Assurance Argument

University of the Southwest

3/28/2018

1 - Mission

The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.

1.A - Core Component 1.A

The institution's mission is broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations.

1. The mission statement is developed through a process suited to the nature and culture of the institution and is adopted by the governing board.
2. The institution's academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.
3. The institution's planning and budgeting priorities align with and support the mission. (This sub-component may be addressed by reference to the response to Criterion 5.C.1.)

Argument

Mission Statement

University of the Southwest is a Christ-centered educational community dedicated to developing men and women for a lifetime of servant leadership by emphasizing individual faith, responsibility, and initiative.

- Teaching at University of the Southwest adheres to belief in God, in the Bible as the inspired Word of God, in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and in the separation of church and state.
- University of the Southwest strives for excellence in academic curriculum, campus life programming, and student activities in a supportive educational community where freedom of thought and expression is honored, and the demonstration of faith in acts of service is encouraged;
- At University of the Southwest, students are instructed and mentored by a faculty and staff who demonstrate Christ-centered values and maintain an environment where students can live and work cooperatively, valuing the multiple cultures from which they come; and
- As a community of initiative, University of the Southwest challenges graduates to become enterprising members of our society contributing to the common good by advocating and participating in the productive commerce of free enterprise, the constitutional privilege of self-government, and the practical contributions of community service.

The university mission is supported by a commitment to the principles of servant leadership:

"At University of the Southwest, we believe that education is more than earning a degree – it's also about developing the knowledge and skills to create positive change within yourself and others. At USW, we're dedicated to developing men and women to be leaders who motivate, who create positive change, and who make an impact on the world. We're preparing them for a lifetime of servant leadership. What is servant leadership? Servant leadership is a philosophy coined by management expert Robert Greenleaf in 1970 that supports the idea that the best leaders must also serve. He wrote: 'The servant-leader is servant first… It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve

first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions….' How is servant leadership practiced at University of the Southwest? The servant leadership philosophy permeates our entire university - in the classroom, on the playing field, and in our communities."

University of the Southwest (USW) operations are mission driven. Faculty and staff work diligently to ensure that campus and community constituencies are made aware of the mission and that it is articulated frequently and in a variety of publications (including the college catalog) and forums. All academic course syllabi (examples: English, Orientation, and Servant Leadership) include the university mission statement. The University mission impacts and influences all aspects of University operations, including (a) decisions made by the Board of Trustees, (b) faculty teaching and mentoring to students, (c) curriculum development, (d) fiscal and managerial planning, policies and procedures, and other University operations.

Response to 1.A.1

The University mission statement was revised by a group of stakeholders and adopted by the Board of Trustees and President in 2005.

The process for review and approval of the current mission statement included formation of a Mission Statement Committee (MSC) composed of two university trustees, one dean, one faculty member, the Dean of Students, the president of the Student Government Association and one member of the alumni board. The committee reviewed and discussed the previous mission statement, the language of the statement, sought input from constituent groups, and then drafted an updated version of the language including references to the principles of servant leadership.

USW's mission is further supported by an Honor Code that applies to all University stakeholders. The core tenants of the Honor Code include: personal responsibility, respect for self, and respect for others. The Honor Code is supported by an Honor Board and by university policies that enforce the principles of the Code.

The trustees, faculty and staff are committed to preparing students to embrace USW's Mission Statement by becoming servant leaders, a concept consistent with Christ's teaching that, "The greatest among you is the one who serves" *(Holy Bible*, Matthew 23:11). USW employees help prepare graduates to enter the work force and to demonstrate initiative and responsibility. USW graduates will have had many opportunities to become responsible initiators or servant leaders.

Response to 1.A.2

USW's academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.

The University offers educational opportunities for local residents and non-residents to earn bachelor's degrees under Bachelor of Arts and Sciences, Bachelor of Business Administration, and Bachelor of Science degree programs; additionally residents and non-residents can earn graduate degrees in Masters of Science in Education Programs, a Masters of Business Administration program, and a Doctorate of Business Administration.

Campus life, academic programs, student activities, and support services are consistent with the USW mission. Students can participate in activities on campus that include but are not limited to:

- First Generation College Student group
- ENACTUS – **En**trepreneurial initiatives, **act**ion - the willingness to do something, **us** – a committed group of people
- Alpha Chi Honor Society
- Sigma Tau Delta International English Honor Society
- Intramural Sports
- Fellowship of Christian Athletes
- Student Government Association

Campus athletics are an important part of the University life, and student athletes are regular participants in campus and community-based activities. Participation in these activities enhances student academic and social experiences, and provides opportunities for servant leadership, a tenant of the University mission, as well.

As an institution, USW supports a range of on-campus activities focused on student academic and personal development and community-based activities in support of the University mission. The CASTLE program is an important example of student-focused support. CASTLE is a program dedicated to supporting students in their search for direction and purpose after graduation. Within the regional community, USW is a sponsor of the Maddox Distinguished Lecture Series. The Maddox Distinguished Lecture Series brings national and world-renowned figures to the community. Community members may attend the lectures free-of-charge. The most recent speaker to present was Ms. Dara Torres, 12-time Olympic medalist and the first U.S. swimmer to compete in five Olympics. Previous speakers have included Captain Chesley (Sully) Sullenberger, who safely landed a crippled airliner in the Hudson River with no loss of life, Former First Lady Laura Bush, NFL Quarterback Payton Manning, General Colin Powell, and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

USW also hosts the annual Free Enterprise Dinner. The evening, a local tradition, features distinguished speakers and the annual recognition of a Trustee of Free Enterprise (a local business or community leader who reflects the values and principles of free enterprise and servant leadership).

In addition, the University hosts an annual Prayer Breakfast bringing community leaders together from throughout the region. The Prayer Breakfast is an excellent example of how the University supports the institutional mission by connecting the mission with the regional community. The University has also sponsored activities with the local Hispano Chamber of Commerce.

Response to 1.A.3

USW's planning and budget priorities align with and are in support of the mission of the university.

Detailed discussion of this sub-component is addressed in Core Component 5.C.1.

Sources

- Athletic Dept Community Service
- CASTLE
- CASTLE Evaluation 1
- DLS Maddox
- ENACTUS Description
- Flyer- Free Enterprise Dinner Program
- Flyer- Prayer Breakfast 2017

- HHC
- Honor Board
- Honor Board- Breach in Honor Code Agreement
- SYLLABUS ENG 1113 RhetComp
- Syllabus Freshman Orentation
- Syllabus Servant Leadership
- Undergraduate Course Catalog 16-17
- Undergraduate Course Catalog 16-17 (page number 6)

1.B - Core Component 1.B

The mission is articulated publicly.

1. The institution clearly articulates its mission through one or more public documents, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans, or institutional priorities.
2. The mission document or documents are current and explain the extent of the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development, and religious or cultural purpose.
3. The mission document or documents identify the nature, scope, and intended constituents of the higher education programs and services the institution provides.

Argument

Response to 1.B.1

USW clearly articulates and communicates its mission through multiple public documents, through institutional venues, and in public communications.

The University Mission Statement and associated statements reflecting institutional commitment to the principles of servant leadership appear throughout college publications including, but not limited to, the undergraduate and graduate catalogs, the university website, as well as staff and faculty handbooks. The mission comes alive during weekly Chapel sessions for students, faculty, and staff as well as in numerous public events and activities as described in subcomponent 1.A.1.

Response to 1.B.2 and 1.B.3:

The University's mission documents are current and support the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission. The former mission statement had characterized the college as "grounded in Christian principles." These positive principles adopt a Christian viewpoint. In identifying University of the Southwest as Christ-centered, the refocused mission statement characterizes the University as an institution where a Christian viewpoint prevails. Yet, because it also believes in practicing Christian principles, the University seeks to maintain an environment where students can live and work cooperatively, valuing the multiple cultures from which they come.

By refocusing the Mission Statement, the Board and the MSC members sought to strengthen University of the Southwest's distinctive Christian identity. The former mission statement had characterized the college as grounded in Christian principles. The new statement goes further and offers a specific commitment to a way-of-life and sense of purpose.

USW operates within a framework of planning that includes a new strategic planning process (described in subcomponent 5.C), strategic plan action steps, and the University budget. In each of these processes, the mission of the University serves as the foundation for implementing current activities and planning for the future.

Sources

- 2016 - 2017 Faculty Handbook
- 2016 - 2017 Faculty Handbook (page number 7)
- Graduate Course Catalog 16-17
- Graduate Course Catalog 16-17 (page number 5)
- Staff Handbook 2017
- Staff Handbook 2017 (page number 7)
- Undergraduate Course Catalog 16-17
- Undergraduate Course Catalog 16-17 (page number 6)

1.C - Core Component 1.C

The institution understands the relationship between its mission and the diversity of society.

1. The institution addresses its role in a multicultural society.
2. The institution's processes and activities reflect attention to human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

Argument

Response to 1.C.1 and 1.C.2

As an institution composed of individuals from all walks of life and cultures, USW is fully committed to programs and activities that reflect and honor human and cultural diversity.

University faculty, staff, and students are reflective of cultural pluralism and multiculturalism found in today's society. The faculty and staff are diverse and vary in ethnicities and cultural backgrounds. Faculty and staff members include African Americans (11%), Hispanic (20%), Asian (2%), and White (67%). The USW student population also is diverse. Although the majority of the student population comes from the United States, international students from Europe, Australia, Central and South America, Pacific Islands and other countries add to the diversity of the student population. The USW student population – as documented in the 2016 IPEDS data - includes Hispanics (24%), Native American (3%), Asian (1%), African American (21%), and White (33%); of the student body, 18% chose not to identify.

Although historically there have been challenges, USW has made special efforts to address issues of diversity and culture through its activities and academic offerings. For example, in September 2013 the New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) sent a five-member team to review licensure programs offered by the USW School of Education. The School of Education was evaluated according to six NCATE Standards (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education), which included a standard addressing diversity (Standard 4). In the previous visit (in 2003), the School of Education did not meet Standard 4 for undergraduate programs. By the time of the 2013 visit, the School of Education had addressed all issues and concerns related to the 2003 visit and met all six standards.

University of the Southwest addresses its role in a multicultural society in many ways-through course offerings, campus activities, and multicultural celebrations. Professors are urged to foster well-rounded educational experiences for students that are essential in a multicultural society. The relationship between the University's Mission and diversity is demonstrated in the academic programs and courses offered. USW faculty have developed a number of specialized courses focused on cultural diversity and many of these same courses appear as requirements in student degree plans.

University of the Southwest recognizes the students and communities it serves, and it takes special needs and issues into account in all activities and programs. For example, attention is given to human diversity as demonstrated in the following areas:

- Office of Special Services (OSS): The Director of the OSS provides faculty with ways to modify/accommodate the learning environment and content so that all students have the

- opportunity to succeed in higher education.
- Title IX: Title IX applies to all aspects of University life for which federal funds are received, including funds for financial aid to students. USW provides training and information related to Title IX to all students, faculty, and staff.

In addition, the institution has employment procedures that reflect attention to human diversity within its mission and for the constituencies it serves. Systematic policies are in place that reflect fair and uniform employment procedures. The Assistant Vice President of Human Resources facilitates the hiring process from the notification of a vacancy to the completion of new employee documentation on the first day of employment.

Sources

- Degree plans - examples
- Diversity - Course examples
- OSS Infosheet
- OSS Policy Procedure Manual--2017-2018
- Title IX USW Employee Presentation 2017-2018
- Title IX USW Student Presentation 2017-2018
- USW IPEDS Data Feedback Report_2016

1.D - Core Component 1.D

The institution's mission demonstrates commitment to the public good.

