Southern Utah University

STANDARD ONE

THE YEAR-SEVEN EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS (EIE) REPORT

Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

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Table of Contents

Institutional Overview

Southern Utah University is a publicly funded, comprehensive, regional, masters-level university located in Cedar City, Utah. From humble beginnings in 1897 as Branch Normal School, Southern Utah University has grown into a thriving university that proudly celebrates its 125th year in 2022. The University is an accredited member in good standing of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) and has been accredited by The Commission since 1933.

A snapshot of the University at the end of fall semester 2020 (compared to seven years prior) includes the following highlights:

- A student enrollment of 12,998 (headcount, measured at the end-of-semester) compared with an enrollment of 8,227 students in Fall 2013 end-of-semester;
- A student-to-faculty ratio of 20.2:1 in Fall 2020 compared with 18.7:1 in Fall 2013);
- Improved academic preparedness for first-time students (as measured by the Admissions Index Score) with an average score of 113.4 in 2020 as compared with 110.1 in the fall of 2013;
- The University has entered into a unique, integrated dual enrollment partnership with Southwest Technical College (STECH). For additional information on this partnership, please see **Addendum Two, Appendix 2A**.

Also in the 2019-2020 academic year, SUU became the only university in Utah to offer students a 3-year degree option, as part of a continuing effort to increase the accessibility and affordability of its academic programs. The University operates on a semester system, including a 2019 revision to the Academic Calendar that allows for a more robust summer semester in support of 3-year degree participants.

Report Format

As requested by The Commission, the reports for Standard One and Standard Two are published separately despite both being submitted during the Year-Seven accreditation cycle (Spring 2021). In subsequent cycles, the Standard Two report (PRFR) will be submitted in year six. Additional narrative outlining the effects of COVID-19 has also been added where appropriate to both reports, with a dedicated appendix associated with Standard One (**Addendum One, Appendix 1C**, with a focus on teaching and learning) and Standard Two (**Addendum Two, Appendix 2C**, with a focus on budgeting and operations). A list of those that worked to compile this Standard One report may be found in **Addendum One, Appendix 1I**.

Basic Institutional Data Form, General Catalog, and Course Schedule

A separate copy of the Basic Institutional Data Form (BIDF) has been prepared and has been uploaded to the Box folder. Likewise, separate electronic copies of the 2020-2021 General Catalog and the 2020-2021 Course Schedule have been uploaded to the Box folder.

Preface

Southern Utah University embraces the opportunity to participate in the self-study and peer-review process. In preparation for this review, the institution is submitting this self-study to showcase the direction, accomplishments, and challenges the University has experienced since the last comprehensive review, seven years ago. In the last seven years, significant efforts have focused on improving retention rates, improving the preparation and delivery of instructional programs, increasing enrollment, and ensuring financial stability. As reviewers will see throughout this report, the University has made progress in each area and clear plans have been developed to continue this growth in numbers and in quality.

The University has a clear mission statement outlining its role as a regional public institution with practices built on core themes of explore, engage, and excel. As an institution with a unique geographic advantage, the University engages students in meaningful learning experiences inside and outside of the classroom. This holistic approach to education is implemented throughout the curriculum and improved through a methodical assessment process that engages the essence of shared governance. This mission statement and related core themes are outlined in section 1.A below.

The University is in the process of implementing a Strategic Plan which was adopted by the Board of Trustees in June 2016. This plan has been evaluated and its impact measured by key performance indicators and a strategic plan scorecard. These evaluations are shared internally (through dashboards and other assessment documents) as well as externally in annual reports and other public-facing dashboards prepared for external audiences. Additionally, the University continually compares itself to peer institutions and uses benchmarked performance to improve operations and decision making. Throughout this process, an inclusive and exhaustive strategic planning process was undertaken in 2016 and renewed again in 2020 to ensure a continual study of external market shifts and optimal strategic positioning for the institution. Several shifts that have helped the University stay relevant in the markets it serves include the launching of the 3-year degree initiative, a pooling of resources to support strategic hiring of faculty, revised recruitment and enrollment strategies, and thoughtful program positioning in the online marketplace. Details of these initiatives are found in section 1.B below.

The University is intensely focused on quality student learning. The General Catalog outlines the programs offered to students at all levels and through all delivery modalities. Learning outcomes are identified for each academic program and assessed through a mature and intentional process of learning outcome assessment. The process for curriculum adoption, assessment, and review is outlined in section 1.C, with particular attention to sample assessments and detailed discussions about implementing improvements based on the outcomes of these assessments.

This report concludes with section 1.D, which outlines the admission processes for various student types as well as the orientation processes for incoming students. This section also overviews the institutional work on identifying attainment gaps within disaggregated student populations. This work has been part of the University's effort to understand and improve student success for a long time. Multiple dashboards are available to institutional leaders and are used regularly in institutional decision making. This section overviews that work and outlines a

number of times these data have led to meaningful improvements in student success among disaggregated student populations.

Southern Utah University is grateful for the opportunity to conduct this internal self-study and compile this report which documents its many efforts. Likewise, the University values the opportunity to be evaluated by peers and it welcomes any feedback. In the spirit of continuous quality improvement, the University looks forward to integrating that feedback into its journey to improve student success in all of its forms.

Standard 1.A - Student Success and Institutional Mission Effectiveness

Standard 1.A.1
The institution's mission statement defines its broad educational purposes and its commitment to student learning and achievement.

The mission, vision, and core themes of Southern Utah University (SUU) are found on the President's website and linked extensively throughout catalogs, websites, and other published materials of the institution. The most recent versions of these statements received approval from the SUU Board of Trustees on June 24, 2016. Each statement is included below.

Our Mission: Southern Utah University is a dynamic teaching and learning community that engages students in experiential education leading to personal growth, civic responsibility, and professional excellence.

Our Vision: Southern Utah University will receive national recognition for its innovations in learning, student success, and providing the best educational experience in the intermountain west.

Our Core Themes:
Explore: SUU explores diverse ideas, disciplines, skills, cultures, and places.
Engage: SUU creates intentional and transformative learning experiences.
Excel: SUU excels through a commitment to high-quality outcomes and student achievement.

In order to fulfill its mission, SUU will:

Increase opportunities for the SUU learning community to explore complex problems and sense of purpose in the region, nation, and world.

- Support student learning experiences beyond the traditional classroom setting.
- Help students, faculty, and staff understand and appreciate varied perspectives and ideas.
- Expand and support collaborative partnerships for learning.

Engage students, faculty, and staff in practices that lead to meaningful learning.

- Provide students with the fundamentals of a modern Liberal Education.
- Provide students with opportunities to design their own learning experiences, connect learning across disciplines, and apply learning to new contexts.
- Optimize SUU's educational, physical, technological, informational, financial, and human resources to maximize learning.

Foster intellectual and creative engagement within the SUU campus community.

- Enhance student learning environments by integrating teaching, scholarly, and creative efforts.

Lead students, faculty, and staff to successful professional and educational outcomes.

- Increase student retention and graduation rates.
- Increase the number of students pursuing post-graduate opportunities.
- Support faculty and staff in achieving their professional and personal goals.

Prepare students for responsible citizenship in their communities and countries.

- Involve students in practices that lead to higher participation rates in community service and democratic processes throughout their lives.

Help students develop lives of purpose, fulfillment, and wellness.

- Develop students that are lifelong learners that live fulfilled lives.

Standard 1.B - Improving Institutional Effectiveness

Standard 1.B.1
The institution demonstrates a continuous process to assess institutional effectiveness, including student learning and achievement and support services. The institution uses an ongoing and systematic evaluation and planning process to inform and refine its effectiveness, assign resources, and improve student learning and achievement.

Evidence of Systematic Assessment of Institutional Effectiveness

The University engaged in several initiatives aimed at facilitating evidence-informed decision making and systematic assessment of institutional effectiveness in an effort to advance mission fulfillment, including improved student learning and achievement.

Strategic Planning and Indicators of Achievement
Central among these efforts was a comprehensive strategic planning process that took place during 2015-2016 and resulted in the University's current 2016-2022 Strategic Plan that was approved by the University's Board of Trustees on June 24, 2016. This Strategic Plan established updated mission and vision statements as well as three core themes. Moreover, the Strategic Plan outlined an effective and systematic approach to assessing institutional effectiveness and has led to continuous quality improvement of institutional systems, structures, budgeting and resource allocation practices, and achievement of student learning outcomes.

The University's 2016-2022 Strategic Plan defines institutional effectiveness and translates it into specific (a) objectives, (b) strategies to achieve those objectives, (c) indicators of achievement, and (d) desired outcomes. Although the Strategic Plan provided a robust framework for outcomes assessment, the total number of indicators of achievement was quite large and would prove to be very challenging to use effectively.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Strategic Plan Scorecard
Based on very helpful suggestions made by the NWCCU accreditation review team during the 2017 Mid-Cycle Review, the Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness (OPIE) worked with the President's Cabinet and other stakeholders to identify six large-scale, macro-level institutional metrics that came to be known as Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). These six KPIs (listed below) included associated measures and targets (outlined in detail in **Addendum One, Appendix 1A**). Identifying these six KPIs allowed the University to create a condensed, measurable version of the original indicators of achievement and provide a comprehensive summary in what is known as the Strategic Plan "Scorecard."

- KPI #1 - Use of Effective Teaching and Learning Methods (Academic Affairs)
- KPI #2 - Student Achievement and Persistence (Academic and Student Affairs)
- KPI #3 - Exploration of Diversity and a Safe Environment in Which to Do So (Academic and Student Affairs)
- KPI #4 - Preparedness for Post-Graduation (Academic and Student Affairs)
- KPI #5 - Community Engagement (Community & Alumni Relations)
- KPI #6 - Effective Use of Resources (Finance & Administration, Academic Affairs, and Advancement & Enrollment Management)

The 2017-2018 academic year was then spent establishing baseline measurements and setting first-time targets for each KPI. Within each KPI is a small number of measures (typically 3-5) that indicate institutional effectiveness in that particular area at any given time. In the cases of KPIs #1, #3, and #4, a slightly larger number of measures was used, but the results from each associated measure were aggregated to create an overall score for the area. All of these KPIs and their associated measures were then built into data dashboards and are updated regularly, typically once per year. A screenshot of the Strategic Plan Scorecard progress summary is included in **Addendum One, Appendix 1A, Table 7**.

Development of this Strategic Plan Scorecard and six KPIs allowed the University to establish internal benchmarks and targets, and facilitated a more meaningful comparison of results for nationally normed survey instruments, such as the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI), while still maintaining alignment with the core themes and strategies originally identified in the 2016-2022 Strategic Plan. In other words, the University ensured that there was alignment between the Core Themes (and associated goals) and the KPIs in the new Strategic Plan Scorecard. As a result, these new KPIs and the Strategic Plan Scorecard greatly simplified the process of providing an overall evaluation of mission fulfillment and institutional effectiveness (again, please see **Addendum One, Appendix 1A** for more information and examples of corresponding data dashboards).

Responsibility and Accountability
The President's Cabinet assigned responsibility for each indicator of achievement and KPI to at least one Vice President and their corresponding division on campus. Each Vice President and division was then held accountable to monitor and support initiatives that support continuous improvement and progress toward measurable targets (i.e., mission fulfillment and institutional effectiveness). The assignment of institutional performance measures to specific members of the President's Cabinet with progress reporting in the form of the Strategic Plan Assessment document (for the numerous indicators of achievement) and the Strategic Plan Scorecard (for the six KPIs) helped to facilitate institutional effectiveness and improvement through a culture of clearly defined responsibility paired with accountability.

Responsibility and accountability are further promoted through academic programs reporting on assessment of student learning via the University's assessment management system (TracDat) and completing annual academic Unit Effectiveness Plans (UEPs) and other performance measures (the University's use of TracDat and the UEPs is described below in Standard 1.C).

Data Support
In addition to engaging in a comprehensive strategic planning process and developing an operationalized Strategic Plan Scorecard, the University undertook several efforts to improve the availability and use of data in support of ongoing, systematic, and evidence-informed planning and evaluation of institutional effectiveness. Important to this effort was asking the Data Council and its members to clarify which office is responsible for reporting different types of data (view the summary of reporting responsibilities identified by the Data Council). To facilitate collaboration and the consistent use and analysis of data, several offices were physically co-located, notably the Office of Budget and Planning and the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. Finally, additional data support staff were added, robust interactive data dashboards

were developed, and several existing offices (such as Administrative Information Systems and Data Integrity) were combined with Institutional Research and Assessment, all of which now form a core data analytics team that reports directly to the Provost. All of these corresponding changes have resulted in improvements to data integrity (accuracy and consistency of data) and development of a common language and shared understanding around data and data conventions.

