CHAPTER ?, CRITERION 2:
INTEGRITY: ETHICAL AND RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT

The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

CORE COMPONENT 2.A: THE INSTITUTION OPERATES WITH INTEGRITY IN ITS FINANCIAL, ACADEMIC, PERSONNEL, AND AUXILIARY FUNCTIONS; IT ESTABLISHES AND FOLLOWS FAIR AND ETHICAL POLICIES AND PROCESSES FOR ITS GOVERNING BOARD, ADMINISTRATION, FACULTY AND STAFF.

SMSU operates with integrity as it carries out its mission. In addition to following SMSU's own policies, SMSU operates under the purview of the system-wide policies established by MnSCU. A list of SMSU policies are easily found together on one web page linked off of the "Administration" tab and are categorized into academic, fiscal, general, personnel, student, and information technology policies; links to the Student Handbook and the MnSCU Board Policies and Procedures, the two other primary governing sets of policies, are also referenced on this SMSU policy web page (http://www.smsu.edu/nca/view.cfm). MnSCU Board Policies and Procedures provide a basic, shared foundation across the system for items such as a Code of Conduct for employees and trustees, auditing, and system-level rights and responsibilities of students and expectations of student conduct. The contracts and plans between the University/MnSCU and its employees (described further in Chap. ? Criterion 5) also provide another layer of guiding principles that enable the University to operate with ethical and responsible conduct. These contractual guidelines spell out the relationships between employees of the institution; the agreements address terms and conditions of employment, as well as responsibilities of shared governance. Essentially the agreements with the various bargaining units provide a system of checks and balances that help ensure fair practices. More examples of each of these types of policies and how they enable SMSU to operate with integrity follow below.

INTEGRITY IN THE ACADEMIC FUNCTION

The primary purpose of higher education is its academic function. A number of processes, policies, agreements, accrediting guidelines, and procedures related ensure that SMSU operates with integrity related to this function.

Curriculum Approval Process

In its academic function, the University is guided by a collaborative process between the faculty and the administration. The IFO contract spells out all of the obligations and responsibilities of both the faculty and the administration related to the development of curriculum and the delivery of academic programs. The contractual guidelines describe a process that helps to ensure that programs and courses are appropriate per the University's mission and resources. The IFO contract guarantees faculty the primary authority over curriculum; faculty, through the established undergraduate and graduate Curriculum Committee processes and procedures and via their agreed-upon departmental processes, develop new classes and programs and make changes to programs and courses as needed. Normally, curricular proposals originate with faculty,

programs or departments. However, proposals may also originate from students, administrators or special committees.

Regardless of how a curriculum proposal originates, all curriculum proposals must pass through a structured curriculum review by faculty first before moving on for administrative approval. Curricular change proposals must be designated to be either of "Major Significance" or "Less than Major Significance." All Liberal Education Program-related/Minnesota Transfer Curriculum proposals are considered to be of Major Significance and must first be reviewed by the Liberal Education Committee (LEC) for a recommendation before being sent on to the undergraduate Curriculum Committee. All curriculum proposals of Major Significance (such as new programs or changes to majors or minors) must be reviewed by the appropriate Curriculum Committee (undergraduate or graduate), which forwards the proposal to the whole Faculty Assembly with either a positive recommendation, with no recommendation, or with reservations. The Faculty Assembly then votes on the curriculum proposal. If the Faculty Assembly approves the change, the proposal is then sent on to the Office of Academic Affairs for administrative action, generally routed first to the appropriate Dean's Office. The administration marks the proposal as

> 0 Approved
> 0 Recommendation for approval
> 0 Recommendation for disapproval with explanation
> 0 Returned to F.A. with recommended revision

If disapproved by the administration, the proposal may be brought to Meet and Confer for further discussion. Some changes might have to undergo further approval by the System Office or HLC before implementation.

Changes of Less than Major Significance, such as course title or catalog description, need only go before the relevant Curriculum Committee, which reports their actions to the SmSUFA Executive Committee. Changes of Less than Major Significance are then sent on to Academic Affairs for the same four types of recommendation listed above, and disapproved changes may also be discussed at Meet and Confer. This curriculum approval process ensures several things: it enables the shared governance outlined in the contract; it ensures that both faculty and administration are aware of changes and major programming initiatives, helping to keep the communication between faculty and administration open; and it helps the University operate efficiently by ensuring no course bloat, as one of the items on the proposal form asks whether similar courses are taught elsewhere on campus. An excellent example of the process can be found in the description of the LEP transformation in Chapter ?. (See Policies A-001 Curriculum Approval, A-001.1 Process of Curriculum Approval Proposals of Major Significance, and A-001.2 Process of Curriculum Approval Proposals of Less than Major Significance for the full description of the process.)

Policy Review

SMSU is governed by a number of policies from a variety of levels: federal and state policies and legislation, MnSCU system policies, University policies, and departmental/office policies. All SMSU policies can be found under the Administration tab of the website (http://www.smsu.edu/nca/view.cfm); this website includes a link to MnSCU System Office policies as well. SMSU must follow policies the MnSCU System Office mandates, such as the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum policy. SMSU has also developed its own policies (academic, fiscal, general, personnel, student, and information technology policies) guiding its local operations. The Internship Policy demonstrates how SMSU has developed an institution-wide policy and how departments have refined that broader policy for their particular areas or have used the policy to develop agreements with corporate internship partners.

Revision of state or system-wide policies occurs at a statewide level, often guided by task forces with representation from campuses. All SMSU policies are reviewed on an ongoing basis, depending on the type of policy. Some policy reviews, often related to personnel or financial policies, are mandated by the System Office. All units across campus are involved in any institutional policy review via the Meet and Confer process.

The review and revision of institutional SMSU academic policies in particular present another example of the shared governance process between the administration and the faculty. Academic policy review can be initiated by either the faculty or the administration. If initiated by SmSUFA, generally the proposed policy has been discussed and revised by one of its primary committees, usually the Academic Affairs committee, and brought before the SmSUFA Assembly for a vote before being sent on. Once approved, the SmSUFA Executive Committee carries proposed changes forward to Meet and Confer. Members of the administration may also bring forward recommended policy changes to Meet and Confer. After discussion at Meet and Confer, if needed, the proposed changes are taken back for further review by the respective units involved until the next Meet and Confer, following that back-and-forth process until revisions are acceptable, although the administration does have the ultimate authority on determining when the policy revision is complete. While SmSUFA and the administration are primarily responsible for academic policies, other bargaining units also have the opportunity to discuss academic policy changes at their respective Meet and Confers.

Review of all policies is continual, with constant review and revision across all categories of policies, as noted above. In regard to academic policies in particular, the Dean of ALS spearheads an ongoing concerted effort to ensure that all officially posted academic policies are in compliance with federal or state regulations, are up-to-date, accurate and/or relevant. This review project also includes creating required or mandated policies needed in order to stay in compliance with federal, state or MnSCU regulations that did not exist previously as well as removing policies that are no longer needed for any purpose. All additions, updates, changes and edits are channeled through proper shared governance and collective bargaining pathways. For example, throughout the 2013-2014 academic year approximately 27 policies were reviewed following this process. Below is a list of academic policies that have been created or revised since the last HLC review in 2004: [CHANGE THIS LANGUAGE WHEN COMPLETE; UPDATE THE LISTS BELOW].

Policies and Procedures Updated, Edited or Created in 2012-2013:

- A-035 Drop/Add/W policy (11/17/12)
- A-050 and A-050.1 Credit for Prior Learning Policy and Procedure (new 3/13)
- A-048 Deans List (Student Handbook and new Policy) 2013
- A-049 Credit Hour Assignment (new) 2013
- A-043 Student's Rights in the Event of Change in Instructor (2013)
- G-012 Alcohol (2013)
- A-047 Minor Degree Policy (2013)
- Portions of A-005 Satisfactory Academic Progress

Created Prior to 2012-2013 but after 2003:

- A-038 Institutional Review Board for Research
- A-039 Policy for Research Using Animal Subjects
- A-040 Advance Placement
- A-045 Graduate Policies and Procedures
- A-046 Amnesty

Polices Pending Approval or in Progress September 2013

- Transfer Credit (in progress; first draft)
- A-023 Final Exam Policy (Edit/Update) (9/23 Meet and Confer)
- First Part of A-005 SAP (Edit/Update) (9/23 Meet and Confer)
- A-001 Curriculum Process (draft in progress)
- Make-up work/Missed classes (in progress)

This continual review of policies through the Meet and Confer discussions helps to verify that the University is acting with the best interests of all of its constituencies in mind, and that the University's processes and procedures are up to date and in accordance with system- and federal-level requirements.

Guidelines for Distance Learning, Online Programs, and Dual Enrollment

In addition to foundational policies and employee contracts that help ensure fair and ethical practice, other guidelines or agreements address several specific educational endeavors. SMSU, in accordance with its mission and strategic objectives, provides educational opportunities to students off-campus, primarily through 2+2 agreements, online graduate programs in Education and Business, and the College Now dual enrollment program in which students earn college credit for classes delivered in a high school setting. Each of these arrangements has its own set of agreed-upon policies and contractual obligations that have been vetted by the System Office and is further described below.