1. Actions and decisions reflect an understanding that in its educational role the institution serves the public, not solely the institution, and thus entails a public obligation.
2. The institution's educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes, such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization, or supporting external interests.
3. The institution engages with its identified external constituencies and communities of interest and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

Argument

Response to 1.D.1

USW's actions and decisions reflect an obligation to the public and communities it serves as well as an emphasis on the institution's core educational mission.

Servant Leadership has been especially promoted by the University by the creation of the new Calling and Servant Leadership Education (CASTLE) Center. The mission of The Calling and Servant Leadership Education center is to engage students at University of the Southwest in servant leadership training with a community partner in their field of study. The vision statement of CASTLE is: We desire to raise up servant leaders who will make a positive difference in their communities through their vocations.

The on-campus community is made up predominately of students who are athletes, and many of the athletic teams participate in servant leadership projects for non-profit organizations as well as those in need. Over the past 12-18 months, USW teams and individual athletes have taken part in a number of community activities including:

- The USW Softball Team worked with the Hobbs Parks and Recreation Department to repair fence netting at Baker Field. Severe wind storms had blown down most of the protective blue netting on the field. The team also conducted several trash day pickups after windstorms and tournaments. Also, three athletes conducted classroom assistance at Jefferson Elementary School for two hours every Monday in the Fall of 2016 and Spring of 2017.
- The USW Men's Soccer Team sent players to College Lane Elementary School to support reading sessions and soccer clinics. The team supported numerous Habitat for Humanity construction activities and the Slam Jam event in downtown Hobbs. The team participated in a total of 12 community service activities in the Spring of 2017.
- The USW Tennis Team engaged in "trick or trunk" for Halloween. The athletes dressed in costume for preschoolers to create a fun, safe Halloween for about 100 children at the Junglebook Preschool and Daycare. The team also worked with Sanger Elementary School to celebrate Dr. Seuss Day. The athletes dressed as Dr. Seuss' characters to enhance the learning experience. The team also helped Habitat for Humanity to build and paint homes. Athletes also were sent to Sanger Elementary to help with their Read and Mentor days.
- The USW Baseball Team spent many hours with their adopted school. They also spent time at the Desert Gardens Assisted Living and Memory Care Facility visiting with and helping the

residents. Baseball team members also supported the Habitat for Humanity projects.
- The USW Women's Basketball team has helped with several community organizations including the Adopt-a-School Program (Stone Elementary), the Lea County Fair, the Community Drug Coalition Red Ribbon Week, the United Way Chili Fest, the Hobbs Jaycees "Dress a Live Doll" event, and the USW campus DKMS bone marrow drive. The team also helped to construct an autism playground for the Humphrey House which is a substance, drug, and alcohol abuse center

The USW Athletic Department continually receives recognition from the National Association for Intercollegiate Athletics. USW has earned the Champions of Character award for the second year in a row, and recently learned that it placed second nationally among NAIA institutions competing for this year's Champions of Charity Award that recognizes exceptional community service.

Response to 1.D.2

USW's educational responsibilities take clear priority over other institutional activities and projects.

USW's resource allocation and budgeting clearly reflect the University's commitment to education programs, student support, and academic support. Of the approximately $12 million University operating budget, over 75% of the funding goes directly to instruction, student services, and academic support. Institutional operations account for an additional 16% of the budget, but the clear priority has been and will remain instruction and student services.

Response to 1.D.3

As described in the response to sub-component 1A.1, USW engages with the communities outside the campus through a variety of programs and activities. These activities included, but are not limited to, the Maddox Distinguished Lecture Series and the Community Prayer Breakfast among others.

The campus has allowed use of its facilities for external organizations such as the local police Special Weapons and Tactics (S.W.A.T.) teams for training. It also has allowed its facilities to be used by the MyPower organization, which strives to help fifth and sixth grade school girls successfully navigate their teen years by making good choices and avoiding many of the problems teens face. Through the Servant Leadership student projects, the campus community is actively involved in providing services across Lea County.

Sources

- Athletic Dept Community Service
- CASTLE
- CASTLE Evaluation 1
- Consolidated financial statement May 31 2017
- Consolidated financial statement May 31 2017 (page number 4)
- DLS Maddox
- Flyer- Prayer Breakfast 2017

1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary

The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.

Summary

The USW mission statement is broadly understood within the institution. The university's entire planning, budgeting, and infrastructure revolve around its students and the mission statement. USW faculty and staff join together with the Board of Trustees to maintain planning practices. The mission statement, together with the new strategic master plan, will provide a foundation and guide for directing the institution into the future; these planning efforts will be publicly documented through institutional venues and public communications. The mission statement will continue to serve USW's diverse population and assist students in understanding the importance of servant leadership. University of the Southwest's mission is clearly visible throughout the University, and it serves as a constant reminder to students as they progress through their servant leadership experiences and their interactions with community members, organizations, and constituencies.

Sources

There are no sources.

2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

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

2.A - Core Component 2.A

The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions; it establishes and follows policies and processes for fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing board, administration, faculty, and staff.

Argument

Response to 2.A

USW operates with a firm commitment to integrity and an emphasis on ethical behavior. In support of this commitment, the University has established numerous policies and processes in support of institutional integrity.

Institutional policies and practices related to staff and students:

University students are presented with clear expectations with regard to personal integrity and ethical behavior. Students are expected to adhere to the rules and expectations of the Honor Code that are outlined in numerous places including the Student Handbook. The Honor Code is administered by an Honor Board. Violations of the Honor Code carry very specific penalties including, but not limited to, reprimands, suspensions, fines, community service, and possible expulsion from the University. Academic integrity is paramount for students and the University has established clear policy related to instances of plagiarism and other issues of academic integrity. Policies related to academic probation and suspension are outlined in the Student Handbook, the Undergraduate Catalog, and the Graduate Catalog.

Clear, detailed, and well-publicized procedures for appropriate conduct and grievances covering sexual harassment or misconduct, discrimination, conflict resolution, and termination are documented in the Faculty Handbook, Student Handbook, Undergraduate Catalog, Graduate Catalog and Staff Handbook. The University has also assigned an individual to serve as Title IX coordinator to support continual communications of expectations regarding personal conduct as well as documenting Title IX related issues.

Faculty and staff are subject to numerous policies related to inter-personal conduct, ethical behavior, and personal integrity. These policies as well as potential penalties for inappropriate or unacceptable behavior are outlined in the Staff and Faculty Handbooks. Faculty, staff, and students are also advised of issues related to misuse or inappropriate use of university technology.

All faculty and staff receive training on FERPA and the expectations for maintaining confidentiality of student information. Each time faculty and staff members sign into secure areas of the university website they are reminded of their commitment to FERPA principles and must actively accept those principles before gaining access to the secure areas.

As a private institution, USW maintains an active effort to develop external sources of support for the University's mission. Outside contributions and all donor gifts are documented with a system called *Donor Perfect*. Only the Coordinator of Development & External Relations and the Executive Assistant to the President have access to these documents, which helps maintain confidentiality. All donor records are stored in a secure locked file cabinet.

USW's financial integrity is assured through annual audits conducted by outside accounting professionals (recent audits included are for 2015, 2016, and 2017). These audits review all University fiscal activities including issues related to handling of federal financial aid, external funding, internal controls, and issues of prudent fiscal management. Annual audit reports are provided to executive staff as well as to the University Board of Trustees. Members of the board have full access to all University documents, records, and external reviews.

The University has established a system for soliciting, monitoring, and acting on student and community suggestions and complaints. Any member of the campus (student, faculty, or staff) or members of the USW community outside campus, may access an anonymous suggestion/complaint system that is available on the University website. All comments are automatically submitted to the Director of Student Life.

Sources

- Acceptable Use Policy for Technology Resources
- Comment Concerns Complaints
- Consolidated financial statement May 31 2017
- Consolidated FInancial statement
- Consolidated Financial statement May 31, 2015
- Faculty and Staff Portal
- Graduate Course Catalog 16-17
- Graduate Course Catalog 16-17 (page number 21)
- Honor Board
- Honor Board- Breach in Honor Code Agreement
- Student Handbook 2017-2018
- Student Handbook 2017-2018 (page number 6)
- Student Handbook 2017-2018 (page number 11)
- Undergraduate Course Catalog 16-17
- Undergraduate Course Catalog 16-17 (page number 37)

2.B - Core Component 2.B

The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public with regard to its programs, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, control, and accreditation relationships.

Argument

USW presents itself clearly and completely to prospective students, current students, and members of the public through a variety of media, publications, and communications.

The University website displays the Higher Learning Commission's Mark of Affiliation on the site's homepage. The HLC Mark of Affiliation is linked to the HLC website where details of the University's accreditation status can be viewed. USW provides prospective students and their families detailed information about financial aid and cost of attending the University. University cost information is documented on the University web pages as well as in the Net Price Calculator, which will estimate tuition, housing, and other educational cost information for USW. Information on faculty credentials is maintained on open pages of the University website. USW's undergraduate and graduate catalogs are published on the University website annually and contain substantial information about all academic programs, University policies, cost of attendance, and other important information.

USW maintains a regular process of communicating to members of the public by providing public relation information via the University website and other local media outlets. Additionally, the University publishes and makes accessible a variety of student/consumer related information including, but not limited to, drug and alcohol abuse, student right-to-know information, equity in athletics, campus security and safety, and other reports. These reports are provided under the CONSUMER INFORMATION tab on the university website.

Sources

- Equity in Athletics Report
- Faculty credentials
- Graduate Course Catalog 16-17
- HLC Mark Screenshot
- Net Price Calculator
- Undergraduate Course Catalog 16-17
- USW Campus Safety Report 2017-2018

2.C - Core Component 2.C

The governing board of the institution is sufficiently autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution and to assure its integrity.

1. The governing board's deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.
2. The governing board reviews and considers the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations.
3. The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests or other external parties when such influence would not be in the best interest of the institution.
4. The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the administration and expects the faculty to oversee academic matters.

Argument

The USW Board of Trustees is sufficiently autonomous to make decisions that are in the best interest of the institution and the students, and to ensure the integrity of institutional operations. The Board of Trustees is the official governing board of the University. The Board consists of 26 positions, and members serve a five-year term with no limitation on consecutive terms. The University is established as a private, non-profit organization, and operates under Articles of Incorporation.

The Board of Trustees has established clear policies and practices that outline the Board's expectations and accountability, as well as the delegation of authority and responsibility to the president of the University. The Board retains authority for ensuring that the institution is meeting its educational objectives, for selection and evaluation of the president, and for assuring that the institution operates with integrity and in an ethical manner. Responsibility for managing the day-to-day operations of the institution is delegated to the president who may, in turn, delegate certain responsibilities to faculty and senior leadership.

Response to 2.C.1

The Board of Trustees' deliberations and actions are reflected in the agendas of their meetings and in the minutes of those meetings. The Board members focus on effective stewardship of University resources and are regularly informed of the status of campus finances. In addition, the Board has established several working committees of members who work more closely with the president and senior leaders. These committees are not decision-making bodies; rather, they are advisory in nature and designed to support greater flow of information between the full-time staff and the volunteer members of the Board.

The Board has established a new strategic planning process (described in Criterion 5) to support informed decisions and planning. The new strategic plan will serve as the guiding document for Board deliberations and actions going forward.

Response to 2.C.2

The Board of Trustees meets quarterly. The institution operates under Articles of Incorporation (which outline the composition of the board, terms of board members, and how the board functions).

The Public Disclosure Policy assures that documents such as IRS forms, governing documents, and annual audited financial statements are released to any external party or agency upon request.

