Western Oregon UNIVERSITY

TOP 10 Things to know about Accreditation by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

10

WHY ACCREDITATION?
Through regional accreditation, we assure the public that we are responsible stewards of societal resources: federal grants (Pell, TEACH & SEOG), guaranteed student loans, veteran's benefits, PLUS Loans for parents and graduate students, Oregon Opportunity Grants—that flow to educational institutions.

9

WE STATE OUR MISSION.
Western Oregon University creates lasting opportunities for student success through transformative education and personalized support.

8

WE DEFINE MISSION FULFILLMENT.
Our mission is fulfilled when students engage in purposeful learning experiences (i.e., well-designed curriculum and co-curriculum) and they graduate.

7

WE TRACK AND REDUCE EQUITY GAPS.
Learn more about retention and graduation.

6

WE EXAMINE OUR ACHIEVEMENTS IN COMPARISON TO OUR PEERS.
Who are our peers?

5

WE PROVIDE EVIDENCE OF OUR WORK AND OUR STUDENTS' OUTCOMES.

4

WE PLAN, ALLOCATE RESOURCES, ASSESS AND CONTINUALLY IMPROVE.
Institutional effectiveness is not a state we achieve but a process where we constantly get better at what we do. Our students learn more, we support them better, and they are more successful.

3

WE USE INDICATORS TO TRACK OUR PROGRESS.
Alignment and assessment of learning outcomes; NSSE measures of academic challenge and High Impact Practices; graduation rates at four and six years; excess credits at graduation; affordability; first to second year retention.

2

OUR YEAR SEVEN EVALUATION IS COMING UP.
Self-evaluation due March 1, 2023. **NWCCU evaluation team site visit: April 12-14, 2023**

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EVERYONE AT WOU PLAYS A ROLE IN MISSION FULFILLMENT.

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INSTITUTIONAL OVERVIEW

Western Oregon University (WOU) is a mid-sized public university committed to changing lives, strengthening communities, and transforming our world. Our university is in the heart of Oregon's Willamette Valley, 75 minutes from the state's cultural hub and largest city, Portland. While our main campus is in Monmouth, we have established an additional site in Salem, Oregon's second largest city and state capital, where we presently deliver two graduate programs and support degree completion for undergraduates.

Governance. The university is governed by a 15-member Board of Trustees, which includes President Jesse Peters as an ex officio, non-voting member. The board's work is supported by four committees: Academic and Student Affairs Committee; Finance and Administration Committee; Executive, Governance and Trusteeship Committee; and WOU's newest board committee constituted in 2022 Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility Committee. For an overview of all senior university leadership, please see the university organizational chart.

Students. In fall 2022, WOU enrolled 3320 undergraduate and 432 graduate students, with an FTE of 2872 undergraduates and 263 graduate students. Like many other regional public comprehensive universities, WOU has experienced enrollment declines in recent years (see response to Year Six PRFR findings).

Eighty-six percent (86%) of our undergraduate students, and 56% of our graduate students attend full time. Forty-seven percent (47%) of our students are first-generation, and 37% are Pell eligible.

WOU's student body is among the most diverse of Oregon's public universities. In Fall 2022, 22% of WOU students were Hispanic and 14% were non-Hispanic students of color. WOU is progressing towards becoming a Hispanic-Serving Institution and has engaged the community in planning with campus-wide educational forums (and here) and a newly formed planning committee.

Programs. WOU offers undergraduate and graduate degree programs, graduate and undergraduate certificates, and an associate degree limited to specific transfer degree completion programs in collaboration with international partners. At the undergraduate level, WOU offers Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Fine Arts, Bachelor of Music, Bachelor of Science, and Bachelor of Applied Science degrees. There are 63 undergraduate degree programs. The undergraduate teacher preparation program has 21 subject matter specializations and prepares educators to serve in early learning, elementary, middle, and high school levels. Most majors also have an associated minor option.

Graduate degree programs include the Master of Arts in Teaching, Master of Arts in Criminal Justice, Master of Science in Justice Studies, Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership, Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies, Master of Science in Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling, and the Master of Science in Education with ten specialty areas.

Individual programs at WOU are accredited by the following organizations:

- National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (CAEP) (last renewed in 2015, awaiting results of 2023 review) accredits the College of Education as a unit for all of its educator programs;
- Oregon Teacher Standards and Practices Commission (TSPC) (last renewed in 2021, without conditions) accredits primary licensure and add-on programs related to teacher preparation; and
- Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) (last renewed in 2017, due for review in 2024) accredits the MS in Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling program.

Faculty. In Fall 2021, WOU's students were served by 319 faculty (268 FTE); 76 [243/319] percent were full-time faculty, and 45 [144/319] percent were tenured or tenure-track faculty. In 2021, which is the most recent year available, the student-to-faculty ratio was 12:1. More detail on the qualifications and rank of faculty was reported in Table 2.F.3-1 of the Year Six PRFR Self-Evaluation.

Student life. WOU supports the interests and needs of students, with an emphasis on belonging and well-being. We view the student leadership and on-campus employment opportunities, resources, and clubs as opportunities for students to be positioned as agents within the learning community, which helps them find coherence between school and life beyond the classroom, where they make informed decisions and take actions as individuals and as community members, both locally and globally. Many student activities are initiated and sustained by students and funded by incidental fees, which are managed by student government.

Students can participate in cultural events, including the Smith Fine Arts Series, MLK Jr Celebration Week, annual Drag Show, Multicultural Student Union Pow Wow, and Nuestra Fiesta Latina. Co-curricular opportunities include alternative break service projects; study abroad; leadership and student government; Black Student Union; Multicultural Student Union; Multicultural Student Services and Programs; Unidos; WOU Triangle Alliance, Stonewall Center, and Wolf Pride Network; Abby's House; Stitch Closet and Food Pantry; FEM in STEM; career exploration opportunities through the Center for Professional Pathways; and free tutoring in Math, Writing, and general subjects.

Students can participate in intercollegiate athletics at the NCAA Division II and club levels, as well as intramural athletics. The campus recreation center provides access to resources, including a climbing wall, aquatic center, fitness equipment, turf field disc golf, and equipment for outdoor activities.

We also view our Student Health and Counseling Center as key to supporting our students. The center helps to meet students' medical and counseling needs and provides them with health education, health events, prevention services, and a rest and relaxation room with therapy lighting and biofeedback equipment.

Finally, we take pride in the safety of our students. This is achieved through the Safety Corridor and Escort Program, along with the anonymous incidence of bias report process, which allows students to report an act of conduct, speech, or expression that targets and individual or group based on their actual or perceived race, religion, ethnicity, gender, gender identity/expression, age, disability, or sexual orientation.

Broader context. WOU is one of eight independently governed public universities in Oregon, and one of four smaller technical/regional universities. The universities are coordinated by the Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC), whose members are appointed by the Governor. A recent study that was commissioned by the Oregon Council of Presidents reported that Oregon ranks 45th in the nation in public funding for higher education, especially universities, resulting in a high reliance on tuition revenues.

PREFACE

INSTITUTIONAL UPDATE SINCE YEAR SIX REPORT

Since WOU submitted its 2022 Year Six Report, the following institutional changes have occurred:

- Dr. Jesse Peters joined Western Oregon University as President.
- To enhance open dialogue and communication, President Peters expanded the president's cabinet from Vice Presidents and Executive Directors to also include the elected presidents of the shared governance groups and the deans.
- Tina Fuchs was appointed Vice President of Student Affairs, after serving in the interim role following the departure of Dr. Gary Dukes.
- Dominique Vargas joined the university as its inaugural Executive Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion following a national search.
- Cara Groshong has served as Interim Director of the WOU Foundation since Erin McDonough departed. After a national search, Katie Wojke begins as the Vice President of University Advancement & University Relations and Director for the WOU Foundation on 30 January 2023.
- Alice Sprague has served as Interim Director of Human Resources since the departure of the former interim director, Heather Mercer; a national search for a permanent Executive Director of Human Resources is underway.
- Carson Campbell was appointed interim University General Counsel following the departure of Ryan Hageman who had served as Vice President, University Counsel and Board Secretary. The General Counsel Office is undergoing reorganization to redistribute responsibilities. Part of this reorganization includes creating a dedicated position for Board Secretary; the search for that position is underway.
- Ricardo "Rico" Lujan Valerio has been appointed as Director of Governmental Relations, replacing David McDonald.
- Dr. Judy Sylva joined the university as Associate Provost for Academic Effectiveness following a national search; she replaced Dr. Michael Baltzley who returned to the faculty after completing his three-year term of service.
- Malissa Larson was appointed as Associate Vice President of Student Affairs.

ADENDUM ON DISTANCE EDUCATION POLICY

The NWCCU has requested additional information from all institutions regarding institutional compliance with its Distance Education Policy: Verification of Student Identity and Regular and Substantive Interactions. Evidence related to four areas is required to demonstrate compliance with this policy.

1. Policies and procedures for ensuring the student who registers in a Distance Education course or program is the same student who participates in the course and receives credit
2. Policies and procedures make it clear that these processes protect student privacy
3. Notification to students at the time of registration of any additional charges associated with verification procedures
4. Academic policies and procedures for instructors to implement requirements for regular and substantive interactions (RSI) in Distance Education courses or programs

WOU addressed evidence required in 1, 2, and 3 in our Year Six PRFR report (Appendix E). Reviewers found our response and evidence to be compliant (Appendix F). Here we focus on the fourth area, regular and substantive interactions (RSI) in Distance Education (DE) courses or programs.

Regular and substantive interaction is embedded in WOU's approach to online course quality. WOU ensures distance education integrity through a three-pronged strategy:
1. Proactive communication and training on distance education quality and RSI
2. Comprehensive monitoring
3. Timely resolution with ongoing support

Distance learning at WOU has increased substantially in the past six years. Using Fall terms 2016 to 2019 as a pre-pandemic baseline, WOU previously averaged 214 DE courses (137 online, 77 hybrid). In Fall 2022, WOU offered 443 DE courses (307 online, 136 hybrid), representing a 107% increase.

The Director of Academic Innovation is responsible for administrative management of distance education, including compliance and quality assurance. The Center for Academic Innovation, provides faculty development programming and instructional design support for all instructors, courses, and programs, including distance education. The Center for Academic Innovation currently has 1.0 FTE instructional design, 1.0 FTE faculty development, and .75 FTE LMS administration. However, our 1.0 FTE instructional design is not base-funded. Recognizing budget pressures, we anticipate losing .75 to 1.0 FTE on June 30, 2023, resulting in service cuts. We wish to be fully transparent, as this will impact our current quality assurance strategies.

Proactive Communication & Training

WOU has four defined course modalities ([Course Modalites at WOU](#)). The Director of Academic Innovation works with college and faculty leadership to ensure instructors understand expectations for each modality. The Center for Academic Innovation offers a comprehensive set of faculty development and instructional design support to aid instructors in meeting these expectations. RSI is a critical focus of this work.

Faculty development programs include workshops, multi-week courses, and a faculty fellows program. RSI is inseparable from quality teaching and so programming is designed to ensure our instructors have the skills necessary to connect with students and facilitate learning in all modalities. Examples include workshops on meaningful assessment strategies, facilitating synchronous meetings online, and strategies for active learning and student engagement. We offer comprehensive technology training to ensure instructors are empowered users of academic technology. For details on offerings, please see our [comprehensive programming list](#).

Instructional design support is currently available for all WOU faculty and emphasizes RSI in online course development; our course mapping process specifically incorporates feedback and engagement planning in support of RSI. These services, implemented during the pandemic, are not based-funded. After June 30, limited instructional design hours (approximately 10 hours per work for all related activities) will remain available. These hours will be allocated to projects approved by Academic Innovation as high priority, (e.g. new programs, retention, compliance). Cuts to this service area will mean even high-impact projects will be delayed.

Moving forward, WOU will also incorporate two improvements to its proactive communication regarding RSI to its faculty and college leadership:

1. Each term, instructors assigned to online/hybrid courses will be emailed information specific to RSI, including guidance and available resources.
2. We will develop and implement annual training for division/department leadership on identifying evidence of RSI during online/hybrid teaching observations.

Monitoring

WOU monitors online course quality both formally and informally. Formally, the university's performance review and promotion and tenure processes include observations of teaching, including online courses. When practices inconsistent with the university's RSI expectations in online/hybrid courses occur, Academic Innovation is available to work directly with faculty members to improve course design and instructional strategies.

Informal monitoring is a continuous, ongoing process facilitated by the Center for Academic Innovation. CAI staff regularly evaluate support tickets from students, faculty, and staff for indicators of course quality concerns. In some cases, what an instructor or student may experience as a technical challenge belies a more serious disconnect from online teaching best practices. When these tickets are flagged, Academic Innovation provides support and solutions

to resolve both the reported problem and the underlying pedagogical or instructional challenge. This method has proved highly successful in quickly resolving emerging course quality concerns.

Forthcoming FTE reductions will impact our capacity in this area. Presently, our team works in tandem with contract 24/7/365 technical support, initiated previously to extend technical support availability outside standard business hours. Moving forward, in-house technical support will respond only to tickets escalated by Canvas 24/7/365. We do not yet know how this impacts our informal monitoring strategy or course quality.

WOU facilitates additional lines of communication with faculty, through universally available instructional design consultations, open question periods in all workshops, and providing confidential, nonjudgmental consultations to faculty and chairs working to resolve course concerns. These services build the trust with faculty necessary for voluntary, proactive disclosure of course quality concerns and promote collaboration when implementing solutions.

Regular needs assessment activities are the final component of our monitoring strategy. WOU's Institutional Research office conducts an annual survey on students' regarding course modality preferences. The Center for Academic Innovation conducts an annual faculty development survey to inform programming and assess faculty's feelings of efficacy. Ad hoc institutional research, such as listening sessions and incidental surveys, are also conducted. All faculty development programs are evaluated by participants. Presently, more than 95% of faculty participants rate our programs favorably.

An example of ad hoc needs assessment is a voluntary course evaluation project facilitated in partnership with WOU's faculty union. Faculty voluntarily applied a course quality rubric to courses moved online during the pandemic and provided the results to Academic Innovation to inform future programming and service development. We are delighted the strong, positive relationship Academic Innovation cultivated with faculty allows us to engage in course quality improvement efforts in a collegial, non-adversarial manner.

Timely Remediation & Continuous Quality Improvement Support

Presently, we can provide same-day consultations, followed by action plans. In some cases, resolution is quick, as the root cause is strictly technical. In other cases, where a more fundamental issue exists (e.g. online teaching fundamentals, course design deficiencies), we have been able to provide one-on-one design services that provide interim solutions while implementing a long-term action plan.

With future staffing shortages, our ability to respond quickly or commit to long-term remediation plans will be diminished. We anticipate challenges related to technology alone will be resolved quickly, but those which require instructional design support or course revisions will be delayed due to reduced instructional design capacity. Because hours will be extremely limited, we will not be able to incorporate unplanned instructional design projects that arise from an unanticipated compliance concern without delaying other high-impact projects.

STANDARD 1A – INSTITUTIONAL MISSION

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

Western Oregon University creates lasting opportunities for student success through transformative education and personalized support.

The Western Oregon University (WOU) mission statement, which was adopted by the Board of Trustees in 2017, describes our commitment to student success. This comprehensive mission was developed through a collaborative strategic planning process, which included committee and town hall meetings over a 9-month period.

We unanimously believe that student success is achieved through transformative education and personalized support. Education is transformative when students are positioned as agents in the learning community. This requires teaching and learning that is designed to empower learners to find coherence between school and the world beyond the classroom and to make informed decisions and take actions as individuals and as community members, both locally and globally. Support is personalized when individuals in the institution go above and beyond meeting the needs of a learner. Delivering personalized support means adding a familiar human touch to every interaction, reducing barriers, and continually adjusting to meet a learner's specific needs, abilities, and expectations.

Our mission is invoked regularly by leadership; understood by faculty, staff, and students; and serves as a touchstone for institution-wide and program-specific processes and planning.

General reflection and next steps

As described in further detail in the response to Standard 1B4, WOU will engage in strategic planning in 2023. We expect that process to result in a revised mission that will better reflect the increased diversity of our student population and the region that we serve.

STANDARD 1.B - PREAMBLE - EVOLUTION OF GOVERNANCE/CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

In 2016, WOU's **institutional governance** consisted of the State Board of Higher Education and the Oregon University System to whom the university president reported. The president was advised by shared governance groups (i.e., faculty senate, staff senate, student senate) and delegated execution of operations to vice presidents and executive directors. At the time, our **system for continuous improvement** was undeveloped.

A University Advisory Committee was formed to identify meaningful key performance indicators that would point to mission fulfillment, but the group was unable to reach consensus on indicators or targets for acceptable performance (2016 Self-Evaluation, p. 15-16). Planning and budget decisions were managed centrally by the president with input from vice presidents and executive directors. New initiatives arose from conversations within informal networks rather than through a transparent, systematic process (2016 Self-Evaluation, p. 114). Figure 1.B-1 illustrates our 2016 governance structure and system for continuous improvement.

Figure 1.B.2-1

Figure 1: Institutional governance, shared governance and continuous improvement, 2016
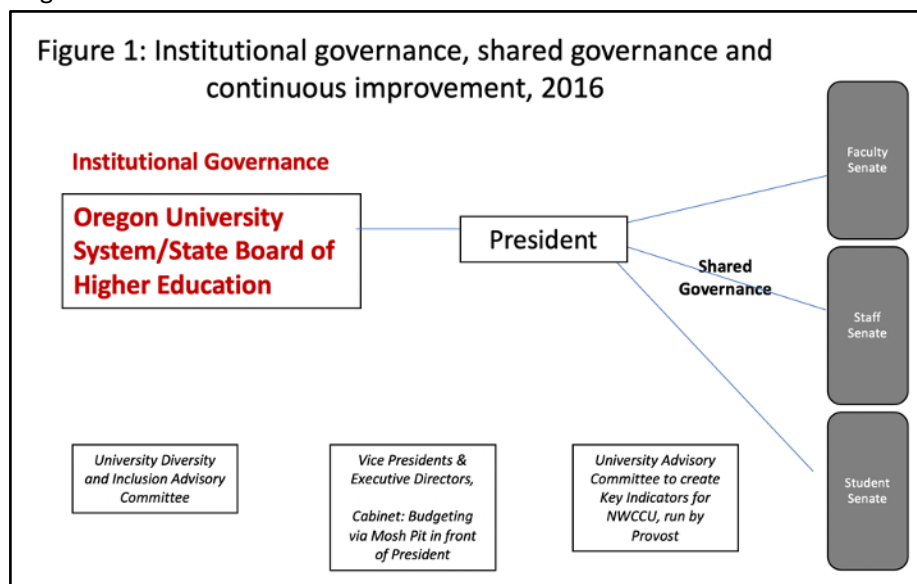
In sum, WOU lacked (1) structures for inclusive, broad-based, comprehensive planning and resource allocation and (2) meaningful indicators to assess mission fulfillment. Our processes did not meet NWCCU standards associated with "Improving Institutional Effectiveness," and we received numerous recommendations from the NWCCU regarding mission fulfillment; outcomes,

objectives, indicators, planning, and budgeting; and assessment and continuous improvement. In response to those recommendations and under the leadership of a new president, WOU developed a strategic plan and established inclusive, university-wide advisory groups, which included University Council, University Budget Advisory Committee, and University Technology Advisory Committee. The University Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee was also reinvigorated. In 2017, WOU submitted its Mission Fulfillment and Core Themes Report, where it identified a set of meaningful goals, objectives and indicators.