Both the 2+2 and online graduate programs were recently reviewed and accredited by the HLC in 2011. The HLC evaluation found "high quality standards" in place and appropriate methods for ongoing monitoring of quality. Articulation agreements for the 2+2 programs lay out the expectations and curriculum for the involved programs, ensuring that students receive the classes expected and that SMSU is held accountable for its promises. The degrees offered in 2+2 programs and their participating partner schools can be found on the Distance Learning website: http://www.smsu.edu/academics/distancelearning/; the Early Childhood program offers further support with linked articulation advising guides from this site. Full text of articulation agreements are found locally in the respective Dean's office, and a searchable database of all articulation agreements can be found on the MnSCU System Office's transfer website at http://www.mntransfer.org/transfer/tools/t_artagreements.php). The online graduate programs function in accordance with the same graduate policies as the on-campus graduate programs (see A-045 Graduate Policies and Procedures . Both programs continue to operate according to the standards described in the 2011 substantive change request. (The change request and the assurance document from HLC regarding the request are available on the SMSU HLC website: http://www.smsu.edu/administration/hlc/.)

SMSU's dual credit program, currently called College Now, is the longest running concurrent enrollment program in Minnesota. In 1985 the Minnesota legislature passed the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Act (PSEO), Minnesota Statute 124D.09, allowing high school juniors and seniors to complete college coursework while still in high school. High school students may either attend classes on the campus of a college or university, or by enrolling in classes offered by a college or university while remaining in their high school setting. College Now thus operates under the umbrella of state legislation. As a leader in the development of dual enrollment in Minnesota, SMSU reviews the processes and offerings of College Now in an ongoing basis. Since 2004, many improvements have been made in how SMSU delivers and supports the college programming in the high school setting, including the allocation of dedicated personnel to oversee the program and a committee structure to provide input from faculty involved. Current information regarding the College Now program is available on its program website, http://www.smsu.edu/academics/collegenow/. A primary indicator of the integrity in SMSU's College Now program is that it has been accredited since October of 2010 through the National Association of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP). The NACEP

accreditation report is available in e-resources for reviewers. In addition to following NACEP accreditation standards, all College Now courses are subject to SMSU program, departmental, and University policies. For greater detail regarding College Now, see Chap. ? Criterion 3.

Academic Progress, Academic and Judicial Appeals, and Early Alert

All students at SMSU are held to the standard for adequate academic progress, described in Policy A-005 Satisfactory Academic Progress and in the student handbook (http://www.smsu.edu/administration/studenthandbook/?id=8192).

Students who do not meet the required minimum GPA are put on academic warning and given a semester to improve their semester GPA; students who fail to do so are given an opportunity to go before the academic appeals committee, should they choose to, and present their case for why they should not be suspended for two semesters. Students who successfully appeal or who sit out for two semesters of suspension and return are on academic probation and must maintain a GPA of 2.10 or higher each semester and have a 70% completion rate until they are off probation and in good standing. The policy was last modified in spring of 2012, as the System Office mandated that all institutions include all credits being attempted as part of the financial aid consortium process to count in GPA and completion rate.

Likewise, an appeal process exists for students who disagree with the evaluation of their work given by a faculty member or who have been accused of academic dishonesty. Students may appeal their grades or, in the case of academic dishonesty, request a hearing about the complaint. The process is outlined in the SMSU policy G-005 Academic Appeals, the procedure for which is fully described in the Student Handbook. (See also section 2E below for more information about academic dishonesty.)

In addition to the academic expectations and appeals process, students are held accountable to the SMSU Code of Conduct described in the Student Handbook, along with their student rights and responsibilities as members of the campus community. The University maintains a University Judicial Affairs Program as well as the academic appeals process described above. The purpose of the Judicial Affairs Program is to provide a campus grievance mechanism for any person who believes that any Southwest Minnesota State student (whether living on or off campus) has violated his or her individual rights, community expectations of behavior or a campus code of conduct. The Student Handbook fully describes the expectations of SMSU students and the Judicial Affairs process.
(http://www.smsu.edu/administration/studenthandbook/?id=8208)

In order to help as many students avoid the kinds of situations which lead to academic warning or other problems with engagement at the university level, over the last ten years the University has implemented several versions of an "early alert" process in which faculty and other advisors are able to notify the Advising Center, and now, the new Office of Student Success, about concerns regarding specific students; students are then contacted and offered guidance and help. The early alert service has gone through several transformations as it has been tested and refined over time.

First piloted in fall of 2004, the Director and Associate Director of the Advising Center sent out emails multiple times during the semester asking faculty to send them "alerts" for any students about whom they had concerns, such as grades, attendance, personal problems, or other behavioral issues. An Early Alert Referral Form was also posted online. In the fall of 2007, in an effort to streamline some services and cluster the smaller Advising Center with a larger department, the Advising Center was moved and reorganized; the Associate Director of the Advising Center position was cut, and the Advising Center was moved over to the Registration Office, and became part of the Registration and Advising Office. The Director of Advising continued to take Early Alert referrals, but the referrals dropped markedly because, due to low staffing, the

service was not advertised, though still utilized by faculty who knew the process. However, the University recognized that the service was still very important to faculty and to students. In 2011, in an effort to boost retention, the Office of Student Success was established by *interim* President Wood, and this office first piloted and then instituted a campus-wide early alert system which addresses not only academic but other types of concerns faculty and advisors might have. Faculty are asked to notify the office of any perceived social, academic, personal, attendance, financial or behavioral issues students might be having during week 3 and again during week 7 of each semester. Once the survey has been submitted, the Office of Student Success follows a three-step intervention process (email, phone/text, postcard) to connect with these at-risk students and help them to succeed. Additional outreach is also made to advisors, International Student Services, Athletics Department, Office of Diversity & Inclusion and the PSEO coordinator for enhanced support. The Office of Student Success serves as a central location where students can get feedback and help beyond their immediate advisor. While more closely aligned with retention and advising concerns, it provides another example of how SMSU keeps students' interests at the forefront and provides an additional avenue to ensure that students are treated fairly and in accordance with established policies.

 More detailed information on advising at SMSU can be found in Chap. ?.

Technology and Integrity

One aspect of fair and ethical policies and procedures related to the academic function that has changed considerably since the last round of accreditation are those policies related to technology. In terms of the academic function of the University, policies related to acceptable use of technology, data privacy, instructional technology, and the decision-making process surrounding investment in technology help ensure that the University allocates and utilizes educational technology appropriately.

The foundation of information security policy across all units of MnSCU is defined by the Board of Trustees in Board Policy. The Board of Trustees has established three policies in this area. These Board Policies are: a) 5.13 Information Technology Administration, b) 5.22 Acceptable Use of Computers and Information Technology Resources and c) 5.23 Security and Privacy of Information Resources. The MnSCU system has also developed procedures and guidelines that stem from these policies. Procedures support the information security policy by providing more detail on how to meet key aspects of the policy goals. Guidelines provide additional requirements and recommendations to follow as part of a specific area of information security.

Pursuant to these MnSCU system policies, procedures and guidelines, the University has developed institutional-level policies addressing information security and computer network system use. In addition, operating procedures and guidelines have been established to help ensure the University adheres to the MnSCU policies procedures and guidelines. To help with the development of internal University policies and practices, the University has created an Information Security Team (IST) that is representative of the faculty and administrative departments that are in a position to handle potentially confidential information. The IST was created in 2008 after the Meet and Confer process revealed the preference for an advisory group. The IST works with the CIO to develop procedures, guidelines and standards that address compliance with MnSCU System and University information security policies. The IST is also charged with making recommendations on training and awareness programs that pertain to information security. The team meets as needed; an example of their work is the password standard that was developed and implemented.

 The MnSCU system ensures that employees have a core level of understanding on information security issues through the provision of a required training course for new employees.   This course is entitled "Public Jobs, Private Data". When the course was initially developed, all current system employees were required to take the course. A wide variety of Information Security Training Courses geared for information technology

employees are also provided. SMSU has also had an information security assessment conducted by MnSCU information security staff in 2007-2008 and a follow-up visit in 2012. As of April 2013, MnSCU is in the process updating the Vulnerability Management plan, and currently adopted elements are being implemented.

In conjunction with MnSCU procedures, guidelines and directives, the University has also implemented a consolidated access point (CAP) infrastructure to provide enhanced information security. The CAP infrastructure requires all persons that handle sensitive student data on a regular basis to have their workstations be included in a secure network VLAN. Access to data bases maintained by MnSCU that contain sensitive data is channeled through the CAP infrastructure. Similar security steps are taken with networks and workstations used to support such activities as payment card industry (PCI), banking, and financial aid transactions.

The Technology Resource Center (TRC) serves as the front door to the SMSU campus community for the University's Information Technology Services (ITS) division. Among its roles, the TRC serves as the ITS help desk or service desk. The TRC is led by a Technology Resource Center Manager that reports directly to the Chief Information Officer. In addition two graduate assistants—one focused on general technology support services and the other on instructional technology support—have offices in the TRC. The TRC employs several student workers that are hired to provide technology support for the entire campus community. There are also numerous student workers that serve as computer lab staff. All students hired by SMSU ITS are required to sign a confidentiality policy including an acknowledgement of disciplinary action that they would be subject to should they violate it.