The Board operates with a published agenda (examples from April and June) that is available to all members of the campus community and external parties upon request. Active committees of Board members are a central part of the policy and decision-making process. Each of these committees is composed of informed Board members who work closely with designated executive, staff, or faculty leadership. Executive, staff, and faculty members regularly participate in Board meetings and in presenting information to the Board for review.

Response to 2.C.3

The University Board of Trustees has established policies and practices that support its ongoing autonomy and independence from undue influences.

Each member of the Board is asked to sign a Conflict of Interest Statement as well as a Statement of Personal Responsibility at the time they join the Board. These forms are updated annually and signed by each current Board member. These documents clearly outline expectations with regards to ethical and independent behavior.

Annual financial audits (as detailed in Criterion 5) support the ongoing independence of the Board and ensure that its actions are consistent with institutional requirements as outline in the Articles of Incorporation.

Response to 2.C.4

The USW Board of Trustees is responsible for selecting and hiring the University president as the chief executive of the institution. The Board delegates operational responsibility for the institution to the president according to the University Articles of Incorporation, and as documented in the Statement of Responsibility each Board member is expected to sign as part of their agreement to serve on the Board. The president reports to the Board while all senior administrators report to the president. Minutes of the Board meetings as well as Minutes from the Administrative Team (A-Team) and President's Cabinet document that the Board has effectively delegated operating responsibilities to the president and university staff/faculty.

The Board has established several internal committees for the purpose of helping to ensure that trustees are, in fact, knowledgeable about institution operations and well informed to make appropriate policy decisions.

The provost, deans and faculty have oversight of academic matters including teaching, advising, and scholarship. During Faculty Council, the faculty establish policies and regulations that govern matters of curriculum and academic standards. Faculty are responsible for the addition and delegation of courses and programs, which affect requirements for admission and graduation.

Sources

- A-Team Notes
- Board Agenda 4-4-17
- Board Agenda 6-6-17
- Board Articles of organization

- Board Committees
- Board Minutes 9-21-17 final
- Cabinet notes
- Conflict of Interest - USW 11-17-09 one page
- Members of the Board of Trustees 2017-2018
- PUBLIC_DISCLOSURE_POLICY
- Statement of Responsibility - USW 7-22-16
- Strategic Plan Development Committee Notes

2.D - Core Component 2.D

The institution is committed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.

Argument

Response to 2.D

University of the Southwest is committed to the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning and in freedom of expression. The central principle of academic freedom is documented in the Faculty Handbook, and is embraced throughout the University community. The University is fully committed to principles of open expression, and it supports student, faculty, and staff rights in this regard. All campus stakeholders (faculty, staff, and students) are afforded grievances processes that are accessible and well documented. Grievance processes are robust and are founded and conducted according to the principles of free expression and diversity of opinion.

Additional evidence documenting the University's commitment to truth in teaching and learning is presented in Core Component 2.E.

Sources

- 2016 - 2017 Faculty Handbook
- 2016 - 2017 Faculty Handbook (page number 16)
- 2016 - 2017 Faculty Handbook (page number 25)
- Staff Handbook 2017
- Staff Handbook 2017 (page number 40)
- Student Handbook 2017-2018
- Student Handbook 2017-2018 (page number 17)

2.E - Core Component 2.E

The institution's policies and procedures call for responsible acquisition, discovery and application of knowledge by its faculty, students and staff.

1. The institution provides effective oversight and support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff, and students.
2. Students are offered guidance in the ethical use of information resources.
3. The institution has and enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.

Argument

Response to 2.E.1

The University has established an Office of Institutional Effectiveness that has responsibility for oversight of on-campus research activities and for management of the process for approval of research using human subjects or protected records. Individual faculty members maintain responsibility for oversight of undergraduate student research and writing. With the approval of the new DBA program, the University will be establishing a formal Institutional Review Board and supporting policies consistent with federal and state mandates. Once the IRB function is in place, faculty and students will receive training in human subject research practices and continued training in use of protected records.

Response to 2.E.2

Students are given guidance on the ethical use of information resources through a variety of communications and settings. Gateway undergraduate courses in English and other subjects include specific lessons concerning the ethical use of information. Expectations regarding academic honesty are outlined in course syllabi for all courses. All students are expected to use APA format and meet APA requirements (APA 6th Ed.) for proper documentation of information and sources.

The University currently uses SafeAssign as a tool to help review and document student work with regards to proper citation of sources. Prior to changing to SafeAssign, the University used the Turnitin service. Faculty have access to SafeAssign tools and the process is embedded into online courses and Blackboard course shells. Students are advised that their work will be subject to review by SafeAssign and of the expectations (and consequences) for failure to ethically document the work of others.

The Student Handbook documents both the expectations for ethical use of sources and consequences of plagiarism. In addition, the Honor Board exists in support of these expectations.

It is important to note that faculty and staff understand that students may come to the institution without experience in writing research papers or without a clear understanding of what it means to properly and ethically document sources. Faculty support the education of students in these issues in each and every class that is conducted (whether in a traditional classroom or online). Students are made aware of SafeAssign and how it works so that they have a better understanding of how their instructors evaluate their work.

Response to 2.E.3

Academic honesty and integrity are documented throughout the Student Handbook, academic catalogs (for undergraduate and graduate level students), and individual course syllabi. Disciplinary procedures existing for academic misconduct of students are outlined in the Student Handbook. In most cases, *a*cademic infractions are usually dealt with directly by the faculty member involved, but some are taken to the level of the dean. If the situation is not resolved by the dean of the school, the matter then goes to the provost who will make any final decisions. Penalties for violations of academic integrity policies range from a warning, an F grade for the specific assignment, an F grade for the course, or removal from the specific class. The provost has flexibility to determine if additional sanctions may be warranted. In all instances, the student has specific rights to appeal any sanctions.

The Internet and access to electronic communications has opened an entirely new area of ethical concern and behavior. As stated in the Responsible Network User Agreement, which must be agreed to for users to gain access to the USW networks outside of limited guest privileges, students are required to avoid the use of P2P file sharing, pornographic websites, gambling sites and sites selling alcoholic or tobacco products. Website filtering for primary networks is accomplished via a Sophos Web Security Appliance. In addition to the web filtering system, an IPS device scans all outgoing and incoming traffic and attempts to filter out banned traffic types. Due to the effectiveness of this system, disciplinary action is rarely ever needed. There have been only two cases since supplying students with access to online tools in which students were banned from USW networks due to abusive practices, and they were both permitted back online once their systems had been verified to be free of inappropriate material. It is important to understand that active management of the University technology is not a limitation on personal freedom or the rights of personal expression. However, the University takes its responsibility to protect against illegal and unethical activity literally when University resources are involved.

Sources

- Graduate Course Catalog 16-17
- Graduate Course Catalog 16-17 (page number 24)
- Honor Board
- Student Handbook 2017-2018
- Student Handbook 2017-2018 (page number 6)
- Student Handbook 2017-2018 (page number 36)
- SYLLABUS ENG 1113 RhetComp
- Undergraduate Course Catalog 16-17
- Undergraduate Course Catalog 16-17 (page number 39)

2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary

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

Summary

University of the Southwest is committed to ethical and responsible conduct by its students, faculty, staff, administration, and Board members. All members of the USW community are provided with a clear explanation of these expectations through a variety of media, publications, and communications. The Board of Trustees establishes clear policies and practices for the University, and USW utilizes shared governance in its policies and procedures to allow for all faculty and staff to provide input into strategic planning, policy and procedure development, and day-to-day management of the institution. Additionally, the University budgets funds for faculty development and scholarship opportunities, and encourages faculty to apply new knowledge acquired to the advancement of student experiences and the overall academic climate of University of the Southwest.

Sources

There are no sources.

3 - Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support

The institution provides high quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

3.A - Core Component 3.A

The institution's degree programs are appropriate to higher education.

1. Courses and programs are current and require levels of performance by students appropriate to the degree or certificate awarded.
2. The institution articulates and differentiates learning goals for undergraduate, graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate, and certificate programs.
3. The institution's program quality and learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery and all locations (on the main campus, at additional locations, by distance delivery, as dual credit, through contractual or consortial arrangements, or any other modality).

Argument

Response to 3.A.1-3

University of the Southwest develops specific degree plans for each program across all levels (undergraduate and graduate). In addition to current programs, the USW School of Business proposal for the Doctor of Business Administration has been approved by the Higher Learning Commission, and recruitment has begun for the first DBA cohort. USW has a single campus and delivers undergraduate and graduate coursework in a variety of formats. All face-to-face, hybrid, and online classes are delivered with the same quality and rigor that is expected for effective teaching and learning environments. Face-to-face courses are also enhanced with online learning.

Course requirements and descriptions of each degree program are set forth in the university catalog. Course and program content remain consistent across all modes of delivery. All courses applied to degree requirements must be at college level. The University does not offer developmental or transitional studies in any subject area. All undergraduate degrees require a minimum of 120 semester credit hours and master degrees require a minimum of 30 semester credit hours.

Institutional learning outcomes:

The foundation for both undergraduate and graduate learning goals are based on five student learning outcomes (SLOs): Communication, Knowledge, Critical Thinking, Academic & Professional Integrity, and Servant Leadership. All undergraduate and graduate students and courses are evaluated on these five criteria. Professors must indicate which criterion their course requirements address and how students are evaluated at the end of each term on their successful mastery of the learning outcomes.

Learning outcomes by division:

The University's success in fulfilling its mission integrates a learner-centered model of education, and

each of the three schools has a unique set of learning goals and objectives for their students. The School of Education (SOE) provides an instructional framework for all their students (undergraduate and graduate) and has set specific learning goals for students in addition to the University's student learning outcomes. In order to accomplish its primary purpose, the SOE has established the additional minimum goals specific to New Mexico educator licenses. The School of Business and Professional Studies' (SBPS) identified specific objectives for its majors. Each department within the School of Arts and Sciences (SAS) has specific goals for undergraduate programs. However, since the SAS provides the majority of classes required for general education, the overall goals of each department are closely tied to the institutional academic goals. In addition, the SAS has identified specific objectives for its majors. The SAS provides undergraduates with a quality liberal arts education—distinguished by active student learning and discovery, intellectual breadth and depth, and the development of enduring skills—that prepares them to be successful and engaged citizens in an increasingly diverse, technological, and global society.

Graduate programs:

For graduate students (including post-baccalaureate licensure students and post-master's licensure students), there are specific expectations prior to entering the graduate programs. Admission to the graduate programs is open to qualified applicants who hold a bachelor's degree from a college or university accredited by the appropriate regional accrediting association and recognized by USW. Students seeking to pursue a post-master's licensure program also must have completed a master's degree from a regionally accredited college or university. Applicants for admission must have earned a 3.0 GPA on a 4.0 scale as an undergraduate. Applicants who have earned less than a 3.0 cumulative GPA may be considered for conditional acceptance to a graduate program on an individual basis. The University seeks graduate applicants who are academically well-prepared, have shown dedication to their professions, and are highly motivated. Program admission requirements for graduate students vary depending on the school.

Managing the instructional processes:

The Academic Program Review Committee (APRC) follows a formal protocol to review proposed changes and updates to programs and courses. Actions and recommendations from the APRC are presented to Faculty Council for review, amendment, and ratification. As degree plans are approved, they are developed and/or updated, and made available to students on the school's homepages.

Between 2010 and 2014, the University used the research-based Quality Matters standards to ensure quality delivery in online courses. Faculty had professional development opportunities to receive online training in Quality Matters, which could lead to earning a certificate to use as evidence of their training. Since 2015, faculty have not formally used Quality Matters standards; but, they have worked with their schools' leadership and received training on best practices for developing online classes so that courses are uniform and student-friendly, providing the best learning opportunities for students.