In support of the Strategic Plan and monitoring mission fulfillment and institutional effectiveness, these enhanced data dashboards include a wide variety of regularly updated data points (e.g., retention, graduation, grades, admission, enrollment, degrees granted, and postgraduation status) that can be broken down by various student demographics (e.g., age, gender, race/ethnicity, major, and residence) and course information (e.g., college, department, subject, delivery method, and course level). Beyond the Strategic Plan, these data dashboards are valuable because they allow employees from all across campus to access a wide variety of measures to help focus their efforts, make adjustments to their programs, and monitor progress toward goals for their individual units. Finally, these data dashboards have freed up data support staff to address ad hoc data needs (reporting, analysis, etc.) that cannot easily be accommodated via existing data dashboards.

Taken together, these changes have allowed for better evidence-informed decision making at multiple levels of the University, such as the strategic hiring of faculty where most needed, the "A Bachelor's Degree in 3" initiative, and the strategic use of scholarships and enrollment management initiatives to facilitate balanced and responsible enrollment growth.

Improvement of Student Learning and Achievement

In order for the University to engage in a process of continuous improvement and evidence-informed planning and evaluation, two key elements were necessary: first, defining institutional effectiveness by identifying what to achieve, how to achieve it, and how to measure achievement; and second, creating the necessary data support for continuously measuring progress and identifying potential areas for improvement.

The Strategic Plan Scorecard is the framework by which the University engages in a systematic and regular process of assessing institutional effectiveness and assesses progress toward achieving mission fulfillment over time. Importantly, this includes evidence and indicators of student learning and achievement, which are critical measures of overall student success and achievement.

Evidence of Improvement
In the 2015-2016 academic year, DFW rates for face-to-face and online undergraduate classes were 12.5% and 18.1%, respectively. In the 2019-2020 academic year, these DFW rates dropped to 9.3% and 13.8%, respectively. These improvements met the University's target. However, the 2019-2020 numbers need to be viewed with caution, due to adjustments to grading in response to the COVID-19 situation (where students were given the option to keep the letter grade originally assigned or switch their letter grades to either a "Pass" or "No Credit" option).

The University's first-year retention rate in 2015 was 64%. The retention rate improved to 74% in 2019, an improvement of 10 percentage points. In comparison to its peer set for retention (see

Addendum One, Appendix 1A, Table 8), the University's retention rate in 2015 was 12 percentage points lower than the 75th percentile. By 2019, however, the University's retention rate was just 1.3 percentage points lower than the 75th percentile. This shows that not only did the University improve first-year retention rates for its students, but it did so at a rate that outpaced the improvements made by its peer institutions.

While the University's retention rate dropped from 74% in 2019 to 72% in 2020, the unadjusted retention rate (the rate that also includes students with exclusion reasons) for those two years actually improved from 62.7% to 63.3% respectively.

The University's graduation rate improved from 47% in 2015 to 50% in 2019 (see **Addendum One, Appendix 1A, Table 9** for more information related to graduation rates). At the same time, the gap to the 75th percentile of the University's peer group slightly increased from 1% in 2015 to 2.3% in 2019. While the graduation rate dropped to 46% in 2020, the next two cohorts have already surpassed the 50% mark, making it likely that the University will reach its target of a graduation rate of 55% or higher in 2021 and 2022. This could also potentially lift the University above the 75th percentile of its peer group that currently sits at 52.3%.

Improvement Efforts
Various efforts were undertaken to promote student achievement and student learning as measured by KPI #1, including retention rates, graduation rates, and DFW rates. The University created a series of programs and initiatives to ensure all students have the opportunity to find greater success at the University.

Such programs and initiatives include a peer mentoring system for all first-year students; holistic academic advising; outreach to parents and families; greater collaboration between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs; hiring a Chief Diversity Officer; creating and/or continuing to support such centers as the Center for Diversity and Inclusion, Veterans Resource and Support Center; Non-Traditional Student Services; First-to-Fly (first generation support through the First Year Experience Office); Pride Alliance (LGBTQIA+); Disability Resource Center; Student Support Services (TRiO); and numerous multicultural and underrepresented campus clubs and organizations. Through these endeavors, the University provides broad engagement with student achievement through many areas on campus and across multiple demographics.

Moreover, by regularly monitoring retention, graduation, and DFW rates that are disaggregated by key student demographics (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, admission index, high school GPA, age, student-athletes, those living on-campus vs off-campus, etc.), the University is able to quickly adapt and change outreach, key initiatives, and persistence processes surrounding key student populations.

Within academic departments, faculty monitor DWF rates in critical classes (such as those required for General Education) and engage in a variety of continuous improvement efforts. For example, the Department of Biology deployed a type of supplemental instruction by utilizing trained tutors, student mentors, and writing fellows to help decrease DFW rates. The Department of Economics and Finance aimed to decrease DFW rates by reducing class size, implementing peer tutoring, making a series of pre-recorded videos available to students, and making staffing

changes among instructors in critical courses. Finally, the Department of English changed placement procedures into composition courses, integrated a two-credit developmental writing course with the standard three-credit first-year composition course, and created a co-requisite pairing of an information literacy course with the second-year composition course. All of these examples illustrate the ways that student performance indicators (such as DFW rates) are monitored and lead to improvement efforts.

On a broader scale, the university promoted the use of High Impact Practices (HIPs), which are regularly reported on by programs in their annual Unit Effectiveness Plans (UEPs). Furthermore, innovative teaching methods continue to be supported by programming and support offered by the Center of Excellence for Teaching and Learning (CETL) and expanded capacity and services by the Office of Online Teaching & Learning (OTL).

Standard 1.B.2
The institution sets and articulates meaningful goals, objectives, and indicators of its goals to define mission fulfillment and to improve its effectiveness in the context of and in comparison with regional and national peer institutions.

Mission Fulfillment

The following recommendation was made in the University's 2014 Year-Seven Peer-Evaluation Report with regard to mission fulfillment:

> *Recommendation 1*
> *The evaluation committee recommends that the institution articulate institutional outcomes that represent an acceptable threshold of mission fulfillment. In addition, it is recommended that the institution establish assessable and verifiable indicators of achievement of each of the core themes that encompass its mission.*

This recommendation was incorporated into the planning and implementation process for the University's 2016-2022 Strategic Plan. In their 2017 Mid-Cycle Peer-Evaluation Report, the NWCCU visiting team concluded that the University had fulfilled this recommendation.

Indicators of Achievement and KPIs
As shown in **Addendum One, Appendix 1A, Table 1**, the Strategic Plan has three core themes that flow from the mission statement and are connected to six broad strategies. Each of the University's core themes has (a) objectives, (b) strategies to achieve said objectives, (c) indicators of achievement, and (d) desired outcomes.

Although the current Strategic Plan provided a robust framework for outcome assessment, the number of indicators of achievement was quite large. Based on information received during the 2017 NWCCU Mid-Cycle Evaluation and at the urging of the President and members of the Cabinet, development of a much more concise version of the Strategic Plan began in earnest in Fall 2017. In response, macro-level Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) along with associated measures and targets were identified for each division on campus (these KPIs are discussed in Section 1.B.1 and **Addendum One, Appendix 1A** includes additional details).

These KPIs allowed the University greater ease in assessment and peer benchmarking. The KPIs and their associated performance measures provided an overall view of mission fulfillment, and the resulting Strategic Plan Scorecard greatly simplified the process of providing a day-to-day sense of mission fulfillment. At the same time, the KPIs remained highly meaningful indicators and measures of institutional effectiveness by adhering closely to the full Strategic Plan (see **Addendum One, Appendix 1A, Table 2**). For example, objectives 2.3.3 and 2.3.4 list various activities and indicators of achievement related to enrollment management and brand identity. The overall effectiveness of all these initiatives is regularly tracked in the culminating performance measure of enrollment growth.

Regional and National Peers
While peer benchmarking is challenging due to limited comparison data, the KPIs allowed the University to identify benchmarking data for various performance measures (see **Addendum One, Appendix 1A, Table 4**). In the last 10 years, the University has reviewed and revised its set of regional and national peers and identified institutions with similar characteristics.

The University's peer groups have changed over time as the institution's mission and size have changed. After discontinuing its membership in the Council of Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC) organization, the University's President chose a group of public institutions in the eight Intermountain West states that were classified by U.S. News and World Report as regional universities and colleges and whose primary degree focus is on baccalaureate degrees or above to gauge the University's standing in the region. This peer group was also used for establishing the University's targets for retention and graduation rates.

The most recent revision of the University's peer set occurred in 2018 (for a list of peer institutions, see **Addendum One, Appendix 1A, Table 4**). The Faculty Senate collaborated with the VP for Finance & Administration to create a faculty and staff compensation system that allowed all employees to compare their salary to their contemporaries at the University's peer institutions. The peer institutions were selected with the help of an external consultant (Gallagher). A wide variety of factors were considered to ascertain a collection of 47 institutions that are most similar to the University in terms of enrollment, type of degree-granting institution, and mission. The resulting "CUPA Benchmarking Group" was not just used for compensation benchmarking but also for comparing the University's progress in other areas such as retention and graduation rates, as well as enrollment growth.

Progress in other areas was measured against the nationally normed NSSE (National Survey of Student Engagement) and SSI (Student Satisfaction Inventory) surveys, US Census Bureau data, USHE (Utah System of Higher Education) targets, Carnegie classification, and NACADA (National Academic Advising Association) data.

Improvements
Compared to its targets and benchmarking groups, the institution has fared well in several areas. As discussed in Standard 1.B.1, the University has made noticeable progress with regard to student learning and achievement as broadly measured in DFW rates and retention and graduation rates (see **Addendum One, Appendix 1A, Tables 8, 9, and 10**). The University's focused and strategic efforts in enrollment growth have resulted in the University surpassing its

annual enrollment growth goal of 5% or higher each year and being generally well above the 75th percentile of its peer group. This is especially noteworthy in light of the recent enrollment challenges for higher education institutions in general.

The University's enrollment growth and upward trends in retention and graduation rates may also be reflected in students' generally positive perception of the campus environment. The subscores pertaining to this measure were on average about 5% higher than the University's target and the scores of the University's peer set. As the University is committed to not only grow but to also become a more diverse campus, it is encouraging to know that the University has seen an upward trend in its Exploration of Diversity score. In the 2018-2019 academic year, the related subscores were on average 2.8% higher than their respective targets and on average 1.2% higher than the scores of the peer set. Likewise, the University's commitment to fostering community engagement in its students was recognized in the institution's 2020 Carnegie Community Engagement Classification endorsement.

While the University has made noticeable progress in mission fulfillment, there were areas with downward trends. Scores for Effective Teaching/Learning and Life Learning Skills & Dispositions declined steadily, which mirrored the trend for peer institutions. At the same time, the University's downward trend was slightly more pronounced than that of the peer set. The University's student-advisor ratio has seen some overall improvement but is still far from its target. While the student-faculty ratio was at its lowest in 2019, it jumped to its highest in 2020. After meeting the employee compensation target in 2019, the institution missed the target in 2020.

It is possible that at least some of the gaps in mission fulfillment highlight a challenge in pursuing multiple goals. At times, progress in one area may mean setbacks in another area. For example, as the institution continues on its path to growth, it may not be possible to always achieve and/or to maintain the desired student-faculty ratio and the desired student-advisor ratio. Likewise, in financially challenging times, it may not be possible to pay 99% of the employees at or above the minimum benchmarked salary. This, in turn, may necessitate re-prioritization and potentially adjustment of targets.

> ### *Standard 1.B.3*
> ***The institution provides evidence that its planning process is inclusive and offers opportunities for comment by appropriate constituencies, allocates necessary resources, and leads to improvement of institutional effectiveness.***

Planning Process

The following recommendation was made in the University's 2014 Year-Seven Peer-Evaluation Report with regard to strategic planning:

> ### *Recommendation 2*
> *The evaluation committee recommends that the university engage faculty, staff, and students in a data-driven, strategic planning process that utilizes the core themes to inform the strategic plan which in turn informs the budget process through funding initiatives.*

This recommendation was incorporated into the planning and implementation process for the University's 2016-2022 Strategic Plan. In their 2017 Mid-Cycle Peer-Evaluation Report, the NWCCU evaluation team concluded that the University had fulfilled this recommendation.

Participatory Planning
Prior to 2015, the University did not have a comprehensive strategic plan. In 2015, President Scott L Wyatt asked Marvin Dodge, Vice President for Finance and Administration, and Dr. Emily Dean, Associate Professor of Anthropology and then-president of the University's Faculty Senate, to serve as the co-chairs of the Strategic Planning Committee. Specifically, they were tasked with leading a broad-based and inclusive team to create new University core themes, vision, and mission statements. The process included input from every employee, student constituent group, and community members through a months-long information gathering process. Vice President Dodge and Dr. Dean enlisted 27 faculty, administrators, staff, and students to serve on the Strategic Planning Committee. This was a diverse committee, composed of stakeholders from across campus who could represent the interests of their various academic and administrative units while also effectively working together. All committee members participated fully in the strategic planning process despite the major time commitment that required bi-monthly committee meetings as well as attendance at campus and community forums throughout Fall 2015 and Spring 2016.

