

# SO | Southern OREGON UNIVERSITY



## Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness Report

August 2023

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## **Institutional Overview**

### **Southern Oregon University Land Acknowledgment**

Southern Oregon University is located within the ancestral homelands of the Shasta, Takelma, and Latgawa people. These Tribes were displaced during rapid Euro-American colonization, the Gold Rush, and armed conflict between 1851 and 1856. In the 1850s, the discovery of gold and settlement brought thousands of Euro-Americans to their lands, leading to warfare, epidemics, starvation, and villages being burned. In 1853 the first of several treaties were signed, confederating these Tribes and others together – who would then be referred to as the Rogue River Tribe. These treaties ceded most of their homelands to the United States, and in return, they were guaranteed a permanent homeland reserved for them. At the end of the Rogue River Wars in 1856, these Tribes and many other Tribes from western Oregon were removed to the Siletz Reservation and the Grand Ronde Reservation. Today, the [Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Community of Oregon](#) and the [Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians](#) are living descendants of the Takelma, Shasta, and Latgawa peoples of this area.

### **History of Southern Oregon University**

Southern Oregon University's first building was completed in 1872 and called the Ashland Academy. In 1895, the school was renamed Southern Oregon State Normal School and was located about a mile south of the present campus. In 1925, the City of Ashland donated 24 acres for a new campus, the present site of SOU. The new campus of Southern Oregon State Normal School opened in 1895 with an academic building and a women's dormitory. The seven-and-a-half-acre campus was located near the intersection of present-day Normal Street and Siskiyou Boulevard, a mile south of today's campus. The Southern Oregon State Normal School campus closed in 1909 when the state legislature failed to fund Oregon's normal schools. Following the closure of Southern Oregon State Normal School in 1909, the region united to advocate for a teacher training school in Southern Oregon. In 1925, \$175,000 was appropriated for a normal school building, and the City of Ashland donated 24 acres for a new campus, the present site of SOU. Construction was completed on the new building known as Churchill Hall, and Southern Oregon State Normal School officially reopened on June 21, 1926.

In 1932, the school name was officially shortened to Southern Oregon Normal School (SONS) and the normal school expanded into a junior college offering more courses and evening classes. In 1939, after the Oregon Board of Regents eliminated normal schools, SONS received full accreditation from the American Association of Teachers Colleges, and the institution changed its name again to Southern Oregon College of Education. In 1939, SOCE enrollment was declining. By 1941, most male faculty had joined the military, while men who otherwise might have gone to college enlisted as well. After the war, by the fall of 1946, 387 men enrolled as freshmen, bringing the student body to 492. Dormitories, classrooms, and service buildings were erected, and the construction of McNeil Pavilion in 1957 gave athletics a proper home. President Elmo Stevenson expanded the campus borders across Siskiyou Boulevard and a 20-year plan was approved by the Oregon State Board of Education.

The 1960s and 1970s were a time of turbulent change. A growing focus on inclusion and diversity was taking shape on campus. The first Las Posadas celebration was held in December

1967, the Black Student Union was formed in 1969, a Director of Minority Students was hired in 1970, Indian Awareness Days were observed in 1975, and a Women's Center was created in 1976.

The physical campus was transformed with the construction and opening of new buildings, including the Student Health Center in 1962, Taylor Hall in 1965, the Library in 1967, and the Greensprings Residence Hall complex in 1969. A Student Union was constructed and opened in 1972 and named after past SOU president Elmo Stevenson. During 1966 – 1967, the Science Building was expanded and Central Hall was remodeled. Two years later, the student radio station KSOR was established.

Southern Oregon State College grew and transformed during the final decades of the last century. Despite the recession of the early 1980s, public and private fundraising aided in a time of growth, including a modern multi-use stadium and the construction of the Schneider Museum of Art. Academic programs were organized into four schools, and pre-professional programs were introduced in nursing, forest management, social work, and other disciplines.

In 1997, Southern Oregon State College attained university status with an official name change to Southern Oregon University. Major campus events during this time included the construction of the Theater Arts Building, KSOR's affiliation with National Public Radio, and the construction of the Computing Services Center and Family Housing Complex which were both completed in 1990.

Since 2000, SOU has seen unprecedented change. A focus on sustainability has prompted the university to develop programs including an organic farm, solar panel installation, a recycling center, Bee-campus and Tree-campus designations, and most recently SOU was awarded a Gold rating for "Sustainability in Higher Education."

New construction projects have continued to transform the campus, including the four-building Center for the Visual Arts complex completed in 2000; the renovated and expanded Hannon Library in 2005; the Higher Education Center at SOU's Medford campus in 2008; Raider Village, which opened in 2013, including residence halls and a dining commons; the 96,000 square-foot Lithia Motors Pavilion and adjacent Student Recreation Center in 2018; and the expanded and renovated Theater building with the Jefferson Public Radio broadcast center, also completed in 2018.

Southern Oregon University's current vision, mission, values, strategic directions and goals, and its current realignment plan SOU Forward are all reflections of and natural progressions from the values and events that have shaped SOU's history. Today, SOU provides career-focused, comprehensive educational experiences to over 5,000 students. Along with an emphasis on student success and intellectual growth, SOU is committed to diversity, inclusion, and sustainability. Theoretical and experiential learning programs provide quality, innovative experiences for students. At SOU, students build strong community connections through internships, mentorships, field studies, capstone projects, volunteer opportunities, and civic engagement.



## Preface

### Institutional Changes Since Last Report

Southern Oregon University has undergone some significant changes since the last comprehensive evaluation in 2016:

1. The successful national search for a university president;
2. The addition of a Vice-President of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion position;
3. Significant cost management measures to better align our revenues and expenditures.

After a national search for a university president, the SOU Board of Trustees announced in November of 2021 that Dr. Rick Bailey was selected to become the new President of SOU. Dr. Bailey began his tenure in January of 2022. He replaced Dr. Linda Schott who had served as President of SOU since 2016. Dr. Bailey's curriculum vitae was included in the support materials for our Year Six review.

Like most universities, Southern Oregon University's progress and achievements since our previous site visit in 2016 are divided into pre- and post-pandemic periods. Our resources and resiliency were tested by the Covid-19 pandemic, which had profound impacts on all aspects of the university. Additionally, the region that SOU serves also faced catastrophic wildfires in the Fall of 2020. The Alameda and Obenchain fires destroyed many homes and businesses in the Rogue Valley. Many SOU faculty and staff lost homes, jobs, and/or businesses in the fire. In combination with the COVID lockdowns, the local economy, which is significantly dependent on tourism dollars, is still struggling to recover almost three years later.

In addition to the economic challenges caused by the pandemic and the fires, the emerging post-pandemic period is also marked by the impacts of declining enrollment, uncertain local and statewide economic conditions, changes to the state's funding formula for higher education, and organizational changes at SOU due to the budget challenges. The last three years have brought staffing and resource limitations that required the university to prioritize critical functions: instruction, student services, and compliance with state and federal regulations. At the same time, the new President and Board of Trustees have led the university in strategizing about how to reorganize to create a sustainable and vibrant future for the university and surrounding community.

At the start of the 2022-23 academic year, President Rick Bailey informed the SOU community of the gravity of the university's financial situation and the need for quick action to rein in non-essential costs and examine existing and potential revenue sources. In the Fall of 2022, President Bailey launched SOU Forward, a campus-wide effort, engaging all of the relevant university constituents, to prioritize foundational programs, processes, and systems. At the risk of oversimplification, the goal of this process was to develop a plan to address the short-term budget deficit and to plot a long-term strategy that has financial sustainability at the core. A comprehensive discourse of this plan and process is too lengthy for this report, but the process used can be seen [here](#) and the plan can be seen [here](#). In summary, SOU Forward focuses on four planks to address both the short-term deficits and the long-term sustainability.

The Four Planks of the SOU Forward plan are:

- Cost Management
- Reimagining grants and contracts: SOU is expanding support for faculty and programs seeking funding from external granting agencies and organizations.
- Leveraging philanthropy: The university will maintain an ongoing surge in philanthropic support for SOU, its students and its programs.
- Revenue diversification: SOU will diversify its revenue streams by pursuing entrepreneurial opportunities including solar power production, a senior living center at the site of the Cascade Complex, the creation of a new University Business District, and transitioning its core information system from Banner to Workday.

The adoption of SOU Forward ushers in an epoch marked by creativity, community, and dedication to strategic goals and objectives.

## Student Success and Institutional Mission and Effectiveness

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

#### Vision

Southern Oregon University will become an inclusive, sustainable university for the future that guides all learners to develop the knowledge, capacities, and audacity to innovate boldly and create lives of purpose.

#### Mission

Southern Oregon University is a regionally engaged learning community committed to being the educational provider of choice for learners throughout their lives.

- We inspire curiosity and creativity, compel critical thinking, foster discovery, and cultivate bold ideas and actions.
- We achieve student success, professional preparation, and civic engagement through service excellence, evolving technologies, and innovative curriculum.
- We foster access, equity, inclusion, and diversity in thought and practice.
- We prepare our learners to be responsible, engaged citizens in our democracy.
- We promote economic vitality, sustainability, cultural enrichment, and social well-being in our region, the state, the nation, and the world.

Our Mission statement deliberately calls out our role as regionally engaged and an educational provider of choice. Being regionally engaged means that, in addition to our primary responsibility of serving our regional students, we are increasingly working with our regional employers and institutions to better understand how we can partner with them. Briefly, this allows us to better understand the types of skills they are seeking in their employees, how we can design our programming around specific desired skill sets, or how we can provide faculty expertise and student effort to partner on community-wide problems.

#### Values

- The well-being and success of all learners
- Critical thinking, discovery, and engaged learning
- Equity, diversity, and inclusion
- Creativity and collaboration
- Excellence, continuous improvement, and accountability
- A healthy, safe, and civil campus
- Economic vitality and environmental sustainability
- Improving our community, region, and world

In addition to the [Vision, Mission, and Values](#), we also developed seven strategic directions and numerous subgoals for each direction that have helped guide the university for the past five and a half years. In addition to the Mission, Vision, and Values, these Strategic Directions have become the bedrock for our institutional planning and assessment. See section 1.B.2 for a detailed discussion of the SOU Strategic Directions.

## Institutional Effectiveness- Standards 1.B.1 – 1.B.4

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

Southern Oregon University's system of assessing institutional effectiveness and mission fulfillment was established prior to the current accreditation cycle, and by the beginning of this cycle in 2016, was functioning with a few programmatic gaps. During this cycle, SOU has continued to use a process that involves each program mapping its intended outcomes to the university's [strategic directions](#), implementing annual assessment according to a [multi-year plan](#), and submitting [an annual assessment report](#). Here is a sample program map for our [Masters in Environmental Education program](#). The process further involves peer review of programs' [plans and results](#), [feedback to programs](#), programs' use of feedback for continuous improvement, and the University Assessment Committee's use of themes in assessment reports to plan and implement faculty development workshops in collaboration with the Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning.