For graduate students, all courses are delivered online. The University also offers three undergraduate programs that are provided fully online: psychology, criminal justice, and business. In 2014, the School of Education began offering a completely online program in teacher preparation referred to as the NExT program. USW has a partnership with area school districts to help "grow their own teachers" by offering an efficient way for instructional assistants to become certified teachers.

Students in their last term of high school can be conditionally admitted to USW and register for classes. After graduation, the student submits a final high school transcript with the date of graduation to admissions in order to acquire full admission status. Online education programs utilize Blackboard

9.1, and prior to 2015 online Business programs partnered with V-Camp, an independent learning management system. The School of Business now utilizes MindTap from Cengage to facilitate their online course content. USW utilizes Blackboard technology to provide online courses as well as hybrid courses.

Sources

- Graduate Degree Plans
- Undergraduate Course Catalog 16-17
- Undergraduate Course Catalog 16-17 (page number 52)
- Undergraduate Degree Plans

3.B - Core Component 3.B

The institution demonstrates that the exercise of intellectual inquiry and the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning and skills are integral to its educational programs.

1. The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings, and degree levels of the institution.
2. The institution articulates the purposes, content, and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements. The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.
3. Every degree program offered by the institution engages students in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information; in mastering modes of inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.
4. The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity of the world in which students live and work.
5. The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their programs and the institution's mission.

Argument

Response to 3.B.1-5

USW offers educational programs that place emphasis on the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning skills. The university learning objectives emphasize institutional commitment to communication, knowledge, critical thinking, academic and professional integrity, and servant leadership. These learning objectives are well aligned with the university mission as stated: University of the Southwest is a Christ-centered educational community dedicated to developing men and women for a lifetime of servant leadership by emphasizing individual faith, responsibility, and initiative.

Institutional learning objectives:

- Communication – students will demonstrate the ability to communicate clearly and effectively in both an oral and written format.
- Knowledge – students will demonstrate a depth of knowledge and apply the methods of inquiry in a discipline of their choosing, and they will demonstrate a breadth of knowledge across their choice of varied disciplines.
- Critical thinking – students will demonstrate the ability to access and interpret information, respond and adapt to changing situations, make complex decisions, solve problems, and evaluate actions.
- Academic and professional integrity – students will demonstrate awareness and understanding of the ethical standards of their academic discipline and profession.
- Servant leadership – students will demonstrate awareness and understanding of the skills necessary to serve others and their community in a diverse and changing world.

Institutional learning outcomes are the broad descriptions of the knowledge and abilities achieved by

students graduating with undergraduate degrees from USW. Students will achieve these outcomes as well as the specific curriculum outcomes for their area of study. Individual course syllabi reflect institutional learning objectives as well as program specific objectives for the particular course or program.

The University's general education program is inspired by the mission and is the foundation for the liberal arts programs and degrees offered to USW students. Beginning with the spring 2016 semester, the requirements for general education for its undergraduate programs are now a standard 45 credit hours. Major, minor, or elective credit hours are not included in the general education credit hour requirements. It is worth noting that the requirement of 45 credit hours exceeds the baseline expectation (32 undergraduate credit hours) of the New Mexico Higher Education Department.

Grounded in the University mission, students have ample opportunity to construct their own knowledge to become culturally competent, and to be exposed to a wide variety of concepts, perspectives, research, critical thinking, and servant leadership activities.

USW is located in a richly diverse area of the country. Located in Lea County, New Mexico, the local population is 60% Hispanic, 35% White with the remaining 5% divided among different ethnic backgrounds. This region forms the basis for a strong commitment to respect for cultural differences and the educational opportunities offered by sharing classes with students from varied backgrounds. In addition to a naturally diverse location, USW students come from a variety of international settings. The diversity of students, their backgrounds, and their cultural perspectives only serve to add to the general education component of the USW curriculum.

Because USW is a teaching University, its primary goal is to promote the sharing, acquisition, discovery, and application of knowledge with a wide variety of persons of all ages and backgrounds. The University continues to promote a life of learning for faculty, administration, staff, and students in ways consistent with its mission.

Sources

- HED Gen Ed Core
- Syllabi Examples
- Undergraduate Course Catalog 16-17
- Undergraduate Course Catalog 16-17 (page number 6)
- Undergraduate Course Catalog 16-17 (page number 52)
- Undergraduate Degree Plans

3.C - Core Component 3.C

The institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services.

1. The institution has sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty members to carry out both the classroom and the non-classroom roles of faculty, including oversight of the curriculum and expectations for student performance; establishment of academic credentials for instructional staff; involvement in assessment of student learning.
2. All instructors are appropriately qualified, including those in dual credit, contractual, and consortial programs.
3. Instructors are evaluated regularly in accordance with established institutional policies and procedures.
4. The institution has processes and resources for assuring that instructors are current in their disciplines and adept in their teaching roles; it supports their professional development.
5. Instructors are accessible for student inquiry.
6. Staff members providing student support services, such as tutoring, financial aid advising, academic advising, and co-curricular activities, are appropriately qualified, trained, and supported in their professional development.

Argument

Response to 3.C.1

USW currently employs twenty-six full time faculty members and adjunct faculty members based on course demand. Full-time faculty are expected to teach 24 credit hours per year (typically 12 credits each semester, spring and fall). Courses taught beyond 24 credit hours may be calculated as an overload and the faculty member may receive additional compensation for the additional load.

The average load for faculty (both face-to-face and online) ranges from 15-18 credits each semester. Full-time faculty members have time for instruction, for course preparation, for contact with students outside the classroom (office hours), and for participation in University policy governance through various committees. On-campus faculty are expected to post 8 offices hours per week, and off-campus faculty are expected to be available to individual student inquiry through electronic communications.

Each school tracks faculty loads and reports these results annually as part of their Academic Annual Report (examples from School of Business and School of Arts and Science). These loads are reviewed each year by academic administration, and adjustments to faculty positions (either adding positions or eliminating positions) are based on these annual reports. Adjunct faculty are contracted to teach on an as-needed basis, determined by the course needs of the student body.

Response to 3.C.2

USW evaluates and credentials all instructional staff. University faculty members are evaluated and hired according to policy established by the University and identified in the faculty handbook. All credentials are in alignment with the guidelines and assumed practices of the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). Candidates for full-time faculty positions are expected to have appropriate master's degrees (doctorate degrees preferred) for undergraduate teaching positions, and must have

doctorate degrees in discipline-specific fields for graduate teaching positions. All degrees accepted by USW for hiring purposes must be from regionally accredited institutions, and the applicant must provide official transcripts verifying all degrees claimed on the application for employment. Adjunct faculty must meet these same expectations. The University does not offer dual credit opportunities to students, so instructional requirements associated with these types of courses are not applicable to University faculty.

Response to 3.C.3

All faculty members at USW are formally evaluated each year using a variety of tools for the assessment. Details of the evaluation process are set forth in the Faculty Handbook that is available to all faculty members. Key elements of the evaluation process include end-of-course assessments by students, review of classroom teaching or peer review by a colleague, self-assessment and reflection, and an annual conferences with the appropriate dean.

Response to 3.C.4

USW faculty engage in professional development activities and have access to a variety of tools that assist in their course development and teaching activities.

The Annual Report from the School of Arts and Sciences outlines the nature and scope of professional development activities undertaken by faculty over the prior year. Faculty across the University have the opportunity to request funding for participation in external professional development activities in accordance with policies outlined in each specific academic school; although, these funds have been scarce due to budget constraints over the past several years. All faculty have access to online tools that can help with course development and teaching methods.

Professional development was a topic of extended conversation among members of the Faculty Council in March 2018. The University recognizes that while each academic school manages distribution of faculty development funds to it faculty members, this is an area in need of greater commitment of resources as well as a more organized processes. Working together, faculty and leadership plan to develop a more robust process of professional development over the coming 18-24 months.

Response to 3.C.5

USW faculty and instructional staff, both full and part-time, are available for student engagement and inquiry outside the classroom (whether a physical or virtual classroom). Regardless of the mode of delivery, all full-time faculty members are expected to be available to their students through office hours or virtual connection. On-campus faculty are required to maintain a minimum of eight office hours per week, and these hours are to be posted outside their offices. Many faculty are available well beyond these posted times, and students are always able to connect with their faculty through e-mail, text message, or by phone. Contact information for all faculty members is listed on course syllabi and on the University website.

Response to 3.C.6

USW professional and support staff who provide student services are appropriately qualified. Staff members participate in internal and external training on a regular basis.

Student services staff routinely participate in on-campus and online training. The recently conducted

NSSE survey will provide a base of knowledge about the student experience for future internal training opportunities.

The University recognizes that organized staff development activities can be improved and expanded to engage more staff and to provide a greater number of external training opportunities. The need for efforts to update and enhance faculty and staff development are acknowledged in this sub-component and in sub-component 3.C.4.

Sources

- 2016 - 2017 Faculty Handbook
- 2016 - 2017 Faculty Handbook (page number 17)
- 2016 - 2017 Faculty Handbook (page number 44)
- AdoptedPoliciesAssumedPractices_2015_06_POL
- EOC Survey SOE
- Faculty Discussion of Professional Development
- Faculty Online Training
- FacultyGuidelines_2016_OPB
- SAS Annual Report 2016 - 2017
- SAS Annual Report 2016 - 2017 (page number 12)
- SAS Annual Report 2016 - 2017 (page number 37)
- School of Business 2016-2017 Annual Report Rev.1.5
- School of Business 2016-2017 Annual Report Rev.1.5 (page number 29)

3.D - Core Component 3.D

The institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching.

1. The institution provides student support services suited to the needs of its student populations.
2. The institution provides for learning support and preparatory instruction to address the academic needs of its students. It has a process for directing entering students to courses and programs for which the students are adequately prepared.
3. The institution provides academic advising suited to its programs and the needs of its students.
4. The institution provides to students and instructors the infrastructure and resources necessary to support effective teaching and learning (technological infrastructure, scientific laboratories, libraries, performance spaces, clinical practice sites, museum collections, as appropriate to the institution's offerings).
5. The institution provides to students guidance in the effective use of research and information resources.

Argument

Response to 3.D.1

The University provides student support services for prospective, new, and current students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Services and support that are available include:

Student advising and enrollment **-** The essential functions of the Office of Admissions and Academic Affairs include recruitment, enrollment, and retention efforts. Once students have applied for admission they are assigned an advisor appropriate to their level of enrollment (undergraduate or graduate) and their field of study. Once assigned, the same advisor will assist students until matriculation. The students' advisor provides guidance when students register for classes, advice related to the students' areas of study, and addresses those individual needs that may affect retention of the student and their ultimate graduation. In addition to these services, the University's academic counselor provides students both seminar settings and one-on-one counseling settings to prepare for their "next steps." This program includes resume preparation, graduate school applications, assistance and review of graduate admissions essays, and organized trips to visit regional graduate schools.

Financial Aid and Veterans Services – the University Financial Aid office serves students and families by educating them about opportunities for financial support. The office supports students as they apply for aid and monitors their success to ensure that students are meeting expectations necessary to maintain their aid.

Disability and Counseling resources - The Office of Special Services (OSS) helps to meet the needs of students with disabilities and provides services in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the *Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.* The director of the OSS can determine the student's eligibility to receive special services and will collaborate with the student to develop appropriate accommodations including, but not limited to, ways to study, take tests, approach instructors, and deal with the challenges and opportunities one can experience when attending the University. Counseling services are available to all currently enrolled USW students free of charge.