At Vice President Dodge's suggestion, the University modeled its strategic planning process after that outlined in the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO) publication, *Collaborative Strategic Planning in Higher Education*, authored by Patrick Sanaghan in 2009. Sanaghan's model outlines a multi-step process for developing a comprehensive strategic plan through first choosing team members who represent a broad spectrum of faculty, staff, and students. The next phase of the process was data-gathering and engagement. This phase was the longest intentionally, as the committee sought information from across campus through public forums, departmental meetings, and other gatherings using a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats), discussions, and other tools to gather opinions and expressions of vision for the University. Third, the committee worked to make sense of the input, and they crafted a new mission and vision for the institution, as well as core themes inclusive of the newly defined direction. The final step included meetings with stakeholders to identify specific goals, action plans, indicators of achievement, and measurable outcomes defining a roadmap to implementation of the overall strategic plan.

Co-chairs Dodge and Dean scheduled 29 college and campus-wide meetings, as well as two community forums. All meetings were announced to the campus and community on the SUU website, by email to individual campus colleges, and via the leadership of the Faculty Senate, the Staff Association, and the student government (SUUSA). The meetings, which ranged from small groups of 20 or so people to large gatherings of over 100 participants, yielded an impressive amount of data which the committee then spent the next three months analyzing as they designed new core themes, mission, and vision statements. The minutes from all strategic planning meetings were posted in a timely fashion on the Strategic Planning website so that they could be viewed by any interested parties. The University also established a strategic planning email address so that people could share their thoughts with the committee even if they were unable to attend the meetings, or did not feel comfortable speaking up at the time.

Resource Allocation

The resulting 2016-2022 Strategic Plan has guided the University over the last five years. Resources have been systematically allocated in direct alignment with institutional objectives outlined in the strategic plan, as evidenced in the University's official budget request process available to all on the Budget Office website. Section 8 of 10 on the Budget Request Instructions form lists strategic plan alignment requirements. Budget requests must describe how they are aligned with strategic plan objectives, and they must indicate how success will be measured.

Over the past five fiscal years, there have been a number of examples of funded budget requests that have aligned with the strategic plan. Examples include the funding of the ACES program, additional Student Success Advisors, and a new position called the Student Connection and Completion Coordinator, all of which are within the Division of Student Affairs. These programs were funded to help support and improve retention and completion efforts.

In addition to the Student Affairs funding allocations, funding was provided to the Division of Academic Affairs in support of the University's goal of improving degree completion. Over the past five years, the University added approximately 70 faculty lines to departments and colleges/schools to alleviate bottleneck courses and support enrollment growth. The University also funded the expansion of summer offerings to help support the University's 3-Year Bachelor's Degree program and provide an accelerated degree option for interested students. The expansion of summer offerings also helped the University to increase the number of online programs and courses offered.

Standard 1.B.4
The institution monitors its internal and external environments to identify current and emerging patterns, trends, and expectations. Through its governance system it considers such findings to assess its strategic position, define its future direction, and review and revise, as necessary, its mission, planning, intended outcomes of its programs and services, and indicators of achievement of its goals.

Evidence of Monitoring Internal and External Environments

Southern Utah University used the Strategic Planning Scorecard, Unit Effectiveness Plans, systematic program reviews, the institutional budgeting process, and a shared governance framework to assess the institution's strategic position, define its future direction, and review and revise its mission, intended outcomes, and indicators of achievement. The section below describes evidence that supports these efforts.

The Strategic Planning Scorecard and supporting dashboards provided a systematic approach to assessing continual improvements in student learning, and they allowed for continual monitoring of internal and external environments. Specifically, KPIs #3, #4, #5, and #6 addressed several important aspects of Southern Utah University's holistic health (see **Addendum One, Appendix 1A**).

Evidence of Strategic Positioning

In assessing the University's strategic positioning, several initiatives were pursued to meet its mission and continually improve on its indicators of achievement. Below are examples of some of these initiatives.

Data Support Staff and Data Resources
As mentioned in Section 1.B.1 above, the University undertook several efforts to improve the availability and use of data in support of ongoing, systematic, and evidence-informed planning and evaluation of institutional effectiveness. These efforts allowed for better evidence-informed decision making in strategic initiatives such as the strategic hiring of faculty where most needed, the "3-Year Bachelor's Degree" initiative (see also **Addendum Two, Appendix 2B**), and the strategic use of scholarships and tuition collection to facilitate balanced and responsible enrollment growth. Improvements in data support structures and resources better positioned the University to engage in ongoing, systematic, and evidence-informed evaluation and planning in an effort to refine and inform systems, practices, strategies, and assign resources in the pursuit of strategic plan fulfillment with a special focus on student learning and achievement. For example, a dashboard that includes prediction scores for incoming students' likelihood of retention and graduation has allowed the Division of Student Affairs to more strategically allocate their resources with a focus on students who are more likely to not persist.

Strategic Hiring of Faculty
The University developed a systematic approach to allocating resources to faculty hiring. The enrollment and data teams established enrollment targets based on lead generation strategies, a program/market Ansoff matrix, and high school graduate population changes. Those targets were converted into student credit hours (SCH) and used to forecast SCH enrollment by course prefix. The SCH forecast was combined with (a) a faculty resource assessment from the General Education Committee that considered GE course bottlenecks and instructor workloads, (b) expected faculty demand for new programs, (c) requests for new faculty via the institutional budget process, and (e) program SCH production ratio (Student Credit Hour/Instructional Credit Hour). Holistically, this evaluation process invited participation from all areas and every level of campus and provided a diversified view of the demand for faculty to assist University leadership in allocating resources.

3-Year Degree Initiative
Through analyses of space utilization and student demand, the University determined that increasing summer enrollments would (1) save the State of Utah significant funding by reducing the need to build more classroom buildings, and (2) provide students an opportunity to reduce time to graduation, thereby allowing them to enter the workforce sooner with higher-paying jobs, which would enhance their socioeconomic status and provide increased tax revenue to the state. The 3-Year Degree initiative was created to encourage more faculty to teach in the summer and more students to take summer classes. Summer 2020 was the first year of implementation, and despite a significant setback due to COVID-19, the University increased its summer end-of-term headcount from 4,178 in Summer 2019 to 5,143 in Summer 2020, an increase of 23%. For more information related to the 3-Year Degree Initiative, please see **Addendum Two, Appendix 2B**; for more information related to responses to COVID-19, please see **Addendum One, Appendix**

1C (with a focus on teaching and learning) and **Addendum Two, Appendix 2C** (with focus on operations and budgeting).

<u>Enrollment Strategy</u>
Since the last comprehensive year-seven self-study in 2014, the University has focused significant planning and resources on growing enrollment while maintaining selective admission standards and small class sizes. These efforts have been successful in significant ways, as shown below:

- A student enrollment of 12,582 (headcount, measured 3rd week Fall 2020) compared with an enrollment of 7,745 students 3rd week Fall 2013. This represents an increase of 62.4% since the date of the 3rd week report.
- Improved academic preparedness for first-time students (as measured by the Admissions Index Score) with an average score of 112.5 in 2019 as compared with 110.1 in Fall 2013.

The enrollment growth strategies adopted by the University have also included an increased focus on online programs and courses. This focus effectively helped grow overall University enrollment and led to the expansion of online programs at both the graduate and undergraduate levels. Since the last report in 2013-2014, the University has implemented 13 additional undergraduate online programs (from one program in 2013). Additionally, five new online graduate programs and two face-to-face graduate programs were created. To support this growth, resources were allocated to hire additional Online Teaching & Learning staff such as instructional designers, instructional technology specialists, and multimedia specialists, as well as additional online marketing and recruiting professionals.

Additionally, the University partnered with an online program manager to support online development, marketing, and recruiting in five specific programs, including the Master of Business Administration, Master of Arts in Professional Communication, Master of Music in Music Technology, Registered Nurse-to-Bachelor of Nursing, and Master of Interdisciplinary Studies. The online program manager helped the University grow enrollments in these areas significantly, which strengthened the University's strategic position.

<u>Online Tuition Structure</u>
As online offerings expanded, it became apparent that online students were taking fewer credits on average than face-to-face students. To promote accessibility and affordability, the University began a process in 2019 to change its online tuition to a flat per-credit rate. The former tuition structure penalized many online students who were taking less than a full-time course load. One significant factor was that the first credit was more expensive than subsequent credits. It also made the overall degree more expensive. To combat this and make degree costs more equitable, the University changed the undergraduate online tuition structure from a tuition/fee system to a $300 per-credit rate. [Online graduate programs' tuition rate](#) changed to a tiered flat-rate. In addition to the improved tuition rate structure, the University also provided in-state tuition rates for all online-only students, even if they were not Utah residents.

To further improve completion rates, the Graduate and Online office (G&O) developed a returning/transfer scholarship. Called "Finish Line," this scholarship was designed to support students who left the University without completing a degree and to encourage students with

some college credits to re-enroll and complete their degrees. Since implementation, 393 students have applied for this scholarship, and 127 have been awarded. Nineteen students on this scholarship have graduated since Fall 2019.

Marketing/Branding Efforts
The Office of Marketing Communication (OMC) invested many hours and resources into examining the University's current brand. The effort identified inconsistent and disjointed messages and brand assets. In the fall of 2019, the team began refreshing the University's brand in collaboration with an award-winning consulting and branding agency, Golin Harris. OMC also collaborated with representatives from across campus to build a shared narrative from each individual's experience with the University. After several meetings, an audit of University materials, and two on-campus visits, the Golin Harris team presented the University with a brand roadmap. The guidelines included core values and brand pillars, a message map, audience research, visual treatment suggestions, updated logo ideas, website recommendations, a potential marketing campaign, and unique marketing tactics.

Having a centralized brand benefits the organization as all stakeholders speak with one voice and use consistent creative materials. This builds equity and credibility into our value proposition that the University is a quality institution that disrupts the landscape of higher education by placing students first and by removing barriers to their education and future success.

2020-2021 Strategic Planning Process
The institution has just begun a new strategic planning process. It is guided by a thorough white paper prepared by Provost Jon Anderson entitled "Building an Institutional Strategy for Southern Utah University." The white paper was disseminated to the campus, and it includes the following introduction:

> Welcome to the strategic planning process for Southern Utah University. We are fortunate to work at an institution and in an environment that values shared governance. Within that shared governance context, an institution's strategic planning process serves at the heart of a unified effort to create and implement a clear direction for the institution's future, as well as a clear picture of what that future should be. As we begin this process of defining the future direction of the institution, we plan to engage all stakeholders and look forward to working together collectively.
>
> As we (the collective "we" including all stakeholders) complete this work together, this guidebook is shared with you to help you better understand the strategic planning process and find ways to engage in this effort. This process will be led by a small committee which will engage all areas of campus. So, please don't sit back and wonder what the future will look like. This is your opportunity to engage in and help shape the future of Southern Utah University and the students it serves.

The new strategic planning process is documented online, and the new Strategic Planning Committee includes representatives from across campus. A subcommittee is currently completing a thorough market analysis to assess the University's strategic position and define its future direction. The Strategic Planning Committee has been charged with rewriting the University's mission accordingly.

Standard 1.C - Student Learning

Standard 1.C.1
The institution offers programs with appropriate content and rigor that are consistent with its mission, culminate in achievement of clearly identified student learning outcomes that lead to collegiate-level degrees, certificates, or credentials and include designators consistent with program content in recognized fields of study.

General Catalog

The University's General Catalog is the official repository of all curriculum, including all academic programs and courses, as well as all graduation requirements in policy (6.49). The published and accessible General Catalog represents the culmination of a robust review and approval process. All curriculum changes originate from faculty and are reviewed and approved by department-level curriculum committees, college/school-level curriculum committees, and the university-level curriculum committee. These reviews and approvals are based on requirements outlined in both USHE policies (R401, R470) and University policy (6.8), guided by expectations related to appropriate disciplinary content and rigor, and aligned with the University's mission and vision. The General Catalog is updated annually (published in mid-February and effective the next Fall, Spring, and Summer semesters) and includes updates to existing curriculum as well as new academic programs and courses.