Figure 1.B-2:

Institutional governance, shared governance and continuous improvement, 2022
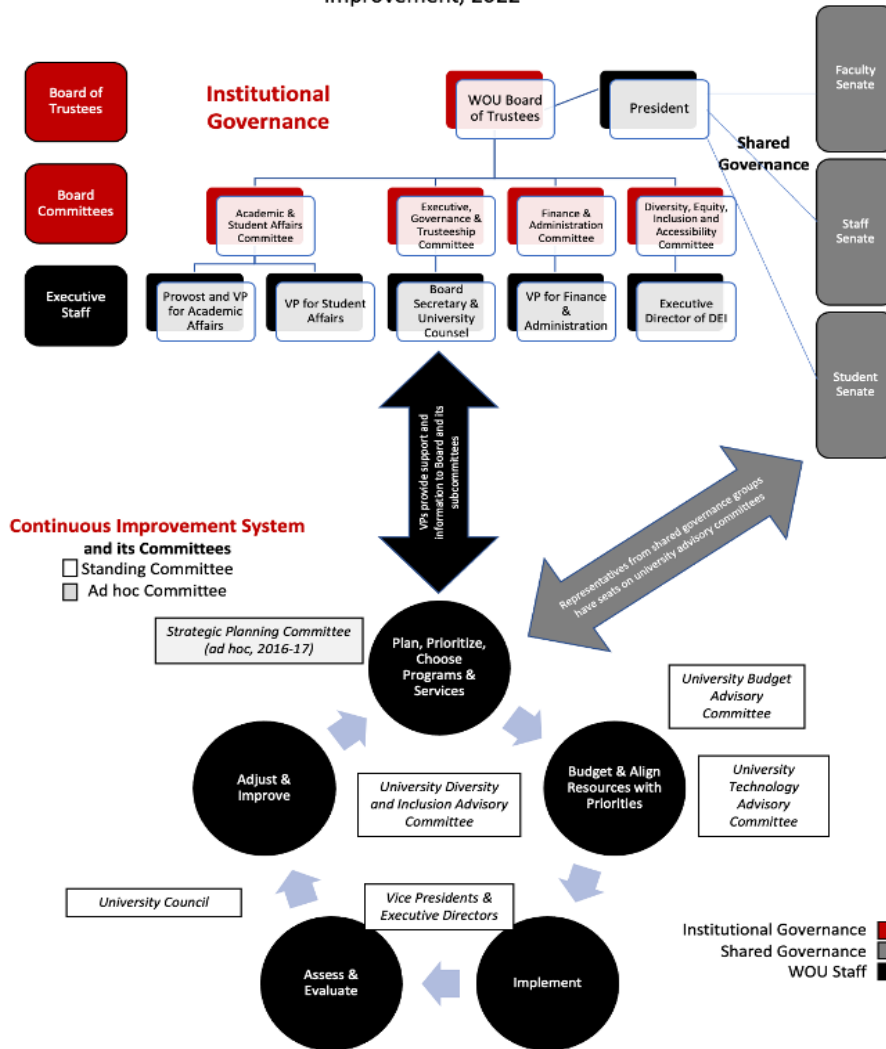
We will demonstrate that the **continuous improvement system** that has emerged is more inclusive, comprehensive, broad based, and transparent than past practice (1.B.1, 1.B.3). As a result of the dissolution of the Oregon University System, our **governance body** has also changed; WOU is now governed by an independent Board of Trustees. We will also demonstrate that, via the board and its subcommittees supported by appropriate vice president-level staff, the university's work, strategic position, and future directions are actively monitored and managed

(1.B.4). WOU's current governance structure and continuous improvement process, depicted in Figure 1.B-2, represents significant development of infrastructure for strategic planning, budgeting, assessment of mission fulfillment, and continuous improvement.

STANDARD 1.B.2 – MEANINGFUL GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND INDICATORS

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

Mission fulfillment objectives, indicators, and goals

In our 2017 Mission Fulfillment and Core Themes report, WOU identified core themes, goals, objectives, and indicators related to mission fulfillment. While core themes are no longer used as an organizing principle by NWCCU, WOU's core themes, goals, and indicators align closely with the first two pillars of our university's larger strategic plan: student success and academic excellence. For that reason, we retained the overarching goals established in our 2017 Report, along with their objectives and most of the indicators, as our framework for determining mission fulfillment. Detailed information on the goals, objectives, indicators, and the justification for their selection can be found in Table 1.B.2-1.

Table 1.B.2-1: Goal—Student success, defined as degree completion

Objective	Indicators	Comparator data	See also
Curriculum is delivered to students via multiple paths.[1]	Percent of courses with at least one section offered via flexible course format during the academic year	Not available	1D2
Students complete programs in a timely and efficient manner.[2]	Percent of programs that can be completed in 180 credits	Not available	1C1
	Undergraduate annual calculation for six-year graduation rate, for first time, full-time student cohort	Available	1D2
	Total credits at graduation for first time, full-time students (graduating class based, not fall cohort based)	Not available	1D2
	Total credits at graduation for transfer students (graduating class based, not fall cohort based)	Not available	1D2

	Undergraduate annual calculation for four-year graduation rate, for first time, full-time student cohort	Available	1D2
Student-support services facilitate student persistence and academic achievement.[3]	Retention for undergraduates from year one to year two for first- time, full-time student cohort	Available	1D2
	Achievement gap in six-year graduation rate for undergrad students who are Underrepresented minority students	Available	1D3
	Achievement gap in six-year graduation rate for undergrad students who are Pell-eligible students	Available	1D3
	Added: Achievement gap in six-year graduation rate for undergrad students who are first-generation	Available	1D3
	Added: Achievement gap in six-year graduation rate for undergrad students who are Hispanic	Available	1D3
	Discontinued: Achievement gap in six-year graduation rate for undergrad students who are students from rural communities	Not available	
	Discontinued: Achievement gap in six-year graduation rate for undergrad students who are students from rural communities	Not available	
Faculty and staff cultivate positive and personalized interactions with students[4]	Students' perceptions of frequency of student-centered interaction with faculty, first-year and seniors, from NSSE	Available*	1C7
Financial hardships that interfere with student completion are minimized.[5]	Cost of attendance, all students, average net price and rank among Oregon public universities	Available	1D2
	Cost of attendance, middle-income students, average net price and rank	Available	1D2

[1]We set a 2023 target of 25% of all courses to be available off-campus, in the evening, online, hybrid or weekends. This measure is meaningful because it is an indicator of our support of degree completion among students with competing demands on their time.

[2]We focused on curricular structure to ensure that our undergraduate requirements could be completed within 180 credits. Originally, we hypothesized that this would contribute to higher 6-year graduation rates, lower excess credits for first-time students, and greater affordability of our degrees. We have added two indicators: 4-year graduation rates for first-time, full-time students and excess credits for transfer students. The 4-year graduation rate allows are meaningful because they indicate minimized opportunity costs for attending college. Reducing excess credits in transfer students has been identified as a state-level priority in Oregon and aligns with our efforts to offer affordable degrees to all students.

[3]Retention from 1st to 2nd year was chosen as an indicator of student persistence, and because this indicator has been stuck for over a decade and represents an area in need of improvement. We originally focused on achievement gaps for URM and Pell Eligible students because they are most relevant to our student population. With NWCCU's 2020 standards, we added indicators for achievement gaps for Hispanic, first generation and male/female students. In addition, our original plan also said we would track achievement gaps in six-year graduation rates for graduate students; we have discontinued that set of indicators because that particular measure is not meaningful. At this time, we don't track achievement gaps at the graduate level. We originally included measures achievement gaps for Veteran's and rural status because they aligned with categories recognized in Oregon's Student Success and Completion Funding Model. We discontinued their use because comparator information is not readily available and the measures are less relevant to our current work.

[4]We chose this measure because it allows us to look at student interactions with faculty at two points in the student life course; we have data from past NSSE administrations so we can track change over time; and NSSE provides peer comparators.

[5]We chose these measures to track our affordability as compared to other public universities in Oregon.

Table 1.B.2-1: Goal—Academic Excellence, defined as well-defined curricular and co-curricular opportunities that enable students to engage in purposeful learning experiences.

Objective	Indicators	Comparator data	See also
Alignment across course, program and university learning outcomes is clear.[1]	Percent of curriculum with alignment among course, program and university learning outcomes	Not available	1C2
Academic and co-curricular programs are responsive to the evolving needs of students.[2]	Completion of program reviews per seven-year program review cycle	Not available	1C1
WOU champions outstanding teaching, research and scholarship that serve student success.[3]	Academic challenge as indicated by NSSE Higher order learning, seniors & first-years	Available*	1C7
	Academic challenge as indicated by NSSE Reflective and integrative learning, seniors & first years	Available*	1C7

	Academic challenge as indicated by NSSE Learning strategies, seniors & first years	Available*	1C7
	Academic challenge as indicated by NSSE Quantitative Reasoning, seniors and first years	Available*	1C7
WOU students engage in high impact learning practices (HIP).[4]	Student scholarship, research and creative activity as indicated by AES	Available	1C7
	Student scholarship, research and creative activity as indicated by PURE Insights	Available	1C7
	Percentage of seniors who have participated in at least one HIP	Available*	1C7
	Percentage of seniors who have participated in two or more HIPs	Available*	1C7

[1]Alignment provides evidence of intentional and thoughtful curriculum design that builds to ultimate learning outcomes for students at the program and degree level.

[2]Program reviews allow for deep reflection on academic programs, and an opportunity for renewal that goes beyond the adjustments that result from ad hoc logistical concerns and annual assessment of student learning.

[3]At the time these indicators were chosen, we did not have assessable general education outcomes. In the absence of such outcomes, these measures from NSSE were those most meaningfully associated with our focus on academic excellence, transformative education, and personalized supports. The General Education program has begun assessment, after initial implementation in 2019-20, and in future cycles evidence related to the results of the general education program, along with evidence from program assessment, will be more appropriate sources of evidence of academic challenge and student performance.

[4]High impact learning practices are meaningfully connected to personalized support and transformative education.

Standardized data at unit (i.e., academic department) and institutional levels

Institutional-level data is available on our Institutional Research website and includes the following: enrollment, retention rates, graduation rates, degrees awarded, faculty, transfer students, cohorts, majors, and other miscellaneous reports. Additionally, academic programs have access to a set of standardized reports on our Institutional Research website.

Assessing and making progress over time

Overall, we have made significant progress in identifying meaningful measures of student achievement and using findings to increase student achievement. For example, data related to graduation rates and excess credits sparked a holistic review and revision of university graduation requirements; data on the size of degree programs, along with the implementation of program reviews, helped us see our curriculum clearly and identify alternatives to serve today's students; the tracking of graduation rates and excess credits over time allowed us to observe and document how curriculum review and revision improved student achievement and increased

affordability; and monitoring equity gaps in degree completion using disaggregated data gave us a deeper understanding of universal or specific effects. See response to Standard 1.D.3 for more detail.

The definitions of measures, along with their importance for achieving our mission, are increasingly understood across campus. An example of increased awareness includes a shift in embracing our role as agents: prior to identifying graduation rates and excess credits as meaningful indicators, concern about our graduation rates was low and we tended to view our students' struggles as a function of their own deficits rather than something that our deeply rooted but unexamined practices might be causing. Data enabled us to see barriers that we had unintentionally put in place and begin the process of collectively and individually dismantling them.

Additional examples of indicators playing a significant role in improving institutional effectiveness include the following: (1) data on affordability compared with other Oregon public universities drove a deliberate strategy over several years to limit tuition increases and (2) data on 1st-to-2nd-year retention led to the development of our bridge program, Destination Western, and a collaborative and cross-unit redesign of student orientation (Wolf PACK). Finally, our Institutional Research Office has developed regular reports for distribution to academic units, which include some of the indicators described in Table 1.B.2-1 and other indicators that have been requested by unit-level academic leaders.

Regional and national peers

We used a transparent process to select regional and national peers for comparison of student achievement indicators. Our peer institutions include the following:

- Arizona State University – West (Glendale, AZ)
- California State University – Channel Islands (Camarillo, CA)
- Colorado Mesa University (Grand Junction, CO)
- Eastern Oregon University (La Grande, OR)
- East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania (East Stroudsburg, PA)
- Emporia State University (Emporia, KS)
- Northwest Missouri State University (Maryville, MO)
- Shippensburg University (Shippensburg, PA)
- Southern Oregon University (Ashland, OR)
- University of Washington – Tacoma (Tacoma, WA)

Arizona State University-West ceased reporting IPEDS data as an independent institution in 2020; shortly after, we updated our list of peer institutions and, therefore, ASU-West is not used in more recent comparisons to peer institutions.

Our peers were selected by using IPEDS data to identify similar institutions based on the following variables:

- Sector of institution (Public, 4-year or above)
- Carnegie Classification 2018 (Masters colleges and universities—small, medium, or large programs)
- Carnegie Classification 2018: Undergraduate Instructional Profile (Arts & Sciences plus professions, with some graduate coexistence; Balanced Arts & Sciences/Professions, with some graduate coexistence, or Professions plus Arts & Sciences, some graduate coexistence)
- Carnegie Classification: Enrollment Profile (high or very high undergraduate)
- Institutional Size Category (1,000 – 9,999 students)
- Percent admitted (79% to 89%)
- Core revenues, total dollars ($70m to $120m)
- Percent of first-time, full-time undergraduates awarded Pell grants (31% to 55%)

In addition to the peer list described above, we often compare our student achievement, enrollment, and finances to the other Oregon public universities. Our Human Resources Office generates salary ranges for the hiring of new staff and administrators by examining CUPA-HR data at [Masters Colleges and Universities](#).

The current list of regional and national peers was identified in 2020 at the time that NWCCU published its newest standards. While annual reconsideration of peers is not a part of our current plan, WOU will review these peers for appropriateness at the time of our next Mid-cycle and Year Seven reviews.

Performance relative to peers

The work described above has resulted in WOU improving its performance in four- and six-year graduation rates as compared to peers.

Graduation rates at six years lag our peers, though the gap in six-year rates has narrowed in recent years as we have improved in this area. In 2016, our six-year graduation rate was 7.5% lower than the mean of our comparators; in 2021, the gap had narrowed to 1.5% (see Chart 1.B.2-1).

As noted previously, WOU has made substantial progress in improving its four-year graduation rate, which increased from 20% in 2016 to 30% in 2021. Our peers have also made progress on this measure. Nonetheless, our 2016 four-year graduation rate lagged our peers' average by 9 percentage points while the 2021 gap was reduced to 4.25 percentage points (see Chart 1.B.2-2).

Chart 1.B.2-1: 6-year graduation rates, 2016-2021, WOU and peers.

6 year grad rates, 2016-2021, WOU and peers

Year	Median of NWCCU Peers	Average of NWCCU Peers	Western Oregon University
2021	49.5	48.75	48
2020	48.5	47.375	45
2019	50.5	47.875	41
2018	46	45.625	40
2017	46.5	44.125	44
2016	46.5	46.5	39

■ Median of NWCCU Peers   ■ Average of NWCCU Peers   ■ Western Oregon University
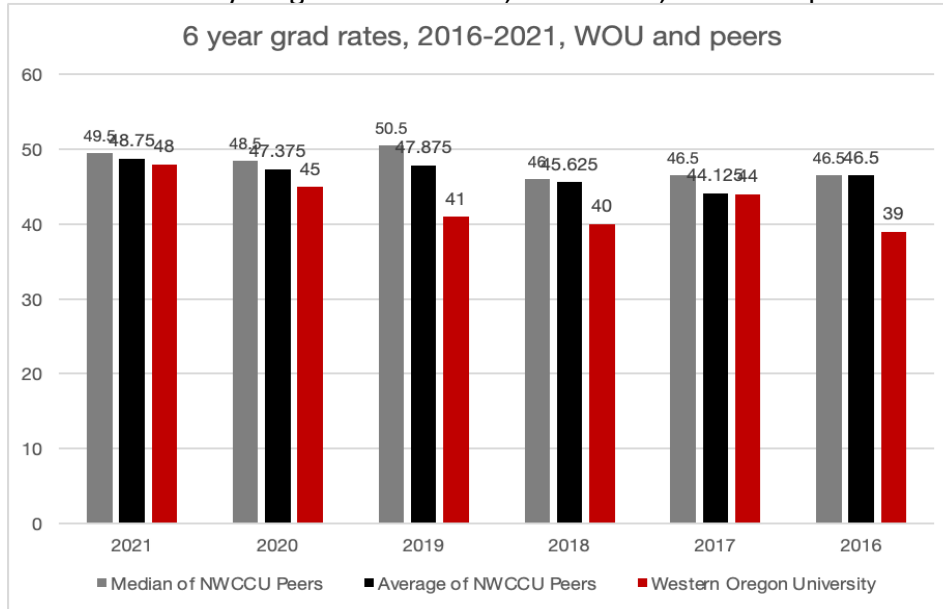
Chart 1.B.2-2: 4-year graduation rates, 2016-2021, WOU and peers

4 year graduation rates, 2016-2021, WOU and peers

Year	Median of NWCCU Peers	Average of NWCCU Peers	Western Oregon University
2021	33	34.25	30
2020	35	33.25	30
2019	31	30.5	27
2018	26.5	28.875	25
2017	26	27.75	24
2016	25.5	29	20

■ Median of NWCCU Peers   ■ Average of NWCCU Peers   ■ Western Oregon University
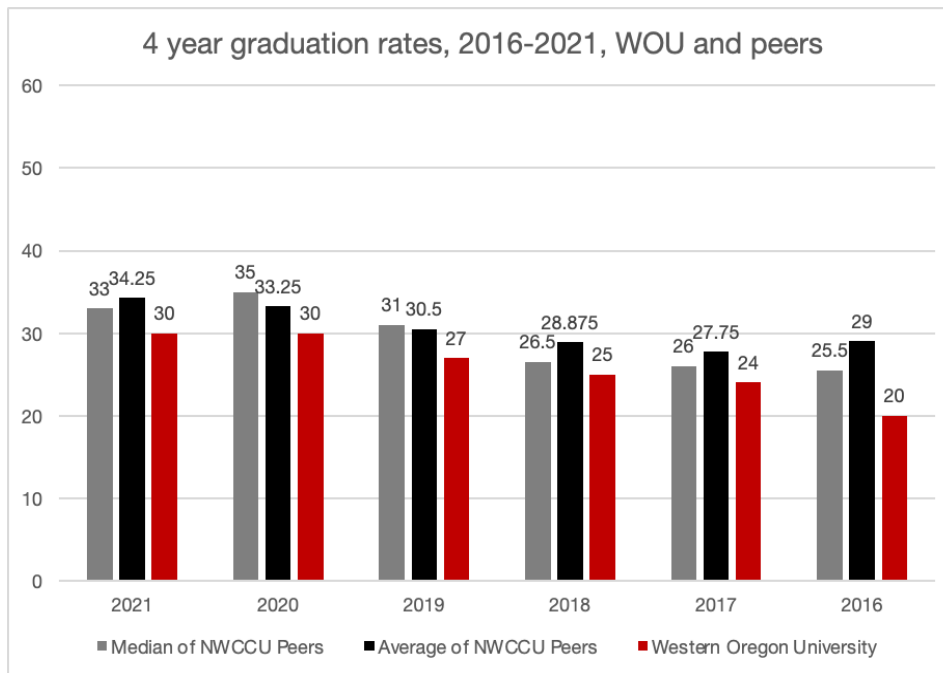
General reflections and future steps

In January 2023, University Council observed that our measures of mission fulfillment focus almost exclusively on the formal academic experience of students (e.g., instruction and academic advising), yet much invaluable work related to student engagement occurs beyond the purview of our academic programs. We invest in this work because we believe it enriches the student experience, provides for a sense of belonging and purpose, and contributes to student success

as measured by retention and graduation. The absence from our indicators of mission fulfillment reflects historical silos that we are working to break down. A truly comprehensive plan for mission fulfillment will conceptualize how engagement impacts student success and will include indicators of student engagement. We have taken the first step by recognizing what is missing.