Undergraduate programs' participation in the formal assessment system has been strong. A program may miss a year because of a major staffing change. A few programs have not participated in the annual assessment, highlighting one of the issues under discussion by the University Assessment Committee: the tension between assessment for improvement and for accountability, and the difficulty of obtaining universal participation when there is no mechanism to mandate compliance. The Faculty Senate, Provost's Office, and University Assessment Committee have chosen to focus on assessment for improvement and on asking for participation and setting deadlines without penalty for noncompliance. The high rates of participation indicate programs' awareness of the importance of assessment for continuous improvement.

Reflection and evaluation of annual assessment results become part of the academic program review (APR), a comprehensive examination of each program that occurs every three years. Here is a sample APR for our [Business program](#). The process was revised in 2019, piloted by two programs, and then eighteen more [programs](#) participated by 2020-21. The cycle was suspended in 2022-23 as all programs produced program reviews or amended their last review in preparation for the University's realignment process. We plan to review and redesign the APR process during the 2023-2024 academic year.

Documentation of assessment, review, tracking, and feedback is distributed across Improve, Box folders, Qualtrics surveys, a Moodle course site for the University Assessment Committee, and reports to the Faculty Senate, and there are a number of false starts and inactive programs and outcomes. The decentralized nature of documentation and the mixture of active and inactive programs are weaknesses of the current system. The university renewed its license with Nuventive's Improvement Platform in May, and Nuventive is releasing a new version of the platform, which gives SOU the opportunity to store current data, archive historic data, and set up the new system to be more user-friendly and useful for individual programs, units, and departments.



Across academic and student support programs, participation in annual assessment and review is strong, especially among undergraduate academic degree programs. Some [undergraduate](#), [graduate](#), and [support](#) programs have integrated assessment into the ongoing work of the program, routinely collecting, analyzing, and interpreting assessment results and using those results to implement changes indicated by the findings, as will be discussed further in response to standards addressing student learning.

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

Southern Oregon University has developed [Strategic Directions and Goals](#) that align with its mission. Academic programs set their intended learning outcomes, objectives, and indicators and map those to the University's strategic directions and goals. Through mapping in Improve, program faculty, staff, administrators, and the Board of Trustees can see the alignment of efforts and progress toward the university's goals and strategic directions. As an Oregon public university, SOU contributes data to the state's Higher Education Coordinating Commission, which results in [snapshots and comparison reports](#) with regional peer institutions. SOU participates in the [National Survey of Student Engagement](#), which includes comparison groups of national peer institutions.

Strategic Direction I: SOU will transform its pedagogy and curriculum (how and what it teaches) to enhance the success of its learners and graduates.

- Goal One: SOU will develop curriculum and provide learning experiences that prepare all learners for life and work in an evolving future; connect directly with the challenges of our community, region, and world; and build self-confidence and the capacity to think critically, innovate boldly, and create lives of purpose.
- Goal Two: SOU will align faculty hiring, promotion and tenure policies, and allocation of other academic resources with the university's mission, vision, and strategic plan.
- Goal Three: SOU will develop and utilize resources to ensure affordability of and access to student learning opportunities.
- Goal Four: SOU will engage in ongoing assessment of academic and academic support programs in order to further a process of continuous improvement.

Strategic Direction II: SOU will become an employer of choice and provide excellent service to all of its constituents.

- Goal One: SOU will develop effective orientation, training, and professional development programs as well as a performance management process that rewards employees for continuous improvement.
- Goal Two: SOU will improve its customer experience by streamlining business processes.
- Goal Three: SOU will align its internal and external communications to foster greater collaboration and enhance its credibility.
- Goal Four: SOU will design and implement a program that will develop a culture of service excellence in all employees.

Strategic Direction III: SOU will actively model an environmentally sustainable campus and engage in collaborative research to promote an ecologically resilient bioregion.

- Goal One: SOU will be a model sustainable institution of higher education, integrating sustainable planning, practices, policies, and education throughout the university.
- Goal Two: SOU will strengthen its organizational and financial infrastructure to support the advancement, promotion, and reach of environmental sustainability at SOU.
- Goal Three: SOU will integrate sustainability, the environment, and conservation into its curriculum, scholarship, and creative activity.

Strategic Direction IV: SOU will create a diverse, equitable, inclusive community where learners flourish.

- Goal One: SOU will replace structural and systemic barriers with equitable processes and practices that promote a sense of belonging and ensure the success of a diverse “new majority.”
- Goal Two: SOU will establish supportive pathways that will increase the access, retention, and success of learners (students, faculty, and staff) from underrepresented backgrounds.
- Goal Three: SOU will prepare all learners regardless of background, identity, and position to be able to work, live, and communicate effectively across differences in order to thrive in an increasingly diverse world.

Strategic Direction V: SOU will maintain financial stability and invest for institutional vitality.

- Goal One: SOU will develop, implement, and monitor a comprehensive strategic enrollment management plan.
- Goal Two: SOU will develop key performance indicators to incentivize, monitor, and reward improvements, innovations, or efficiencies.
- Goal Three: SOU will enhance opportunities to leverage its existing assets to increase revenue.
- Goal Four: SOU will invest in opportunities that generate additional gifts, grants, and sponsorships from external sources.

Strategic Direction VI: SOU will develop physical and virtual environments in which all learners can thrive.

- Goal One: SOU will utilize universal design principles to transform learning spaces to inspire creativity, collaboration, and intellectual growth in all of the learning communities we serve.
- Goal Two: SOU will provide opportunities for all learners to be effective users of immersive, accessible, and virtual technologies and spaces.

Strategic Direction VII: SOU will be a catalyst for economic vitality, civic engagement, and cultural enrichment through ongoing collaboration with local, state, tribal, national, and global partners.

- Goal One: SOU will be a resource and collaborative partner for the economic, cultural, artistic, and social betterment of the region.
- Goal Two: SOU will collaborate with a wide range of partners to provide civic engagement, service learning, and community-based learning experiences for all its

learners.

Goals I, IV, VI, and VII are directly related to student learning and achievement, and as such they are central to our academic assessment work across the campus. The other three SDs (SD II, SD III, and SD V), while not directly related to student learning and achievement, are still critical to the infrastructure that supports our students.

These strategic directions help provide guideposts for all of our academic programs across all aspects of the developmental lifespan of our programs. All new course and full program proposals are required to address how the new course/program will support SOU's mission and strategic plan goals. Each new proposed course and program is reviewed by multiple constituencies including a curriculum committee and faculty senate. Both of those entities review course and program proposals through the lens of our strategic plan. Additionally, all programs are reviewed on a yearly basis through assessment. The institution has used Nuventive's Improve software to help track and document our ongoing progress toward meeting institutional and program-level strategic plans. Program faculty use the "outcome mapping" feature of Improve to show the alignment with Strategic Directions and Goals. Each year, the Academic Program Assessment Report Guidelines document includes a checklist for programs to review and make sure their information is up-to-date. Of academic programs, all but three (BA/BS Healthcare Administration, BA/BS Interdisciplinary Studies, and the minor in Philosophy/Ethics) have mapped their program learning outcomes to the University's strategic directions and core themes.

As described above (1.B.1), each year, faculty from each program conduct assessment of one or more PLOs. One faculty member enters results and actions taken into Improve. The designated faculty member then writes a narrative report and self-evaluation of the program's assessment work. The narrative and self-evaluation are then submitted to the University Assessment Committee for review and feedback. The Director of University Assessment meets with program faculty to share the UAC's evaluation feedback, and the faculty members use that feedback to improve assessment and contribute to continuous improvement.

Program assessment reports discuss efforts within programs to evaluate practices and gauge performance compared with peer institutions. At the university level, peer institutions are chosen to answer specific questions rather than having one peer group that is a better comparison group for some issues than for others; see, for example, [Strategic Enrollment Management at SOU](#), which uses data and trends from community colleges and public universities in the aggregate as well as data from individual institutions to analyze SOU's enrollment trends and set targets.

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

Southern Oregon University's planning process includes both formal cycles and ad-hoc responses to emergent needs. While the latter may require more immediate actions, we strive to approximate the formal cycles whenever possible; for example, in addressing the realignment, every program was asked to update its most recent program review. Formal cycles are driven by annual assessment and evaluation, periodic program review, and proposals and requests arising

from new situations and opportunities. Processes include collaboration, feedback, input, and negotiation among faculty, staff, students, and administration, as well as community partners, advisory boards, and employers. Formal governing bodies of SOU include the Board of Trustees of SOU; the Associated Students of SOU (ASSOU), which represents all students; the SOU Faculty Senate and its subcommittees, which represents the faculty; and the SOU Staff Assembly, which represents both classified (union) and unclassified (non-union) staff members. Our union partners are also important constituent groups included in planning processes: The faculty are represented by the Associated Professors of Southern Oregon University (APSOU) and classified staff are represented by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). Additionally, the specific departments or groups affected by certain planning decisions also are included during planning processes.

Ultimately, the Board of Trustees approves plans and budgets with all stakeholders having the opportunity to provide input and feedback. As a public university, the Board of Trustees—a public governing body appointed by the governor of the State of Oregon—reserves time on the agenda of each regular public meeting for invited reports from the student, faculty, and staff governing bodies. The board also reserves time on the agenda for invited public comment from APSOU and SEIU. Additionally, the board invites written or verbal [public comments](#) at its public meetings, both in-person and from remote attendees. The board also holds listening sessions dedicated only to obtaining feedback from the campus community and the public on major strategic matters, and regularly invites emails from the campus and the public on any and all matters.

An example of academic program planning, aligned with Strategic Directions and Goals, is the development and approval of a new [General Education model](#). The SOU general education model, developed by faculty, is a core curriculum that must be completed by all baccalaureate students regardless of the major or type of baccalaureate degree. The GE curriculum features six capacities or critical skills areas; purposeful learning, community expression, creativity and innovation, inquiry and analysis, numerical literacy, and equity, diversity, and inclusion. Students take between 39-44 credits across these six capacities intentionally designed to integrate seamlessly with the students' majors and other degree opportunities.