 As the front door for ITS, the TRC provides support for faculty, staff and students with a variety of questions and issues. Should the TRC staff not be able to address a specific matter internally, ITS has a ticketing system to escalate issues to the appropriate professional staff member(s). The TRC Manager is able to track the progress of issues resolution and engage ITS department leadership as necessary.

All students are informed about the University's policies regarding "unauthorized distribution of copyrighted material" as mandated by the federal government. An annual notice is sent out each year and information is also in the student handbook. The University has a written plan on how to address incidents. The issue is also covered by Residence Life during the opening week orientation for new students. In addition, faculty and students receive instruction in the use of the course management system, Desire to Learn (D2L), faculty through various opportunities provided through ongoing optional training offered by the TRC and on Professional Development days at the start of each semester, and students through initial training as part of their orientation to campus activities. Individual faculty establish the guidelines for acceptable use of D2L functions within their class, such as whether discussion posts will be moderated or removed. For broader web-related issues, faculty can request individual sessions with the Web Services office.

The University has an open process related to student and faculty technology needs. The Student Association participates in the Student Technology Fee annual process. The Student Technology Fee Committee is responsible for recommending allocation of funds gathered through the Student Technology Fee. The Committee solicits proposals from the campus community each year using this form: http://www.smsu.edu/administration/academicaffairs/form418.cfm. Proposals from the campus community and projects submitted for consideration by ITS are ranked by Committee members, made up of 15 persons: 6 student members, 3 SMSUFA faculty representatives, 2 MSUAASF representatives, the Coordinator of Computing Services (ex officio; non-voting), the SMSUSA President (ex officio; non-voting), one representative from Administrative Services Staff (ex officio; non-voting) and the Vice President/Provost for Academic Affairs (or designee) (ex officio, non-voting). The committee is chaired by one of the student

members. The Student Technology Fee recommendations are brought to the Student Senate for their endorsement as a matter of practice each year. The Committee recommends to the Vice President/Provost for Academic Affairs allocations based on established criteria. In this manner, great care is taken to be certain that student voices and preferences are heard, in addition to faculty and staff-favored initiatives. (Full text of the fund request process can be found here: www.smsu.edu/administration/academicaffairs/techfeefundrequest.pdf)

INTEGRITY WITH REGARD TO PERSONNEL

Fair and ethical polices and processes for personnel are ensured through the work of the Human Resources office and via the contractual processes described in the relevant employment agreements. On the SMSU campus, there are eight categories of employees. Five of the eight are represented by collective bargaining:
- Inter Faculty Organization (IFO), of which the Southwest Minnesota State University Faculty Association (SmSUFA) is the local representative body
- Minnesota State University Association of Administrative and Service Faculty (MSUAASF)
- Middle Management Association (MMA)
- Minnesota Association of Professional Employees (MAPE) and
- American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), Council 5.

The remaining three categories consist of labor plans:
- MnSCU Administrator Plan
- Commissioner's Plan (formerly titled Confidential Plan)
- Managerial Plan

Links to all contracts/plans can be found on the MnSCU web site (http://www.hr.mnscu.edu/contract_plans/index.html).

Each of the bargaining units has a regularly occurring Meet and Confer with the administrative unit in order to review any on-going issue or new initiatives. The collectively-bargained contracts describe the terms and conditions for the relevant employees and the institution, depending on which bargaining unit the employee belongs to. For example, per each of the unions' contracts, specific grievance policies and procedures, seniority guidelines, hours of work/load, overtime/overload, paid and unpaid leave and layoff/retrenchment are outlined that the employee and the University must follow.

Graduate assistants present another category of employees at the University. While SMSU's number of graduate assistants is fairly limited, it has grown since the last HLC review. Currently, SMSU hires on average 35-40 graduate assistants; this represents an increase since the last HLC review, as in 2007, for example, there were only 18 graduate assistants. The number of graduate assistants is generally evenly split between the two graduate programs of study in Education and Business. Graduate assistants work across campus in a variety of offices, with about half working for Athletics but others working in areas such as Graduate Studies, Civic Engagement, IT, and the Alumni Office. All graduate assistantships are governed by a hiring procedure (http://www.smsu.edu/administration/businessservices/?id=2564).

Performance and Promotion

Performance reviews of non-faculty employees are to be conducted annually. There is an evaluation form for classified employees located on the Human Resource Department's website. Classified employees may appeal their performance rating or they can provide a written response to the appraisal. A non-faculty employee can

receive a promotion through a reclassification of their current position if there have been substantive changes in the responsibilities and scope of the position. Another way for an employee to receive a promotion is by applying for a position in a higher classification/range through the search process.

MSUAASF employees are also evaluated annually using a form found on the Human Resource Department's website. Annual review of SmSUFA faculty performance is explained in the IFO contract's description of the "Professional Development Plan" and "Professional Development Report" process, which also carry contractual dates for reporting and for administrative response, which goes into each faculty member's personnel file. The IFO contract's Appendix G provides an extensive list of acceptable scholarly and creative accomplishments that faculty may include in their reports. The IFO contract describes the full process for faculty promotion and tenure, outlining each step and contractual dates of obligation by both the employee and administration for applying and responding.

Employee Conduct Training

In addition to the separate bargaining unit contracts, all SMSU employees are bound to MnSCU policies for employees, including the Code of Conduct for employees and trustees, FERPA, and Minnesota data privacy laws. All MnSCU employees are expected to take online course training modules regarding aspects of this code of conduct and federal and state law; the modules include Employee Code of Conduct, Public Jobs: Public Data, and Sexual Harassment Prevention Training. The Human Resources Department tracks the training and annually sends out reminders to employees who have not completed the training. As of fall 2013, 61% of SMSU employees have completed the Sexual Harassment Prevention training, 84% the Data Security training, and 73% the Code of Conduct training.

Affirmative Action and Discrimination Policies

SMSU makes a clear commitment to Affirmative Action on its Affirmative Action Office Website:

Southwest Minnesota State University is committed to providing equal education and employment opportunities to all persons and does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, color, creed, religion, age, national origin, disability, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation, or membership or activity in a local commission as defined by law.   Hiring is conducted within guidelines set by the state and system.

The Affirmative Action Office is responsible for:

- assisting faculty, staff and students who believe they have been harassed or discriminated against because they are a member of a protected group.
- monitoring the recruitment and employment process for faculty and staff to ensure compliance with state and federal laws and regulations, as well as compliance with the Southwest Minnesota State University mission and strategic plan regarding diversity and affirmative action.
- development and monitoring of Southwest Minnesota State University Affirmative Action Plan.

In addition, SMSU follows Title IX regulations as to prohibiting sex discrimination. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 is a federal law that prohibits sex discrimination in education. Sex discrimination includes sexual harassment and sexual violence. It is the policy of Southwest Minnesota State University (SMSU), in accordance with federal and state law, to prohibit unlawful discrimination as outlined in MnSCU Board Policy 1B.1 Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination in Employment and Education Opportunity.

Additional information can be found at http://www.smsu.edu/administration/affirmativeaction/

The Hiring Process

The Human Resources office oversees the procedures for hiring new employees, in accordance with all federal standards and legislation. For all hires at the University, a search committee is established; for hires such as faculty members or a new administrative assistant for a department, the search committee is either primarily made up of colleagues within the area along with a representative from outside the department and/or student representative. For hires which affect the broader University, such as for a Dean or other administrative positions, broader representation from the bargaining units is sought. For the recent presidential hire, the search was conducted by the Chancellor at the System Office, and for this position, the search committee included community members and was chaired by a president from one of the other six state universities. Overall, no matter the position being searched, the search process is thorough and involves feedback at each step of the process, first by the committee members to the HR director, and then by the campus communities involved in the search when the finalists are public and campus visits take place.

Consortium Personnel

Several areas of the University have cooperative agreements with other non-profit institutions which include some shared positions. SAMMIE, the Southwest Area Multi-County Multi-Type Interlibrary Exchange, is a consortium of 197 libraries in the southwest region of Minnesota established by state law to promote cooperation across all types of libraries. SAMMIE's offices are housed at SMSU; in exchange, SMSU receives the services of one of their librarians for an agreed-upon number of hours per week. A second consortium, the Southwest/West Central Higher Education Organization for Telecommunications and Technology (SHOT), is one of six regional consortia that make up "The Learning Network of Minnesota," the core telecommunication network infrastructure that supports public higher education in Minnesota, according to the MnSCU web site. SHOT's consortium agreement was developed pursuant to the Joint Exercise of Powers Act (Minnesota Statute, Section 471.59). SMSU serves as the fiscal host for the SHOT consortium, which has existed since 1994. One half of the SHOT Executive Director's assignment is earmarked to serve as SMSU's Chief Information Officer. This arrangement has been in place since the 2007-2008 academic year. SHOT and SMSU have also shared a Network Services Specialist position equally since 2000. In addition to the two shared positions identified, SHOT has two full time positions, an Operations Coordinator and a Network Services Technician, that support its operations.

INTEGRITY RELATED TO FINANCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONS

Southwest Minnesota State University operates within the policies and procedures set by the Minnesota State Colleges and University Board of Trustees as well as policies and procedures established at the institution level. The system and all 31 institutions must follow all federal and state laws, rules, and regulations that pertain to higher education and operations of a state agency.

