

Comprehensive Standard

3.3.1 *The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results in each of the following areas (**Institutional Effectiveness**):*

3.3.1.3 Academic and Student Support Services

The institution has identified expected outcomes for Counseling and Career Services, Health Services, Financial Aid, First-Year Experience and Leadership Development, Office of the Registrar, Student Affairs, and the Watson Libraries for 2014-2015 and 2015-2016. The expected outcomes for each unit, achievement expectations, achievement assessment, reported information collected and the stated use of the information for improvement were provided. However, the “Information collected about achieving the outcome” section only provides general summative information and lacks specific evidence in support of the stated “information collected.” In other words, evidence of analysis leading to actions for improvement was not evident. The excerpt from the Office of the Registrar’s “Information collected about achieving the outcome” is an example.

Use of professional judgment by taking into consideration the most frequent concerns encountered by staff and other essential departments regarding the volume of student, faculty, and parents’ phone calls and emails to find out how to request specific things or not being about to find the needed information online.

Some goals are presented, but there are few targets. For this reason, it was unclear to the OffSite Reaffirmation Committee how the institution could determine the extent to which units are achieving stated goals. Also, evidence of analysis aligned with actions for improvement was not apparent.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee finds that the institution has named a Director of Institutional Effectiveness to demonstrate commitment to university-wide involvement and oversight with a multifaceted, systematic approach to measuring performance and a cyclical process for continuous improvement. In addition, the institution’s new IE model; which includes an IE policy, strategic plan, strategic planning and budgeting process, and IE assessment process; is new and should have the capability to provide the institution with the tools and structure necessary to assist the institution in systematically identifying outcomes, assessing the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and providing evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results.

During interviews on-site, the Committee was able to determine that academic and student support areas such as the Registrar’s Office, had identified expected outcomes and measures to

assess those outcomes; however, the institution was unable at the time of the On-Site Review to provide sufficient evidence that it uniformly identifies expected outcomes for each of its academic and student support service areas, assesses those outcomes and makes improvements based on those assessments.

Recommendation 4: The Committee recommends that the institution provide evidence that it assesses the extent to which it achieves the articulated program outcomes, and provide evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results for each of its academic and student support services units.

University Response:

Note: All supporting documents referenced in this response are located at <https://www.nsula.edu/institutionaleffectiveness/>. In most cases, a link to each supporting document is located directly below the link to the narrative University response. Please download the response so that you can easily navigate between it and its supporting documents. The supporting documents are in numerical order in accordance with the sequence in which they appear in the response. If the documents referenced are located at another location on the institutional effectiveness website, they are listed by category name (i.e., STRATEGIC PLANNING); sub-category name (i.e., Strategic Communications); and the cited name of the reference (i.e., "1 - Dr. Henderson - Week of 2 February 2015").

Northwestern State University has established uniform processes for developing and assessing outcomes for its administrative support services through its Strategic Plan and Institutional Effectiveness Model. These processes, with their attendant oversight structures, were refined as part of the development of the current strategic plan for 2016-21. In 2017, the University completed the most recent cycle of this Institution-Wide Assessment Process for all academic programs and administrative, student, and academic support units. This process provides evidence that the University assesses articulated program outcomes and makes improvements based on analysis of assessment results.

Strategic Planning

In January 2017, Northwestern State University transitioned from its Strategic Plan 2011-2018, *Go for Greatness* (1: [NSU Strategic-Plan-2011 – 2018, Jan 2011](#)), to its current five-year plan, *Strategic Plan 2016-2021* (2: [Strategic Plan 2016-2021, 23 Jan 2016](#)). This transition was the culmination of six academic years of ongoing, integrated, and institution-wide research-based planning and evaluation processes that engaged the entire University community. In June 2017, the University completed the first year of this assessment cycle (3: [Assessment Cycle 2016 – 2017, Setting the Benchmark, 5 July 2017](#)), which contributed to the refinement of objectives

that drive the process of continuous improvement of institutional quality and demonstrate that the University is effectively accomplishing its mission.