Goal One of SOU's strategic plan adopted in 2018 is to “develop curriculum and provide learning experiences that prepare all learners for life and work in an evolving future; connect directly with the challenges of our community, region, and world; and build self-confidence and the capacity to think critically, innovate boldly, and create lives of purpose.” This goal was critical in prompting a review of the university's General Education program. The first step was determining what level of re-engineering is needed, and a Professional Learning Community was formed and encouraged to:

- Assess the effectiveness of general education, looking at data from various groups of learners and various groups of courses and the effectiveness and efficiency of general education courses that also count as majors courses.
- Review studies on student perception of general education and collect campus data on SOU students, faculty, and staff perceptions.
- Find ways to align changes in general education with the needs of current and future student demographics regarding transferability, content, pedagogy, and especially SOU's ability to attract and retain students.

- Carefully monitor and further explore dual credit transfer alignment and growth potential in general education, such as the Interstate Passport and the General Education Maps and Markers effort.
- Review models in more depth, consult with other campuses, and consider submitting a team application to the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) Institute on General Education and Assessment.
- Involve those whose healthy skepticism can lead to discovering unintended consequences and unanticipated problems.
- Consult broad constituencies throughout the university community while following the regularly shared governance procedures for curriculum change.
- Set a reasonable timeline and be mindful of the resources and incentives needed for innovation, planning, and implementation.
- Develop a broad-based communications effort for general education focusing on the goals and value of a liberal education.
- Identify synergies with the work of other professional learning communities, such as those dealing with upper-division education, creativity, lives of purpose, and learner satisfaction.

After the [Professional Learning Community](#) completed its work, in the Spring of 2019, the SOU Faculty Senate authorized the Transforming General Education Task Force with a charge to review and act upon the prior recommendations of the General Education Professional Learning Community in accordance with SD1, Goal 1 of the SOU Strategic Plan.

The initial work of the Task Force commenced with a smaller planning unit in the Summer of 2019 and expanded into a much larger and inclusive body in the Fall of 2019, with participation and input from students, faculty from every division, staff, and administrators. This larger Task Force met weekly in the Fall, Winter, and Spring terms of the 19-20 academic year.

The Task Force identified the following objectives to guide the work:

- Objective 1. To apply Strategic Directions 1 (Goal 1) and (Goal 4) (with a special focus on meeting the HB 2864 Oregon Cultural Competency mandate) to SOU GenEd.
- Objective 2. To reduce the GenEd credit burden for SOU students.
- Objective 3. To make GenEd learning goals and requirements more transparent and purposeful for students.
- Objective 4. To make SOU's GenEd model more attractive to prospective students.
- Objective 5. To accomplish all of the above while ensuring maximum transferability of credits.

In the Fall of 2019, the Task Force made a [progress report](#) to the Faculty Senate, outlining six draft "Core Capacities." The Winter and Spring 2020 reports to the Faculty Senate were disrupted by COVID-19, but work continued into the Summer of 2020 with a smaller, concentrated Task Force subgroup. This smaller unit designed a model and made a series of presentations to the full Task Force, the Office of Admissions, the Registrar's Office, the Student Success Coordinators, the Division Directors, the Provost's Office, the Faculty Summer Symposium, and faculty in their individual academic divisions. Moving forward with [the new model](#), courses were built in each of the following six capacities for a fall 2023 launch. A small



group of faculty and staff are at work during Summer 2023 to accomplish the following objectives outlined by the Chair of GE Committee:

Participants will polish capacity proficiency language, develop scoring sheets to support committee course review, create an outline for the new GE Committee Handbook, and develop a prototype template for a capacity assessment rubric for the Assessment Committee's further consideration.

First, the proficiency language will be polished. Course scoring sheets for each capacity will be created for the GE Committee to use when reviewing courses seeking Capacity status, thus allowing alignment for approval. Second, once the scoring sheets are developed, the next step is to create a prototype assessment rubric that could be used to assess any signature assignment (student work sample). The draft rubric will be shared first with the Director of University Assessment and then with the Assessment Committee for further review and development. Finally, as time allows, work will begin on an outline for the much-needed handbook for the GE Committee to continue development over the AY 23/24.

The adoption of the new General Education model is one university-wide example of SOU's planning process and its features of broad participation and alignment with institutional objectives and indicators. Strategic Enrollment Management, curriculum and program planning, and the university's recent and current realignment efforts, discussed in response to other standards, also demonstrate SOU's commitment to an inclusive planning process.

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

Monitoring of internal and external environments occurs at several levels. Faculty members monitor trends in their disciplines and related fields, as well as feedback from community partners, employers, and students, and use that information as part of program revision and in proposing new credentials, certificates, and degree programs. Admissions, Enrollment, Financial Aid, the Provost's Office, and the President's Office monitor internal and external environments through reports generated with their own data or by the Institutional Research Office, as well as information from external sources.

Financial planning includes input from the [Tuition Advisory Council](#). The Tuition Advisory Council (TAC) is Southern Oregon University's official advisory group charged with reviewing and recommending tuition and fee proposals each year, prior to their submission to the President and Board of Trustees. Established after the passing of Oregon Senate Bill 242 in 2011, which required Universities to obtain student input in tuition and enrollment fees, the goal of the Tuition Advisory Council (TAC) is to provide a shared governance opportunity for students on campus to become familiar with university finances. Ultimately the council strives to create an environment where students, faculty, and administrators can provide meaningful feedback prior to the University formally submitting proposed tuition rates to the Board of Trustees and then to

the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC).

There are three key structures for assessing SOU's strategic position, defining its future direction, and reviewing and revising, as necessary, its mission, planning, intended outcomes of its programs and services, and indicators of achievement of its goals. First are the curriculum development and assessment systems at the instructional level (discussed further in response to Standard 1.C., Student Learning). Second is [strategic enrollment management](#) at the administrative level, discussed next. Third is realignment for cost management at the executive level, as described in SOU Forward.

[Strategic Enrollment Management](#) (SEM) at Southern Oregon University is a shared governance, institutional approach to managing and growing student enrollments to achieve the vision and mission established for the university. Chaired by the Provost and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs, SOU established the Strategic Enrollment Council in 2019 to provide oversight, accountability, and a framework for enrollment-related strategies to be debated and implemented. The Enrollment Council (EC) considers enrollment-related strategies in the following four areas: Recruitment and Marketing, Student Success and Retention, Financial Aid and Pricing, and Academic Program Planning. The academic program planning component of the Enrollment Council ensures a flow of information between faculty and departments generating ideas for new programs and managers of administrative departments. The Strategic Enrollment Council is an appointed body by the President to engage in and make recommendations to Cabinet regarding enrollment areas of focus and strategies to improve access, retention, and graduation from SOU. Specifically, the charge of the Enrollment Council is to:

1. Establish comprehensive goals for the number and types of students needed to achieve the desired future of SOU.
2. Improve students' academic success by improving access, transition, retention persistence, and degree completion.
3. Enhance institutional success by enabling more effective enrollment and financial planning.
4. Create a data-rich environment to inform decisions and evaluate strategies.
5. Strengthening communications with internal and external stakeholders.
6. Increase collaboration among departments across campus to support enrollment goals; and
7. Identify, recommend, and monitor institutional enrollment strategies.

The Enrollment Council reviews and makes recommendations for institutional strategies related to the four subcommittees. Enrollment metrics are established by the Board and are tracked by Institutional Research.

The work of the Enrollment Council is guided by both the strategic directions and the [SOU Forward](#) plan approved by the Board of Trustees in April of 2023. This includes the evaluation criteria for new proposals outlined in the conclusion of the SOU Forward plan (p. 43), which reads in part:

*To minimize the possibility of future fiscal crises, like the one we now face, we need to create a culture that incorporates stronger accountability measures. The Board of Trustees will play a crucial role in those processes. Put simply, as new proposals are introduced for Board*

*consideration, and as new proposals are introduced to the President, five questions must be answered before any approval is given:*

- 1. What resources will this new proposal require?*
- 2. What are the anticipated fiscal or performance benefits from this initiative?*
- 3. What is the time horizon for these expected benefits?*
- 4. What metrics and measurements will be used to monitor progress?*
- 5. What actions will be taken if the expected milestones are not achieved?*

These five questions, and their answers, become the criteria upon which new programs will be evaluated, and point to a challenge for the next accreditation cycle.

## **Student Learning – Standards 1.C.1 – 1.C.9**

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

As a public institution, Southern Oregon University's curriculum development and management system includes multiple quality control measures and different levels: Curriculum Committee and Provost Office, Board of Trustees, and the Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Committee (HECC). From the [Pre-Proposal for a New Academic Program Form](#): SOU carefully considers several factors in the development and submission of a new academic program including, but not limited to: alignment with the institutional mission and strategic plan, "fit" and suitability within the academic division(s), demand and potential enrollment, and resource need. This pre-proposal is intended to help assess the viability and importance of the new program, determine whether a new program should be pursued, and provide early identification of any barriers or concerns that may prevent or delay timely review via the New Academic Program Submission and Approval process.

The curriculum management process ensures that programs offer appropriate content and rigor consistent with SOU's mission, and that persistence through the program leads to achievement of collegiate-level degrees and certificates and includes designators consistent with program content in recognized fields of study. The Curriculum Committee, a committee of the Faculty Senate, oversees the process with the Provost Office and Enrollment Management. After a program is approved, both annual assessment reporting and periodic Academic Program Review include faculty review and evaluation of curricular mapping, and revision if necessary. The [Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning \(CATL\)](#) offers resources and faculty development programming to assist faculty in creating and revising programs in order to articulate expected learning outcomes and design and implement effective teaching and assessment practices.

An example of review of programs including relevance and alignment with currently recognized fields of study is this description of assessment of Critical Thinking/Problem Solving from the undergraduate Computer Science program from the [2021-22 assessment report](#).

Outcome 1: Critical Thinking/Problem Solving - CS graduates apply problem-solving techniques to a variety of problems to develop algorithms that can be encoded to produce solutions.

Faculty reviewed and discussed the results related to CS 418, 452, and 469 during the fall retreat and through the term. We were pleased to see that we continue to meet the target for CS 469 and thus, determine the only action needed there is to continue to collect data and reevaluate next year. With respect to both CS 418 and CS 452, we were concerned that the targets were not met, and further that our attainment decreased from last year. These are commonly some of the most challenging courses in CS curriculum and thus, we suspect the last few years of switching from in-person to online and even some hybrid delivery has significantly impacted both the delivery of the courses and the engagement of the students. We are hopeful that the full return to in-person classes will improve these measures. However, because obtaining our target in 418 has been challenging across the years, we looked at what other programs outside of SOU do to prepare their students for the 418 content. This resulted in us taking action to add a prerequisite course, CS 250 Discrete Structures to our curriculum. The course will be offered in Fall of 2022 for the first time and the syllabus is available in Improve. The winter 2023 professor already believes students are more prepared. For 452, Dr. DeFreeze took the action to change the programming language used from a statically-typed language (Haskell / Elm) to a dynamically-typed (Racket) language. This decision was made because one of the main struggles for students in the class was the type system. Simplifying this will help them focus on the programming language concepts. We will continue to collect and analyze data to measure how these changes impact students.

