



Southern Oregon University

Mid-Cycle Self Evaluation

September, 2019

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SOU Mid-Cycle Self-Evaluation, 2019

Introduction

Since submission of its Year Seven Self-Evaluation to NWCCU in 2016, SOU has initiated several significant institutional processes, including a new Strategic Plan and core themes for Accreditation. The University has also expanded its catalog of academic programs and co-curricular opportunities for students, completed searches for several key positions, and implemented structural changes that are designed to enhance student success, employee satisfaction, institutional efficacy, and sustainability. Among these changes include:

- Hiring a Vice President of Enrollment Management & Student Affairs
- Creating the position of Chief Diversity & Inclusivity Officer and completing a successful search
- Appointing a new Associate Vice President of Government Relations & Outreach
- Realignment of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs
- Reinstating the position of Dean of Students and filling the position
- Reconfiguring the University Enrollment Management Council
- Filling vacancies in positions of Director of Housing, Director of the Center for Instructional Support, Director of Campus Public Safety and Director of the Honors College
- Completion of capital construction projects, including the recently LEED Gold-certified [Lithia Pavilion and Campus Recreation Center](#) and renovation and expansion of the SOU Theatre Building and new Jefferson Public Radio Broadcasting Center
- Collaborating with other public colleges and universities in southern Oregon to create the Southern Oregon Higher Education Consortium (SOHEC), an alliance aimed at streamlining students' educational pathways and addressing the region's specific workforce needs
- Becoming a member of the EAB Student Success Collaborative and implementing EAB's Student Success Management System, [Navigate](#), a digital platform that supports intentional student support intervention and success tracking.

The University is closely monitoring implementation of our new strategic plan, which was adopted in January of 2018 after a comprehensive effort by the campus Strategic Planning Committee, and significant consultation and collaboration among all major campus constituencies (staff, faculty, administration, students, Board of Trustees and external stakeholders).

Full text of the plan, its seven component Strategic Directions (SDs), and their goals, can be found on the [President's web site](#). Twenty-two specific goals are identified within the seven Strategic Directions, six of which were identified as immediate priorities for the institution (see below). These priority goals were identified as those that most help the institution financially, would have the biggest impact on students and employees, could be achieved with current resources, and/or should start immediately due to the time required. Per Standard 3.B.1 and 3.B.2, these goals also align with the institutional Core Themes, as described in Part I below and in SOU's response to Recommendation 4 in NWCCU's response to the Year Seven Peer Evaluation (See Addendum, Response to Year Seven Peer Evaluation).

Current Priority Goals (and the corresponding Core Themes) guiding strategic plan implementation are:

1. 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. (SD 1.2; CT I.1, I.2, I.3, I.4))
2. SOU will develop effective orientation, training and professional development programs as well as a performance management process that rewards employees for continuous improvement. (SD 2.1; CT II.2, CT II.2.1)

3. SOU will design and implement a program that will develop a culture of service excellence in all employees. (SD 2.4: CT II.2)
4. SOU will establish supportive pathways that will increase the access, retention, and success of learners (students, faculty, and staff) from underrepresented backgrounds. (SD 4.2; CT I.1, I.2, III.1.1, III.1.2, III 1.3, III1.4)
5. SOU will develop, implement and monitor a comprehensive strategic enrollment management plan. (SD 5.1; CT II.1)
6. SOU will develop key performance indicators to incentivize, monitor, and reward improvements, innovations or efficiencies. (SD 5.2; not currently mapped to a Core Theme)

It is anticipated that more objectives for the priority goals will be defined and tracked over the course of future years. Similarly, other goals will be assigned priority status while others will be marked as complete. Progress on the Strategic Plan is closely documented, monitored and reported utilizing the Nuventive product [Improve](#), which is also used for institutional assessment. This enables us to track alignment between institutional planning and assessment of mission fulfillment. Appendix MCE.1 provides a sample report of progress made on Strategic Direction 1. The addendum provides more detail on SOU’s response to the Year Seven Peer Evaluation team’s recommendation on Standards 3.B.1 and 3.B.

Part I: Overview of Institutional Assessment Plan

SOU’s current Institutional Core Themes were submitted to NWCCU in our Year One Self-Evaluation Report in December 2017. These core themes, and the process by which they were developed, reflect the institution’s commitment to aligning the assessment of mission fulfillment for accreditation with university planning (Standards 3.B.1 and 3.B.2). Significant care was taken to ensure that the institutional core themes and strategic planning are integrated, closely connected, and complementary to one another in implementation, execution and assessment.

Assessment of Mission Fulfillment

SOU Vision and Institutional Mission

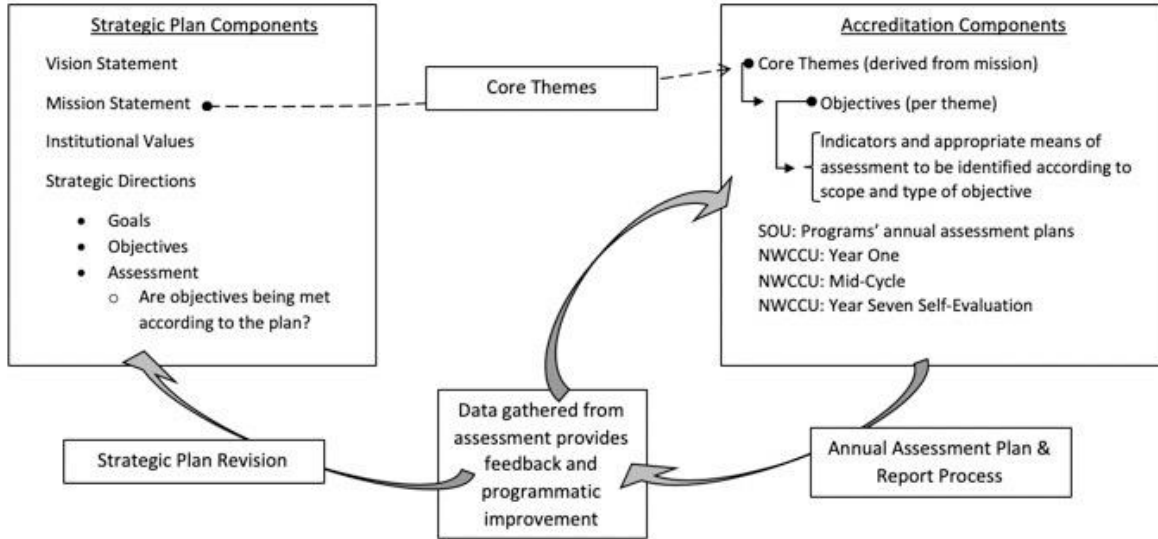
Vision
Southern Oregon University will become an inclusive, sustainable university for the future that guides all learners to develop the knowledge, capacities, and audacity to innovate boldly and create lives of purpose.

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.

SOU’s mission, vision, and strategic plan were approved by its Board of Trustees in January 2018. The seven strategic directions that comprise the Strategic Plan “derive directly from the mission and form the basis for the core themes and the objectives and indicators identified to determine progress toward mission fulfillment, articulating ‘acceptable threshold[s] or extent of mission fulfillment’ for each. The chart below illustrates the relationship between strategic planning and development and assessment of the University’s core themes.

