

Assurance Argument

New Mexico Highlands University - NM

9/11/2017

1 - Mission

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

1.A - Core Component 1.A

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

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

Argument

1.A.1. In January 2015, Highlands initiated the HU Vision 2020 process to revise our mission, vision, core values, and strategic priorities. [Our previous mission](#), because of its simplicity and generality, lacked sufficient direction to guide university processes. Therefore, our goal was to develop a mission that clearly identified our commitment to excellence in undergraduate and graduate education, accessibility, opportunity, diversity, and to the history and culture of our region.

To lead the HU Vision 2020 process, the provost/VPAA formed [a strategic planning committee composed of staff, faculty, students, administrators, and community members](#). [As publicly documented on our strategic planning web page](#), the Strategic Planning Committee used community forums, campus forums, and [surveys](#) to generate feedback related to the vision, mission, values, and strategic priorities. To guarantee our mission included all major stakeholders, the following campus governance groups discussed, suggested improvements, and endorsed [the new mission and HU Vision 2020](#):

- Student Senate ([October 25, 2015, Resolution of Support](#))
- Faculty Senate ([January 14, 2016](#))
- Staff Senate ([February 4, 2016](#))

After this thorough writing, discussion, and approval process, the revised mission was unanimously adopted by the [Board of Regents on February 26, 2016](#) and approved by the [Higher Learning Commission in May 2016](#). In addition, the [Alumni Board](#) and [Foundation Board](#) also endorsed the mission and *Vision 2020*. As discussed below, the mission, vision, and strategic goals have been widely distributed to the university community, integrated into essential planning and budgeting processes, and used to guide university operations. The *HU Vision 2020* is:

NMHU MISSION: New Mexico Highlands University is a public comprehensive university serving our local and global communities. Our mission is to provide opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students to attain an exceptional education by fostering creativity, critical thinking and research in the liberal arts, sciences, and professions within a diverse community.

NMHU Vision: Our vision is to be a premier comprehensive university transforming lives and communities now and for generations to come.

Core Values:

- Excellence
- Diversity
- Accessibility
- Responsiveness

Strategic Goals for 2020:

1. Highlands University will achieve academic excellence, academic integration and student success.

We commit to establishing and strengthening systems, structures and programs to enhance students' holistic well-being and success at all levels of study (including lifelong learning), through the delivery of high-impact practices such as research and creative opportunities, increased student engagement, and service learning.

2. Highlands University will achieve strategic enrollment management.

We commit to establishing and implementing a strategic enrollment management plan that includes target enrollments, recruitment, and retention strategies for all academic degree programs and all locations.

3. Highlands University will achieve a vibrant campus life.

We commit to enhancing campus life for students, staff, faculty, alumni and community through expanded intellectual and recreational programs and services at the main campus and centers, with a commitment to safety and inclusion.

4. Highlands University will be a community partner.

We commit to developing, expanding, and enhancing collaborative community partnerships for mutual benefit in the areas of leadership, community and economic development, community service, academic enrichment, entertainment, and recreation.

5. Highlands University will achieve technological advancement and innovation.

We commit to strategically using technology to support quality, efficiency, and innovation in daily operations, student support services, and teaching and learning.

6. Highlands University will achieve enhanced communication and efficiency.

We commit to engaging in proactive communication at all levels to provide efficient and effective services.

1.A.2. Enrollment Profile:

As a publicly funded university, Highlands' fundamental mission is to provide a quality university education to the historically underserved populations of northern New Mexico and beyond.

Information about our enrollment profile can be found in the annually published [New Mexico Highlands University Factbook](#), produced by our Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Research, and publicly available [on our website](#). The organization of the university can be found in the [August 2017 organizational chart](#).

Since 2000, Highlands has had an enrollment ranging from 3,000-3,800 ([Student Enrollment by Classification](#)) with fluctuations depending on economic and other demographic factors. For an institution of our profile, we serve an unusually high number of graduate students, with our total enrollment split around 2/3 undergraduate, 1/3 graduate. During the last five years, our fall enrollments have been:

Fall Enrollments, 2012-2016

Year	Total Number of Undergraduate Students (Headcount)	Total Number of Graduate Students (Headcount)	Total Number of Students (Headcount)
Fall 2012	2408	1360	3768
Fall 2013	2408	1332	3740
Fall 2014	2276	1284	3560
Fall 2015	2249	1359	3608
Fall 2016	2191	1321	3512

Source: [Student Enrollment by Classification](#)

For new students, Highlands is evenly divided between new first-time freshmen, new transfer students, and new graduate students. Of our 1,073 new students in fall 2016, 312 (29 percent) were first-time freshmen, 395 (36.8 percent) were transfer students, and 366 (34.1 percent) were graduate students.

[Highlands has steadily increased our number of degrees awarded in the last five years](#), moving from 415 Bachelor's awarded in 2013 to 551 in 2017, and from 368 Master's awarded in 2013 to 426 in 2017.

New Mexico Highlands University clearly understands its public obligation through the focus of our mission to serve local communities by embracing our core value of diversity, particularly in light of the distinctive population and region we serve. Situated as we are in northern New Mexico, our student body reflects the unique character of our region. We are a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), with 51.9 percent of our student body identifying as Hispanic in fall 2016. Our student demographics break down as follows:

Students by Race and Ethnicity, Fall 2016

Hispanic	51.9%
White	23.2%
American Indian	7.3%
African American	4.0%
Asian	.9%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	.5%
Non-Resident Alien	5.2%
Two or more/Unknown	4.2%

Source: [NMHU Factbook 2016-2017](#)

Hispanic and American Indian student populations are disproportionately underrepresented in higher education and face special challenges in accessing and succeeding in a higher educational environment. A key part of Highlands’ public mission, and one we are particularly well situated to meet, is providing access and support to these populations.

In fall 2016, 83 percent of our students came from New Mexico and 17 percent were out of state (or country). The enrollment profile of the Highlands student closely matches the demographics of our state, according to the [United States Census estimates of 2015](#), which lists the population of the state as 48 percent Hispanic and 10.5 percent Native American, showing that we are achieving our mission of serving our local communities. One of Highlands’ goals is to better serve our American Indian students by increasing enrollment to 10 percent, thus becoming a Native American Serving-Non Tribal Institution. To achieve this end, our Office of Strategic Enrollment Management, Native American Center, and Peoples Center for Indigenous Knowledges work specifically to recruit and meet the academic and social needs of our American Indian students.

In fall 2016, we had 84 international students from 29 different countries, representing 2.4 percent of our total student body. While Highlands has a policy to not track details about the documented or undocumented status of our students, our proximity to the southern border means we serve a significant number of undocumented students as indicated by the gap between our identified international students (2.4 percent) and our total non-resident alien students (5.2 percent).

Our mission’s focus on opportunity and accessibility aligns with the substantial educational and economic challenges faced by many of our students. As a state, New Mexico ranks near the bottom in high school achievement and other economic factors. New Mexico lags behind many other states in college readiness, [as per the state of New Mexico's report](#). For fall 2017, [47 percent of freshmen](#) were placed into developmental English, and [73 percent of freshmen](#) were placed into developmental Math , meaning they were not ready to enroll in stand-alone sections of either English 111: Freshmen Composition or Math 140: College Algebra.

Many of our students are first-generation college students. Of our undergraduate population, 854 out of 2,191 undergraduates identified themselves as first generation, for a percentage of 38.9 percent.