Purchasing/Contracting and the Campus Service Cooperative

SMSU spends over $9 million annually on services, supplies, and repairs and maintenance.   The University must follow state rules and regulations as well as MnSCU policies and procedures. The purpose of the Purchasing Department is to provide the campus community with responsible purchasing in accordance to set policies and procedures. This may include timely purchases of goods and services at the lowest possible cost while keeping close consideration of quality, quantity and delivery. Purchases at different thresholds require bids, quotes, and/or approvals by various individuals dependent of the total cost.   Purchasing is decentralized for the most part but the University Purchasing Director is available to assist all departments

with bidding, contracting, and with other questions and concerns regarding purchasing. More detail can be found at the Purchasing website: http://www.smsu.edu/administration/businessservices/?id=4003

The Campus Service Cooperative (CSC) is a strategic initiative out of the MnSCU System Office that began in 2011. The two purposes of the CSC are to help MnSCU institutions share service delivery, such as payroll processing and direct student loan processing, and "Strategic Sourcing." Strategic Sourcing is a disciplined, efficient, and modern approach to the way that MnSCU institutions purchase the more than $550 million of goods and services by all MnSCU institutions annually. It is a fact-based approach to vendor management, driven by metrics and benchmarks that helps to save money across the system.   Through strategic sourcing, system-wide contracts are negotiated to provide products and services at the best possible cost. A leadership committee made up of eight presidents and three vice-chancellors guides the CSC efforts. Additional information can be found at http://www.csc.mnscu.edu/sourcing/Approach.html .

Financial Statements, Internal Audit, Internal Controls, and Budgeting

Each year, administrators and employees responsible for the preparation of the annual financial statements must review and sign a *Code of Conduct Certification* certifying that they understand their responsibilities under the code. SMSU has received unqualified opinions from the external auditors for the financial statement audits in each of its annual audits. SMSU has not had any serious deficiencies or material weaknesses noted.   Financial statement preparation is a combined effort of the individual MnSCU institutions and the MnSCU System Office Financial Reporting Team. The SMSU Senior Accounting Officer in charge of the financial statements on campus has always been very conscious of due dates and often is ahead of the calendar in regards to completing required items.   She is very often a go-to person for System Office personnel in regards to financial statement practices.

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Internal Audit division's executive director reports directly to the Board of Trustees through the chair of the audit committee and does not report directly to the Chancellor or any other staff within the System Office, providing a safeguard against undue influence.   The system-level Internal Auditing division provides expertise in auditing, accounting, internal controls, and financial risk management.   The office promotes best practices and advocates for improvement and accountability. Internal audit designs audits of different functions within the University each year. SMSU is accountable to participate in the audits and to correct any actions or activities that are deemed to need correction.   The audit plan for fiscal year 13 included audits of banking and cash controls, document imaging, and purchasing cards. Any suspicions or known fraud incidents are reported through appropriate channels, and then if determined that an investigation is needed, Internal Auditing is contacted. More information can be found at http://www.internalauditing.mnscu.edu/fraud/index.html . The MnSCU Internal Auditors track all internal audit comments and follow up with the individual institutions regarding the compliance with the audit findings. SMSU has complied with all comments from the various internal audits except for three audits' comments that are currently awaiting MnSCU system-wide review. [WILL UPDATE THIS LATER IN SPRING]

Internal controls documents describe the functions within the Office of Business Services, Human Resources, and Financial Aid that impact the financial reporting process. These documents detail the steps to conduct various financial processes, list any risks involved in the processes, and identify systematic and mitigating controls for each process. Degrees of risk are identified for each process.   The documents are to be reviewed and updated as processes change.   The documents are used in financial audits to verify that processes are actually performed as listed in the documents.

University budget information can be found on the Vice President for Finance and Administration website http://www.smsu.edu/administration/vpfinanceadmin/. Each year a balanced budget must be submitted to the System Office and a system-wide budget completed per policy 5.9 biennial and Annual Operating Budget Planning and Approval. Consultation must take place with students per MnSCU Board Policy 2.3 and Procedure 2.3.1 Consultation must be conducted for such items as overall budget, tuition and fee changes, student wage rates, and room and board rate changes.   The budget is discussed with all union constituencies at meet and confers. More information regarding the budgeting and allocation process can be found in Chapter ? Criterion 5.

SMSU Procedure F-001.4 governs the assessment of student fee collection and disbursement, which must also follow the MnSCU Board policies 5.11 and 5.12 and related procedures. Fees currently charged to students can be found on the Business services webpage "Schedule and Explanation of Fees" at http://www.smsu.edu/administration/businessservices/?id=8923 . While most of the fees are allocated to the areas noted in the fee schedule, the Student Activity fee and Technology fee have prescribed processes to distribute those funds with participation from the student body. The Student Activity fees are distributed by the Student Activity Fee Allocation Committee after approval by the President. The Technology fee committee must be made up of more students than faculty and staff. The Technology Fee Committee votes on how technology fees will be used each year.

Financial Aid

The mission of the Student Financial Aid Office is to provide fair, equitable, and unbiased service to students seeking financial aid. This mission supports the mission of the University by helping students find financial means that enable them to enroll in and complete their academic programs. The office guarantees delivery of federal and state financial assistance to students within rules and regulations established by the respective departments of education. The Student Financial Aid Office coordinates all federal, state, and institutional financial assistance, including grants, scholarships, student employment, and student loans.

SMSU Foundation

The SMSU Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation with appropriate policies, annual independent audits and reviews governing its relationship with the University, including a standard contract agreement between the University and Foundation. The Foundation and its affiliated boards including the Alumni Association and Mustang Booster Club are committed to building meaningful, positive, high-trust relationships. Those relationships include, but are not limited to alumni, parent, community and corporate donors and friends. The SMSU Foundation is committed to operating with the highest ethical standards by adhering to the Donor Bill of Rights policy developed by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education, the American Association of Fund-Raising Counsel, and the National Society of Fund Raising Executives. See Chapter X Criterion 5 for more information about the SMSU Foundation.

As defined by HLC, auxiliary functions entail those "activities and services related to but not intrinsic to educational functions." All such auxiliary functions must demonstrate integrity in their operations at the University.   The primary auxiliary units at SMSU include Athletics, Housing, Dining Services, the Bookstore, and Public Safety.

Intercollegiate Athletics

The Southwest Minnesota State University Athletics Program prides itself in competing at the highest level of NCAA Division II, while being committed to NCAA rules and regulations. SMSU Athletics adheres to all NCAA compliance procedures and reporting. More information about SMSU NCAA compliance can be found at http://smsumustangs.com/sports/2011/5/9/GEN_0509112057.aspx? An Intercollegiate Athletic Advisory Committee, chaired by the Faculty Athletics Representative and made up of members from across the University community (4 faculty, 2 MSUAASF, 1 MMA/MAPE/Confidential, 1 Council 6, 1 student, 1 SAAC, 1 Booster, 1 At-large from community, and 1 Alumni Association) serves in an advisory capacity to the President and the Athletic Director in matters relating to intercollegiate athletics. The committee meets as needed to advise the President and A.D. on such matters as policies, procedures and programs that affect student-athletes, the athletic staff, the University, alumni and general public. While in the past, the committee met sporadically to respond to any emerging concerns, in 2013 the committee convened with new goals including meeting once a term or more as needed, increasing communication, and offering periodic student-athlete awards.

Housing, Dining, and Bookstore

All students living in the residence halls must first apply and then sign housing contracts. Residence Life policies and procedures are public on their web site (http://www.smsu.edu/campuslife/residencelife/), and "A Guide to Community Living" informs students about living in the residence halls. Residence hall policies are enforced by Resident Assistants (RAs) and the Residence Life professional staff. Each residence hall elects its own House Council, and residents can vote on some house policies as well, such as on quiet hours or spending of house funds. While all residence hall students are members of the Residence Hall Association (RHA) through fees included in room and board costs, each House Council president is the hall's representative on the RHA. The RHA elects student officers and committee chairs, who helps shape programming and enforce policies in the halls and the Foundation Apartments. The Foundation Apartments, which are not owned by the University but through a unique collaboration between the SMSU Foundation, the City of Marshall, Bremer Bank and the SMSU Department of Residence Life, also employs RAs and its policies are subject to RHA oversight. RAs are chosen through a rigorous process involving recommendations from faculty and staff each year.

Dining services and the bookstore operate through contractual agreement with the University. Currently Aramark is the dining services provider, and Barnes and Noble College Bookstore took over the relocated bookstore space after the Student Center was rebuilt following the fire in 2003. Other contractual providers on campus include PepsiCo, which has exclusive rights on campus. Large contracts such as these must start with a Request for Proposal (RFP) that is sent on to specific vendors, posted on the SMSU website and MnSCU's website along with the State of Minnesota's site for contracts.   Once proposals are received, a committee must review the proposals to determine which one best meets the criteria set forth in the RFP; cost alone is not the only determining factor on the vendor chosen. Contracts tend to be for no more than five years although exceptions are sometimes given for these larger contracts with extended renewal periods, but

any deviation from five years must be approved by the MnSCU Vice Chancellor for Finance, the Chancellor, and/or the MnSCU Board of Trustees dependent on the total dollar value of the contract.