Strategic Plan 2016-2021 emphasizes five Strategic Focus Areas (SFAs): The Student Experience, Academic Excellence, Market Responsiveness, Athletic Prominence, and Community Enrichment. The Leadership Team, which includes faculty and student representation, determined that it was important to ascertain the University's status for each SFA. The University completed the first phase of its strategic plan on June 15, 2017, as reported in the document, *Assessment Cycle 2016-2017, Setting the Benchmark*. This document identifies specific benchmarks, metrics, and targets for each SFA. The benchmarks establish a baseline for measuring continuous improvement in each annual assessment of the strategic plan, and the metrics describe how each SFA will measure change over the course of the strategic plan. For example, in the "Market Responsiveness" SFA, one metric concerns the "Number of departments that have active advisory councils" and includes a benchmark of 77% and a target of 100%. This process ensures the University is using a responsive, data-driven model to establish objectives and drive strategic planning and decision-making in support of its mission.

Institution-Wide Assessment Process

The University's current Institutional Effectiveness (IE) Model evolved from the systematic review of institutional mission, goals, and outcomes dating to the University's "Go for Greatness 2011-2018" strategic plan. The University's Institutional Effectiveness Policy codifies this model, which includes a uniform Institution-Wide Assessment Process for academic program student learning outcomes (SLOs) and administrative unit service outcomes (SOs). The Northwestern IE Model Timeline graphically reflects the integrated nature of the University's IE process. Please note the activities reflected on the timeline will apply to each upcoming academic year. (4: [Institutional Effectiveness Policy signed 27 January 2017](#) and 5: [IE Model laid out over time 4 May 2017](#)).

The Institution-Wide Assessment Process completed under this plan in 2016-17 engaged one-hundred and sixteen (116) academic programs and administrative units (See [ASSESSMENT CYCLE AY 2016-2017 REPORTS](#)). The document, *Assessment Cycle 2016 – 2017, Setting the Benchmark*, leverages the assessment results of the University's sixty-six (66) academic programs, twenty-six (26) administrative support services units, and twenty-four (24) academic and student support services units. These assessment reports provide evidence that the University's academic programs and administrative units have capitalized on their respective findings and analyses to make decisions and take actions that lead to improvement and mission accomplishment. Examples are provided at the end of this document. Assessment plans for 2017-2018 incorporate these refinements.

The University took a deliberate approach to the structure of its assessment process particularly regarding the identification of outcome measures. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness provided faculty and staff with a guide to assist in standardizing the development of academic program Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and Service Outcomes (SOs) ([See 6: Guide to Outcome - Measure Development 15 April 2017](#)).

According to the University's *Guide to Outcome – Measure Development*, SOs should be specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, and tied to a specific timeframe. Each outcome addresses what the administrative unit intends to do, achieve, or accomplish. The policy (or model) also requires that outcome statements specify what a unit intends to do, achieve, or accomplish through certain activities or experiences (what a unit accomplishes for its students, faculty/staff or institution).

As described in the University's *Guide to Outcome – Measure Development*, measures combine the assessment methodology and the target for the outcome. A direct measure, which is preferred, requires a unit to demonstrate the achievement of stated outcomes. An indirect assessment measure addresses perceptions of or satisfaction with the extent to which the unit accomplishes its intended outcomes. The University encourages setting targets that are difficult to attain so that there is a constant pursuit of improvement.

In accordance with the *University Assessment Process Guide* and in coordination with the respective University Vice President, each academic and student support services unit reviewed, amended, or revalidated their respective missions. The foundation of this assessment process emanates from the hierarchy of University, College, Department, Program and/or Unit mission. Twenty-four (24) academic and student support services units participated in the assessment process. Each unit developed specific SOs and an associated assessment methodology from which they derive their findings. Each then analyzed their results, leading to decisions and or actions to promote organizational improvement ([See 7 - NSU Assessment Process Guide 6 April 2017](#)).

The University's assessment calendar is derived from the academic calendar. By 15 April of each year, each academic and student support services unit must submit a draft of their assessment cycle plan for the upcoming year through their respective Administrative Review Committee Chair. The Vice President reviews and approves assessment plans before submitting them to the Office of the Director of Institutional Effectiveness (DIE). Revisions to assessment plans are completed prior to the beginning of the fall semester. The University will use Taskstream, an assessment management system, to house assessment plans once training is provided to ensure continuity.

Assessment data collection took place throughout the 2016-2017 academic year with spring commencement on May 12, 2017, ending the assessment cycle. Each unit identified its findings, completed an analysis, and collectively determined decisions/actions necessary to drive the improvement cycle. The unit compared current results to those of the previous year to refine plans for the upcoming year. Coordinators then submitted completed assessments, once approved by the respective Vice President, to the Director of Institutional Effectiveness (DIE) on 15 June 2017.