To further align our enrollment profile with our mission, we maintain an unprecedented level of access. At the undergraduate level, we are proud to be an open-enrollment institution. As documented in our [undergraduate catalog](#), prospective students need only demonstrate the attainment of a high school diploma or GED to be enrolled; we do not require an ACT or SAT for enrollment. As

documented in our [graduate catalog](#), admission to our graduate programs requires a 3.0 undergraduate GPA for regular admission. However, for students with a GPA below 3.0, the university may offer provisional admission with a recommendation from the department.

To further our mission of offering access and opportunity, Highlands maintains one of the lowest tuition rates in the region and the country. As reported in our [2016-2017 HLC Institutional Update](#), 61 percent of our first-time, full-time students received Pell Grants, documenting the level of economic need of our students. [According to the Chronicle of Higher Education's 2017](#) citation of the College Board's 2016-2017 Survey of Colleges, we had the third lowest tuition of any public four-year university in the Southwest. Compared to other New Mexico universities, our tuition is lower:

In-State Tuition and Fees (Annual), 2016-2017

New Mexico Highlands University	\$5,400
Eastern New Mexico University	\$5,510
Western New Mexico University	\$6,644
New Mexico State University	\$6,729
New Mexico Tech	\$6,891
University of New Mexico	\$6,950

To make our education more accessible, Highlands offers a full range of [scholarship programs](#), leading to 91 percent of our students receiving some form of financial aid, the [highest percentage in the state according to the most recent comparison to other public New Mexico universities](#).

Despite our low cost, we provide our students with strong educational outcomes and high levels of student satisfaction. [According to the Educate to Career College Rankings](#), Highlands earned a Best-Value Top College ranking, and was ranked #1 for career outcomes for its graduates and affordability in New Mexico. In an article from the [New York Times](#) about [“Colleges with the Highest Mobility Rates.”](#) which tracked what percentage of students moved from the bottom 40 percent economically to the top 40 percent, Highlands ranked #82 in the nation, well ahead of our in-state peer sister institutions Western New Mexico (ranked #252) and Eastern New Mexico (ranked #298).

Highlands particularly values these third-party assessments because they demonstrate, without the bias that could come from internal assessments, that Highlands offers an outstanding education in conjunction with our low tuition rates. The [New Mexico Council of University Presidents' \(CUP\) annual report](#) comparing New Mexico four-year universities shows New Mexico Highlands has the [second highest percentage of Hispanic and American Indian students \(59.2 percent\)](#) and the [second highest percentage \(92.5 percent\) undergraduate student satisfaction rate](#). To place this in context of tuition, the CUP report shows that our [undergraduate in-state tuition was 69.5 percent of our peers](#), and [our non-resident tuition was 54.6 percent of our peers](#).

Highlands is one of only three master's-granting comprehensive universities in New Mexico, alongside Western New Mexico and Eastern New Mexico, and the only master's-granting institution in the northern part of the state. As such, Highlands serves an unusually high percentage of graduate students. In 2015-2016, Highlands conferred 390 master's degrees (43 percent) versus 514 bachelor's degrees (57 percent) ([2016-2017 Factbook](#)).

To promote accessibility and to meet the economic and educational needs of our students, Highlands

operates four main centers in Albuquerque, Rio Rancho, Santa Fe, and Farmington. For many of our low-income and first-generation students, relocating to Las Vegas, NM for their degree is simply not feasible. The Highlands centers are discussed in detail in section 3.C. Highlands also offers a number of online classes and a small number of online-only degree programs, including nursing and a Master's of Business Administration.

The Las Vegas campus offers more traditional on-campus living options, with six residence halls and an occupancy of more than 450 rooms. Rooms are available to both undergraduate and graduate students. By offering the full range of college experiences, from the traditional first-time freshmen on our Las Vegas campus, to our centers serving more working urban populations, to online classes targeting students who are unable to physically attend a campus, Highlands ensures that we are providing access to higher education for all the students of our region.

By participating in the Voluntary System of Accountability, we communicate this information about our enrollment profile to the public through the [College Portrait](#).

Academic Programs:

Highlands has a wide range of academic offerings. Identified in our mission as a comprehensive university and classified by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions as such, Highlands follows the Carnegie definition that “These institutions awarded at least one master's degree or professional practice/other doctoral degrees in each of the humanities, social sciences, and STEM fields, as well as such graduate degrees in one or more professional fields.” As documented in our [undergraduate](#) and [graduate catalogs](#), Highlands offers a broad range of academic programs in the humanities, social sciences, STEM, business, social work, and education, offering 39 bachelor’s programs, 18 master’s programs, seven associate programs, and 24 certificates. Highlands offers no Ph.D. programs, leaving that segment of the academic mission to the state’s research universities: University of New Mexico, New Mexico State, and New Mexico Tech. As part of a state reciprocity agreement, Highlands offers no 100 to 200-level classes at our centers to avoid unnecessary competition or duplication with New Mexico’s many community colleges.

Highlands is organized into the [College of Arts and Sciences](#), the [Facundo Valdez School of Social Work](#), the [School of Education](#), and the [School of Business, Media and Technology](#). The web page of each college or school presents its mission, aligned to the University mission, and the programs offered in that college or school. Many of our programs, such as [early childhood multicultural education](#), [bilingual education](#), [Native American/Hispano cultural studies](#), [social work](#), and [southwest studies](#), focus on the unique traditions, cultures, and needs of our region. All of our programs serve the mission of open access, student-centered education, and lifelong learning.

Student Support Services:

To support our core values of excellence and accessibility, Highlands offers many programs to support students in achieving their educational goals. Services include:

- [Academic Enrichment/First-Year Experience](#) oversees the First-Year Experience Learning Communities (FYE LCs), which provide first-year students with academic, social, and personal support through connected courses, college success (Integrative Seminar) instruction, field experiences, peer mentoring, structured group study sessions, and Hacienda Club engagement.
- [Academic Support](#) provides academic advisement that empowers and encourages students of our diverse population to build collaborative relationships with faculty, staff, and peers.
- [Accessibility Services](#) focuses on removing barriers at the university for students with physical,

psychological, developmental, and learning disabilities by providing appropriate accommodations.

