machines and simulators, electrical communications equipment, and Programmable Logic Controller (PLC) tools. These updates recently enabled faculty members to manufacture and donate face shields to healthcare facilities in western Oklahoma during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Performance spaces: The [Fine Arts Center](#) (FAC) auditorium is designed to serve as an instructional facility and a cultural center for western Oklahoma. Recent updates to the FAC include new orchestra shells, a 21K lumen Christie Digital Projector, and a fully digital 32 channel audio console. The upgrades make the performance space more aesthetically pleasing and enable SWOSU to host a wider variety of events, speaking engagements, and workshops. The Black Box Theatre hosts [performances](#) of the university's [theatre program](#). The theater was upgraded in 2019 with a new performance projector in 2019. The Pioneer Cellular Event Center also serves as a space for large events, such as [Panorama series performances](#).

Clinical practice sites: A renovation of the Berrong Music Hall expanded the clinical site for the university's [Music Therapy program](#).

Museum collections: The university owns a downtown space that houses the [SWOSU Museum](#). The museum includes artifacts from more than 100 years of the university's history.

Meeting spaces: In August 2018, SWOSU announced a collaboration with the Timothy T. Day Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to improving facilities and programs at educational institutions that strengthen free enterprise, economic development, and workforce training. The \$300,000 investment into the [Business Enterprise Center](#) updated two large presentation rooms with new audiovisual equipment, adaptive high resolution tracking cameras, and high speed Wi-Fi. A 1,000 sq. ft. deck was also added.

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3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary

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

Summary

Courses and programs at SWOSU are monitored through an effective and thorough program review process. Undergraduate and graduate programs have appropriate, differentiated student learning goals delivered consistently across all modalities.

The general education program is appropriate for the university's mission. Program objectives ensure that graduates have a broad knowledge of the social and natural world, a keen sense of self and their membership in a global society, and an understanding of what it means to be a responsible citizen.

Sufficient numbers and quality of faculty and staff enable the university to achieve its mission. Processes for faculty and staff review are articulated through their respective handbooks. The university provides appropriate professional development and celebrates the success of its employees.

Diverse support services are provided to suit the needs of the student population, including academic advising, tutoring services, and co-curricular offerings. The institution has the necessary infrastructures to support effective teaching and learning.

Sources

There are no sources.

4 - Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

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

4.A - Core Component 4.A

The institution ensures the quality of its educational offerings.

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

Argument

4.A.1. Southwestern Oklahoma State University (SWOSU) adheres to internal and external policies and procedures for regular program review, all of which are tied to learning outcomes and drive continuous improvement. The procedures are outlined in the [Processes for Assessment and Improvement of Student Learning table](#).

In accordance with [Oklahoma State Regents of Higher Education \(OSRHE\) policy](#), academic degree programs are reviewed every five years, unless the programs have achieved specialty accreditation status. OSRHE maintains a [Degree Program Review Schedule](#) that lists each academic program's most recent and next scheduled review. OSRHE suggests the use of the [Program Review Summary Template 3.7](#), which solicits information such as the program's centrality to the university's mission. The department's faculty and chair works with the dean and Provost to assess the program's vitality and describe productivity indicators available through institutional reports such as the [Common Data Set](#) and [Fact Book](#). Respondents describe their use of resources, record recommendations for continuous improvement and program sustainability, and act upon the findings. OSRHE reviews these program reports and may require additional information, such as reports for programs that do not meet [minimum productivity indicators](#). Five-year OSRHE program reviews from the

[Communication Arts](#) and [Engineering Physics](#) programs provide examples of the report's information. Fifty-six programs submit these reports.

Program review is also a part of the re-accreditation process for [programs with specialized accreditation](#). These reviews include evidence of learning outcomes, such as graduation rates, board pass rates, and program improvement. Accreditation self-studies from the [School of Business and Technology](#) and the [Industrial Technology](#) programs provide examples of self-study information relevant to program review.

All programs complete an annual survey administered through the SWOSU Assessment Center via an [online questionnaire](#). It includes two parts:

Respondents detail the program's outcomes in Part I (Outcomes/Graduate Assessments), including information about the number of graduates, types of licensure (if applicable), assessment tools, and outcomes. Completed Outcomes/Graduate Assessments from six programs - [Biological Sciences](#), [Music](#), [Radiologic Technology](#), [Education](#), [Nursing](#), and [Pharmacy](#) - provide examples of this component. The Assessment Center compiles all responses to construct [Section III \(Program Outcomes\)](#) of the Annual Student Assessment Report (ASAR), which is submitted annually to OSRHE. Section III lists assessment measures and the number of students assessed for each degree program. It also summarizes the [instructional changes that have occurred or are planned](#) in response to the outcomes assessment.

The Academic Degree Programs and Option portion (Part II) provides more information on student learning goals and assessment measures. SWOSU instituted this system to capture annual evaluation data and link program learning goals to general education objectives, if applicable. This report requires each department to identify learning goals that are measurable and relevant to the program outcomes. The department offers plans or recommendations for improvement, as evidenced by reports from the [BBA in Business Administration program](#), the [Doctorate in Pharmacy program](#), the [BS in Psychology program](#) and the [BS in Chemistry program](#). The Assessment Center compiles all programs' responses into a report to track [overall success in meeting learning goals](#).

Each program can also review exit surveys as part of its program reviews. Students who are eligible to graduate are prompted to complete Exit Surveys in their last semester. The Assessment Center produces reports that are separated by program so that departments can review and act on responses by its graduates. The Assessment Center also produces cumulative reports at the [associate's](#), [bachelor's](#), and [master's](#) levels.

Acting Upon the Findings:

In addition to the changes recorded in [Section III](#) of the ASAR, meeting agendas and minutes from the [Business](#), [Pharmacy](#), and [Engineering Technology](#) programs show that faculty participate in reviewing program goals and recommendations for improvement from the previously described reports. These reviews regularly lead to actions. For example, the Department of Chemistry identified a need to improve student connection, and responded with a [zero-hour seminar](#) that allows students to meet with mentors. A [2019 handout](#) for faculty outlines an assessment process, including an annual timeline and processes for program review.

In addition to actions by individual departments to address program review findings, SWOSU's [Continuous Improvement process](#) includes the annual review of the Student Learning Outcomes

reports by an Assessment Committee subcommittee.

4.A.2. SWOSU follows institutional and Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO) policies and procedures in ensuring the quality and integrity of the credits that it transcripts. The Registrar's office oversees credit review, and its [policies](#) dictates that all credits are earned in terms of semester hours. This policy includes [developmental and activity courses](#). The [Credit Hour Policy](#) accounts for hybrid or online classes, and is consistent with SWOSU's [Distance Education Policy](#) in requiring that each distance education course meet the same learning outcomes as the equivalent in-person course.

College Level Examination Program (CLEP) credit is outlined by [CLEP Policy](#). CLEP exams cover introductory college course material in 33 subjects. A [table of CLEP activity](#) for the last three years shows that CLEP demand has increased each year. SWOSU awards college credit to students who have successfully met score requirements on Advanced Placement tests. The [Assessment Center's Advanced Placement Policy](#) details examinations for credit and the credit recommendation by SWOSU departments relative to scores achieved.

SWOSU follows various state-level policies prescribed by OSRHE, including but not limited to [credit for prior/experiential learning](#), [concurrent enrollment](#), [institutional accreditation and state authorization](#), [course load](#), [grading](#), and [granting of degrees](#). In addition, the [OSRHE Prior Learning Assessment Matrix and Career Tech Cooperative Agreement](#) provides evidence of guidance. The Registrar reports the number of hours it awards for Prior Learning Assessments to OSRHE.

The checklist for International Student Admissions for both [exchange students](#) and [first-year applicants](#) requires that transcripts be evaluated by a credential evaluation service. Foreign institution credit may be accepted; the [international student admittance requirements page](#) describes relevant policy.

4.A.3. The Registrar's Office provides efficient and accurate transcript evaluation through its [transfer policies and procedures](#). The Admissions Coordinator and Degree Audit Coordinator work with academic departments to ensure consistent articulation of transfer work.

SWOSU follows the requirements of [OSRHE's Articulation Policy](#) for the transfer of students among institutions in the state system. OSRHE mandates a [student transfer policy](#) and publishes transfer tables through a [course equivalency project](#).

Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees from an Oklahoma-accredited college are marked as equivalent to SWOSU's general education in most programs. Also, the [out-of-state articulation transfer policy](#) states that students with an Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degree from a regionally-accredited college will be given the benefit of the Oklahoma articulation policy.

Courses that are not included in the SWOSU's transfer credit policy or OSRHE's articulation policy are examined on an individual basis to determine validity. If a course is not predetermined to match a SWOSU course, the student may complete a [Request to Substitute General Education Courses](#) form or a [Request to Substitute Courses in Major-Minor Field](#) form. In either case, the department that offers the corresponding SWOSU course determines whether the course meets the requirements and can be transferred.

The [undergraduate catalog](#) provides [transfer credit guidelines](#). Transcripts from universities accredited by the Higher Learning Commission and other regional associations are given full value when appropriate to the student's program. SWOSU also has [articulation agreements](#) and a [two-year](#)

[institution credit policy](#) that allow additional transfer hours.

4.A.4. RUSO and OSRHE grant SWOSU the authority to designate course prerequisites, course rigor, student learning expectations, learning resources access, and faculty qualifications. The granting of this authority is found in the [RUSO Policy Manual](#) and [OSRHE's Academic Affairs](#) policies. Oversight of course offerings is accomplished through a variety of assessments and resources for students, faculty, staff, and administrators.

Course Review and Rigor

Faculty and departments oversee schedules, rigor, and student learning expectations through procedures such as the [Course Scheduling Procedures](#). Additionally, [each college maintains a curriculum committee](#), which reviews and makes recommendations to the Provost for additions, deletions, or modifications of courses or programs. The SWOSU Faculty Senate also maintains a standing Curriculum Committee; this committee does not meet regularly and defers decisions to the individual colleges. The recommendations are based on impact on other departments, alignment with the university mission, philosophy, and policies; strategic goals; and fiscal requirements of the request. Departments and curriculum committees follow [university procedure](#) and [OSRHE policies](#) when adding, deleting, or modifying programs.

The [General Education Committee](#) meets regularly concerning various aspects of curricular rigor. Recent modifications include the [implementation of support courses](#) for math and language arts classes in 2016, an update of [General education requirements](#) in 2018, a modification of [general education student learning outcomes](#) in 2019, and [realignment with the Assessment Committee practices](#) in 2019.