Another example is from the [Early Childhood Development program's assessment report](#) of 2021-22, in answer to the following prompt:

**Describe how and the extent to which program assessment processes are demonstrated in the fulfillment of its vision and implementation of the curriculum. How have assessment activities influenced the direction of curriculum and program design? What differences do you see in your students as a result of these efforts? How could this integration be improved?**

Each year, self-assessment of our program allows us to be reflective and proactive in tailoring our curriculum to the needs of our students, the community, and to the field of early childhood education. As we see areas of need arise from these assessments, and

from our own internal program reviews, we work to make the necessary adjustments. Along with the University's strategic plan and renewed mission to be responsive to local community needs, we've worked to address the critical need for a stronger childcare providing workforce - as amplified by the ongoing pandemic - through the Bridge grant activities; the new Student Leadership Club project this past year; course modifications; targeted workshops that address specific areas of high need in the community; and more. In our effort to be responsive to student and community needs, we plan to bring in additional training opportunities to support equity and inclusion in the future. We continue to incorporate innovative practices such as holistic education, resilience building, understanding infant/toddler mental health, humanized instruction, and a focus on diversity, creativity, well-being, and community service.

As an example of how assessment activities influence the direction of curriculum and program design, we have been thoroughly reviewing exit surveys and have been making programmatic level changes to reflect the needs of our students. Upon analysis of last year's survey, we found a portion of online students desire more socialization and networking opportunities with their peers. In addition to the implementation of the ECD Leadership Club to address this need, we increased virtual meeting opportunities for our major coursework and advising sessions, which have historically been completed asynchronously. These opportunities have been well received by students who have increasingly begun to request Zoom appointments for advising needs and who enthusiastically attend whole-group Zoom courses when assigned.

The program assessment process is used to monitor the program's effectiveness in facilitating student achievement of expected learning outcomes, and the program review process provides for summative evaluation and course correction to maintain and improve student achievement.

1. The program review process includes a strategic planning section to reflect on each program's position within its field and goals moving forward, including three questions: Are there ways you can modify, augment, streamline or discontinue programming to add efficiencies or better meet the changing needs of students, industry and/or society?
2. What are the program goals for the next three years and how do they relate to the strategic directions?
3. What is your bold and audacious idea for your program? Frame your answer addressing how this idea supports SOU's mission and strategic directions. What would it take to accomplish your bold idea?

As discussed in response to Standard 1.B.1, the faculty of most undergraduate programs participate in annual assessment. Curricular review is not consistently documented across all programs and may occur in faculty meetings without being recorded in annual assessment reports, but is part of periodic program review.



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

As a public institution of higher education, the quality of the curriculum, including breadth, depth, sequencing, and synthesis of learning represented in degree and certificate programs, is governed by a multi-level review process, by the Provost's Office, Curriculum Committee, Board of Trustees, Higher Education Coordinating Committee, and NWCCU.

Southern Oregon University has a system in place to guide program faculty in documenting that credit, degrees, certificates, and credentials are awarded for programs that are based on student learning and learning outcomes that offer an appropriate breadth, depth, sequencing, and synthesis of learning. At the course level, credit is awarded for student learning based on grades tied to the mastery of course material. Program-level assessment uses student work from key courses. Breadth, depth, sequencing, and synthesis of learning are documented in curriculum maps in Improve. Definitions of rigor are embedded in course and program-level learning outcomes, and outcomes are assessed based on student performance relative to targets set by program faculty.

Degree programs have learning outcomes recorded in Improve. Courses are mapped to program-level expected learning outcomes, and faculty evaluate student work across sections of a course, and from courses throughout the program. However, there is no syllabus template with a requirement for course-level learning outcomes, so faculty articulate expectations for student learning in a variety of ways: course goals, objectives, descriptions of content covered and of what students will learn, or course-level expected learning outcomes. Because the language is not standardized, expected learning outcomes may be called objectives, as is the case in the [syllabus for BA 427](#), Business Policy and Strategy, from Spring 2022, which clearly articulates expected learning outcomes and assessment methods without using the word "outcomes."

Program-level assessment activities recorded in Improve and described in assessment reports reflect faculty discussions of breadth, depth, and sequencing of courses within the curriculum and how they build to program learning outcomes; however, the university's forms and review processes do not currently prompt faculty to think in terms of student learning outcomes during the curriculum development process. This is an area currently under revision.

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

All but one program (Healthcare Administration) has identified and articulated expected program learning outcomes; however, there is no formal mechanism or template for publishing those expected learning outcomes in the catalog or on the website.

The Southern Oregon University website and catalog include program descriptions and statements of purpose; for example, the Biology program's [description](#), which includes, "The bachelor's degree in biology prepares students for employment in diverse fields related to the life sciences. It is also excellent training for graduate and professional programs leading to degrees in such areas as agriculture, dentistry, environmental science, forestry, medical technology, medicine, optometry, veterinary medicine, and wildlife biology."

The SOU website includes statements of what students can expect to learn and be able to do upon completion of some but not all degree programs; for example, when a viewer clicks "[See Details](#)" about the BFA in Creative Writing, the [description](#) tells potential students and others that "Through the course of the Creative Writing program, students learn to develop their own styles, to communicate original ideas clearly, and to present their understanding of themselves and the larger world through cogent, expressive writing in a variety of forms."

Some InsideSOU program pages have program learning outcomes listed; for example, the [BA/BS program in Education Studies](#) and [Criminology and Criminal Justice Program](#), but a listing of expected program learning outcomes is not part of the university's templates for websites or other media.

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

Admission requirements are listed on the Southern Oregon University [website](#), with information and requirements for [freshmen](#), potential [transfer students](#), [Rogue Community College](#) students, [graduate students](#), and [international students](#). There is information specific to [DACA](#) (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival) students, as well as information on [equivalencies](#) to receive credit through Advanced Placement courses and exams.

Degree requirements are listed in the [catalog](#) with [General Degree Requirements](#), [Core Curriculum Requirements](#), [Graduate Studies](#) program requirements, and all [individual program requirements](#).

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

Southern Oregon University's system of academic assessment to evaluate the quality of learning in its programs includes faculty-led program assessment at the undergraduate and graduate levels, as well as assessment of institutional learning outcomes through the [University Seminar program](#) and [senior writing](#), critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, information literacy, and [oral communication](#) (see responses to 1.C.6 and 1.C.7 for further discussion). Recognition of the central role of faculty to establish curricula, assess student learning, and improve instructional programs is described in documents, bylaws, and committee charges such as the SOU Faculty Constitution, Faculty Senate Bylaws, Graduate Council Bylaws, and the charge of the University Assessment Committee.

Academic program assessment at the undergraduate level is overseen by the University Assessment Committee, whose [charge](#) is:

The Assessment Committee (AC) will oversee the institution, maintenance, and development of student learning outcomes for the curriculum at Southern Oregon University.

The UAC will be composed of seven voting members, one representing each of the following: the School of Arts and Letters, the School of Business, the School of Education, the School of Sciences, the School of Social Sciences, Health and Physical Education, the University Seminar program, and the Library. The chair of the committee will be elected from the voting membership of the committee.

The Associate Provost for Curriculum and Personnel, the Assistant Vice President for Raider Student Services and Director of Admissions, the Director of the Center for Teaching, Learning and Assessment (CTLA), the Director of University Studies, one member of the ACCESS center advising staff, a representative from Information Technology (IT), and one student will serve as ex-officio, non-voting members of this committee. The Provost will designate one of the administrative ex-officio members as the administrative contact for this committee.

The charge of the University Assessment Committee needs to be updated to be consistent with the reorganization from schools to divisions and to reflect changes in accreditation standards and expectations.

The Curriculum Committee of the Faculty Senate operates under the following [charge](#):

The Curriculum Committee shall study existing curricula and consider all changes in curricula including degrees offered, degree requirements, and specific courses.

The Faculty Senate appoints six faculty members. The Student Senate may appoint a student member. Ex officio: Registrar, Associate Provost for Curriculum, and Director of Graduate Studies.

The role of the faculty in improving instructional programs is described in the charges of the Curriculum Committee and the [Faculty Constitution](#), including, “The governance and operation of Southern Oregon University are the common responsibility of the Board of Trustees of Southern Oregon University, the University President, and the faculty. The faculty functions to meet the primary responsibilities for which the University has been organized. The faculty shall continue to be recognized as an essential participant in both the making and the implementing of educational policy.”

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

[University Studies, the SOU general education pathway](#) that has been in effect throughout this accreditation cycle, is built from the Liberal Education and American Promise (LEAP) model. The three levels include Foundations, Explorations, and Integrations. Students complete 60 – 64 credits in this model.

University Studies connects students to an explicit pathway of learning at Southern Oregon University and to life beyond college. Under the “strand” model, students complete strands A through J in the areas of Foundations (Strands A, B, C, D), Explorations (Strands E, F, G), and Integrations (Strands H, I, J), they develop an understanding and appreciation for the complexities of the world and their role in it. Faculty submit courses for acceptance into the University Studies model, and students transferring into SOU with courses not directly articulated can petition for a substitution review at no cost.

SOU’s faculty approved the University Studies model in 2007, aligned with the state compact to AAC&U’s Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP). During our NWCCU site visit in 2019, the credit heavy model became a topic of conversation. An opportunity existed to realign and address the strengths and weaknesses of the Strand University Studies model.

In 2019, Provost Susan Walsh charged a [General Education Task Force](#) with redesigning the university’s General Education model, and that new model will launch in the fall of 2023.

Academic Year 2020 was the last opportunity for programs to submit an application for University Studies strand approval. The UStudies final report to the Faculty Senate revealed the number of courses approved and the pathway for students to complete their University Studies requirements. In 2019, when the General Education Task Force was created, a slowdown in

interest in the “old” model and an interest in understanding the future “capacity” model surfaced.

In the current model which is being phased out, assessment of ILO’s has occurred consistently at the end of the first-year seminar courses, with faculty across the [University Seminar](#) program assessing [final university seminar essays](#) (FUSE) every year. The institutional learning outcomes for [written communication](#), [critical thinking](#), [information literacy](#), [quantitative reasoning](#), and [oral communication](#) have been assessed for senior students by the University Assessment Committee (UAC) using consistent methods and common rubrics over the course of this accreditation cycle. After the assessment of senior writing conducted in Fall 2022/Winter 2023, the UAC evaluated results over the past several years and came to the conclusion that because of the limitations of the methods, workload issues, and the rollout of the new General Education model in Fall 2023, the assessment should be revised. The UAC further concluded that the assessment of oral communication, which relies on similar methods, should be suspended or replaced by a new General Education assessment process.