- The [Achieving in Research, Math, and Science \(ARMAS\) Center](#) provides comprehensive support including supplemental instruction in STEM gateway courses, math tutoring, and a STEM textbook library, to science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) students.
- [Campus Life and Conferences](#) assists in making student life fun, lively, and educational. The office provides a number of services including the student transportation initiative, student extreme emergency hardship fund, emergency food/basic-needs pantry, game room, intramurals, post office, faculty/staff/student/emmeriti IDs, summer camps/conferences, facilities scheduling, chartered clubs/organizations, and campus events.
- [Career Services](#) offers current students a variety of career planning services including job search strategies, resume preparation, interview skills, career fairs, job listings for internships and career opportunities, employer information sessions, and on-campus student employment recruitment.
- [Educational Outreach Services](#) provides access to educational opportunities through distance education and off-campus instruction, including training for students and helpdesk support for our Desire 2 Learn online learning platform.
- [Financial Aid](#) helps students find ways to fund their college education through scholarships, work-study, grants, and loans.
- [HU CARES](#) provides collaborative services and support to students who have experienced domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking as well as other mental health services and services for substance abuse. Additional [counseling services](#) provided include licensed counselors and graduate interns to help students, faculty, staff, and family members with personal issues about depression, anxiety, stress, academics, finances, relationships, health, and other problems that can impact success at Highlands.
- The [International Education Center](#) is committed to providing international students with the individual support to succeed. Through programming, the center provides immigration and orientation services for international students and scholars who study and work at Highlands. The center also assists academic departments with visa information about sponsoring scholars, professors and exchange students to Highlands.
- The [Language Learning Center](#) offers tutoring services in Spanish and American Sign Language to students who want to supplement their language learning outside of the classroom.
- The [Native American Center](#) provides support services to all Highlands American Indian students. The center offers assistance with everything from academic opportunities and financial aid opportunities to social interaction with clubs and organizations. It also provides an annual financial aid workshop and coordinates with more than 23 tribes throughout the Southwest region.
- Highlands opened a new [Outdoor Recreation Center](#) for its students in 2016, giving them a chance to explore the great outdoors in the scenic Sangre de Cristo Mountains near the university. The center provides gear for bicycling, skiing, hiking, snowboarding, camping, boating, fishing, and hiking and also leads outdoor excursions.
- The [Registrar's Office](#) creates, maintains, and protects student academic records for accuracy, integrity and security of records under Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). The office ensures adherence to academic policy, closely monitors course offerings, reports enrollment history patterns, grades, and degrees awarded.
- [The Office of Student Recruitment & Undergraduate Admissions](#) assists prospective students and their families with the enrollment process. It engages with all prospective students, process all undergraduate admission applications and supplemental documents, and administer admission decisions. It also offers customized campus tours to highlight academic programs and campus facilities and host targeted enrollment yield events throughout the year.

- The [Student Health Center](#) provides non-emergency medical care and behavioral health services for all students on the Las Vegas campus.
- The [Universities Libraries](#) offer the following informational services to Highlands students, staff, and faculty: access to computers, e-mail, and Internet, Ray Drew Gallery, loan of books and other materials, electronic research resources, interlibrary lending and borrowing, microfilm copying and printing, public access catalog, online and in-person reference services, library instruction, special collections, and study facilities.
- The [Writing Center](#) welcomes all students, freshman through graduate, who want help with papers in any field. The Writing Center is committed to serving undergraduate students in all disciplines with a holistic, student-centered approach to writing. Students may come to the center for support at the beginning, in the middle, or near completion of their writing projects. Through one-to-one conferencing with trained staff, students become better skilled in interpreting assigned reading and in developing and articulating their own ideas.

These services advertise themselves to students through the website, as linked above, and many include frequently asked questions sections to help students more easily access the services they need to succeed. Services are available (as appropriate) to our center and online students, as documented in the [centers services table](#) and the fliers for [Albuquerque](#), [Farmington](#), [Rio Rancho](#), and [Santa Fe](#). See 3.D. for more information about services at the centers.

1.A.3. The [HU Vision 2020](#) articulates six strategic goals that guide university operations, and the [Executive Strategic Plan](#) details the responsibility of each vice-president in achieving those goals. All university departments and units have developed strategic plans with clear goals aligned to the Highlands' mission and strategic goals. These plans are publicly [available on our website](#).

Beginning fall 2016, Highlands implemented [a new budget process](#) that guides our planning and budgeting priorities and aligns them with the university's mission. The budgeting process was developed through a shared governance process with the university's internal constituents, including approval by the [Faculty Senate](#). The vice-president of finance and administration [maintains a website](#) that links to budget process documents, budget policies, and the fiscal year budget timeline.

In the budgeting process, units submit budget requests for the next academic year. All plans are linked to the university's strategic plan and are tied to the university's mission. The process includes discussions with supervisors, revision of plans, and forums before the final budget is created at the end of the fall semester.

Please view Criterion 5.C.1 for more information regarding strategic planning, the budgeting process, and their alignment to Highlands' strategic plan and mission.

Sources

- 2016 PEP Report Council of University Presidents
- 2016 PEP Report Council of University Presidents (page number 10)
- 2016 PEP Report Council of University Presidents (page number 12)
- 2016 PEP Report Council of University Presidents (page number 22)
- 2016 PEP Report Council of University Presidents (page number 49)
- Academic Enrichment FYE
- Academic Support
- Accessibility Services - NMHU
- Albuquerque Brochure

- Alumni Board Minutes 6-23-17
- ARMAS
- Board of Regents Minutes February 26, 2016
- Board of Regents Minutes February 26, 2016 (page number 4)
- Budget Process
- Campus Life
- Career Services Center - NMHU
- Center Services
- Chronicle 2017 Tuition Rates
- College of Arts and Science Webpage
- Counseling Services - NMHU
- Degrees Awarded
- Desire2Learn_E-courses - NMHU
- Developmental Math
- Educate to Career Colle Rankings Story
- English Placement Numbers Fall 2016 - Fall 2017
- Exeuctive Strategic Plan
- Faculty Senate Minutes 9-14-16
- Faculty Senate Minutes 9-14-16 (page number 2)
- Farmington Brochure
- Finance and Administration - NMHU
- Financial Aid - NMHU
- Foundation Board 3-17-17 Minutes
- Foundation Board 3-17-17 Minutes (page number 6)
- General Faculty Minutes January 14, 2016
- Graduate Catalog 2017-2018
- Graduate Catalog 2017-2018 (page number 6)
- Graduate Catalog 2017-2018 (page number 12)
- Graduate Catalog 2017-2018 (page number 45)
- Higher Education Department - College Readiness in New Mexico 2014
- HLC Approval of Mission
- HLC Institutional Update 2016-2017
- HLC Institutional Update 2016-2017 (page number 21)
- HU CARES - NMHU
- HU Vision 2020
- International Students - NMHU
- Language Learning Center - NMHU
- Library
- Mission Survey Results
- Native American Center - NMHU
- New Mexico Highlands University College Portrait
- NMHU Factbook 2016-2017
- NMHU Factbook 2016-2017 (page number 13)
- NMHU Factbook 2016-2017 (page number 19)
- NMHU Factbook 2016-2017 (page number 29)
- NMHU Mission and Strategic Plan 2009
- NMHU Org Chart Final 08-24-17
- NY Times Mobility Report
- OIER Institutional Factbooks
- Outdoor Recreation Center - NMHU

- Registrar - NMHU
- Rio Rancho Brochure
- Santa Fe Brochure
- School of Business, Media and Technology Web Page
- School of Education Web Page
- School of Social Work Web Page
- Staff Senate Minutes February 4, 2016
- Staff Senate Minutes February 4, 2016 (page number 3)
- Steering Committee Membership - NMHU
- Strategic Planning Timeline
- Strategic Plans and Budget Requests - NMHU
- Student Enrollment by Classification
- Student Health Center - NMHU
- Student Recruitment & Undergraduate Admissions - NMHU
- Student Senate Minutes October 25, 2016
- Student Senate Minutes October 25, 2016 (page number 3)
- Student Senate Misison Statement of Support
- Undergraduate Catalog 2017-2018
- Undergraduate Catalog 2017-2018 (page number 7)
- Undergraduate Catalog 2017-2018 (page number 13)
- Undergraduate Catalog 2017-2018 (page number 70)
- Undergraduate Catalog 2017-2018 (page number 115)
- Undergraduate Catalog 2017-2018 (page number 118)
- Undergraduate Catalog 2017-2018 (page number 126)
- United State Census New Mexico
- Writing Center - NMHU

1.B - Core Component 1.B

The mission is articulated publicly.