Clients are accepted for counseling who have the capacity to resolve their own problems with the assistance of a counselor. Primarily, person-centered and cognitive behavioral approaches are used. Clients requiring more than 4 counseling sessions will be referred to other specialized counseling services available in the surrounding area.

Support for online learning - Students who enroll in online courses also receive instruction that can help them succeed in working with an online learning management system. Blackboard 9.1 is the system used to deliver undergraduate and graduate online courses. A tutorial on the USW website provides instructions on how to access both online courses and student e-mail, Mustang Mail. Faculty and student portals are also linked to the University's website and provide students and faculty with tools needed for access and information. Through the portals, faculty and students may access online courses, e-mail, unofficial or advisor transcripts, and other components necessary for student success.

Technology - Teaching and learning are enhanced and facilitated by USW's support of and investment in technology (details are provided in sub-component 5.A.1). The University's library resources (e.g., book, periodicals, educational videos, and electronic databases) also aid instructional preparation and student learning and research. Every course has direct access to electronic databases via the Blackboard course shell, ensuring off-campus students have access to research materials at all times. Equipment and tools are available in science laboratories, and library services and resources are current and accessible. Regardless of the program of study, the library provides students with materials necessary for academic success, for research, and for personal enjoyment. Any materials unavailable in the Scarborough Memorial Library (SML) may be accessed through interlibrary loan services. The SML's dean and staff assist and connect students and faculty with materials and research methodologies in order to enhance the teaching and learning experience.

Student life - Organized activities are an important part of the university experience. The following activities, organizations, special awards, and publications comprise an integral network of social interaction and communication at University of the Southwest, which balances and enhances the learning environment. Examples of these activities include, but are not limited to;

- Maddox Distinguished Lecture Series
- Athletics
- Alpha Chi National Honor Society
- Student Government
- ENACTUS
- First Generation College Student organization
- Academic Counseling Seminars

Response to 3.D.2

To be admitted, a first-time entering freshman must be a graduate of an accredited high school, must have completed an accredited home school program, or must have earned a GED from an accredited program. For admission, a student must (a) complete an application for admission, (b) submit official high school, college, and university transcripts, and (c) submit a copy of his or her high school diploma. First-time students who have taken placement exams, the ACT, or the SAT should also submit that information at the time of application for admission.

Upon review of a student's grades on transcripts and/or the scores of any placement exams, if any academic deficiencies are noted, students are advised accordingly. For example, students who have low achievement in English or mathematics may be advised to take developmental courses before beginning degree-required courses. Although USW does not offer developmental courses, students

may want to consider enrolling for and completing developmental courses through a junior or community college before registering for degree-required English and math classes.

High school students, who have a 3.0 GPA or higher on a 4.0 scale, upon written approval of their principal and approval of the University registrar, may enroll for the fall and spring semesters only. Additional hours may be taken upon special request to the provost. Transcripts from USW are available after high school graduation. A letter will be written to validate that the student has completed the course and the grade received in the class. In order to validate college credit, students must submit an official transcript to the Office of the Registrar after high school graduation. The acceptance of Home School students taking college courses for credit will be decided on a case-by-case basis by the provost.

For academic merit scholarship eligibility, any new degree-seeking student in a face-to-face program must submit official ACT or SAT scores. Students may take the ACT or SAT during the first semester of attendance. Official scores must be submitted to the Office of Admissions and Academic Affairs to be considered for academic merit scholarship eligibility. An academic merit scholarship increase will not be effective until the next semester of attendance. The highest score on ACT or SAT will be accepted for merit scholarships.

All international students coming to the United States to study are required to submit official English proficiency score reports to the Office of Admissions and Academic Affairs at USW. This can be in the form of one of the following:

- ACT English score of 19

- SAT score of at least a 910

- TOEFL score of 550 on the paper-based exam, a 213 on the computer-based exam or a

    79 on the internet-based exam

- IELTS score of 6.0

Students who wish to enroll in 100% online classes must first be admitted to the University under the same admission criteria established for all students. Students may submit the admission form online. Financial aid is available for students who meet the eligibility requirements. Student advisement will be conducted with online students by email and/or telephone.

New approaches to under-prepared students – the University faculty have recognized that even with these screenings in place, some students struggle in their first classes (notably English and mathematics). USW faculty in each of these areas have been working to better identify students early in the course cycle who may be in need of extra support and allowing opportunities within the courses for remedial scaffolding of basic academic skills. Free tutoring services are available as well as direct outreach by faculty members. It is too early to measure the impact of these efforts but this is something faculty and academic leaders will be tracking over time.

Response to 3.D.3

After applying to USW, undergraduate students are assigned to an advisor in the appropriate school, and graduate students are advised by the Directors of Graduate Admissions and Student Support. These are the advisors with whom students work throughout their time at the University. Advisors collaborate and communicate with faculty, who serve as program directors, regarding specific degree

requirements, licensure regulations for education majors, and other concerns regarding the classes students must complete. In the event a student's advisor or program director is unavailable, the student can communicate with the dean of his or her school. Even though students have a designated, primary advisor, they are encouraged to communicate with faculty concerning problems they may be encountering. Advisors, faculty, and staff all encourage students to attend class and to seek help or tutoring as needed. Faculty are responsible for reporting any excessive lack of participation of students to the dean of their school. If a student is an athlete, the student's coach is also apprised of the student-athlete's lack of participation through an established at-risk notification system.

Response to 3.D.4

The USW campus and technology infrastructure is one of the most significant set of resources available to students. As outlined in Core Component 5.A, the University supports a campus of over 240,000 sq. ft. of space and a robust structure of technology serving both on and off-campus students. The new campus master plan, Vision 2020, outlines plans for expansion of student learning and activity spaces.

The technology services staff provides faculty with training and support concerning online course development and management. The staff also provides students with tutorials for becoming familiar with online course instruction and learning, as well as support for students and faculty through the USW website and with personal phone and/or e-mail communications when necessary. Students have access to free wireless Internet access across campus so that residential students, commuting students, staff, and faculty can use personal devices such as laptops, iPads, and smart phones at anytime, anywhere on campus. The campus's two computer labs are conveniently located in the School of Business, which connects with the School of Arts and Sciences building, and in the Scarborough Memorial Library (SML). The students in the School of Education also have access to these two labs. The computer labs are available throughout the day and evening, and new students are provided with their own computers during orientation.

The SML offers open stacks, reading and study areas, a reference section, a computer lab, classrooms, faculty and staff offices, a meeting room, a room with audiovisual capabilities, a large atrium for group activities, a tutoring area, and The Thelma Webber Room, which houses books, memorabilia, and artifacts of the region. The SML has an online catalog and offers access to subscriptions to numerous electronic resources. The library maintains and manages the databases, search engines, videos, and other multi-media resources for faculty and students. These electronic research and learning tools are accessible to faculty and students online through the USW website, via faculty and student portals, Blackboard, or the library's web page. The library keeps students, staff, and faculty apprised of current and newly purchased materials and resources that can facilitate research, course preparation, and student learning.

Response to 3.D.5

USW is an institution focusing on teaching and student learning. In classrooms and online, faculty instruct and provide guidance for effectively using research skills and information sources. Students conduct reviews of research materials and participate in basic research projects as required in some courses. Students and faculty use the library's technology to help facilitate the students' research inquiries relative to course content. The library staff is readily available to assist students in finding helpful resources for any research projects required in their classes. In addition to books and periodicals, the library also provides database subscriptions that give faculty and students a large number of available research sources.

Students are provided information regarding the ethical and responsible use of information sources through the library and by instructors in individual classes. Many classes require students to apply APA form in their written presentations. Instructors use Safe-Assign as a tool to help review student submission for issues of plagiarism and incorrect documentation.

All USW faculty and staff are well versed in institutional expectations with regards to ethical behavior and are expected to enforce college policies related to academic honesty, plagiarism, and cheating.

Sources

- DLS Maddox
- ENACTUS Description
- OSS Infosheet
- Plagiarism policy (academic honesty)
- Vision 2020 Campus Expansion with Athletic Facilities Combined

3.E - Core Component 3.E

The institution fulfills the claims it makes for an enriched educational environment.

1. Co-curricular programs are suited to the institution's mission and contribute to the educational experience of its students.
2. The institution demonstrates any claims it makes about contributions to its students' educational experience by virtue of aspects of its mission, such as research, community engagement, service learning, religious or spiritual purpose, and economic development.

Argument

Response to 3.E.1-2

Educating students and developing in them a desire to act as servant leaders within their communities is at the heart of the institution's mission. Students' curricular experiences are enhanced through various co-curricular activities including, but not limited to, student teaching, internships, practicums, field trips, and various outside assignments. For example, all students who attend the University of the Southwest are required to take USW 2233 Servant Leadership. Requisite to that course and through USW's Calling and Servant Leadership Education Center (CASTLE) students perform a minimum of 24 hours of internship (directly related to their respective academic majors/vocational pursuits) within local businesses and organizations. For the Spring 2017 semester, 85 students were placed with community partners for this purpose.

All USW students are also required to take six hours of Christian religion courses. Most religion courses contain co-curricular activities that take students out of the classrooms for various activities associated with the Christian faith, requiring students to engage with members of the local communities, as well as with other students. Examples include attending churches within the communities, attending staff meetings at local churches to observe how church business is conducted, learning from members of local community churches preparation practices for communion bread, preaching a sermon or otherwise communicating God's word to the community, and visiting with widows/widowers in local retirement homes. One REL professor includes a servant leadership component for every course, requiring every student to perform volunteer services within local communities and present to their classmates their experiences. There were 122 students in this professor's classes who were off-campus performing various volunteer activities in the 2016-17 academic year.

Various psychology courses take students out of the classrooms into local communities to practice concepts through engagement with community members. For example, in PSY 3223 Psychology of Aging, students were required to volunteer at senior facilities and to interview willing senior residents. Students in PSY 3413 Family Systems performed ethnographic observations and interviewed random families at various locations around local communities, ultimately explaining their observations related to course content/concepts. Students in PSY 3503 Social Psychology performed volunteer activities within local communities. Similar co-curricular activities are assigned for students studying business and criminal justice.

In the 2017-2018 academic year students had the opportunity to participate as subjects in a large research project organized by Tuskegee University. Additionally, students acted as co-researchers

with a primary investigator from the University of Minnesota in order to collect data on student behavior at the local HeadStart facilities. This academic year also saw students designing, proposing, and completing independent research projects within their disciplines (facilitated by faculty), in an effort to apply the processes of academic research to a problem or question of their own design.

There are 19 athletic teams at USW, each of which has a community partner for whom student athletes perform volunteer activities (community engagement/service learning). Community partners include, but are not limited to, MyPower, Inc., Lea County Fair and Rodeo, Crosswinds Community Church/Crosswinds Homefront, Habitat for Humanity, St. Helena's Annual Fall Festival, Isaiah's Soup Kitchen, Community Drug Coalition Red Ribbon Week, Lea County Community Prayer Breakfast, Crusade of Hope, Dress a Live Doll, the Humphrey House, Landmark/Desert Gardens Assisted Living, Rotary Club of Hobbs, New Mexico-Texas Marathon Challenge, Hobbs Slam & Jam/Gus Macker, Hobbs Animal Shelter/"Bark in the Park" dog adoption event, United Way Chili Fest, Hobbs Masonic Lodge, DKMS Bone Marrow Drive, and Hobbs Municipal Schools (Adopt-A-School Program). Student athletes are serving food, building houses, mentoring youth, and visiting the elderly, and many other activities that put the USW mission into practice – "dedicated to developing men and women for a lifetime of servant leadership by emphasizing individual faith, responsibility, and initiative." In the Fall 2016 term, 339 student athletes participated throughout the semester in these activities. There were 300 student athletes serving in the communities in the Spring 2017 term.