Office of Public Safety

The Office of Public Safety follows procedures established by state and federal law, MnSCU guidelines, the SMSU Student Handbook, and labor bargaining contracts. Southwest Minnesota State University's Annual Security Report and Fire Safety report and statement of Campus Security Policy is prepared, published and distributed in accordance with the requirements of the Campus Security Act of 1990, the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act of 1998, the Higher Education Amendments of 1998, and all implementing regulations issued by the U.S Department of Education (34 C.F.R. Part 668; hereinafter the "Regulations"). The report can be found here: http://www.smsu.edu/campuslife/publicsafety/?Id=6510. The report is published annually and available on the Office's web site. SMSU Public Safety believes strongly in transparency; although only required to post annual crime statistics for the past three years, Public Safety keeps all statistics on the web site from 1998 to the present, dating back to the current Director's arrival. Also found on the well-developed Public Safety web site is complete information about all parking and traffic regulations, including an appeals process for tickets.

Public Safety works closely with the local police department, and Public Safety staff undergoes annual training. While the System Office requires one emergency drill per year, SMSU conducts two-to-three each year. The Director of Public Safety reports to the Vice President for Finance and Administration.

CORE COMPONENT 2.B: THE INSTITUTION PRESENTS ITSELF CLEARLY AND COMPLETELY TO ITS STUDENTS AND TO THE PUBLIC WITH REGARD TO ITS PROGRAMS, REQUIREMENTS, FACULTY AND STAFF, COSTS TO STUDENTS, CONTROL, AND ACCREDITATION RELATIONSHIPS.

In the last ten years, the University has transitioned from print documentation to web-based information. The University continually reviews its practices to ensure that its information is clearly and completely available. The Office of Communications and Marketing (formerly known as University Relations) generates most mass communication to the public via website, radio, television, mailings, publications, and annual reports. They publish an annual Fact Book and aid the Office of Admission in creating promotional material. Some offices, such as the Office of Admission and the Athletics Department, additionally create their own publication material. All University-related media, however, must adhere to the SMSU Style Guide, Visual Identity Standards Manual, and Social Media Guidelines established by the Office of Communications and Marketing, all of which were established to make information about SMSU clear and uniformly identifiable. All of these policies and guidelines are available on that Office's web page (http://www.smsu.edu/administration/communicationsmarketing/). The Publications Editor monitors documents created by SMSU departments and continues to educate departments and staff about the policies.

THE SMSU WEB SITE

The University's Web Services Office likewise has a set of web policies available for all departments and staff to use, as well as instructions

(http://www.smsu.edu/informationtechnologyservices/webservices/?id=1581). While the Web Services Office is responsible for the SMSU web site as a whole, individual departments must maintain their own web pages, although help is available through the Office of Web Services as needed. The Technology Accessibility Taskforce also works to ensure that information is accessible for all audiences as part of ADA compliance.

Over the last ten years, the Office of Web Services has overseen many enhancements to the public display and utility of information regarding SMSU. In 2009, the web site underwent a complete redesign, and for its efforts, the Office of Web Services won five top awards from a leading educational web design organization, eduStyle, in 2010.

Some examples of the SMSU web site's improvements include

- the Student Handbook and Academic Catalog are fully online
- the creation of SMSU Today as a central location to post campus announcements and news
- a "Web Alerts" system which notifies students and other University members about cancelled classes or other concerns
- the addition of mobile-enhanced applications since students prefer to access this information via mobile devices

Given the complicated architecture of the web site, concerns frequently arise about whether certain topics are easy enough to locate. These concerns are used to refine the web site. An example is the addition of the academic calendar to the "quick links" list located on the SMSU home page.

A series of questions on the HLC Self-Study Survey of University community members asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed about the ease of finding information on the web site (the full survey, administered in Spring of 2013, is described in Chapter ? and available in Appendix ?). Figure 2.1 below, showing the combined percentages of agree and strongly agree responses, indicate that most community members and students can easily find what they are looking for on the web site:

FIGURE 2.1: RESPONSES OF PUBLIC/STAFF AND STUDENTS ASKED WHETHER THE INFORMATION INDICATED ON GRAPH WAS EASY TO LOCATE ON SMSU'S WEBSITE. Percentage reflects share of those strongly agreeing or agreeing with question.
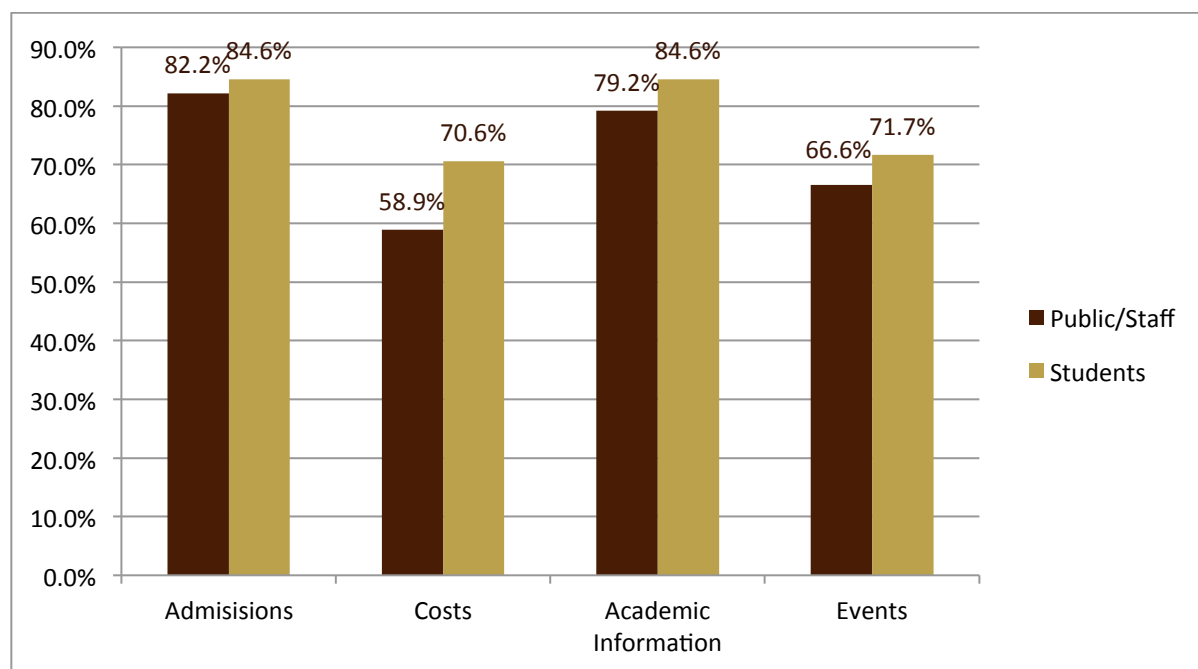
Although the University was without a web designer for an extended period of time due to the resignation of the former web designer and difficulty in filling the position, plans underway before he left continue to move forward. Because of the constantly evolving nature of the web and viewers' expectations, there are current plans to redesign the website after committee input, moving to a completely CSS-based platform in order to maximize accessibility and incorporating more video. According to the former web designer, good web sites are adequate for about six years; thus, despite the award in 2010, SMSU's site is soon in need of review. Creating better portals for different University populations, developing more apparent links for providing feedback about the site, renewing a Web advisory group with membership from across campus, and extending the use of Google Analytics to understand users' approaches to the overall web site and department-specific trends are other areas of potential improvement.

PROGRAMS AND REQUIREMENTS

The Academic Catalog is the ultimate source of program and graduation requirement information. Since 2010, the catalog has been available fully and only online (http://www.smsu.edu/catalog/), and it is now updated annually; the 2008-10 catalog was the last printed two-year catalog. Converting the catalog into a fully online document was a large undertaking by the Registrar, and her efforts set an example for the rest of the MnSCU system institutions.

While the Academic Catalog houses all requirements for all programs, the Degree Audit Reporting System (DARS) is the primary online tool students and advisors use to make certain all requirements in their specific pursuit of a degree program are being met. The DARS implementation began in spring of 2000 shortly before the previous round of accreditation but had only been in use across campus for less than a year when the previous review team was here in 2004. DARS tracks a student's progress towards degree; students log in to

eServices to access their own DARS, and advisors also can access each of their students' DARS reports. The DARS has been improved over the years by adding more dashboard features and color-coding, making it even more evident when requirements have been met (green) or are yet to be accomplished (red). The student petition form is now directly linked into the DARS form, making it easier for students to navigate the petition process. All program requirements have been coded into the DARS system, but as programs change, the DARS coding must also be changed. DARS program requirements are keyed to the Academic Catalog year in which a student began coursework at SMSU.

The DARS system also helps to generate degree checks for graduating seniors, and transfer students' previous coursework is loaded into DARS, clearly marking which courses transfer into which requirements.

Transfer students can find information about which of their classes will transfer by using the "U.Select" web site, offered as a link from the SMSU web page on information for transfer students. Using this site they can input information about the courses they have taken from any number of institutions to see what is automatically transferable and what might have to be petitioned. (https://www.transfer.org/uselect/login.htm) As part of a "Smart Transfer" initiative started by the System Office in 2010 and further prompted by legislation requiring ease of transfer within the state system, SMSU complies with System requirements regarding the sharing of course outlines and other necessary information to ease transfer for students. A new Transfer Credit policy relating System Office requirements to local requirements was approved through the meet and confer process in 2013-2104. (This policy can be found at [INSERT LINK WHEN POLICY IS POSTED].)