Curriculum

The University's development of new academic programs is guided by USHE policy R401, including a series of templates maintained by the Commissioner's Office. The University uses these templates in the development of new academic programs. New program templates require critical information, including consistency with institutional mission, analysis of labor market demand, student demand, admission and graduation standards, program learning outcomes and assessment, program curriculum and degree map(s), as well as necessary financial, instructional, and library resources. Likewise, the development of new academic courses is driven by faculty expertise and insights into the discipline and other specialized fields of study. Each new course proposal requires a sample syllabus, a faculty CV demonstrating appropriate knowledge of the subject, and explicit identification of learning outcomes and how those are aligned with both assessment methods and learning activities.

Each spring, a series of university-level curriculum committee dates and deadlines for the following year is published and colleges/schools/departments schedule their meetings accordingly. Periodic updates to existing curriculum (programs and courses) occur regularly based on faculty insights, emerging disciplinary trends, and changing needs of students.

Unit Effectiveness Plans (UEPs)

Within the Division of Academic Affairs, annual UEPs are completed by each department and includes a review of key performance indicators (including enrollment, retention, degrees awarded, total credits earned by graduates, DWF rates, and job placement rates). These annual UEPs can reveal trends and other places for improvement. (For more information about Unit Effectiveness Plans, please see **Addendum One, Appendix 2D**.)

Starting in 2017, these UEPs included a dedicated section for reporting on the department's use of High Impact Practices (HIPs) for its programs and in its courses. Through careful review of the national literature, the University recognizes that HIPs are highly effective educational practices that contribute to greater depth of learning, help reduce DFW rates, and closes the achievement gaps for students from historically underrepresented groups in higher education.

In support of the use of HIPs across campus, in collaboration with the Provost's Office and Faculty Senate, the Center of Excellence for Teaching and Learning (CETL) developed a mechanism for designating courses that use HIPs. Course HIP designation applications are reviewed by a committee of expert practitioners who evaluate the extent to which a course addresses the defining characteristics of each HIP. Courses that receive a HIP designation will be coded in Banner, so the designation will be visible to students during registration and will appear on their transcripts. This will also provide a mechanism to recognize faculty who are using HIPs, which are the types of evidence-based teaching practices that are encouraged by the Promotion and Tenure process.

TracDat

Results of the assessment of student learning are gathered and reported in the University's official assessment management software platform, TracDat (now known as "Nuventive Improve" but everyone on campus still refers to this as TracDat). The University's use of TracDat further supports the expectation that academic programs focus on student learning and learning outcomes that offer an appropriate breadth, depth, sequencing, and synthesis of learning (which is part of Standard 1.C.2, below).

To help facilitate this faculty-driven effort, TracDat is organized into the following seven interrelated sections: (i) Student Learning Outcomes, (ii) Curriculum Map, (iii) Assessment System/Process, (iv) Assessment Methods and Targets), (v) Schedule, (vi) Assessment Results and Target Met, and (vii) Action and Follow-Up.

This framework of assessment allows faculty to update program learning outcomes, align program-level outcomes with courses, identify and use consistent assessment of student learning, collect assessment information from multiple courses using multiple methods, specify performance targets, report on results, and identify actions that help to close the loop.

By working within this system of assessment, faculty can identify programmatic trends and implement action steps to ensure student achievement of learning outcomes and that academic programs engage in a process of continuous improvement. Additional information about TracDat is provided below in section 1.C.5.

Specialized Accreditation

Finally, some academic programs maintain specialized accreditation which identify additional expectations related to emerging disciplinary expectations and professional standards. When taken together, these UEPs, assessment results in TracDat, and specialized accreditation standards (if any) help to inform departmental conversations that may result in curriculum changes. Department chairs are expected as part of their job description to initiate and lead this

conversation with their faculty (policy 6.2). This routine review of existing curriculum ensures proper content and rigor, as well as appropriate breadth, depth, sequencing, and synthesis of learning.

> ### _Standard 1.C.2_
> **_The institution awards credit, degrees, certificates, or credentials for programs that are based upon student learning and learning outcomes that offer an appropriate breadth, depth, sequencing, and synthesis of learning._**

The University's response to Standard 1.C.1 (above) addressed issues related to the award of credits and credentials based on appropriate content and rigor, and based on identified learning outcomes and student learning. Academic programs use a framework of assessment that includes a detailed curriculum map that ensures courses and learning outcomes are aligned with program-level learning outcomes and that student learning is appropriately sequenced and synthesized. Those issues were addressed primarily through the curriculum development process and the broad annual review cycles (UEPs and TracDat). Besides this, the University employs two additional avenues to ensure appropriate breadth, depth, sequencing, and synthesis of student learning.

Syllabus Policy

To ensure that all courses have clearly stated learning outcomes that are shared with students, the University has a syllabus policy (6.36) that includes guidelines for all instructors. These policy guidelines (and corresponding syllabus template and example rubrics) allow each course to make explicit the learning outcomes students are expected to achieve, the various ways that student performance will be assessed, and the expected depth or level of learning. Faculty within individual departments routinely share syllabi and update student learning outcomes, assessment methods, and learning activities. Likewise, the General Education Committee (GEC) reviews all GE courses on a three-year cycle to ensure that courses that carry the GE designation are aligned with expected learning outcomes associated with each GE knowledge area.

When courses need to be adjusted in credit hours, updated content, or level (such as moving from 2000-level to 3000-level), faculty must provide an updated syllabus that reflects the new expectations of the course's content, rigor, and learning outcomes. This process is part of the curricular approval process and must be approved by department, college/school, and university curriculum committees.

Four-Year Degree Plans

In close consultation with each department, the Student Success Advisors publish four-year degree plans for each baccalaureate degree program. These are updated annually based on any adjusted major requirements published in the new General Catalog. These four-year degree plans provide students with guidance with respect to the sequencing of courses.

Standard 1.C.3
The institution identifies and publishes expected program and degree learning outcomes for all degrees, certificates, and credentials. Information on expected student learning outcomes for all courses is provided to enrolled students.

Program and Degree Learning Outcomes

Program learning outcomes are identified for all officially transcriptable credentials leading to a master's degree, baccalaureate degree, associate's degree, minor, Certificate of Proficiency, and Certificate of Completion. These learning outcomes are publicly available in each program's entry in the General Catalog. Some colleges/schools and departments also publish overall learning outcomes on their respective catalog entries and SUU.edu webpages (for examples of learning outcomes posted to webpages, see the College of Performing and Visual Arts, the Walter M. Gibson College of Sciences, the Department of Teacher Education, and the Department of Nursing). All programs in development must submit program learning outcomes as part of the curriculum proposal process and are reviewed and approved by faculty on department, college/school, and university curriculum committees before the programs may be forwarded for further approval by upper-level administrators.

Course Learning Outcomes

As explained above (in section 1.C.2), all courses offered at the University (including General Education courses) are required to have clearly stated learning outcomes that are shared with students via the course syllabus. These policy guidelines (and corresponding syllabus template and example rubrics) allow each course to make explicit the learning outcomes students are expected to achieve, the various ways that student performance will be assessed, and the expected depth or level of learning.

Enrolled students may access course syllabi through the University's official learning management system, Canvas, once the term begins. Instructors are expected to utilize Canvas at the minimum for either uploading their syllabus as a downloadable file or converting it into a web format. Course syllabi are also submitted to their respective departments each semester for each course, and students may request to review the syllabi at any time. Additionally, some departments require that their faculty maintain a website that provides access to course syllabi for both current and past courses.

Some departments also provide students with documentation in addition to the course syllabus that explicitly connects course learning outcomes to the course assignments. For an example of mapping course learning outcomes to course assignments, see **Addendum One, Appendix 1G**.

Standard 1.C.4
The institution's admission and completion or graduation requirements are clearly defined, widely published, and easily accessible to students and the public.

Admission Requirements

Admissions requirements are published in three publicly accessible places: the suu.edu/admissions website, the General Catalog, and within Policies and Procedures (specifically policies 6.5, 6.16, and 6.61). Information on undergraduate conditional admission and readmission after final probation is available in policy 6.31, within the General Catalog, and on the Office of Academic Success webpage. Links to the Admissions website and the General Catalog are included on all SUU.edu webpages in the header and footer respectively, allowing for easy access from any part of the website. Individual programs that require additional admission requirements above the institutional minimums list these requirements on individual program websites and in the General Catalog. For example, the undergraduate pre-licensure Nursing program requires formal admission to the major (as outlined on their admission page) and the Master of Athletic Training program requires documentation of at least 50 hours of observation with a Certified Athletic Trainer (as outlined on their admission page).

Readability and Accessibility of Admission Requirements

Readability and accessibility scores for admission requirements, as determined through the subscription web analytics program Siteimprove, are available in **Addendum One, Appendix 1H**. The overall accessibility score of the website is 87.2/100, which is above the industry benchmark for educational institutions. Of the webpages with a readability score (25 out of 27 pages, or 92.6%), 10 (40%) are rated on the Flesch Kincaid Reading Test as between 5th and 12th grade reading levels and the remaining 15 (60%) at college or college graduate level.

Application Process

Applicants to the University are sent an email with the requirements to complete the application within one work day of submission, and follow-up emails and physical letters are sent for incomplete applications 5 and 12 days later. A student portal with an Admission Checklist is also available to applicants within one work day of the application being submitted. Applicants may view the status of their application at any time after the portal has been created. They are able to verify the application term, major, items required and received, and the acceptance decision on the checklist. Once all checklist items have been received by the Office of Admissions, applicants are notified of an admission decision by email and physical letter the next business day.

Graduation Requirements

Graduation requirements adhere to USHE policies (R401 and R470) and specialized accreditation where applicable, and are accessible in several locations, including but not limited to the General Catalog, the SUU Program Finder, policies 6.49 and 6.62, and students' individual degree audits (offered through Ellucian Degree Works via the mySUU Portal). Students are able to monitor their progress toward graduation with Degree Works, as it will indicate which classes they have remaining, the number of credits they still need to earn, and their progress toward all other graduation requirements. Students are encouraged to meet with their Student Success Advisor (SSA) each semester to first create a degree completion plan and then, in subsequent meetings, to review that plan and Degree Works to ensure they are regularly apprised of their progress toward meeting graduation requirements. Suggested four-year schedules developed by

SSAs are also published online and updated annually after the new General Catalog requirements have been released.

Students wishing to change their major are required to first meet with the SSA who advises for their intended major. In this way, SSAs are able to identify for students the impact of changing their major on graduation requirements and the timeline for completing their new program. In Academic Affairs, during the curriculum approval process, all course and program changes must be vetted by a catalog expert in the Provost's Office after they have been approved at the department level but before they reach the college approval level. The catalog expert identifies potential issues with the proposed changes (e.g., increasing credits may increase time to graduation, course sequencing changes may make getting a full-time schedule more difficult, etc.) and requests that the appropriate College Curriculum Committee address these issues. Faculty and departments are also expected to periodically review their curriculum to ensure that the content, rigor, and quality of courses and academic programs are current and of the highest standards (see policies 6.2 and 6.28).

> ### *Standard 1.C.5*
> ***The institution engages in an effective system of assessment to evaluate the quality of learning in its programs. The institution recognizes the central role of faculty to establish curricula, assess student learning, and improve instructional programs.***

TracDat

TracDat supports the use of comprehensive assessment plans to inform planning and practices and to continuously improve student learning outcomes. As mentioned above, TracDat is organized into the following seven interrelated sections: (i) Student Learning Outcomes, (ii) Curriculum Map, (iii) Assessment System/Process, (iv) Assessment Methods and Targets, (v) Schedule, (vi) Assessment Results and Target Met, and (vii) Action and Follow-Up.

This framework of assessment supports continuous improvement by allowing faculty to assess student learning, evaluate the quality of learning, establish and improve the curriculum, and update instructional methods.

Examples
Using the TracDat software platform for organizing assessment plans, faculty in each academic program report the results of assessment, evaluate the quality of learning, monitor student achievement of learning, and plan for curricular changes and pedagogical improvements.

For example, within the School of Business, each program includes a faculty member (known as a "Knowledge Lead") to lead efforts related to the assurance of learning. These faculty members are responsible for leading curriculum and assurance of learning discussion during monthly meetings, ensuring student learning outcomes are appropriate and meet accreditation (AACSB) standards, ensuring execution of the assessment of learning plan, developing an annual curriculum improvement plan, and serving as a member of the department curriculum and assurance of learning committee.

Within the College of Education and Human Development, the Department of Family Life and Human Development holds weekly faculty meetings where the assessment plan is discussed and updated. While individual faculty members are responsible for setting their respective course activities and assessment methods, faculty collaborate to share learning activities, assessment methods, rubrics, and targets. Recently, the faculty developed a "faculty reflection" activity to document faculty reflections on student performance and develop an action-oriented goal for each course intended to improve student learning outcomes.