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

Argument

1.B.1. The New Mexico Highland University's mission statement is included in the [HU Vision 2020](#) and articulated publicly [on our website](#), in our [undergraduate](#) and [graduate catalogs](#), on [posters](#) and TV displays throughout our main campus and centers, and on [business cards](#) distributed to staff, faculty, and students. In addition, our mission statement and *HU Vision 2020* are readily available to the campus community through additional public documents both in print and on our website. These public documents include:

- [About HU web page](#)
- Administrator web pages ([president](#), [provost/VPAA](#), [VPFA](#), [VPSEM](#), [dean of students](#))
- [Board of Regents web page](#)
- [Contingent Faculty Handbook](#)
- [Faculty Handbook](#)
- [2016-2017 Factbook](#)
- [Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual](#)
- [Student Handbook](#)
- [President's weekly campus e-mails](#)

Following the HLC's approval of our new mission statement in May 2016, the strategic planning committee, Faculty Senate, provost/VPAA, and vice-president of finance and administration worked to create mission documents to guide university operations. Among the many documents created or updated to guide university operation with our new mission were:

- [Strategic Planning Process](#)
- [Budget Process](#)
- [Staff Evaluation Process](#)

Reports by administrators to the Board of Regents regularly focus on mission accomplishments, as documented in 2.C.2. Faculty Senate action items are explicitly tied to the *HU Vision 2020* (example: [the October 26, 2016 Faculty Senate minutes](#), which shows how each action item has been aligned with a strategic goal).

The [2016-2017 Mission Accomplishments](#), a document widely distributed to the Board of Regents and campus community, summarizes Highlands' progress towards achieving its mission, as does our

[fall 2017 Mission Accomplished campaign](#), a series of short videos distributed to the Highlands community.

1.B.2. After the new mission, vision, and strategic goals were approved in spring 2016, all mission documents were updated to reflect the new mission, and, as such, are up to date.

The mission itself explains the focus on instruction (“outstanding education”) and research and creative works (“fostering creativity, critical thinking and research in the liberal arts, sciences, and professions”). The six strategic goals, always linked to the mission in all our mission documents, further clarify the emphasis on various aspects of the mission, placing academic excellence, academic integration, and student success front and center.

1.B.3. The nature and scope of the services provided by Highlands are clear in the mission statement itself, included in all the documents listed above: “New Mexico Highlands University is a public comprehensive university serving our local and global communities. Our mission is to provide opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students to attain an exceptional education by fostering creativity, critical thinking and research in the liberal arts, sciences, and professions within a diverse community.”

As a publicly funded state university, our mission identifies the residents of the state of New Mexico as the primary constituents of the university, but also envisions contributions to our broader national and international community. By clearly identifying our role as a comprehensive university with both undergraduate and graduate education, our strong teaching and research traditions, and our range of offerings in the liberal arts, sciences, and professions, the nature, scope, and intended constituents of Highlands are clearly articulated.

Sources

- 2016-2017 Mission Accomplishments
- About HU Webpage
- Admin Web Page Dean of Students
- Admin Web Page President
- Admin Web Page Provost
- Admin Web Page VPSEM
- Board of Regents Web Page
- Budget Process
- Contingent Faculty Handbook
- Contingent Faculty Handbook (page number 4)
- Faculty Handbook 2017-2018
- Faculty Handbook 2017-2018 (page number 6)
- Faculty Senate Minutes October 26, 2016
- Finance and Administration - NMHU
- Global-President Minner's Weekly Update 08_18_17
- Graduate Catalog 2017-2018
- Graduate Catalog 2017-2018 (page number 8)
- HU 2020 Business Card
- HU Vision 2020
- HU Vision 2020 Poster
- Mission Accomplished - NMHU

- NMHU Factbook 2016-2017
- NMHU Factbook 2016-2017 (page number 5)
- Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual
- Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 2)
- President's weekly Messages-2017 - NMHU
- Staff Evaluations 2016-2017
- Strategic Planning Process
- Strategic Planning_ HU VISION 2020 - NMHU
- Student_Handbook
- Student_Handbook (page number 2)
- Undergraduate Catalog 2017-2018
- Undergraduate Catalog 2017-2018 (page number 9)

1.C - Core Component 1.C

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

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

Argument

1.C.1. New Mexico Highlands University demonstrates its fundamental concern with human diversity and our multicultural society through its values, actions, and people.

The Highlands mission affirms that our institution is dedicated to “serving our local and global communities,” and that we foster “creativity, critical thinking, and research in the liberal arts, sciences, and professions within a diverse community.” To further emphasize this, one of our core values included in the *HU Vision 2020* is diversity, along with the closely connected idea of accessibility.

To specifically address our role in a multicultural society, Highlands formed the Diversity Advisory Council in 2014. The Diversity Advisory Council endeavors to cultivate cultural competence among students, staff, faculty, and community members through a variety of [discussions and activities](#) with the explicit intention to create and maintain an inclusive and equitable campus environment that embraces, respects, and values diversity. The Diversity Advisory Council is composed of administration, faculty, staff, and student representatives.

1.C.2. Highlands faculty, staff, and administration value diversity, and diversity has been a foundation for this institution for generations. Our institution continues to commit to the importance of diversity, setting these values into action as exemplified by the following campus offices, organizations, and events:

- Campus events in 2016-2017 such as [the Diverse Diversities Dialogue](#), [the Diversity Virtual Career Fair](#), numerous diverse speakers such as [Kyla Lacey](#) and [Dr. Thohahoken Michael Doxtater](#), [a memorandum of understanding with the National Hispanic Cultural Center to bring events to campus](#), [community library reading groups that focus on diverse authors](#), and cross-departmental efforts to bring travelling exhibits like the [Native Voices: Native People's Concepts of Health and Wellness](#) to campus.
- [Chartered student clubs and organizations](#) such as the Native American Club, the Hispanic Culture and Language Association, the International Club, the Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan (MEChA) club, and the Women for a Change club.
- Student Services that focus specifically on marginalized groups, including HU CARES, the International Education Center, and the Native American Center, as described in 1.A.2.
- The Center for Education and Study of Diverse Populations, as described in 1.D.3. below.
- The Diversity Advisory Council, as described above.
- Faculty Senate and Board of Regents discussions of diversity initiatives and concerns, such as the concerns voiced by our DACA/Dreamer students, as documented in the [Faculty Senate minutes](#) and in the resolution presented to the [Board of Regents](#), and the providing the [meeting space](#) and [resources requested by these students](#).

- The [Library Amigos program](#), a nonprofit consortium that represents 800 libraries and works to help them obtain affordable information technology to facilitate collaboration and resource sharing among its members.
- Our founding membership in HACU, the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities.
- Our signing of the [NCAA Diversity pledge](#).
- Grants that focus specifically on providing opportunity for minority students, including the US Department of Education [STEMfast grant](#) and [the CONECTADO grant and scholarships](#).
- The Peoples Center for Indigenous Knowledges (PCIK) serves students, staff, faculty and communities through a [strategic plan with five primary goals](#). These goals are aligned with HU 2020 and address strengthening program infrastructure, improving student retention and mentorship, integrating curriculum, developing research, and engaging with communities. Most PCIK projects and activities are accessible across all centers via technology with the exception of the Native American Student Association, which meets at The Community Center for Indigeneity at Melody Hall.
- The [Indigenous Knowledge living learning community](#) in the residence halls, which began in fall 2017.
- The president's creation of the [President's Leadership Development Program](#), targeted at women and minority faculty members, to "to provide them with the knowledge and experience to assume new leadership roles."

Highlands demonstrates its commitment to global diversity in the Flagship of Diversity located at the Centennial Tower, which displays the flags from various countries represented by students attending Highlands, developed by the Associated Students of New Mexico Highlands University.

