



**Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
Commission on Colleges**

REPORT OF THE REAFFIRMATION COMMITTEE

Statement Regarding the Report

The Board of Trustees of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) is responsible for making the final determination on reaffirmation of accreditation based on the findings contained in this committee report, the institution's response to issues contained in the report, other assessments relevant to the review, and application of the Commission's policies and procedures. Final interpretation of the Principles of Accreditation and final action on the accreditation status of the institution rest with SACSCOC Board of Trustees.

Name of the Institution: **Northwestern State University of Louisiana**

Date of the Review: **March 14-16, 2017**

SACSCOC Staff Member: Dr. Crystal A. Baird

Chair of the Committee: Dr. Melissa Canady Wargo
Chief of Staff
Western Carolina University
Cullowhee, NC

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**):

***3.3.1.1** educational programs, to include student learning outcomes

The institution stated that it is transitioning regarding an operational strategic plan with an expected implementation date of December, 2016. The institution provided assessment reports for the two prior academic years as evidence for this standard. The institution indicated that academic units are responsible for setting student learning outcomes and inputting into the Accreditation Management System. Additionally, a description was provided about what information is required for each assessment report. The institution provided a sampling of assessment reports from 2014-15 and 2015-16, but did not describe how the sample is reasonable and representative. Student learning outcomes were articulated; however, assessments rely heavily on course or project grades, which include extraneous components (e.g. writing mechanics), which do not speak to the specified student learning outcome. It was unclear to the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee how these blunt measures provide useful and/or usable data upon which to make changes to improve the academic programs. The "Action is associated with the following Findings" portion of the assessment reports often indicated, "No supporting Findings have been linked to this Action." Evidence that results are used for continuous improvement was limited.

After a review of the Focused Report and supporting documentation, the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee finds the institution gives appropriate rationale for the sampling provided. In addition, 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. However, the institution's institutional effectiveness model; which includes an IE policy, strategic plan, strategic planning and budgeting process, and assessment process is new. Interviews with the Director of Institutional Effectiveness, Executive Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Human Resources, and the Institutional Effectiveness committee indicated that, while the institution had an assessment process in place prior to the implementation of the new Taskstream system, the process lacked uniformity and oversight in some areas. An examination of the evidence provided for the sample of the institution's academic programs for AY 2014-15 and 2015-16 demonstrated expected outcomes are identified; however, assessment of the articulated outcomes rely heavily on course and/or project grades that do not speak to directly to the student learning outcomes (SLO) identified.

The Committee determined that the new process, tools, and structure will assist the institution in systematically identifying outcomes, including student learning outcomes, assess the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provide evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results. However, the institution's process is immature and, therefore, the institution was unable to provide sufficient evidence that it assesses the articulated program outcomes and makes improvement based on those assessments.

Recommendation 2: The Committee recommends that the institution provide evidence that it assesses the extent to which it achieves the articulated student learning outcomes and provide evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results for each of its educational programs.