Within the College of Engineering and Computational Sciences, the Mathematics faculty have mapped their course learning outcomes to program learning outcomes and have identified a set of common questions and rubrics that are used for assessment. As they progress through the major, students are expected to gain additional knowledge and skills, and their level of performance is expected to increase. The faculty record results in TracDat and curriculum changes are discussed in department meetings and a formal vote is taken to approve changes to the curriculum.

Within the College of Health Sciences, the Agriculture faculty review assessment results at least once a year and discuss how to improve the curriculum. This includes reviewing course prerequisites, identifying the strategic use of High Impact Practices, ensuring the curriculum remains relevant to industry standards and assessment methods are valid, reliable, and fair measures of student performance.

Within the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, faculty in the French program hold annual meetings to discuss program-level assessment results for both lower-division and upper-division courses. The faculty compare these results to the established achievement targets and use this to inform decisions about changes to the curriculum. In addition to revising existing courses, the French faculty have used assessment results to develop new courses and change major requirements. In one instance, the faculty were unhappy with the available course textbooks offered by major publishers, so they developed their own Open Educational Resources (OERs) that would better align with the learning outcomes of the French program.

Within the College of Performing and Visual Arts, faculty in the Department of Art and Design collaborate to ensure meaningful assessment takes place at the course level, the program (major) level, and at the department level. At the course level, faculty have the primary responsibility over curriculum, subject matter, and pedagogical techniques. Curriculum changes are orchestrated by the Faculty Curriculum Chair where individual faculty bring proposals for curriculum changes. At the program level, the faculty have developed a comprehensive "foundation review" that all students complete to demonstrate basic proficiency across multiple areas (2-D design, 3-D design, drawing, digital technology, etc.). Using a common scoring rubric, all of the faculty in the department engage in assessment of the foundation review for each student.

Finally, within the College of Sciences, the Chemistry faculty align their course content and major requirements with the American Chemical Society standards and expectations. Both curriculum and assessments are regularly discussed during faculty meetings. The Chemistry program administers the American Chemical Society's standardized subject exams within

individual courses and utilizes two exit exams for the major: the ETS Major Field Test and the American Chemical Society's Diagnostic of Undergraduate Chemistry Knowledge (DUCK) exam. Moreover, the faculty maintain parity of course-level curriculum and assessment practices through a formal mentor/mentee system, as well as an informal but effective culture of regular communication and discussions between faculty. Laboratory courses with multiple sections are coordinated through a single person, with input on the curriculum and assessment from all instructors.

These examples illustrate how faculty carry out an effective system of assessment to evaluate the quality of learning outcomes, how faculty play a central role in both curriculum development and pedagogical innovation, and how faculty use the results of assessment to improve instructional programs.

> ### *Standard 1.C.6*
> ***Consistent with its mission, the institution establishes and assesses, across all associate and bachelor level programs or within a General Education curriculum, institutional learning outcomes and/or core competencies. Examples of such learning outcomes and competencies include, but are not limited to, effective communication skills, global awareness, cultural sensitivity, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and logical thinking, problem solving, and/or information literacy.***

General Education Learning Outcomes

In order to help achieve the overall goals of the Strategic Plan, the University is actively participating in the [Association of American Colleges & University (AAC&U)](#) program known as the [LEAP Initiative](#). LEAP stands for Liberal Education and America's Promise. One of the central tenets of LEAP is the Essential Learning Outcomes (ELO). The ELOs have been developed to articulate what 21st-century students need to know, understand, and be able to do upon completing their program of study at a college or university. The outcomes have been developed through work done with hundreds of colleges and universities across the nation to ascertain the important goals for student learning, and in consultation with the business community and employers, as well as analyzing the requirements of multiple accrediting agencies (business, nursing, engineering, and teacher education).

The [SUU Essential Learning Outcomes](#) (ELO) are slightly modified from the LEAP ELOs, and they are incorporated in numerous programs and classes offered at the University. Additional program-specific learning outcomes are noted in the General Catalog information provided by the colleges/schools and the departments. The ELOs are also foundational to the University's General Education Program. Policy [6.8](#) describes the curriculum approval process, including requirements for General Education courses.

Beginning in 2014, the University's ELOs were consistently assessed at the course level. Course-level assessment occurred in all courses with GE designation. Because ELOs are "essential" at the University, and because basically every University undergraduate participates in the GE Program, the GE Committee originally adopted a "coverage" model in which each ELO was assigned to one or more Core/Knowledge Areas, and each GE course addressed and

assessed two assigned ELOs plus one ELO of the faculty member's choice. Assessments occurred via a set of standardized rubrics in the University's learning management system, Canvas, designed to automatically collect assessment data in a centralized database. The standardized rubrics were modified from AAC&U's VALUE rubrics. A score of zero (0) indicated that a student did not meet a freshman-level expectation. Scores of 1-4 corresponded to performance that was equivalent to a freshman- through senior-level expectation. Faculty played a vital role in creating the assessment plan, determining which ELOs to address and assess in each GE course, creating learning exercises to address the ELOs, and creating meaningful assessments. Definitions of rigor are clearly stated on the GE Program's website, and they are used to determine appropriate levels of learning in GE courses. Learning outcomes are assessed based on student demonstration relative to expected performance targets. This *General Education Assessment Three-Year Report* summarizes the assessment strategy and results from Fall 2014 through Spring 2017 and was assembled in preparation for the University's materials for the NWCCU 2017 Mid-Cycle Review; it has also been included in **Addendum Three, Appendix 3B**.

After thoughtful evaluation and consideration of faculty input during 2018, SUU changed the requirement in January 2019 so that every GE course addressed and assessed at least two ELOs of the faculty member's choice. This *2018-2019 Assessment Strategy* document (also included in **Addendum Three, Appendix 3B)** summarizes the justification for the revised assessment strategy. The number of students assessed each semester for each learning outcome is depicted in a series of data dashboards and is also included at the end of **Addendum Three, Appendix 3B**, along with other examples of data dashboards related to GE assessment efforts.

The Strategic Planning Scorecard, described in section 1.B of this report, contains specific data on the University's progress toward achievement goals (see results for KPI #2.4 in **Addendum One, Appendix 1A**). The General Education Committee used these results, along with DFW rates in GE courses, systematic reviews of all GE courses' syllabi, and other data to inform conversations with departments about how to improve the GE Program. The GE Committee is composed of faculty representatives from across the colleges/schools, the Faculty Senate, and other at-large members of the campus community. The Committee meets monthly as a whole committee, and they also meet as smaller working groups to discuss assessment, curriculum review, and other pertinent topics. Through these and other conversations, the GE Committee helped departments to design initiatives to clarify expectations and provide additional student support. The Center of Excellence for Teaching & Learning also provided numerous workshops and other resources to faculty that focused on high impact practices and other evidence-based teaching strategies.

Standard 1.C.7
The institution uses the results of its assessment efforts to inform academic and learning-support planning and practices to continuously improve student learning outcomes.

TracDat

TracDat supports the use of assessment efforts to inform planning and practices and to continuously improve student learning outcomes. As mentioned above, TracDat is organized into the following seven interrelated sections: (i) Student Learning Outcomes, (ii) Curriculum Map, (iii) Assessment System/Process, (iv) Assessment Methods and Targets, (v) Schedule, (vi) Assessment Results and Target Met, and (vii) Action and Follow-Up.

This framework of assessment allows faculty to synthesize multiple aspects of student learning and focus on planning follow-up actions. As part of the preparation for writing this report, each program was asked to provide a summary of their efforts related to Standard 1.C.7. Those responses are available in the "Resources" folder in Box under the title "Assessment of Student Learning" in the subfolder called "Program Responses to NWCCU Standards."

Examples
Within the School of Business, the faculty members who contribute to the Master of Accountancy (M.Acc.) have identified four learning outcomes and monitor student achievement on an annual basis. As an AACSB-accredited program, faculty monitor direct assessments of student learning within M.Acc. courses and also student success rates for national examinations, such as the national Certified Public Accountant (CPA) exam. Based on the results of these two perspectives, the M.Acc. faculty make curricular adjustments to meet student needs. In one case, when national exam scores reveal deficiencies within the program, the program hired a dedicated tax professor.

Within the College of Education and Human Development, faculty in the Master of Education program conduct an annual review of student responses to the Institute for Systemic Program Improvement through Research in Educational Leadership (INSPIRE Leadership) Collaborative survey. This tool provides a survey and evaluation resources to support continuous improvement of leadership preparation, professional learning, and practice. The INSPIRE Leadership Survey is used by faculty to provide feedback on program designs, implementation, outcomes, and program improvement. Results from this survey are used to make improvements to leadership courses in the curriculum, including adjustments to learning outcomes, pedagogy, and learning activities.

Within the College of Engineering and Computational Sciences, faculty in the Construction Management program review and evaluate assessment results each spring. Based on these results, faculty identify ways to improve student learning through both curriculum changes and learning support initiatives. For example, one year it was noted that students were struggling to meet the performance criterion related to mathematics (such as trigonometry and linear algebra). To address this concern, the faculty identified specific Construction Management courses that were revised to include a review of key mathematical concepts and learning activities related to mathematical applications.

Within the College of Health Sciences, faculty in the Outdoor Recreation, Parks, and Tourism (ORPT) program use course-level and program-level learning outcomes to inform changes to course design (assignments, learning activities) and to adopt pedagogical innovations (such as the incorporation of research-based High Impact Practices). Likewise, the ORPT faculty have

integrated Library faculty (who specialize in a different discipline, namely Information Science) to assist with student research projects and they have connected students to the Writing Center on campus to support student writing. For example, ORPT 2040, ORPT 3060, and ORPT 4900 each include a significant writing assignment that requires students to conduct a literature review and synthesize information across sources. Librarians visit ORPT 2040 twice: the first session focuses on helping students find and evaluate sources for their paper, and the second session introduces them to the Synthesis Matrix tool. These skills are then revisited in ORPT 3060 and ORPT 4900.

Within the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, faculty in the English Literature program meet each fall semester to review assessment results and student performance on the ETS Field Exam in Literature. Using a common rubric, the faculty perform a comparative analysis of essays written by graduating students during their initial course in the major (ENGL 2400) and their final course in the major (ENGL 4800). Results of this comparative analysis informs curriculum changes, adjustments to learning outcomes, and other changes to assessment methods.

Within the College of Performing and Visual Arts, the Photography faculty used assessment results to integrate core learning outcomes from one course (ART 2110) into another course (ART 3800), thereby allowing the removal of ART 2110 and the creation of a new course (ART 2800) that emphasized more advanced photography outcomes. Also within the College of Performing and Visual Arts, faculty in Theatre Arts used annual program-level assessment results to plan and develop the next year's theatre production season. Assessment efforts have resulted in reprioritizing renovations to facilities and updating departmental policies and procedures linked to student learning.

Finally, within the College of Sciences, the Biology faculty review and discuss annually the results of assessment, including the specific assessment methods used and overall outcomes of student achievement. Using the ETS Major Field Exam in conjunction with their own course-based assessments, when the Biology faculty identify a course that is not meeting the goals outlined in the assessment plan, faculty members meet to ensure that the assessment tools are accurately reflecting the learning outcomes and/or to discuss activities or pedagogy to improve upon student understanding. This allows the Biology faculty to identify changes to the curriculum and other learning support initiatives, such as undergraduate research opportunities, programming to support student professional development, and peer mentoring programs.

These examples provide evidence that faculty are using the TracDat assessment framework to organize their efforts, perform meaningful (authentic) assessments of student learning, and initiate changes that support continuous improvement.

Student Learning Support Services
The University offers a variety of support services focused on helping students succeed. Learning support is available both institution-wide and through programs serving smaller subpopulations. Institution-wide services include the following:

- Tutoring Center - In-person and online tutoring (drop-in, pre-scheduled, and group tutoring) for over 150 courses, including high enrollment and high DFW courses.

- Writing Center - In-person and online assistance for writing across all disciplines, including support for both undergraduate and graduate students.
- Speech & Presentation Center - Guidance in organizing and outlining speeches, designing slides, and offering feedback on speeches and presentations.
- Testing Services - Testing location allowing faculty to recover instructional time and offer students extended time to complete exams in a controlled testing environment.

Learning support for subpopulations includes the following:

- Comprehensive Academic Support and Success (COMPASS) program - Academic success course and peer academic coaching for conditionally admitted students with low pre-college academic achievement scores.
- Academic Probation & Recovery Program - Required academic success course and peer academic coaching for students whose cumulative GPA has fallen below 2.0.
- TRiO Student Support Services - Academic counseling, life counseling, tutoring and grant aid for 160 low-income, first-generation, or disabled students.
- Athletics Academic Center - Quiet student space and tutoring for student-athletes.
- Language & Logic Lab - Tutoring for students enrolled in language and philosophy courses.
- CSIS Tutoring Lab - Tutoring for students enrolled in Computer Science & Information Systems courses.