Transfer students who are part of a 2+2 program follow the articulated requirements for transfer and acceptance into the designated program. All detailed articulation agreements can be found on the MnSCU web site http://www.mntransfer.org/educators/transfer/e_artagreements.php. The full text of articulation agreements can be unwieldy for students, but the Office of Distance Learning maintains listings of the different 2+2 partnerships on their web site and links to easy-to-use advising guides for the different 2+2 programs (http://www.smsu.edu/academics/distancelearning/). The Distance Learning web site also links to many useful services and information needed by distance students.

College Now program and course requirements are available on the University's College Now web page, along with all needed information for students, high school teachers, and SMSU faculty liaisons: http://www.smsu.edu/academics/collegenow/. Students and their high school faculty can find videos explaining SMSU e-services and registration, links to library services, and the SMSU Student Handbook.

Prospective students and their parents can find information on admission through a primary tab at the top of the web site. Viewers are funneled to different types of information depending on whether they are pursuing graduate or undergraduate coursework or if they are interested in PSEO, College Now, or distance learning opportunities. Requirements for admission to each type of program, along with related information such as financial aid, scholarships, or general information about campus, is easily found through the links from the Office of Admission's portal site.

ACCREDITATIONS

The University notes its accredited status from the Higher Learning Commission on its "Accreditations" web page and on a page dedicated to the university-wide accreditation (along with the self-study process), where it displays the HLC logo and direct link to the HLC. (http://www.smsu.edu/administration/hlc/)

The University is also accredited or holds special certification from the following organizations:

- the National Association of Schools of Music
- the Minnesota Board of Teaching
- the American Chemical Society
- the Council on Social Work Education
- National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP)

These accredited or certified relationships are listed on a dedicated web page, along with another notice of the HLC accreditation. (http://www.smsu.edu/administration/accreditations/) The links to both of these pages can easily be found via the main "Administration" tab at the top of the home page or linked from the "About" page. Some departments associated with these accreditations or certifications make the relationship clear on their departmental web pages as well.

In addition to these accreditations, SMSU is currently pursuing accreditation for its RN-to-BSN program from the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE). The program, which began in 2013-2014, is required to have students enrolled for at least one year before an evaluation is conducted; thus the CCNE accreditation review will be in process during 2014-2015. SMSU is also engaged in the candidacy process for accreditation from the International Assembly for Collegiate Business Education.

COST TO STUDENTS

As noted above, the Office of Admission's web pages link directly to the main page for Financial Aid. The SMSU Financial Aid office strives to deliver valuable information to the public and one of the most used tools is the website. The SMSU Financial Aid office website is monitored constantly to make sure it provides all current and prospective students with up to date information about the costs of attending SMSU, financial aid programs available, and on-campus employment opportunities for students. The Net Price Calculator is included on the site as required by Federal Regulation (http://www.smsu.edu/campuslife/financialaid/?id=423), and all students who receive an award notice from SMSU also receive a link to the Financial Aid Shopping Sheet hosted by the U.S. Department of Education (http://collegecost.ed.gov/shopping_sheet.pdf). The Financial Aid Shopping Sheet provides information to students on both possible forms of Financial Aid and Costs. Many links on the Financial Aid site connect to pages on the University's Business Services site to help direct students to the appropriate offices for help.

FACULTY AND STAFF

The online directory lists all employees of the University and is easily searchable by department or individual. It is updated annually. In addition to the directory, the Academic Catalog lists the faculty associated with each department or program at the beginning of each discipline's catalog entry. These faculty listings are hot links to the online directory. Each department or office on campus also lists its employees on their web page. Employees are responsible for updating their profile page to include information such as where they received their degrees. However, not all employees fill out the additional information on their profiles. This can make it difficult for students and the public to recognize the achievements of faculty and other employees of the University. Previously, up through the 2006 print Academic Catalog, a full listing of faculty, the year of their hire, and their degrees awarded was maintained in the print version of the Academic Catalog, along with similar information for staff, a listing of emeriti, and presidential award recipients (an award which ceased in

2000). While the directory utility and cross-linked web pages make it easier to locate and contact employees, the University is exploring how to address the issue of lack of profile information.

CONTROL

SMSU is one of seven state universities in the MnSCU system. (See further description in Section 2C below.) SMSU's relationship to MnSCU is clearly indicated at the bottom of *every* web page, along with a link to the MnSCU home page.

Conversely, MnSCU maintains an Accountability Dashboard for all of institutions within the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system (http://www.mnscu.edu/board/accountability/). The Accountability Dashboard is designed to track progress in reaching the system's strategic goals and to encourage continuous improvement of each institution in the system. The Dashboard contains links to the following types of data, which SMSU reports to MnSCU annually: Composite Financial Index, Enrollment, Facilities Condition Index, Licensure Exams Pass Rate, Student Persistence and Completion, and Tuition and Fees.

CORE COMPONENT 2.C: THE GOVERNING BOARD OF THE INSTITUTION IS SUFFICIENTLY AUTONOMOUS TO MAKE DECISIONS IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE INSTITUTION AND TO ASSURE ITS INTEGRITY.

2C1. The governing board's deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.

Southwest Minnesota State University is one of seven state universities, part of the 31 institution Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system (MnSCU). The Minnesota Senate and the House of Representatives oversee the MnSCU system's operations and finances, per Minnesota Statute Chapter 136F (link). The system is governed by a 15-member Board of Trustees appointed by the governor and approved by the Minnesota State Senate. Members include one representative from each of the state's eight congressional districts; four at-large members; and one student from a community or community and technical college, one student from a technical college, and one student from a state university. The roster of Trustee members can be found at http://www.mnscu.edu/board/roster.html. The Board has policy responsibility for system planning, academic programs, fiscal management, personnel, admission requirements, tuition and fees, and rules and regulations.

The Board of Trustees operates under an extensive code of conduct that addresses:

- Authority to act
- Informed decision-making
- Support for Board decisions
- Official spokesperson
- Conflicts of interest
- Prohibited activities

In addition there is an Office of Internal Auditing with the mission "to provide independent, objective assurance and consulting services designed to add value and improve the operations of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities. Internal Auditing helps the Board of Trustees, Chancellor, presidents, and all other levels of management accomplish their objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control, and governance processes."

The MnSCU System Chancellor "is responsible for providing academic leadership to the system's 31 colleges and universities, ensuring effective and efficient management and operation of the system, carrying out board policies, recommending operating and capital budgets to the board, and planning for the current and long-term educational needs of Minnesota."

Southwest Minnesota State University is headed by President Connie J. Gores. The president serves as the chief executive officer and is responsible for leading the faculty, staff and students in developing and implementing the University's mission.

The president is the primary spokesperson for the college or university and regularly consults with students, faculty, staff and members of the community. Duties and responsibilities of the president include providing innovative educational leadership, allocating campus resources, employing personnel, following system policies and procedures, and implementing the system's strategic plan.

Component 2C2. The governing board reviews and considers the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations.

Component 2C4. The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the administration and expects the faculty to oversee academic matters.

SMSU's Student Handbook provides students with information on opportunity for involvement in university governance and also describes student access to the Board of Trustees through the Minnesota State University Student Association as recognized by the Board. Student Association representatives meet and discuss with SMSU Administration on a regular basis.

As described in several previous sections of this chapter, through the SMSU Faculty Association (SmSUFA) the faculty meets to discuss and approve academic policies and procedures and engages in meet and confer with the local administration. At the state level, the InterFaculty Organization bargaining agreement with MnSCU outlines rights of the IFO Board to a meet and confer process with the Board of Trustees. As described in Section 2C1 above, the roles and responsibilities of the Board of Trustees, Chancellor, and University President demonstrate how the institution is empowered in its daily operations, while being held accountable to MnSCU and state strategic directives, policies, and mandates.

Component 2C3. The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests, or other external parties when such influence would not be in the best interest of the institution.

The Board of Trustees Code of Conduct explicitly addresses Conflict of Interest and delineates required action for trustee with potential conflict of interest. In addition the Code specifically prohibits use of position to secure benefits, disclosure of confidential or protected communications, and use of influence.

The HLC Self-Study Survey of all constituent groups conducted in Spring 2013 found that there was wide-spread understanding that SMSU is a MnSCU institution and that the President of SMSU is accountable to the Chancellor of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System and the Board of Trustees of the system.

The supporting information for this component is available on the MnSCU system website http://www.mnscu.edu/board/index.html and http://www.mnscu.edu/about/index.html.

Policies and procedures ensure that the governing board:

    1) preserves and enhances the institution
        b) 1C.1 Board of Trustees Code of Conduct
        i) Subpart B. Informed decision-making

    2) listens to, takes into account interests of internal and external constituencies
        a) Student Handbook, student representative on board

    3) is independent
        a) Board of Trustees Code of Conduct
        i) Part 3. Conflicts of Interest

    4) delegates authority to SMSU's administration.
        Board statement http://www.mnscu.edu/about/presidents/index.html

    5) expects faculty to oversee academic matters.
        a) Board policies
        b) IFO contract, Article 6, Section B. Meet and Confer

CORE COMPONENT 2.D: THE INSTITUTION IS COMMITTED TO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND THE PURSUIT OF TRUTH IN TEACHING AND LEARNING.