There are some other areas where we are working to improve.

First, we have generally made better use of student achievement indicators than indicators of student learning. Student learning results tend to remain in a black box, either unexamined or examined but with results not shared broadly with the university and the public. For example, we have NSSE data going back to the early 2000s, along with comparator data, yet we do not disseminate that data beyond posting on our website. Faculty largely do not know the data exists, which means that opportunities to inform their teaching or advising have been missed. While the 2019 re-envisioning of General Education placed high value on high-impact practices and engaged in substantial research into high impact practices and their effects on learning and achievement, the NSSE data on our students' experiences with those practices were not reviewed during the re-envisioning process. Relatedly, University Council has noted that, for some dimensions of interest, our indicators could be more strongly aligned with our goals. For example, we established a goal of having 25% of *courses* be available in flexible formats; while that may be a step in our intended direction of providing more flexibility to students, we have learned that our students need *programs* and *services* to be accessible in flexible formats.

Second, with the new NWCCU standards, WOU identified peer comparators for our student achievement data in 2020. While we have retrieved and reviewed this data, our performance in the context of peers has not been disseminated widely, perhaps because it is discouraging that we lag our peers on retention and graduation rates, despite significant work and progress at WOU to improve. As the peer comparator data reveals, we still have much to accomplish.

Finally, with respect to transparency, while public-facing data related to nearly all measures is available on WOU's Institutional Research webpage, the data is not consolidated into a single dashboard or other easily viewed format. Originally we planned to consolidate the measures into a "Mission Fulfillment Matrix" ([2018 iteration](#)); however, the maintenance of this matrix was unrealistic, especially given the overly complex calculations embedded in our targets. In retrospect, we can now see that choosing indicators related to institutional effectiveness requires collaboration with professional Institutional Research staff who were not in place in 2017 when our indicators and their targets were first identified.

STANDARD 1.B.1 – CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

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

Overview

WOU's integrated, systemic and ongoing process for assessing institutional effectiveness ensures continuous improvement of student learning, achievement and support services. The process relies on inclusive university-level committees that coordinate, communicate, plan, guide the allocation of resources, and assess progress towards mission fulfillment. Representatives of shared governance groups are represented on these committees. As described in the preamble, this system represents a significant development of institutional infrastructure to be transparent, inclusive, and effective in pursuit of our mission. Figure 1.B.1-1 plots key elements of WOU's university-level system for continuous improvement (i.e., University Budget Advisory Committee, University Technology Advisory Committee, University Council, and University Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee) within our cycle of planning, assessment, and continuous improvement.

Figure 1.B.1-1: Continuous improvement process at WOU
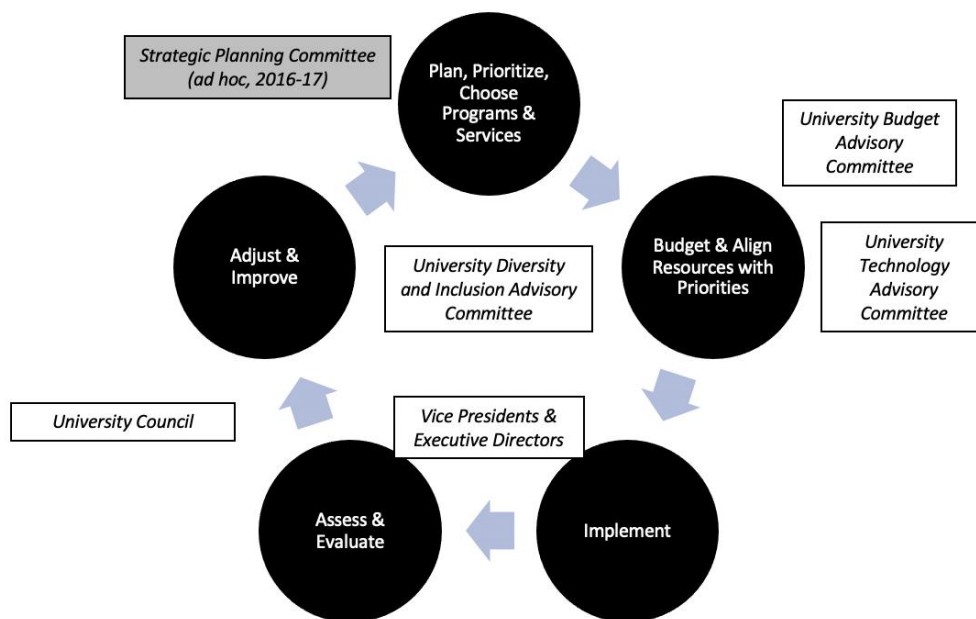
Guided by these cross-institutional groups and the insights they bring forward, and supported by an increasingly effective Institutional Research Office, WOU has advanced initiatives to refine our effectiveness, assign resources, and improve student learning and achievement.

Continuous improvement at the university level

The University Technology Advisory Committee (UTAC) is an advisory committee charged with receiving, developing, and submitting recommendations related to the university technology

systems and academic technologies that are aligned with WOU's strategic plan. Among its accomplishments, UTAC guided the adoption of a new learning management system.

The University Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee (UDIAC) is a presidential advisory committee charged with annually recommending and supporting diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) priorities that are rooted in our core institutional values and informed by our university diversity action plan and the needs of the university community. Among its accomplishments, UDIAC spearheaded the establishment of an office of Diversity, Inclusion and Equity whose executive director reports directly to the president.

The University Budget Advisory Committee (UBAC) is an advisory group consisting of representation from faculty, classified staff, unclassified exempt staff, students, and administrators. This body is advisory to the president, and all members are appointed by the president based on recommendations from appropriate constituencies. UBAC hosts campus budget conversations and serves as an educational platform for learning about the university's finances. UBAC makes recommendations to the president on budget prioritization to both sustain and grow the university. UTAC and UDIAC have also informed institutional decisions with allocation implications; examples include funding of the quasi-endowment, the establishment of new academic programs (e.g., MA in Organizational Leadership), the expansion of program delivery via WOU:Salem 2018 and 2019), the adoption of Canvas as our learning management system (UBAC recommendation, UTAC review process), and the initiation of a two-year equity audit.

University Council is our primary venue to disseminate information about internal and external developments and to monitor our responses. University Council hears reports from UBAC, UTAC, and UDIAC, along with accreditation updates. In addition, the group has monitored work related to student achievement, learning, new programs and enrollment management, and vital resources and infrastructure to support student achievement and learning. Since its inception, the University Council has posted minutes from its meetings. In 2021, University Council added links to presentations to disseminate information more broadly about important university developments.

University Council has reviewed and supported (1) refinements in systems, practices, and strategies and (2) the allocation of resources in the areas of student achievement and supports, student learning, new programs and enrollment management, and vital infrastructure (see Table 1.B.1-1).

Table 1.B.1-1: University Council Review of Refinements & Allocation of Resources

Student achievement and supports ("Student Success")	Student Learning ("Academic Excellence")
- Retention and graduation rates, including equitable outcomes (2021, 2022) - Retention efforts and assessment (2018, 2019, 2020). - Transfer initiatives (2017, 2018, 2019) - Process to identify new peer comparators (2020)	- General Education redesign (2017, 2018) - The ACE Learner Success Lab initiative (2020, 2021) - Exemplary academic assessment practices in Gerontology (2020) and WOU's accelerated learning program (2019)
New Programs/Enrollment Management	**Vital Infrastructure**
- Enrollment updates (2020, 2022) - The development of professional doctorate programs (2018, 2019, 2020) - WOU: Salem (2018)	- COVID planning (2020) - Open Educational Resources initiatives (2020) - Cybersecurity efforts (2019) - Campus climate (2019, 2020) - Cabinet-level assessment (2019) - State funding projections and other legislative updates (2021, 2020, 2019) - CARES Act funding (2020) - Partnerships (2018, 2019) - Enrollment-related program reduction and faculty layoffs (2020)

Continuous improvement work at the unit level

Aligned work of continuous improvement also occurs within subunits of the university. Units assess their contributions toward larger mission fulfillment and use findings to plan and allocate resources. Much of this work is described and assessed in greater depth in our responses to standards in 1C on student learning (see Table 1.B.1-2).

Table 1.B.1-2: Additional refinements & allocation of resources not reviewed by University Council

Student Achievement and Supports ("Student Success")	Student learning ("Academic Excellence")
1C7: Destination Western Bridge program (Student Affairs & Academic Affairs). 1C7: Wolf PACK student orientation (Student Affairs & Academic Affairs). 1C7: Financial Aid distribution (Student Affairs).	1C Preamble: Creation of position for Associate Provost for Academic Effectiveness (2016) 1C5: Assessment of Academic Program Learning Outcomes (Academic Affairs). 1C1, 2, 3: Academic Program Review (Academic Affairs). 1C6: Establishment and assessment of Institutional Learning Outcomes via faculty-led Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) (Academic Affairs).
Related to Assignment of Resources 1C7: Instructional budgeting process to advance equitable academic resources (Academic Affairs). 1C7: Reallocation to fund First Year Seminars (Academic Affairs).	**Adoption of New Technologies** - Canvas (Learning Management System) - Slate (Admissions CRM) - Wolf Connection System (Student Success and Advising EAB Navigator) - My Major (Student Success and Advising)

General reflections and future steps

In reflecting on this work in January 2023, members of the University Council observed that the narrative response to Standard 1B1 makes the work that has been accomplished sound linear and straightforward. It was not. This kind of work requires a "massive culture shift that sometimes prompts impatience, but also fear." As stated by various council members, the transformation was "hard work," it took time, and there were "missteps," "messiness, and points of resistance."

The University Council and our university's leadership have also identified challenges in implementing the system of continuous improvement. As is often the case with emerging structures, clarity on committee charge, scope of responsibility, and role in decision making has sometimes been unclear; the same is true of membership and length of term of service. Initially, charges for the committees were defined by the university president. Now, with several years of work behind us, our new president has identified this as a needed moment of reevaluation to ensure effectiveness. He has asked these committees to review their charges and membership. The goal is to ensure that the committees function as agents of oversight and innovation,

assessing actions/strategies while also suggesting actions. University Council members also recognized the need for assessment and accountability and the most effective ways to interface with university leadership (i.e., the president and cabinet).

We also observe that much mission-centric work occurs within units (e.g., within an academic program, Academic Affairs, or Student Affairs) and the results are not always communicated more broadly. For example, evidence of student learning remains mostly siloed within academic programs or Academic Affairs more broadly. Learning is more amorphous than graduation or retention rates, thus harder to capture in a statistic; however, we recognize that learning deserves just as much attention as the clearly quantifiable.

STANDARD 1.B.3 – INCLUSIVE PLANNING PROCESS

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

Broad participation in planning

Table 1.B.3-1 details the membership of the key planning committees, which reflects participation and meaningful contributions from a broad and expanding constituent base.

Table 1.B.3-1: Inclusive Committees

Committee (click link for detailed information on membership)	Summary of Membership (actual membership, 11/15/22, empty positions not counted)
Strategic Planning Committee (Ad hoc, 2016-17)	Faculty (9), Student (3), Academic Affairs staff (3), WOU BOT (2), WOU Foundation, Alumni Board, Athletics staff, Student Affairs staff (3), President
Standing Committees	
University Council	President chairs. Dean (4), Faculty (4), Vice President/Executive Director (6), Student, Academic Affairs staff (6), Student Affairs staff (1), Finance & Administration staff (2) – overlap with representatives from Faculty, Staff and Student Senates; SEIU and WOUFT
University Budget Advisory Committee	VP for Finance and Administration co-chairs. Faculty (5), Academic Affairs staff (3), Finance & Administration staff (4), Foundation, Student Affairs staff (1) – overlap with Faculty, Staff and Student Senate; SEIU and WOUFT

University Technology Advisory Committee	Dean of Libraries and Director of University Computing Services co-chair. Academic Affairs staff (5), Student Affairs staff (2), Finance & Administration staff (2), Faculty (3), Student – overlap with Faculty, Staff and Student Senate; SEIU and WOUFT
University Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee	Co-chaired by a faculty member. Faculty (6), Academic Affairs staff (1), University Counsel (1), Finance & Administration staff, Student (4), Student Affairs staff (2), Athletics, Ex Dir of DEI – overlap with Cultural Competence Committee, Freedom Center, Faculty and Student Senates

Planning that supports mission fulfillment and strategic priorities

As alluded to in the Preamble to Standard B, each advisory body was created to play a distinct role in supporting WOU's strategic priorities and ensuring mission fulfillment:

- University Council was formed to sustain the work of WOU's ad hoc Strategic Planning Committee. The council determines the degree to which the university is meeting its mission and is engaged in comprehensive, ongoing, systematic assessment of its work that leads to mission fulfillment and continuous improvement.
- University Budget Advisory Committee makes recommendations to the President on budget priorities to both sustain and grow the university.
- University Technology Advisory Committee is charged with receiving, developing, and submitting recommendations related to the use of technology for university technology systems and academic technologies that are aligned with the strategic plan.
- University Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee is charged with recommending and supporting diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility priorities for each academic year that are rooted in our core institutional values and are informed by our university diversity action plan and the needs of the university community.

These advisory bodies have enriched inclusive decision making at WOU. In 2016, decision-making was informed by shared governance groups that represent WOU's faculty, staff, and students. However, we lacked a systematic way for stakeholders in different offices and roles to work together to address university concerns like budget, technology, and important or new initiatives. The advisory bodies that now make up our university-level continuous improvement system provide those venues. They include seats for representatives from shared governance and bring insights from important cross-cutting conversations to the president and the cabinet for consideration as decisions are made.

Planning that (1) aligns to institutional objectives, indicators, and outcomes; (2) guides resource prioritization and allocation; and (3) leads to improvement of institutional outcomes.

As described in the response to Standard 1.B.2, WOU's planning process centers on goals, objectives, and indicators that we have identified for student success and academic excellence. During the most recent accreditation cycle and as described in 1.D.4, institutional planning has prioritized allocating resources related to improving equitable student achievement. In turn, as described in Standard 1.B.2, we have seen positive results from those assessment and planning and resource allocation efforts with increases in four- and six-year graduation rates and reductions in excess credits for transfer students.

General reflections and future steps

President Peters has noted that Western Oregon University has an authentic commitment to hearing all voices when planning or making decisions. Last year, the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion was established. We hired an Executive Director at the cabinet level, and we have worked to infuse all our decisions with a sensibility towards equity and inclusion. In fact, we are engaged with a multi-year Campus Equity Assessment designed to improve our systems, enhance how we serve students, and promote a culture of continuous improvement. This commitment to inclusive decision making is also reflected in our path to becoming a Hispanic-Serving Institution: The president has assembled an advisory committee made up of faculty and staff who will guide the process and strategies and facilitate input across campus.

University Council members noted that the opportunities for broad participation are valued but involving a wider range of staff people remains a challenge. As is true of many service opportunities on campus, there is a relatively small pool of people who consistently step forward. Looking ahead, we will actively seek a wider range of folks to serve on these committees.

STANDARD 1.B.4 – MONITORING INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENTS

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

Overview

WOU engages in continuous and systematic monitoring internal and external environments. The university uses data to identify current and emerging patterns, trends, and expectations and to inform regular planning and resource allocation.

Internal environment

WOU monitors its internal environment with the support of its increasingly mature Institutional Research function. Regular reports are available to the university community and the public on our Institutional Research (IR) website. Resources include enrollment reports, which are used to

model future enrollment projections; retention and graduation reports; course success reports (i.e., DFW rates); and course modality surveys and reports. WOU employees can also [request additional reports](#) from IR, which is producing more than 30 ad-hoc reports per month. As detailed in Standard 1D3, student achievement data is disaggregated so that we can identify areas for additional investigation and support.

Data has been central to the following:

- Program curtailment work ([Final Report](#), see Appendix A), helping us to identify programs that were underperforming;
- The development of Destination Western, supporting higher retention rates;
- Curricular review and revision, identifying graduation rates and excess credits at graduation as issues to be addressed;
- Program- and course-level work to address bottlenecks, including courses with high DFW rates;
- Determining when to approve requests for new or replacement tenure track lines; and
- Determining instructional FTE to build into program- and college-level budgets.

External environment

WOU administration, faculty and staff monitor its external environment via a variety of mechanisms:

- Contracts with the Education Advisory Board (EAB) to access and act upon educational market information (e.g., portfolio health checks and in-depth analyses of specific programs for existing programs and market scans and program feasibility studies for potential programs);
- Use of data from Oregon's Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) to understand the landscape of public higher education in Oregon, including [community colleges](#) and [universities](#);
- Use of data from public sources, like the American Community Survey, for population estimates that informed our analysis of the [Salem market](#); WICHE's projections of [future high school graduates](#), which shapes our understanding of the market of traditional high school graduates; and Oregon's Employment Department's data on [jobs and careers](#), which informs new academic program proposals;
- College and University Professional Association - Human Resources ([CUPA-HR](#)) data informs analyses of salaries for faculty and staff;
- As described in 1.B.2, [IPEDS](#) data on regional and national peers for the benchmarking of student achievement;
- IPEDS and HECC data to monitor affordability and benchmark against other public universities in Oregon;
- [Academic program review](#), which includes external review, and faculty participation on state-level work groups (e.g., transfer mapping), which enables our academic programs to identify and respond to trends in their areas; and

- Participation in the Oregon Council of Presidents (OCOP), Statewide Provost Council, and Oregon Public University Vice Presidents of Finance and Administration group, which enables WOU to receive reports on the state budget forecasts, state legislative activity, and national legislative activity and research about universities in Oregon and beyond; OCOP also commissions work, such as the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) report (see "Landscape Study").

Governance discussions related to planning and institutional effectiveness

Our 2017-23 Strategic Plan, *Forward Together*, laid the groundwork for our progress over the past six years. To provide support and oversight for this work, WOU's Board of Trustees actively engages–through reports, presentations, and discussion–issues related to mission fulfillment and institutional effectiveness. Appendix F provides an inventory, drawn for board meeting minutes, of the kinds of topics that have come before the board related to mission fulfillment (e.g., academic excellence, student success, affordability) and institutional effectiveness (e.g., assessment and continuous improvement, scanning of our environments). In addition to quarterly board meetings and meetings of subcommittees, the president maintains open communication with the board, including a weekly call with the board chairperson.

Assessment of strategic position, definition of future direction, and review and revision of mission, planning, outcomes, and indicators

Since the Strategic Plan was established in 2017, its overarching goals and objectives have guided us towards a sustainable future as we wrestle with significant changes in our environment:

- The leveling off of, and anticipated drop in, the number of high school graduates in Oregon (WICHE, 2020);
- A demographic shift where we serve increasing numbers Hispanic and other "new majority" students for whom college is a greater financial challenge (WOU IR);
- The emergence of the Oregon Promise, a statewide initiative that incentivizes community college attendance for recent high school graduates;
- The recent practice of University of Oregon and Oregon State University to admit and enroll larger first-year cohorts;
- The opening of Oregon State University-Cascades in Bend, OR, which created an additional regional/technical university in the state; and
- COVID-19 effects on recruitment, though retention (e.g., first to second year) had been relatively stable until fall 2021.

Our Board of Trustees has a deep understanding of these trends and has been insightful and supportive as WOU identifies new opportunities within this challenging environment. The future directions include the following:

- *Emerging Hispanic-Serving Institution.* WOU's proportion of enrolled Hispanic students (20% in 2020) is highest among all Oregon public universities. As a result, we are on the

cusp of being able to apply for federal Department of Education designation as a Hispanic-Serving Institution. Planning for this work – not just to achieve a designation but to be prepared to support all students to success – is being led by our Executive Director for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, with oversight from the Board of Trustees Committee on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility.