All of these learning support services exist to support the learning outcomes of the courses they serve. The Speech & Presentation Center even asks students to provide their assignment rubric. In addition to supporting course learning outcomes, the Tutoring Center has identified additional learning outcomes. For example, students will report use of effective academic literacy skills. This outcome speaks to transferable skills and strategies that are discussed and modeled during tutoring sessions. These outcomes are assessed annually. Based on results, adjustments are made to the training of peer tutors, scope of services, and tutoring delivery modalities.

In general, these services also exist to contribute to the retention and graduation of students. Some, such as TRiO, have targets for GPA, retention rates, and/or completion rates. Students are informed about support services through a variety of means (depending on the culture and audience of each service). Methods of promotion can include orientations, resources fairs, periodic faculty and advisor recommendations and referrals, direct emails, class visits by tutors, social media, and open houses.

Standard 1.C.8
Transfer credit and credit for prior learning is accepted according to clearly defined, widely published, and easily accessible policies that provide adequate safeguards to ensure academic quality. In accepting transfer credit, the receiving institution ensures that such credit accepted is appropriate for its programs and comparable in nature, content, academic rigor, and quality.

Transfer Credits

In accordance with policy 6.47, the University accepts credit from institutionally accredited colleges and universities in the United States, as long as such credits have been earned through university-level courses and the institution is in good standing with its accreditor. The Registrar's Office relies heavily upon academic departments to evaluate incoming transfer work for rigor and content equivalency. Each time a transcript is received, course descriptions for courses that have not been previously evaluated are sent to the Department Chair of the appropriate academic department for evaluation via a dedicated email address. Once departments determine an equivalency, the documentation is filed within the email so that it can be referenced in the future. This information is then added to the publicly accessible SUU Transfer Guide and is updated weekly with new information through a data extract from the institution's Student Information System, Banner.

The Registrar's Office manages daily reports to monitor that the process is being conducted in a timely and consistent manner. If a department has not responded within one week, a follow-up email is sent. In-state transcripts generally are evaluated within one week, while out-of-state transcripts can take as long as one month. Transcript evaluation times vary based on factors such as transcript quantity, staffing in the Registrar's Office, time of year, and staffing in feeder offices.

Transfer students receive a transcript evaluation that illustrates how each of their previous courses articulates to the University, either as a direct equivalent or elective credit. Students with international transfer credit work directly with International Admissions. Students may appeal transfer credit decisions by providing additional course materials, such as a syllabus or other documentation, to the department chair or program director of that course's discipline.

USHE System Transfer
The Utah System of Higher Education (USHE) facilitates annual faculty-driven Majors Meetings for the eight system institutions. During these meetings, faculty representatives from the system's academic disciplines convene to (1) align learning outcomes and competencies across the system, (2) address transfer and articulation agreements between lower and upper-division programs and make transferring between system institutions seamless, and (3) ensure that all pre-major and lower-division courses that are similar in content, rigor, and standards have common course numbering. Majors meetings also determine commonly acceptable cut-off scores for Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, DSST, and College-Level Examination Program tests.

WICHE Transfer
Southern Utah University participates in the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) Interstate Passport Network, a network of regionally accredited institutions that agree to transfer completed General Education requirements as a block in a seamless and efficient process among its members. Students who transfer into Southern Utah University with a Passport from another Network-member institution will not have to repeat or take additional courses to satisfy lower-division General Education requirements.

Southwest Technical College Dual Enrollment Program
In 2019, SUU and Southwest Technical College (STECH) created a Dual Enrollment Program that allows students from each institution to benefit from the educational offerings of both institutions. Course equivalencies have been identified through a series of articulation agreements so that students can combine coursework from both institutions to reach their educational goals. A complete list of up-to-date course equivalencies can be found online, accessible to the public.

Because the agreement allows for SUU students to enroll at STECH and receive SUU credit, students have access to a broad spectrum of courses and programs that are currently unavailable for University credit. Areas of study such as welding, culinary arts, automotive technology, and others that are not taught at SUU can now be taken for SUU credit. Students can choose to take one or more of these courses as an elective for their major, or they can choose to pursue an STECH certificate alongside their SUU diploma.

Likewise, STECH students can enroll in a certificate program at STECH, opt-in to the Dual Enrollment Program, and earn university credit at SUU for articulated courses completed at STECH. This allows students to pursue an STECH certificate and earn University credit at more affordable rates.

In addition to course-by-course articulation, Southern Utah University has developed several Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.) in General Technology degree programs that are designed to support students transferring from STECH. Students who complete an articulated 900+ clock hour certificate from STECH are eligible to earn a single block of 30 University credits to count toward a 63-69 credit A.A.S. in General Technology degree.

Prior Learning Credits

The University maintains a website for prior learning credits that consolidates the different types of opportunities that students have to earn additional credits through prior experience, such as Advanced Placement (AP), College-Level Examination Program (CLEP), departmental test-outs, military credits, and more. The website serves as a landing page that offers summaries and associated costs of each opportunity as well as links for further information on the necessary forms and approvals required for each type. Information on prior learning credits is also available in the General Catalog and in policy 6.47.

In response to a recent initiative by the Utah System of Higher Education, in Fall 2019 the University created a Prior Learning Committee to review existing standards for the award of credit for prior learning and develop new university policies related to prior learning assessment and other forms of prior learning. Importantly, these standards and policies must be consistent with other institutions within USHE. A new USHE policy (R472) was created in November 2019, and at the time of writing this report, that policy is undergoing significant revision (expected to be approved in spring 2021). Once that system-wide policy revision is complete, the University will embark on a policy revision effort to ensure alignment with new and recently revised USHE policies.

The institution's graduate programs are consistent with its mission, are in keeping with the expectations of its respective disciplines and professions, and are described through nomenclature that is appropriate to the levels of graduate and professional degrees offered. The graduate programs differ from undergraduate programs by requiring, among other things, greater: depth of study; demands on student intellectual or creative capacities; knowledge of the literature of the field; and ongoing student engagement in research, scholarship, creative expression, and/or relevant professional practice.

Specialized Accreditation and Professional Standards

According to the Utah System of Higher Education (USHE) policy ([R312](#)), the University's is designated as a "regional university" therefore its state-defined role is to "provide career and technical education, undergraduate associate and baccalaureate programs and select master's degree programs to fill regional or state workforce demands."

Development of graduate programs is guided by this and aligns with the University's specific mission. In this way, the University's array of graduate programs include a combination of traditional graduate programs (M.A. and M.S.) that typically culminate in a thesis or applied research, and professional graduate programs (M.B.A., M.P.A., etc.) that are closely connected with professional standards and culminate in applied research or professional projects.

The majority of graduate programs maintain [specialized accreditation](#), including Accountancy (M.Acc.), Athletic Training (M.A.T.), Business Administration (M.B.A.), Business Analytics (M.S.), Education (M.Ed.), Public Administration (M.P.A.), Music Education (M.M.E.), and Music Technology (M.M.). The remaining graduate programs are closely aligned with standards and expectations established by professional organizations, including Arts Administration (M.A., M.F.A.), Cyber Security and Information Assurance (M.S.), Interdisciplinary Studies (M.I.S.), Professional Communication (M.A.), and Sports Conditioning and Performance (M.S.).

Specialized accreditation and alignment with professional standards assure that the University's graduate programs are designed around learning outcomes and subject matter recognized by the discipline, specialized fields of study, and/or professional standards. Moreover, alignment with specialized accreditation and professional standards ensures graduate programs are differentiated from undergraduate programs in terms of depth of study, demands on students, knowledge of the literature of the field, and ongoing student engagement in research, scholarship, creative expression, and relevant professional practice.

As part of the preparation for writing this report, each graduate program was asked to provide a response related to Standard 1.C.9. Those responses are available in the resource folder uploaded in Box under the folder called "Assessment of Student Learning." Below are several examples provided as evidence regarding how graduate programs at the University are differentiated from undergraduate programs by requiring greater: depth of study, demands on student intellectual or creative capacities, knowledge of the literature of the field, and ongoing student engagement in research, scholarship, creative expression, and/or relevant professional practice.

<u>Examples</u>
Within the School of Business, all three graduate programs (Accountancy, Business Administration, and Business Analytics) are fully accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), with its most recent comprehensive Continuous Improvement Review (CIR) completed in Fall 2020. In particular, the Master of Accountancy (M.Acc.) program has clearly published admission standards, adheres to graduate-level learning expectations established by AACSB, has identified four central program-level learning outcomes, and is designed to satisfy the State of Utah's eligibility requirements to take the Certified Public Accounting (CPA) exam. All of this ensures that graduates from the program learn discipline-appropriate content and skills and are prepared to successfully enter the field of accounting as a professional.

Within the College of Education and Human Development, the Master of Education (M.Ed.) program includes graduate coursework that aligns with appropriate ETS Praxis tests. The M.Ed. offers several pathways to complete the program, including a pathway dedicated to educational administration and leadership. For this pathway, graduate coursework and program outcomes are aligned with the Utah State Board of Education's *Utah Effective Leaderships Standards* and the ETS Praxis test for *Educational Leadership: Administration and Supervision* (5412).

Within the College of Engineering and Computational Sciences, the M.S. in Cyber Security and Information Assurance (CSIA) program requires 33 credits of core and elective courses designed to prepare graduates to enter the workforce prepared with technical knowledge and skills, as well as leadership and management abilities. The CSIA courses include current cyber security topics and frameworks used by the industry (e.g., NIST, FEDRAMP, and COBIT). While a thesis option is available, students who are already employed in the cybersecurity field typically complete a capstone project under the supervision of a faculty mentor that allows them to apply their learning in a professional setting. Currently, the CSIA program does not have specialized accreditation; however, the CSIA faculty adhere to the best practices and resources recommended by the National Security Association's *Center of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense Education* (CAE-CDE). In fact, the University's Department of Computer Science and Information Systems (where the CSIA program is housed) maintains a secure space dedicated to digital forensics and malware analysis. This center is designated as a CAE-CDE, officially recognized by both the National Security Agency and the Department of Homeland Security.

Within the College of Health Sciences, the M.S. in Sports Conditioning and Performance (MSSCP) program is recognized by the National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA) as one of its Educational Recognized Program (ERP). The MSSCP program learning outcomes are fully aligned with the NSCA's ERP standards for graduate-level content and depth. Moreover, the MSSCP program is nationally ranked in the discipline by five organizations that focus on quality of education at a graduate level, including College Choice, Online Masters Organization, College Affordability Guide, Student Success Organization, and College Rank Organization.

Within the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, the Master of Public Administration (M.P.A.) is accredited by the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA). In addition to aligning its outcomes with NASPAA's seven accreditation standards,

the M.P.A. program ensures that graduates are provided with an education that aligns with both the discipline and the profession. With its professional and practitioner-oriented approach, the M.P.A. program includes a rigorous set of requirements in leadership, management, public-sector budgeting, research methods, ethics and critical thinking, human resources, and administrative law. Differentiating itself from undergraduate programs, the M.P.A. includes applied, professional projects and action research.

Finally, within the College of Performing and Visual Arts, the Arts Administration (AA) program is offered in two forms: first, as a residential, 60-credit terminal Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.) program, or second, as an online, 36-credit Master of Arts (M.A.) program. Using the foundation of the Association of Arts Administration Educators (AAAE) Graduate Standards and Curriculum Guides, the AA faculty meet formally six times per year to assess and adjust course and program content and learning outcomes, ensuring that all are aligned with disciplines and professions within the field of arts administration. Course content is adjusted annually, as well as on an as-needed basis, to reflect current issues, updated research and practice, and relevance to the needs of professional arts organizations.

For the M.F.A. program, faculty also meet with graduate assistantship supervisors formally each semester to assess the state of the academic and professional experiences students are receiving. Additionally, as reflective of the difference between undergraduate and graduate study, the graduate admissions process is rigorous and competitive. Admissions packets include a resume, three letters of recommendation, and a writing sample. The day-long admission interviews highlight the transferrable skills related to graduate life, and involve an Admissions Committee, Assistantship Mentors, the Dean's Office, and current students. Upon admittance, the Orientation Conference serves as a training camp that builds upon the rigorous admissions process and formally demonstrates expectations from faculty, staff, and cohorts. Current students plan and execute the orientation event, providing an experiential learning opportunity while disseminating and passing on the culture of the program, which provides an additional assessment of their own experience in their first year.

As these examples illustrate, graduate programs align with the University's mission, they adhere to the expectations of their respective disciplines and professions, they are described in the General Catalog and on other webpages using language that accurately captures admission requirements and program requirements, and they differ from undergraduate programs by requiring greater depth of study, additional demands on student intellectual or creative capacities, more advanced knowledge of the literature of the field, and engage students in appropriate forms research, scholarship, creative expression, or professional practice.