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

Assessment findings are used to inform and improve programs, student learning outcomes, and learning support practices in the following ways:

1. Within programs, faculty review and discuss findings and decide on changes in curriculum, instruction, assignments, assessment methods, and referrals to and collaborations with student support programs and practices.
2. Program faculty work with the Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning (CATL) to implement best practices and innovate new practices in teaching and learning.
3. The Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning plays a crucial role in curricular revision such as the transformation of General Education.
4. The University Assessment Committee uses the results of its reviews of program assessment reports, senior writing, and oral presentations to provide feedback to program faculty for their use in improving student learning and achievement; and collaborates with CATL to offer quarterly workshops to faculty.
5. The Provost, Faculty Senate, and Office of the Dean of Students respond to results by re-designing academic and student support programs and institutional efforts, such as the redesign of General Education.

*Programs’ use of assessment to improve student learning outcomes and student support practices*



Within programs, faculty review and discuss findings and decide on changes in curriculum, instruction, assignments, and assessment methods, as evidenced by the following examples.

### ***Biology***

One example of continuous improvement resulting from assessment at the program level is the Biology program's reassignment of a faculty member with expertise in molecular and cell biology to the introductory course in order to address a weakness in mastery test results on the ETS exam. From the Biology program's [2021-22 assessment report](#):

Overall the department did reach its goal for both the skills and the dispositional assessments. However, the department's goal of 90% of students scoring above the 20th percentile on the major field test was not met. While these results are interesting and suggest that as a whole we do a solid job getting our students to do science and to respect science. These results mirror previous results. One trend is that our students have done worse on the Major Field Test since the onset of the COVID pandemic than previous years.

Certain content areas our students tend to struggle a little more, most specifically genetics and molecular biology. To address this, starting Fall 2022 we have one of our molecular biologists being the primary teacher for our initial introductory biology course. While the previous instructors did a fine job, nothing beats having the expert teach the intro to cells class. In addition we hired a second molecular biologist in Fall 2022 to help flesh out our elective molecular and genetics offerings.

From informally surveying the students that took the Major Field Test, it seems that they did not take it as seriously as we would have liked. This led to scores being lower than what they learned in our Major. Because of this we plan to pivot to the bioMAps assessment program. This assessment program will survey the same role as the Major Field Test and the dispositional survey but be much less bulky and can be more easily interwoven into a preexisting course rather than making the student pay for a credit that was lacking the intended value. Because it will not be tied to a senior seminar class and the test is less long and tiresome, we hope that our students will take more care and we can get results that reflect our students' learning. This program will also provide us better dispositional questions that will remove some of the misunderstanding in our survey which should also clear up results. We will continue to assess the capstone presentations but the new assessment committee will be looking into the rubric as our current one lacks enough detail to be consistently used among faculty.

### ***Computer Science***

Other examples come from the undergraduate Computer Science program's [2021-22 assessment report](#).

**Outcome 2: Coding - CS graduates can implement and debug algorithmic solutions in at least two programming languages.**

Faculty reviewed and discussed the results related to CS 258 and CS 411 and expressed deep concern for the low attainment scores. We discussed challenges that contributed to each. CS 258 is a prerequisite for CS 411, and the delivery of CS 258 in the prior year has significant challenges. The instructor of record had extreme extenuating circumstances (he was a non-US citizen who lost his home in the Alameda fire), which had a considerable impact on his ability to deliver the 258 course the previous year. Ultimately, the students from CS 258 were left extremely unprepared for CS 411. To address this shortfall the following actions were taken. First and foremost we added CS 250 Discrete Structures, a new course in our curriculum, as a prerequisite. When comparing our curriculum with others across the state we found that this was the more common prerequisite for the content covered in CS 411. It focuses on mathematical concepts and reasoning methods that are needed for understanding and developing complex algorithms. The syllabus can be found and Improved. It will be delivered for the first time in Fall 2022 by Dr. Pouliot. Additionally, Dr. Pouliot took a close look at student feedback and updated specific lectures based on their comments. And, he has been encouraging students to form study groups outside of class, which seems to be going very well in Winter 2023. With respect to CS 258, we noted that the sample size was especially small in Spring and we had an adjunct professor, who hadn't used C++ recently, teaching the course. However, considering the Fall attainment was also lower than expected, we discussed actions that would improve student success in this course, which resulted in Dr. Pouliot making changes for Fall 2022. He made significant changes to the beginning of the course by adding new lectures and labs to ease students into Object Oriented Programming (OOP) in C++ and makefiles, both of which students really struggled with last year. He also modified the labs throughout the course because we agreed they were too hard for a sophomore level class. Dr. Pouliot will share these materials and discuss the specific changes with our adjunct faculty who will teach the updated course in Spring 2023. Finally, we made changes in our advising. Initially, the curriculum was set so that students would take CS 258 and CS 357 (OOP) together immediately after taking CS 257. However, we've now created a path where students who need more time to focus solely on OOP can delay their enrollment in CS 258 to the following term (Fall instead of Spring). We will collect data again next year to see how these changes impact student success.

**Outcome 6: Teamwork - CS Graduates work effectively in teams.**

Faculty reviewed and discussed the results related to CS 469, CS 470, and CS 471. Although we came quite close to our target for both CS 469 and CS 470 we ended up just below it (78% attained in each case with 80% targets). However, in CS 471 we did

achieve our target (89% attained, 80% target). Considering this sequence of courses follows a cohort format, with the same set of students progressing through the sequence throughout the year, we were pleased to see that these results show improvement across the year. Only 2 of the 18 students did not attain the target by the end of the sequence. We dug deeper into the data and realized both of these students had significant external circumstances impacting their mental health, and that their unwillingness to share these challenges with their teammates created conflict. As a result, Dr. Vanderberg took the action to discuss mental health challenges and supports available to students regularly in CS 469 the following year. Additionally, she was able to ensure that each student in 469 had the chance to work with every other student and paid special attention to peer reviews as well as students concerns before assigning teams for CS 470 and CS 471. Our next action for this outcome and these classes is to collect data again and reanalyze next year.

### ***Early Childhood Education***

Another example is the Early Childhood Education program's use of assessment results to improve instruction and follow up to see the impact of the changes it made. From the [ECE 2021-22 Assessment Report](#):

Upon completing this year's data analysis, the ECD Committee determined that all four goals were met for the 2021-22 academic year. Though the program continues to make satisfactory progress and is content with the designation of the new program, last year we had identified a few areas where we would like to further develop the integration of our core competencies, especially in regards to professionalism preparation. In 2020, the committee decided to expand both our introductory course, ECE 300 ECD Orientation, and our culminating course, ECE 495 Capstone B: Professional Portfolio starting in the 2020-21 academic year. ECE 300 ECD Orientation was changed from a one-credit to a two-credit course; ECE 495 Capstone B: Professional Portfolio was changed from a 2-credit to a 4-credit course.

Our goal in implementing these changes was to set students up for success, providing a front-loaded introduction to program expectations and an aptitude for post-graduation leadership development. After our first successful year of offering these updated courses, we have seen several positive results. Students really valued the additional Zoom meetings that were built in as part of these course changes, with many citing that they felt a "better sense of connection" to classmates and appreciated the opportunity to reflect on and plan through the guided activities. The additional credit in the Orientation and the final Capstone B allowed more room and flexibility for professional preparation activities and personal-professional and whole-group reflection and relationship building.

### ***English***

Another example is the [English program's assessment](#) of their students' writing development over time:

The scoring guide used to assess student writing in ENG 301 and 401 papers, collaboratively developed by the English faculty and revised in 2021, was used to assess student writing samples from two core courses. ENG 301 is a foundational course in the major introducing students to literary analysis and is typically taken in the sophomore or early junior year; ENG 401 is the second class in the capstone series supporting seniors in producing an original, researched project/paper. Assessing both papers across two or three years provides a reasonable snapshot of students' growth in the four skill areas between sophomore/junior year and spring of senior year.

In 2020-21, based on the increases we had seen in student outcomes across three of the four skill areas, we raised our target percentages for the first two outcomes.

The one slight exception—as we also saw in our 2020-21 results—was in “research skills and conventions,” where we fell short of the 50% target for 301 papers by 2%, while over 90% of seniors scored 3 or 4 in this category, well above our 75% target. We will address this target in 2022-23; it is possible that we need to lower the initial (301) target and raise the senior (401) target, as it's apparent that students are adequately learning and applying research skills between sophomore and senior years.

Improvement in the skill areas over the past few years has been the result of efforts to better align measurement methods with our instructional practices. For example, we believe that our explicit emphasis on teaching the ‘moves’ of academic writing (Harris, 2006) has shown positive results in student learning outcomes. Also helpful: teaching academic English as “dominant academic discourse” rather than as an unproblematic ‘standard’ English. We think that teaching and talking about grammar as rhetorical choices that differ across varieties of English (rather than a set of hegemonic rules to follow) has empowered students to make more effective rhetorical choices in their writing.

*The Center for Advancement of Teaching and Learning's role in use of assessment for improvement of student learning outcomes*

Program faculty work with the Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning (CATL) to implement best practices and innovate new practices in teaching and learning.

The Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning is integral to continuous improvement of teaching and learning. The Center for the Advancement of Teaching and

Learning (CATL), positioned within the Office of the Provost, works with faculty and staff to ensure excellence in teaching practices in all learning environments.

CATL offers a variety of sponsored programs for individual and small groups of faculty to implement best practices and innovate new practices in teaching and learning.

- Course Design Academy: The Course Design Academy (CDA) represents a multi-term community of practice to support faculty in redesigning entire courses to advance institutional core themes and initiatives.
- Innovation Communities: ICs are intended for small groups (~4-16 faculty) who wish to create a community of practice on a short-term basis (~4-16 weeks) to solve a student learning challenge through innovative curriculum or pedagogy.
- Transparent Assignment Design Workshops: Attendees revise a key assignment to ensure that the purpose, instructions, and criteria for success are clearly designed to optimize student success.
- Learning Circles: Learning Circles are groups of up to 10 participants who meet to discuss topics or books consistent with the mission of the Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning.
- CATL also supports the development, implementation, and maintenance of policies and standards for teaching and learning at the programmatic level, such as the ongoing redesign of general education.

*The Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning plays a crucial role in curricular revision such as the transformation of General Education.*

In Fall 2019, the Faculty Senate convened a Transforming General Education Task Force to define outcomes for a revised general education program at SOU. In addition to reviewing outcomes at several similar universities and conducting a survey of current SOU students, the committee was able to draft a list of six broad capacities for general education. The final approved list of capacities can be found here.

In April 2021 the Faculty Senate ultimately voted to approve the general direction of the task force, affirming the capacities while reserving decisions on some matters of credit requirements. In response, a smaller group with CATL representation crafted a model and plan to assist faculty in the course design process.