The Undergraduate Course Catalog provides [course descriptions](#), including credit, semester availability, and prerequisite information. In preparation for the transition to a new enterprise resource and planning (ERP) system in 2018, [each department reviewed all courses](#) listed in the catalog and the legacy ERP system and made updates to course descriptions, course numbering, and prerequisites. The new ERP system prohibits registration in courses for which prerequisites have not been completed.

The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) evaluates online, blended, and webinar courses for rigor using an [internal rubric](#) developed from field best practices. Sample rubrics include [lower-level](#) and [upper-level](#) undergraduate courses and two [graduate courses](#).

Student feedback concerning course rigor is gathered in multiple ways. The first method is the student course evaluation system. Examples of course evaluation summaries include [Fall 2017](#), [Spring 2018](#), and [Fall 2018](#). Faculty regularly review students' comments and numerical scores from course evaluations to identify areas for improvement. Department chairs also review student course evaluations for evaluate instructors. Each semester, the Assessment Center publishes a department summary table aggregating the means for all department faculty and comparing these means with the means of the college and university. Department curriculum committees also review student course evaluations to identify areas for curricular improvement. The [Student Satisfaction Inventory](#) (SSI) gives university leaders insights about student priorities and how satisfied students are with their SWOSU experience. The [National Survey of Student Engagement](#) (NSSE) is offered annually to freshmen and senior students to assess their satisfaction with teaching methods and the quality of instruction. The Assessment Center's analysis of these surveys in [overview documents](#) and the ASAR's [Section IV \(Student Engagement and Satisfaction\)](#) highlights strengths, as well as

opportunities for improvement.

Expectations for Student Learning:

[Student learning outcomes](#) at the institutional, general education, co-curricular, program, and course level are intertwined, as further detailed in Component 4B. Faculty, staff, and administrators regularly review [courses and programs](#) to ensure progress toward all outcomes, and implement revisions as necessary. Student learning outcomes at the course level are outlined in each course's syllabus, as shown this example from the [Occupational Therapy Assistant](#) program.

Access to Learning Resources

SWOSU maintains and exercises authority over learning resources. Many services are listed on the [SWOSU Current Student web page](#) and range from computer laboratories to library resources.

The SWOSU Library has two locations: the Al Harris Library in Weatherford and the Oscar McMahan Library in Sayre. The library's holdings support teaching and learning with a 300,000+ title book collection and a broad array of online resources, including full-text journals, ebooks, music, and streaming videos. Reference assistance is offered through Ask a Librarian.

The university's Canvas learning management system offers a variety of learning resources for students, including a module on [Succeeding in an Online Class](#). Other learning support includes 24/7 tutoring support from the [Student Success Center \(SSC\)](#), support from the [Office of Retention Management](#), and support from the [Writing Center](#).

For faculty, learning support includes resources through the department and Canvas. For example, all faculty have access to Canvas' [Faculty Commons](#), which offers resources on [course development](#), [syllabus creation](#), [writing measurable objectives](#), and [teaching online](#). CETL employs two full-time Teaching and Learning Coordinators who assist faculty in developing and improving course content and delivery. CETL also offers weekly workshops, most of which are recorded and uploaded to a [Faculty Development](#) Canvas page. Workshop topics include improving learning through accessibility, flipped classrooms, classroom management, and curriculum development.

Faculty Qualifications (including those teaching dual credit sections):

The university complies with the [Higher Learning Commission policy](#) and [OSRHE guidelines](#) for certifying instructors. SWOSU's [credentialing policy](#) applies to all faculty positions including voluntary, part-time, dual credit, adjunct, full-time temporary, non-tenure track, tenure track, and tenured faculty. Faculty may be deemed qualified based on academic credentials, tested experience, or a combination of the two. Before an applicant for a faculty position is hired, the department chair or associate dean must complete a [credentialing form](#) for review by the dean and Provost. Faculty qualifications are published in the [Undergraduate Course Catalog](#).

The [Policy for Distance Education](#) addresses online instructor and course developer certification. Faculty are required to complete a one-hour online course “[Certification of Instructors to Teach Distance Education Courses](#)” to become certified to teach distance education courses. Each course -- whether online, self-paced, webinar, or blended -- must meet the [Course Development Rubric standards](#) for the course's delivery method. Faculty are required to take the in-depth course, “[Distance Education Rubric Training](#),” to develop and teach distance education courses.

Dual Credit Programs

The [general practice at SWOSU](#) is that dual credit students enroll in the same sections offered to all other students. Exceptions are courses offered at Western Technology Center and a new dual credit program offered in partnership with Yukon High School. All concurrent and dual credit programs follow [OSRHE guidelines](#). These guidelines require concurrent and dual credit courses to be taught by credentialed faculty in sections that have the same learning outcomes and achievement levels as other sections in the same course and subject. The [SWOSU-Yukon principles](#) reflect these guidelines.

4.A.5. Fourteen programs at SWOSU have specialized national accreditations. Three programs are accredited at the state level. Additionally, the university's education program offers 15 accredited degrees. Faculty and curriculum committees may review their program and elect to seek specialized accreditation based upon whether accreditation provides significant benefits to student outcomes and enhances program quality. For example, the [self-study](#) and [approval letter](#) from the International Accreditation Council for Business Education's accreditation of the Department of Business and Computer Technology provides insight of this review process. Each [program publicizes](#) its [status of accreditation](#). An [accreditation website](#) provides the public with information about each program, including the date when the program was first accredited. All 14 programs are in good standing with their accrediting agencies.

4.A.6. SWOSU employs several methods to assess the success of its graduates.

The SWOSU Fact Book includes results of these assessment presented across multiple years to easily identify important trends. Counts of [Bachelor Degrees Granted](#), [Graduate Degrees Granted](#), and [Degree Outcomes by Academic Program](#) from 2010 to 2019 are provided.

The RUSO Dashboard uses Oklahoma workforce data to provide an overview of graduate success and satisfaction. For example, an [earnings table](#) shows that SWOSU graduates' earnings are the highest among all RUSO universities. A [student satisfaction table](#) shows that 93% of SWOSU students answered affirmatively to the Institutional Exit Survey question, "Would you attend the same school if you had to do it over?" Similarly, OSRHE maintains a [workforce dashboard](#) that displays the occupations and median earnings of SWOSU graduates who stay in Oklahoma. Each program completing the OSRHE five-year program review provides [information on graduates](#).

Preparedness for the graduate study or employment is gauged through the ETS Proficiency Profile. SWOSU seniors have completed the [ETS Proficiency Profile](#) every year since 2017. In the 2019 survey, seniors' mean score of 453.1 exceeded the national mean of 445.4. SWOSU also exceeded the national average in all subscores. As evidenced by [action points in the university's Strategic Plan](#), SWOSU fosters internship, service learning, clinical learning experiences, and student teaching experiences.

Alumni surveys are conducted every five years to assess graduates' satisfaction with SWOSU. There is an opportunity to improve the level of feedback, as both the [2013](#) and [2018](#) alumni surveys had a low response rate. Highlights of the 2018 survey include a 96% employment rate among graduates and high rankings given to the quality of education and the quality of faculty. Additionally, 87% of SWOSU graduates reported that they consider their investment in the university to be worthwhile. An Assessment Committee subcommittee reviews the survey results to provide [recommendations](#).

The institution collects additional data from independent publications. For example, the [Georgetown Return on Investment rankings](#) of the nation's institutions places SWOSU ahead of all RUSO universities in 40-year return on investment.

Programs and departments are strongly invested in evaluating student success. The College of Pharmacy administers an alumni survey every three years and a six-month post-graduation employment survey for every semester's graduation cohort. A sample of board scores, national examination results, and certification results and minutes showing analysis include:

[Pharmacy NAPLEX scores](#) and [MPJE scores](#) are publicly posted for the School of Pharmacy. [Additional analysis](#) by Pharmacy Assessment Committee chair provides insight to the department's evaluations of student success.

[Health Informatics and Information Systems student outcomes](#) are published annually.

[Department of Nursing charts](#) show [program outcomes](#) for its BSN degree.

The Everett Dobson School of Business & Technology's [Disclosure of Achievement and Enrollment and Graduate Data](#) discloses student outcomes and is available on the school's web page.

The [business school's strategic plan](#) includes data-driven changes.

For the last 23 years, 90% of Biology graduates who apply to professional and graduate schools are accepted.

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4.B - Core Component 4.B

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

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

Argument

4.B.1. Defining and assessing student learning outcomes are embedded in practices on many levels, as outlined in the [Processes for Assessment and Improvement of Student Learning table](#). These processes not only guide curriculum decisions but also help inform [institutional planning and budgeting](#).

Defining student learning outcomes

The university sets Institutional Student Learning Outcomes, general education learning objectives, program-level student learning outcomes, course learning outcomes, and co-curricular student learning outcomes appropriate to its student population. The [Student Learning Outcomes document](#) defines these outcomes.

Institutional Student Learning Outcomes (ISLOs) are comprehensive statements describing proficiencies that SWOSU graduates possess, regardless of academic program of study. In 2016, administrators and faculty used guidance from the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment to start defining expected levels of competence for associate, baccalaureate, and graduate degree programs. SWOSU adopted the Lumina Foundation's Degree Quality Profile framework for its definitions of outcomes in five learning domains. In November 2019, the President and Vice Presidents [adopted the definitions](#).

The General Education Committee defines the **general education learning objectives** for the GE Curriculum. The objectives are expected skills or knowledge in four areas that students should possess upon completion of SWOSU's general education curriculum. In 2019, the committee [revised](#) the objectives to meet current expectations.

The Vice President for Student Affairs leads the university's efforts to track **co-curricular learning outcomes**. The outcomes are aligned with the Higher Learning Commission's co-curricular definition. They are annually set through the [Student Affairs Assessment Cycle](#) and tracked through the [Student Engagement Assessment Model](#).

As defined in Core Component 4.A.1, each program annually completes assessments that define **program-level learning outcomes**. Program learning outcomes are defined in the Assessment Center's annual student learning outcomes assessment, accreditation documents (if applicable), Five-

Year Program Review, and other program-specific documents. These outcomes are communicated via various channels, including degree plans and some [department webpages](#).

Each department's faculty members determine **learning outcomes for courses** taught within the program. These outcomes are listed on [syllabi](#) and other course documents. Faculty are provided with [syllabus templates](#) and [support](#) on how to tie activities to outcomes. Each program also annually reviews its course outcomes to ensure that they are aligned with program and institutional student learning outcomes. A planned curriculum mapping project will standardize this assessment method.