Standard 1.D - Student Achievement

Standard 1.D.1
Consistent with its mission, the institution recruits and admits students with the potential to benefit from its educational programs. It orients students to ensure they understand the requirements related to their programs of study and receive timely, useful, and accurate information and advice about relevant academic requirements, including graduation and transfer policies.

Recruitment and Admission

The University has a highly developed recruitment plan for domestic and international students, as well as online and graduate students. These plans are updated annually and serve as an active roadmap for those centrally responsible for recruitment efforts. In the process of developing these recruitment plans, the University has partnered with Ruffalo Noel-Levitz (RNL) to identify several key markets of prospective students and has dedicated resources to strategically achieve enrollment goals.

Domestic Admissions
Admission counselors are assigned geographic territories that support the University's strategic enrollment efforts. Outreach to students, high schools, and guidance counselors through in-person visits, phone calls, social media, and electronic communication is performed by all admissions counselors. Names and contact information from college entrance exam testing organizations are purchased that consider geography, the prospective student's academic area of interest, and other characteristics to promote and communicate opportunities to students who may benefit from the University's academic programs. A robust campus visit program has been developed and marketed to students and families. In conjunction with the Office of Marketing Communication, a well-developed communication plan has been created that includes print and electronic communication across multiple platforms and social media channels.

International Admissions
Regions of the world are assigned to professional staff members within International Affairs. Prior to COVID-19, these staff members traveled to various parts of the world to participate in recruitment efforts and provide information about the University to prospective students and families. Partnerships have been developed with international institutions and include transfer agreements, dual degree programs, and student exchanges. These efforts have established opportunities for students all around the world. For prospective international students, the University offers a [virtual campus tour](#) that includes a live presentation by a professional staff member who provides information about campus, programs of study, cost, and the admissions process. A short campus tour video featuring SUU students is also shown. International Affairs staff members are actively engaged in lead generation efforts and have a communication plan that provides timely information to prospective students.

Online and Graduate Admissions
Within the SUU Online office, professional staff are assigned to specific academic online undergraduate and graduate programs and work closely with prospective students via phone and electronic communication. Significant lead generation efforts are made utilizing various social

media platforms. Prospective student names are purchased from graduate entrance exam companies, and students are contacted. Staff members have developed an automated communication plan to ensure timely response to leads and inquiries. Staff members supplement these automated communications with personal outreach and follow-up as appropriate. The staff members also engage in other activities such as participation in graduate fairs and industry events in an effort to introduce the University's educational programs to targeted student markets.

Understanding Academic Requirements

In addition to maintaining a robust and public set of academic requirements through its General Catalog, the University also conducts a variety of recruitment events, such as open houses and campus visit programs. These events include each academic college/school and provide opportunities for prospective students to learn more about the academic requirements in each program. Each summer a training event entitled "Deans Days" is organized by SUU Enrollment Management. The purpose of the event is to train and update recruitment staff on programs of study and share information on any changes or new programs. Finally, the University belongs to the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) and the International Association for College Admission Counseling (IACAC). In particular, NACAC has created a Guide to Ethical Practice in College Admission and the University has committed to following and adhering to its principles.

While the University adheres to selective admission standards, in some cases first-time students are allowed to matriculate into a conditional admission program. This program, known as Comprehensive Academic Support and Success (COMPASS), permits students who do not otherwise meet the University's admission requirements to enroll and establish their ability to successfully navigate the demands of university-level studies. The COMPASS program includes a structured series of supports (including a study skills class and one-on-one meetings with academic success specialists) to ensure they have the support and guidance they need for success at the University.

Per policy 6.31, the University maintains an Academic Standards and Admissions Committee chaired by an academic dean with the purpose of ensuring that the institution either conditionally admits students (into the COMPASS program as first-time students) or re-admits students (after a probation-required suspension or transfer with a GPA less than 2.0) who demonstrate the potential to benefit from the academic programs offered by the University. The committee membership includes representatives from the Admissions Office, Student Affairs, International Affairs, and the Faculty Senate.

Orientation

Domestic On-Campus Students

For incoming domestic on-campus students, the University requires a mandatory two-part orientation. Over the summer, before students arrive on campus, they are required to complete an online orientation that educates them on student success, best practices, student life, study skills, academic integrity, campus resources, academics, Title IX, and other topics. The week before fall semester starts, students are required to attend an in-person orientation called Thunder U, where students attend a resource fair regarding campus and community services, meet their

academic dean and faculty members, engage with their Student Success Advisor, and participate in Title IX training. Peer mentors (ACES, discussed below) are responsible for ensuring incoming students complete the online portion of orientation over the summer, and they also take attendance at the in-person portion of orientation.

Throughout the summer and during Thunder U, Student Success (academic) Advisors collaborate with every incoming student to prepare their first-semester class schedule. Systematic outreach occurs to ensure that each student has an appropriate schedule, they understand how any transfer credits will be applied, and they understand how their upcoming classes will fulfill requirements of their academic program, the requirements of General Education, and/or how such credits may count as electives.

To ensure that students fully understand the requirements of their program and how to efficiently make progress toward a degree, first-year students are not allowed to register without guidance from a Student Success Advisor during their first two semesters. An advising syllabus is posted on the Advising website as a resource for students. While students may be mentored by their Student Success Advisor throughout their time at the University, each first-year student is assigned a peer mentor (called ACES, Assistant Coaches for Excellence & Success), and second-year students also have peer mentors (called Leads).

At the end of Thunder U, a survey is administered to all students to get feedback on the effectiveness and relevance of the material they learned and experiences they had during the orientation process. Using the feedback from the survey, the University makes necessary changes to future orientation activities and schedules.

International On-Campus Students
Once on campus, international students are assisted with moving into their housing, buying groceries and other necessities, setting up cell phone plans, and opening a U.S. bank account. International students are also required to attend a two-day orientation that provides in-depth information regarding campus resources, laws and customs, and student visa maintenance and regulations.

As an extension of orientation, all first-year international students are enrolled in a First Year Experience course for international students. This course is designed to help international students adjust to their new surroundings, covering a wide range of topics that aid students in the acculturation process. These topics include preparing for and addressing culture shock, academic and personal success at the University, understanding immigration laws, getting involved on campus, academic integrity, utilizing campus resources, and better understanding aspects of culture within the United States and the State of Utah, as well as life in Cedar City and on campus.

Prior to the standard campus-wide orientation, on-campus international students receive a supplemental orientation that includes one-on-one support from International Affairs staff and regular communication that begins the moment a student is admitted to the University. International Affairs staff are responsible for preparing for and coordinating the arrival of every

international student each semester. This includes arranging for housing, assisting with the visa interview, making flight arrangements, airport pickup, and assisting with course registration.

Online and Graduate Students
Incoming online and graduate students participate in an online orientation program. Students are assigned a Student Success Advisor who helps enroll them in classes, monitors their progress, follows up as needed, and mentors them throughout their academic program. From the time of admission, graduate students are in close contact with their graduate program director and are provided detailed instruction, support, and guidance based on the requirements of each graduate program.

> ### *Standard 1.D.2*
> ***Consistent with its mission and in the context of and in comparison with regional and national peer institutions, the institution establishes and shares widely a set of indicators for student achievement including, but not limited to, persistence, completion, retention, and postgraduation success. Such indicators of student achievement should be disaggregated by race, ethnicity, age, gender, socioeconomic status, first generation college student, and any other institutionally meaningful categories that may help promote student achievement and close barriers to academic excellence and success (equity gaps).***

Indicators of Student Achievement

In addition to the Strategic Plan Scorecard and the six KPIs, the University has identified seven effectiveness measures within the Division of Academic Affairs: major enrollment, course DFW rates, retention rate, graduation rate, degrees awarded, average credit hours at degree completion, and job placement rate. The data for these indicators are accessible by all employees in the data dashboard and can be broken down by college, department, and major. Department chairs are required to review the data each summer in preparation for completing the annual Unit Effectiveness Plans (UEPs) (see **Addendum One, Appendix 1D** for more information about UEPs). Completing these UEPs helps to prompt department chairs to engage their faculty in planning for continuous improvement in relation to these indicators that align with the University's larger goals. These academic metrics are utilized by other student achievement stakeholders for planning and program design. For example, the Tutoring Center uses DFW rates by discipline to inform outreach efforts and tutoring support offerings.

Peer Comparisons
As discussed in Standard 1.B, the University compares its enrollment, retention rates, and graduation rates to a set of regional and national institutions (see **Addendum One, Appendix 1A, Table 4**). These comparisons provide perspective and allow the University to understand shifts of indicators of achievement within a regional and national context. Likewise, compared to its peers, the University closely monitors national survey results such as the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI).

Disaggregated Indicators

Student achievement data has been disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, race, Pell Grant eligibility, and other factors, and this disaggregation has provided useful data and insight for administrators, faculty, and staff (see **Addendum One, Appendix 1B**). The University has utilized disaggregated data to analyze the progress of students and promote equitable student achievement. For example, the University has invested resources to increase the number of staff in the office of Online Teaching and Learning (OTL) to contribute to student achievement goals. In addition, data from student exit surveys led to the hiring of a financial wellness counselor and the implementation of a financial wellness program in 2018. Since the start of the program, the number of financially based withdrawals has decreased by 35%.

The University regularly monitors first-year retention rates, overall persistence, and graduation rates through several supporting data dashboards available to faculty and staff. Where appropriate, there are cohort summaries, semester-based summaries, and (in some cases) weekly summaries (for next-term registration and persistence rates). In most of these data dashboards, student success measures can be further analyzed by various key demographics (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, admission index, high school GPA, age, student-athletes, those living on-campus vs. off-campus, etc.). This allows University leaders to quickly adapt and change outreach, key initiatives, and persistence processes relative to key student populations.

A dashboard available to Student Success Advisors and others within the Division of Student Affairs displays key information for each student, including retention and graduation prediction scores and GPA/grade data. This dashboard also provides those within the Division of Student Affairs with important information for identifying and reaching out to students at risk of not succeeding in their academic endeavors. More recently, daily student and course files were added, providing administrators, deans, department chairs, and others with the information needed to identify and reach out to students who have not yet re-enrolled and to make sure sufficient seats are available to students in required courses.

Post-Graduation Success

As mentioned above (section 1.B) and explained in **Addendum One, Appendix 1A**, the University identified KPI #4 (Preparedness for Post-Graduation) and includes several associated measures to track progress. These associated measures include student responses to specific questions on two national surveys (NSSE and SSI) as well as information collected by the Career and Professional Development Center.

The Career and Professional Development Center offers students (and alumni) a wide range of career-readiness support services, including resume writing, on-campus employment, off-campus employment and internships, major and career exploration, interviewing skills, and career fairs and graduate school fairs. The Center aligns its efforts with the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) and its professional staff members remain engaged in the national literature regarding post-secondary career-readiness.

In addition to metrics tracked within the Center (attendance at career fairs, number of career assessments performed, etc.), all graduating students are asked to complete the Graduate Questionnaire (administered through the student's mySUU Portal) and information is collected

regarding the student's plans following graduation, their purpose of pursuing a degree, their prior involvement with internships, and their updated contact information. Results of this questionnaire are then assembled into a data dashboard where macro-level data are presented and can be filtered by level of degree obtained, by graduation year, and by college, department, and major. These institutional metrics are included in the Strategic Plan Scorecard and aligned under KPI #4, along with other institutional measures, such as student responses to key career-readiness questions in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI). See **Addendum One, Appendix 1B** for more information about KPI #4 and preparation for post-graduation success.

> ### _Standard 1.D.3_
> **_The institution's disaggregated indicators of student achievement should be widely published and available on the institution's website. Such disaggregated indicators should be aligned with meaningful, institutionally identified indicators benchmarked against indicators for peer institutions at the regional and national levels and be used for continuous improvement to inform planning, decision making, and allocation of resources._**

Disaggregated Indicators of Student Achievement

Data Dashboards, Surveys, and Factbooks
The University values data and has a culture of making data-informed decisions. As described above, the University has developed a Strategic Plan Scorecard and six institutional Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). These are described in detail in **Addendum One, Appendix 1A**. These KPIs, along with their associated measures, are displayed in a series of data dashboards and are accessible to all University employees through the password-protected mySUU Portal.

In addition to these data dashboards, the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) publishes a variety of student achievement and satisfaction results. This includes results from national surveys, such as the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) as well as the Student Satisfaction Survey (SSI). The results of these national surveys include key comparisons to peer institutions that were identified by the organization that sponsored each survey. An analysis is also provided that compares the University's most recent results in relation to the University's prior results. These results (provided by a third-party vendor) include some disaggregated student data, but do not include disaggregated student demographic data for comparable institutions.