The model and plan were based on the assumption that the Gen Ed Course transformation would require that more than 75 courses be designed or redesigned to meet the new requirements. As the scope, scale, and pace of that effort were beyond the capacity of the university's regular processes and structures, new course templates and approval processes were developed. CATL has expertise in instructional design and proven programs for delivery such as Course Design

Academy and Transparent Assignment Design that could be adjusted to support the increased scope and scale of Gen Ed Transformation. Faculty serving as "Capacity Leads" on subcommittees and in the approval process have expertise in capacity descriptions, proficiencies, and rubrics, necessary to support faculty during the course design process. The CATL plan relied on distributed support, with CATL and faculty Capacity Leads each providing technical assistance.

CATL provided workshops introducing structures and tools in three key areas:

- Course design process (backward design starting with the capacity outcomes)
- Transparent assignment design
- Syllabus design

Capacity Leads shepherded faculty through the processes, providing:

- Support for capacity learning outcomes
- Alignment with capacity intentions
- Increased potential for successful proposals

From Fall of 2021 through Spring of 2022, CATL and faculty worked together, resulting in the approval of 92 courses earning approval by the Faculty Senate to be offered as part of the new General Education model, with another 25 allowed until Fall 2022 for completion, approval, and stipend support. Throughout the process, 80 faculty from across campus were introduced to formal course design principles that can be applied to any course they teach, thereby greatly increasing our capacity to offer a high-quality learning experience for our students.

*The University Assessment Committee's role in use of assessment for improvement of student learning outcomes*

The University Assessment Committee uses the results of its reviews of program assessment reports, senior writing, and oral presentations to provide feedback to program faculty for their use in improving student learning and achievement. Based on themes in assessment reports, the University Assessment Committee collaborates with CATL to offer workshops to faculty; for example, a workshop on [Closing the Loop](#) in [Winter 2021](#).

*The role of shared governance in use of assessment results for improvement of student learning outcomes*

The Provost and Faculty Senate respond to results by re-designing programs and institutional efforts, such as the redesign of General Education.

**1.C.8 Transfer credit and credit for prior learning is accepted according to clearly defined, widely published, and easily accessible policies that provide adequate safeguards to ensure**



**academic quality. In accepting transfer credit, the receiving institution ensures that such credit accepted is appropriate for its programs and comparable in nature, content, academic rigor, and quality.**

Policies for [accepting transfer credit](#) are published in the SOU Catalog. Students transferring to SOU from a regionally accredited college or university must show evidence of honorable dismissal from the other collegiate institutions and a cumulative grade point average of at least 2.25 in 36 quarter credits (or 24 semester credits) of acceptable college work. Applicants who hold an associate's degree from a regionally accredited institution or an Oregon Transfer Module (OTM) will be admitted with a 2.00 GPA. SOU limits students to a maximum of 12 quarter credits (8 semester credits) of physical education activity and team participation credits that can be used toward meeting the transfer admission requirements. A transfer student with fewer than 36 transferable quarter credits must also meet the requirements for freshman standing.

Post-1996 GED holders, as well as applicants who graduated from high school in 1997 or later, must also submit a copy of their official high school academic records to prove they have successfully completed with a C- or better a minimum of two years (2 units) of study in a second language. An exception to this requirement will be made for transfers who have completed two terms (8 quarter credits) of a second language at the college level with a C- grade or better or who have achieved satisfactory performance on an approved second language proficiency assessment (ASL is acceptable).

Transfer applicants must submit an application for admission, the \$60 application fee, and official transcripts from every institution of higher education attended. Transcripts must be mailed from the prior institutions directly to the SOU Admissions Office. Transfer students are also encouraged to visit the campus.

Transfers should note that a minimum of 45 of the last 60 credits of coursework must be SOU credits to complete a degree. For more specific requirements, see the descriptions of the various degree programs in the catalog. In addition, please refer to Transfer Student Policies in the Core Curriculum Requirements for more information.

Substitutions for University Studies required courses may also be submitted for review. If a student believes a course transferred into SOU met the requirements, a petition for substitution may be submitted. There is no fee to the student to have the application reviewed.

### **Credit from Accredited Institutions**

Advanced standing is granted to students transferring to SOU with acceptable records from regionally accredited institutions. The amount of credit granted depends on the nature and quality of the applicant's previous work, evaluated according to Southern Oregon University's academic

requirements. The GPA of transferred credits is computed and used only as a basis for admission and is not included in a student's SOU GPA.

### **Credit from Non-regionally Accredited Institutions**

No credit is granted at entrance for work at a non-regionally accredited institution.

### **Credit from Two-Year Institutions**

SOU accepts college-level credit toward a baccalaureate degree transferred from regionally accredited postsecondary institutions. Up to 24 credits of vocational-technical coursework that is applicable in an associate degree or certificate program at a regionally accredited institution may be accepted as elective credit along with the transfer credits. In regards to admission, up to 24 quarter vocational-technical credits can count toward the 36 quarter credits required to consider an applicant a transfer student, but the GPA from those vocational-technical credits will not be counted toward the cumulative GPA used to make an admissions decision.

### **Special Academic Credit**

SOU considers granting credit for credit by examination, the College Level Examination Program (CLEP), Advanced Placement (AP), and International Baccalaureate (IB). Please read Special Academic Credit on page 8 for more information.

The policy for accepting [Credit for Prior Learning](#) is published in the SOU Catalog. Credit for prior learning (CPL) provides an opportunity for students to document acquired learning from life/work experiences in a format that can be assessed for academic credit. CPL credits may be earned by students who can demonstrate that they have gained university-level knowledge and skills that articulate with university coursework on the specific topic.

CPL may be appropriate for students if their prior learning experiences have resulted in college-level knowledge, skills, and abilities, and if they are able to demonstrate that this knowledge meets the objectives of designated SOU courses.

Before seeking credit for prior learning, the student must apply to the academic program in which course credit is sought for approval to complete a prior learning portfolio to meet the requirements for coursework designated for CPL.

1. Students may not seek credit for prior learning for a course they have previously taken for credit and for which they have received a grade other than an audit, nor may they seek credit for a course more than once. If students register for a course for which they are seeking credit for prior learning, they must drop that course and submit an application for CPL for the course before the last day to drop without a grade record.

2. No more than 25% of the credits submitted for graduation may be earned through CPL.
3. Credit for prior learning counts toward graduation residency requirements.
4. Portfolios receive either a P (pass) or NP (no pass). A pass indicates that the student has mastered material comparable to a grade of C- or better in the corresponding course. The Registrar records P grades on the student's transcript but does not count the P in grade point average calculations. The Registrar does not record NP grades. Transcripts will identify credits earned through prior learning assessment.
5. CPL credits may be awarded for courses required by the student's major program that are eligible for P/NP option through prior approval of the major program.
6. A student is permitted to have one course a term with the Pass/No Pass (P/NP) grading option. This limitation is in addition to any courses that are only offered with a P/NP grading option, such as activity courses, or courses completed through credit for prior learning.
7. A non-refundable fee of \$150 will be charged for each application to assess credit for prior learning, regardless of the outcome. A nonrefundable fee of \$55 per credit hour will be charged to the student at the time that credits are awarded.
8. Appropriate program faculty, or other approved departmental or institutional representative(s), are responsible for reviewing the portfolio, interviewing the student, and making a recommendation. The Program Chair or Coordinator is responsible for initiating the process and contacting program faculty who will review the portfolio and recommendation and make a decision to grant credit. If none of the program faculty are available to assess the portfolio, and no appropriate substitute can be identified, the program will have the option to deny the application.
9. Disposition of the portfolio assessment, along with the application, will be forwarded to the Registrar, who will keep it as part of the student's permanent academic record. The student's portfolio will be stored by the Program Chair or Coordinator, or another appropriate administrator.
10. There is no guarantee of transferability of CPL credits awarded at or accepted by Southern Oregon University.

11. Credit for prior learning will be assessed for lower division credit only. Exceptions will be considered by petition, and approval by the Program Chair or Coordinator, appropriate program faculty, Division Direction, and the Registrar.

### **Prior Learning Assessment**

Southern Oregon University grants credit for prior learning assessed from the sources identified below. The following does not include/apply to transfer credit. Please see the [Admission of Transfer Students](#) section for information on how SOU awards transfer credit.

### **Overarching Policies:**

- No more than 25% of the credits assessed for prior learning, in any combination, may be applied to requirements for a SOU degree
- Prior learning credit will only be granted at the undergraduate level
- Depending on the type, prior learning credit will be granted as generic credit with no grade, or as Pass/No pass credit - it will not be granted with an associated letter grade
- Prior learning credit can be used to satisfy overall degree credit requirements, specific general education requirements, and/or specific major/minor/certificate requirements, even if these would normally require a letter grade

### **American Council on Education (ACE) Credit**

Students entering SOU may have college credit awarded for educational experiences obtained in the military or elsewhere. Credit recommended by the American Council on Education (ACE) will be evaluated by SOU and awarded as appropriate. Notwithstanding the aforementioned Overarching Policies, SOU will attempt to transfer as many ACE credits as possible from official military transcripts.

SOU also accepts some credits from third-party entities that do not hold regional accreditation (such as from StraighterLine) that have been evaluated by ACE, as recommended for credit on an ACE transcript. Please note that not all coursework will be accepted - SOU academic programs have the prerogative to determine which ACE coursework will be acceptable and have full authority to establish course equivalents. These third-parties are not regionally-accredited degree-granting institutions and their transcripts do not display credit values for courses taken. ACE must recommend all such courses for credit. Students will need to send SOU a transcript from ACE to request that these credits be evaluated and assessed for transfer acceptance. Transcripts received directly from these third-parties cannot be utilized. For ACE credit from these third-parties, SOU will award no more than 9 total quarter credit hours, or 2 courses, to an individual student.

### **Advanced Placement (AP) Credit**

SOU will award AP credit using the Advanced Placement Credit table at [this link](#) for all students entering SOU Fall 2019 or later. With the exception of Calculus BC (see table), SOU requires a minimum AP score of a 3 in order to award any credit. SOU will award credit, with no associated grade, for acceptable AP scores. Insufficient AP scores will not be recorded in any fashion.

#### **College Level Examination Program (CLEP) Credit**

SOU will award CLEP credit using the CLEP Credit table at [this link](#).

SOU will award credit, with no associated grade, for acceptable CLEP scores. Insufficient CLEP scores will not be recorded in any fashion.

#### **Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) Credit**

SOU has a robust CPL process. Please see the [CPL section above](#) for details.

#### **DSST (DANTES) Credit**

SOU does not award credit directly for DSST. Students may elect the [Credit for Prior Learning \(CPL\)](#) option as applicable.