Freedom of expression as a core value of this institution is reflected in the University's guiding values, as stated Value 8:

> "8. We value a safe environment for intellectual expression and encourage open and civil communication."

In addition, as a MnSCU institution SMSU adheres to the Board of Trustee's policies. Under Student Rights and Responsibilities (MnSCU Policy 3.1) the first three points address the freedoms of learning, expression and association. The SMSU Student Handbook references these rights (http://www.smsu.edu/administration/studenthandbook/?id=8200) and also provides information on the procedure to address grievances (http://www.smsu.edu/administration/studenthandbook/?id=8217).

Students with complaints about any aspect of the University may follow a clear process outlined in the Student Handbook. The Deans' administrative assistant sends a campus-wide email notifying all campus constituents about the complaint policy and procedure each semester. The Academic Deans' Office maintains a record of these student complaints. Since 2008, the year a more detailed complaint log was established, no

complaints regarding academic freedom or freedom of expression have been received. (See the SMSU policy on student complaints: http://www.smsu.edu/nca/policies/g-011%20institutional%20record%20of%20student%20complaints.pdf; see also the Federal Compliance chapter for more information about this process.)

As described in Section 2A, SMSU follows the MnSCU Board's Policy 1B1. Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination in Employment and Education (http://www.mnscu.edu/board/policy/1b01.html). Periodic publications such as the Oct. 13, 2013 notice in SMSU Today remind students and staff of the University's equal opportunity and nondiscrimination policy. (For an example, see http://www.smsu.edu/today/?infoDirect=5013.) This yearly notice also links to the University's Affirmative Action page, which provides procedures for addressing complaints and lists the MnSCU policies related to complaints of discrimination or harassment.

As reflected in the MnSCU Board policy, Student Rights and Responsibilities, the freedom of association is also guaranteed. Student clubs supported by the Student Activity Fee Committee (SAFAC) represent a wide variety of activity and interests on campus exemplifying the institution's commitment to freedom of association for all. Campus organizations include Oyate (Native People/Nation), Muslim Student Organization and several Christian student organizations, Nepalese Student Association and several nationality-based student clubs, SMSU Feminists Club, and the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Ally. For a complete list, see https://southwestmsu.collegiatelink.net/Organizations.

Political clubs are also supported through SAFAC. Political debates and discussions can tend to the volatile and raise concerns regarding the University's political neutrality. As stated in the Policy on Political Events, SMSU "encourages open and vigorous discussion of political ideas while maintaining its political neutrality." (http://www.smsu.edu/nca/policies/g-026%20political%20events%20policy.pdf) While not related just to political events, the procedure Freedom of Expression (http://www.smsu.edu/nca/policies/freedom%20of%20expression%20procedure.pdf) was developed to guide students and faculty interested in planning or participating in public forums and other activities or events.

SMSU's faculty value their right of academic freedom and accept the inherent responsibilities as stated in their union's contract with MnSCU. The contract between the Inter Faculty Organization and the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board of Trustees recognizes the value of Academic Freedom in Article 4 and has agreed "to maintain and encourage full freedom, within the law, of inquiry, teaching and research." Faculty rights, responsibilities and obligations are outlined in section C of Article 4 of the contract. The contract between MSUAASF and MnSCU also provides for academic freedom in Article 4, mirroring much of the same language as in the IFO contract. The contracts contain grievance procedures to address any concerns. While the faculty handbook lists suggestions for what topics a syllabus should include, faculty create and develop their own syllabi, in keeping with agreed-upon departmental requirements for courses. Faculty also guide and conduct academic assessment.

MnSCU Policy 5.22 Acceptable Use of Computers and Information Technology Resources acknowledges academic freedom as it relates to access to information and resources. As stated in both the policy and the related procedure, "nothing in this policy shall be interpreted to expand, diminish or alter academic freedom." (See 5.22 Acceptable Use of Computers and Information Technology Resources and 5.22.1 Acceptable Use of Computers and Information Technology Resources Procedure.)

As demonstrated below in Table 2.1, in response to the 2013 HLC Self-Study Survey statement "The SMSU community is open to the expression of diverse opinions," a high percentage of all University constituents strongly agree or agree with the statement. 77.4% of on-campus undergraduate students agree and strongly agree. Certain populations without much direct contact on campus, such as employers, were more likely to state that they did not know. The highest combined rate of disagreement, 22.6%, comes from the SMSU faculty. (All HLC Self-Study Survey data is available in Appendix ?)

TABLE 2.1 RESPONSE TO STATEMENT "THE SMSU COMMUNITY IS OPEN TO THE EXPRESSION OF DIVERSE OPINIONS"

Audience	Community							Undergraduate		Graduate
	Overall	Marshall	Alum	Employer	Faculty	Staff	Parent	On Campus	Off Compus	
Strongly Agree	16.8%	13.5%	18.9%	11.2%	16.3%	14.9%	12.5%	25.8%	26.9%	25.8%
Agree	45.4%	54.7%	51.5%	31.5%	35.0%	55.4%	56.3%	51.6%	23.1%	38.7%
Neither Agree/Disagree	17.0%	17.0%	14.8%	15.7%	26.3%	18.9%	12.5%	12.7%	15.4%	19.4%
Disagree	7.5%	7.2%	8.3%	3.4%	16.3%	6.8%	18.8%	3.4%	0.0%	3.2%
Strongly Disagree	2.5%	2.2%	2.4%	2.2%	6.3%	1.4%	0.0%	1.4%	7.7%	0.0%
Do Not Know	10.8%	5.4%	4.1%	36.0%	0.0%	2.7%	0.0%	5.1%	26.9%	12.9%

Clearly, freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning is integral to this institution as evidenced in policies and procedures and as actively practiced, and is valued by University members. Freedom of expression is also enacted daily through departmental or club sponsorship of forums, programs, and speakers, the faculty New Works programming, and annually through the Undergraduate Research Conference's demonstrations of student research. A more prominent statement on the website, and in the student and faculty handbooks would make this evident to all.

2E. THE INSTITUTION ENSURES THAT FACULTY, STUDENTS, AND STAFF ACQUIRE, DISCOVER, AND APPLY KNOWLEDGE RESPONSIBLY.

Students have many opportunities to "acquire, discover and apply knowledge responsibly" outside the classroom through applied experiences such as the Research Chefs Association Culinology Student national competition, SMSU and MnSCU Undergraduate Research Conferences, presentations at national conferences, work at the SMSU Marketing Advisory Center, and other opportunities.

Faculty are supported in similar endeavors through contractual professional development funds and Faculty Improvement Grants. MnSCU offers online resources through the web (http://www.asa.mnscu.edu/facultydevelopment/). In addition, IFO faculty are able to spend concentrated time on research and/or continuing education during sabbatical leaves.

Staff professional development (for members of MSUAASF and AFSCME) may be supported either through area/department funds or from grants available through SMSU's Human Resources Department.

2E1. The institution provides effective oversight and support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff, and students.

In addition to the Academic Honesty policy and procedures as noted below in 2E3, the University supports the integrity of research by faculty, staff and students through the Institutional Research Board. The Board has policies and procedures in place for research involving both human and animal participants. (http://www.smsu.edu/nca/policies/a-038%20institutional%20review%20board%20for%20research.pdf and http://www.smsu.edu/nca/policies/a-039%20policy%20for%20research%20using%20animal%20subjects.pdf.) The Institutional Review Board is a committee of faculty and administration who review University research activities involving human or animal participants to ensure that it is being conducted ethically. The Institutional Review Board is composed of one (non-voting) dean; three SMSUFA members that include one science faculty; and one MAPE, AFSCME,

or MSUAASF member. Faculty are appointed to serve a term of one year.   The IRB committee thoroughly reviewed and revised the IRB Policy for Research Using Human Subjects (http://www.smsu.edu/administration/committees/irb/?id=6141) and developed a Policy for Research Using Animal Subjects http://www.smsu.edu/administration/committees/irb/?id=6141.) Originally passed in 2006 after committee members researched best practices, revised policies went through faculty and administration approval and went into effect on October 10, 2010. The number of reviews completed vary each semester, but average approximately 25 for each semester.

SmSUFA faculty design professional development plans addressing the five criteria listed in the IFO contract with MnSCU. One criterion is scholarly or creative achievement or research. Plans are reviewed and may be commented on by department colleagues. The college deans provide guidance and support for research and scholarly practice. The current faculty contract calls on the department to provide comment on faculty plan outcomes to the deans at the end of the academic year. The purpose is to guide and support all faculty, but particularly tenure track faculty, toward their creative and research goals.

As role models to their students, faculty are expected to uphold high standards for ethical research. As indicated on the HLC Self-Study Survey, alumni and students perceive their faculty to indeed practice good academic behaviors; while off-campus students have a slightly lower rate of agreeing, perhaps due to not seeing the faculty members in person, consistently between 70 to 80 percent of students and alumni agree and strongly agree with the statement noted in Figure 2.2 below that "My professors practice(d) what they preach(ed) with regard to academic behaviors and standards."