Assessing student learning outcomes

The Assessment Center and Assessment Committee are developing mapping methods that link program and course outcomes with the newly-developed Institutional Student Learning Outcomes. Qualitative [methods of assessing overall student learning and ISLOs](#) include several review processes that preceded the establishment of ISLOs. The primary method of assessing overall student learning is through the [University Executive Summary Assessment Plan](#). [OSRHE policy](#) requires that SWOSU facilitate such a plan. This plan is submitted [every five years](#) or when substantive changes are made.

The [Assessment Plan Overview](#) provides a chart of how the [Annual Student Assessment Report \(ASAR\)](#) and the [Continuous Improvement Report](#) comprise the University Assessment Executive Summary Assessment Plan.

The Assessment Committee summarizes the assessment plan through a process detailed in the [Continuous Improvement Report Process \(CIRP\) chart](#), which shows several areas related to student learning.

The Assessment Center annually compiles the ASAR, which includes sections on [course placement](#), [general education assessments](#), [program outcomes](#), and [student satisfaction](#). The Assessment Center submits the report annual to OSRHE.

Other data tied to student learning outcomes that is reviewed regularly to determine achievement of institutional learning goals includes [IPEDS data](#), the [Institutional Degree Completion and Academic Plan](#), and the [RUSO Dashboard](#).

Program and course student learning outcomes are measured using the methods described in Core Component 4.A.1. Program and course learning outcomes are assessed through:

The Assessment Center's [Outcomes Assessment](#) and [Academic Degree Program and Options learning goals assessments](#). The Assessment Center compiles these program reports in the ASAR and [associated learning outcome reports](#).

[Accreditation reports](#) for the 14 programs with specialized accreditation.

OSRHE's [Five-Year Program Reviews](#) for programs without specialized accreditation.

[Student evaluations](#) of courses.

Annual [program and course reviews](#) in department meetings.

[Exit surveys](#) of students in their final semester.

As detailed in 4.A.1, these reports and meetings offer opportunities for departments to identify challenges and track methods to improve student learning. In addition, effective systems are in place to ensure that many faculty and staff are involved in the assessment process at various levels. The Associate Provost [annually meets](#) with faculty to discuss program and course learning outcomes. Programs such as [Pharmacy](#) and [Nursing](#) regularly update curriculum maps that link course,

program, and general education objectives and outcomes. A planned university-wide curriculum mapping project will connect course, program, and institutional learning outcomes for all programs.

General education student learning objectives are evaluated by the teaching faculty, departments, the university General Education Committee, the Assessment Center, and the Assessment Committee's GE subcommittee. GE courses are evaluated on a [rotating schedule](#) set by the Assessment Center. The reporting faculty completes an [online form](#) that [matches the course's evaluations](#) with the university's GE objectives, [describes the assessment measures](#), and [reports on the level of student achievement](#). The Assessment Center summarizes the reports in the [ASAR](#). Additionally, the Assessment Center updates the [GE Mapping chart](#), which matches each GE course with the university's GE objectives. The university's General Education Committee and the Assessment Committee's GE subcommittee review the reports to determine strengths, weaknesses, and recommendations for each course. This annual report becomes part of the [Continuous Improvement Report](#). The Faculty Senate's General Education Committee is tasked by the [University Executive Summary Plan](#) to "evaluate current offerings, make recommendations, and analyze the faculty reports of student achievement." [To fulfill the recommendations of the 2010 HLC Exit Report](#) and clarify the tasks of each committee, [the chairs of the Assessment Committee and Faculty Senate General Education Committee](#) met to discuss the responsibility of each committee. A [joint meeting](#) of the Assessment Committee and the Faculty Senate General Education Committee resulted in a [document outlining the joint responsibilities](#) of the committees.

Co-Curricular Learning Outcomes: Student Affairs has the primary responsibility for the assessment of co-curricular programs and related student outcomes. In accordance with [HLC directives from the 2010 site visit](#), Student Affairs produces an annual student engagement assessment model in which all student services departments identify appropriate student learning outcomes. Examples of indirect measures include data from the [National Survey of Student Engagement](#) and the [Student Satisfaction Inventory](#). Co-curricular student learning outcomes are also reviewed by the Assessment Committee in the [Continuous Improvement Report](#). The Vice President for Student Affairs compiles department input and data annually into the [Student Affairs Annual Assessment Report](#).

4.B.2. SWOSU uses the assessments described above to drive improvements in student learning.

Overall/Institutional student learning outcomes: The university defined ISLOs in 2019; the Assessment Center is constructing methods to link program outcomes and general education objectives with ISLOs. While this mapping project is underway, the following established institutional-level assessments have driven improvements in overall student learning:

The ASAR's [Entry Level Assessment and Course Placement](#) section focuses on assessments used to place students in appropriate entry-level courses. This ensures that students' learning experiences are aligned with their current performance levels, as indicated by their high school or entrance exam performance. Changes in recent years prompted by this data include the implementation of co-requisite courses, implementation of an introductory course for alternatively-admitted students, and expansion of the [Retention Management office](#). The Continuous Improvement Report compiled by the Assessment Committee describes the assessment process employed at the institutional level. The report contains reviews and recommendations, and the administrators offer their [responses to these recommendations](#). Responses include the documentation of changes that have been made to increase student learning.

Data provided through NSSE and SSI student surveys, [Strategic Planning Review](#), [IPEDS feedback](#), [IPEDS summaries](#), and the [RUSO Dashboard](#) is distributed and publicized for feedback and action. These reports guide administrators and department chairs in making large-scale changes within programs or colleges.

In 2015, the university undertook a Quality Initiative Process (QIP) to emphasize course transformation and higher-order learning objectives. The [Three Pillars of Learning Course Transformation Method](#) was implemented in 44 courses [over three years](#). To support the QIP, CETL created a Teaching and Learning Coordinator position and implemented a Three Pillars Course for faculty. Faculty selected and developed rigorous student learning goals, constructed engaged learning activities with robust assessment strategies, and created syllabi that informed students of expected learning and achievement levels. One outcome of the initiative is that all general education course assessments include Three Pillars course transformation designated activities. The initiative showed successes in meeting goals, as detailed in the [QIP's final report](#) and the [updated evidence booklet](#).

General education learning objectives: The ASAR's Section II ([General Education Assessment](#)) indicates planned or implemented instructional changes resulting from general education assessment results. Each General Education Assessment Report contains two sections describing changes resulting from assessment. First, the instructor addresses a prompt to "describe in detail any assessment, instructional, and/or curriculum changes you plan to make to improve student learning, and how these changes will advance student learning." For example, the instructor who completed the [GE report for COMSC-1023](#) Computer and Info Access stated that, "The current research option limits the research to salary information in a potential career field. I'm considering giving more research options." The respondent in next asked to respond to a prompt to "describe student learning improvements. If no learning improvements have occurred, please provide a brief explanation of why." The General Education subcommittee of the Assessment Committee annually reviews these GE reports to recommend improvements.

Program and course student learning outcomes: Each program completes a [Program Outcomes \(Part I\) and Degree Programs and Options \(Part II\)](#) component of an annual review submitted to the Assessment Center. These provide evidence of assessment used to improve student learning and describes program level outcomes and [continuous improvement plans](#). The [final prompt](#) for program chairs completing the report is: "Based on the results from the previous program assessment report, please describe the student learning improvements from last year to this year. If no improvements occurred, please provide a brief explanation." In 2019, the Associate Provost [provided guidance](#) to chairs about focusing on and reporting changes. Each program may review its previous reports to track outcome achievement over multiple years. Programs act on these reports. For example, students in the Medical Laboratory Technician program did not achieve the desired learning outcome in 2018, as measured by a qualifying exam. In response, the program expanded one course into two to devote more instructional time to key exam topics. As a result, in 2019, the percent of students passing the qualifying exam increased to the level required by accreditation standards. [This list](#) provides examples of other large-scale program changes driven by student learning assessments.

Accredited programs have similar expectations set by their accrediting agencies. For example, the School of Business and Technology's self-study includes an [outcomes assessment](#) section for a specific accreditation principle. These assessments mandate that program changes occur to meet accreditation principles.

[Student evaluations](#) are an indirect measure of student outcomes and are also used to identify areas

for improvement. The Assessment Center aggregates students' course ratings and comments and provides the results to instructors and chairs for analysis and action. [Exit surveys](#) serve as another indirect measure. The Assessment Center separates responses by program major and deliver the reports to departments, which then act upon the findings.

Co-curricular student learning outcomes: Co-curricular activities are assessed according to the Student Affairs Assessment Cycle. As part of this assessment, each department completes an [Individual Program Report](#) which describes learning goals, assessment measures, and student learning improvements. These reports and other inputs are acted upon during the annual co-curricular assessment retreat and throughout the year as necessary. Examples of recently implemented student learning improvements include increased writing and discussion opportunities in the first-year experience course [about topics such as alcohol awareness](#), and a [new staff position in the Registrar's Office](#) to expedite admissions for high volume programs and degree audits.

4.B.3. The processes and methodologies by which student learning is assessed and modified reflect good practice, and include substantial participation by faculty, student affairs staff, and other key personnel. SWOSU follows best practices to ensure that learning outcomes assessment is data-driven and tied to the university's Mission Statement. For example, the [annual academic program review](#) requires faculty and chairs to:

1. consider how the university mission relates to their program;
2. set learning outcomes that are relevant and measurable;
3. identify strengths and weaknesses based on the assessment; and
4. develop a continuous improvement plan.

Coordination: The [Assessment Center](#) serves as a coordinating agency and repository for assessment. The Assessment Center ensures that all processes are performed regularly, improvements and recommendations are acted upon, and reports are published for transparency. The Assessment Center:

Provides an overview of student placement, general education reports, program outcomes and improvements, and student satisfaction in the ASAR.

Publishes the Assessment Committee's Continuous Improvement Report with interpretation of outcomes and suggestions for improvement.

Maps GE course outcomes.

Compiles course evaluations and exit surveys to be used by faculty and programs to improve outcomes.

Participation: Assessment processes are designed so that faculty and key staff have many opportunities to create and maintain a culture of continuous improvement in student learning.

As noted on the [CIRP chart](#), the Assessment Committee has 10 areas dedicated to assessment. Subcommittees meet annually to review and analyze the data, and make data-driven recommendations. Coordination of this committee with the GE committee was a [recommendation of the 2010 HLC Review Team](#).

The SWOSU Faculty Handbook sets the expectation that faculty will [understand and participate in five levels of assessment](#): 1) entry level, 2) mid-level or general education, 3) exit-level or outcomes, 4) graduate, and 5) student satisfaction. Faculty members facilitate standardized data assessments, student achievement data analysis, and exit survey analysis.