Core Themes - Strategic Plan Alignment



The Strategic Plan consists of the seven strategic directions (SDs), and goals, objectives and means of assessment with targets for each. Each **Strategic Plan Objective** specifically identifies how and when it should be measured, who is responsible for the work, and whether the identified target for that assessment was met or not. Each of these elements is tracked under the supervision of a “sponsor” (a senior administrator who has been assigned to oversee one or more of each of the seven strategic directions), and documented using the Improve software program. Sponsors oversee plan development, assessment of progress by defining **outcomes** and **means of assessment**, the extent to which target goals are met, status of each specific component of the strategic plan, and achievements linking data to the institution’s strategic objectives. While this is SOU’s first endeavor to continuously monitor a strategic plan, the assessment software is already well established on campus and allows us to demonstrate the clear integration between the Strategic Plan, core themes, and individual program outcomes. Additionally, the software constantly updates to reflect changes and additions, and provides real-time tracking of strategic plan progress, as well as comprehensive reporting functions. This approach to institutional planning is one of the key measures that SOU has taken to ensure timely and comprehensive reporting to constituents, including the SOU Board of Trustees and NWCCU.

Keying off of the **institutional mission**, the **core themes** articulate the concrete **objectives** that ensure that the elements of the mission can be measured in “meaningful, assessable and verifiable ways.” Each of the three core themes reflects a component of the mission from which specific objectives and meaningful **indicators** are derived. They summarize and operationalize the basic propositions of the institutional mission: student learning, institutional improvement, and community, regional and global engagement. Full text of the core themes, core theme objectives and indicators is found in Appendix MCE.2.

Institutional Core Themes

- Core Theme I: Use innovative curriculum, practices and technologies to achieve student learning and success (“make a better student”)
- Core Theme II: Put our guiding principles into practice (“make a better institution”)
- Core Theme III: Create opportunities and inspire the audacity to act upon beliefs and values in a broader context (“make a better world”)

Ongoing assessment, reporting and documentation help assure that the institution is fulfilling its mission, reinforce the connection between the institutional core themes and strategic plan, and support the goal of implementing “core themes [that] are consistent with the institution’s comprehensive plan” and are aligned with and contribute to achievement of the goals or intended outcomes of the institution’s respective programs and services” (Standard 3.B.1. and 3.B.2).

Institutional Assessment

As noted above, Strategic Plan assessment aligns with existing institutional assessment processes undertaken by multiple campus entities. These include all academic programs (majors, minors and graduate programs), as well as special academic programs (such as the Honors College), and academic support programs (all programs that are not academic, including administrative, auxiliaries, support services, and infrastructure). Assessment is overseen by the Director of University Assessment who reports to the Associate Provost and Accreditation Liaison Officer, in collaboration with the Office of Institutional Research.

Assessment reports are submitted annually by all academic and academic support programs. Each program defines and/or updates internal outcomes, maps these outcomes to the institutional core themes and to the goals of the Strategic Directions, provides a narrative that summarizes the work done over the course of the academic year to conduct assessment and apply results, and submits data in Improve as evidence.

Undergraduate academic program assessment reports (Appendices MCE.3 and MCE.4) are reviewed annually by the University Assessment Committee, whose charge is “to oversee the institution, maintenance and development of student learning outcomes for the curriculum at Southern Oregon University”. The Committee’s charge is as follows:

- Reviews and recommends university-wide assessment tools.
- Advises and assists academic programs in developing and monitoring student learning
- Collaborates with the University Studies Committee on university-wide assessment of University Studies goal strands and proficiencies
- Collaborates with the Accreditation Steering Committee to report on accreditation standards that include academic assessment.
- Reports information on university-wide assessments to the Institutional Assessment and Accreditation Committee
- Reports and makes policy recommendations to the Faculty Senate through the Academic Policies Committee.

The Academic Assessment committee includes eight faculty members (one from each of the academic divisions); ex officio members (the Associate Provost, the Director of Institutional Research, the Director of the Center for Instructional Support, the Director of University Studies, the Director of University Assessment), and one student. The Associate Provost is the administrative contact for this committee. The Assessment Committee provides several assessment retreats or workshops each year, and provides an annual report to Faculty Senate.

Academic support program assessment reports are submitted and reviewed annually, following a similar process. Review of academic support program reports is undertaken by a separate 10-member committee known as SPARC (Support Program Assessment Review Committee), which consists of administrative staff. Each program’s report is reviewed, feedback is provided and, when necessary, plans for additional consultation or supplemental work to address issues, concerns or shortcomings are identified, generally by the Director of University Assessment. Assessment report reviews are submitted to administrative supervisors of each program, and to executive leadership. Academic support program assessment is discussed in more detail in Part II of this report.

Beginning in AY 18-19, each of SOU's 10 graduate programs completed an assessment report following guidelines which closely parallel undergraduate program assessment (MCE.5 and MCE.6). Graduate program reports were reviewed by the university's Graduate Council, which reports to Faculty Senate. Program faculty also received training and guidance on conducting program-level assessment, as did Graduate Council members, on reviewing assessment reports. Each program received feedback and recommendations for next steps. The integration of graduate programs into institutional assessment fulfills the recommendation made by the Year Seven Peer Evaluation team.

Summaries of each year's assessment reviews are provided to the President's Executive Cabinet, and in semi-annual reports on accreditation activities to the Board of Trustees. Roles and functions of the various campus entities and individuals involved in university assessment are summarized below.

Roles and Involvement in Assessment of Mission Fulfillment at SOU

Group/Individual Involved	Role or Function
University Assessment Committee (UAC)*	Oversees undergraduate program assessment activities; reviews undergraduate program assessment reports; oversees Senior Writing, oral presentation, quantitative literacy assessment; provides training and informational workshops to faculty
University Studies Committee (USC)*	Proposes, reviews and defines outcomes and new curriculum for general education curriculum
Graduate Council*	Reviews graduate program assessment reports
Support Programs Assessment Review Committee (SPARC)	Reviews academic support program assessment reports.
President's Executive Cabinet	Receives regular updates on accreditation and assessment activities
University Board of Trustees	Receives regular updates on accreditation and assessment activities; approves institutional strategic plan, mission, vision and core themes
Accreditation Steering Committee	Manages reporting requirements for NWCCU

**Indicates faculty membership*

Consistent with Core Theme II.4.2 (Institutional Improvement), and Strategic Direction 1.4 (SOU will engage in ongoing assessment of academic and academic support programs in order to further a process of continuous improvement), in academic year 2018-19, the Provost's office convened a working group consisting of academic faculty, several division directors and the Director of University Assessment to review approaches and practices to academic program review (APR). The recommendations of that group were presented to faculty governance and Division Directors and implemented in a pilot phase in Spring 2019. Three academic programs (Business Administration, Biology and Psychology) completed APRs, using the initially proposed template (MCE.7), which identifies five main areas for review: program description/context; student learning experience; program appraisal and institutional support; faculty; and goals, aspirations and 21st century transformation. The template was carefully designed to complement, but not duplicate, the assessment reporting that programs already complete, focusing more specifically on programmatic efficacy, resources, and planning priorities relative to the strategic plan. After the spring pilot experience is evaluated, any refinements needed to the APR template will be made and the process will be fully implemented in academic year 2019-20. In order to avoid placing significant reporting responsibilities on programs during the busy spring quarter, the deadline for University Assessment reports for academic programs will shift from Spring to Fall.

Validity of University Core Themes

As noted above, mapping of individual programs outcomes to institutional core themes and to strategic directions, is a component of each program's annual assessment report. Appendix MCE.8 is an example of how an academic

program (Business Administration) has mapped specific **learning outcomes** (seen in the illustration as column headings: “Professional”, “Information Literacy”, “Disciplined Inquiry”, etc.), to **institutional core themes** (seen in the row headings in the illustration as summary descriptions of each Core Theme and Core Theme objective: i.e., Student learning and Success: Critical Thinking; Student learning and Success: Professional Preparation, etc.) The table below delineates mapping of program outcomes to each of the university’s core themes, and shows both total number of outcomes related to each core theme, and the number of programs that map one or more of their outcomes to each theme.