Highlands is committed to hiring a diverse faculty that reflects our student demographics:

Fall 2016 Tenured/Tenure-Track Faculty Demographics

Hispanic	20	21%
White	55	59%
American Indian	1	1%
African American	2	2%
Asian	4	4%
Non-Resident Alien	7	7%
Two or More/Unknown	5	5%

Source: [2016-2017 NMHU Factbook](#)

Highlands stresses diversity in faculty hiring, and many of our professors have diversity, equity, and social justice as a focus of their teaching and research interests. [Compared to the other four-year universities in New Mexico](#), we have the second-highest percentage of Hispanic faculty in the state, trailing only Northern New Mexico College. In conjunction with the state of New Mexico, Highlands offers the [Minority Doctoral Loan Assistance program](#), which funds a doctoral degree on the condition that the recipient return to Highlands as a professor. Several of our current faculty have used this fellowship, including our current vice-president of strategic enrollment management and two current assistant professors in the English department, with one joining the faculty in Fall 2017. Highlands has been the biggest beneficiary in the state of New Mexico of this program since its

inception.

Highlands' staff and administration also reflect the diversity of our community. Of our upper administration, more than 50 percent are Hispanic. Fall 2016 staff and administration numbers are listed below, with more detail provided in the 2016-2017 Factbook:

Fall 2016 Full-Time Staff and Administration Demographics

Hispanic	251	70%
White	63	17%
American Indian	9	2%
African American	11	3%
Asian	2	1%
Non-Resident Alien	4	1%
Two or More/Unknown	21	6%

[Source: 2016-2017 NMHU Factbook](#)

By placing diversity as one of the core values in our HU Vision 2020, Highlands is committed to continue to strengthen the processes that have resulted in our already diverse campus.

Sources

- 16-17 ASNMHU Resolution 3 Supporting Safe Zone Status for NMHU
- 2016 PEP Report Council of University Presidents
- 2016 PEP Report Council of University Presidents (page number 20)
- Ballen Scholar reception with faculty senate today at 3pm
- Career Services Events page 7.12.2017
- Chartered Clubs and Organizations - NMHU
- Cineflix in Ilfeld - NMHU
- ComCtr@Melody Hall
- Daca Dreamer Space
- Daca Space
- Diverse Diversities Dialogue Flier
- Diversity Council Materials
- Division II Presidents and Commissioners Diversity Pledge _ NCAA
- Fiesta de la Hispanidad April 7 in Ilfeld - NMHU
- Highlands School of Education Dean Awarded \$2
- Hispanic Cultural Center
- IKC Search Conf doc
- Minority Doctoral Assistance
- Native Voices Flyer
- NMHU Factbook 2016-2017
- NMHU Factbook 2016-2017 (page number 33)
- NMHU Factbook 2016-2017 (page number 34)
- November 30, 2016 General Faculty Minutes

- Poet Kyla Lacey Performs at Highlands March 28 - NMHU
- President's Leadership Fellow-call to faculty 1-25-17
- Reading Groups - NMHU
- Ruben Aragón Named to Two Library Leadership Positions - NMHU
- Title V CONECTADO Graduate Scholarship - NMHU

1.D - Core Component 1.D

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

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

Argument

1.D.1. At Highlands, our obligation to the public good has always been fundamental to our actions as documented throughout this assurance argument. As a public institution, written into the New Mexico Constitution and overseen by the taxpayers of New Mexico, our every decision is focused on serving our students and our communities.

The rural and underserved communities of northern New Mexico face many sociological and economic challenges in accessing higher education. Highlands strives to meet its public obligation to provide higher education access to all by focusing on remaining affordable and providing supportive services and a personalized experience for all our students, including our first-generation college students. Statistically, when a first-generation student graduates from college, the likelihood of other family members doing the same greatly increases. Therefore, the success of each Highlands graduate has a ripple effect that impacts our entire region. Our obligation as a public institution to these diverse and underserved populations and areas, those which can benefit most from higher education, is foremost in all we do at Highlands and the cornerstone upon which our institutional mission has been built.

1.D.2. As a public institution, we are governed by a Board of Regents appointed by the governor of the State of New Mexico, and we are ultimately accountable to the people of New Mexico through our state government agencies, bodies, and legislature. We do not have private investors, a parent organization, or other stakeholders. Our educational mission is at the heart of all we do at Highlands and is emphasized in our focus on delivering "exceptional education by fostering creativity, critical thinking and research in the liberal arts, sciences, and professions."

1.D.3. The [HU Vision 2020](#) identifies community partnerships as one of our strategic goals:

"We commit to developing, expanding, and enhancing collaborative community partnerships for mutual benefit in the areas of leadership, community and economic development, community service, academic enrichment, entertainment, and recreation." Highlands participates in numerous formal partnerships to enhance the economic and educational development of our local communities, including (in alphabetical order):

- The [Advanced Placement New Mexico](#) (AP) program is part of a national nonprofit educational association of colleges, universities and high schools that monitors introductory-level college curricula and then designs courses, materials, and professional development to deliver the

curricula in middle schools and high schools. In cooperation with New Mexico's Public Education Department, AP New Mexico has run summer institutes at Highlands for the state's teachers for almost three decades.

- The [Ben Lujan Leadership and Public Policy Institute](#) is a state of New Mexico sponsored initiative that consists of five different projects designed to provide students with skills and experience in the public policy arena. The institute has a particular focus on preparing leaders to work in a multicultural and multiethnic society.
- The [Center for Education and Study of Diverse Populations](#) (CESDP) was established by the New Mexico Legislature in 1993 to provide technical assistance, distribute research findings, offer resources, and promote quality in public educational systems. Based at Highlands, CESDP works across New Mexico. Its primary mechanism for meeting its mission is through collaboration with communities and organizations, which is reflected in the diverse array of partnerships the CESDP has developed. During its 24-year history, CESDP has provided and continues to provide technical assistance to school districts throughout the southwestern United States. The program has worked with 69 schools in New Mexico across 37 school districts. The program has served more than 9,000 educators, administrators, parents, school board members, policy makers, and state and federal Department of Education personnel.
- The [Dual Credit Program](#) was established in 2007 by New Mexico Senate Bill 943 and extended to include summer terms in 2008 by Senate Bill 31. The program allows high school students to enroll in courses at postsecondary public institutions (universities, colleges, and community colleges) prior to high school graduation at no cost, giving them enrichment opportunities and firsthand experiences with the requirements of college-level work. Dual-credit students receive simultaneous high school and college credit. Tuition and standard fees are waived for students participating in this program. Beginning with freshman high school students in 2009, the state of New Mexico requires that students take either an online, distance education, advanced-placement, or dual-credit class prior to their graduation from high school (see Senate Bill 561, 2007). At Highlands, all dual-credit students are enrolled in regularly scheduled classes on the main campus.
- The [New Mexico Forest and Watershed Restoration Institute](#) (NMFWRI) is a statewide effort based at Highlands that engages government agencies, academic and research institutions, land managers, and the interested public in forest and watershed management. The NMFWRI was authorized by Congress in 2004 with the task of promoting practices reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire and restoring ecosystems suffering from natural fire exclusion. Our sister institutes in Arizona and Colorado were authorized at the same time. NMFWRI, which has a statewide mandate, is funded by the U.S. Forest Service and the New Mexico Legislature. NMFWRI works in three broad areas: ecology, which mostly is forest thinning and reintroduction of fire; monitoring, measuring treatments to track changes; and geographic information systems (GIS), supporting field work with maps and databases. In addition, NMFWRI works closely with the Department of Natural Resource Management at NMHU, helping to advise and teach the next generation of land managers.
- Highlands is a partner with [New Mexico Mathematics, Engineering, and Science Achievement \(NM MESA\)](#), a pre-college program that prepares students for college and careers in mathematics, engineering, science or technology related fields. The MESA program is coordinated through seven regional offices, each staffed by a regional coordinator hosted at a local postsecondary institution, including: UNM main-campus, Highlands University, UNM Gallup, NMSU, Santa Fe Community College, and ENMU Roswell.
- The [Northeast Regional Education Cooperative](#) (NEREC) was established in 1984 by the New Mexico State Department of Education. NEREC is one of nine regional education cooperatives in New Mexico and is located on Highlands campus. The cooperative provides training, technology assistance, administrative support, grant administration, and other services to the

