

DRAFT OF CRITERION 4: STRENGTHS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Strengths:

- Over the past four years, efforts aimed at building a culture of assessment at SMSU have been developed, enhanced, and implemented, with renewed funding and structural supports
- Faculty have numerous professional development opportunities including instruction regarding assessment of student learning at the institutional level and system level
- A full LEP assessment plan is implemented, with AHA teams supported with a duty day to establish baselines
- There is a clear cycle of program review, increasing completion rates of those reviews, and continuous spiral of improvement linked to the reviews
- College Now is accredited and has initial assessments that mirror on-campus assessment in addition to service goals
- More evidence-based decision-making is occurring throughout university
- SMSU has a very high employment rate of its graduates
- SMSU has current policies that guide transcription of credit and procedures that ensure rigor
- Student Affairs assessment has shifted to include learning outcomes in addition to programmatic outcomes
- Retention has been well studied, and analysis of retention has led to concrete, evidence-based initiatives such as the Office of Student Success, with more initiatives forthcoming

Recommendations:

- Continue to develop clear lines of communication and reporting regarding assessment processes and sharing of information
- Develop better archives of assessment efforts
- Strengthen the manner in which College Now is assessed across all disciplines
- Review College Now high school instructors' credentials and ensure that all future partnerships align with HLC's new guidelines for dual credit
- Review retention, completion, and persistence goals so that goals are set with regard to data analysis
- Continue to use retention and completion data to develop and support University strategies for helping all students, especially those currently not well retained, to achieve their educational goals
- Continue to recognize and enhance the relationship between the co-curriculum and core curriculum via collaborations between Student Affairs and academic programs
- Review the internal survey instruments currently in use and revise to ensure the data being collected are what is most useful
- Review program internship policies and the overall SMSU internship policy to ensure the overall policy addresses needs of programs and that program policies are consistent with the overall policy

HLC Criterion 3 Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

Core Component 4A. The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs.

4A1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews.

4A2. The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning.

4A3. The institution has policies that assure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.

4A4. The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It assures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.

4A5. The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.

Component 4A6. The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution assures that the degree or certificate programs it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission, such as employment rates, admission rates to advanced degree programs, and participation rates in fellowships, internships, and special programs (e.g., Peace Corps and Americorps).

Core Component 4B. The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.

4B1. The institution has clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals.

4B2. The institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and co-curricular programs.

4B3. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.

4B4. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members.

Core Component 4C. The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational improvement through ongoing attention to retention, persistence, and completion rates.

4C1. The institution has defined goals for student retention, persistence, and completion that are ambitious but attainable and appropriate to its mission, student populations, and educational offerings.

4C2. The institution collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence, and completion of its programs.

4C3. The institution uses information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data.

4C4. The institution's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs reflect good practice. (Institutions are not required to use IPEDS definitions in their determination of persistence or completion rates. Institutions are encouraged to choose measures that are suitable to their student populations, but institutions are accountable for the validity of their measures.)