Core Theme Objectives	Outcomes Mapped by UG Programs	UG Programs Represented	Outcomes Mapped by GR Programs	GR Programs Represented	Outcomes Mapped by Support Programs	Support Programs Represented
CT 1.1	88	25	47	10	37	17
CT 1.2	97	27	49	10	58	21
CT 1.3	60	21	21	7	41	16
CT 1.4	72	21	35	8	42	18
CT II.1	24	8	1	1	66	22
CT II.2	25	8	4	2	121	34
CT II.3	28	10	3	2	71	25
CT II.4	31	9	2	1	108	35
CT III.1	49	16	16	6	58	23
CT III.2	27	11	0	0	45	17
CT III.3	32	9	3	2	39	14
CT III.4	47	15	14	5	47	21
CT III.5	42	15	12	5	73	26

To explain further, focusing on Core Theme Objectives 1.1 (Critical Thinking) and (Professional Preparation) as examples, for AY 18-19, 35 of SOU’s 39 academic programs (undergraduate and graduate) defined program outcomes that support or advance Core Theme I.1, and mapped a total of 135 individual program outcomes to the objectives of this Core Theme. Seventeen of the 66 academic support programs identified program outcomes that support this objective, with a total of 37 individual program outcomes mapping to this objective. Thirty-seven academic programs mapped 146 individual outcomes to Core Theme Objective I.2, while 21 academic support programs mapped 58 individual outcomes to this Core Theme Objective.

While the number of programs mapping to specific objectives is not itself an indicator of mission fulfillment and/or continuous improvement, these data confirm the relevance of the core themes to the outcomes identified by individual university programs.

Over the roughly 1.5 years following the adoption of the new institutional mission and core themes, and the implementation of SOU’s Strategic Plan, it has been possible to refine certain objectives and to further define and revise indicators, as noted below. These revisions generally reflect changes in institutional structure and personnel, as well as enhanced understanding of institutional priorities defined in the Strategic Plan. However, since the submission of the Year One report in December 2017 and the subsequent implementation of the new university Strategic Plan in early 2018, we have only completed one full year of assessment of the new core theme objectives and indicators, and are in the early phase of establishing baselines and threshold levels to indicate success and establish markers of improvement. In some cases, data from previous core themes assessed during the last accreditation cycle are still relevant (Core Theme I.1.2, for example, is assessed via reports on the “matched pair” process of assessing critical thinking through sampling first year and senior writing samples, and dates back to academic year 2014-15). In others, indicators are new or rely on new instruments or data collection methods and have only been operational for one academic year.

While we expect that the core themes will remain constant for the remainder of the accreditation cycle leading up to the Year Seven Self-Evaluation in 2023, it is still possible that objectives and indicators may change or be eliminated based on analysis of assessment data received at the end of AY 2018-19. In order to achieve that goal, core theme objectives and indicators will be analyzed by the Accreditation Steering Committee and the appropriate supervisory entity, early in Fall of 2019. Appropriate modifications and/or thresholds for each indicator will be completed and presented to university leadership for approval, and to NWCCU should we exceed the threshold limit for core theme revision. At this point we are able to identify several revisions to core theme objectives and indicators. The proposed revisions reflect changes or appointment of key positions (for example, a new position of Diversity and Inclusivity Officer, effective August 2019); priority goals as defined by the Strategic Plan; availability of data or instruments; and/or changes to curriculum.

Proposed changes to Core Theme Objectives and Indicators

Core Theme I:

a. Revise Indicator I.1.1:

Achieve 70% of students demonstrating proficiency as defined by SOU institutional rubric(s) that assess critical thinking

Rationale: Remove graduate students from this indicator as the diversity of student work products and student learning outcomes in graduate programs makes it difficult to generate appropriate samples; identify a 70% threshold as a baseline from which anticipated gains will be built.

b. Add new Indicator I.1.3:

Demonstrate year over year growth in assessment of critical thinking ability evident in artifacts generated in senior culminating experiences

Rationale: Focuses additional assessment on the senior experience, and recognizes that the final essay as an illustrative artifact of student learning is not appropriate for all academic disciplines nor consistent with the increasing demand for digital and visual literacy skill development. Establishes the expectation that each program will engage in analysis and application of assessment data to achieve continuous improvement of the senior culminating experience.

c. Revise Indicator I.2.4

Number of programs providing internships, practica and/or capstone experiences that allow students to apply knowledge and skills to professional settings and to meet defined and meaningful learning outcomes.

Rationale: Changes unit of analysis from “percentage of students” to “number of programs” which is a more effective measure of institutional adoption of meaningful pre-professional curricular opportunities.

d. Revise wording in I.3.3:

Achieve benchmark for academic program offerings that align with outcomes identified in general education curriculum Strand I, Goal I as follows:

Understand and apply the tools necessary for responsible participation in communities.

Proficiencies: Students will be able to:

- 1. Demonstrate knowledge of community issues, community assets, and community needs.*
- 2. Identify how individuals affect communities.*
- 3. Identify how communities affect individuals.*
- 4. Apply knowledge, information, and skills to community issues.*

Rationale: Applies additional precision to the measurement of competencies and applied knowledge that comprise “civic engagement” keying off of the current general education curriculum

Core Theme II:

a. Revise wording CT II.1.1:

Achieve efficiency of academic staffing: identify and maintain targets for ratio of total academic FTE to total student credit hours (SCH)

Rationale: Clarifies and simplifies measure of academic resource efficiency

b. Revise wording of CT II.1.2:

Achieve efficiency of academic resources: identify and maintain targets for optimal ratio of permanent faculty to temporary faculty

Rationale: Removed requirement to identify ratio faculty FTE to instructional ELU (equivalent load unit) as this measure is redundant with CT II.1.1;

c. Revise/combine CTs II.1.3 and II.1.4:

Achieve optimal ratio of administrative and non-academic staff FTE to total SCH

Rationale: Provides a parallel measure of efficiency for academic and non-academic/support programs and clarifies what is being assessed; eliminates CT II.1.4 as this measure was largely redundant and requires very similar data to CT II.1.3

d. Eliminate CT II.1.5

Rationale: Incomplete measure of efficiency; determined to be an unnecessary measure for the expected yield.

e. Add a new indicator CT II.1.5:

Achieve efficiency of academic resources: identify and maintain target course fill rate (i.e. filled seats/available seats)

Rationale: Course fill rate has been determined to be an effective way to manage and assess efficacy of instructional resource.

f. Add a new indicator CT II.1.6:

Achieve efficiency of academic resources: identify and maintain optimal SCH by program

Rationale: SCH is the clearest indicator of growth in academic programs.

g. Revise wording of CT II.3 and Indicators II.3.1-II.3.7:

II.3 Diversity, Inclusivity and Equity: SOU will create, implement and assess a systemic set of practices that sustainably enable, enhance the cultural competence of all its constituents.

II.3.1 Complete a baseline diversity climate survey, disaggregate data and identify institutional challenges and opportunities by May 2020

II.3.2 Develop, institutionalize, and assess an equity affirming search, recruitment, and retention (EASRR) program

II.3.3 Establish and achieve target objectives for representation and deployment of trained Equity & Diversity Advocates in all searches

II.3.4 Establish and achieve target goals for the number of searches and candidate pool following the EASRR Program annually

II.3.5 Establish and achieve target objectives for hiring employees from underserved communities annually

II.3.6 Establish and achieve target objectives for retaining employees from underserved communities annually

II.3.7 Establish optimal target number of courses within the general education curriculum that define and assess cultural competence learning outcomes for students annually

Rationale: Applies additional specificity to measurement of diversity, inclusivity and equity and reflects the priorities of the new office of the Chief Diversity & Inclusivity Officer; expresses institutional commitment to cultural competence, by encapsulating diversity, inclusion and access

Core Theme III:

a. Revise Indicator III.1.4:

Maintain supportive and timely response to reports of bias, discrimination and equity grievance.

