

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**):*

3.3.1.5 community/public service within its mission, if appropriate

The institution states community and public service align with the University's mission because of "improvements in the quality of life of the citizens in its regions." The institution provided opinion surveys, community service hour's log, and NSSE data about students; however, institutional effectiveness reports were not provided. While the institution as what appear to be service-oriented units (i.e. the Child and Family Network and the Office of Service-Learning), evidence of expected outcomes, assessments, and use of results to make improvements were not included.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed the institution's new strategic plan, which provides a statement of commitment to community enrichment as one of the five focus areas and a plan for assessment and continuous improvement based on assessment. However, because the IE process is new, the institution was unable to provide supporting documentation of this commitment, assessment, and continuous improvement at the time of the On-Site Review.

Recommendation 6: The Committee recommends that the institution provide evidence that it assesses the extent to which it achieves its articulated community/public services 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 community/public service is an integral part of the University's mission. The University identifies expected outcomes concerning community/public service, 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](#)). Community/public service is a key component of the University's mission, underwriting its core commitments to the "acquisition of knowledge through teaching, research, and service"; to preparing students "to become productive members of society"; and to promoting "economic development and improvements in the quality of life of the citizens in its region." Community/public service also substantiates the University's *Strategic Plan 2016-2021*, specifically Academic Excellence Objective 5, "Support faculty in teaching, research, and service."

Northwestern is committed to serving the citizens in its region through organized community and public service that is relevant and meaningful to participants and beneficiaries. Service that targets community-identified needs enhances university-community partnerships. Service also provides an educational platform through which the University can contribute to the quality of life of the citizens of its region.

The University's Office of Service Learning (OSL) develops and maintains community and public service programs in the following categories: Healthcare – Physical & Emotional; Sports & Fitness; Education; Environmental Stewardship; Economic Development of Town & Business; Creative & Performing Arts Exhibitions; Event Planning & Entertainment; Historical & Cultural Preservation; Community Safety & Emergency Preparedness; Protection of Vulnerable Children & Adults; Combatting Poverty, Hunger, or Homelessness.

The OSL demonstrates the University's commitment to community and public service. The OSL develops outcomes and measures associated with service, gathers and analyzes supporting data, and makes recommendations for institutional improvements. The OSL has articulated three community and public service outcomes in relation to its mission. These outcomes, listed below and fully described in the *Community and Public Service Assessment Report*, define the parameters by which the University measures the accomplishment of its service mission ([2 - Community and Public Service AY 2016-2017 Assessment](#)).

1. Students will have increasing opportunities to serve the community through participation in service activities.
2. The community will benefit from responsive service projects that address the community's unique and evolving needs.
3. Faculty and staff will have access to resources with which to track and enhance their service projects.

The *2016-2017 Community and Public Service Assessment Report* delineates the assessment process for community and public service ([2 - Community and Public Service AY 2016-2017 Assessment](#)). The three outcomes listed above provide the foundation for the assessment of the University's service activities. The *Community and Public Service Assessment Report*

identifies outcomes and measures; findings; analyses of the findings; and associated actions, decisions, and recommendations.

For example, Outcome 2 states, “The community will benefit from the responsive service projects that address the community’s unique and evolving needs.” Measure 2.1 supports Outcome 2 through the expectation that the OSL will “Conduct an annual measure of the degree to which all types of NSU service projects are effective in helping community partners address community needs. At least 70% of respondents will report that our volunteer service efforts are effective.” In its analysis of the 2016-2017 assessment data, the OSL found that the percent of community partners who rated the University’s service efforts as “effective” exceeded the target in all eleven service categories. The OSL recommended that faculty and staff encourage their community partners to complete the online *Community Partner Survey* within 10 days of service interaction. Additionally, the OSL determined that it will deliver at least one professional development training program concerning service as a component of high-impact educational practices. The *Community and Public Service Assessment Report* concludes with a comprehensive summary of key findings and decisions.

Examples of other decisions made based on 2016-2017 assessment data include the following:

- In order to meet or exceed the 10% growth target, the OSL will make available information about service opportunities in the community. The Office will offer professional development on community and public service matters. In addition, the Office will coordinate its annual assessment and facilitate communication between the University and its community partners.
- The OSL director consulted with University administration regarding the importance of distinguishing between ‘academic service-learning’ and ‘community/public service’. The discussion concerned the benefit of keeping the terms separate but related. For the 2017-2018 Assessment Cycle, the University will continue to distinguish between “community and public service” data and “academic service-learning” data. These will be recorded under two separate measures, 1.1 and 1.2, respectively. However, since both activities are so closely related to one another in terms of benefits to the community, the terms “service” and “service projects” will be used as general terms that include both activities for Measure 1.3 through Measure 3.3.
- Each year, faculty and staff will identify courses that have a service component. Faculty/staff will self-report using the online *Community/Public Service Survey*. Results of the survey will reveal whether the University increased the total number of courses with service components by 10% each year. In order to meet or exceed the 10% growth target, the OSL will make available information about service opportunities in the community. The Office will offer professional development on community and public service matters. In addition, the Office will coordinate its annual assessment and facilitate communication between the University and its community partners.

- Each year, community partner agencies will be asked to report on the effectiveness of service efforts. They will rate the degree to which the OSL is effective in helping address a variety of community needs. Partner agencies will participate in the online *Community Partner Survey*. Results of the survey will reveal whether the OSL attained an effectiveness rating of at least 70% in each community/public service category.

Through this assessment process, the OSL is taking steps to improve the development of community and public service initiatives. These changes are reflected in the *Community and Public Service AY 2017-2018 Assessment Plan* ([3 - Community and Public Service Plan AY 2017-2018](#)).