SWOSU provides support for assessment practices. The university Quality Initiative Project -- the [Three Pillars Course Transformation Project](#) -- was completed and its report was accepted by the Higher Learning Commission. The outcome of the QIP was the [Southwestern Instructional Excellence Academy \(SWIEA\)](#), an on-going project that builds on the successes of the initiative. The SWIEA includes regular presentations on best practices on assessment.

[CETL](#) employs two Teaching and Learning Coordinators who assist faculty with teaching approaches, and also provides online resources and video presentations in student learning techniques. CETL serves as a comprehensive professional development resource in enhancing the culture of assessment as well as the skill of faculty who drive student learning.

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4.C - Core Component 4.C

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

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

Argument

4.C.1. SWOSU has [defined goals and strategies for student retention, persistence, and completion](#) that are ambitious and attainable. [SWOSU's Strategic Plan](#) has several components tied to retention, persistence, and completion. The [Retention Council](#) ensures that the goals are appropriate to the university's Mission Statement, its student populations, and educational offerings.

The university set [short-term and long-term goals](#) for retention, persistence, and completion through discussion with administration, faculty, staff, and Retention Council members during the university's strategic planning process in 2018. SWOSU's 2018-2023 Strategic Plan includes the following action items to address the plan's [Goal 1: Cultivate effective methods to attract, develop, and retain students](#):

1. Implement methods to attract students, as evidenced by effective recruitment initiatives.
Increase accessibility of courses, including expansion of course delivery options.
2. Implement methods to develop students, as evidenced by increased academic support efforts
Expand the Freshman Orientation to a full semester course.
Implement advising and informational methods that will retain a higher percentage of students who begin as Undecided majors.
3. Implement methods to retain students, as evidenced by increased retention rates
Extend communication and support services to incoming freshmen and transfer students for their entire first year at SWOSU.

The Retention Council reviewed retention data provided by the Office of Institutional Research and recommendations from a consultant from Ruffalo Noel Levitz, LLC to define goals that are attainable and ambitious. A [Retention, Persistence, and Graduation publication](#) was released in April 2019 to announce the goals for each area.

SWOSU Retention Rate: Current rate of first year to second year retention: 65.5%. Short-term

(two-year) goal: 67%. Long-term (>5 years) goal: 75%

SWOSU Persistence Rate: Current rate of first semester to second semester persistence: 82.6%.

Short-term (two-year) goal: 88.5%. Long-term (>5 years) goal is 90%.

SWOSU Completion Rate: Current rate of first six-year completion: 40%. Short-term (two-year) goal: 40.5%. Long-term (>5 years) goal: 45%.

In 2020, the Retention Council reported that from Fall 2019 to Spring 2020, the persistence rate increased to 84%; from Fall 2018 to Fall 2019 the retention rate decrease to 62.5%; and the six-year completion rate for 2019 remained the same as the previous year at 40%.

These goals are a long-standing focus of the institution; the 2018-2023 Strategic Plan is the latest five-year plan to set goals in the areas. Retention and completion initiatives that were implemented in the [2012-2017 Strategic Plan](#) and will continue in the 2018-2023 Strategic Plan include the following:

- A College Success course for incoming freshmen who are deficient in several academic areas and students who return from probation or suspension;

- A co-requisite support class for remedial students enrolled in core Mathematics and English courses;

- Expanded tutoring services in academic departments and through online tutoring systems;

- An expanded first-year experience course that increased from five weeks to eight weeks and finally to 16 weeks;

- An Early Alert support program for students who have a D or F in the first five weeks of a course;

- Establishment of an [Office of Retention Management](#); and

- Establishment of co-curricular programs and other high impact elements within courses and programs.

The retention, persistence, and completion data compiled by the Office of Institutional Research and published in its annual Fact Book reports [enrollment trends](#), [degree outcomes](#), [degree outcomes by program](#), [university-wide fall-to-fall retention](#), and [retention rates of individual programs](#). Through dedicated planning and wise use of resources, the university met previous goals, particularly enrollment objectives. In Fall 2017, the university achieved the highest enrollment in 30 years with a headcount of 5,458 students after five years of continuous enrollment increases.

IPEDS data shows how SWOSU performs on these measures compared to other peer universities in Oklahoma. The most recent report shows that SWOSU exceeds the other RUSO universities in retention and is comparable in completion. For example, [Figure 10](#) of the RUSO IPEDS report shows that SWOSU's Fall 2017 cohort of full-time students had a 66% retention rate compared to the RUSO average of 64%. A RUSO Dashboard provides additional insight into how SWOSU leads other regional institutions in key completion measures such as [median annual earnings after graduation](#). SWOSU also focuses on transfer students in its retention and completion efforts. As a result, the university now awards [more undergraduate degrees than the number of full-time freshman who arrive each year](#).

Other trends show that specific SWOSU programs have increased student retention, persistence, and completion. SWOSU reports data to the [Student Achievement Measure \(SAM\)](#) and National Student Clearinghouse to show student progress. Additionally, SWOSU's 14 accredited programs have retention and completion goals set by accrediting agencies; as of April, 2020, all programs meet these goals and are in good standing with their agencies.

4.C.2. The [Retention Council](#) is a committee composed of faculty and staff who [meet](#) to analyze data relevant to institutional retention initiatives. The Council works in coordination with the Office of Institutional Research, which collects and analyzes data on student retention, persistence, and completion. The Council's review methods are based on its [Retention Plan](#), which has specific methods of tracking the institution's efforts to reach retention, persistence, and completion goals. Examples of the Council's efforts include an agenda and supporting materials from its January, 2020 meeting. The [agenda](#) gives an update on key data points and a [progress check document](#) provides updates about data points on retention, persistence, and completion.

Academic departments prepare regular program reports. The OSRHE five-year assessment includes a [report on degree and program outcomes](#). Another part of the assessment requires the department chair to [outline changes to improve](#) retention, persistence, and completion data. University program assessments include [information and data](#) on efforts to improve retention. Retention data gathered by the Office of Institutional Research is reported by academic major in the [university's Fact Book](#).

Institutional Research staff prepare annual reports on student retention and graduation to national agencies, including the U.S. Department of Education's [Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System \(IPEDS\)](#) regarding percentages related to student retention and graduation. The Office of Institutional Research also produces a [RUSO IPEDS report](#) that compares SWOSU's retention and graduation rates with those of other Oklahoma regional universities. These IPEDS reports are published on the Office of Institutional Research's webpage.

Upon request, the Business Enterprise Center provides reviews to show individual program completion rates of SWOSU and other institutions, regional trends in completion, and employment trends. Recent reviews include [Business Administration](#), [Computer Science](#), and [Marketing](#).

[College Success](#) is a required one credit-hour academic skills course for students who do not meet institutional admission requirements. [College Success outcomes data](#) is gathered and analyzed by the Office of Retention Management to facilitate continual data-driven course and curriculum improvement.

4.C.3. The Retention Council uses feedback gathered through its Retention Plan to drive changes to meet persistence, retention, and completion goals. For example, the Retention Council met in January 2020 to review the [Progress Check](#) document. Committee members broke into three groups to [complete reports](#) that identified successes, noted challenges, suggested changes, and proposed future efforts to meet goals. For example, one immediate change was to modify developmental course offerings to accommodate changes to incoming freshmen requirements for developmental courses. After each meeting, the [Retention Plan](#) is updated to provide employees and other stakeholders with a schematic of how the university is pursuing its persistence, retention, and completion goals.

The Office of Retention Management (ORM) was created in 2014 in response to evaluation of institutional retention and graduation rates. Services provided by the ORM include:

- The Academic Hold Course for students placed on academic probation or notice
- Early Alert Reports for all students
- Academic coaching
- Referrals to various campus services
- Faculty Referrals.

Since the creation of the office, graduate assistant positions have been added to efficiently meet

student needs.

The development of the Early Alert Report is an example of the ORM's efforts to improve retention. In 2014, the retention management coordinator, Provost, and Registrar evaluated the effectiveness of the existing Midterm Grade Report and decided to issue this report earlier to allow more time for intervention services and academic recovery. Since Spring 2015, the ORM has asked SWOSU's instructors to [enter grades](#) for students earning a letter grade of D or F, or a U in pass/fail courses. The retention management coordinator [contacts all students](#) on the Early Alert Report to initiate academic recovery interventions. The Provost also emails these students guidance on how to access helpful campus resources.

Academic departments use a variety of information sources to drive changes that will improve retention and completion at the program level, including:

1. Fact Book program retention and completion data
2. Annual program assessment reports, five-year assessment reports, and/or accrediting agency reports
3. Annual program reviews by department faculty
4. Exit survey results
5. Other data such as BEC program reviews

For example, the [Biology Department](#) made a variety of course and program changes to improve retention. These included the implementation of discussion sessions and a monthly seminar series. Individual faculty also strive to improve retention. In an effort to improve retention in her own courses, a Dobson School of Business and Technology professor emails her advisees four to six times a semester with updates, such as "This Friday is the last day to drop for a refund." The professor initiated this practice upon the advice of the Provost to practice "intrusive advising practices" to improve course retention. The practice was so successful that all 29 faculty members of the school have adopted this professor's method to retain their advisees. This professor has shared this success with other faculty through presentations on best practices for advisee retention.

Another effort to improve retention has been the implementation of online tutoring. Students had expressed a desire for departmental tutors to be available at more times and on weekends. To meet this need, SWOSU contracted [Upswing online tutoring](#). In 2018, Upswing was made available 24/7 at no cost to all SWOSU students. At the same time, the [Writing Center's](#) service hours have expanded to evenings and weekends as well.

SWOSU was awarded a Title III Strengthening Institutions grant in fall 2018. Grant funds now sustain the SSC, which serves serving a cohort of approximately 60 students. [Services offered](#) to students are specifically tied to persistence and retention needs identified by the Office of Retention Management and the Retention Council.

The Assessment Committee works to "close the loop" on assessment feedback related to program and institution persistence, retention, and completion. SWOSU regularly initiates multiple institutional assessment measures described earlier in this criterion and also in Criterion 3. Assessment results are reviewed by SWOSU's Assessment Committee and sub-committees to help the institution advance student learning and completion. [Comments and recommendations](#) for the purpose of continuously improving the satisfaction and success of SWOSU students are sent to senior administrators to facilitate meaningful data-driven changes.

4.C.4. SWOSU uses sound methodology when collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs. The methodology used ensures that the measures are uniformly defined so that results can be compared with assessments from other institutions. Two offices help ensure that good practices are used in collecting and analyzing information: the Office of Institutional Research (OIR) and the Assessment Center.