- *Health Professions.* Market research has identified a dearth in public university options for graduate-level education in allied health professions (e.g., Physical Therapy, Occupation Therapy, Speech Pathology) despite growing demand for workers in these fields. With the formal approval of the Board of Trustees, WOU has developed program proposals in accredited health-related fields and is building the staffing needed to implement the first of these programs: a Professional Doctorate in Occupational Therapy.

- *WOU:Salem.* Salem, Oregon's second largest city and state capital, has been underserved by public higher education: its only non-online options are Chemeketa Community and a few stand-alone programs out of Portland State University. Although Salem is only 15 miles away from our Monmouth campus, WOU has not been understood as Salem's local university. With the board's approval, WOU has gone to Salem instead of continuing to wait for Salem to come to us. We purchased a downtown property (525 Trade Street SE) in 2019 to establish programs to serve place-bound adult learners and degree completers whose needs are not met by online education. Masters programs in Organizational Leadership and Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling are also being offered at WOU:Salem, and we expect that the Doctorate in Occupational Therapy will be offered at WOU:Salem with its nearby clinical sites (e.g., hospital, nursing homes and assisted living, Salem-Keizer public schools).

General reflections and future steps

As our current strategic plan extends only through 2023, we will engage in developing a new strategic plan during the Winter, Spring, and Fall terms of 2023. We will seek to develop a plan that is clear and succinct, establishing key philosophies to guide our work. The goal is to articulate the focal points for Western Oregon University and then develop strategic actions emanating from those points. Our actions must be grounded in our goals.

We also want to be visionary; the plan will grow from the new and developing trends in higher education, paying particular attention to the needs of contemporary students and the ways universities interact with social change and economic needs.

To accomplish this, we create a clear path for the process: (1) Identify an internal lead person; (2) Establish a writing/facilitating/brainstorming group; (3) Review the current plan for points of continuation; (4) Facilitate feedback sessions with campus constituents; (5) Draft a new Strategic Plan; and (6) Present to the Board of Trustees for approval.

STANDARD 1C – PREAMBLE

Background and History. In WOU's 2016 Year Seven Evaluation, NWCCU recommended that we "establish student learning outcomes for all courses, programs and degrees including general education, wherever offered and however delivered, that are meaningful, assessable and verifiable and are consistent with the mission." The recommendation pointed to what, at the time, was a fragmented and decentralized approach to assessment of student learning. Sparked by this recommendation, WOU invested additional resources in, and engaged in, program- and institution-level activities that support the assessment of student learning (see Chart 1.C-1).
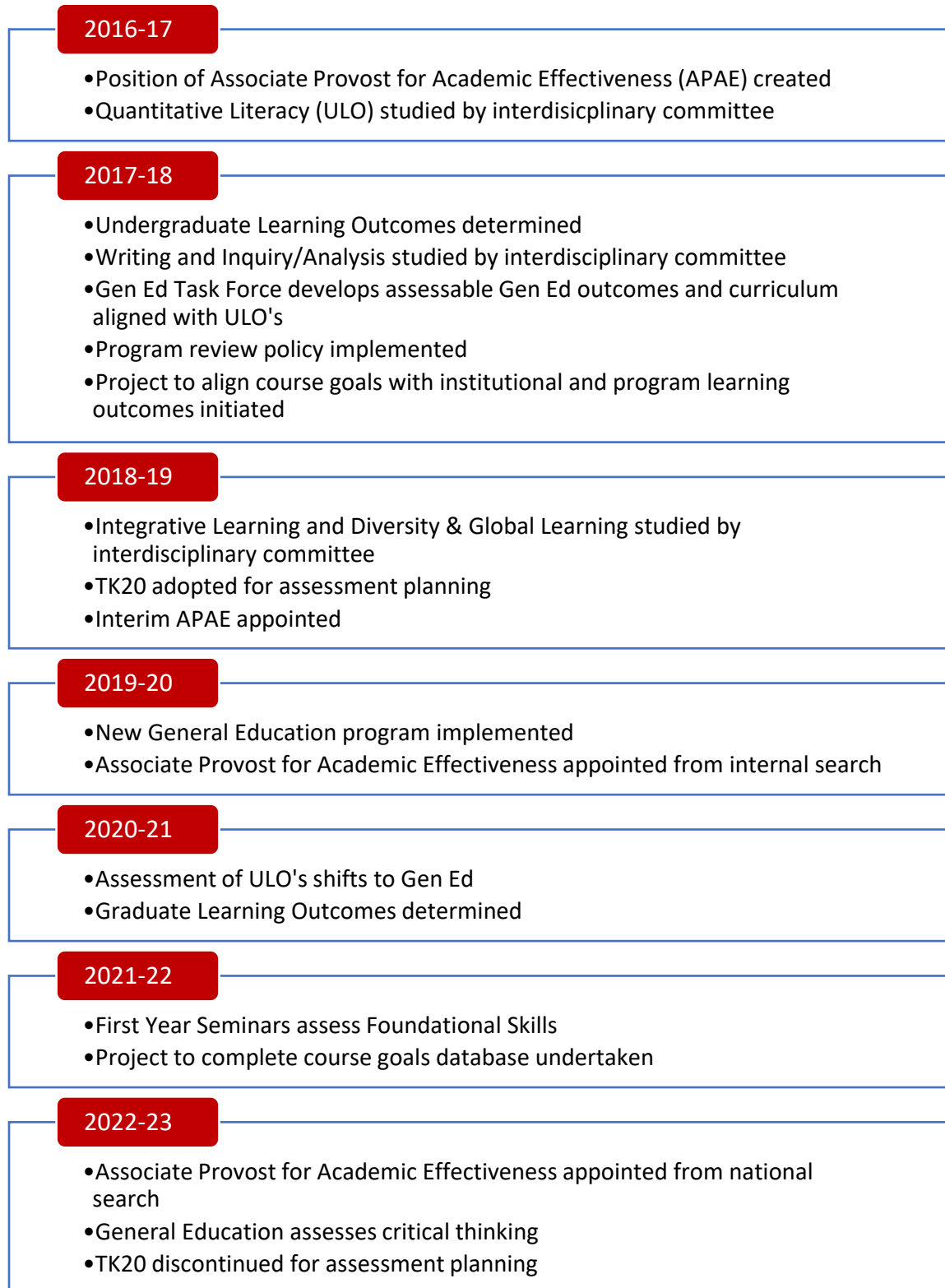
In 2019, based on the developments up to that point, NWCCU deemed the recommendation related to assessment of learning met.

Additional Data Sources. Evidence in this section includes results from two surveys administered in Fall 2022 to better understand on-the-ground experiences with teaching, learning, and assessment at WOU.

- The **Program Assessment Survey** was distributed to program leaders (i.e., department heads, program coordinators, division chairpersons, assessment committee chairpersons). The survey was completed by over 95% of program leaders. Results from this survey are reported under Standards 1C1, 1C3, and 1C7. The unit of analysis for this survey is "program leader"; some program leaders oversee multiple programs and so one response may represent multiple programs.

- The **Course Goals Survey** was distributed to all faculty (n=309): tenured, tenure track, and non-tenure track. The survey asked about how faculty use course goals and transparent teaching practices in their courses. Sixty-five (65) or 21% of faculty responded and provided us with insights into their teaching. Of the respondents, 63% have taught at WOU for more than 10 years; 20% for 6-10 years; and 17% for five or fewer years. We did not collect any additional demographic data in an effort to encourage faculty to respond candidly. Results of this survey are primarily reported under Standard 1C3.

Note on terminology. NWCCU uses the term "institutional learning outcomes." WOU offers both undergraduate and graduate degrees, and has developed institutional learning outcomes at each level. We use the term "undergraduate learning outcomes" to refer to institutional learning outcomes at the undergraduate level. We use the term "graduate learning outcomes" to refer to institutional learning outcomes at the graduate level.

Chart 1.C-1: Recent History of Academic Effectiveness at WOU

2016-17

- Position of Associate Provost for Academic Effectiveness (APAE) created
- Quantitative Literacy (ULO) studied by interdisicplinary committee

2017-18

- Undergraduate Learning Outcomes determined
- Writing and Inquiry/Analysis studied by interdisciplinary committee
- Gen Ed Task Force develops assessable Gen Ed outcomes and curriculum aligned with ULO's
- Program review policy implemented
- Project to align course goals with institutional and program learning outcomes initiated

2018-19

- Integrative Learning and Diversity & Global Learning studied by interdisciplinary committee
- TK20 adopted for assessment planning
- Interim APAE appointed

2019-20

- New General Education program implemented
- Associate Provost for Academic Effectiveness appointed from internal search

2020-21

- Assessment of ULO's shifts to Gen Ed
- Graduate Learning Outcomes determined

2021-22

- First Year Seminars assess Foundational Skills
- Project to complete course goals database undertaken

2022-23

- Associate Provost for Academic Effectiveness appointed from national search
- General Education assesses critical thinking
- TK20 discontinued for assessment planning

STANDARD 1.C.1 – PROGRAMS

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

Academic programs

WOU's academic programs are consistent with our mission and culminate in the achievement of clearly identified student learning outcomes that lead to collegiate-level degrees, certificates, or credentials. WOU offers undergraduate and graduate degree programs that serve the needs of our region.

Undergraduate programs. BA, BS, and BFA programs are built on the foundation of a strong liberal education embodied in our General Education curriculum. While the Bachelor of Music, Bachelor of Applied Science, and Honors students complete slightly modified versions of the General Education program, we are pleased that our recent process of General Education review and revision resulted in a more consistent General Education experience across undergraduate degree types. From that foundation, undergraduate students pursue degrees in traditional liberal arts and applied fields.

The General Education review was part of a broader curricular review that focused on ensuring that undergraduate students have feasible paths to graduation in no more than 180 credits, or four full-time years on the quarter system. The review was driven by our discovery that program requirements, general education requirements, and other university graduation requirements had grown independently of each other, and students had fewer than 15 free elective credits (the equivalent of a single quarter of college) in over 40% of programs. This review ultimately positioned WOU to meet one of its mission fulfillment indicators related to student success, that all undergraduate degree programs be structured so they can be completed in 180 credits. Programs were directed to have at least one path to completion of no more than 90 program credits; General Education was allocated a maximum of 60 credits; and students have the remaining 30 credits for free electives. Accredited programs and professional paths may dip into the students' free elective credits, but all other programs must have at least one path to completion of 90 program credits or fewer.

Undergraduate degree programs are listed in Table 1.C.1-1. In recent years, we have discontinued several undergraduate programs with low student interest (e.g., Anthropology, Geography, German, Philosophy) and developed new interdisciplinary programs with more applied focuses (e.g., Creative Production; Cybercrime, Investigation, and Enforcement; Data Analytics; Sustainability). While the completion of a minor was eliminated as a graduation

requirement in 2018, undergraduates may now choose [minors](#) in a wide range of fields. Undergraduate students may also complete [certificates](#) that typically comprise fewer credits than a minor but allow students to develop applied proficiencies.

Table 1.C.1-1: Undergraduate Degree programs	
- Accounting, B.S. - American Sign Language Studies, B.A. - Aquarium Science, B.S. - Art & Design, B.A./B.F.A. - Art, B.A. - Biology Teacher Education, B.S. - Biology, B.S. - Business, B.S. - Chemistry Teacher Education, B.S. - Chemistry, B.S. - Communication Studies, B.A. - Computer Science & Mathematics, B.S. - Computer Science, B.A.S./B.S./B.A. - Creative Production, B.A. - Criminal Justice, B.S./B.A.S. - Cybercrime, Investigation and Enforcement, B.S. - Dance, B.A. - Data Analytics, B.A.S./B.S. - Earth and Environmental Science, B.A./B.S. - Economics & Mathematics, B.S. - Economics, B.A.S./B.S. - Education Studies (Non-Licensure), B.S. - Early Childhood Studies, B.A.S./B.S. - Education, Early Childhood/Elementary Teaching Preparation, B.S. - Education, Elementary/Middle Level Teaching Preparation, B.S. - Education, High School Teaching Preparation, B.S. - Education, Middle Level/High School Teaching Preparation, B.S. - English Studies, B.A. - Exercise Science, B.S. - Gerontology: Aging and Older Adulthood, B.A.S./B.S.History, B.A. - Humanities, B.A.	- Information Systems, B.A.S./B.S. - Integrated Science Teacher Education, B.S. - Interdisciplinary Studies, B.A. - International Studies, B.A. - Interpreting Studies: Theory, B.S. - Language Arts Teacher Education, B.S. - Liberal Studies, B.A.S. - Mathematics Teacher Education, B.S. - Mathematics, B.S. - Music, B.A./B.M. - Music, B.M. - Physical Education Teacher Education, B.S. - Political Science, B.A. - Professional Studies in the Deaf Community, B.A.S. - Psychology, B.A.S./B.S. - Public Health, B.S. - Public Policy and Administration, B.A. - School Health Teacher Education, B.S. - Social Science Teacher Education, B.S. - Social Science, B.A. - Sociology, B.A. - Spanish Teacher Education, B.S. - Spanish, B.A. - Sustainability, B.A. - The Arts, B.A. - Theatre Arts, B.A./B.S./B.F.A. - Visual Communication Design, B.A.

Graduate programs. Our Master's programs (see Table 1.C.1-2) prepare students to serve their communities in professional positions in public and social service. In recent years, we have discontinued some master's programs with low student interest, including the Master of Music in Contemporary Music, Master of Arts in History, and the Master of Science in Information Systems. As we move forward, we are developing new programs related to health sciences, which is a better fit for our region's needs and our focus on public and social service.

Table 1C1-2: Graduate Degree Programs	
• Criminal Justice, M.A.	• Interpreting Studies, M.A.
• Curriculum and Instruction, M.S.Ed.	• Justice Studies, M.S.
• Deaf and Hard of Hearing Education, M.S.Ed.	• Literacy Education, M.S.Ed.
• Early Childhood Education, M.S.Ed.	• Organizational Leadership, M.A.
• Educational Technology, M.S.Ed.	• Reading, M.S.Ed.
• Elementary Mathematics Specialist (K-8), M.S.Ed.	• Rehabilitation Counseling, M.S.
• English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), M.S.Ed.	• Special Education, M.S.Ed.
• Interdisciplinary Professional Studies, M.S.Ed.	• STEM Education, M.S.Ed.
	• Teaching, M.A.T.

Revision of undergraduate program designators. In this review cycle, Western Oregon University made substantial progress in aligning our program designators with recognized fields of study. Although this was not noted as a deficiency by previous NWCCU reviewers, we realized that our use of the designators for Bachelor of Arts (BA) and Bachelor of Science (BS) was problematic regarding the meaning of degrees and student progress through degree requirements, respectively.

Through 2018, WOU distinguished the Bachelor of Science degree from the Bachelor of Arts degree based upon a student-selected set of additional course requirements. For students who wished to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree, a language and liberal arts math course were required; for those who wished to earn a Bachelor of Science degree, college algebra, a computer science course, and two additional courses related to math, computer science, and/or quantitative literacy were required. Except for the BA-only in English, the choice of degree designation was determined by the student, regardless of discipline.

As part of larger curricular restructuring, we identified two significant problems with this model: (1) the degree designator was unrelated to the content of the major field of study, weakening the meaning of the degree and (2) the resulting curricular complexity created barriers to degree completion. Thus, we established a review process for undergraduate programs to propose their degree designator (BA or BS) based on the goals and nature of the program and alignment with definitions of BA and BS degrees provided by NWCCU. At present, the BA and BS degree designations reflect the nature of the field of study and are embedded in program requirements.

Program review. We ensure relevance and applicability through regular program review (policy linked here). Initiated in 2017, the plan details a review of programs on a seven-year cycle. Accredited programs are exempt from the regular program review because they are evaluated during their program-level accreditation process. To date, 11 programs have completed reviews: Dance, English, ASL Studies, Music, Philosophy, Sociology, Economics, Criminal Justice, Gerontology, Theatre, Chemistry. Executive summaries are linked here.

General reflections and next steps

With respect to program review, we have learned that the process of self-evaluation and external review spans two and three years, which is longer than originally anticipated. Programs that have completed reviews, however, have generally reported positive experiences and followed up with curricular modernization. Reflections from our survey of program leaders include the following:

- Communication Studies: "First, we've done a great deal of work updating our curriculum to meet current trends in our field and to meet the areas of expertise of our current faculty. Second, it taught us areas where we could serve students better, by updating courses, pathways, hand-on learning, internships, etc."

- Teacher Education: "During our program review for CAEP, the special education program identified areas for improvement. We had a team meeting with [the College of Education Assessment Director] and are currently collaborating on a multi-year research project. The study is designed to help us redesign course assignments/activities and analyze the effectiveness of these program level changes. Our goal is to find ways to better prepare and support our students in developing the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required of professional educators. We seek to more seamlessly scaffold learning across our first-year methods courses (e.g., literacy, math, extensive support needs) so that students are prepared for their clinical experience sequence and to pass licensure requirements as they move through the program."

- Sociology: "As a result of our program review, we incorporated two new concentrations: social work and social justice that corresponded to the interest of the students and our analysis of employment opportunities for our graduates. We have reconstructed our curriculum to include these updates. The program also eliminated a required three term research-based thesis and replaced it with an integrative capstone course."

- Music: "From the process, we learned that we needed to make many curricular changes that aligned with the mission of the program and university. These were completed over the past three years and have resulted in increased enrollment, more efficient use of time and resources, and a faster time to graduation that also resulted in jobs for students. We designed a robust assessment process that has informed instruction and helped to refine pedagogy to serve students that has resulted in dramatically positive change and results for the music program."

- Gerontology: "We learned quite a bit about our program. We evolved in our advisory board development (reintroducing it two years after submitting the review); updated our marketing materials; have discussed plans for placement survey revision, plan, and delivery; have continued to establish relations with community college partners; and have officially created a "standalone" certificate that can be available to employees in the workforce. We continue to examine the need for research methods and more biology-based courses in our curriculum."

STANDARD 1.C.2 – CREDIT, DEGREES, CERTIFICATES, AND CREDENTIALS

The institution awards credit, degrees, certificates, or credentials for programs that are based upon student learning and learning outcomes that offer an appropriate breadth, depth, sequencing, and synthesis of learning.

Learning outcomes

Course learning outcomes are published in our public [curriculum database](#) and provided to students on syllabi. *Program and certificate learning outcomes* are published in the [catalog](#) and in our public [curriculum database](#).

Degree learning outcomes. In 2017, after the study of, and engagement with, ACC&U's LEAP outcomes, WOU selected a subset as [undergraduate learning outcomes](#) (ULOs) for its bachelor-level programs: (1) Quantitative Literacy; (2) Written Communication; (3) Inquiry and Analysis; (4) Integrative Learning; and (5) Diversity and Global Learning. In 2020, graduate programs identified [graduation learning outcomes](#) (GLOs) for its master level programs: (1) Core content knowledge; (2) Applied Skills; and (3) Dispositions and Values.

Program learning outcomes. Programs are based upon student learning and outcomes that offer an appropriate breadth, depth, sequencing, and synthesis of learning. We ensure programs offer an appropriate breadth, depth, sequencing, and synthesis of learning using three mechanisms:

- Program review, as described in the response to 1C1;
- The professional judgment of faculty in a program, as described in the response to 1C5; and
- Collegial review of curricular proposals at the divisional and university levels, as described in the response to 1C5.

Learning outcomes are mapped from the course to the program and institution levels. Our [curriculum tracking system](#) consolidates information about course learning outcomes, program learning outcomes, and graduate/undergraduate learning outcomes. When inputting data into the curriculum system, faculty identify alignments between course learning outcomes, program learning outcomes, and graduate/undergraduate learning outcomes (i.e., ULOs or GLOs). In this way, each program articulates how courses are related to program and graduate/undergraduate learning outcomes. Though we have established a system for aligning course outcomes with

program and graduate/undergraduate learning outcomes, gaps in implementation persist, as reported in the 2020 Report on Academic Effectiveness. Many courses that do not have learning outcomes, or institutional alignments, have not been taught recently, while new courses are required to provide information course goals and alignments.