- Pecos, Mora, Santa Rosa, Wagon Mound, West Las Vegas, and Las Vegas City school districts.
- The [Northeastern New Mexico Library Group](#) is a partnership of local libraries, all of which collaborate in assessing resources and ensuring all their patrons have access to those resources. The libraries work to develop and lobby for requests for library funding through the state legislature and local bond issues. The Donnelly Library staff participates in quarterly librarians meetings with Luna Community College, New Mexico Behavioral Health Institute, Las Vegas City Schools, West Las Vegas City Schools, United World College, Fort Union, and the Carnegie Public Library. The group's primary goal is to work together in providing quality library services to the community. Such areas that the committee works on include library services training to staff, reciprocal borrowing (universal library card), library technology, and joint cooperative efforts on library legislative issues.
 - New Mexico Highlands University has been coordinating and hosting [the Northeastern Regional Science and Engineering Fair](#) for 42 years. More than 200 middle and high school students from around the region participate annually. Winners at this competition move on to the New Mexico Science and Engineering Fair then to the International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF). This year, five students from the Northeastern region attended ISEF.
 - [Testing services](#) are overseen by the Office of Academic Support, which provides community members the opportunity to take the high-school equivalency HiSET exam. As a partner with HiSet, Highlands offers the testing service free of charge to community members. The center also offers local high school students the opportunity to take the ACT.

Highlands is also committed to partnering with our local communities to provide educational enrichment and entertainment activities such as:

- The [Arts @ HU](#) brings national musical, comedy, and other artistic performances to Las Vegas. This is a new program that began in fall 2016. Events are free to students and available to community members for a modest fee. For the six major events in 2016-2017, 1,063 students attended an event, and 1,994 other members of the campus and community attended. Activities are also hosted at local businesses such as the Indigo Theater (examples: [March 2017](#), [August 2017](#)).
- [Cineflix in Ilfeld](#) shows recently released movies two or three times a week in Ilfeld Auditorium on the big screen in high-definition and surround sound. These events are free of charge and open to both students and community members.
- Community use of university facilities: Highlands believes university buildings and other facilities should be made available under reasonable conditions to non-university organizations for certain activities, as per our [Facilities Use Policy](#). These activities must foster the educational, cultural, recreational, civic, or social development of the community. Since July 2015, community members have used our facilities more than 1,300 times, ranging from holding meetings in individual campus rooms to hosting major events at the Student Center Ballroom or Ilfeld Auditorium. Facilities usable by the public include:
 - Ilfeld Auditorium, with a 718 person capacity;
 - Kennedy Lounge, with a 150 person capacity and a large open space that can be set up to accommodate auditorium or banquet-style seating;
 - Melody, Centennial and Central parks;
 - the Natatorium, a swimming pool complex;
 - Perkins Stadium, with a 3,800 person capacity and a football field, track, and practice fields;
 - Sala de Madrid, with a 250 person capacity, a large open space with built-in stage;
 - Student Union, including the ballroom;
 - Wilson Sports Complex, with a 3,000 person capacity, basketball courts, racquetball

courts, and tennis courts.

- Offering the community \$5 meals weekly at the Student Center [Dining Hall](#).
- [Donnelly Library Reading Programs](#), [Community Cards](#), and [Ray Drew Gallery](#): Donnelly Library's annual scholar-led reading and discussion programs allow students, faculty, staff, and community members to engage with books on a variety of subjects. Discussions of the books are led by Highlands' faculty and have covered a wide variety of subjects. Recent examples include the fall 2013 literature reading group, Let's Talk About It: Muslim Journeys: Literary Reflections; the spring 2015 biology reading group, Cancer: History, Research, and Ethics; and the fall 2016 literature reading group, Pulitzer Prize Winners: 5 Book Reading Challenge. The library also provides public programming such as film screenings and lectures. Community members can also receive community library cards to access library services. The library also operates the Ray Drew Gallery, which offers rotating exhibits open to the public, many featuring regional artists.
- The university is a sponsor of the [Fiesta de la Hispanidad](#), an annual event in Ilfeld Auditorium that promotes the Hispanic culture of the region.
- The [Gene Torres Golf Course](#) is USGA certified, and New Mexico residents can play for a reduced fee. The course is an important part of the Las Vegas community and is listed in the City Master Plan as a permanent green space. Community events are held at the golf course for special holidays such as Easter and the Fourth of July.
- The [HU Wellness Program](#), housed at the Wellness and Fitness Center, is an exercise program open to students, staff, and community members. The HU Wellness Program provides physical assessments and consultations to students, staff, and community members.
- The [Kennedy Gallery](#) showcases artwork from our permanent collection and hosts the annual [New Mexico Painters Show](#) of local artists. The gallery is open and free to the public.
- The [Recycling Center](#), operated by Highlands and located on our campus, offers free recycling services to the community. The center received an award as [the New Mexico Recycling Employee/Operator of the Year in 2016](#).
- Highlands offers [Reduced Tuition for Senior Citizens](#), allowing senior citizens to take classes for \$5 per credit hour.
- Our [Natatorium](#) is a community accessible swimming pool unique in northeastern New Mexico in that it has a deep end, allowing the university to offer courses in lifeguard training and scuba diving, and is open to the public when not in use for classes or other university activities. The pool has heavy community usage.

In many other instances, the university asks community groups about needs that the university might help address. For example, Campus Life responds to community needs by coordinating requests from groups that need help (i.e., Keep America Beautiful, Red Cross, Big Brother/Big Sister, Samaritan House and Salvation Army Food Drives) and communicating those needs to the student clubs. The clubs then decide to volunteer if it fits their organization's mission.

The president and other university members also participate as committee members on Las Vegas Main Street, the city's campaign to improve tourism to Las Vegas by restoring its historic main street corridors, the Las Vegas Arts Council, and the San Miguel County DWI Council.

Highlands also works extensively with our Alumni Board and our Foundation to engage the community, as documented in the "Community Partnerships" section of our [2016-2017 Mission Accomplishments](#).

Our many events are presented to the public in our [Campus Events Calendar](#).