An Administrative Review Committee, composed of division, unit and office assessment coordinators, oversees the assessment process for the Library; Auxiliary Services; The Student Experience; and the Registrar. Following the completion of all unit assessments, the four (4) Academic and Student Support Services Review Committee Chairs coordinate the development of an annual assessment report. The report captures the most significant findings and decisions of the past academic year, including proposed and actual changes, an analytical assessment of the potential effects of the changes, and the status of new assessment plans. The DIE consolidates these reports into one executive presentation for the University President's review in the June-July timeframe. ([See 8: AY 2016-2017 Assessment Findings Report, 5 July 2017](#)).

Key Findings and Decisions, Academic and Student Support Services Units

Evidence that the University identifies expected outcomes, assesses outcomes and makes improvements based on assessment is available on the Institutional Effectiveness website. All twenty-four (24) unit assessments for AY 2016-17 are posted under the category heading "ASSESSMENT CYCLE AY 2016-2017 REPORTS" in the sub-category "ACADEMIC & STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES" ([ASSESSMENT CYCLE AY 2016-2017 REPORTS – ACADEMIC & STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES](#)). Below are examples of key findings and decisions from each Administrative Support Services unit.

The University Recruiting Office. Service Outcome (SO) 1 "Recruitment efforts will lead to an increase in student enrollment and be representative of the regional community." Measure 1.3. Ninety-five percent (95%) of the student body will be representative of the university's regions in terms of diversity. The findings revealed the University enrolled students from 62 out of 65 parishes in the state of Louisiana meeting our regional goal. In addition, Northwestern recruited students from out-of-state representing over 20 states and several countries. International students increased from 117 to 129 students for an increase of 10%. In the analysis, we determined the timing was right to move to enhanced recruiting, specifically our out-of-state market. The University is adding a recruiter to specifically target out-of-state populations. A plan is in development to leverage our performing arts and International Student Office to increase recruitment abroad.

Library. Service Outcome (SO) 2 “Improve library instruction classes on main campus.” Measure 2.1. Use Request Forms for Individual Research Consultations and single-session Library Instructions. Analyze data from 100% of these forms to set benchmarks for next year. Findings reflect the total course-related sessions taught at Watson Library was 47 (45 separate forms used). Departments: UNIV (14), education (10), psychology (4), English (4), Scholars' (3), freshman student-athletes (2), dual-enrollment (2); one each for new faculty orientation, math, biology, music, fine arts, and LSMSA. The analysis reflects all UNIV 1000 sections received a session of library orientation, which we will continue to revise based on numerical and experiential data. Nine out of nineteen academic departments requested course-related instruction last year. The long-term goal is for every course with research assignments to come to the library for instruction. The numbers above show how far we have to go to reach that goal. The decision, as the first step toward achieving our goal of reaching all students, in 201718 the library staff would like 20% of instructors in the departments of English, engineering technology, and Scholars' College to request course-related instruction. To this end, they will analyze data from Request Forms to see what proportion of students and faculty participate in library instruction, and set goals to increase it as appropriate to the various disciplines. Next year, librarians at Leesville, Shreveport, and Natchitoches will work together to assess university-wide information literacy and instruction.

First Year Experience & Leadership Development. Student Learning Outcome (SLO) 2 “Each student will complete a Community Impact Project incorporating the lessons learned in the program.” Measure 2.1. Students will attain a minimum score of 80 on their Community Impact Project per a multi-component grading scale. The findings reflect the target was met. Ninety-eight (98%) of the students attained a minimum score of 80 using the multi-component grading scale for the Community Impact Project. In addition, 93% “Strongly Agree” that the Community Impact Project helped them connect with the University community, understand the importance of civic engagement, and connect with other students. The analysis reflected the evaluation provided the opportunity for students to identify the components of the program they found beneficial in their leadership journey. Specific questions were not asked concerning the challenges they faced as first-year emerging leaders. Questions will be reviewed for content. It was determined the projects were evaluated based on the agency or community impacted, as well as group presentations, mentor feedback, and student reflection and that additional work needs to be done with identifying community needs, as well as a formal training program to assist community representatives.