Rationale: Due to the elimination of the campus Bias Response Team and the restructuring and creation of an Equity Grievance Director position, with associated reporting and response responsibilities, revised wording reflects the appropriate function.

b. Eliminate Indicator III.3.4

Rationale: Indicator III.3.2 measures “activities and partnerships” that promote sustainability. Upon review, it was determined that because “programs”, “activities” and “partnerships” overlap and are difficult to delineate for analysis, measurement for both indicators would likely be duplicative.

Full text of revised Core Theme Objectives and Indicators is provided in Appendix MCE 10.

Part II: Examples of Mission and Core Theme Operationalization

Per NWCCU guidelines on the purpose and process for the Mid-Cycle Self-Evaluation, SOU has identified “two representative examples of how it has operationalized its mission and core themes progressing from objectives to indicators to outcomes to mission fulfillment.”

Example One: Chemistry and Business Administration Senior Learning Outcomes (CT I.1 and I.2)

SOU’s Business Administration and Chemistry programs illustrate mission fulfillment as academic majors with clearly articulated and continuously assessed student learning outcomes, as well as intentional procedures to effect improvements (i.e. “closing the loop”), specifically in their assessment of Core Themes I.1 and I.2, Critical Thinking and Professional Preparation.

Business Administration

SOU’s Business Administration (BA) program identifies five learning outcomes for each student:

1. Professional: Demonstrate the ability to apply and synthesize the functional areas of business to make sound business decisions (CT I.1)
2. Information Literacy: Access, use and evaluate information in business decision-making (CT I.2, I.4)
3. Disciplined Inquiry: Use quantitative and qualitative analytical and critical thinking skills to evaluate information, solve problems and make sound decisions (CT I.4, II.4, III.1, III.4)
4. Communication skills: Communicate effectively in various forms (CT I.2, II.2, III.1, III.5)
5. Ethics: Demonstrate knowledge and application of prescribed ethical codes and behaviors in the workplace (CT I.3, II.1, II.2, II.3, III.1, III.2, III.3, III.4)

Achievement of these program learning outcomes is assessed at various stages throughout the curriculum, with particular focus on the proficiencies assessed in the Comprehensive Business Plan (part of the BA 427 Business Strategy and Policy course), which students develop and present to the faculty and peers for their Senior Capstone requirement. The Business Plan addresses each of the program’s learning outcomes, and is evaluated using a common rubric assessing 18 individual elements on a scale from 0-4. The rubric is used to assess both the draft and final version of each student’s business plan and the program faculty use these data to track progress and efficacy of the curriculum. Data over the last three years show improvements in mean scores on each component of the business plan, except for Writing Mechanics, Executive Summary and Appendices. Program faculty note, however, that in each of the rated components, their students are meeting the program’s goal of an average rating of 3 (See Appendix MCE.11, BA 499 Business Plan Categories and Results).

The faculty also use the data from this same rubric for formative assessment, giving students feedback on their draft versions of their business plans, and helping faculty determine changes to the curriculum and other elements of the program. An example of an action taken as a result of comparative analysis of Business Plan assessment

from year to year was the recent introduction of BA 285 (Advanced Business Applications: Excel), as results demonstrated that students needed to improve their ability to analyze data.

The program also analyzes its Senior Capstone scores over time in order to map its own improvement, and submits samples of the students' Business Plans to the University Assessment Committee for institution-wide assessment of senior writing for content, fluency, convention, focus, evidence, inferences and conclusion. Scores are provided by the UAC to each academic program, and compared across all programs that submit samples. The Business program notes that its students tend to outperform other academic programs' senior writing skills on writing quality and demonstration of critical thinking, as well as on quantitative reasoning.

Other data collected by the program are generated by the administration of the Educational Testing Service (ETS) Major Field Test which measures "critical knowledge and understanding obtained by students in their major field of study" and provides comparative data from institutions across the country. The ETS Field Test assesses students' ability to analyze and solve problems, understand relationships, and interpret material from the major field of study. Data indicating counts of students scoring above and below the 50th percentile are provided, and are used by the program to assess student performance and areas in which improvements are needed. The ETS Major Field Test is administered every three years in the undergraduate program (MCE.12, ETS Major Field Test), and measures the SOU business program student performance compared to similar COPLAC institutions.

Another valuable component of the Business Administration curriculum is BA 409, the Student Internship, outcomes for which map directly to Core Theme I.2. The program's core requirements include completion of a professional internship (generally comprising 120 hours), or a practical business research project working with an external client. Data collected on the internships are compiled based on feedback provided by internship supervisors on 11 performance metrics, and two open-ended questions focusing on strengths and areas for improvement for each student. These data are similarly compiled and analyzed by the program each year. Between 2014 and 2017, students demonstrated gains in performance in several areas, including time management, professional judgement, productivity, communication, computer skills and overall performance. Areas identified for improvement included confidence, attention to detail, problem-solving abilities and dependability. Based on these data, BA initiated a Business Communication course in order to enhance professional disposition and oral communication and writing skills.

The program also invites professionals to come in once a month and give the students advice, and holds a yearly "Business After Hours" event for students to network with professionals. Though formative at this point, assessment of these and other curricular and co-curricular experiences focusing on career preparation is intended to allow the program to understand how well it is preparing students for professional work. The program will soon begin to administer an employability rubric developed by a business partnership with the Southern Oregon Economic Development Initiative (SOREDI) and Rogue Workforce). Program faculty intend this rubric to track progress on student learning outcomes associated with the BA 428 (Business Research), course which is designed to provide students real-world opportunities to "analyze decision-making tools and research methodology in retail, service, community, and industry [and] apply research methods and procedures, problem identification, data collection, data analysis, and recommended solutions to real organizational situations and projects".

The Business Administration program has consistently assessed its student learning outcomes in order to identify benchmarks and goals for student achievement, providing year-over-year data that address the impact of efforts to apply changes to areas in which improvements are needed, and specifically in its case, to integrate goals related to core themes that address critical thinking and professional preparation. That the data indicate consistent improvement validates and reinforces their use of assessment data, but perhaps more importantly, demonstrates the value added to the program's curricular planning and student experiences by consistent analysis of data aimed at measuring the extent to which elements of the institutional mission are being fulfilled.

Chemistry

Chemistry is another program that exemplifies the use of data resulting from assessment of student outcomes related to critical thinking (CT I.1), from which the program has recently identified the need for better assessment of the student learning outcomes related to career preparation CT I.2).

Chemistry identifies nine student learning outcomes, each of which is mapped to CT I.1 and I.2:

1. Chemical information and technology: Students will demonstrate competency in the theory, application, and use of spectroscopic, chromatographic, electrochemical, and analytical instrumentation (skill).
2. Information literacy: Students will be able to access, evaluate, and use information resources in an effective, ethical, and balanced manner (skill)
3. Organic Chemistry: Students will demonstrate a mastery of organic chemistry (knowledge).
4. Inorganic Chemistry: Students will demonstrate a mastery of inorganic chemistry (knowledge).
5. Physical Chemistry: Students will demonstrate a mastery of physical chemistry (knowledge)
6. Analytical Chemistry: Students will demonstrate a mastery of analytical chemistry (knowledge).
7. Instrumental Chemistry: Students will demonstrate a mastery of analytical chemistry (knowledge).
8. Biochemistry: Students will demonstrate a mastery of biochemistry (knowledge)
9. Synthesis: Students will be able to synthesize chemical knowledge across sub-disciplines of the chemical sciences and test the integration of that knowledge in applied situations.