Culminating experiences. Many programs culminate in capstone experiences where students demonstrate cumulative learning and/or put their learning to use in a field or service experience. All graduate programs have exit requirements for students to demonstrate cumulative learning. With respect to undergraduate programs, all teacher preparation (i.e., licensure) programs include field work that serves as a culminating experience. Of WOU's remaining undergraduate programs, 27 of 44 have a required capstone, internship, or field work experience clearly identified in its program requirements:

- Thesis Project: History
- Capstone/Senior Project: Art/Art & Design (BA & BFA)/Visual Communication Design; Computer Science; Computer Science & Mathematics; Economics & Mathematics; Humanities; Interdisciplinary Studies; International Studies; Liberal Studies; Music (BA/BM); Psychology; Social Science; Sociology; Spanish; Theatre Arts (BA/BS/BFA)
- Field/Clinical Experience: Education Studies, Early Childhood Studies; Interpreting Studies–Theory; Professional Studies in the Deaf Community; Sustainability
- Internship: Criminal Justice, 2 of 3 concentrations in Exercise Science; Gerontology; Public Health
- Performance and/or Choreographed Event: Dance

General reflections and next steps

Appropriate breadth, depth, sequencing, and synthesis of learning could be effectively demonstrated by curriculum maps that identify alignment between courses and program learning outcomes and account for the development of learning (introduction, developing, mastery) over sequences of courses.

STANDARD 1.C.3 – EXPECTED STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

Learning outcomes

Learning outcomes are identified for courses and programs and are available to students and the public via multiple methods.

Program learning outcomes are published in the [catalog](#) and in our public [curriculum database](#). When we began publishing program learning outcomes in the catalog several years ago, a

minimum of three learning outcomes were required for each program. A current review of program learning outcomes shows that a three-outcomes model has prevailed, in large part because programs understood the three-outcomes requirement as a maximum. As a result, program learning outcomes are sometimes presented in ways that move beyond describing the knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviors, or values that students should be able to demonstrate upon program completion; instead, many programs attempt to capture everything that programs want students to be able to do, which often produces three lengthy and comprehensive statements.

Course learning outcomes are published for students in every course syllabus. In addition, students may review course learning outcomes in our public [curriculum database](#) prior to enrolling in a course. At this site, students can review official course descriptions, course learning outcomes, alignments of course learning outcomes with program outcomes, and alignment of course learning outcomes with institutional learning outcomes. In our survey of faculty regarding course outcomes and transparent teaching practices, 54% reported that they advocated for learning outcomes to be expressed in plain language and 52% expanded on course learning outcomes in the context of the course to help students better understand them (see Table 1C3-1).

Course coordination. In nearly all of WOU's academic programs, program leaders reported that formal mechanisms are in place to ensure rigor in student learning in courses or sequences of courses. Specifically, we asked program leaders about how programs coordinate grading standards. They selected all applicable responses from the following: no coordination, informal conversations, coordination among those who teach a course/course sequence, and program-level coordination. The responses are ordered from lowest to highest levels of coordination. Because some program leaders selected more than one answer, we report data on the *highest* level of coordination reported by program leaders:

- 6% of program leaders reported that individual faculty establish their own course grading standards;
- 10% of program leaders reported informal coordination ("This conversation occurs informally (e.g., over coffee, at lunch, in the hallway) among some or all faculty who share in teaching a course.");
- 23% of program leaders reported coordination among those who teach the course or course sequence; and
- 61% of program leaders reported program-level coordination of grading standards in courses and course sequences.

Program leaders also report that they discuss course goals and content with stakeholders outside the program (see Chart 1.C.3-1). Most commonly, programs consult with faculty in other programs whose students take their courses.

Chart 1.C.3-1: Stakeholder conversations about course goals
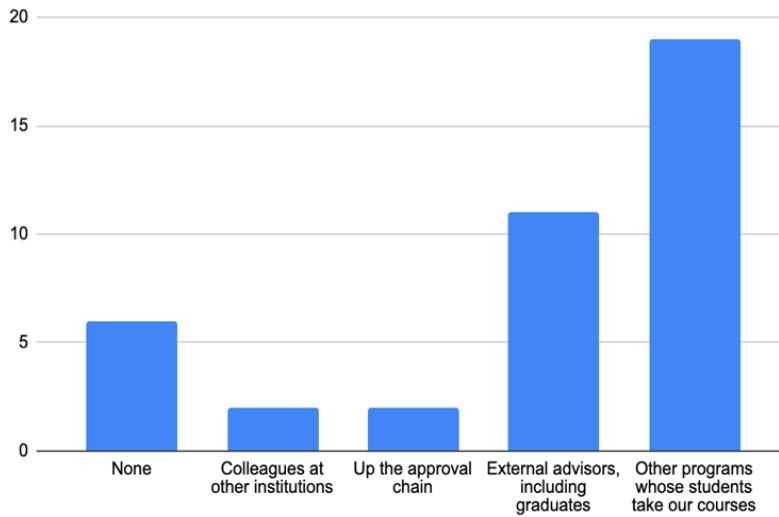
Practices related to course goals. Some faculty report practices that indicate a commitment to making learning outcomes transparent to students and clearly linked to assessments. In the faculty survey about course outcomes, over 90% of respondents report that they discuss course learning outcomes on the first day of class; other frequently occurring practices include explaining the purposes of assignments (89%) and using rubrics to grade or provide feedback (86%). Results also show that newer faculty are more likely to check course outcomes in the curriculum system before teaching the course, expand on the meaning of course learning outcomes for students, show students how assignments are aligned with course outcomes, provide students with rubrics for self-assessment, and encourage students to reflect during and/or at the end of the course on their progress in achieving course goals. Overall, our newest faculty, those who have been with us for five or fewer years, engage in more of these practices than more seasoned faculty (see Table 1.C.3-2 for additional information). It is important to note that 21% of faculty responded to this survey.

Table 1C3-2: Fall 2022 Learning Outcomes Faculty Survey

	Years teaching at WOU			
I have taught at WOU for this length of time.	0-5 years	6-10 years	More than 10 years	All
I check course learning outcomes in the curriculum system before teaching the course.	82%	69%	68%	71%
I talk about the course learning outcomes on the first day of class.	100%	85%	90%	91%
I talk about the course learning outcomes as the course progresses.	64%	54%	61%	60%
I tell students when course activities or assignments are aligned with one or more course outcomes.	64%	38%	49%	49%
I explain broader purposes of assignments, including how they might use the skills they demonstrate or develop in other settings.	82%	92%	90%	89%
I use rubrics to grade or provide feedback on course assignments.	91%	100%	80%	86%
I give students rubrics so they can self-assess before submitting an assignment.	82%	85%	49%	62%
I provide students with examples of proficient work (e.g., papers, essays, answers) before the assignment is due so they have an idea what it looks like.	55%	38%	56%	52%
I expand on course learning outcomes and say more about what they mean in terms that students may be better able to understand.	73%	46%	49%	52%
I advocate for course learning outcome statements that are in plain language, as free from jargon as possible.	55%	46%	56%	54%
During, or at the end of, the course I ask students to reflect on their progress in achieving course goals.	82%	46%	54%	57%
Average number of practices reported	8.27	7.08	7.02	7.25
Median number of practices reported	9	6	7	7

For some faculty, well-formulated learning outcomes form the framework of courses. Our learning outcomes survey also included opportunities for respondents to say more about the role of course outcomes in course and assignment design and more than half provided additional information. Many referred explicitly or implicitly to the role of backwards design in developing their courses. Two examples from faculty who have taught at WOU for more than 10 years:

"Course outcomes are the starting point for backwards design of course assessments and learning activities."

"Course outcomes are an essential part of designing and teaching a course. Without clear understandings of what students are supposed to learn from the course - why teach it? In developing course lesson plans, the first step is and should be course outcomes."

Another seasoned faculty member provided an even broader view of their process of professional growth alongside the university's evolution as a learning-centered institution:

"For me, this has really shifted over the last several years since we have adopted more assessment formality at the University. In working with colleagues to develop the general education learning outcomes and developing more elaborate proficiency criteria that is used in the classrooms, I have become much more focused on the role of learning outcomes in my program specific courses. I have more intentional assignments with better developed rubrics. The rubrics are also available to students before the assignment is due, so that they can better assess how they are meeting these objectives. I still have room for improvement too, in providing more clarity around learning objectives in the weekly assignments. Our continued conversations on campus about these goals is very helpful and continues to teach me about the best ways to evaluate student learning in my classroom. I'm thankful for this process."

We showcase this excerpt because it demonstrates the trajectory of our work, the ways it has been infused in institutional- and program-level curriculum development and revision, and its impact, not just on the newer faculty but also on our more experienced faculty.

Learning outcomes for learning supports. We are in the initial phases of developing learning outcomes for services that support students. Some examples of existing program outcomes include the following:

- WOU has trained over 75 campus supervisors to participate in [GROW](#), which is a program with defined target competencies; supervisors of student-workers engage in intentional conversations to help student workers draw connections between work and academics and to articulate the skills they learn via campus employment.
- The Office for Student Success and Advising has established [learning outcomes](#) for its work with students.
- The Center for Professional Pathways has established [learning outcomes](#) for Alternative Spring Break and for Career Readiness and Life Design counseling, events, and experiences.

With the construction of the new Student Success Center, which will open its doors to students in 2024, academic-support services are poised to develop building- and unit-specific outcomes and create a coordinated cycle of assessment.

General reflections and next steps

Learning outcomes serve as the foundation for curriculum development. Clear, shared understandings of learning outcomes are essential for at least two reasons: (1) students' learning is improved when they have a clear understanding of their destination points in a course and (2) coordination within and across courses and programs can occur while still leaving room for creativity and innovation as learning environments are constucted.

Course coordination, and coordination within sequences of courses, has increased at WOU in recent years. Exemplars include first-year writing and entry-level science, computer science, and mathematics courses. There has been tension, however, between course coordination and beliefs about academic freedom. While the establishment of course goals does not infringe upon how a faculty member helps students achieve learning, the goals are sometimes viewed as overly prescriptive or an infringement on professional prerogatives. We continue to work through these tensions in collegial ways, learning from each other's perspectives, practices, and experiences.

STANDARD 1.C.4 – ADMISSIONS AND GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

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

Admissions process

WOU's admission requirements are easily accessible, readable for a general audience, and available via multiple methods to students and the public. The WOU enrollment process is described in the [catalog](#), on our publicly accessible and easy-to-find [Join Our Pack](#) webpage, and in the [Admissions Viewbook](#), which is available in hard copy and electronic forms.

Steps, timelines, and checklists for undergraduate admissions are available [online](#) and include information on priority deadlines and status-dependent processes (e.g., undergraduate vs. graduate student, new vs. returning student, first-time vs. transfer student). Once an undergraduate student begins the application, they are provided with [discrete steps](#) of the process by our application management system, Slate.

Steps for graduate admissions can be found [online](#); the webpage includes links that take prospective students to online forms for university and program admissions and guidance for submitting transcripts.

The admissions team works directly with students in the admissions and onboarding processes, and applicants can [track](#) their progress through the application process.

Admission requirements

Undergraduate programs with additional entry requirements and/or program capacities provide detailed entry information on department websites and in the catalog. Typically, full admission to such programs occurs in the third or fourth year, after a student has successfully completed prerequisite course work. Examples of such programs include teacher preparation programs and Interpreting Studies. Additionally, program advisors work with students early in the process to demystify the path to full admission.

Graduate programs provide detailed entry information on department websites and in the catalog. Program advisors also work with students early in the process to demystify the path to full admission.

Graduation requirements

Graduation requirements are published in the catalog. The webpages for [Academic Programs](#) contain links to the requirements for each major, minor, certificate, and concentration. [Four-year degree planners](#) are available for undergraduate programs, which allow students to map course plans, from program start to degree completion. Requirements for graduate students are also posted in the [Student Handbook](#) and presented to students during orientations.

Monitoring/apprising student of progress towards graduation

All WOU students have access to Degree Tracks, which is an auditing tool that enables them to monitor their progress from admission through degree completion. Degree Tracks is a dynamic system that updates daily to reflect the most recent grades, registration, and curricular requirements of a student's program. All degree-seeking students work with an assigned academic advisor or program coordinator to monitor their academic progress each term.

Undergraduate students apply for graduation once they have reached senior standing, at which time the Office of the Registrar or the Office of Graduate Programs conducts a degree-progress evaluation. Graduate students apply for graduation once they have completed 30 credits. Students are notified, based on their record at the time of evaluation, of their degree-completion status: prior to their term of graduation, during their term of intended graduation, and following completion of that term. Advisors are also notified when their advisees are on track for graduation or in need of credits.

Students who have completed requirements are awarded their degree, notified, and issued a diploma. Students who have not completed requirements may move their term of graduation or resolve outstanding issues within two weeks of the date of notification before their application to graduate is canceled.

Students and advisors can identify the impacts of changing majors on graduation requirements. The "What If" and "Look Ahead" functions in Degree Tracks allow students and advisors to

explore the impact of program and registration changes together. Degree Tracks also aids advisors as they apply reasonable exceptions to requirements, and the Office of the Registrar audits these exceptions for accuracy, training, and overall appropriateness.

Graduation requirements are updated annually to reflect changes that have been approved through the university's curriculum approval processes. The process is automated and integrates the Faculty Senate curriculum review process with catalog revision and publication processes.

General reflections and next steps

While program admission requirements are accessible in the catalog and on program websites, we see some areas for improvement. For example, the information is not consistent in format, details, and/or clickable pathways across programs. Additionally, in some instances, admissions requirements for specific programs are present but not easy to find:

- Division of Education and Leadership posts [Advising & Program Admittance](#) information and a robust advising structure for admittance into the licensure program; however, the program admittance information is deeper in the website, which may mean that prospective students only find the information with explicit guidance.

- The admission requirements for the [Aquarium Science Program](#) are clearly stated in the catalog and on the program webpage; however, details of the process for formal admission to the program are missing.

While degree requirements are also accessible in the catalog and on department webpages, the path to graduation is presented as a set of courses a student should take in a given year, rather than a term-by-term sequence of courses that would guide a student in registering for appropriate courses.

STANDARD 1.C.5 – EFFECTIVE SYSTEM OF ASSESSMENT

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

Standard 1.C.5 describes two distinct yet related areas: (1) a system of assessment to evaluate the quality of learning, and (2) the central role of faculty in establishing curriculum and leveraging the assessment system to continuously improve the curriculum. Thus, we address each in turn.

System of Assessment

WOU has a system of assessment to evaluate the quality of learning in its programs. Our Academic Effectiveness Office, led by the Associate Provost for Academic Effectiveness, has

emphasized that the purpose of assessment is to answer three broad questions (see [2020-21 report](#), page 5):

- Are students learning what faculty think students are being taught?
- Are faculty teaching students the right things (e.g., skills, content, competencies)?
- Can faculty improve how they are teaching students?

Assessment of learning begins with goals for student learning, be it in courses or in programs. We discuss course goals in our response to Standard 1.C.3. At the program level, student learning outcomes are published in our catalog and in our centralized and public-facing [curriculum database](#). With learning goals in place, all academic programs are expected to engage in the following:

- Align at least one program learning outcome to an Undergraduate Learning Outcome (ULO) or Graduate Learning Outcome (GLO). Courses that are offered as part of the General Education Program must also align to the General Education Learning Outcomes (GELO) required for the element of the General Education program which they support.

- Select at least one PLO on which to focus annually using the instruments, assignments, and strategies that the program determines to be appropriate and reporting their results to the relevant academic dean.

- Engage in conversations with all members of the program, based upon the assessment information, and report on those conversations to the relevant academic dean.

- For course goals aligned to ULO/GLOs, identify a signature assignment and provide input on the student learning of aligned ULO/GLOs to the appropriate professional learning community during the academic year in which that ULO/GLO is highlighted (2016-20).

- Incorporate the program assessment information into the regular 7-year cycle of program review as part of the self-study.

Assessment plans and reports are archived in our assessment management system, TK20. Based on faculty feedback that TK20 is difficult to use, WOU is reviewing its assessment management system under the leadership of a new Associate Provost for Academic Effectiveness, who brings expertise from other management systems and expects to identify improved strategies in the next six months.

The institution has a well-defined system for evaluating the effectiveness of its learning assessment plans, including training, timelines for review, scoring rubrics, and accountability measures across departments. Since 2018, WOU's Academic Effectiveness Office has provided open houses and training related to assessment and [program review](#) during our annual kickoff week in September and throughout the academic year. Resources for [using our assessment planning](#) and reporting technology (TK20) are also available. Academic Effectiveness reports on

program assessment are available on WOU's website ([2021](#), [2020](#), [2019](#)). The most recent report from Academic Effectiveness is for [Fall 2021](#).

In Fall 2021, 58 Programs were expected to submit a 2020-21 Program Learning Outcome Assessment Report. Of those 58 Programs, 93% completed their reports by 31 December 2020. For comparison, the reporting rate for 2018-19 was 65% and the reporting rate for 2019-20 was 70%. Additionally, as of 15 March 2022, only 2 programs had not yet submitted a 2020-21 Program Assessment Report. Assessment plans have been reviewed by the Associate Provost for Academic Effectiveness with feedback provided to programs.

It should be noted, however, that feedback was provided using this [rubric](#) in 2020. The use of the rubric to score assessment plans, however, troubled some faculty as it made some feel they were being criticized for the quality of their work. Thus, in order to continue a practice of providing feedback while simultaneously sustaining professional relationships, qualitative feedback informed by the original rubric criteria was provided in 2021 and 2022. Table 1.C.5-1, which is drawn from the 2020-21 annual report, summarizes data from recent years. Scores on each dimension range from 0 to 3, with 0 indicating a practice that is missing, 1 indicating a need for improvement, 2 as satisfactory, and 3 as exemplary.

Table 1.C.5-1

Table 1: Average scores for all academic programs that submitted Program Learning Outcome Assessment Reports

	Outcomes	Target	Data Source	Means of Assessment	Means of Scoring	Evidence Storage	Findings	Dissemination	Actions	Reporting	Pacing	Total
2018-19 Average	1.9	1.1	2.5	2.0	2.0	1.2	1.6	1.7	1.7	1.9	2.1	19.6
2019-20 Average	2.0	1.4	2.6	2.0	2.2	1.7	1.7	1.8	2.2	2.2	2.1	22.1
2020-21 Average	2.0	1.4	2.6	2.0	2.2	1.4	2.0	2.0	1.9	2.0	2.0	21.5

Overall, the quality of assessment efforts has improved, but the data shows, and the report notes, an ironic possibility: As more programs participate in assessment, the average quality of assessment efforts stalls because the practices of late adopters are less developed than those of earlier adopters.

Reports on program assessment efforts university-wide are provided annually to WOU's Faculty Senate ([May 10, 2022](#); [June 8, 2021](#); [May 12, 2020](#)). Other assessment updates have been provided to the Faculty Senate on an ad hoc basis (October 25, 2022; [May 24, 2021](#); [November 24, 2020](#)).

Numerous programs have common assessment elements, like rubrics, that they use to assess student achievement of learning outcomes. In a number of cases, programs rely upon AACU's LEAP rubrics that align with the program learning outcome. Rubrics are uploaded into TK20 during the assessment reporting process, and we have collected [rubrics](#) from a range of programs to provide an overview of local practices.

The central role of faculty in establishing and continuously improving curriculum

At WOU, the faculty design academic programs, assess student learning, and ensure that curriculum is current and functioning as intended. In this work, the faculty are supported by the following:

- University-level offices, such as [Academic Effectiveness](#), [Institutional Research](#), and [Academic Innovation](#);
- Institutional processes, including [program learning outcome assessment](#) and [program review](#); and
- Other resources, including the [Faculty Development Committee](#)).