Retention, persistence, and completion reports generated by the OIR use methodologies and definitions as directed by the [Integrated Postsecondary Educational Data Survey \(IPEDS\)](#). OIR defines other data terms in accordance with common practice among RUSO and OSRHE institutions and the professional literature.

The Assessment Center facilitates data gathering, verifies accuracy, and prepares reports that are accessible to stakeholders.

Staff members of the OIR and Assessment Center regularly attend state and national conference on institutional research and assessment to gain insight on proper methodology in collecting and analyzing data.

Additionally, [measures for RUSO and OSRHE](#) are aligned with definitions established by these oversight groups. Other evaluation processes are logical and valid because:

1. Measures used are those required by various accrediting bodies; and
2. Assessment Committee sub-committees review university assessment tools to ensure reliability and validity of the instruments as discussed in 4.B.1.

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4.S - Criterion 4 - Summary

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

Summary

SWOSU demonstrates commitment to quality in all areas related to student learning, and follows processes and procedures that ensure continuous improvement in these areas. The university has a strong infrastructure for defining learning outcomes at all levels, collecting learning outcome data through a variety of ongoing review processes, and acting when student learning outcome data warrants change. These processes review not only courses and programs, but also learning environments and support services so that five levels of outcomes are expected -- course, program, general education, co-curricular, and institutional. The processes of ensuring quality of the education comply with state oversight board policies, accrediting agencies, and best practices. Changes are based on needs identified by students, faculty, chairs, and other stakeholders through input from surveys, evaluations, annual reviews, and oversight committee reports.

The university also demonstrates commitment to continuous improvement through ambitious goals of persistence, retention, and completion. Efforts in these areas include ambitious goals in the Retention Plan, placement of retention and completion efforts throughout the strategic plan, enhancements in student support services, and ongoing review of these efforts by oversight groups such as the Retention Committee and Strategic Plan Review Committee.

Sources

There are no sources.

5 - Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning

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

5.A - Core Component 5.A

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

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

Argument

5.A.1. Southwestern Oklahoma State University ([SWOSU](#)) practices shared governance and engagement at all levels in accordance with its [Mission Statement](#) and [planning processes](#).

Governing Board Engagement and Shared Governance

The governing board for SWOSU is the Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO). RUSO is Oklahoma's largest four-year university system and governs six universities. [Regularly scheduled meetings](#) are held by the RUSO Board of Regents, university presidents and other university administrative personnel to approve items such as tuition and fee rates, purchasing agendas, and construction projects. [RUSO's Policy Manual](#) further delineates its oversight and engagement with SWOSU. In cases of conflict with SWOSU policies, the RUSO Policy Manual takes precedence. SWOSU also engages in shared governance with its coordinating board, the [Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education](#) (OSRHE), through regular regent meetings, report feedback, and statewide initiatives.

Administration Engagement and Shared Governance

The [Executive Council and Administrative Council](#) meets monthly. The Executive Council is composed of the President, the Vice Presidents, deans, the Faculty Senate president, the Associate Provost, and department directors. The Administrative Council convenes immediately after the Executive Council. It includes the Executive Council members, the Student Government Association president, and all coordinators. Both meetings involve discussion and decision making regarding challenges, changes, policies, and initiatives. The President provides the Administrative Council's agenda and gives each attendee the opportunity to relate important items in the attendee's area of

responsibility. [Minutes](#) of the Administrative Council are published. Meetings of the President and Vice Presidents are held at least monthly,

To share important information across the university, the deans hold informational sessions, titled [Let's Talk About SWOSU](#), following Administrative Council meetings. Faculty and staff are invited to attend the event and it is publicized through monthly emails. At [Let's Talk About SWOSU](#), members of the Executive Council relate items discussed at the Administrative and Executive Council meetings and invite questions regarding faculty and staff. The event also features [presentations and discussions](#) on relevant topics.

Strategic Planning Engagement and Shared Governance

A 14-member [Strategic Planning Review Team](#) (SPRT) meets quarterly to review more than [50 points of information](#) to take stock of the university's commitment to and accomplishment of its mission and Strategic Plan. The SPRT is composed of administrators, faculty, staff, students, and alumni; its recommendations are returned to the Executive Council.

Faculty Engagement and Shared Governance

The [Faculty Senate](#) makes recommendations to administrators on any matter relating to the university. The Senate has its own constitution, officers, and [meetings](#). The faculty in each academic department select their own senators. As directed by its [constitution](#), the Faculty Senate develops recommendations for governance during its meetings. These are sent to the Provost for review. The Faculty Senate president serves on the Executive Council and Administrative Council. The Provost and Associate Provost hold monthly meetings with the Faculty Senate Executive Council prior to Faculty Senate meeting meetings.

The university maintains several [subcommittees](#) and [standing committees](#) that provide additional shared governance decision making. The scope of these committees is broad, ranging from the promotion and tenure of faculty to the awarding of student scholarships.

Staff Engagement and Shared Governance

The [SWOSU Staff Council](#) (SSC) represents all staff and support personnel. The university relies on the efficiency and commitment of its staff; through the SSC, SWOSU staff are engaged in the achievement of SWOSU's mission and goals. SSC representatives serve on the Executive Council and Administrative Council; the SSC conducts its own [regular meetings](#) as well. The SSC [meets quarterly](#) with the President to discuss topics of concern. Recommendations from the SSC are directed through the Vice President for Finance and Administration.

Student Engagement and Shared Governance

By directive of the President, most university committees have at least one student representative, including the Administrative Council. Each month the President and Vice Presidents hold a luncheon with the Student Government Association (SGA) to confer about matters of importance to students.

The [SGA](#) is the elected governing body for SWOSU students. Student fees fund the SGA; student-elected officers oversee the expenditure of these funds. The SGA has three branches: executive, legislative, and judicial. The SGA is an advocate for student interests, a powerful voice for change

and progress, and a dedicated provider of student services and resources. The SGA [meets weekly](#) and advises the Vice President for Student Affairs. Student input through the SGA and standing committees has led to several campus initiatives. A recent example is the installation of two popular amenities: a hammock lounge and a pergola.

The Collegiate Activities Board (CAB) is a university-funded student group that organizes many of SWOSU's well-attended special events.

Summary

The diverse viewpoints of SWOSU's employees and students have many avenues for expression, and many ways to influence the university's governance. The influence of long-established bodies such as the SSC, the SGA, and the Faculty Senate is deeply woven into SWOSU's decision-making culture and ensures effective shared governance. SWOSU's leadership -- deans and associate deans, chairs and program directors, and executive management -- were rated by employees as "very good" in the area of shared governance in the [Institutional Effectiveness Survey](#).

SWOSU's engagement with constituencies and commitment to its mission-driven planning process is evident in the university's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The university mobilized the SWOSU Emergency Management Working Group, consisting of staff, faculty, and administrators, that met several times in early March. The Faculty Senate President canvassed faculty members concerning plans proposed by the Executive Council. The President and Vice Presidents held meetings with the SGA. When the transition from face-to-face to virtual learning was announced on March 12, a COVID-19 webpage was published to make [announcements](#) and provide support pages for [faculty](#), [employees](#), and [students](#). Throughout the remainder of the spring semester and the summer term, regular virtual planning meetings were held among staff, faculty, students, administrators, community members, and alumni. These meetings led to decisions on how to use [CARES Act funds](#) and prepare for the [reopening of campus for the Fall 2020 semester](#).

5.A.2. SWOSU utilizes data from a variety of sources, including budgets, IPEDS reports, student enrollment, and continuous improvement reports, to make informed decisions in pursuit of institutional goals and to serve constituents. Administrators and university committees gather, verify, and analyze data to make recommendations and implement strategies that are chosen in the best interests of the institution. Examples include:

Administrators use [budget trends from state government](#), [year-to-year state funding](#), [OSRHE state budget allocations and analysis](#), the [RUSO dashboard](#), [RUSO financial metrics](#), [overall enrollment](#) and [program enrollment trends](#) provided by SWOSU's Office of Institutional Research, FAFSA student data, and budget estimates from individual departments to construct [yearly budgets](#) and determine [tuition rates](#).

Budgets from [FY 2020](#), [FY 2019](#), and [FY 2018](#) were constructed with planning processes highlighted in the [planning flowchart](#). Independent [audits](#) and [stability reports](#) advise administrators on long-term financial decisions.

The [Retention Council](#) and administrators regularly use data on student enrollment from the OIR, such as [IPEDS feedback reports](#), [IPEDS graduation reports](#), and [degree outcomes](#), to drive the [retention](#), [persistence](#), and [completion](#) efforts. Recent examples of these efforts include changes to financial aid and the first-year experience course.

A [Campus Perceptions and Experiences Survey](#) informed administrators on methods to increase advising options and enhance multicultural student support.

The [Executive Compliance Committee](#), consisting of Vice Presidents, Assistant Vice

Presidents, and the Associate Provost, meets monthly to review compliance reports. These reports include the [Drug-Free Schools and Campuses Act biennial review](#) and the [annual campus crime report](#). This committee was created in response to a recommendation in SWOSU's latest Title IV audit.

Student enrollment and pass rates in general education courses led to recommendations from the General Education Committee to restructure the [general education program](#) and [learning objectives](#).

Increased student demand for distance-based courses, as evidenced by enrollment figures, Student Satisfaction Inventory results, and Faculty Senate input led to the reorganization of the Distance Learning department into the [Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning \(CETL\)](#). CETL employs two Teaching and Learning Coordinators to help faculty [develop and deliver technology-enhanced courses](#).

The [Service Learning Annual Report](#) guides the university in its commitment to increasing high-impact practices in its courses. The 2019-2020 report showed that the percentage of students involved in [service learning increased](#) from 17% in 2018-2019 to 23% in 2019-2020. An Institutional Effectiveness Survey was conducted in [2017](#) and [2019](#) to gauge administrator, faculty, and staff perceptions in four areas: (1) leadership shared governance; (2) leadership communication; (3) quality of student services, auxiliary services, and co-curricular services; and (4) communication of student services, auxiliary services, and co-curricular services. The administration records [actions taken](#) in response to the data.

Administrators respond to data and recommendations provided by the [Continuous Improvement Report](#). The most recent report describes these responses, which include establishing action points in the 2018-2023 Strategic Plan to meet recommendations; directing grant application processes to meet identified gaps; and implementing Executive Compliance Committee monitoring of safety statistics.

Data from assessment reports and reviews is systematically communicated to decision makers. For example, the [Annual Student Assessment Report](#) is compiled by the Assessment Center, sent to the Executive Council, and published on the Assessment Center's website. The SWOSU [Fact Book](#) is printed and given to key personnel; a digital version is published on the university's website. Data is also routinely shared on an ad hoc basis whenever necessary. For example, the Associate Provost prepares a [summary of the Fact Book](#) that is provided to the Executive Council.