Much of the assessment of student learning in this program originates from data collected for the program's national accreditor, the American Chemical Society (ACS), which offers a range of standardized assessments of subject-specific and general knowledge exams. SOU's Chemistry program administers the following ETS exams:

Subject ACS exams (taken at the end of each course(s):

(first-year) **General Chemistry** (yearlong course)

(sophomore) **Organic Chemistry** (yearlong course)

(junior or senior) **Biochemistry** (yearlong course)

(junior or senior) **Analytical Chemistry** (one quarter course at SOU but a semester long course at most institutions; *note that SOU students' performance is particularly impressive as our instructors only have 10 weeks vs 15 weeks semesters to address subject content.*

(junior or senior) **Instrumental Chemistry** (one quarter course at SOU but a semester long course at most institutions)

(junior or senior) **Physical Chemistry** (yearlong course previously students took the Comprehensive exam but, starting in 2017-2018, students now take two exams: Thermodynamics and Quantum)

(senior) **Inorganic Chemistry** (one quarter course) **Note that SOU students' performance is particularly impressive as our instructors only have 10 weeks to address subject content relative to 15 weeks provided by schools on the semester system.*

DUCK (Diagnostic of Undergraduate Chemistry Knowledge) is completed by seniors prior to graduation).

Chemistry maintains a programmatic goal of 50% of its students achieving scores in the 50 percentile or higher on each of the national standardized ACS exams that it administers (Appendix MCE.13, ACS Scores for Assessment). The program compiles each year's results as the exams are completed, including data from students across the country that ACS supplies, and uses this to determine both where SOU students rank with respect to the average, as well as comparative results from year to year. When a particular course or course section's students do not meet this program goal, it is the faculty member's responsibility to adapt and alter their course to focus on the deficient material until their students are performing to set goals.

Examples of course adjustments that have been made to Chemistry curriculum are flipped classrooms, guided inquiry, peer-lead team learning, new course texts, and project-based content. One example of the latter is the recent Lithia Water Springs Project undertaken for [Analytical Chemistry Laboratory](#) (CH 422), in which students performed chemical studies of a local spring water source to determine its major inorganic components. "The

understanding and use of stoichiometry, equilibria and statistics” and a general focus on problem-solving skills in the class enhance the program’s ability to address student learning outcomes related to synthesis and application of subject-specific knowledge. Similarly, in the program’s two-year Chemical Research Communication and Senior Project courses, students’ progress in demonstrating competence in critical analysis, writing, and oral communication is monitored and assessed at multiple points in the sequence, allowing program faculty to identify areas for improvement, and to document student achievement in areas specifically related to the discipline and institutional goals identified in core theme objectives I.1. and I.2.

Similar to the Business Administration Program, in Chemistry, each student designs their own capstone project, including research questions; independent production, documentation and analysis of data; several oral presentations; and a final thesis, with the intent of developing the industry-specific skills that professionally trained practitioners require for careers in the various scientific fields and occupations that they will likely pursue upon graduation. Specifically connecting outcomes related to CT I.1, Chemistry’s year-long “Chemical Communication” sequence trains students to research and write professional-level research papers. At the end of the sequence, each student is responsible for a written work product and an oral presentation which condenses and summarizes their research in a time-limited format. Students present their research three times in oral and written formats during each of their junior and senior years, and receive feedback and constructive suggestions from program faculty and from students. The students generate suggestions and comments in order to provide peer feedback, and to gain the types of skills and dispositions that are customarily associated with occupational expectations for graduate study, post-graduate employment, teaching and industry.

Career-specific skills are also provided in co-curricular programming. High performing Chemistry students are eligible to be selected as mentors for Organic Chemistry in their junior (and senior if desired) year in a the [Peer-Led Team Learning](#) (PLTL) program. Mentors facilitate two-hour long problem-solving sessions on a weekly basis with a consistent set of students throughout the quarter and may also provide support and advice in many areas to their peers. PLTL students submit weekly journal entries to the instructor and then discuss challenges, ideas, and teaching methods. Students intending to pursue graduate and professional school are guided into these PLTL opportunities, and into summer internships and research experiences. Graduating seniors also prepare a professional portfolio prior to graduation. Impact of these career preparation activities is not known through direct assessment, however, the program tracks and retains alumni information via a Facebook page, administers an exit survey to each student, and retains yearly data.

Example Two: Academic Support Program Assessment - The Digital Media Center

Starting in academic year 2014-15, all academic support programs (programs that do not directly provide academic curriculum to students) are required by the university to complete an annual assessment report following a similar format and process to that used by academic programs. Initially, results of this process were uneven, as many of these programs had not engaged in assessment activities prior to that time and struggled with determining outcomes, outcome mapping, or developing appropriate means of measuring outcomes. Over the past several years, the Director of University Assessment, working with the Director of Institutional Research and the Associate Provost and Accreditation Liaison Officer, has designed and conducted training workshops for these programs to develop skills in using the institution’s assessment software, identify outcomes and means of assessment, and devise strategies to effect improvement when targets had not been met. While there are improvements to be made and full compliance still to be reached, we have seen significant progress in achieving integration of core theme planning and assessment into the non-academic component of the institution. This further develops efforts to infuse core theme goals into institutional planning, and allows us better data when assessing mission fulfillment.

The 66 support programs currently identified represent all administrative and business services, auxiliary programs, support services (including student learning, housing, health, and social support), student affairs and physical infrastructure. The Academic Support Program assessment review has two components:

(1) Submission of a narrative summary of assessment activities in the past academic year, goals, and challenges for the upcoming year, and a statement on how program outcomes have either been mapped to or adjusted in

response to the university's strategic plan and institutional core themes adopted in 2018. Program also identify measures to be taken to address any targets that have not been met from the previous academic year, and barriers to completing effective assessment activities;

2) Developing or updating an assessment plan and entering it and its constituent units into Improve, including evidence and supporting materials (Appendix MCE.14, Support Program Assessment Report Guide).

A Support Program Assessment Committee (SPARC) is convened annually to evaluate reports (submitted in mid-July), to provide feedback to each support program, and to identify exemplary programs who are periodically invited to share processes and approaches to identifying and assessing outcomes, strategies for improvement, and program planning at semiannual retreats and trainings (Appendix MCE.15, Support Program Assessment Rubric).

Since SOU began requiring support program assessment, results have shown improvement (both in terms of the number of programs submitting reports and the quality of the work), although challenges persist. These include:

- Helping large units with multiple programs, such as Student Life, determine the appropriate level of specificity to apply to identifying internal programs and functions for assessment purposes;
- Increasing understanding of how to identify meaningful outcomes that map to larger institutional priorities as well as internal goals;
- Effecting improvement processes, particularly for programs with minimal staff resources;
- Understanding how to use assessment data.

Prior to adopting the new strategic plan and institutional core themes, many academic support programs reported difficulties identifying meaningful connection to the previous set of core themes, which focused exclusively on student learning outcomes. The more expansive array of institutional goals and outcomes articulated in the new core themes and the strategic directions enable support programs to identify more meaningful connections to institutional priorities and, more importantly, to how they inform internal outcomes and means of assessment.

While direct comparison of numbers of support programs mapping to core themes is difficult due to the adoption of a new set of core themes, year by year analysis demonstrates increasing compliance with assessment reporting, and some gains in the quality of the actual assessment activities undertaken by these programs.

Table I (on p. 6 above) indicates the number of support programs mapping outcomes to core theme objectives, as well as the number of support programs that mapped to each individual core theme objective. Of particular note is that 66 academic support programs mapped their outcomes to CT I (Use Innovative Curriculum, practices and technologies to achieve student learning and success), 25.8% indicated CT I.1, 31.8% mapped to CT I.2, 24% mapped to CT I.3, and 27% mapped to CT I.4. This core theme focuses on student learning and experiences, however, the number of non-academic programs, and the breadth of this outcome mapping demonstrates that extent to which the student component of the mission aligns with programs across the institution.

