

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**):*

3.3.1.4 research within its mission, if appropriate

The institution stated that it is not a Tier I research university but that faculty members consider research to be of high importance. An assessment report was presented for review; however, there was a lack of clarity pertaining to what is being assessed. A document referred to as a research plan for the Louisiana Folklife Center was included; however, it appeared to be a list of activities completed by the center over the course of 2014-15 academic year, rather than expected outcomes, related assessments to determine the extent to which those outcomes are achieved, and the analysis of results used to make improvements. It was not clear to the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee whether research truly is within the institutional mission.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee was unable to determine, beyond the research and service component attached to faculty evaluation as part of its documentation for CS 3.1.1, if the institution has a commitment to research as stated in its mission. The institution's new IE model may provide future evidence to support its commitment; however, the process is immature and, therefore, the institution is unable to provide sufficient evidence at the time of review.

Recommendation 5: The Committee recommends that the institution provide evidence that it assesses the extent to which it achieves its articulated research outcomes, and provide evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results.

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 provides evidence that research is an integral part of the University's mission. The University identifies expected outcomes concerning research, assesses its articulated research outcomes, and demonstrates improvements based on analysis of the results.

On February 23, 2017, the Board of Supervisors (BOS) for the University of Louisiana System (ULS) approved Northwestern's *Mission, Vision, and Core Values*. (1: [ULS Approval of NSU Mission, Vision and Values, 23 February 2017](#)). Research is a key component of the University's mission, underwriting its core commitment "to the creation, dissemination, and acquisition of knowledge." Research also substantiates the University's *Strategic Plan 2016-2021*, specifically Academic Excellence Objective 5, "Support faculty in teaching, research, and service." The *2016-2017 Research Assessment* demonstrates the varied roles of research in accomplishing the University's mission (2: [Research Assessment AY 2016-2017 dated 16 June 2017](#)).

Undergraduate Research is a pedagogical tool to increase understanding of theory through practice and to prepare students for success in graduate and professional programs, business, and other career paths. As stated in the University's *Guidelines for Preparing Your Final Research Document at Northwestern State University*, Graduate Research "provides graduate students an opportunity to design and implement research, explore historical and current trends, create new designs and products, and engage in problem-solving" as a component of their professional training. Both undergraduate and graduate research activities represent best practices in higher education. (3: [Guidelines for Preparing Your Final Research Document at Northwestern State University](#)).

The research activities of Faculty and Staff contribute to the generation of new knowledge in their disciplines and to innovation, best practices, and problem-solving across the disciplines offered by the University, particularly in education, nursing, computer information systems, and engineering technology. Collectively, research activities at Northwestern contribute to a more capable workforce, service to the community and industry, innovation in the classroom, and an increase in scholarly knowledge. Thus, the University fosters a culture of scholarship at all levels (faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students) and in all programs.

The University's Research Council (RC) guides the University's principles and policies for research activities, including the University's annual Research Day and the ULS Academic Summit. The RC also develops outcomes and measures associated with research, gathers and analyzes supporting data, and makes recommendations for institutional improvements. The RC has articulated five Research Outcomes in relation to its mission. These outcomes, listed below and fully described in the *Research Assessment*, define the parameters by which the University measures the accomplishment of its research mission.

1. Students completing substantial scholarly projects and disseminating them through presentations on campus and at scholarly meetings and through archival written documents and publications.
2. Faculty and staff members securing external funding for research projects.
3. Faculty and staff members presenting research outcomes on campus, at professional meetings, and through publication in scholarly journals.
4. Faculty and students providing expert guidance for the solution of applied problems in both public service agencies and private industry.
5. University sponsorship of research-related events such as professional training workshops and regional conferences that rotate their locations.

The *2016-2017 Research Assessment Report* thoroughly delineates the assessment process for University research (2: [Research Assessment AY 2016-2017 dated 16 June 2017](#)). The five outcomes listed above provide the foundation for the assessment of the University's research activities. The *Research Assessment Report* identifies outcomes and measures; findings; analyses of the findings; and associated actions, decisions, and recommendations.

For example, Outcome 3 states, "Faculty and staff members will present research outcomes on campus, at professional meetings, and through publication in scholarly journals." Measure 3.1 supports Outcome 3 through the expectation that the Research Council (RC) will "Collect annually a report of all faculty research presentations and workshops conducted at scholarly meetings. The number of faculty giving scholarly presentation will increase by 5% each year." In 2016-2017, the RC found that approximately "33% of faculty members (n=104) made one or more conference presentations during the assessment period." In its analysis, the RC suggested that a lack of institutional funds may limit participation in national conferences. The RC recommended that the institution "increase professional development funds, either through departmental budgets or more funding for travel grants." The Research Assessment concludes with a comprehensive summary of key findings and decisions.

The *2016-2017 Research Assessment Report* demonstrates that research and scholarship contribute to the intellectual mission of Northwestern (2: [Research Assessment AY 2016-2017 dated 16 June 2017](#)).