To enhance SWOSU's ability to make data-driven decisions, the OIR has hired a full-time data specialist.

5.A.3. As described in Core Component 5.A.1, SWOSU relies on a shared governance approach to establish academic requirements, policies, and processes. The Provost sets policies related to academics with input from the Faculty Senate's leaders and Senate subcommittees. In addition, SWOSU has several [standing committees](#) for a variety of academic issues, including the General Education Committee, the Library Committee, and the Protection of Human Subjects Committee. Students are involved as members of the Faculty Senate and campus subcommittees. [Minutes from these bodies](#) show evidence of policy recommendations and other policy suggestions. SWOSU's Staff Council meets monthly and has a seat on the Executive and Administrative Councils.

The university's policies and processes [require that new academic programs and program changes](#) be initiated at the department level. A change approved at the departmental level next goes [college curriculum committees](#). If approved by a curriculum committee, a proposed change then goes to the Provost. After approving a proposal, the Provost submits it to OSRHE for their final approval.

The adoption of the new [general education plan](#) was a major change that affected all academic programs. The plan was a joint effort between the General Education Committee (composed of full-time faculty representing each college) and the Provost, who serves as an ex officio member of the committee. After adoption of the new GE plan, every major area prepared and submitted program modification forms to the Provost. The program modifications were submitted to OSRHE in December, 2018, with implementation in fall 2019.

In recent years, the Provost has worked closely with the Faculty Senate to revise the procedures for tenure and promotion and to adopt a collegiality statement for the university. In both cases the changes were discussed by the Provost and Faculty Senate officers, and provided to senators. The senators relayed these proposed changes to their departments' faculty and gathered their feedback. The Faculty Senate voted to approve the changes, which have subsequently been incorporated into the Faculty Handbook. [Minutes from the March 19, 2019, meeting](#) are an example of how this process led to changes in the composition of the Faculty University Promotion/Tenure Review Committee.

SWOSU administrators organize new committees and task forces to address specific issues when necessary. For example, student and faculty concerns about rising textbook costs and unsatisfactory customer service at the on-campus bookstore led to the formation of the [Textbook Taskforce Committee](#) in 2017. This committee, composed of representatives from each college, met for two years and [issued its final report to administrators](#) in fall 2019. As a result of the [committee's recommendations](#), [SWOSU assumed operation](#) of the bookstore in January, 2020.

Students are also involved in setting academic requirements, policies, and processes. Students' participation comes through the Student Government Association (SGA), the Collegiate Activities Board (CAB), and representation on [standing committees](#). Each month the President and Vice Presidents hold a luncheon with the Student Government Association. The monthly luncheons provide an avenue for students to confer with upper administration on matters of importance to students. In addition, the SGA president is a [member of the Faculty Senate](#). The SGA president is empowered to bring issues of importance to the attention of senators, including policy changes.

The [Dean of Students](#) oversees [student clubs and groups](#), and is the advisor to the CAB. Each fall, student organizations are [awarded student activity fees](#) through an allocation process managed by CAB, with assistance from the dean.

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5.B - Core Component 5.B

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

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

Argument

5.B.1. SWOSU has the staff and infrastructure needed to support high-quality operations in all areas and locations.

Sufficient Infrastructure: [Budget planning](#) and [policies](#) ensure the financial resources necessary to support and sustain high-quality operations. RUSO annually reviews and approves a balanced budget, as shown in the [FY 2018](#), [FY 2019](#), and [FY 2020](#) budgets and [summary documents](#). The university receives revenue from a [variety of sources](#). These include tuition and fees (38%), state appropriations (27%), grants and contracts (22%), and auxiliary income (10%). [Operating revenue](#) in 2019 totaled \$38.3 million and non-operating revenues totaled \$29.6 million. The university's finances are independently audited annually, as evidenced by the [FY2017](#), [FY2018](#), and [FY2019](#) audits. For the past 10 years, the university's audits have not resulted in any going concern for disclosure, nor have the audits found significant deficiencies on internal controls over financial reporting or compliance with major federal awards programs.

Although SWOSU has experienced fluctuations in its Composite Financial Index (CFI) over the past six years, the university's total [CFI score](#) remained between 2.4 and 3.9. This is within the "safe zone" defined by HLC to be from 1.1 to 10.0. SWOSU's score is the second-highest among the six RUSO universities.

Year	Public CFI
2019	2.50
2018	3.59
2017	3.51
2016	2.50

Per [OSRHE policy](#), SWOSU updates a [capital master plan](#) annually. The plan analyzes space, transportation, building age, and utilization. The Business Services office and the physical plant follow [OSRHE guidelines](#) in implementing this long-range plan. The plan includes a multi-year schedule for major renovations and ADA improvements. The offices also maintain a ledger of [completed projects and deferred maintenance](#). and [historical master plans](#). Major physical plan

projects in the last decade include:

Construction of the \$24 million Pioneer Cellular Event Center.

An \$8 million transformation of a long-shuttered residence hall into Black Kettle Hall and space for the nursing and psychology departments.

A more than \$2 million renovation of the Chemistry, Pharmacy, and Physics Building, including ADA-compliant elevators and laboratories.

Renovation of Berrong Music Hall to include a music therapy laboratory

Renovation of the Business Enterprise Center.

A \$6 million renovation of Henrietta Mann Hall, a residence hall.

A renovation of the administration building at the Sayre location.

Upgraded broadband networks in all campus buildings.

The physical plan is working with contractors on current projects that include a \$1.75 million [renovation of the Al Harris Library](#), campus energy improvements, and the construction of an esports arena in the Wellness Center.

[Information Technology Services \(ITS\)](#) provides the university with innovative and integrated technology. ITS works with individual departments and the Business Services office to embed technology into all aspects of planning and infrastructure. ITS recently entered into a lease agreement with Dell, Inc. to make the university's computer replacement rotation schedule cost effective and efficient.

The university's financial infrastructure is regulated in part by its coordinating and governing boards. For example, [OSRHE requires](#) state institutions to maintain reserves of 8.3% (1/12th of their annual allocation). SWOSU complies with that requirement in yearly planning. [SWOSU's budget forecast](#) for 2020-2021 predicts that SWOSU will have reserves of nearly 10.2% in June 2021.

An independent report on SWOSU's [long-term viability](#) in 2020 determined that SWOSU has a resource base that allows it to "devote funds toward strategic priorities while continuing to build reserves in the coming fiscal years."

Sufficient Qualified and Trained Operational Staff: The university sufficient human capital to maintain and strengthen the quality of its educational offerings. The [2019 IPEDS Human Resources](#) report shows that the university has 205 full-time instructional staff, 87 part-time instructional staff, 519 full-time non-instructional staff members, and 95 part-time non-instructional staff. These employees serve 4,955 students. SWOSU's [organizational chart](#) depicts the institution's structure, including student support services and nonacademic infrastructure. In addition to its faculty and academic offices, the Weatherford campus has fully-staffed offices for:

Assessment

Business Services and Payroll

Dean of Students

CETL

Center for Health and Well-being

Enrollment Management

Food Services

Human Resources

ITS

Institutional Advancement

Institutional Research
International Student Affairs
Library
Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP)
Physical Plant
Public Safety
Registrar
Residence Life and Housing
Retention Management
Student Financial Services
Student Success Center
University Bookstore
Wellness Center

The Fort Cobb and Sayre locations have on-site personnel for assessment, business services, counseling, enrollment management, information technology, the library, and public safety. As noted in the 2018 [multi-location report](#), SWOSU ensures that students have equal access to all resources wherever they are located and however they access educational offerings. The HLC reviewer [confirmed](#) that SWOSU's locations have equal services for students.

SWOSU follows its [standards and policies](#) with regard to hiring and retention of qualified staff, administrators, and faculty. Faculty and staff opportunities for development and training (including periodic required training) are always available. Roles on campus have different levels of expectations; these expectations are defined primarily by [position descriptions](#) maintained by Human Resources. Though staff members do not go through a credentialing process, they must meet the requirements defined in their position descriptions before being offered employment. SWOSU's [faculty credentialing policy](#) complies with [OSRHE guidelines](#) and [HLC expectations](#). This policy applies to all faculty positions without exception. Faculty may be deemed qualified based on academic credentials, tested experience, or a combination of both. This policy was adopted in 2017 and applies to faculty at all locations. All full-time faculty are evaluated using a standardized process described in the [Faculty Handbook](#).

All new employees complete [new employee orientation](#); new faculty also complete a [two-day orientation](#) prior to the beginning of the fall semester. SWOSU administrators and staff complete training, certification, and continuing education that relates to their responsibilities and professional standards. Some personnel have specific ongoing training and development, including campus safety and police, physical plant, food services, and custodial support. Employees receive Human Resources supervised [training and certification](#) in areas such as blood borne pathogen safety, emergency procedures, and harassment and discrimination prevention. Resources are provided to faculty and staff for continuous improvement of job performance. Examples of these resources include [LinkedIn Learning resources](#), [enterprise resource planning \(ERP\) system training](#), and [Canvas course pages](#) maintained by [CETL](#). Many staff maintain memberships in state and national peer organizations; these staff receive support for professional conference attendance.

SWOSU has [policies](#) that support [affirmative action and equal opportunity employment](#). Bulldog Works is a web-based platform for managing administrative, faculty, staff, and student worker employment opportunities and applicants. Bulldog Works also provides a secure platform for archiving employment documents and materials associated with applications. When there is a position available, a search committee of subject area experts convenes to consider applicants.

Supervisors and search committee members use Bulldog Works to securely access employment applications and coordinate the search process.

5.B.2. The [Mission Statement and Strategic Plan goals](#) are realistic because they were created with a deep understanding of SWOSU's structure, resources, constraints, opportunities, and challenges. Plan components that drive financial decision making include the following:

As embodied in this description of the university's Vision Statement, "...SWOSU strives to create an environment for faculty, staff, student, and graduate success and public service through a variety of elements..."; a key element is *Management of resources and establishment of new avenues to support and preserve quality programs.*

Strategic Goal 3: *Provide stewardship of resources necessary to operate excellent programs and services.*

Within Strategic Goal 4, "Foster quality programs that meet the needs of students and the local, state, national, and global economy," the subgoal, *Provide resources for faculty, staff, and administrators.*

Other statements and subgoals require actions that entail prudent financial decision making. For example, a subgoal of Strategic Goal 1 is expansion of the first-year experience course to a full semester. The Business Services office forecast that this subgoal was feasible before it was incorporated into the Strategic Plan. Business Services subsequently planned and budgeted for this action before it was implemented in Fall 2019.