With respect to evidence of cumulative institutional improvement over time, the academic support program assessment process and annual results indicate that progress remains to be made. However, programs' abilities to identify and assess outcomes, and to apply the overarching logic of assessment to programmatic improvement continues to inform their assessment work. A representative example of this aspect of SOU's assessment of core theme and mission fulfillment is the SOU Digital Media Center (DMC).

The DMC houses both Rogue Valley Television (RVTV), the local cable access provider, and multimedia instructional and production facilities for students, staff and community members. Its mission states: "the DMC empowers students, governmental partners, and regional enterprises in our community by building and operating a state-of-the-art center for convergent media, cinema studies, scholarly research, interdisciplinary teaching, and public outreach via digital media."

The 8500-square-foot physical facility features multimedia workstations, a television production studio with a permanent lighting grid, a digital master control center for playback and archiving of programming, an equipment room (with cameras, lighting and sound equipment available for student check-out), and virtual reality studios. It provides training and production facilities for student filmmakers, faculty, video artists, and television content creators, in addition to serving the institution more broadly by providing support to marketing and communication and generating revenue through client contracts. These multiple roles, functions and stakeholders are reflected in its program outcomes for assessment:

1. Academic support: The DMC provides a workshop for academic media production and facilitates the creation and distribution of content on regional scale.
2. Community Engagement: Maintain and grow our public education and content development program thru RVTV, work with community partners and non-profit organizations to develop content that benefits the community, student involvement, responsible citizenship, etc.
3. Government outreach servicing: maintain and/or grow active government TV / Video partnerships, evolve content, expand distribution, add new gov. partners, student involvement, etc.
4. SOU Marketing Support: Capture events, initiatives, and performances around the University and shares them via television regionally and worldwide on the Internet. Help educate the public about SOU projects and highlight the work of our students.
5. Self-sustainability revenue: Generate 22k in non-government and non-SOU production and special project revenue annually. Maintain on-going projects with existing clients, add new projects, identify and approach new clients aligned with DMC mission and values, improve quality of our product.
6. Student Success: Prepare SOU students, from a variety of disciplines, to perform professionally in the media industry. Working with real-world clients, exposure to industry events, meeting deadlines, and assisting with day to day RVTV operations are the key elements of this.
7. Recruitment: Host area high school student groups, provide community ed classes tied to HS video course programs, and provide tours to groups and families. Also, build an archive of video that is appealing, helpful, and informational to prospective students.
8. Audience tracking: Understand regional TV audience totals. Track online RVTV viewership. Track growth in web and social media presence for DMC & RVTV, examine viewing trends.

Focusing on Outcomes 1 and 6, the DMC staff annually compile counts of courses and instructional staff utilizing the facility for academic programming. In academic year 18-19, the DMC provided instructional space for 30 different academic classes for two academic programs (Emerging Media and Digital Arts, and Communication), provided support for six individual degree, minor and certificate programs, offered over 1300 hours of student-created content on its programming, and provided over 4,772 hours of paid student work, employing student workers, federal work study recipients and students in SOU's [PEAK](#) (Professional Experience and Knowledge) program. Overall, DMC is one of the largest, non-service related student employers on campus, offering positions that provide students experience working with real clients and enabling them to develop skills required to transition into jobs or careers: managing deliverables and deadlines; communicating effectively and professionally with clients; and meeting quality expectations.

The PEAK positions are particularly informative for program-level assessment. Each PEAK position must include student learning outcomes identified by the employer, with the expectations that they are related to the student's course of study, that they be assessed and shared with the student, and that they serve to enhance professional and disciplinary integration. In AY 18-19, the PEAK program funded a Digital Media Assistant at the DMC to achieve the following outcomes:

- develop a professional approach to digital communication and social media
- learn to manage an editorial calendar
- write and gather content, including text, images or videos as needed; manage an email newsletter; and syndicate content on our social media channels, including WordPress, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Vimeo, and YouTube.

- record, track, and report on social media analytics and use this data to implement optimal audience engagement strategies.

For this position, assessment of outcomes was completed by the student's submission of a final report detailing the extent to which targets for the position were met, and her recommendations for the DMC to achieve its metrics for the following year. These data help provide measures for the DMC's assessment purposes and inform planning for the next quarter or year, but they also provide direct assessment of student learning outcomes connected to the position. In other words, by completing tasks related to its "Academic Support" outcome (student learning goals: training, professional development, client relations), the program is also able to meet an additional goal (social media marketing: gathering and tracking analytics), and generate data for its improvement planning. These tasks and outcomes are reported in Appendix MCE.16, Digital Media Marketing Report.

Across its eight outcomes, for AY 18-19, the DMC identified 24 individual means of assessment, achieved 70 results, and identified 7 actions to take to bring improvement for the next year. The program illustrates how student learning from the individual assignment or task maps to its internal outcomes, institutional core theme indicators and objectives, and finally to its mission. More generally, however, and as is the case with many programs (academic and academic support) "closing the loop" in achieving documented actions and results of applying assessment data remains a challenge for this program. Their annual report "reflection" section notes: "Most importantly, student activity . . . are our classroom, lab, and studio busy with classes and student projects during the school year [tracked by Classroom and studio usage]; are students connecting with each other to better develop their work [collaborative project data] Are our student staff getting consistent professional preparation work opportunities [number of employment hours; evaluations and feedback processes]? And are the clients satisfied with their work?"

Other significant institutional assessment activities

In addition to our two representative examples, SOU can also demonstrate operationalization of "mission and core themes progressing from objectives to indicators to outcomes to mission fulfillment" in student learning assessment and other programmatic outcomes related to critical thinking (I.1) and professional preparation (I.2), as well as other CT I objectives on an institutional level. Evidence includes:

MSC

Since (year), SOU has participated in the Multi-State Collaborative to Advance Quality Student Learning, a student learning assessment partnership between the State Higher Education Executive Officer's Association (SHEEO), twelve state higher education systems and 88 two- and four-year public campuses in those states. Members of this assessment initiative, part of AAC&U's VALUE (or Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education), provide samples of student work from students approaching completion of their academic program for assessment by groups of faculty scorers using select VALUE rubrics. Student artifacts and results are submitted, along with student demographic information, to the nationwide VALUE database. Participating campuses receive the results of their own students' work in order to compare it with their campus efforts to assess levels of student learning. Results from participating campuses also inform state-level decision making and provide information about student achievement.

Student capstones were submitted for scoring in two of the three areas, critical thinking, written communication, or quantitative literacy. A maximum of 10 artifacts are submitted per instructor (if more than 10 students in a class then random samples are selected) from ten academic programs: GSWS, Honors, Math, English, SOAN, Economics, Business, Innovation and Leadership, Biology, and Chemistry. The results show that SOU students outperformed the national average on all three assessment areas (Appendix MCS MCE.17).

NSSE

SOU also administers the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) to first year students and graduating seniors. The survey provides self-reported student assessment specific to Core Themes I.1 (Writing and Critical Thinking) and I.2.2 (Career Preparation). NSSE assesses student perception of their participation in activities and

programs that enhance their learning and academic development, and students' overall satisfaction with their education and the institution. The assessment was administered biennially prior to 2017; however, upon adoption of the new strategic plan and core themes, it was determined that an annual administration would be optimal.

Four questions included in the NSSE Engagement Indicator "Higher Order Learning" are relevant to Core Theme I.1: 4b. applying facts, theories, or methods to practical problems or new situations; 4c. analyzing an idea, experience, or line of reasoning in depth by examining its parts; 4d. evaluating a point of view, decision or information source; and 4e. and forming a new idea or understanding from various pieces of information.