Sources

- 2016-2017 Major Acts
- 2016-2017 Mission Accomplishments
- 2016-2017 Mission Accomplishments (page number 4)
- August 2017 Campus Events
- Ben Lujan Fellows Programs
- Borrowing from Donnelly Library - NMHU
- Center for the Education and Study of Diverse Populations
- Cineflix in Ilfeld - NMHU
- Currently at the Kennedy Gallery _ The Galleries at NMHU
- Dining Hall to Offer Lunches to Community Beginning August 21 - NMHU
- Dual Credit - NMHU
- Events Archive - NMHU
- Facilities Use Policy-BOR APPROVAL
- Fiesta de la Hispanidad April 7 in Ilfeld - NMHU
- Fourth Invitational New Mexico Painters Exhibition Opens Sept
- Gene Torres Golf Course
- Highlands Natatorium - NMHU
- HU Steps Up Recycling, Opens New Center to Community - NMHU
- HU Vision 2020
- Library Annual Report 2015-2016
- Library Annual Report 2015-2016 (page number 8)
- March 2017 Campus Events
- NEREC
- New Mexico MESA _ New Mexico MESA
- NMFWR
- Northeastern New Mexico Science and Engineering Fair - NMHU
- Office of Academic Support - NMHU
- Ray Drew Gallery _ The Galleries at NMHU
- Reading Groups - NMHU
- Recycling Center Coordinator Earns Statewide Recognition - NMHU
- Senior Tuition New Mexico Public Access Law
- Summer Institutes Advanced Placement New Mexico
- Wellness Program - NMHU

1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary

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

Summary

The evidence presented throughout Criterion 1 demonstrates our commitment to our mission, of providing opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students to attain an exceptional education, and to our core values of accessibility and diversity. By revising that mission and clarifying our strategic goals, Highlands has created a strong foundation for future operations, strategic planning, and budgeting.

Of our six strategic goals, the evidence in Criterion 1 shows how we are achieving Strategic Goal #3: *Highlands University will achieve a vibrant campus life* and Strategic Goal #4: *Highlands University will be a community partner*. As the only comprehensive university in northern New Mexico, we play an essential role in the community, providing the public with access to our facilities, our many campus events, and educational opportunities.

The new mission and strategic goals have reenergized Highlands, giving the university a clearer focus and direction. While our HLC probationary status has been a serious challenge, it has also provided Highlands the opportunity to reexamine and strengthen our systems, structures, policies, and practices, as documented throughout the rest of this Assurance Argument.

Sources

There are no sources.

2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

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

2.A - Core Component 2.A

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

Argument

2.A. Both integrity and ethics function as operational cornerstones of New Mexico Highlands University. As an institution, the governing board, administration, faculty, and staff engage with policies that enforce clarity and transparency at all levels of the campus. Highlands' commitment to integrity and ethics is evident in multiple documents that detail policies and procedures followed by the university. Highlands' website makes these policies available to the campus community and the general public, which further demonstrates the university's commitment to integrity and transparency across the spectrum of functions (i.e., financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary).

Such policies deal with all aspects of the institution's functions, including academics, student life, finances, personnel regulations, and other issues. See the [August 2017 organizational chart](#) for the overall structure of the university. Policies routinely include the processes, procedures, and protocols necessary for their implementation:

- Policies for regents: Found in the [Regents Policy Guide](#), which includes explicit policies regarding [conflicts of interest](#).
- Policies for faculty: Found in the current [Collective Bargaining Agreement](#), [Faculty Handbook](#), [Contingent Faculty Handbook](#), and [Distance Learning Manual](#).
- Policies for students: Found in the [Undergraduate](#) and [Graduate Catalogs](#), [Student Handbook](#), [Graduate Student Handbook](#), and [Academic Integrity Policy](#).
- Policies for staff and administration: Found in the [Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual](#).

Other policies that emphasize integrity include:

- Policies regarding communications and technologies: Includes [use of e-mail, media, and data access](#).
- Policies regarding facilities, property, safety and maintenance: Includes [policies for alcohol usage, facilities usage, campus housing policies, the policy statement regarding the prevention of and response to sex offenses, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking](#), and [campus police safety policies and reports](#).
- Policies regarding finance and administration: Includes policies for [travel](#) and [procurement](#).
- Policies regarding human resources: Includes the [staff grievance procedure](#), [sexual harassment policy](#), [equal employment opportunity and non-discrimination policy](#), and the [code of conduct](#).
- Policies regarding research: Found in the [Research Handbook](#).
- Policies regarding athletics: Includes [NCAA Division II regulations](#), [Rocky Mountain Athletic](#)

[Conference manual](#), [faculty athletic representative/administrator responsibilities](#), and [the athletic emergency action plan](#).

- Alumni and HU Foundation: Includes [Alumni Association Bylaws](#) and [Foundation Bylaws](#).

Highlands is committed to making these policies easy to find for faculty, staff, and students. We have created the [Faculty Resources](#) web page, which brings together the major policy documents that affect tenure-track, tenured, and contingent faculty. For students, we revamped the [Current Students](#) web page to quickly direct them to important student services and policies. [Human Resources](#) has a web page with links to all relevant staff policies.

In its [action letter](#) placing us on probation, the HLC specified that Highlands needed to show evidence of: 1) a personnel handbook for visiting and adjunct faculty approved by the Board of Regents; 2) evidence of development and approval processes that are consistent with shared governance procedures at the university.

The [Contingent Faculty Handbook](#) was initially drafted by the Faculty Affairs subcommittee of the Faculty Senate, revised by the Faculty Senate with input from all faculty members, including contingent faculty members, through both feedback and forums (see [Contingent Faculty Handbook development timeline](#)). The faculty of Highlands chose to use the word “Contingent” in the title of the Handbook to connect conversations on our campus to ongoing national conversations about contingency in the academy, particularly those by the American Association of University Professors.

Following shared governance practice at Highlands, the Contingent Faculty Handbook was approved by the [Faculty Senate on March 9, 2016](#), the [General Faculty on March 23, 2016](#), and the [Board of Regents on April 8, 2016](#).

The [Contingent Faculty Handbook](#) is distributed to all contingent faculty members at the time of their contract with an [acknowledgement form](#) and is linked on the [Faculty Resources web page](#), which includes a number of other resources, manuals, and policies for all faculty members. After the handbook’s first year of usage, the Faculty Senate [surveyed Contingent Faculty in Spring 2017](#), with [the results](#) leading to [several improvements to the Contingent Faculty Handbook](#), as approved by the [Board of Regents on July 27, 2017](#).

Contents of the handbook are further discussed in Section 3.C. in conjunction with the probationary concerns regarding contingent faculty evaluation, orientation, and professional development. Full information on the numbers and percentage of contingent faculty are included in that section.

Financial matters at Highlands undergo several layers of scrutiny to ensure ethical dealings. Highlands employs a third-party audit firm to audit our financials every year. Finances are fully discussed in 5.A., including links to our audits.

In the event that the appropriate policies and/or procedures have not been followed, the university mandates that faculty, staff and students make use of established mechanisms through which to seek redress or resolution. Examples of these mechanisms include the following:

1. [Collective Bargaining Agreement grievance procedure](#), for grievances concerning the tenure-track and tenured CBA and working conditions.
2. [Faculty Handbook](#) and [Contingent Faculty Handbook Grievance procedures](#), for grievances concerning the Handbook and shared governance.
3. [Classified Employee grievance process](#).
4. [Student Handbook grievance procedure](#).

Student misconduct, complaints, appeals, and grievances are addressed as promptly as possible. If the complaints are not of an academic nature, the dean of students and the Faculty Senate [Student Affairs Committee](#) handle their disposition per the policies and procedures in the [Student Code of Conduct](#). Academic appeals are reviewed by the provost and/or the associate VPAA, who either makes a decision or forwards the appeal to the [Academic Affairs Undergraduate \(or Graduate\) Subcommittee](#). After the respective committee has made its recommendation, if the appellant is not satisfied with the recommendation, he or she can appeal the decision to the committee in person. The final decision is made by the provost/VPAA, with consideration of the committee's recommendation. The process is outlined in the [Undergraduate](#) and [Graduate catalogs](#). In 2016-2017, Highlands resolved 70 undergraduate academic petitions, 20 graduate academic petitions, and 19 student affairs petitions/grievances/disciplinary hearings, as well as a large number of routine retroactive adds and drops.