The Mission, Values, and Vision Statements are realistic because they are based on completed and closely monitored goals from the previous and current strategic plans. The university has expanded in the areas of growth to take advantage of opportunities that meet the demand of students. As a consequence, SWOSU's retention rate and completion rate [exceed those of other RUSO universities](#). Successes such as these demonstrate the university's mission and strategic goals are realistic. Another example of SWOSU's realistic approach to decision-making is the successful accomplishment of this Strategic Goal 4 subgoal: "Increase salaries for faculty, staff, and administrators to a higher percentage of CUPA..." This was accomplished by sound financial management, enabling salary increases in 2018. Further raises in 2019 were made possible by additional state funding.

Each annual budget summary includes [explanatory information](#) tying expenditures to the university's Mission Statement and Strategic Plan.

5.B.3. Budget Process. The Vice President for Administration and Finance (VPAF) and the Business Services office lead the university in a standardized process to develop each [annual balanced budget](#). Additional core responsibilities include monitoring finances and allocating, encumbering, and expending funds in accordance with state-mandated policies and best professional practices. The university follows state-mandated and best practice policies and processes regarding the allocation, encumbrance, and expenditures of funds. The university has [audited financial documents](#) and [historical CFI scores](#) that demonstrate that SWOSU's budget process is sound and that the university has the resource base to support its mission and sustain operations. [Operating expenses](#) for 2019 were \$67.8 million, an increase of \$1 million over the previous year.

During the budget building process, department chairs and unit heads bring resource requests to their respective deans and Vice Presidents. Budget priorities, tuition and fee revenue estimates, and probable increases in expenses regarding payroll, fringe benefits, program costs, and mandated expenditures are reviewed and discussed by the President and Vice Presidents to formulate the institutional budget. Most budget processes for the colleges occur internally, and involve decisions

about the allocation of academic enhancement fee (AEF) funds. AEF funds support general instructional operations for specific colleges or courses. College deans work with department chairs to determine the best ways to allocate AEF funds. For example, the College of Graduate and Professional Studies charges a \$15 per credit hour AEF to support the costs of nationally-accredited programs, faculty development, and purchase replacement equipment.

SWOSU emphasizes transparency in its budgeting process. The budget is discussed during monthly Executive Council and Administrative Council meetings, faculty workshops, staff council meetings with the President, and *Let's Talk About It* events. The President holds annual [open sessions](#) for faculty and staff to discuss the university's budget and the overall fiscal situation for Oklahoma and higher education. The university's [Digital Commons](#) publishes all budgets online.

The Business Services office follows state-mandated policies regarding the allocation, encumbrance, and expenditure of funds. Its operating budget is approved by RUSO, SWOSU's governing board. Each October, SWOSU submits an annual independent [audit report](#) summarizing the previous fiscal year to the state's Office of Management and Enterprise Services (OMES).

Quarterly [business metrics](#) are reviewed to show that SWOSU is aligned with other RUSO universities in its resource sufficiency, measures of resource management, asset performance and management, and operating performance.

Budget monitoring is an administrative responsibility that ensures the proper expenditure of funds. Primary expenditure control is the responsibility of department chairs and unit heads, who are trained to monitor their budgets through the Ellucian ERP general ledger system. The Business Services office holds training sessions for department chairs and unit heads on the use of the general ledger. The Business Services office monitors expenses and provides support for individual offices. For example, the office conducts training for all business credit card (PCard) users and conducts monthly reviews and periodic audits using the PCard Review Procedure.

Each department receives an expenditures statement to review and approve. The Business Services office [helps individual departments](#) monitor expenditures by reviewing each [large purchase order](#) and [personal service contract](#) for sufficient fund balances. Each department, whether academic or non-academic, maintains an annual budget and can access budgetary information about purchases and remaining balances through the Ellucian ERP system. The Business Services office reviews all revenue and expenditure accounts monthly to identify potential issues with the budget. When a department chair requests additional funds, the chair makes the request to the appropriate dean, director, or coordinator. The coordinator then discusses the request with the Business Services office. The Business Services webpage outlines the university's [deficit policy](#), procedures by which departments can [request a budget increase](#), and [budget change policy and procedure](#).

5.B.4. Using the budgeting process described above, SWOSU allocates funds to ensure that its teacher programs are of the best quality and that the university is fulfilling its mission. Established review and decision making mechanisms ensure that the purposes for which the funds are allocated are monitored. The [budget expenditure chart](#) from the 2019 audit shows that costs directly related to educating students constitute the majority of expenditures. Compensation accounts for 67% of operating expenses, 9% for scholarships, and 9% for supplies and other. The [budget summary page](#) for FY 2019-2020 SWOSU's primary mission to educate students. Expenditures by activity are as follows:

Expenditure by Activity	Percent of Total
Instruction	53.2%
Scholarships and Fellowships	14.6%
Student Services	9.3%
Operation and Maintenance of Plant	8.9%
Institutional Support	7.2%
Academic Support	5.7%
Public Service	0.8%
Research	0.4%

The university's fiscal allocations undergird the university's [Strategic Plan and Strategic Goals](#). The Strategic Plan's specific [action points](#) require dedicated funding. The VPAF works with university employees in all areas to implement these points. For example, Action Point 3B, "Develop more efficient buildings," requires that the university invest resources and opportunity costs to improve efficiency. These investments both support the current Strategic Plan and anticipate future needs.

The university's investments in facilities, technology, and maintenance demonstrate its commitment to sustained high-quality education. This meets Strategic Goal 3's commitment to "provide stewardship of resources necessary to operate excellent programs and services." The university has a [capital master plan](#) developed by the VPAF and the physical plant. The master plan looks to the future and outlines major renovation and improvement projects. ITS provides support for all areas on campus, and determines when technology is obsolete. ITS works with the [Academic Technology and Administrative Technology Committees](#), VPAF, and departments to acquire, implement, and upgrade technology. CETL dedicates its budget and resources to ensuring that online courses and programs are supported with adequate technology. Through the maintenance plan, the master plan of improvements, and the technology replacement plan, SWOSU minimizes unexpected breakdowns of equipment and infrastructure.

SWOSU's funding of its educational priorities has been supported since 1977 by the [SWOSU Foundation, Inc.](#), which is operated by the Office of Institutional Advancement. The Foundation is a nonprofit corporation, which is tax exempt under Sec. 501(c)(3). Its main duties are:

- administering private donations to SWOSU,
- coordinating fund-raising projects that promote and further the interests of SWOSU,
- managing scholarship funds and programs to benefit SWOSU, and
- managing investment accounts and endowments established to benefit SWOSU.

The SWOSU Foundation, Inc. [stewards over \\$26 million](#) divided among more than 450 funds. The Foundation's activities in the past decade have included:

- expanded outreach with potential donors,
- hosting special events for the benefit of the [Athletics Department](#),
- the establishment of a [fund specifically for students](#) in dire financial need, and
- fully funding endowments.

The Foundation has been able to increase its scholarship distribution to SWOSU students by nearly

60% since 2016, while simultaneously increasing the Foundation's net assets by 23%. The Pharmacy Foundation stewards a separate pool of resources.

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5.C - Core Component 5.C

The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning and improvement.

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

Argument

5.C.1. Through its consistent implementation of planning and improvement policies and practices, SWOSU allocates its resources in alignment with institutional priorities, its [Strategic Plan](#), and its mission: *Southwestern Oklahoma State University supports students and community through its integration of effective teaching, scholarly and creative endeavors, and civic engagement.*

Decisions about resource allocation involve a variety of stakeholders who are guided by the Strategic Plan as detailed in the [planning and budgeting flowchart](#). As described in Core Component 5B, stakeholders at all levels have many opportunities to participate in and contribute to budgeting and planning decisions.

Budgeted revenue and expenditures demonstrate that the institution has aligned its resources to its mission and priorities as a teaching institution. The [FY 2019-2020 budget summary](#) shows that instruction and academic support accounted for 53.2% of the budget, student services for 9.3%, operations and facilities for 8.9%, scholarships for 14.6%, and institutional support for 7.2%. The remaining 1.2% of the budget was allocated to research and public service support. These budget percentages are [comparable to other Oklahoma institutions](#) whose primary functions are instruction.

State appropriations, tuition, and mandatory fees are designated as Education and General (E&G) funds. The expenditure of E&G funds is directed by guidelines in the [RUSO Policy Manual](#). The [2019 audit](#) shows that SWOSU follows these guidelines. The audit's [Schedule of Findings and Questioned Costs](#) reports no weaknesses or deficiencies related to internal control of financial reporting and no questioned costs. The [2018 audit](#) showed minor deficiencies in the previous year with regard to internal control over major federal programs, but the administrative response shows that the reported deficiencies were discrepancies that have been resolved.

Mandatory [Student Activity Fees](#) (SAF) are dedicated to student organizations, athletics, and other operations that support student co-curricular and extracurricular activities and infrastructure. The President and Vice Presidents determine the initial percentage allocated to each area. Some SAF fees

are allocated to student organizations through a [process](#) administered by the Collegiate Activities Board under the supervision of the Dean of Students.

Academic Service Fees (ASF course fees) are charged at the course level and vary according to the needs of each college. OSRHE provides [guidelines](#) based on [Oklahoma statute](#) for the collection and expenditure of ASF funds. Each year, colleges may request fee changes based on specific needs.

In addition to the three categories of course fees identified by OSRHE, (i.e., classroom supplies, facilities, and special instruction), a fourth category called “other special fees” is collected either on a per credit hour basis or as flat fees connected to a service (e.g., admissions and graduation applications, special accreditation, transformative learning, etc.). More than 20 of these “other special fees” were eliminated in the FY20 academic year because the fee funds had such specific requirements that it caused some funds to go unspent.

5.C.2. SWOSU has extensive methods for [assessing student learning](#) (as detailed Core Component 4B) and [gathering recommendations for continuous improvement](#). These methods are [linked](#) to the evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting through several analysis strategies.

SWOSU maintains an [Assessment Committee](#), which utilizes data from many sources. Some data comes directly from the SWOSU Assessment Center, such as information concerning student learning outcomes and student satisfaction. Additionally, the Assessment Committee reviews data gathered by academic departments and the Office of Institutional Research (OIR). Examples include success/failure rates within specific areas of remediation, overall retention rates, and rates of growth and decline within programs and the institution. The Assessment Committee [summarizes](#) and submits conclusions drawn from the analysis to the President and Vice Presidents to guide their planning and budgeting decisions. The President and Vice Presidents further utilize this information to make informed decisions about the future of the university.