Faculty are also involved in improving course and program delivery. For example, faculty are consulted prior to technology upgrades and serve on the [University Technology Advisory Committee](#). With support from the [Center for Academic Innovation](#), WOU faculty have expanded delivery modalities to include hybrid, online asynchronous, and synchronous delivery modes.

Curriculum evolves at WOU, with oversight provided by the faculty senate. There are multiple levels of formal review described in the [Curriculum Committee's Curriculum Guidelines and Help Page](#), which include division chairperson, division curriculum committee, the appropriate faculty senate review committee (i.e., Graduate Committee, General Education Committee, Curriculum Committee, Honors), Faculty Senate Executive Committee, and faculty senate as a whole.

After committee approvals, proposals are reviewed by members of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, which is composed of 10 faculty members and the senate president. The executive committee approves many minor changes (e.g., updating course descriptions to include current terminology, eliminating courses no longer taught, and adding/dropping/modifying courses that do not have an impact on students in other majors). Proposals that include changes that may alter program mission or have implications for students or faculty outside the proposing programs are brought to the full faculty senate for review.

The curriculum management system requires that all curriculum changes be accompanied by a rationale. Responses include data and other information like observations, accreditation requirements, disciplinary changes, and considerations for other impacted programs. A [sample of rationales](#) for curricular changes driven by assessment is provided in the response to 1C7; this sampling illustrates some of the factors that faculty consider as they revise curriculum.

The review process engenders broad-based conversations about curriculum changes, especially those that are novel or have implications for other degree programs. Faculty senate committees that review curriculum changes are populated with a broad representation of faculty members, one from each academic division, and provide a holistic review of the curricular proposals. Those proposing curriculum changes are required to document their consultations with affected programs; that work, along with the university-level review, usually identifies unintended implications of change for students. All proposals under consideration by faculty senate committees are also available for review in the curriculum management system.

The survey of program leaders revealed widespread collaboration and conversation with colleagues in other programs regarding curriculum and learning outcomes, especially when students from other areas are required or encouraged to take courses in a given area. Twenty two of thirty-four program leaders reported such conversations. In cases where such conversations are not happening, some are stand-alone cohort-based master's programs and/or they are programs with courses that are not taken by students outside of the program (n=5). The remainder are undergraduate programs, many of which do not offer courses required by other programs.

The work of cross-disciplinary review of curriculum, analysis of student learning, and planning for instructional improvement are described in detail in 1C6; the description centers on the institution-wide assessment of graduate learning outcomes (GLOs) and undergraduate learning outcomes (ULOs).

General reflections and next steps

The work of assessing learning outcomes was guided by this plan. The plan evolved over time:

- We shifted from assessing undergraduate learning outcomes to assessing General Education in 2020 (see 1.C.6),
- We shifted our approach to graduate learning outcomes (see 1.C.6)

The next phase of WOU's evolution is guided by our new Associate Provost for Academic Effectiveness, Dr. Judy Sylva, who brings academic effectiveness experience with a different university, university system, state, and regional accreditor. Under Dr. Sylva's leadership, we have initiated a broad review of our assessment-related accomplishments and gaps. We want to hold on to what has worked well but also identify areas where program assessment, understood and practiced more broadly, will strengthen the continuous improvement of student success and learning.

Assessment of learning has the greatest impact when findings are shared, priorities for improvement are collectively identified, and findings are used to drive improvement. In turn, effective assessment – assessment that makes a difference in our students' and faculty's experiences -- builds momentum for support of rich learning assessment practices.

With this in mind, we are expanding the focus of assessment of learning from simply collecting and analyzing data on student work to a broader project of meaning-making that draws upon multiple sources of evidence such as surveys (both local and institutional), focus groups, anecdotal evidence, and observations. To support this new approach, we have changed how we collect assessment reports. Faculty had reported that TK20, our assessment management system, was unwieldy; meanwhile, the university found it difficult to extract broader data from the system. As a result, our ability to access data, and faculty bandwidth to engage in larger meaning-making, was impeded. To address this problem, we have begun using Google Forms to report annual assessment findings and recommendations for continuous improvement. This mechanism will make it easier to collect, collate, and analyze data, and distribute findings back to program and college leaders who are best positioned to identify opportunities, and *trends* in opportunities, for continuous improvement.

The new report collection system is part of a broader initiative to improve the quality of our assessment practices, that includes:
- Providing summaries of findings and recommendations to programs, PLCs, and academic Deans for meaning-making and implications for improvement at each level.
- Empowering communities of learning, inquiry, and practice to support efficient and effective assessment practices that inform priorities for continuous improvement.
- Establishing outcomes assessment processes that align important program, division, college, and institutional priorities so constituents at different organizational levels (e.g., program, division, college) can see how they contribute to student success.

Most of all, we want to change assessment reporting from being where assessment goes to die to assessment reporting being the first step in a larger conversation about student learning and experience.

STANDARD 1.C.6 – INSTITUTIONAL LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

Institutional Learning Outcomes

Graduate Institutional Learning Outcomes. After a [rocky start](#) where we experimented with graduate learning outcomes drawn from the Lumina Foundation's Degree Qualifications Profile, our graduate programs finalized graduate learning outcomes in 2020. A subset of graduate

faculty, including program directors, worked together over the course of more than one year to explore commonalities and differences before arriving at a proposal for graduate learning outcomes, which include the following:

- Core Content Knowledge
- Applied Skills
- Dispositions and Values

Undergraduate Learning Outcomes. In 2014, we examined our existing *institutional aspirations* for students. We concluded that they were too numerous and vague to be assessable, and we turned to the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) for guidance. In 2014, the faculty senate adopted the total collection of 16 LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes as our Undergraduate Learning Outcomes (ULOs). After collecting and analyzing data on program and General Education course outcomes, their alignments with LEAP outcomes, and faculty perceptions of high priority LEAP outcomes, we selected five focal ULOs:

- Inquiry & Analysis
- Integrative Learning
- Quantitative Literacy
- Written Communication
- Diversity (an amalgam of the Intercultural Competence and Global Learning LEAP outcomes)

Alignment with Institutional Learning Outcomes

With institutional learning outcomes in place, all academic programs have or are participating in aligning course outcomes with program learning outcomes and institutional learning outcomes. This alignment is managed through our curriculum system and is visible to students and other stakeholders via our curriculum database.

In developing our new General Education program, the General Education Committee aligned outcomes with ULOs (see Table 1.C.6-1). This enabled us to pivot towards assessing General Education outcomes when NWCCU introduced its 2020 Standards.

Table 1.C.6-1: Alignment of GE student learning outcomes with Undergraduate Learning Outcomes

WOU Undergraduate Learning Outcomes	WOU GELO 1 **Intellectual foundations and breadth of exposure**. Put into practice different and varied forms of knowledge, inquiry, and expression that frame academic and applied learning.	WOU GELO 2 **Critical thinking**. Demonstrate the ability to evaluate information and develop well-reasoned and evidence-based conclusions.	WOU GELO 3 **Citizenship.** Articulate the challenges, responsibilities, and privileges of belonging in a complex, diverse, interconnected world.	WOU GELO 4 **Multidisciplinary learning.** Integrate knowledge, perspectives, and strategies across disciplines to answer questions and solve problems.
Quantitative Literacy	■			
Written Communication	■			
Inquiry & Analysis		■		
Integrative Learning				■
Diversity and Global Learning			■	

WOU's faculty approved its new General Education program in 2018. The 2020 NWCCU standards identified specific skills associated with General Education. Although our outcomes are not the same as those listed in the 2020 NWCCU standards, we did not revise our program's learning outcomes because our current outcomes align sufficiently with the outcomes listed by NWCCU (see Table 1.C.6-2).

Table 1.C.6-2: Alignment of Undergraduate Learning Outcomes (ULO) with NWCCU examples

Recommended NWCCU Outcomes	Undergraduate Learning Outcome (ULO) Quantitative Literacy	Undergraduate Learning Outcome (ULO) Written Communication	Undergraduate Learning Outcome (ULO) Inquiry & Analysis	Undergraduate Learning Outcome (ULO) Diversity and Global Learning
Effective communication skills		■		
Global awareness				■
Cultural sensitivity				■

Scientific and quantitative reasoning	🟥			
Critical analysis and logical thinking	🟥	🟥	🟥	🟥
Problem solving	🟥	🟥	🟥	🟥
Information literacy	🟥	🟥	🟥	

Review of outcomes. Institutional learning outcomes should evolve as the needs of students evolve. Nonetheless, we believe that it is important that we follow through on assessing the institutional learning outcomes we have selected before we return to a more global review and revision process. For that reason, review of ILOs is slated for after 2023 so that we can experience and benefit from the assessment of each learning outcome.

Common method of assessment. Cross-disciplinary professional learning communities of faculty (PLCs) are at the heart of institution-wide assessment at WOU for both graduate institutional learning outcomes and General Education outcomes. The composition and process for PLCs were first formalized in our 2017 Academic Effectiveness Assessment Plan. Professional Learning Communities typically convene for one year to engage in the following work:

- Finalize a rubric for the year's selected learning outcome(s),
- Solicit de-identified student work that aligns with the outcome,
- Review the student work considering the rubric and with an interest in understanding the opportunities students are afforded to demonstrate learning and the proficiency they demonstrate, and
- Synthesize findings in a report on student learning that is shared with campus.

For example, at the undergraduate level, the General Education program convenes a campus-wide professional learning community (GEPLC) to examine General Education outcomes (GELO) aligned to the appropriate ULO. Faculty and staff from across campus comprise the GEPLC, and together they thoughtfully explore this interdisciplinary program. The General Education's framework is designed to bridge traditional disciplinary boundaries and bringing together colleagues to compare GELOs in context helps to build these bridges. In 2022-23, for example, the General Education program is (1) applying the foundations rubric to a variety of foundations courses beyond the already analyzed First-Year Seminars, (2) calibrating the critical thinking rubric by collecting and examining evidence from courses aligned with that outcome, and (3) introducing a new practice of meaning-making that goes beyond analysis of data to include Gen Ed survey data and anecdotal evidence drawn from the approval process in the General Education Committee. Additional information can be found on Academic Effectiveness's General Education Assessment webpage.

Graduate and undergraduate PLC reports are linked below, along with rubrics used by the PLCs. For undergraduate learning outcomes, we originally focused on ILOs but with NWCCU's new standards we shifted to assessing General Education. As the First Year Seminars (FYS) are the newest element of the program, we initially focused on FYS experience and outcomes, which provided a setting to pilot assessment protocols. For graduate learning outcomes, we originally focused on the Lumina Foundation's Degree Qualifications Profile; however, after two years, faculty moved in a different direction where they identified different graduate institutional learning outcomes and developed new rubrics.

As is apparent from Table 1.C.6-3, there are gaps in institution-level assessment of student learning due to COVID disruptions.

The centrality of faculty-led PLCs has continued, however. In general, faculty have found the cross-disciplinary collaboration around student learning to be valuable both for understanding student learning and for improving their own teaching.

Table 1.C.6-3 – Professional Learning Community Reports

	Undergraduate	Graduate
2016-17	Quantitative Literacy	Communicative skills (Writing) (rubric)
2017-18	Writing, Inquiry & Analysis	Analytic Inquiry (rubric)
2018-19	Integrative Learning, Diversity & Inclusion	Graduate Professional Learning Committee Report (2018-19, submitted 2022)
2019-20	Gen Ed: Foundational Skills	
2020-21	Gen Ed: Foundational Skills	Graduation Institutional learning outcomes draft rubrics: Core Content Knowledge, Applied Skills, Dispositions
2021-22	Gen Ed: Critical Thinking	
2022-23	Gen Ed: Critical Thinking (underway)	

General reflections and next steps

General Education Assessment
The new General Education curriculum was implemented in Fall 2019. The goal for assessment of this program is to understand the experiences of students in the program and to evaluate their learning in the program. Our planned assessment strategy will accomplish the following:

- provide information to ensure the effectiveness of the program;
- guide decision-making, as needed, regarding program function; and
- target program development efforts by identifying program strengths and weaknesses.

By focusing on the program, as opposed to individual courses, we seek to gain a comprehensive picture of General Education at WOU. We will use a mixed methods approach, with a variety of instruments, including institutional research data, student surveys and artifacts, and faculty surveys and reflective portfolios. We anticipate that different instruments will take prominence in different parts of the program, depending on emergent questions related to program function. The deployment of General Education assessment instruments will be gradual and focused on target questions for understanding specific elements of the General Education program.

Assessment of Graduate Learning Outcomes
In Winter and Spring 2022, graduate coordinators identified model student projects that demonstrate core content knowledge and applied skills and shared them with the Graduate PLC. The PLC's consensus was that the rubrics served their purpose appropriately while allowing for individual program nuance and specialization. Overall, the process of identifying these learning outcomes was experienced as a positive outcome for graduate faculty who had long felt sidelined in decision making about graduate institutional outcomes and assessment processes. More faculty joined the PLC over time after learning about the PLC's progress at Graduate Studies meetings, and they believed that their voices would make a difference in decisions about assessment. Graduate faculty report being especially inspired by the WOU Strategic Plan, part 5.2: *Create opportunities for all graduate programs to include high impact activities that support attainment of graduate learning outcomes* and felt, for the first time in many years, that faculty were at the foundation of creating these opportunities.

STANDARD 1.C.7 – USE OF LEARNING ASSESSMENT RESULTS

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

Assessment of Learning

WOU documents the use of assessment results to improve learning outcomes across academic departments. Our curriculum management system handles curriculum changes from proposal submission through communication to the registrar for integration into our course catalog. The tracking system gathers information on rationale for curriculum changes and records whether the curriculum change is driven by assessment data that has been collected. Table 1.C.7-1 summarizes data on assessment-driven changes. The rationales for assessment-driven program changes from 2018 through 2022 can be viewed here.

Table 1.C.7-1: Total program changes and assessment-driven changes, 2018-2022

Year	Total program changes	Assessment-driven program changes
2022	128	0
2021	581	31
2020	588	28
2019	578	15
2018	790	63

Academic programs use the results of assessment to guide modifications in programs. Based on a review of curriculum changes that were driven by assessment, we identified three broad types of assessment that inform curricular revision. Many curricular revisions draw on more than one of these sources of assessment. For example, English Studies described the data sources it used to revise its curriculum in 2018: "The English Department has spent two years [preparing for program review] reviewing assessment data from our senior capstone, 30/60/90 data, numbers of majors/minors, national trends in the discipline, and other sources." We provide examples for each type below.

Annual assessment of program learning outcomes reveals gaps and weaknesses that are addressed by curriculum revision.

- 2021, Sustainability, created a capstone course to facilitate assessment of learning;
- 2020, Social Science, created a capstone course to facilitate assessment of learning and provide students the opportunity to reflect on learning;
- 2021, Teacher Education, added a 200-level course, ED 260, Sociopolitical Foundations of the Diverse Classroom based on feedback from program graduates;
- 2020, Information Systems, added lab sections to IS 475 to better support students in senior projects;
- 2020, Computer Science, eliminated CS 363 (Information Assurance and Security) and integrated its learning outcomes into existing courses based on assessment of learning and ABET standards;
- 2019, Teacher Education, added one credit to ED 404 and ED 405 to accommodate the additional support students need to succeed in licensure assessments;
- 2019, International Studies, added a capstone course to support assessment and provide students with opportunities to reflect on international experiences; and
- 2018, Biology, reduced credits in foundational biology courses from 5 to 4 after assessment revealed that increasing the number of credits was associated with an increase in DFW rates..

Program review is a relatively new process at WOU and includes the review of annual assessment results, deeper reflection, and external review. The process has informed a range of curriculum revisions. Based on program review, revision examples include the following:

- 2021, Communication Studies, created curriculum in scientific and technical writing;
- 2020, Computer Science & Mathematics, added a capstone requirement to provide a cumulative, synthesizing experience for students;
- 2018, English Studies, made significant revision to its curriculum;
- 2018, Dance streamlined the curriculum to establish program cohesion and reflect the current trends and developments.

Environmental scans include research on practices at other institutions, accreditation and licensing requirements, best practices supported by disciplinary associations, and feedback from graduates and advisory boards:

- 2021/2020, first-year Writing, adjusted the minimum grade to proceed to the second of two first-year writing courses based on a review of practices at other Oregon public universities;
- 2020, Chemistry, added CH 365: Material Chemistry in response to American Chemical Society standards;
- 2019, Early Childhood Studies, added ED 470: Home Visiting in Early Childhood in response to feedback from recent graduates regarding gaps in their professional preparation;
- 2018, Gerontology, made temporary course GERO 407: Life Course Review a permanent course based on findings from alumni survey; and
- 2018, Gerontology, added a lower-division course on aging pathways to align with the Association for Gerontology in Higher Education's Gerontology Competencies for Undergraduate Programs.

The modifications are expected to strengthen programs and improve learning. At this point in time, however, we do not have much evidence that curricular changes have improved student learning. Some exceptions include the following:

- The teacher preparation program has engaged in-depth study of curriculum as part of its CAEP accreditation (examples include [Faculty Impact Study 1](); [Faculty Impact Study 2](); [Faculty Impact Study 3]()).
- In the case of Biology, the *absence* of improvement in student success led to a reversion to past practice – a reduction in course hours from 5 to 4 – since the increase in hours did not have positive effects.
- Interdisciplinary Studies added a [capstone]() to its curriculum, to facilitate assessment and provide students an opportunity to reflect on their areas of study. Feedback from students reveals that students have improved their understanding of the connections between their fields of study and their real-world applications.

Overall, however, we observe a pattern of moving on to other curricular challenges without investigating and reporting the impacts of the curriculum changes made. We believe it is also possible that, as programs progress through a cycle of review of each program learning outcome, they will come back to closing the loop of outcomes already assessed.

Other assessment of learning

Beyond program assessment, the university also collects data on student experience via the National Survey on Student Engagement (NSSE). As we discussed in our response to Standard 1.B.2, we identified measures of academic challenge and high impact practices from NSSE to serve as mission fulfillment indicators related to academic excellence ("student learning"). We also identified an indicator that was related to student success ("student achievement"): students' perceptions of frequency of student-centered interaction with faculty. Data from 2017 and 2020 is available on our Institutional Research website. Please note, we collect data every third year, which means that 2023 data will not be available for the Year Seven evaluation.

We also identified indicators related to student participation in our Academic Excellence Showcase and our student academic journal, *PURE Insights*, which are both examples of high impact practices. Data for these indicators are found in annual reports from the Program for Undergraduate Research Experiences (PURE).

Though we gather this data, we have no evidence that we collectively analyze the survey results or use this data in planning curriculum, programs, or services. At the time we prepared our Mid-Cycle Review, many faculty involved with General Education revision and the assessment of undergraduate learning outcomes indicated that they were not familiar with NSSE data. An important step for us moving forward is identifying indicators of mission fulfillment that reflect student learning and will be used in the improvement of learning.

Finally, as we moved back to face-to-face instruction in Fall 2021, we began to survey students regarding their preferred delivery modalities so that we could better match our scheduling patterns with students' needs. While only indirectly related to student learning, we report these efforts here because this data helped us achieve one of our mission fulfillment indicators, having at least 25% of courses available in flexible formats as we came out of fully online learning from Spring 2020 through Summer 2021.

Dissemination of assessment findings

Results of student learning assessment are shared within disciplines and programs. In our survey of program leaders, we asked about where and how often the results of assessment of program learning outcomes occurred. As Chart 1.C.7-1 illustrates, the majority of program discuss assessment results at least annual at a program-level faculty meeting.