In terms of enrollment, OIRA has developed a publicly accessible series of data dashboards to help report on enrollment, retention, and graduation rates. Under the navigation section entitled "Factbooks," members of the general public can access detailed enrollment data (e.g., third week and end-of-term; headcount, full-time equivalent, budget-related full-time equivalent) for a variety of student demographics (e.g., gender, sex, age, country, race/ethnicity, residence, etc.) as well as other academic details (e.g., college, department, and major).

Also under "Factbooks," OIRA publishes a dashboard ("Student Persistence") where members of the general public can access the University's up-to-date rates for retention and graduation. However, this public information does not include disaggregated student demographic data.

Comparative Equity Gap Analysis

As mentioned above, using the data available through IPEDS, OIRA completed an equity gap analysis that was disaggregated by student demographic data (see **Addendum One, Appendix 1B** for a detailed report). This report used the University's official peer list (the same set of regional and national peer institutions used for the CUPA Benchmarking effort; see **Addendum One, Appendix 1A, Table 4**) and was compiled using disaggregated student achievement data. This information was then benchmarked against regional and national peers. The information presented in the report includes enrollment and graduation rates and has been disaggregated by gender, financial aid eligibility, and race/ethnicity. This report has been shared with the new Attainment Gaps Committee.

The Attainment Gaps Committee was selected by the Provost's Office through a robust and transparent process in which interested individuals completed a campus-wide survey describing their experiences, expertise, and interests related to attainment gaps. The Committee's charge is to identify campus resources, key data, and individuals committed to the University's current diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives (see **Addendum One, Appendix 1F**) to support the University's new Chief Diversity Officer and to share collective responsibility for reducing attainment gaps at the University. An attainment gap is defined by USHE's Equity Lens Framework as the lack of access that underserved groups face, due to systemic barriers, when seeking educational advancement or gainful employment. The Committee identified five areas of focus:

1. Systemic and Campus Barriers to Success
2. Campus Climate and Support Services for Marginalized, Underserved, and Underrepresented Students and Employees
3. Employee Hiring, Student Recruiting Practices, and Retention Efforts
4. Pedagogical Practices and Curricular Design
5. USHE/SUU Strategic Planning and Key Performance Indicators

The Attainment Gaps Committee was divided into working groups to investigate each area of focus, gather existing data, and identify areas where more data is necessary. The new Associate Provost and Chief Diversity Officer will chair the Committee and lead the campus efforts to collect, analyze, and interpret new data, and to design and implement initiatives to close attainment gaps.

In summary, the University has been able to gather, report, and analyze important student success data in ways that include disaggregated results by key student demographics. In some cases, the University has been able to gather, report, and analyze important student success data that includes peer comparisons. At this point, however, the University is still developing key institutional reports related to student success that include results that are both disaggregated by student demographics and in terms of peer comparisons.

Improvement Efforts

DFW Rates
Between 2015-2016 and 2019-2020, DFW rates have decreased for all age groups, female and male students, and all race/ethnicity groups except for students who identify as Two or More Races (see **Addendum One, Appendix 1A, Table 10**).

Retention Rate
When comparing Fall 2015 and Fall 2019 cohorts, retention rates have increased for all age groups 24 and younger, as well as male and female student populations overall. The University has increased retention rates for students who identify as American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Hispanic, Nonresident Alien, and White, but has decreased rates for students who identify as Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, or Two or More Races (see **Addendum One, Appendix 1A, Table 8**). However, the University's underrepresented minority cohorts tend to be small so retention rates among them can fluctuate greatly based on total enrollment.

Graduation Rate
Graduation rates have generally decreased across age, gender, and race/ethnicity groups from Fall 2010 to Fall 2014 cohorts (see **Addendum One, Appendix 1A, Table 9**). Again, SUU's underrepresented minority cohorts tend to be small, so this decrease may be due to multiple other factors. Moreover, as graduation rates are measured six years after the cohort's starting semester, more recent efforts and initiatives to improve the graduation rate may not yet be reflected in the data.

However, the Fall 2015 and Fall 2016 cohorts are progressing well and are ahead in their preliminary graduation rates when compared to the Fall 2010 to Fall 2014 cohorts (as shown in 1.B.1 under "Evidence of Improvement"). This positive trend for the Fall 2015 and Fall 2016 cohorts applies to male and female students, age groups 20 or younger, and students who identify as Hispanic or White. Results are mixed for age groups 21 and older and students who identify as American Indian or Alaska Native and Black or African American. SUU is not currently seeing a positive trend in the Fall 2015 and Fall 2016 cohorts for students who identify as Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, Nonresident Alien, or Two or More Races.

Graduation Rates and Peer Comparisons
The University also tracks graduation rates in comparison to its regional and national peers using disaggregated student demographic data. Using the same set of peer institutions mentioned previously (see **Addendum One, Appendix 1A, Table 4** and also **Addendum One, Appendix 1B**) the University identified the 75th percentile among these peer institutions as a benchmark for comparisons across different student cohorts. This allows the University to track graduation rates over time in comparison with its peers. Below are summaries of three different peer comparisons for graduation rates.

First, when comparing 6-year graduation rates for Fall 2009 and Fall 2013 cohorts (IPEDS reporting year 2015 and year 2019):

- Men improved 3 percentage points (from 8 percentage points below the 75th percentile to 5 percentage points below the 75th percentile).
- Women improved 2 percentage points (from 4 percentage points below the 75th percentile to 2 percentage points below the 75th percentile).
- Students who identify as American Indian or Alaska Native improved from the 25th percentile to median.
- Students who identify as Asian improved 12 percentage points (from 17 percentage points below the 75th percentile to 5 percentage points below the 75th percentile).
- Students who identify as Black or African American decreased 17 percentage points (from 6 percentage points above the 25th percentile to 11 percentage points below the 25th percentile).
- Students who identify as Hispanic improved 19 percentage points (from 15 percentage points below the 75th percentile to 4 percentage points above the 75th percentile).
- Students who identify as Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander improved 4 percentage points (from median to 4 percentage points above the median).
- Nonresident Alien students improved 31 percentage points (from 30 percentage points below the median to 1 percentage point above the median).

Second, when comparing 6-year graduation rates for Fall 2010 and Fall 2013 cohorts (IPEDS reporting year 2016 and year 2019):

- Pell Grant recipients improved at the University, but decreased 1 percentage point in relation to its peers (from 1 percentage point above the 75th percentile to right at the 75th percentile).
- Non-recipients of Pell Grant or Subsidized Stafford Loans improved 2 percentage points (from 4 percentage points below the 75th percentile to 2 percentage points below the 75th percentile).

Third, and finally, when comparing IPEDS reporting year 2017 and 2019 for Outcome Measures:

- Pell and non-Pell recipients have similar 4-year, 6-year, and 8-year graduation rates. However, Pell recipients have improved in 4-year, 6-year, and 8-year graduation rates whereas non-Pell recipients have only improved in 4-year graduation rates while staying the same in 6-year and 8-year rates. Pell recipients also do better in relative position compared to their peers than non-Pell recipients; Pell recipients are generally around or above the 75th percentile whereas non-Pell recipients are generally around the median.

In summary, the University has identified, collects, and publishes important indicators of student achievement and includes disaggregated student demographics. This allows the University to track the success of its students over time and also make comparisons with its regional and national peers. Multiple student success efforts all across campus use these results to inform their planning efforts, their interventions and initiatives, and to track overall effectiveness. By monitoring these results over time, the University is able to use results for continuous improvement, decision making, and resource allocation.

Standard 1.D.4
The institution's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing indicators of student achievement are transparent and are used to inform and implement strategies and allocate resources to mitigate perceived gaps in achievement and equity.

As explained previously (in section 1.B), the University's Strategic Plan, the refined Strategic Plan Scorecard, and the six Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) identify institutional indicators of student achievement and mission fulfillment. These indicators are updated regularly, results are published in a series of data dashboards and status reports, and all of these materials are accessible to any employee. With the exception of the password-protected data dashboards, these materials are available to members of the general public.

Individual units (offices, departments, etc.) across campus develop their own indicators of mission fulfillment and ensure that these are aligned with institutional indicators (see the discussion of Unit Effectiveness Plans above in section 1.B.1). At this local level, these units refer to indicators of achievement to monitor their overall effectiveness. Updated results are used to inform, implement, and refine student success strategies and intervention initiatives, including the allocation of resources within local budgets.

At the institutional level, to support a transparent, mission-focused approach to the allocation of resources, the University has developed a participatory annual budgeting process that was referenced above in section 1.B above, explained in detail in 1.B.3, and also discussed in the **Standard Two (PRFR) Report** and is the subject of **Addendum Three, Appendix 3A**.

This budgeting process has allocated resources to several initiatives to support student retention, persistence, and completion. For example, funding was allocated to develop a peer-mentoring retention program (ACES), a sophomore persistence program (SOAR), additional capacity for the Tutoring Center, and additional CAPS counselors (for more information about each of these efforts, please see Standard Two, section 2.G.6). Likewise, the University allocated resources to help meet the financial needs of students through adjustments in scholarships and other forms of financial aid, in addition to a commitment to not increase tuition and general student fees over the past several years (see Standard Two, sections 2.G.4, 2.G.5, and 2.E.3 for more information). Each of these initiatives identified critical barriers to student achievement and has contributed to the improvements noted above (section 1.D.3).

The Attainment Gaps Committee (mentioned above in section 1.D.3), is collecting and analyzing various disaggregated indicators of student achievement in order to identify any equity gaps. Under the leadership of the new Chief Diversity Officer (a position that itself was created in 2018 in order to address critical achievement gaps and address equity issues), the Committee will develop a series of recommendations to reduce barriers, close existing attainment gaps, and engage individual units (such as advising, financial aid, the teaching center, etc.) with implementation of targeted initiatives to help address equity gaps. The Attainment Gaps Committee will work closely with the Office of Equity & Inclusion (OEI) and in support of fulfilling the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Plan.

Several ongoing efforts within the Division of Student Affairs are also worth highlighting. During new student Orientation, surveys are used to collect critical information related to various aspects of student achievement (prior academic preparation, current critical issues, ability to pay for college, etc.). Along with demographic information for each student, the results of these surveys are used to identify key risk factors related to student retention and persistence. Taken together, these surveys and the student demographic information allows the University's various intervention units to take action and provide students with customized support. Additionally, withdrawal data is analyzed every semester to identify themes and trends. Based on these trends, anti-melt campaigns are conducted each semester that include marketing, phone calls, emails, and activities to minimize the number of students who stop going to class or drop out.

Within the Division of Academic Affairs, the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) has incorporated the principles of inclusive teaching into programming, with a focus on reducing equity gaps. And within the University's General Education Committee (GEC), a group known as the Equity Gap Coalition has been formed and is composed of five faculty members who will work on the following:

- Connect with the Faculty Senate and the Office of Equity and Inclusion to discuss future collaborations.
- Connect with alumni and the Center for Diversity and Inclusion to work on creating videos that represent the University's successful diverse graduates.
- Create Open Educational Resources (OERs) that are department-specific and shared with faculty, chairs, and deans.
- Study the possibility of an equity fellow position for undergraduates who can peer coach at-promise students.
- Plan social events to bring together General Education Committee members and Student Success Advisors with a focus on equity awareness.

The examples provided above are intended to illustrate the University's commitment to student achievement and the cycle of continuous improvement associated with support efforts. Which is to say: the University engages in a process of problem identification, resource allocation, development of strategic and thoughtful interventions, measuring of results, making further adjustments and refinements, and measuring results again. This cycle of continuous improvement is ongoing.

Conclusion

As Southern Utah University concludes this self-study report, it is the intent of the institution to provide to the review team and its own community with an honest and transparent review of its activities. This report includes a thorough review of the mission and purpose of the institution, which focuses on engaging students in meaningful experiences inside and outside the classroom and delivering academic programs and support services that help students explore, engage, and excel.

Within this mission and purpose, the University has taken seriously the standards outlined by the Northwest Commission to assess and improve its processes and student outcomes. This report reviewed the institution's efforts to comply with standards 1.A through 1.D. and includes an extensive set of appendixes that show evidence of compliance.

The University is grateful for the opportunity to complete this self-study. While the work has been monumental, the process for preparing a self-study report and engaging in the peer-review process has already helped the University become more deeply aware of the good practices that are happening across the campus. This self-study has also helped the University identify areas for improvement and plans to continue institutional growth and maturity. The University is committed to the peer review process and welcomes any feedback to improve its journey of attracting students to campus, guiding their educational paths, and preparing them for futures of service and meaningful contributions to the communities in which they work and live.