NSSE survey results reported in Appendix MCE.18 provide data for both seniors and first year students for 2018 and 2019. Results show that students perceive appreciable gains in the extent to which the institution "contributed to their knowledge, skills and personal development." These gains are higher for students in the 2019 assessment than in 2018, particularly for first year students. While encouraging, it is also important to note that for the purpose of the mid-cycle evaluation, these data provide the baseline from which we will establish future goals for improvement.

In addition to the main question set, SOU also administers two "Topical Modules," which comprise shorter sets of questions focused on topics and areas that are identified as current and pertinent for higher education and student engagement; the two Topical Modules selected by SOU are Learning with Technology, and First Year Experiences and Senior Transition (questions focusing on academic perseverance, support-seeking, and institutional commitment for first years; questions focusing on post-graduation plans, connections between academic majors and career and other future plans, and confidence in skill development). The latter module provides data pertaining to Core Theme I.2.2 (percentage of students reporting gains in career preparation as assessed by NSSE), based on responses to ten questions that seek senior students' assessment of their confidence in their "ability to complete tasks requiring [a set of] skills and abilities" ranging from leadership and entrepreneurial skills, networking and relationship building, to critical thinking and analysis of arguments and information, and creative thinking and problem-solving.

In both 2018 and 2019, students rated the highest degrees of confidence in critical thinking and analysis of arguments, research skills and clear writing. They expressed the least confidence in technological skills, networking and relationship building, financial and business management skills, and entrepreneurial skills. Again, as noted in our Year One Self-Evaluation regarding Core Theme I.2.2., for this mid-cycle evaluation, we are seeking to establish baseline percentages on which to benchmark plans for future gains in student learning and additional interventions to effect better results in these areas.

Matched pairs data (I.1.2)

Since AY 2014-15, SOU has attempted to measure the value-added gain that should exist between the first year and senior year in writing competency. Known as the "Matched Pair Writing Assessment," senior writing samples (generally Capstone papers or writing samples from upper division courses) are scored and compared to the "FUSE" (or Final University Seminar Essay) assignments submitted by the same students during their first year University Seminar course. Writing samples are scored blindly, using an institutional rubric (Appendix MCE.19), which assesses 12 dimensions organized into three categories (Written Communication, Critical Thinking and Information Literacy), with four levels of competence for each dimension: Beginning (1), Developing (2), Exemplary (3) and Accomplished (4). Mean scores and standard deviations, an effect size calculation, and a test for significance, are calculated for each set of samples (Appendix MCE.20, Matched Pairs Data)

In each of the four years of data completed at the time of this report, students made gains in competency in written communication between their first and senior years. Overall, the greatest effects come in Written Communication and in Critical Thinking. In three of the four years, a moderate to large effect size was reported in three of the four dimensions in the Written Communication category (organization of ideas, effectiveness of expression, and standard conventions), as well as all three dimensions of the Critical Thinking category (sustained central focus, evidence, and valid inferences/clear conclusions). For three of the four years (data for AY 14-15

reported the same effect size for two of the three dimensions in Critical Thinking). Effect size and significance tended to be lower for Information Literacy.

Taken together, the data confirm that SOU students make real and significant gains in competence in both critical thinking and written communication over the course of their degree program. Notably, data from the 2017 assessment demonstrated quite a few more gains between the first and senior years, compared to previous years. While suggestive of meaningful and consistent student learning in these key areas for SOU students, it should be also be noted that samples are limited to students who enter in their first year (excluding transfer students and those who take the first-year University Studies courses out of sequence), and that the practice of primarily assessing Capstone papers introduces bias into the sample, as other types of courses and experiences are not included, nor are other potentially relevant student work products that do not conform to a relatively traditional essay format. However, as a means of assessing the efficacy of the instructional approach to writing and critical thinking, these data do demonstrate a clear achievement of skills and competence for the students who enter the institution in their first year.

Part III: Analysis and Preparation for Year Seven.

The selected examples focus on the extent to which SOU can demonstrate operationalization of mission fulfillment and core theme progression, with particular emphasis on achievements made assessing fulfillment of Core Theme Objectives I.1 and I.2. The multiple means of assessment of indicators identified for these core theme objectives, within several academic programs and one academic support program, are illustrative of the infusion of key elements of the SOU mission throughout the university, and of the commitment to assessing the mission. From these examples, and analysis of assessment across the institution since the adoption of our new core themes, we can conclude that the majority of the indicators and objectives initially identified are meaningful, appropriate and provide substantive data from which program and institution-level decision making can occur. Decisions regarding new curriculum, assessment activities and co-curricular programming in both Chemistry and Business Administration are examples of how these data are being used by programs. At the institutional level, ongoing assessment of senior capstones and projects, like those discussed above, help inform decisions about means of assessment for critical thinking and career preparation, and new or revised core theme objectives and indicators (such as the newly proposed CT I.1.3). Similarly, activities at the DMC that address student learning outcomes and institutional priorities simultaneously also yield useful data that demonstrate academic support programs' roles in upholding the institutional mission. While these examples are focused and specific to these programs, they represent the commitment to assessment that exists at the university, and ways that the institution operationalizes its mission.

As we move forward to Year Seven, we are guided by the following conclusions, concerns and opportunities:

1. Significant alignment exists between the core themes and the institutional mission and strategic plan. This is demonstrated by the results of the outcome mapping and the assessment reports that all programs are now submitting.
2. Some of our core theme indicators have required revision and/or do not have specific target measures identified. This reflects the timing of the approval of the strategic plan, mission and core theme which provided only one complete year of assessment, and insufficient time to identify meaningful targets, particularly for newly proposed objectives and indicators. We will focus on establishing targets and goals starting in Fall of 2019.
3. Most CT I objectives and indicators are proving meaningful and sufficiently specific in definition and scale. As noted below, for example, our continued assessment of critical thinking and use of data such as NSSE provides multiple points of analysis for the achievement of critical thinking. Moving forward, we will finalize review and implementation of rubrics for assessment of CT I.4 (Curiosity & Creativity). We anticipate adopting or altering models provided by AAC&U and will aim to roll these out to programs within this academic year.
4. Several CT II objectives and indicators have been revised in order to capture more meaningful data; these include CT II.1, which has been revised to focus primarily on academic program efficiency and CT II.3

which is now more closely aligned with the priority goals of our new office of diversity, equity, and inclusion. However, we will need to analyze assessments completed in AY 18-19 and identify or refine baselines and targets in a timely way in order to determine targets and goals.

5. We will continue to refine indicators and instruments as needed (for example, it has not been decided if we will continue to administer the Great Colleges to Work for Survey or will start to offer the SULI assessment for student learning on sustainability).
6. We will continue to train and support all programs to maintain their annual assessment commitments, including the adjustment of the academic program assessment timeframe to accommodate Academic Program Review deadlines, continued support for Graduate Programs particularly as they complete their first cycle of assessment and will need to document actions taken and assessment-informed planning, and academic support programs who tend to struggle with appropriate outcomes and metrics, as well as some staffing challenges.

Addendum

Response to Recommendations Fall 2016 Year Seven Peer-Evaluation

The following recommendations were made to SOU following our 2016 Year Seven Evaluation Report and site visit

Recommendation 3:

“The Evaluation Committee recommends that the institution develop a plan to adequately fund the library for materials in order to support educational programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels (Standard 2.E.1).”

SOU committed to an ongoing increase of \$12 000 per fiscal year to the Hannon Library beginning in 2018. An additional 3% increase was also budgeted in order to absorb any additional budget requested by the Library for new or limited-term initiatives. The figures below demonstrate the budgeted and actual Library expenditures over the last four years. The budget increase continues to stabilize the Library’s collection budget and to avoid eliminating subscription services for digital resources, which increases student and faculty access to materials. For FY19, the Library budgeted an additional inflation adjustment to offset increases in electronic resources, and to add resources to meet requests and/or needs.