Chart 1.C.7-1: Discussion of program assessment results

Discussion of results of assessment of program learning outcomes
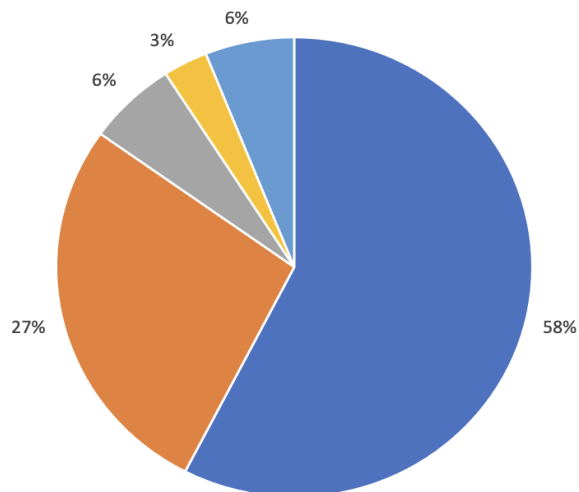
- Program-level assessment results are discussed more than once a year at program level faculty meetings.
- Program-level assessment results are discussed once a year at program level faculty meetings.
- Program-level asssessment results are discussed by the program's assessment committee (but not in program level faculty meeting).
- Program-level assessment results are distributed to faculty in writing but are not discussed at faculty meetings.
- No results to discuss

Some program leaders provided additional information that further illustrates the range of programs practices:

- "Program-level assessments are also distributed to faculty in writing and discussed before any formal submission of final departmental reports. This also includes assessment data and review of program-level outcomes that may be necessitated by the assessment results."

- "We also have a shared google drive that houses all our assessment data. Faculty are free to look over assignments/assessments that have been submitted by other faculty so that they will have other examples and be able to give feedback and suggestions for improvement. Our annual assessment plans and reports are also shared here as well."

But also we find program reflections similar to the following:

- "A common phenomenon is the faculty as a group briefly note collected assessment results and declare that 'we should schedule a time to discuss and respond to the data'— but such times really haven't taken place."

Assessment of Learning Supports

The institution uses the results of its assessment efforts to inform learning-support planning and practices. Student Success and Advising (SSA) is the central office for learning supports, and it uses the results of assessment to inform learning-support planning. SSA has assessed the effects of general-subjects tutoring and interventions using EAB Navigate. In addition, the Math and Writing Centers plan their services around documented student needs.

General Subjects Tutoring. We [disaggregated our SSA tutoring utilization data](#) for the Fall 2021 academic year to understand better who is and is not being served. The findings prompted us to adjust our operations and outreach strategies to serve more first-year students as well as students with GPAs below 3.0. We will repeat this process at the end of the current school year to gauge the effectiveness of the adjustments we made to our operations. We also used the EAB Navigate Intervention Effectiveness Tool to [compare outcomes](#) between students who did and did not use SSA tutoring between Fall 2021-Spring 2022. Students who used tutoring had higher re-enrollment rates, but do not show increased performance or credit carrying loads. These mixed results did lead us to reallocate resources and FTE to strengthen our tutoring program as well as build out additional academic supports like peer academic coaching and supplemental instruction, efforts that are currently underway. And, since Fall 2019, our general subjects tutoring office has assessed learning via a short survey asking students about their experience with peer tutors (results linked here: [Student Assessment Data (Self-Reported) on SSA Tutoring Student Learning Measures/Outcomes](#)). Students who have attended at least one general-subjects tutoring session receive the survey link, and the response rate ranges from 12-25%. Combining all results since 2019, we found the following:

- 94% of students on average report a better understanding of their coursework because of tutoring (with a high of 100% Fall 2022);
- 70% on average report that their study skills/academic habits have improved (with a high of 80% in 2020-21);
- 71.5% on average report making a connection with a peer (with a high of 82.1% in 2021-22);
- 92.1% on average report feeling supported in their academic success (with a high of 100% in Fall 2022);
- 87.1% on average report that tutoring has put them in a better position to accomplish their personal and academic goals (with a high of 90% in 2020-21).

In terms of areas where they grew the most, students cited course skills, feeling supported, gaining confidence, improving self-accountability, gathering tutor perspectives, and broadening their thinking.

Early academic interventions. In response to institutional DFW Data ([here](#) and [here](#)) as well as the larger body of research around early warning systems and the impact of DFW rates on retention and persistence, SSA revamped the existing Early Warning System:

- Rebranded our system and communications from "Early Warning" to "Early Action" to align with growth mindset theory;
- Developed a coordinated Early Action Intervention Timeline and collaborated with leaders of first-year gateway courses (e.g. MATH, Writing, and First Year Seminars) to encourage faculty in those areas to complete Early Action Alerts, utilize our "no-show-drop" policy, and other interventions;
- Identified students who are enrolled in classes but may not be engaged or attending based on Canvas activity reports within the first week of the term. Advisors individually email, call, and/or text students to provide support or help facilitate an early withdrawal, if appropriate;
- Upon seeing that about half of our faculty did not use the early alert system, developed an additional way for faculty to submit alerts via an online form rather than logging in and issuing an alert directly in our EAB Navigate platform;
- Developed an Early Action System website that outlines goals of the system, a process overview, links to submit alerts, as well as sample communications; and
- Re-configured our EAB Navigate platform so we can begin to assess the impact of early alerts and communicate those findings.

Other learning supports. The Math Center regularly reviews DFW data, along with course scheduling and enrollment patterns, for all general education and teacher education math courses. This information is used to hone the hiring, training and scheduling of tutors in the Math Center.

The Writing Center uses scheduling and enrollment patterns and works with high-use programs (e.g., retention-targeted: First Year Seminars, Student Enrichment Program, Destination Western; division level: Behavioral Sciences; and graduate level: Mental Health and Rehabilitation Counseling and Interpreting Studies) to facilitate in-class workshops and faculty workshops on writing pedagogy, to redesign writing projects and/or create evaluation criteria, and to build online and in-person schedules that meet the changing needs of the students. Students from across the curriculum are hired and trained to support, with compassion, the range of written work that students bring to the center. The Writing Center also engages in research, which includes the development of an instrument to track the writing self-efficacy development of those students who use services regularly and over time; the unit is currently developing an instrument to track the development of writing tutors.

These learning supports are available to all students, both in person and online. Students learn about supports like tutoring and computer labs from orientation, in-class presentations, websites and links from campus websites, targeted emails, campus signage, faculty and academic advisors, and via widely used syllabus statements. SSA has included proficiency with accessing learning supports as one of its learning outcomes for advising experiences.

General reflections and future steps

Learning. We expect that more robust assessment of student learning will lead to more comprehensive and consistent use of assessment data and findings in improving student learning. When we look at assessment reports, we typically find a single measure of the outcome that is quantified. While that is a start to assessment of learning, deeper understanding of what our students have learned will require us to go beyond this. We will need to build our capacity to engage in authentic outcomes assessment which includes collective meaning-making through reflection on assessment results. Such meaning-making should lead to assessment becoming a way for us to learn about students learning, but also to inform opportunities for continuous improvement of teaching but also of our assessment practices, co-curricular experiences, learning supports, and how we include students (not just examples of student work) more meaningfully in our assessment of student learning.

In addition, currently assessment of <u>learning</u> does not typically center equitable outcomes for our diverse students in the questions we ask and seek to answer or in our continuous improvement processes. While we have begun a greater focus on equity in student achievement, we are not as far along in demonstrating equity gaps and their mitigation in student learning.

Learning supports. WOU's Student Success Center, which has secured funding and is in planning stages, will provide an opportunity to consolidate, better coordinate and more comprehensively evaluate learning supports and their impacts on student learning and achievement

STANDARD 1.C.8 – TRANSFER CREDIT AND CREDIT FOR PRIOR LEARNING

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

Transfer

Transfer policies and practices. WOU's transfer credit policies are clearly defined, easily accessible, published in the catalog and ensure comparable quality. Our current practices are informed by best practices in the state and in higher education. In creating published regulations that codify our articulation practices, we consulted the American Association of College Registrars and Admissions (AACRAO). Course equivalency is granted when content is sufficiently aligned, typically indicated by approximately 75% match on course description. This alignment expectation gives faculty and students confidence that the student can succeed at WOU with the prerequisite knowledge gained at their previous institution.

Infrastructure for determining articulations. WOU has established a process to support timely, consistent, and ongoing review of transfer credit; that process engages faculty in determining

comparable quality. To better support transfer students, especially the many students who transfer to WOU from community colleges, WOU has hired a 1.0 FTE transfer articulation data manager and implemented the Transfer Evaluation System (TES). We use the TES system to compare our courses to courses from other institutions and to build our internal database of course articulations so that once a course is articulated the articulation is available to all students. TES reviews are triggered by:

- A new course that has never been articulated;
- A transcript from an institution that we have not worked with before; and
- A course has changed since the last time it was articulated.

We also use TES to research courses to determine if there is basis for an equivalency. As needed, TES prompts faculty to review course content to approve articulations. Lower-division transfer courses that align with WOU courses are given equivalent status, with faculty consultation as needed. Faculty review and make determinations for upper-division transfer courses. Qualifying courses without a direct equivalent to a WOU course are transferred in as general elective credits. The General Education Committee may determine that a course without a direct equivalency nonetheless meets the outcomes of a general education requirement; in that case an attribute is added to the course so that it records as meeting General Education requirements.

To ensure currency, we annually review course additions, drops, and modifications at our main feeder schools. In addition, we annually review WOU courses that have been altered or dropped and update articulations accordingly.

Role of academic advisors. Students and their advisors review articulated credits, and either party may submit a petition to the General Education Committee if they believe an articulated course is likely to fulfill a General Education requirement. For non-General Education courses, students and advisors work with the articulation manager in the Registrar's Office to submit a request for articulation to the appropriate academic department. Academic leadership has strongly encouraged academic advisors, including faculty advisors, to be more proactive in identifying articulations that support timely degree completion. The creation of the articulation manager position and adoption of TES facilitate and support proactive advising.

Other activities. WOU is actively engaged in state-level initiatives to address transferability of credits. WOU faculty serve on subject area committees convened by the Higher Education Coordinating Commission to develop state-level common course numbering and degree-specific transfer maps.

Credit for prior learning

WOU offers credit for prior learning by accepting ACE Military Credits, the results of CLEP exams, and providing a mechanism for students to request a challenge exam. Related policies are published in our catalog.

Additionally, we are in the process for students who have acquired alternative education or experience-based learning outside of the sponsorship of an accredited postsecondary institution of education that does not have established methods for granting Credit for Prior Learning. WR 407: Credit for Prior Learning Portfolio Development Workshop is a new course that provides personalized guidance in the development of a professional portfolio that demonstrates how a student's prior learning experiences resulted in college-level learning. Upon successful completion of the course, the portfolio is submitted to the appropriate department for prior-credit evaluation.

General reflections and next steps

Transfer. WOU is actively engaged in a process to improve transfer articulation processes, consistency, advising, and transparency. Though our practices are reasonably consistent and balance evaluator reviews with faculty input and are in alignment with those of our state colleagues, not all of those practices have been published and are transparent. There is no single storehouse for published rules, and some rules lack important details, such as credit hour calculations. At the time of this review, our Registrar is engaged in a process to codify our existing practices into academic regulations. The written regulations will make the rules by which we operate publicly available. The process includes feedback from multiple stakeholders on campus, including, but not limited to, academic affairs leadership and faculty senate. The intent is to publish the regulations in the 2023-24 catalog as well as our transfer pathways webpage.

Additionally, we have leveraged WOU's investment in a transfer articulation data manager and the TES system, to proactively update articulations for our main feeder schools when the feeder school or WOU adds, drops, or modifies a course. In time, we hope to expand this work to all Oregon public institutions. A Transfer Stakeholder group has been convened to coordinate and improve services to transfer students by connecting offices and individuals across campus that work most directly with transfer students in admissions, recruitment, articulation, and advising.

Credit for Prior Learning. During the 2021-22 academic year, a working group of faculty came together to explore expanding credit for prior learning opportunities for working adult students. The faculty had encountered students with substantial prior work experience and evidence of experiential learning, but the university did not have a mechanism for students to demonstrate how their prior learning might be awarded academic credit. Based on that group's work, WOU was positioned to seek funding from Oregon's Higher Education Coordinating Commission to establish pilot projects for expanded CPL options (i.e., credit by portfolio and credit aligned with industry standard certifications). The one-year grant began in October 2022. Faculty from a range of disciplines, including Teacher Education, Early Childhood Education, Gerontology, Information Systems, American Sign Language/Interpreting Studies, Interdisciplinary Studies, Sociology, Writing, and Dance, are contributing to this work. Together, we are developing infrastructure to support students:

- Engaging in inclusive advising for transfer, adult, and degree completion students about CPL opportunities;

- Piloting a portfolio development course that will guide students in preparing a portfolio and satisfy a general education requirement;
- Developing discipline-specific guidance and expanded course outcomes to support students; and
- Developing course-level scoring rubrics and training faculty in the use of those rubrics to award credit.

WOU is also in the process of developing a university policy on credit for prior learning, beyond what is currently published in the course catalog. By the time the pilot is complete in June 2023, information on credit for prior learning at WOU will be available publicly.

STANDARD 1.C.9 – GRADUATE PROGRAMS

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

Overview

As mentioned in our response to Standard 1C1, our master's programs prepare students to serve their communities in professional positions in public and social service. In recent years, we have discontinued some master's programs with low student interest, including the Master of Music in Contemporary Music, Master of Arts in History, and the Master of Science in Information Systems. As we move forward, we are developing new programs related to health sciences, which is a better fit for our region's needs and our focus on public and social service.

Alignment with disciplines and professions

Graduate programs are aligned with respective disciplines and professions and are described through nomenclature that is appropriate to the levels of graduate and professional degrees offered. Alignment with disciplines and professions is accomplished in several ways. For our accredited programs (i.e., MAT, SPED, RMHC, MS Interpreting Studies), this is evaluated and assured through the accreditation process with TSPC, CACREP, CCIE. Our accreditation status is publicly posted: RMHC MAT SPED MAIS. Further, our College of Education Office of Assessment and Data Management provides updated information on teacher candidate performance metrics and outcomes.

Our non-accredited programs participate in the 7-year cycle of program review, which includes an external review panel that addresses alignment with disciplines and professions. Before a new non-accredited graduate program is brought to the Board of Trustees for approval, it is sent to external reviewers to evaluate alignment with respective disciplines and professions. We also

ensure alignment during our curricular review process. In particular, the Graduate Studies Committee is charged with reviewing and recommending all graduate program curricular changes to the faculty senate. The group also addresses and ensures the graduate courses have greater depth, demands, and engagement compared to undergraduate programs, as evidenced by the minutes of the committee. A sub-group of the Graduate Studies Committee, the Graduate Professional Learning Community, also addresses this in their work.

Admissions requirements

Admission requirements for graduate programs clearly identify foundational skills. All programs require a four-year baccalaureate degree, or international equivalent, from a regionally accredited institution as defined by the American Association of Collegiate Registrars, with a cumulative B average (3.0) on the most recent baccalaureate degree. Programs further specify the admission requirements for their programs on each program admission page:

- MSED admissions requirements
- MA Criminal Justice admissions requirements
- MS Justice Studies admissions requirements
- SPED admissions requirements
- MA Organizational Leadership admissions requirements
  MS Rehabilitation Counseling admissions requirements here
- MA Interpreting Studies admissions requirements
- MAT admissions requirements
- MSED Educational Technology admissions requirements

Appropriate rigor, depth, and sequencing

WOU's graduate programs clearly identify the relationship between undergraduate and graduate expectations and require greater depth of study, demands on student intellectual or creative capacities, knowledge of the literature of the field, and ongoing student engagement in research, scholarship, creative expression, and/or relevant professional practice. Accredited programs are reviewed in this aspect as part of their initial and continuing accreditation: RMHC MAT SPED MAIS. For non-accredited programs, sequencing, building depth, and engagement of graduate programs are addressed in 3 ways: (1) external review during initial program approval, (2) program review, and (3) the curricular review process. Evidence of these processes are documented in the following:

- Curricular Review Process (including external review of new programs);
- Minutes from the Graduate Studies Committee for new programs and program changes; and
- Program Review Process.

Using Degree Tracks software, programs clearly outline for students how learning will advance across the completion of degree requirements.

Professional doctoral programs in allied health fields will help to meet the health care needs of our region and student needs for opportunities high-level training in health care professions. In 2023, WOU will submit a proposal to the NWCCU to create its first professional doctoral degree, the Doctorate in Occupational Therapy. In preparation for this new program, we recently hired a Program Director, Dr. Sean Rouch who was a professor in, and Interim Director of, Pacific University's Doctorate in Occupational Therapy program.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

STANDARD 1.D.1 – STUDENTS

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

Recruitment plan

WOU has a [strategic enrollment plan](#), which is in the process of being updated.

Undergraduate students. For the recruitment of undergraduate students, admissions counselors are assigned to all 36 Oregon Counties; the I-5 corridor in Washington; and Riverside, Orange, and Los Angeles Counties in California. Counselors use the Three Tier System:

- Tier 1 School: For high-yielding (top ⅓) schools, counselors visit 1-2 times in fall, attend fairs and/or workshops held by the school, offer on-site admissions, visit at least 1 time during winter term to catch students before priority and scholarship deadlines and 1-2 times in the spring to connect with juniors.

- Tier 2: For mid-yielding (mid ⅓) schools, counselors visit 1 time in fall, attend fairs and/or workshops as schedules allow, check in with seniors during winter term to catch students before priority and scholarship deadlines, and offer on-site admissions; if interest numbers support the visit, they visit 1 time in spring to connect with juniors.

- Tier 3: For low-to-no-yield (bottom ⅓) schools, counselors include the schools in their schedules when the visits align with their travel itineraries; they also maintain relationships with school representatives, as needed.

Tiers were identified by using data from the past 5 years (2017-18 to 2021-22) on applicants, admits, and those enrolled from each school. Data was pulled for Oregon, Washington, California, and Hawaii.

We also used a 5-year report (2017-18 to 2021-22) specific to Hispanic students, identifying applicants, admits, and those enrolled for each school. This report allowed us to identify 7-9 counties that yield the highest numbers of our enrolled students. We have designated these territories to our bicultural/bilingual counselors. Additionally, we have on-going partnerships to support our recruitment of Hispanic Students:

- WOU Conexiones is a partnership designed to support local high schools in educating students and their parents on the college process, with a special emphasis on first generation, historically underrepresented students. Partner schools include all Salem-Keizer schools, Gervais High School, and Woodburn High School.

- We partner with, support, and host the Cesar E. Chavez Leadership Conference each year, for high school seniors in fall and 9-11th grade students in spring.

There is no currently no fee for students to apply to WOU, and we accept unofficial transcripts for the application process for incoming freshmen. Applications are collected and processed electronically on Slate within 1-2 weeks of submission.

High school counselor boxes are mailed to schools early in the fall with viewbooks, *Funding Your Future* brochures, posters of campus events, and WOU swag.

We have an established communication plan that allows us to directly email prospective students, students who have applied, and admitted students via Slate. In addition to email, counselors maintain ongoing communication with prospective students and admitted students via Slate to encourage enrollment. Communication through Slate allows us to track all student contacts and communications.

More specifically, [Destination Western](#) is a two-week residential bridge orientation program aimed at serving students who need additional academic support in math and writing, as well as additional social onboarding; participants who complete the program receive a $1000 wage replacement stipend. Admissions counselors use this program to recruit students who may be concerned about starting college, whether it be academically or socially. Our participant data shows 57% of students who participated in fall 2022 learned about the program through a summer orientation Connect Day or a campus tour. Both of these programs are either sponsored by Admissions or marketed by Admissions. Additionally, we asked participants why they chose WOU, and their responses can be found [here](#).