#### **International Baccalaureate (IB) Credit**

SOU will award IB credit using the IB Credit table at [this link](#) for all students entering SOU Fall 2019 or later. SOU requires a minimum IB score of a 4 in order to award any credit. SOU will award credit, with no associated grade, for acceptable IB scores. Insufficient IB scores will not be recorded in any fashion.

#### **Other Programs**

The University Registrar and the Associate Provost, in consultation with applicable academic programs and academic leadership, may seek to develop and approve additional programs that meet the spirit and intent of the above policies and programs. Examples of such programs may include Credit by Exam, Credit Buyback, Advanced-Level (and similar) International Programs, and California's MAP program (Military Articulation Platform). Such approvals and arrangements will be subsequently presented to the Academic Policies Committee.

**1.C.9 The institution's graduate programs are consistent with its mission, are in keeping with the expectations of its respective disciplines and professions, and are described through nomenclature that is appropriate to the levels of graduate and professional degrees offered. The graduate programs differ from undergraduate programs by requiring, among other things, greater: depth of study; demands on student intellectual or creative capacities; knowledge of the literature of the field; and ongoing student engagement in research, scholarship, creative expression, and/or relevant professional practice.**

Southern Oregon University offers fifteen [graduate degree programs](#), including master's degree programs in Business, Education, and Clinical Mental Health Counseling that participate in specialized accreditation.

- MBA: ACBSP, Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs
- Master in Management: ACBSP, Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs
- Master's in Clinical Mental Health Counseling: CACREP, Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs
- Master of Arts in Teaching: Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation, Oregon Teacher and Standards and Practices Commission
- Master of Science in Education: Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation, Oregon Teacher and Standards and Practices Commission. Note: These accreditors only apply to the licensure pathways in this degree
- Master of Science in Environmental Education: NAAEE, North American Association for Environmental Education
- Special Education, MA or MS: Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation, Oregon Teacher and Standards and Practices Commission

The Graduate Studies Committee of the Faculty Senate is charged with recommending policies related to graduate curriculum and programs. As discussed in response to Standard 1.C.1, as a public institution, Southern Oregon University's curriculum development and management system includes multiple quality control measures and different levels: Curriculum Committee and Provost Office, Board of Trustees, and the Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Committee (HECC). New graduate programs undergo a rigorous review process, and existing programs participate in the annual assessment and periodic academic program review.

## **Student Achievement - Standards 1.D.1 – 1.D.4**

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

Southern Oregon University recruits, admits, and enrolls students who have demonstrated the potential to benefit from its educational programs. In keeping with its mission as a regionally-engaged learning community, regional recruitment and admission are intertwined. SOU recruits, admits, and provides pre-enrollment support to potential students in order to address historic inequities and serve its entire community, including the [Honors College](#), the [Bridge Program](#), the [Degree in Three Program](#), and [pathway programs](#) to support academic success and college readiness for local Hispanic youth from the Medford and Phoenix-Talent school districts.



The SOU Bridge Program, which is only available to students graduating from an Oregon high school, gives special consideration to students who bring equity strengths to Southern Oregon University, including students from low-income families, students representing groups that have been historically underrepresented at colleges and universities, students who will be the first in their family to graduate from college, and students who have overcome extraordinary challenges.

Admission standards are found [here](#):

- [Freshman high school student applicant requirements](#)
- [Transfer college student applicant requirements](#)
- [Graduate student applicant requirements](#)
- [International student applicant requirements](#)
- [Additional information for prospective students](#)

Southern Oregon University orients new students over time and in a variety of ways, including:

- Summer pre-registration- these events allow students to have a one-on-one session with their SSC and work on their term class schedule. The programming that surrounds these events also educates students about our on-campus support resources (CPS, DR, Housing, SOUCares, ODOS, SHWC, Fin. Aid, SJEC, etc.)
- Week of welcome activities- These focus on on-campus support resources and ensuring that students are connecting with their peers and developing a sense of belonging.
- Navigate- has a full list of resources for on-campus. Students are communicated about downloading the App during the admission process and during all of our registration events

In order to help students with their academic success, the [Dean of Students Office](#) has a variety of web pages that help students, including [Basic Needs](#), [Connect](#), [Find Support](#), [SOUCares Resources](#)

Once students are admitted to SOU, various departments begin outreach to welcome them to the Raider family. Incoming students are encouraged to attend a registration event in June, July, August (virtual), or September that will allow them to get their class schedule, meet with their Student Success Coordinator, attend events that educate them about campus resources, and connect with fellow students. Once the term has started students receive information via email or through Navigate to ensure they are aware of any relevant requirements or policies.

Southern Oregon University orients students and provides information about requirements related to their programs of study through Admissions, the Registrar's Office, Student Success Coordinators, and faculty advisors. The Office of Student Activities and the Student Union survey students about their satisfaction with and perceptions of the usefulness of orientation events. Students must meet with an SSC or faculty advisor to register for classes each term. This can help ensure that students are on the right track for their academic program. The registrar's office sends out the Required annual information disclosure for SOU students each term. This includes information about [academic programs](#) and [university policies](#) among other things. The registrar's office also sends out via email any changes to programs or deadlines.

The registrar's office emails students about graduation deadlines, and the [Student Services Enrollment](#) web page provides information about [registration dates and information](#), [degrees and graduation](#), and other information such as courses and schedules.

Student Success Coordinators and faculty advisors play a critical role in providing information about degree and graduation requirements, and students are also able to view their academic progress in DegreeWorks and the Navigate app.

The Admissions Office provides information about [transferring into Southern Oregon University](#).

Students intending to transfer from SOU to another institution can work with Raider Student Services, which will assist with ordering transcripts. Students wanting help finding a new major or other school can work with their Student Success Coordinator or faculty advisor, or with Career Connections.

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

SOU's Institutional Research Office establishes and shares widely a set of indicators for student achievement including, but not limited to, persistence, completion, retention, and post-graduation success through its website and through participation in shared governance, committees, and information to the President and Board of Trustees. The most comprehensive sets of indicators are published in each year's [Common Data Set](#) through IPEDS, [Fact Books](#), and [Enrollment Data](#). IR produces weekly reports that include elements of student success indicators and data disaggregated by categories used to monitor trends, including underrepresented minorities, Pell Grant recipients, Veterans, and Rural High School Graduates.

SOU participates in the National Survey of Student Engagement, which allows comparison to peer groups and allows customization of peer groups depending on the question. In all categories, SOU student responses are similar to peers. Even when differences are statistically significant, effect sizes are very small.

SOU uses disaggregated data to investigate specific topics related to student achievement, such as pathways for Native American students and Pacific Islanders. The use of disaggregated data to track student achievement and design interventions to close achievement gaps is still rare, but the

use of data in decision-making is embedded in the work of various groups across campus. For example, the Strategic Enrollment Management Group uses data to answer broad strategic enrollment growth questions from a variety of perspectives.

At the program level, student support services programs track student data and outcomes and compare the performance of their student population with the general student population, and use the data to improve student services and impact student achievement.

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

At the institutional level, graduation and student achievement data reported to the National Center for Educational Statistics are available through a [link](#) on the [Institutional Research website](#).

Disaggregated indicators of student achievement are published on Southern Oregon University’s Institutional Research website, and a search of the Southern Oregon University website for “retention rate” or “graduate rate” leads to the search result [“Consumer Information”](#) with links to SOU Fact Books produced by Institutional Research.

Through its reporting to IPEDS, the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System of the National Center for Education Statistics, disaggregated indicators of student achievement are widely available to the public.

As will be discussed in response to Standard 1.D.4, the use of disaggregated data occurs at the program and institutional levels.

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

The Office of Institutional Research collects and analyzes indicators of student achievement using data from a number of legacy systems that are being replaced by the university’s adoption of Workday enterprise management system. The university’s adoption of Workday will maintain data integrity and empower users to find and use data themselves by providing cleaner data, more ready for use and public presentation. IR’s role is to be a translator of data into usable information. The adoption of Workday is an indication of SOU’s commitment to data-driven, strategic decision-making.

As discussed in response to Standard 1.D.3, the Office of Institutional Research collects, analyzes, and provides disaggregated indicators of student achievement for use in decision-making at all levels. In addition, support programs collect data related to their specific

populations and compare that data to the general student population. For example, the Disability Resource program tracks retention, graduation, and DFWI rates for students with disabilities and compares them to rates for admitted undergraduate non-disabled students at SOU. Its most recent finding was that students with disabilities were retained at a 78.93% rate this academic year, compared to admitted UG students at 77.64% for a 1.29% difference between these two populations, which is positively significant for students with disabilities.

At the institutional level, the Strategic Enrollment Management Council's subcommittee on Student Success and Retention uses disaggregated data to set and track targets for improvement. Fiscal and staffing challenges during and since the pandemic have been barriers to continuity and communication, but even in that challenging environment, the work of the Enrollment Council indicates the university's commitment to using data for the improvement of student achievement and institutional effectiveness.

## **Conclusion**

During this accreditation cycle, Southern Oregon University has strengthened its existing assessment and continuous improvement practices, implementing recommendations based on the previous cycle. Continuous improvement processes were disrupted first by pandemic lockdowns, the shift to online operations, and the impact of local wildfires, which caused great hardship for many in the university community and harmed the tourism-dependent local economy. Enrollment and financial challenges that are affecting all of higher education have further impacted SOU.

Given the disruption caused by the pandemic during the period from 2020 to 2022, university operations were concentrated on the core functions of providing effective instruction and student services and complying with federal and state regulations. Despite these challenges, we made some great strides across campus. We implemented a number of new degrees, including the Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies major and the Digital Cinema major. We also developed the Institute for Applied Sustainability, a mix of academic programming, conferences, and infrastructure. In addition, we set an ambitious goal to be the first campus to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2040. Lastly, we are excited to launch a newly designed [General Education](#) model in the Fall of 2023. This new model features six critical skill areas; purposeful learning, community expression, creativity and innovation, inquiry and analysis, numerical literacy, and equity, diversity, and inclusion. This new model also significantly reduces the general education footprint for students affording greater flexibility. In the past year, the President's leadership of SOU's realignment effort has marked a transition from reacting to crisis to proactively creating a promising future.

The efforts undertaken during and since the pandemic, lead to the next steps in continuous improvement. These include evaluation of the current realignment and of new programs that result from SOU Forward, assessment of the new General Education model, and increasingly strategic use of data to improve student achievement.

As discussed in response to Standard 1.B.4, President Rick Bailey has outlined five questions to be asked in considering any new program:

1. What resources will this new proposal require?
2. What are the anticipated fiscal or performance benefits from this initiative?
3. What is the time horizon for these expected benefits?
4. What metrics and measurements will be used to monitor progress?
5. What actions will be taken if the expected milestones are not achieved?