SWOSU utilizes many additional processes to support the overall evaluation of student learning and assess the effectiveness of departments and degree programs. Each department head completes an [academic program review and an annual student learning assessment](#) that provide insight into program outcomes. These assessments are then compiled into the comprehensive [ASAR](#). These assessments are used by deans and administrators to develop priorities for the next academic year, including those that comprise the [Institutional Degree Completion Plan](#).

Non-accredited programs submit [program reviews](#) every five years, and accredited programs submit student learning documentation. Both reports require information on program output. The reports provide a way to systematically compare current program output with past output. Additionally, each academic dean provides cost center analyses for each academic department. All of these reports are used by administrators to guide decisions about plans and budgets for degree programs.

Each nonacademic department undergoes an annual budget analysis to determine cost factors and department outcomes. This analysis is conducted by Business Services. Effectiveness and operation reports are also compiled, such as the [Co-Curricular Annual Assessment Report](#) and campus safety reports for [Weatherford](#) and [Sayre](#).

Student support offices and executive offices are evaluated through an [Institutional Effectiveness Survey](#) available to all staff, faculty, and administrators.

All reports and considerations described above are:

brought into budget discussions in the Executive Council, the Administrative Council, Strategic Plan Review Team meetings, and other financial decision-making processes. regularly reviewed by the Vice Presidents and Business Services staff; and discussed during the college curriculum committee meetings, council of chairs meetings, Executive Council meetings.

5.C.3. Planning processes involve SWOSU's stakeholders, including internal and external constituents. These processes include the development and review of strategic plans, program oversight, and recommendations for change.

As described in Criterion 1, SWOSU has developed [strategic plans](#) since 1998 focused on boosting student success, improving academic quality, enhancing the quality of life of students and employees, expanding SWOSU's revenue base, coordinating teaching locations, and optimizing technology. During the development of each strategic plan, SWOSU [gathered input](#) from internal stakeholders (administration, faculty, staff, and students) and external stakeholders (Chamber of Commerce members, donors, emeriti, alumni boards, program advisory board community members, and community members nominated by departments and colleges). The [Strategic Plan Review Team](#) conducts the [strategic plan's review](#). This team includes faculty, administrators, staff, students, and alumni and meets quarterly. Prior to each meeting, the team receives an [overview statement](#) highlighting key items to discuss. Input from team members expected, as evidenced by the [meeting summary](#) from December, 2019.

At the program level, external constituents are involved in discussions about [curriculum planning](#) and program activities. Departments engage with employers, city leaders, and professionals in external organizations to gather their views about curriculum and university planning. This input is then relayed to administrators, faculty, staff and students. Input from these external constituents is also sought through informal channels and formal program advisory committees.

Most [standing committees](#) have one or more faculty and student representatives. Alumni and community representatives also serve on planning committees.

Programs with specialized accreditation engage with external constituents in program planning. For example, the [School of Business and Technology](#) and the [College of Pharmacy](#) sought feedback from internal and external constituents when they revised their strategic plans.

At the college level, perspectives from internal constituents (e.g., curriculum committees) and external constituents (e.g., advisory councils) are considered when making planning decisions. For example, discussions and recommendations generated by the College of Pharmacy's [Dean's Advisory Council](#) were used by the strategic planning coordinators and the curriculum committee to guide the college's curriculum improvements.

SWOSU solicits and monitors feedback from internal and external constituents by maintaining a [strategic plan webpage](#) and using social media such as Facebook and Twitter. SWOSU involves Weatherford community members and businesses in the planning process. In developing plans to support student athletics, SWOSU built strong ties with [local external constituents](#).

Program modifications are responsive to input from external constituents. For example, SWOSU faculty and administrators discussed area healthcare needs with local practitioners. The result of these discussions was to expand SWOSU's healthcare education offerings, include the [RN-to-BSN and MSN programs](#), the [health information management online program](#), and the [physical therapy](#)

assistant programs. SWOSU has initiated closer coordination career technology centers to [develop programs](#) that serve more students and meet the technology centers' needs. A [partnership developed in cooperation with Yukon Public Schools](#) makes accessing undergraduate, graduate, and dual credit courses easier for Yukon teachers and high school students.

In its responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, SWOSU considers the perspectives of many groups. Administrators facilitated meetings with faculty, staff, students, community members, and alumni to discuss [developments](#) and plan the [reopening of the university for fall 2020](#).

5.C.4. SWOSU's budget planning process and other institutional planning processes are realistic and forward-looking to ensure that the university fulfills its mission.

The budget planning process is transparent and explained in the annual budget overview. Sections include:

[Expenditures overview](#)

[Total scholarships and fellowships](#)

[Specific budget actions and their impact on expenditures](#)

[Impact from changes in enrollment](#)

Higher education's portion of the state budget has declined from [18.5% to 10.9% in the last 20 years](#), and these cuts have [hurt regional universities in particular](#). In FY 17, the university experienced two state allocation rescissions. SWOSU was able to weather these unexpected financial downturns by spending reserve funds and placing operating allocations in reserve against future state cuts. Simultaneously, enrollment increased due to the popularity of SWOSU's new and expanded programs.

To keep costs low and ensure sufficient income to remain financially stable, SWOSU discusses and compares its tuition rates with other RUSO institutions. SWOSU maintains a [tuition and fee rate](#) that is [equal to the average of Oklahoma regional universities](#). The [decline in state support](#) has made the university increasingly reliant on tuition fees. As a consequence, planning includes many efforts to increase student recruitment, retention, and completion. An example of these efforts is the revamping of award disbursement to place greater emphasis on student financial need. The university has engaged consultants from Ruffalo Noel Levitz, LLC to review and reshape the current scholarship program to increase retention and graduation rates. The [RUSO Dashboard](#) provides additional insight into how SWOSU's planning is succeeding in key performance metrics.

The [SWOSU Foundation disburses scholarship support](#) to students each semester. In spring 2020, the Foundation disbursed over \$390,000 to support students. [Action points](#) in the Pathways to Excellence Strategic Plan link the Foundation's efforts with institutional goals.

5.C.5. SWOSU uses many methods to prepare for issues that may result from external factors, such as reductions in state funding.

Many SWOSU academic programs have advisory boards. In applied programs, these boards are sources of direct information about changes in the field. The feedback and input received from these boards helps guide [planning](#) for the potential changes needed within the degree or training program. Potential changes are communicated to the deans, who share this information with the Provost and Executive Council. The Executive Council adjusts its planning and budgeting decisions accordingly. For example, the College of Pharmacy's advisory board has communicated needs for rural health and

thus the university has created a [Rural Health Center](#) that provides support for rural hospitals, resources for rural pharmacies, and expands access to consumer health education resources (for example, programs on diabetes prevention).

The university has a long-term plan for information technology; the plan can be modified in response to external factors. In January, 2020, SWOSU entered into a technology leasing agreement with Dell, Inc. This agreement is expediting the replacement of obsolete personal computers and unsupported operating systems. The leased computers arrive with their software preconfigured; the hardware installations in employees' offices are done by Dell personnel. As a result, more than half of SWOSU's faculty have received a new computer in 2020, while greatly reducing the burden on SWOSU's ITS staff.

SWOSU recognizes that the shift toward greater use of technology and virtual learning is driving major changes in professional fields and academic training/degree programs. A primary function of the [CETL](#) is assisting departments and instructors with the development of new course materials and content delivery methods.

SWOSU administrators have regular meetings with OSRHE to keep informed about changes identified in the demographics of the state and region, and to anticipate variations in future budget cycles.

The university's [general education objectives](#) were recently updated to reflect the need for greater student understanding of global issues. A goal of the 2018-2023 Strategic Plan is to [attract a greater number of international students](#). In response to the changing demographics of western Oklahoma, many SWOSU outreach and information documents are published on both Spanish and English.

The university monitors and plans in response to changes in students' needs and demographics. Recent research from the U.S. Department of Education predicts that Oklahoma will have a 7.4 percent increase in college-age students by 2023. Most of this increase will be from Hispanic and African American households. In anticipation of these demographic changes, SWOSU has established several new offices, positions, and funding priorities. One example is the establishment of the Multicultural Specialist graduate assistant position. Additionally, the university has responded to changing external social factors by adopting an inclusive [cultural and diversity policy](#).

5.C.6. The university utilizes systematic methods to improve its operations and student outcomes. Examples include:

[Responses](#) to results from the 2017 Institutional Effectiveness Survey, including connections of those responses to the Strategic Plan and HLC Criteria for Accreditation;
the Assessment Committee's [Continuous Improvement Report](#);
[Administrative Council meetings](#); and
the [Strategic Planning Review Team](#).

The processes are evaluated and linked to outcomes. For example, the Administrative Council and other review committees systematically addressed each of the [HLC peer reviewer's suggestions after the 2010 Comprehensive Visit](#). In the past decade, [each suggestion has been addressed](#), often with a continuing process to ensure that improvements are sustained.

Each academic program systematically reviews its outcomes and makes modifications to ensure that the outcomes are met and that the program is viable. A summary of [academic program development](#)

since 2010 provides an overview of how colleges, schools, and departments have made changes based on planning. Examples described in the document include:

Pursuit of national accreditation. The Education Specialist in School Psychology gained accreditation from the National Association of School Psychologists in 2019.

Transition of teaching format. The Master of Education in Sports Management changed from a traditionally-taught program to fully online in 2014.

Development of a new program or area. The School of Business and Technology developed the agricultural business major area in 2019.

University committees and offices regularly engage in systematic planning. For example, the [Retention Council](#) and other entities work to improve student retention, persistence, and completion. Outcomes of the Retention Council's first-year initiatives include a modified New Student Orientation (NSO), an expanded first-year orientation course, and a student success course for alternatively-admitted students. The [Enrollment Management Office](#) systematically updates its plan to recruit students.

In 2017, the university created an [Executive Compliance Committee](#) that meets monthly to systematically review internal and external policies and procedures. The committee also [makes decisions](#) related to improved efficiency and effectiveness in meeting those policies.

The university also maintains a [capital improvement plan](#) to ensure that buildings and infrastructure are regularly updated and improved to support the university's efficient operation.

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5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary

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

Summary

Southwestern Oklahoma State University has sufficient resources, infrastructure, and processes to provide for its programs at all locations.

SWOSU's Mission Statement expresses objectives that are realistic in light of current and future resources. The 2018-2023 Strategic Plan identifies academic, financial, and planning priorities, and provides methods by which the institution and its departments plan for success.

SWOSU implements policies and processes that ensure effective shared governance and engage constituents at all levels of planning.

The university's planning and budgeting processes are future-oriented and designed to adapt to changes in state funding, student demographics, and student needs.

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There are no sources.