For undergraduate student recruitment, collaboration is central. The majority of campus visit events are coordinated across units: Student Affairs departments, academic departments, athletics, facilities, and dining services. Some academic departments collaborate with the Office of Admissions to offer campus events with a specific focus such as *Creative Arts Day*, *Health and Exercise Science Day*, and *Criminal Justice Careers Day.* Admissions also collaborates with New Student and Family Programs as well as Student Success and Advising to help students who have been admitted through the registration and orientation process. Admissions collaborates with Financial Aid to follow up with students who have completed FAFSA and included WOU as a designated school and those who have applied to WOU but have not completed a FAFSA. Admissions also supports departments and divisions by providing recruitment materials, sharing prospective majors' names, and assisting with registration events.

Graduate students. For the recruitment of graduate students, we rely on market research using historical data mapping the enrollment connections between our undergraduate programs and our graduate programs, most notably our graduates who stay at WOU to continue their studies as graduate students. For recruiting from WOU's undergraduate programs, the *[Accelerated Undergraduate to Master's Pathway](#)* was created, which allows qualified WOU undergraduate students that wish to pursue a graduate program at WOU immediately after completing their undergraduate degree the opportunity to apply graduate coursework toward the completion of their undergraduate and graduate degrees.

The Graduate Office is currently in contract with EAB to create marketing strategies that elicit more applications. The EAB contract has initiated ongoing email campaigns, digital ads, and a Spotify campaign to capture students outside of our typical local pool of students. Our recruitment efforts beyond EAB involve an active social media presence, community engagement and outreach, and tabling at WOU sponsored events. As a result, Graduate Programs had an increase of 23% in applications in 2022.

New student orientation

Orientation provides clearly presented information but is not required of all students. During PACK Connect and Welcome Week, undergraduate and graduate students are introduced to the WOU catalog and Degree Tracks; they learn about the requirements related to their programs of study; and they receive timely, useful, and accurate information and advice about relevant academic requirements, including graduation and transfer policies. Because orientation is not mandatory, WOU has developed new online modules for orienting [First Year](#) and [Transfer](#) students.

Graduate students are provided with a [guide for graduate students](#) via their Graduate Student Channel and a [graduate student handbook](#). These materials help new students transition into their graduate studies. Policies, deadlines, and regulations are further explained and explored in one-to-one new student advising sessions. Several community-of-practice programs facilitate

orientations each term that combine their current and new students to provide opportunities for mentoring and retention within their cohorts.

WOU recently shifted orientation from a group advising model where the intended outcome was to support class registration to an [individual advising model](#) that focuses on creating a personal connection with each student and proactively reducing barriers. Because WOU has mandatory advising each term, these sessions are opportunities for students and advisors to continue communication around relevant policies, deadlines, and regulations. Many of these policies and regulations are covered in the [advising resource guide](#), which is available to faculty and professional advisors.

Continuous improvement of orientation

Feedback from student participants is collected and incorporated into future orientations. For example, WOU's orientation program has evolved into a months-long onboarding process for students, which allows students to digest information in manageable chunks at their own pace. The change is the result of summer orientation feedback, along with recent reports from sources, like *The Journal of College Orientation, Retention, and Transition*, that describe how post-pandemic students now desire on-demand information and increased connection. In the new orientation model, students are encouraged to participate in online activities that will prepare them for the start of their first term (e.g., reserving housing, accepting financial aid, and applying for support programs), which is followed by one-to-one advising sessions. Students are then invited to visit campus for [Connect Days](#), which gives them a deep-dive introduction to campus resources and academics and connects them with their peers. Lastly, [students are invited to campus one week prior to the start of fall classes](#) to engage more meaningfully with campus resource presentations, to learn about campus values through mandatory speakers, and to foster meaningful relationships with peers during social activities (see [Welcome Week 2022 Book](#) for students and their families).

Academic advising

Contact with academic advisors occurs systematically and advising and mentoring continues throughout a student's program of study. Outside of a few smaller programs, new incoming first-year students typically meet with a professional advisor during orientation and make the transition to their assigned faculty advisor for their first term of required advising. This transition is supported in multiple ways:

- Orientation advising typically covers how advising works at WOU during regular academic terms, including how and when to prepare for that advising touchpoint;
- Academic departments are sent a list of their new students who need assigned advisors during the week leading up to the start of the term and then again at census in week 4, if there are additional students by that time;

- New faculty orientation includes a brief visit and high-level advising information from Student Success and Advising, as well as encouragement to complete a training module, Faculty Advising at WOU - Quick Start Guide; and
- Ongoing training and development resources for all advisors, including infographics, handouts, upcoming workshops, and past workshop recordings can be found on the advising website.

In each subsequent term, students have mandatory advising holds placed in week 5 and are encouraged to meet with their assigned advisor prior to registration, starting week 8. On Monday of week 9, advisors receive an email report with their advisees who are not yet registered for the following term and a request to follow up with each of those students. All advising holds expire at the end of final exam week.

General reflections and Next steps

Looking forward to the retention data linked to Destination Western.

Maybe something about assessing advising on campus?

STANDARD 1.D.2 – STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

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

WOU's Institutional Research website provides data on student achievement, including retention rates and graduation rates. Data is available in PDF formats, along with Excel, to facilitate additional user analyses. Table 1D2-1 reports recent retention and graduation data for first-time, full-time cohorts.

Table 1.D.2-1: Retention and Graduation, 2010-2020 cohorts

Cohort	1st to 2nd year retention	4-year graduation rate	6-year graduation rate
Fall 2010	67.6%	19.6%	39.0%
Fall 2011	70.5%	21.9%	43.5%
Fall 2012	68.8%	20.3%	39.8%
Fall 2013	70.5%	23.8%	41%
Fall 2014	69.4%	25.2%	45.1%
Fall 2015	74.0%	27.4%	48.2%

Fall 2016	72.2%	29.8%	
Fall 2017	68.7%	30.4%	
Fall 2018	73.9%		
Fall 2019	70.6%		
Fall 2020	65.5%		

WOU also tracks excess credits to graduation among first-time and transfer undergraduate students (see Table 1.D.2-2). "Excess credits" has served as an indicator of inefficiencies in our curriculum as well as issues with advising.

Table 1.D.2-2: Credits in excess of 180 at graduation (undergraduate students)

Year	Transfer Students, all		First-time, full-time students	
	Average total credits	Percent below 200 credits	Average total credits	Percent below 200 credits
2016	220.5	33.8%	197.7	63.0%
2017	227.8	33.3%	197.1	66.2%
2018	220.2	36.3%	198.3	64.3%
2019	217.8	41.9%	193.2	73.8%
2020	210.1	45.7%	195.2	70.2%
2021	202.8	54.8%	194.5	70.8%

Measures of post-secondary success are available in external data sets (e.g., USDOE's College Scorecard, The Third Way's Equity Index). WOU's Institutional Research site provides links.

As discussed in greater depth in the response to Standard 1D3, data are disaggregated by institutionally meaningful categories: Sex, race/ethnicity (groups include white, Black, Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian, two or more races, non-resident alien), Pell status, first-generation status, rural high school, and veteran status. Monitoring these indicators and equity gaps in them promote student achievements by showing us where additional interventions and resources may be needed.

Internally, we also review disaggregated data on DFW rates and GPA (defined in 1D4) and have used this data to identify courses and programs in need of attention (e.g., additional student supports, professional development for instructors, curriculum review).

In addition to outcome variables related to student achievement, we also track indicators that we hypothesized affect student achievement:

- Percent of undergraduate programs that can be completed in 180 credits (see also response to 1C1),
- Availability of courses in alternative formats (see also response to 1C7), and
- Net price to all students and to middle income students as a measure of affordability.

We compare ourselves to an appropriate set of regional and national peers, which will be reassessed in 2023 and 2026

We have established a set of regional and national peers (see 1.B.2), and we use this set to provide benchmarks for retention and graduation rates. We plan to review our peers for appropriateness at our Year Seven and Mid-Cycle reviews. Consequently, we will reassess the appropriateness of our peers in 2023 and then again in 2026.

Table 1.D.2-1 reports data on 1st- to 2nd-year retention for full-time and part-time students at WOU and at our regional and national peers. We drew data from IPEDS and computed the average of the retention rate between 2017 and 2021. Our retention rate for full-time students lags our peers by about 3 percentage points, but our retention rate for part-time students is more than 15 percentage points lower. This finding, along with other findings related to equity gaps, is a central focus as we plan for a 2023 Title III Strengthening Institutions grant proposal.

Table 1.D.2-1: 1st to 2nd year retention, full-time and part-time students, five-year average (2017-2021)

	Full-time students	Part-time students
Western Oregon University	71.5%	26.5%
Median of peer institutions	74.9%	42%

We provided data on how graduation rates compare with peers in our response to Standard 1.B.2.

Indicators are integrated into institutional processes

For a significant example, please refer to section 1.B.2 where we discuss how indicators of student achievement drove curricular review and revision that resulted in higher graduation rates, across all groups we track, and a decrease in excess credits, especially among transfer students.

Additionally, when we examined DFW patterns, we noted that some students received failing grades across all of their courses, suggesting that they may not have known or remembered that they had registered for classes. To address this, we have initiated outreach in the second week

of classes to students who do not have any Canvas course activity to encourage them to engage with classes or, if they do not intend to complete it, to drop the class.

STANDARD 1.D.3 – DISAGGREGATED INDICATORS OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

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

Student achievement results

Disaggregated indicators of student achievement are available on WOU's website. We publish data related to graduation rates and retention rates.

Equity gaps are identified by disaggregating graduation and retention rates (see Table 1.D.3-1). We see persistent equity gaps between the following:

- Male and female students
- White, Hispanic and Asian students as compared to other students of color
- First-generation college students and non-first gen students
- Pell recipients and non-Pell recipients
- Rural male students and non-rural male students

Table 1.D.3-1: Five-year average for student success measures, disaggregated

	1st to 2nd year retention	4-year graduation rate	6-year graduation rate
All	70.2%	27.3%	43.5%
Male	64.3%	19.1%	37.4%
Female	73.2%	32.2%	47.6%
First Generation	67.6%	22.9%	40.4%
Pell recipient	70.6%	23.4%	42.5%
Hispanic	74.0%	24.2%	47.5%
Asian-American	71.3%	30.0%	45.0%

Black	60.0%	15.4%	28.9%
American Indian/Alaska Native	54.4%	21.6%	31.7%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	66.4%	16.9%	37.9%
White	70.0%	29.6%	44.2%
Two or more races	71.2%	*	*
Rural high school	71.8%	28.7%	45.9%
Non-rural high school	64.3%	26.6%	42.4%

Appendix D provides year-to-year disaggregated data which reveals the university's upward trends in graduation rates for all groups we track since 2016. We break out all data for male and female students because our graduation and retention rates for male students consistently lag those of female students. Although all groups have seen increased graduation rates since 2016, equity gaps remain.

We have also examined grade point average (GPA) and rates for receiving D or F grades, or withdrawing from a class (DFW rates), by sex and race/ethnicity. The average DFW rate for male students is about 3-5% lower than the DFW rates for female students, but the average GPA for male students is approximately 0.25 GPA points, or 10%, lower than the average GPA for female students. With respect to race/ethnicity, the DFW rates are similarly about 3-5% lower for underrepresented minority (URM) students than non-URM students, and average GPAs are about 0.25 GPA points lower for URM students than non-URM students.

Pooling data for all underrepresented minority students, however, masks some important differences among URM students. For example, during 2015-20, the average GPA for students who identify as white was 2.99 for female students and 2.74 for male students. For students who identify as Hispanic, the average GPA was 2.74 for female students and 2.62 for male students. For students who identify as black, the average GPA was 2.52 for female students and 2.29 for male students. This finding, which is also reflected in retention and graduation rates, has led us to disaggregate the URM category, so that the relative success of Hispanic students does not obscure larger equity gaps experienced by other students.

Use of achievement data in planning, decision making, and the allocation of resources

In our discussion of Standard 1.B.2, we referred to a significant example of our use of student achievement data to inform planning, decision-making, and the allocation of resources.

Specifically, we used data on graduation rates and excess credits at graduation to motivate and inform a comprehensive review and revision of university graduation requirements, including General Education. Ultimately this instance of continuous improvement led to increases in four- and six-year graduation rates as well as decreases in excess credits at graduation, especially among transfer students.

Specifically, in 2016, our graduation rates lagged our peers, the typical transfer student graduated with almost a year's worth of excess credits, and students and faculty were confused about university degree requirements. Seeking to improve, we analyzed curriculum and found (1) requirements had changed only by growing; (2) there were twelve "buckets" of requirements, each with distinct rules; (3) requirements were owned by the academic units rather than the university; and (4) we had highly prescribed degree programs with little room for false starts and exploration.

Over the next three years, faculty and administrators partnered to revise university-level degree requirements. We started with a new undergraduate degree framework, which we call 30/60/90. In this framework, programs are allotted 90 credits, general education are allotted 60 credits, and 30 credits are allotted as free electives, which ensures that students have realistic 180-credit degree paths.

A General Education Task Force convened and recommended assessable learning outcomes and an aligned curriculum. A standing General Education Committee was created and now oversees all university degree requirements. BA/BS degree designations were reimagined to become program characteristics, reducing complexity and confusion. A required minor was eliminated, and the 62-credit requirement for upper-division credits was reduced to 60. In this work, we focused on our requirements and practices and revised graduation requirements to meet current student needs. The results of this work are striking. Our 4-year graduation rates have risen from 20.3% in 2016 to 30.4% in 2021; the 4-year rate for transfer students was 58% in 2016 and 72% in 2021. Six-year rates are also higher, rising from 39% in 2016 to 48% in 2021. Moreover, the curricular changes have benefited every sub-group of students that WOU tracks (see Appendix D), pointing to the power of structural changes in curriculum to drive equitable student achievement. Excess credits among transfer students have fallen as well, from 40.5 excess credits in 2016 to 22.8 in 2021. We still have much work to do to support student success, but the hard work of curriculum review and revision provides a strong and sustainable foundation for the future.

This work also led to the reallocation of resources. The university has base-budgeted our new First Year Seminars. In the first year that we implemented the seminars (2019), we relied on voluntary contributions of faculty labor from programs using their existing resources. There was much concern that this was not a sustainable approach for this vital curricular and retention innovation. In the process of rebasing the instructional budget following program curtailment and layoffs, we carved out the funds to support First Year Seminars, a new coordinator for that element of General Education, and a new Director of General Education.

Beyond this larger project, which was recognized with an [NWCCU Beacon Award in 2022](), there are other ways that the tracking of student achievement has informed planning and resource allocation.

- When we looked at 1st- to 2nd-year retention rates by academic program, we found that our business program – one of our largest – had unusually low retention rates. In 2021, we created a professional position for a [recruitment and retention advisor]() in that program to bolster faculty advising. In addition to providing academic advising, the R&R specialist is strengthening relationships with community college partners and is engaging students in co-curricular activities related to the major.

- In 2016, we identified MTH 111 College Algebra as a barrier to graduation for many students. The DFW rate exceeded 30%. Some students needed the skills and knowledge developed in this course to advance in their majors, while many other students did not. In fact, we found that fewer than 10% of students who completed MTH 111, which is essentially pre-calculus, ever moved on to take calculus. With that data in hand, a campus-wide group of [faculty engaged in a year-long process]() to study quantitative literacy at WOU and provide feedback on the development of an alternative course – MTH 110 Applied College Algebra – intended for students in social sciences and business who were not required to take calculus. In addition, we removed the prerequisite of MTH 111 from MTH 243: Introduction to Statistics; the prerequisite was determined to be an historical artifact with no substantive purpose for today's students.

General reflections and next steps

While WOU has made progress in improving graduation rates, two problems remain. First, we have not eliminated equity gaps in graduation rates. Second, our 1st- to 2nd-year retention rates have been "stuck" between 65% and 75% for over a decade, and some groups have even lower retention rates. To continue to make progress in addressing graduation rates, WOU must undertake efforts to retain students so that they can later be positioned to graduate. Currently, WOU is in the planning stages for a US Department of Education Title III Strengthening Institutions grant to support this area of improvement.

STANDARD 1.D.4 – USE OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT INDICATORS

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

Standardized and transparent data practices

Indicators of student achievement used to track mission fulfillment

- For **graduation rates** at four and six years, we draw on data that is also provided to IPEDS and we use the IPEDS data definitions and protocols in reporting that data.
- Credits to graduation, from which **excess credits** are derived, are also used as a primary indicator of student achievement. The measure reflects all college credits earned by students (i.e., WOU credits and/or credits transferred into WOU).

Additional indicators of student achievement

- We calculate the DFW rate at the course and institutional level: the formula is (students who earned a D or F or who withdrew from the course after the drop deadline) divided by the total enrollment of the course. This course-level data is provided to division chairs on a regular basis and is used to identify courses that need additional attention or resources.
- We calculate Grade Point Average using the mechanism described in our [college catalog](#).

Use of disaggregated data to reduce equity gaps

Dissemination and review of student achievement data, including disaggregated data, has led to changes in practices and resource allocation at the course, program, and university levels in an effort to mitigate equity gaps. Examples include the following:

- Disaggregated data regarding retention and graduation rates led to additional types of TRIO grants (Teacher Preparation Student Support Services or TPSSS); additional institutional (not grant funded) investments in supports that parallel those available in our TRIO programs (at this time approximately 50% of SEP staff FTE is E&G funded, the rest of the FTE is TRIO grant); reallocation of an E&G funded line to TPSSS to better serve undocumented students. The SEP-related programs produce higher retention rates (than overall WOU student population) by about 10%; higher rate of students in good academic standing; and higher graduation rates for SEP students.

- Course-level DFW reports in mathematics, science, and first-year writing courses have prompted faculty and programs to revise curriculum (i.e., MTH 110, WR 121/122), including the creation of course coordination mechanisms that have increased consistency of student experience across course sections, and to redesign some student supports (e.g., peer mentors and tutoring services).

- Course and institution-level DFW reports have sparked higher levels of engagement by faculty in our [early alert system](#) (Wolf Connection System). Upon implementation in fall 2022, we are seeing higher levels of reports than in the past and are currently tracking achievement outcomes for students who have a case opened.

- Disaggregated data on expired registration holds helped us to identify students who were missing timely opportunities for academic advising and develop strategies for interventions. Our Black and Hispanic students are more likely to not connect with an

advisor and subsequently have their holds expire. We are exploring mechanisms to ensure that all students receive timely academic advising.

- We have established a goal to diversify the pool of tutors to better reflect the population of WOU students.

General reflections and next steps

As WOU moves closer to qualifying to apply to be a Hispanic-Serving Institution, we are acutely aware that the success of our Hispanic students (i.e., retention and graduation) does not extend to some other groups (e.g., Black students, especially male; Pacific Islander students; and white male students); thus, our planning is focused on improving how our programs and services can support all students.

CONCLUSION

If accreditation is about demonstrating perfection, WOU does not meet that standard. If, on the other hand, accreditation is about demonstrating intentional, systematic, and continuous improvement, then WOU is on solid ground. Since our last comprehensive review, we have accomplished the following:

- WOU has established an interconnected set of inclusive university-level advisory committees that guide planning and resource allocation and monitor institutional effectiveness and mission fulfillment.

- WOU has increased its capacity to develop data into information we use to close equity gaps.

- WOU established institution-wide infrastructure to support continuous improvement in student learning, including establishing assessable institutional learning outcomes.
- Faculty have increased their engagement in assessment of student learning, including assessment of institutional learning outcomes at the graduate and undergraduate levels.

- Curriculum, delivery modalities, and support services have evolved to better meet the needs of today's students.

- Students experience greater success, graduating at higher rates at four and six year, and increases in graduation rates have touched all subgroups of students.

The process of self-evaluation gives us an opportunity to celebrate these successes and remind our community of how far we have come. <mark>It has also shown us the specific areas in which we need to do more or be better . . .</mark>