Sources

- Athletic Dept Community Service
- CASTLE

3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary

The institution provides high quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

Summary

University of the Southwest delivers quality higher education programming, wherever and however its offerings are delivered. Faculty with professional expertise in their identified disciplines utilize best practices of their professions, accreditation and organizational standards, and policies of the university to maintain appropriate standards in all coursework. USW ensures faculty have training and staff assistance in maintaining this same standard of quality in all courses regardless of delivery method, ensuring equal student preparation for all University students. Beginning at entry-level, undergraduate programming, USW subscribes to valid and reliable pedagogical frameworks to achieve expected student growth. Student outcomes are clear for each program, and align with the expected abilities of students attaining these same credentials in other institutions of higher learning (as identified by professional accrediting groups, graduate school admission requirements, etc.). Faculty at the university are all appropriately qualified for their teaching assignments, and although USW does work to support faculty scholarship within disciplines, the university continues to look for ways to expand the existing professional development opportunities for both faculty and staff. Instructors maintain personal relationships with students, and are available to students throughout the week; most of the time beyond the office hours required by the university. Recognizing our student body as one historically underprepared for attending an institution of higher learning, USW faculty and staff continue to provide concierge-style services for student admission and advisement throughout students' tenure at the university. In addition, the university continues to work to build remediation into coursework, and provide additional support services through things like academic tutoring and social navigation via first generation student group programming. Academic programming at University of the Southwest intrinsically includes opportunities for co-curricular assignments; however, as faculty grow in their understanding of disciplines and higher education pedagogy these opportunities will continue to expand.

Sources

There are no sources.

4 - Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

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

4.A - Core Component 4.A

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs.

1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews.
2. The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning, or relies on the evaluation of responsible third parties.
3. The institution has policies that assure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.
4. The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It assures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.
5. The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.
6. The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution assures that the degree or certificate programs it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission, such as employment rates, admission rates to advanced degree programs, and participation rates in fellowships, internships, and special programs (e.g., Peace Corps and Americorps).

Argument

Response to 4.A.1

USW engages in the practice of regular programs reviews. The process includes five primary sources of information: assessment of student learning, the Academic Program Review Committee (APRC), annual reports from each of the academic divisions, end-of-course reviews by students, and financial information.

Assessment of student learning is at the core of the program review process. The assessment process at USW has been undergoing a transformation over recent years. Details of the process are outlined in Core Component 4.B. The essential point is that student learning outcomes are considered to be the primary element of effective program review at USW.

A second segment of the program review process is the work done by the Academic Program Review Committee. The APRC is the faculty-driven committee responsible for evaluating and approving changes proposed to courses, curriculum, and programs. Faculty and academic leaders who have

evaluated student learning data may develop proposals for significant changes in course structures, curriculum sequences and content, and overall program expectations or structures. These proposals must be brought before the APRC where they are evaluated by a cross-divisional group of faculty and academic leaders. This cross-divisional review is also an essential element of the program review process at USW.

The annual reports produced by each academic division (School of Business, School of Education, and School of Arts and Sciences) include a wide range of data including assessment outcomes, student persistence and retention data, student enrollment, faculty loads, student success data, faculty development, and other relevant information documenting the annual activity of the division. These reports present a body of information that is available to the APRC, the provost, the deans, as well as individual faculty.

The fourth element of program review is seen in the end-of-course evaluation/feedback submitted by students. Surveys are automatically tabulated through SurveyMonkey, and each school's administrative assistant retrieves and saves the data. Subsequently, the student self-assessment data is forwarded to the department dean for analysis. After analyzing the data, the findings are used to make improvements to a course or to a program. Based upon the review of the data acquired in the end-of-course surveys as well as the professional judgment of faculty within the discipline, any considered change to a particular course or program is discussed with the other faculty and leadership of the particular school. If the faculty and leadership of a school agree with the data analysis and the instructor's professional judgment, a formal proposal is submitted to the APRC for a course change. Once a proposal has been approved, the proposal is then submitted for a formal faculty council vote.

The final element of the program review process is an analysis of key financial data related to program income and costs. This analysis has been performed within the finance division but it is recognized that a more robust program review process will bring all these elements together for evaluation by academic and institutional leadership.

Program review at USW has not followed the traditional methodology of individual program reviews on a set cycle. Review of courses, curriculum, and programs has been an ongoing process with changes and adjustments evolving annually. While this process has been very beneficial from the standpoint of "in-course" adjustments, it is recognized that the process would benefit from a more comprehensive review with a defined cycle. Going forward, USW plans to continue to gather the data as described, continue the annual adjustments, and produce a more comprehensive 3-5 year report that supports a broader set of decisions related to resource allocation.

Response to 4.A.2

USW evaluates all credit awarded including that awarded for prior learning. The University does not transcript credit for experiential learning.

The registrar is responsible for oversight of the processes established for awarding credit and for approving credits for prior learning. All policies for transfer of credit, awarding of credit, and credit for prior learning are set forth in the University Catalog. Policies detailed in the catalog include transferring credit to USW, transfer among higher education institutions, transfer of lower-division general education core requirements, transfer credit appeals process, advanced placement (AP), and the college level examination program (CLEP).

In the case of international students seeking to transfer credits from outside the United States, the University has established a policy requiring those students to present their credentials to an approved

third party evaluator. These [policies are detailed in the University Catalog](#).

Response to 4.A.3

The University has established clear policies and practices to evaluate all credit that it accepts in transfer. USW's registrar is responsible for administration of the policies for transcription of transfer credit. The policies for transfer of credit are detailed in the University catalog.

It is worth noting that the State of New Mexico has established a general education common core for all public colleges and universities in the state ([New Mexico General Education Common Core - NMGECC](#)). The New Mexico Higher Education Department (NMHED) has established a specific list of general education courses that are part of the common core. All public institutions of higher education in New Mexico are required to accept direct transfer of these courses from other New Mexico institutions as fulfillment of general education requirements. When possible or practical, USW has made it a practice to accept this common body of general education courses as fulfillment of the general education requirements of the University.

Response to 4.A.4

The University maintains authority over academic standards for courses and programs, sustains strong learning support services, and assures faculty have appropriate qualifications for the courses they are teaching. The University does not provide dual credit courses for high school students. As noted in other sections, the University will accept a current high school student as an enrolled student at USW, provided the student meets the appropriate criteria. These students are not, however, considered dual credit as the classes they attend at USW are unique to USW and not considered for dual credit.

Curriculum and Academic Standards:

Responsibility for oversight of curriculum and academic standards for courses and programs is managed by the University's Academic Program Review Committee and Faculty Council. These faculty-led committees are the central clearing point for all proposed curriculum, for changes in curriculum, and for ensuring that academic curriculum is aligned with student and institutional learning objectives. Proposals for new courses/programs as well as substantive changes to existing courses/programs are reviewed by the committees for content, prerequisite requirements, academic standards, course-specific learning outcomes, and institutional learning outcomes.

Faculty Qualifications:

The University ensures that all faculty members, full or part-time, have education and/or professional credentials that meet or exceed requirements for the courses they are teaching. Details in Core Component 3.C.2 outline USW credentialing policy for faculty.

Learning Resources:

Students and faculty at USW have access to a variety of learning services and support. The Scarborough Memorial Library is at the center of learning support services available for students and faculty. Library staff, led by a professional library services director, provide support with database references, answer individual questions at the reference desk, and work with faculty to host in-class library literacy workshops. Academic tutors are available to students by appointment or by drop-in during posted office hours.

Response to 4.A.5

USW maintains accreditation through the Higher Learning Commission, and operates with recognition from the New Mexico Public Education Department and the New Mexico Higher Education Department. USW also participates in the SARA agreements documenting authorization for online offerings in other states. The University has no specific external licensures or certifications at this time.

Response to 4.A.6

USW evaluates the success of its students and graduates. As might be expected, it is difficult to track students after they leave the institution. In the case of certain students and faculty who have established strong relationships, the University is able gather important anecdotal information that can be used by professors within various departments.

The University joined the Student Clearinghouse relatively recently. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness and the registrar have plans for accessing Clearinghouse data for the purpose of tracking transfers and completions at other institutions. The registrar recently conducted the first of these queries to better document IPEDS reporting.

While individual schools within the University have attempted isolated tracking of graduates, USW as a whole has not engaged in formal surveys of former students and is unable to access student performance data from other institutions.

The University recognizes that this is an area in need of greater attention. Although no specific plans have been developed with regards to tracking of students, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness will establish procedure specific to this data collection in the near future.

Sources

- APRC Biblical Counseling Cross Listing
- APRC Ethnographic Research
- End of course surveys
- FInancial Analysis - Program reveiw
- HED Gen Ed Core
- SAS Annual Report 2016 - 2017
- School of Business 2016-2017 Annual Report Rev.1.5
- SOE Annual Report 2016-2017 9.13.17R
- Undergraduate Course Catalog 16-17
- Undergraduate Course Catalog 16-17 (page number 32)

4.B - Core Component 4.B

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

1. The institution has clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals.
2. The institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and co-curricular programs.
3. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
4. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members.

Argument

Response to 4.B.1

USW is committed to improving student learning through an active process of assessment. Assessment processes at the University continue to evolve as academic leaders and faculty, working together, expand the scope of assessment efforts to cover the full range of learning objectives: course level, program level, and institutional.

From early efforts…

The University continues to build upon the institutional assessment system that was designed in the beginning of the 2012 calendar year. At that time, USW implemented a campus-wide program to quantitatively assess student learning outcomes at the institutional level. Institutional learning outcomes included: communication, knowledge, critical thinking, integrity, and servant leadership. Institutional learning objectives formed the basis for program-level objectives in each academic division. Linking program level objectives to the institutional objectives was a foundation step in USW's move towards a more meaningful system of assessment.

Program level objectives were implemented and assessment began in 2015, with the intent of each academic area preparing a complete annual report detailing the results of assessment analysis and recommendations for closing the evaluation loop. Future planning for assessment of student learning includes the final phase in completing the assessment pyramid with University student learning outcomes at the top, program-level objectives in the middle, and course-level objectives at the base.

In 2017, many program-specific courses have developed, implemented, and begun the assessment process at the course level. In many classes, course-level assessment analysis is made available in real-time to instructors via automated analytics tools such as Mindtap. This course-level assessment system links to program-level objectives, which in turn, link directly to University-wide student learning outcomes.

…to the next generation of assessment at USW

A significant development in assessment processes at USW involve the recent HLC approval of the new DBA program. As part of this application, the School of Business designed a

more comprehensive assessment plan based on expectations of the International Accreditation Council for Business Education (IACBE). Adoption of this new plan in the School of Business has had far-reaching ramifications for all academic areas of the University. Faculty and academic leaders from other divisions (Education and Arts & Sciences) have evaluated the new assessment plan (which address student learning across all levels of the curriculum; undergraduate and graduate). As a result, the framework of the new plan is being extended to all academic programs in the University.

Response to 4.B.2

The University regularly assesses the learning outcomes of courses and programs. Individual faculty members collect data on learning outcomes each semester. These data are aggregated annually at the program and division levels and then become part of an ongoing dialogue between faculty and academic leaders.

A key development of the assessment process at USW is the expansion of all levels of learning outcomes into each course. Although the process is not yet fully implemented, individual course objectives are connected to the departmental or program-level objectives, which then relate to the institutional objectives. In-service meetings held at the division level provide faculty with the opportunity to discuss assessment practices and specific data that has emerged from the process.