FIGURE 2.2: RESPONSE TO STATEMENT "MY PROFESSORS PRACTICE(D) WHAT THEY PREACH(ED) WITH REGARD TO ACADEMIC BEHAVIORS AND STANDARDS"
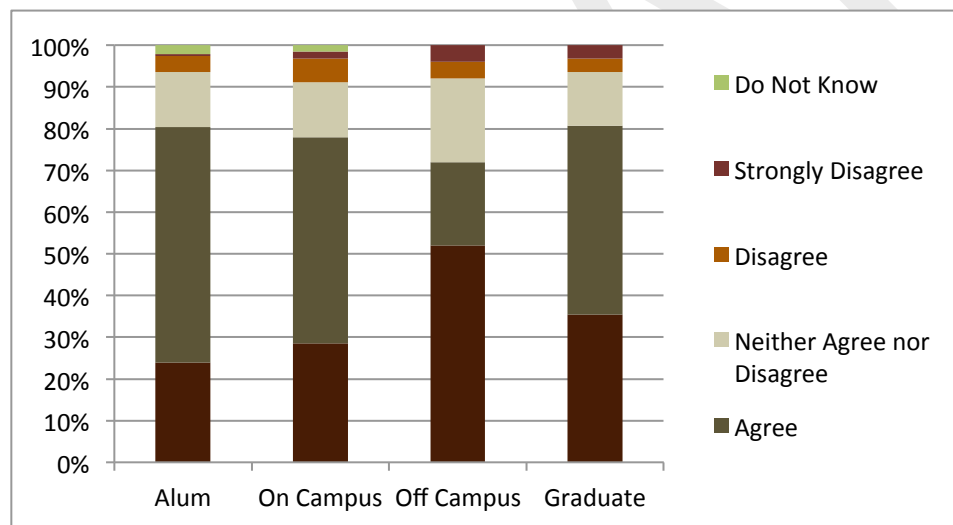
When all four student groups were asked if their major degree programs challenged them to collect and analyze data and also to solve problems through critical thinking, responses to the question were overwhelmingly either in agreement or strongly in agreement. 117 out of 182 alumni surveyed indicated that SMSU prepared them well when addressing ethical conduct in the workplace. This result is comparable to that of employers of SMSU graduates who overwhelmingly agreed that these graduates follow ethical standards in the workplace. (All HLC Self-Study Survey data is available in Appendix ?)

2E2. Students are offered guidance in the ethical use of information resources.

SMSU provides guidance to students in the ethical use of information resources in a myriad of ways throughout their work at the University.

The Liberal Education Program (LEP) leads in this effort. As described in Chapter ?, the revision of the liberal arts curriculum that took effect in 2009 includes LEP 100, First Year Seminar (FYS). All incoming freshmen take this first year seminar course preferably in their first semester at SMSU. The LEP committee has developed a FYS Instructor's Manual describing the shared objectives of the class, and a seminar was held in May 2013 for all FYS faculty to help them learn and discuss their common approaches to the objectives.   Two of the four objectives are

- An introduction to critical thinking. This includes the ability to construct arguments, evaluate claims and evidence, and consider multiple points of view.
- An introduction to research skills and informational literacy, including use of our library's collection of books, periodicals, and online resources

FYS faculty are asked to schedule 3 sessions on information literacy. Building on the scaffolding approach, the FYS Instructor's Manual states: "To help ensure proper incremental development of information literacy skills during a student's first two years, all LEP 100 courses will request library instruction. Each section of LEP 100 will get the same library instruction. These information literacy skills will be developed further in ENG 151 and ENG 251. Some information literacy instruction will take place at the library, although additional information literacy instruction materials may be provided by the library but led by instructors in their regular classrooms."

The focus on core skills, including information literacy, continues in the major, as each degree program must identify and pass through the LEC a core skills-focused class. Finally, the LEP 400 Contemporary Issues seminar class, the LEP capstone, also includes a focus on the core skills in addition to its creative thinking outcome. These elements of the LEP curricular structure ensure that students receive guidance and instruction in the ethical use of information no matter their major, and regardless of whether they transferred in after completing general studies elsewhere, as the major core skills course and LEP 400 are graduation requirements.

The Academic Honesty Policy is also addressed in FYS. The classroom discussion is to cover plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, tampering, and assisting in the dishonesty of others.

Critical thinking and citation practices are explicitly covered and reinforced in these LEP courses: English 151, required of all students, and the sophomore-level or above writing-focused class, consisting of either English 251 or Philosophy 303.

In addition to the LEP coursework, students receive guidance through their major programs. While the type of information and research expectations naturally vary among disciplines, all programs must culminate with a capstone course in which students are expected to demonstrate their mastery over these elements within their discipline. (See program review and assessment information in the Criterion 4 chapter.)

In support of students' coursework, the Library, Writing Center, and Speaking Center provide additional guidance on appropriately citing referenced works. The Writing Center also works with students to recognize how to properly cite sources and incorporate source material into their texts. If the Center consultants suspect plagiarism, there are specific guidelines on how to address the issue with students. Reference is made to the University's academic dishonesty policy and the consultant will report to the Writing Center Director.

The HLC Self-Study Survey demonstrates that alumni and current students very strongly agree that they are instructed in reliable and ethical ways of conducting research, as evidenced in Figure 2.3 below.

Legend:
- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
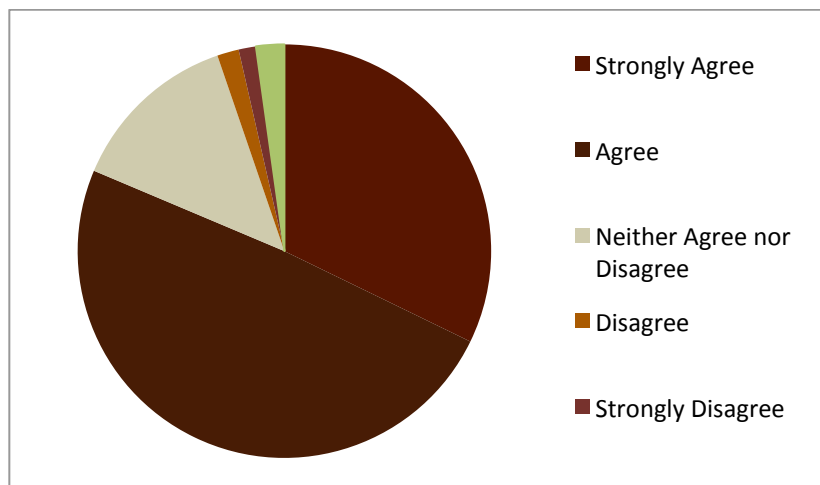
2E3. The institution has and enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.

As noted in the response to Criterion 2D, SMSU values the academic freedoms of inquiry and expression. The University has policies and procedures in place to protect these freedoms. In our required First Year Seminar classes for freshmen, critical thinking and information literacy are part of the curriculum. The Liberal Education Program Committee has developed a manual for FYS instructors with recommended structuring of the course to cover information literacy and critical thinking skills.

The Faculty Handbook encourages faculty to address plagiarism and academic honesty in course syllabi. The University's Academic Honesty policy clearly states expectations and ramifications related to academic dishonesty. Graduate students are held to the same academic honesty standard, as noted in Policy A-045 Graduate Policies and Procedures. For all concerns regarding academic honesty, there is a procedure in place: incidents are documented and forwarded to the Deans' Office, and sanctions are clearly stated. There is also an opportunity for students to appeal findings (Procedure G-005 Academic Appeals Policy http://www.smsu.edu/nca/policies/g-005%20academic%20appeals%20policy.pdf).

In addition to instruction by faculty all students are informed of prohibited conduct, academic dishonesty, and the appeals process through the Student Handbook http://www.smsu.edu/administration/studenthandbook/?id=8206

CRITERION 2: STRENGTHS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Strengths

- Clear contractual guidelines and policies exist to guide SMSU in its daily operations.
- University constituents are represented and involved in the development or revision of policies through the various Meet and Confer processes or other shared governance processes.
- The HLC survey results indicate that necessary information for students and the public is clear and easy to find on the web site.

- The University retains its autonomy in the MnSCU system while contributing to system-wide initiatives and complying with system-wide requirements.
- SMSU follows commonly accepted and ethical practices in financial and academic administration of the University.
- Students have strong grounding in ethical academic and research practices.

Recommendations

- While the SMSU web site has won awards in the past, the website and other online media need continuing support and resources in order to keep up with this main artery of communication. Some information about departments, program accreditations/certifications, and organizational structures could be more clearly displayed on the University web site.
- The University web site could be examined to ensure that links exist between policies or the Student Handbook descriptions and the departments/offices that are relevant to those policies. (Example: The Public Safety page and Residence Life page could link back to Student Handbook rules and regulations.)
- More information on the SMSU website regarding its relationship to the MnSCU Governing Board and MnSCU responsibilities might be useful in key locations.
- The University has a clear policy about freedom of expression, and the IFO contract and Student Handbook contain statements about academic freedom. However, a clear, direct statement regarding freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning could be prominently placed on the website and in appropriate print materials.