One of SOU's priorities for the next accreditation cycle will be to integrate these newly developed questions with existing evaluation criteria and processes. Another will be to strengthen systems that facilitate cross-functional communication and access to data, to improve processes and outcomes. The 2023-2024 academic year will feature significant changes including the launch of the redesigned GE program, a significant reorganization of Academic and Student Affairs, cabinet-level personnel changes, the transition from Banner to Workday, and importantly living into the SOU forward plan outlined above. SOU faces the challenge of maintaining current operations, and with the implementation of Workday and a new version of our assessment tracking system, Improve, we have the opportunity to organize information and processes to address communication and workload issues.

Southern Oregon University's community of faculty, staff, students, and leadership share a commitment to the mission, and the overarching work of the next cycle will be to fulfill our mission using the guiding principles and strategies outlined in SOU Forward.

## **Addendum A - Response to PRFR Findings**

As noted in our Policies, Regulations, and Financial Review Report (PRFR) feedback report, we provided an overview of our policies including language from the SOU Board of Trustees bylaws and our internal language on policies. Furthermore, in response to the PRFR feedback report and with the appointment of a new general counsel and executive assistant for that office, we have initiated a wholesale review of our policies, procedures, and forms. While that is still a work in progress, we have made strides, including the development of definitions and clarification for policies and procedures. The Board of Trustees maintains a “policy on policies” document that provides guidance for individual programs and their development of departmental policies and procedures. We have revised our system for storing, reviewing, and editing policies. Importantly, in January of 2023, we advised all responsible officers to review all of their policies and identify any policies that needed urgent attention. Any policies identified as such were reviewed at the February 2023 meeting. Furthermore, we also revised our policy tracking document and advised members of the policy committee on revisions to our review priority process. Under the revised review priority process, established policies coded as priority level one will be reviewed and/or revised within 12 months; those coded as a two will be reviewed within 24 months and those deemed priority level three will be reviewed within the next 36 months. A priority level four designation means that the policy has been reviewed by the responsible officer and no changes are needed. Regardless of the policy’s priority level, all of our policies are being transitioned to our new policy template.

The following is an account of the Standards noted by NWCCU as needing improvement, and the actions taken by SOU in response.

### **2.B.1 Within the context of its mission and values, the institution adheres to the principles of academic freedom and independence that protect its constituencies from inappropriate internal and external influences, pressures, and harassment.**

We sought clarification from NWCCU staff and were advised to consider expanding our definition beyond faculty and publicizing our commitment to academic freedom more broadly. In response, we have begun to examine both the places where we reference academic freedom as well as our definitions and our statements of commitment to academic freedom. In the Fall of 2023, we will discuss with governance bodies at SOU the consideration of a broader definition of academic freedom that would more clearly expand the rights and responsibilities of academic freedom to all SOU community members. The university’s policies guide the response when a matter is brought to the attention of administrators, and the culture of the university reflects and is in turn influenced by formal policy.

**Standard 2.B.2 Within the context of its mission and values, the institution defines and actively promotes an environment that supports independent thought in the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge. It affirms the freedom of faculty, staff, administrators, and students to share their scholarship and reasoned conclusions with others. While the institution and individuals within the institution may hold to a particular personal, social, or religious philosophy, its constituencies are intellectually free to test and examine all**



**knowledge and theories, thought, reason, and perspectives of truth. Individuals within the institution allow others the freedom to do the same.**

The feedback provided by NWCCU indicated that “SOU provided documentation demonstrating policies and expectations of behavior that include support for independent thought and expression but current policies need to be available on the website.” As part of our review and redesign of our policies, processes, template, and website, we are hopeful that we’ve adequately addressed the concern about publishing our policy. As mentioned above, in the Fall of 2023 we will discuss with governance bodies at SOU the consideration of a broader definition of academic freedom that would more clearly expand the rights and responsibilities of academic freedom to all SOU community members to broaden a culture of academic freedom.

**Standard 2.D.2 The institution advocates, subscribes to, and exemplifies high ethical standards in its management and operations, including in its dealings with the public, NWCCU, and external organizations, including the fair and equitable treatment of students, faculty, administrators, staff, and other stakeholders and constituencies. The institution ensures that complaints and grievances are addressed in a fair, equitable, and timely manner.**

Feedback from NWCCU concerned the accessibility of our grievance policies. As part of our comprehensive redesign of our policies and procedures, we will make sure all of the relevant policies are current and posted to either our policies website or to our HR section on policies.

**Standard 2.D.3 The institution adheres to clearly defined policies that prohibit conflicts of interest on the part of members of the governing board(s), administration, faculty, and staff.**

As noted in the addendum of our PRFR report from October 2022, the [Consensual Relationships and Conflict of Interest Policy](#) was revised in November 2022. Additionally, we are seeking ways to increase the visibility and accessibility of our existing conflict of interest policies. Our Human Resources office is working on a revision of the policies and forms section of their website. This will allow us to better cross-reference those policies elsewhere.

**Standard 2.F.3 Consistent with its mission, programs, and services, the institution employs faculty, staff, and administrators sufficient in role, number, and qualifications to achieve its organizational responsibilities, educational objectives, establish and oversee academic policies, and ensure the integrity and continuity of its academic programs.**

We have reviewed the policies listed in our PRFR report. All of these policies are included in our comprehensive review, transferred to our new policies forms, and links to these policies have been double-checked for accuracy.

**Standard 2.F.4 Faculty, staff, and administrators are evaluated regularly and systematically in alignment with institutional mission and goals, educational objectives, and policies and procedures. Evaluations are based on written criteria that are published, easily accessible, and clearly communicated. Evaluations are applied equitably, fairly, and**

**consistently in relation to responsibilities and duties. Personnel are assessed for effectiveness and are provided feedback and encouragement for improvement.**

We have initiated a review of our policies and procedures governing evaluations. Notably, in the Spring and Summer of 2023, the Provost convened a committee that looked closely at chairperson workload and duties. One of the recommendations of that committee was to examine the requirements for evaluations for new faculty, adjunct faculty, and post-tenure faculty. Additionally, all procedures related to evaluation have been reviewed and updated as part of our comprehensive review or our policies process review.

**Standard 2.G.6 The institution designs, maintains, and evaluates a systematic and effective program of academic advisement to support student development and success. Personnel responsible for advising students are knowledgeable of the curriculum, program, and graduation requirements, and are adequately prepared to successfully fulfill their responsibilities. Advising requirements and responsibilities of advisors are defined, published, and made available to students.**

We are in the process of evaluating our advising structure and procedures. We currently utilize a decentralized model of advising, the function of which is discussed in response to Standard 1.D.1. We have six Student Success Coordinators (SSCs) embedded across our five academic divisions. These SSCs provide comprehensive advising to students in those academic divisions including direction about General Education requirements and discipline-specific advising. Importantly, these SSCs function in support of faculty advisors who meet with a dedicated roster of students a minimum of once per year. There are other student support personnel who perform advising duties as well, but those are typically individuals who are charged with general support of specific university populations e.g. TRIO, Veterans Affairs.

We are in the process of assessing and evaluating our current advising structure through our Student Support assessment process, which involves the Director of University Assessment and Dean of Students working with the Support Programs Assessment Review Committee.

With regard to professional development, the SSCs seek out and attend various trainings throughout the academic year. In addition, they meet weekly and will often discuss topics or engage in professional development activities related to advising. For faculty and other staff that perform advising duties, the SSCs are often the main point of contact for the development of training materials and offering sessions to faculty. For example, we recently adopted the Navigate application and SSCs developed many of the support materials and provided training sessions for individual faculty.

## **Addendum B - Response to Special Request on Distance Education**

*Institutions authorized to offer Distance Education must include an addendum to their EIE Self-Evaluation Report. In this addendum, institutions should address and provide evidence of the following:*

- *Policies and procedures for ensuring the student who registers in a Distance Education course or program is the same student who participates in the course and receives credit.*
- *Policies and procedures that make it clear student privacy is protected.*
- *Notifications to students at the time of registration of any additional charges associated with verification procedures.*
- *Academic policies and procedures for instructors to implement requirements for regular and substantive interactions in Distance Education courses or programs.*

*Institutions also need to address the following, which can either be done as part of the addendum or in relevant Standard One elements identified below:*

- *The institution's Distance Education programs are consistent with the mission and educational objectives of the institutions (Standard 1.C.1).*
- *Institutions that offer courses or programs via multiple delivery modalities ensure learning outcomes and levels of student achievement are comparable across modalities (Standard 1.C.6).*

We addressed the first three bullet points above in our PRFR report. We've included that response here and added information to address bullet points 4-6.

*Response from the Southern Oregon University PRFR*

**2.G.7 The institution maintains an effective identity verification process for students, including those enrolled in distance education courses and programs, to establish that the student enrolled in such a course or program is the same person whose achievements are evaluated and credentialed. The institution ensures that the identity verification process for distance education students protects student privacy and that students are informed, in writing at the time of enrollment, of current and projected charges associated with the identity verification process.**

SOU verifies student identity through the use of assigned login credentials via the inside SOU portal. This portal is our single sign-on point of access for all of the infrastructure provided to students. This includes access to Moodle, our Learning Management System, and a host of course-related materials. In addition, we utilize Okta for our two-step multi-factor authentication

that requires students to confirm their identity through a second secure device like a mobile device or a token.

SOU employs account security measures, and students consent to the [Computing Resources Acceptable Use Policy](#). In addition, all students are made aware of the [academic standards policy](#) that expressly prohibits taking an examination for another student or arranging to have someone else take an examination for you.

Response to bullet points 4-6:

**Academic policies and procedures for instructors to implement requirements for regular and substantive interactions in Distance Education courses or programs.**

As part of the grading process, instructors are required to track student attendance progress throughout the academic term, which involves monitoring of regular and substantive interactions and participation in each course.

**The institution's Distance Education programs are consistent with the mission and educational objectives of the institutions (Standard 1.C.1).**

All of our existing distance ed programs either have an in-person correlate or evolved from a traditional in-person degree program. As such, those programs went through our traditional curriculum review process described above. Additionally, programs are periodically reviewed through the Academic Program Review process and through the annual assessment cycle. All three of these processes have a mission and strategic plan alignment at the core.

**Institutions that offer courses or programs via multiple delivery modalities ensure learning outcomes and levels of student achievement are comparable across modalities (Standard 1.C.6).**

All [distance education programs](#) and individual courses are reviewed initially by the university curriculum committee regardless of their modality. Subsequently, courses are reviewed by program faculty and those programs undergo assessment by program faculty and are reviewed by the University Assessment Committee.