University Registrar. Service Outcome (SO) 2 “The Student Academic Services and Transcript Evaluation Unit ensures the accuracy of information and assistance provided to current and former students, faculty and staff, and accuracy of transfer credits.” Measure 2.1. Student Academic Services is the first point of contact for current and former students, parents, faculty, and other staff. It is essential that accurate information be provided as well as processing their requests within a timely manner. The satisfaction level of the completion of student, faculty, and staff requests will increase to 75% by the end of spring 2017. Finding: Satisfaction rating

not met. Although the rating was not met, the satisfaction responses from students and faculty were good. The analysis reflected there was an average of 158 students who responded as satisfied/very satisfied out of the average 246 who responded to the survey. This resulted in a 64.23% satisfaction rating. Of the 9,269 students surveyed, the satisfaction rating was 1.70%. There was an average of 169 faculty who responded as satisfied/very satisfied out of the average 230 who responded to the survey. This resulted in a 73.4% rating. Of the 1,020 faculty/staff surveyed, there was a 16.57% rating of satisfied/very satisfied. Based upon the findings, we will request completion of a brief survey from students, faculty, and staff when service is rendered. This should result in a more accurate assessment of the satisfaction rating of the students, faculty, & staff.

Auxiliary Services. Service Outcome (SO) 1 “The University provides a professional food service with a wide variety of nutritional and dietary sensitive food selections in a clean and culturally sensitive dining facility environment.” Measure 1.2. Through multiple random nondisclosed inspections, the facility is graded on food quality, variety, service, sanitation, and the environment. The target score is receiving a 90% satisfaction score by a student or faculty inspector. The findings reflect the target was met. A variety of students, faculty, and staff were asked to visit different food service locations during the spring semester. These inspectors were given the option to rate their visit either satisfactory or non-satisfactory based on food quality, variety, service, sanitation, and environment. The analysis is based on 95 Faculty and or Staff members being surveyed. 87 or 92% responded with a satisfactory rating with the food quality, variety, service, sanitation and the environment. The data shows that Café DeMon and Vic’s had better responses than Iberville Dining Hall. After discussions with the general manager for food service at NSU, we will make changes to the variety of food offered at Iberville Dining Hall and the appearance/environment in Vic’s. New signage is being ordered and should be installed during the summer for a fresh inviting look in the fall for Vic’s. The same surveys will be administered in the fall semester as well as the spring to get a better feel of the desires of the students. We will strive to increase the number of surveys returned. The University will support Sodexo next year by reminding students to complete the online national survey.

Counseling and Career Services. Service Outcome (SO) 1 “Ensure that current students’ needs are identified and effective counseling and career services are developed to meet the identified needs.” Measure 1.1 Conduct a population-based assessment (Core Institute’s Survey of Alcohol and Other Drug Use) of current student alcohol and drug use, consequences, and perceptions using a valid and reliable nationally standardized instrument. The resulting data will inform the design of alcohol and drug prevention programming, social norms campaigns, and interventions. Success is defined as the identification of students’ perceptions of alcohol/drug use, prevalence of use of specific drugs and alcohol among student subpopulations, and experienced consequences of alcohol and drug use. This information will be used to inform outreach programming. Findings reflect the target was met. The data shows that there is a slight decrease in the number of underage students drinking on a monthly basis (56.1 % of

underage students consumed alcohol in the previous 30 days) and binge drinking (32.7% of students reported binge drinking (5 or more drinks at one sitting) in the previous 2 weeks.) Twenty-five percent (25%) reported some form of public misconduct at least once during the past year as a result of drinking or drug use. Sixteen percent (16%) reported experiencing some kind of personal problem (suicidality, hurt or injured, trying unsuccessfully to stop drinking, sexual assault) at least once during the past year as a result of drinking or drug use. Thirty-two percent (32%) have driven a car while under the influence. The analysis reflects that although student identification of problems incurred as a result of alcohol and drug use is below the national average in most problematic experiences (exception is driving under the influence), students at NSU are experiencing negative consequences while under the influence of alcohol and drugs. Sixteen percent (16%) reported experiencing some kind of personal problem such as suicidal thoughts or acts, incurring a physical injury, being unable to successfully stop drinking, or experiencing a sexual assault. The decision is to use this data to inform substance abuse prevention programming and outreach activities. Data from the 2017 CORE Alcohol and Drug survey will be compared to this current data to identify areas that need to assess the success of current substance abuse prevention programming and identify areas that need to be the current focus of prevention programming. Program planning will include collaboration with other programs and prevention efforts across campus.