USW has a number of co-curricular programs but has not yet included these programs in a formal assessment process to determine their effectiveness. The University recognizes the need to develop specialized assessment processes for co-curricular activities and will work with faculty and student services staff to create meaningful assessment of these programs.

Response to 4.B.3

USW faculty and academic leaders actively use data from assessment of student learning to adjust courses, evaluate programs, and guide development of new curriculum. For example, the 2015-2016 annual report for the School of Business noted a concern with student achievement of Program Goal 3 in the BBA program assessment. Curriculum changes were implemented in the 2016-2017 academic year and the subsequent assessment indicated a resolution of these concerns. In this example, an improvement strategy was developed in an effort to close the evaluation loop and add curriculum enhancements for program improvement. Additionally, the 2016-2017 assessment report for both the School of Business, and the School of Arts and Sciences provides an extensive level of detail regarding the achievement of student learning outcomes at the program level. Each academic department has identified program level outcomes, assessed student achievement of these outcomes, analyzed the data from assessment, made curricular changes based upon the analysis, and monitored the curricular changes; all as a part of the annual reporting process.

Academic leaders and faculty within the School of Arts and Sciences, the School of Business, and the School of Education have improved student learning and instructional practices by analyzing and using assessment information to make data-driven improvements. Analysis of assessment data led to curriculum changes, new technology used in classrooms, enhancement to student services, and additional emphasis upon student success. Both the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 annual reports detail specific improvements made in each academic area. For example, the assessment analysis in the 2015-2016 annual report for the School of Business highlighted a need for additional focus on presentation skills at the undergraduate level. Curriculum modifications were made in critical areas and these metrics were re-evaluated in the 2016-2017 annual report. Similar examples can be found in the assessment reports for each academic area.

Response to 4.B.4

USW's processes and methods to assess student learning reflect good practice. Assessment of student learning is a faculty-driven activity that relies on faculty to gather data, analyze outcomes, and implement improvements in teaching and curriculum.

The University's commitment to good practices in assessment is evidenced by the commitment to continual improvement of the process. Throughout the years, assessment practices at USW have continued to evolve and become more robust and meaningful.

Faculty and instructional staff substantially participate in the assessment process by providing a formal assessment of each student based upon curriculum requirements. The institutional assessment tool was implemented across the entire University at the beginning of 2012 and resulted in an extensive dataset for analysis.

From early beginnings when assessment focused on institutional learning outcomes, the process of assessment at USW has grown to include program-level data/analysis and course-level data/analysis. The recent move to a more comprehensive structure of assessment based on IACBE expectations will take USW to a new level of data collection and analysis. Institutional learning outcomes are the foundation of the assessment process but the activities have extended so much further as faculty and academic leaders fully embrace the value of assessment as a tool for continually improving student learning.

Sources

- 2012_Assessment_Report
- Course Level Assessment Example - Mastery Report -MGT3103
- SAS Annual Report 2016 - 2017
- SAS Annual Report 2016 - 2017 (page number 16)
- SAS Annual Report 2016 - 2017 (page number 40)
- School of Business - Outcomes-Assessment-Plan - Complete (1)
- School of Business 2016-2017 Annual Report Rev.1.5
- School of Business 2016-2017 Annual Report Rev.1.5 (page number 12)
- SOE Annual Report 2016-2017 9.13.17R
- SOE Annual Report 2016-2017 9.13.17R (page number 25)

4.C - Core Component 4.C

The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational improvement through ongoing attention to retention, persistence, and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.

1. The institution has defined goals for student retention, persistence, and completion that are ambitious but attainable and appropriate to its mission, student populations, and educational offerings.
2. The institution collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence, and completion of its programs.
3. The institution uses information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data.
4. The institution's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs reflect good practice. (Institutions are not required to use IPEDS definitions in their determination of persistence or completion rates. Institutions are encouraged to choose measures that are suitable to their student populations, but institutions are accountable for the validity of their measures.)

Argument

Response to 4.C.1

The University has established goals for student retention and completion that are ambitious but attainable. Student retention and completion have been identified as a challenge for the University, and the institution has responded with a strong commitment to addressing the issues. This commitment begins with a clear definition of objectives for both student retention and completion. The University evaluated the historical patterns of enrollment, retention, and graduation in comparison to the IPEDS-generated comparison cohort. This analysis resulted in identification of specific goals along with an associated timeline for achievement of the objectives. These goals are foundational expectations within the new strategic plan and will be part of a comprehensive effort to improve student success at USW.

Response to 4.C.2

Each of the University academic divisions (School of Business, School of Arts and Sciences, and School of Education) collects and analyzes a significant amount of data related to student persistence and retention in courses and programs. These data are aggregated into the annual reports produced by each school and the information forms the basis for planning of actions intentionally designed to improve student outcomes.

Response to 4.C.3

The University evaluates and intentionally uses data on student retention and completion to improve educational programs, learning support, and student support services. As described in sub-component 4.C.2, University leaders and faculty routinely analyze student success and risk data to evaluate courses, modes of delivery and student engagement.

Each of the schools has implemented a campus-wide "at-risk" identification and student success

program to improve student persistence and completion in courses as well as efforts to support student retention across semesters. For example, faculty are asked to report on student course participation and success on four separate occasions during the academic period. Students who are not participating in courses or who are having difficulty with the course are identified and offered additional support. Faculty members are expected to reach out to these students, and advisors make direct contact with the students. This new system has been in place for over a year and the results are already indicating a greater level of student persistence and course completion.

Results from the student risk assessment have been significant enough to warrant expansion of the program to all classes in all schools across campus. The School of Arts and Sciences has the most number of undergraduates enrolled and, having fully implemented the new process, has realized a significant improvement in student success rates.

Because of the significant number of student athletes on campus, special efforts are made to track and document their success or risk through the academic term. Reports are provided to each team coach so that the coaches may identify student athletes in need of additional assistance in academics. The Director of Athletics has directed that all coaches utilize the student engagement information, and has informed coaches that student athletes who are not participating in their courses or who are not succeeding academically must first address these issues through tutoring efforts or meeting individually with professors before they can continue to compete with their athletic teams. The consequences for not addressing these academic concerns may range from a single game or practice suspension to, in some cases, being dropped from teams.

The University recognizes and accepts that student outcomes with regards to retention and completion have not been at acceptable levels. Without attempting to excuse or reduce the importance of this issue, the University is certainly aware of some of the root causes of the problems. Out of necessity, the University engaged in a deliberate effort to grow undergraduate and graduate enrollment. Enrollment growth was absolutely essential to the continued life of the University (given the University's dependence on tuition as an essential component of revenue – 75%). Expansion of graduate-level programs resulted in greater stabilization of University finances. Expansion of undergraduate enrollment was based on an intentional effort to grow athletic programs. This is just the opening phase of undergraduate enrollment growth, but it definitely comes with a challenge: student retention and completion.

USW is aware of the challenges and is engaged in ongoing dialogues and efforts designed to directly address issues of student persistence (course persistence is the first essential step towards success), retention across courses and semesters, and, ultimately, graduation.

Response to 4.C.4

USW has made clear improvements to processes and activities designed to document, track, and analyze student persistence, retention, and completion. The University uses sound methods to ensure that measures of student retention, persistence and success are commonly defined across the institution and can be easily compared to data from like-institutions. Core methodologies and definitions are derived from the Integrated Postsecondary Educational Data Survey (IPEDS). Student risk and success is defined in accordance with prevailing literature and common practice. The University has begun participation in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and expects to develop more comprehensive information related to student engagement and to be able to evaluate these data through comparison with other institutions. The new Office of Institutional Effectiveness is central in the effort to move USW to a more data-driven level of analysis and decision-making.

Sources

- Athletic Director
- At-Risk_Analytics_-_Term_End
- Grad and Retention1
- SAS Annual Report 2016 - 2017
- SAS Annual Report 2016 - 2017 (page number 9)
- School of Arts and Sciences Risk Assessment by Student and Course
- School of Business 2016-2017 Annual Report Rev.1.5
- School of Business 2016-2017 Annual Report Rev.1.5 (page number 9)
- School of Business Risk Assessment by Student and Course
- SOE Annual Report 2016-2017 9.13.17R
- SOE Annual Report 2016-2017 9.13.17R (page number 10)

4.S - Criterion 4 - Summary

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

Summary

University of the Southwest demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its programs, a commitment to educational achievement through assessment of student learning, and dedication to continuous improvement with an organizational focus on student retention, persistence, and completion. The institution's pledge to offer quality programming is upheld through a systematic process of regular program review that engages all constituent groups. Assessment of student learning occurs at the course, program, and institutional level as part of a multi-tiered, cross-functional effort to evaluate learning outcomes and drive curriculum development. Outcomes assessment processes and methodologies follow best practices and involve substantial faculty participation. The university has developed a robust strategy for improving student retention, persistence, and completion that involves every layer of the student experience. This strategy has provided a clear path to the attainment of ambitious and realistic goals for student completion, and is evident in the reports generated. Institutional efforts regarding program quality, assessment, and student completion are made available to constituents via the departmental annual reports and assessment summaries. This information is strongly considered in the organizational planning process, and programmatic decisions are made after a thorough analysis of program review data with the intent of enhancing the student value proposition.

Sources

There are no sources.

5 - Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

The institution's resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The institution plans for the future.

5.A - Core Component 5.A

The institution's resource base supports its current educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.

1. The institution has the fiscal and human resources and physical and technological infrastructure sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered.
2. The institution's resource allocation process ensures that its educational purposes are not adversely affected by elective resource allocations to other areas or disbursement of revenue to a superordinate entity.
3. The goals incorporated into mission statements or elaborations of mission statements are realistic in light of the institution's organization, resources, and opportunities.
4. The institution's staff in all areas are appropriately qualified and trained.
5. The institution has a well-developed process in place for budgeting and for monitoring expense.

Argument

Response to 5.A.1

Fiscal resources:

USW has the fiscal resources necessary to support and sustain effective operations of the institution. The University receives revenue from a variety of sources including net tuition income (74.7%), contributions (4%), auxiliary enterprises (12.8%) and investments/oil and gas income (6.9%). The University clearly relies on student tuition as its primary source of revenue, which certainly emphasizes the importance of stable enrollment, student persistence, and student success. An important part of the tuition component is the tuition income derived from the graduate programs. Like many private institutions with relatively high tuition levels, USW engages in strategic discounting of tuition in support of undergraduate enrollment. The University has two main discounts, one for student-athletes and one for local area residents (the Lea County Grant). Graduate tuition is not discounted.

The University has demonstrated fiscal prudence in recent years and has established a budget process that has consistently yielded positive bottom-line results. At one time in the past, the University was overly dependent on a local foundation to provide significant year-end gifts to ensure balanced annual budgets. This dependence was noted during prior reviews by the Commission and certainly by the administration and Board. The administration and Board worked diligently to stabilize revenue projections and plan for expenses so that the University could break its dependence on these gifts. This objective was successfully accomplished a number of years ago.

USW's finances are independently audited each year. The University has received unqualified opinions in FY2014, FY2015, FY2016, and FY2017. USW maintains reserves in the form of marketable securities representing 60% of the annual operating budget.

Human Resources:

The University has sufficient human capital (staff and academic) to support and sustain educational programs and student success. USW has 26 full-time faculty members and a sufficient pool of adjunct faculty to support instructional activities. The University organizational chart documents the structure of educational services, student support services, and other nonacademic services at USW. Key elements of the institutional human resources structure include: faculty, student services staff, full-time staffing for Scarborough Memorial Library, full-time staff and help desk support for online students, campus security and safety, administration and financial management, technology support, and community engagement.