Supplies and Services for the Library

	Budget	Actual
15-16	\$575,879	\$571,329
16-17	\$582,431	\$558,450
17-18	\$586,567	\$576,592
18-19	\$610,859	\$578,099 - increase of \$28,165 + \$12,000

Recommendation 4:

“As the University undertakes strategic planning, the evaluation committee recommends that care be taken to more closely connect the core themes with the planning effort, to make certain that the core themes are ‘consistent with the institution’s comprehensive plan’ and are ‘aligned with and contribute to achievement of the goals or intended outcomes of the respective programs and services’ (Standard 3.B.1 and 3.B.2). The committee further recommends that if there is any modification in the Core Themes, the University be mindful that Eligibility Requirement 3 requires that the Core Themes be approved by the Board of Trustees.

SOU’s current Institutional Core Themes were approved by the Board of Trustees and submitted to NWCCU in our Year One Self-Evaluation Report, in December 2017, just prior to the formal adoption of the Strategic Plan and Core in January 2018.

These Core Themes, and the process by which they were developed, reflect the institution’s commitment to aligning the assessment of mission fulfillment for accreditation with university planning (Standards 3.B.1 and 3.B.2). Significant care was taken to ensure that the institutional core themes and Strategic Planning are integrated, closely connected, and complementary to one another in implementation, execution and assessment.

Assessment of Mission Fulfillment

SOU Vision and Institutional Mission

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.

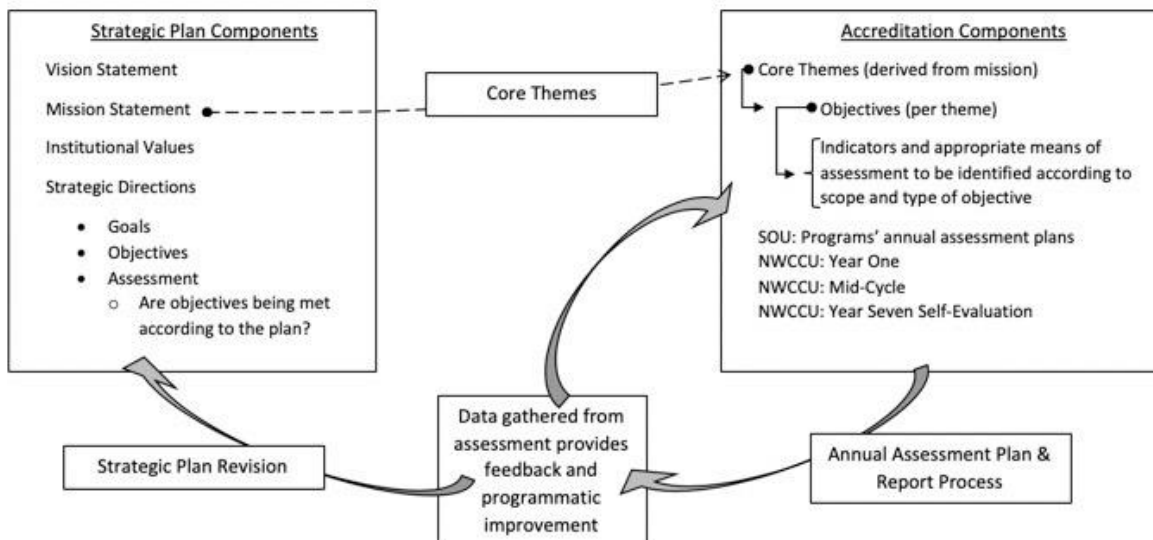
Mission

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.

The framework for the University’s institutional assessment plan is the integration of its mission, vision, strategic plan and core themes. As noted in our Year One Report, the seven strategic directions “derive directly from the mission and form the basis for the core themes and the objectives and indicators identified to determine progress toward mission fulfillment, articulating ‘acceptable threshold[s] or extent of mission fulfillment’ for each”. The chart below illustrates the relationship between strategic planning, and assessment of the University’s core themes, and evaluation of the extent to which the University is fulfilling its mission.

Core Themes - Strategic Plan Alignment



Each **Strategic Plan Objective** specifically identifies how and when it should be measured, who is responsible for the work, and whether the identified target for that assessment was met or not. Each of these elements is tracked, under the supervision of a “sponsor” (a senior administrator who has been assigned to oversee one or more of each of the seven strategic directions) using the Improve software program. Sponsors oversee plan development, assessment of progress by defining **outcomes** and **means of assessment**, the extent to which target goals are met, status of each specific component of the strategic plan, and achievements linking data to the institution’s strategic objectives. Nuventive Improve planning and assessment software is used to document progress on each component of the strategic plan, house evidence and supporting data, and chart the integration between the strategic plan and core theme assessment.

Similarly, institutional assessment processes, by which programs report and document activities and achievements in response specifically to Core Theme assessment, are captured in Improve, as well, which allows the University to continuously track progress on both elements (strategic plan implementation and assessment of core theme objectives and indicators), as well as the linkages between the two. Keying off of the **institutional mission**, the **Core Themes** articulate the concrete **objectives** that guide the process of ensuring that the elements of the mission can be measured in “meaningful, assessable and verifiable ways.” Each of the three core themes reflects a component of the mission from which specific objectives and meaningful **indicators** are derived. They summarize and operationalize the basic propositions of the institutional mission: student learning, institutional improvement, and community, regional and global engagement. Program assessment reports (for undergraduate and graduate academic programs, non-academic support programs) are submitted annually, while strategic plan progress reports (including mapping to institutional Core Themes, see appendix A.1) is reported to the University community and the Board of Trustees each quarter.

As reported in SOU’s Year One Self-Evaluation, the core themes are confirmed as “consistent with the institution’s comprehensive plan” and are “aligned with and contribute to achievement of the goals or intended outcomes of the respective programs and services.” The June 2019 report to the SOU Board of Trustees on Strategic Plan progress included summaries of the number of internal program (for both academic and academic support programs) outcomes that mapped to each Strategic Direction which additionally demonstrate the alignment between the institution’s comprehensive plan and the “goals or intended outcomes of” SOU’s programs and services, as follows:

Table I: Count of programs (academic and academic support) mapping to SD goals

Strategic Direction	Count of Academic Program Outcomes Mapped to SD Goals	Count of Academic Support Program Outcomes Mapped to SD Goals
SD 1	69	23
SD 2	9	27
SD 3	9	20
SD 4	36	24
SD 5	8	16
SD 6	16	10
SD 7	20	15

Recommendation 5:

“The evaluation committee recommends that the institution continue to expand the use of assessment data and document the assessment processes and results to inform academic and learning support planning and practice that lead to enhancement of student learning achievements (i.e. ‘closing the loop’). Furthermore, the committee recommends that all graduate programs be included in the assessment processes (Standard 4.A.3 and 4.B.2).”

The University continues to refine and improve its institutional assessment processes, emphasizing the application of assessment data to improve achievement of student learning and overall institutional operations. Immediately following the approval of the new core themes and mission, work commenced on providing training and support to programs on developing and assessing outcomes, using data for ongoing improvement, and documenting assessment activities. Annual assessment retreats are held for all academic, academic support and graduate programs. Programs that require additional assistance meet with the Director of University Assessment, and/or in some cases, are provided additional professional development opportunities.

Beginning in AY 17-18, following the recommendation of NWCCU and SOU's own assessment planning, focused work on integrating graduate programs began, under the direction of SOU's Director of University Assessment, Accreditation Liaison Officer, Graduate Council and the office of Institutional Research. Graduate program personnel were trained in the use of Improve, SOU's assessment software program in Winter 2018, and each program's outcomes and plans for assessment were finalized by the end of AY 17-18. All 10 of SOU's graduate programs completed an assessment report in AY 2018-19, which were evaluated by the university Graduate Council and returned with feedback and suggestions for improvement.