Physical Resources:

USW's campus is well suited to supporting student learning, activities, administration and student life. The campus buildings offer over 240,000 square feet of functional space, which includes 73,500 square feet for direct instructional activities and 78,000 sq. ft. for student housing. The facilities are well maintained and laid out in a convenient pattern that facilitates ease of movement between buildings.

Technology:

The University supports a robust technology system that supports student learning as well as campus operations.

> Smart classrooms – USW operates five smart classrooms on campus (smart projectors, GUIs, and supporting technology). Two classrooms have interactive graphics tablets for instructors and classroom capture capabilities. All classrooms have projectors and teaching stations.

> Computer labs – USW has two primary computer labs on campus, each with 20 workstations (40 total). All computer labs are virtual desktop stations with automated software updates through USW servers.

> Internet access – the University recently completed a campus-wide Wi-Fi network upgrade in 2015. The total cost of the project was $220,000, and all network connections across campus were increased to 1gb/s fiber. Wi-Fi is available across the entire campus and in every building.

> Student computers – all incoming full time undergraduates receive a new laptop computer with all necessary software and configuration.

Response to 5.A.2

The USW budget process maintains a strong focus on instructional programs and academic support. In each of the past four years, approximately 75% of institutional operating expenses have been allocated to instructional, student service, and academic support. The institution has maintained positive net income in three of the past four years.

Response to 5.A.3

USW is currently engaged in a planning process to develop an updated strategic plan (the process and activities are described in more detail in Core Component 5.C). The University goals and mission are realistic in light of the institution's capabilities and available resources. The current planning process has identified five strategic goals:

- Promote strategic academic growth and increase enrollment – the institution needs to focus on academic quality and achievement by its students and to build on these successes to grow student enrollment.
- Broaden institutional funding and capital resources – as with all small, private institutions, funding is an ongoing issue. The University has carefully managed available resources, but will need new funds or income sources to support plans for growth of facilities and enrollment.
- Improve University culture among students, faculty, and staff.
- Enhance organizational efficiency.
- Strengthen the University's identity and image.

Response to 5.A.4

University employees have the necessary training and qualifications for their respective positions. Faculty qualifications meet or exceed the expectations of HLC accreditation and are detailed in Core Component 3.C.2. The University Human Resources Office has identified processes for detailing the necessary qualifications for various positions, for advertising open positions to diverse populations, and for managing a thorough, comprehensive screening of candidates for all positions. Many positions, notably faculty and executive, involve hiring committees composed of colleagues with appropriate credentials to make informed recommendations as to the hiring of a new individual. Only qualified candidates are advanced through the interview process.

The University encourages and supports professional development of faculty and staff. Faculty and staff routinely engage in professional development activities as outlined in Core Component 3.C.4. All faculty and staff may register for tuition-free courses at the University and have opportunities to pursue higher degrees.

Faculty and staff participate in training related to campus safety, sexual harassment, Title IX, and FERPA.

Response to 5.A.5

The USW budget process (detailed in Core Component 5.C.3) actively engages stakeholders from across the campus and from the community as represented by members of the Board of Trustees. The University Board receives regular reports (examples of Board Briefing materials for 2015 and 2016) on the status of campus finances. Department-level managers have access to updated financial reporting that details the status of their budgets, current expenses, and obligations for upcoming expenses. Annual audits by independent auditors confirm the financial condition and details of the university (2015, 2016, and 2017). These reports are presented to the Board during open session.

Sources

- 2017-2018 Strategic Planning Committee 2.6.18
- Academic Org Chart
- Active Shooter
- Admin Team Departmental Org Chart

- Annual Revenue and Expense
- BOARD_PACKET_032415
- BOARD_PACKET_092216
- Campus Map
- Consolidated financial statement May 31 2017
- Consolidated financial statement May 31 2017 (page number 5)
- Consolidated financial statement May 31 2017 (page number 6)
- Consolidated FInancial statement
- Consolidated Financial statement May 31, 2015
- Title IX USW Employee Presentation 2017-2018

5.B - Core Component 5.B

The institution's governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the institution to fulfill its mission.

1. The governing board is knowledgeable about the institution; it provides oversight of the institution's financial and academic policies and practices and meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.
2. The institution has and employs policies and procedures to engage its internal constituencies—including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff, and students—in the institution's governance.
3. Administration, faculty, staff, and students are involved in setting academic requirements, policy, and processes through effective structures for contribution and collaborative effort.

Argument

Response to 5.B.1

The USW governing board is knowledgeable about the institution, institutional operations, and provides effective oversight of University finances, operations, and academic practices. The Board meets regularly in open session. All Board members receive a packet of briefing material along with the meeting agenda prior to each session. During meetings of the Board, members of the administration and faculty regularly present additional information and answer questions posed by Board members. The Board has organized itself into a number of standing committees which allows individual members to become more familiar with key elements of institutional operations. The Board's process for reviewing institutional finances is detailed in Core Components 5.A.5 and 5.C.3.

Key policies and expectations established by the Board are reflected in the Faculty Handbook, the Staff Handbook, and the Student Handbook. These documents are updated annually as appropriate.

Response to 5.B.2

USW has policies and practices that engage internal constituencies in institutional activities, oversight, and governance. Standing committees and organizations, such as Faculty Council, are engaged throughout the institution.

Response to 5.B.3

Administration, faculty, and staff are actively engaged in setting, evaluating, and updating academic requirements and operating policies and procedures. Detailed examples of the various methods of engagement are provided in responses to Core Components 5.B.1 and 5.B.2.

Sources

- 2017 - 2018 Faculty Handbook-Updated
- Board Agenda 6-6-17
- Board Committees

- BOARD_PACKET_092216
- Minutes Board of Trustees
- Minutes Faculty Council
- Staff Handbook 2017
- Student Handbook 2017-2018

5.C - Core Component 5.C

The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.

1. The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities.
2. The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting.
3. The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.
4. The institution plans on the basis of a sound understanding of its current capacity. Institutional plans anticipate the possible impact of fluctuations in the institution's sources of revenue, such as enrollment, the economy, and state support.
5. Institutional planning anticipates emerging factors, such as technology, demographic shifts, and globalization.

Argument

Response to 5.C.1

The USW Mission and institutional priorities drive all decisions concerning allocation of resources. University resources – money, people, and time – are carefully aligned with programs and activities that directly support the mission and priorities of the institution. The key goals and objectives of the updated strategic plan will serve as the beginning point for annual budgets and operating plans.

Response to 5.C.2

As outlined in other Core Components, USW engages in active processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting. The University recognizes the challenge of linking these process and the data from each into a system of planning and management that is comprehensive and focused on the ultimate goal of student success. For example, at this time, data from assessment of student learning is being used organically by individual faculty and departments to improve their teaching and educational practices. Academic leadership understands that the next step is to link data from assessment of student learning to active planning efforts that can support better alignment of resources with the objective of continuing to improve student outcomes.

The new strategic planning process anticipates the effort to link data from key processes (such as assessment, program review, and others) into annual operating plans. The new strategic plan establishes a process for annual assessment of the plan, progress towards goals, and evaluation of key operations. The new annual assessment process will be a key tool for linking all of the key elements of this sub-component.

Response to 5.C.3

Institutional planning is an area of great improvement for USW, particularly with regards to strategic planning. Within recent years the University has engaged in two major planning efforts. The first is the Vision 2020 plan which is, effectively, a master plan for University facilities and support structures. The Vision 2020 plan was developed with input and engagement of internal constituencies as well as community and Board constituents. The plan builds on the prior strategic agenda and

creates an outline for potential growth of University facilities.

The second major planning effort, initiated in October 2017, is a revised strategic planning process that will result in a new strategic plan for the University. The strategic planning committee is composed of representatives from internal campus constituencies and the Board. In addition to internal information and data, the planning process is utilizing a variety of education industry information from sources including the Hanover Research group, Plunkett Analytics, and the Dun & Bradstreet – Education Sector Update. Recently, the committee presented an update to the University Board of Directors.

The new planning process at USW is composed of three elements; campus master planning, strategic planning, and annual allocation of resources aligned with plans established in the master and strategic plans.

Sources

- 2017-2018 Strategic Planning Committee 10.17.17
- 2017-2018 Strategic Planning Committee 2.6.18
- Strategic Plan Development Committee Notes
- Vision 2020 Campus Expansion with Athletic Facilities Combined

5.D - Core Component 5.D

The institution works systematically to improve its performance.

1. The institution develops and documents evidence of performance in its operations.
2. The institution learns from its operational experience and applies that learning to improve its institutional effectiveness, capabilities, and sustainability, overall and in its component parts.

Argument

USW is firmly committed to systematic improvement of operations and student outcomes. Until recently, the focus of these efforts has been within the academic divisions. Each academic division engaged in systematic, comprehensive collection and analysis of key data related to student success, division staffing, and academic planning. The academic divisions produced annual reports that include data on enrollment, student persistence, student retention, graduation rates, staffing for classes, assessment of student learning, and plans for improvement (School of Business, School of Education, School of Arts and Sciences). These annual reports form the core of critical data that informs decisions and drives actions throughout the academic life of the University. As detailed in Criterion 4, academic leaders used information from these reports and other data to drive decisions establishing new practices for student retention and a renewed focus on student completion.

At the same time, operating areas of the campus such as finance, physical plant, and student services have been engaged in efforts to streamline and improve operations. Completion of the move to a new student information system (COLLEAGUE) will be an important step forward and will allow for greater integration of information and broader access to key data.

The challenge for the University has been to create more comprehensive, systematic efforts focused on improvement of operations. Until recently, these efforts were more compartmentalized, and coordination of efforts across the campus was lacking. The University recognizes the need for intentional actions designed to create coordinated activities that link plans and resources from across divisions. The new strategic planning process (described in Core Component 5.C) will be the driving force in helping the University create a more integrated set of plans supporting improvement of operations and student outcomes. At the same time, the University has made an ongoing commitment to systematic planning and improvement with the creation of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness.

USW stakeholders from across the institution understand that student enrollment and completion are the cornerstone of University operations and success. Like many small institutions, USW has struggled at times simply getting jobs done and classes taught. At times, day-to-day challenges of serving students and managing tight finances can be all-consuming. The University has grown measurably in recent years and this has added to the challenge of meeting needs and managing resources. Throughout the years, USW has collected data and used information about operations to address issues as they arise. What has been lacking was an integrated planning effort that looks to the future. That situation no longer exists at USW. USW stakeholders have come together, set goals (as described in Core Component 4.C.1), are engaged in a new strategic planning effort, and are fully focused on improving student success at USW. The University has always been a good institution but is now poised and committed to become a great private institution of higher learning.

Sources

- 2017-2018 Strategic Planning Committee 2.6.18
- SAS Annual Report 2016 - 2017
- School of Business 2016-2017 Annual Report Rev.1.5
- SOE Annual Report 2016-2017 9.13.17R

5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary

The institution's resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The institution plans for the future.

Summary

University of the Southwest strives to fulfill its mission through utilization of resources in an organized, consistent, and committed manner. USW benefits from operating with a balanced budget and is strategically working to build reserves and secure additional funding sources. As with many universities, USW has faced significant economic challenges and has demonstrated great resilience in the face of these challenges. The goal of providing quality educational programs and controlling tuition has remained in the forefront of administrative, faculty, and staff efforts. Securing funding for initiatives such as Vision 20/20 will allow USW to construct facilities that further meet the needs of students and expanding programs. Through active engagement in the development of the strategic plan, physical facility growth and expansion could become reality. USW stakeholders remain committed to fulfill USW's current mission while strategically planning for positive growth and opportunities in the future.

Sources

There are no sources.