The broad range of these explicit policies guarantees the fair and ethical behavior on the part of our Board of Regents, administration, staff, faculty, and students.

Sources

- Acknowledgement and Receipt of Handbook
- Alcohol Policy
- Annual Policy Safety Report
- April 8, 2016 BOR Minutes
- April 8, 2016 BOR Minutes (page number 8)
- CBA 2016-2019
- CBA 2016-2019 (page number 60)
- Changes to Contingent Faculty Handbook 4-20-17
- Contingent Faculty Handbook
- Contingent Faculty Handbook (page number 17)
- Contingent Faculty Survey call
- Contingent Faculty Survey Results
- Contingent Faculty Timeline
- Current Students - NMHU
- Distance Learning Manual
- Emergency Action Plan-Athletics 2012 07 12
- Facilities Use Policy-BOR APPROVAL
- Faculty Athletic Representative -Administrator Responsibilities
- Faculty Handbook 2017-2018
- Faculty Handbook 2017-2018 (page number 26)
- Faculty Handbook 2017-2018 (page number 28)
- Faculty Handbook 2017-2018 (page number 30)
- Faculty Resources - NMHU
- Faculty Senate Minutes March 9, 2016
- Faculty Senate Minutes March 9, 2016 (page number 2)
- Forum Call
- General Faculty Minutes March 23, 2016
- Graduate Catalog 2017-2018
- Graduate Catalog 2017-2018 (page number 19)
- Graduate Student Handbook
- Highlands Alumni Bylaws

- Highlands Foundation Bylaws
- Housing Policies
- HR Documents - NMHU
- Internet Policy
- July 26, 2017 BOR Minutes
- July 26, 2017 BOR Minutes (page number 7)
- NCAA Division II Manual
- NMHU Org Chart Final 08-24-17
- Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual
- Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 8)
- Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 9)
- Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 50)
- Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 52)
- Probation Action Letter
- Procurement Policy
- Regents Policy Guide
- Regents Policy Guide (page number 15)
- Research Handbook
- RMAC Manual
- Student Academic Integrity Policy
- Student_Handbook
- Student_Handbook (page number 85)
- Student_Handbook (page number 92)
- Student_Handbook (page number 106)
- Travel Policy
- Undergraduate Catalog 2017-2018
- Undergraduate Catalog 2017-2018 (page number 20)

2.B - Core Component 2.B

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

Argument

2.B. The [Highlands University website](#) and the [Undergraduate](#) and [Graduate Catalog](#) are the main sources of information about the university for students, prospective students, the community, and the general public. Highlands currently maintains two web sites, [a main site](#) that includes information for current students, the university community, and the general public, and then a [separate site for prospective students](#). Highlands uses its most current catalog to populate these websites with accurate information.

The website and catalogs contain all relevant information on academic programs, including [admissions](#), [academic policies and procedures](#), [graduation requirements](#), and [program descriptions and requirements by college or school](#).

The current [Undergraduate](#) and [Graduate Catalog](#) lists the faculty of each department or program, and [departmental sections](#) of the NMHU website list faculty and their research specializations (examples are linked from the Department of English). Some of these listings contain links to individual faculty web pages. The website also provides access to the [faculty and staff directory](#), which provides contact information for [staff, administration, and full-time faculty members](#). The [NMHU Factbook](#) presents a full breakdown of faculty and staff numbers.

Information on [tuition and fees](#), [housing costs and meal plans](#), [scholarships](#), and other forms of [financial aid](#) is available through both web sites, as is the [Net Price Calculator](#) as required by the Higher Education Opportunity Act. Students can check their financial accounts and status online through “myNMHU,” a self-service system through Ellucian Banner. Additional information on financial policies is available in the [Undergraduate](#) and [Graduate Catalog](#) and the [Student Handbook](#).

New Mexico Highlands University is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission. The status of the university’s accreditation is presented on the front page of the [NMHU website](#). The accreditation status of the university is also stated in the [Undergraduate](#) and [Graduate Catalog](#), including a full disclosure of probationary status. Information on the accreditation process, including disclosure of our probationary status and the steps we are taking to resolve it, are available on the [accreditation section of our website](#), linked from the front page of the NMHU website.

Other academic accreditations are presented on the [website](#) and discussed more fully in 4.A.5.

As a public institution, Highlands is overseen by the State of New Mexico, via the Higher Education Department, which presents a [full website](#) to the public regarding universities and colleges. The role of the Board of Regents in oversight of Highlands is stated in the [Regents Policy Guide](#).

Sources

- Accreditation Information - NMHU

- English Faculty and Staff - NMHU
- Faculty & Staff Directory - NMHU
- Faculty and Staff Directory - New Mexico Highlands University
- Financial Aid - NMHU
- Graduate Catalog 2017-2018
- Graduate Catalog 2017-2018 (page number 8)
- Graduate Catalog 2017-2018 (page number 26)
- Graduate Catalog 2017-2018 (page number 37)
- Higher Education Department
- New Mexico Highlands University Accreditation - NMHU
- NewMexicoHighlands website
- NMHU Factbook 2016-2017
- NMHU Factbook 2016-2017 (page number 32)
- NMHU home page
- Regents Policy Guide
- Regents Policy Guide (page number 4)
- Scholarships - NMHU
- Student Housing Rates - NMHU
- Student_Handbook
- Student_Handbook (page number 27)
- Tuition and Fees - NMHU
- Undergraduate Catalog 2017-2018
- Undergraduate Catalog 2017-2018 (page number 9)
- Undergraduate Catalog 2017-2018 (page number 13)
- Undergraduate Catalog 2017-2018 (page number 17)
- Undergraduate Catalog 2017-2018 (page number 27)
- Undergraduate Catalog 2017-2018 (page number 33)
- Undergraduate Catalog 2017-2018 (page number 35)
- Undergraduate Catalog 2017-2018 (page number 53)
- VSA Cost Estimator

2.C - Core Component 2.C

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

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

Argument

2.C.1. As a public educational institution established in the [New Mexico State Constitution](#), the Board of Regents has oversight of Highlands University, which consists of five members appointed by the governor of the state of New Mexico. One member is always a current New Mexico Highlands University student, and of the four non-student members of the board, no more than three can be members of the same political party ([N.M. Const. Sec. 13A](#)). All members, including the student member, have full voting rights on all issues.

The Board of Regents meets at least quarterly, and more often if necessary, to take action to preserve and enhance the mission of the university. The Board of Regents functions in accordance with the [Regents Policy Guide](#). To ensure transparency and public accountability, all meetings of the Board of Regents are governed by the requirements of the [New Mexico Open Meetings Act](#), as specified by [Section III of the Regents Policy Guide](#). As a result of this policy, Board of Regents meetings are open to the public and publicized at least 72 hours in advance. Meetings are also broadcast over the radio, over the web, and at each regular meeting there is time for the public to address the Regents.

All Board of Regents deliberations and actions are closely aligned to the mission, as reflected in the publicly published [Board of Regents minutes](#), which document all actions taken by the Regents. Please see section 2.C.2, 2.C.3., and 5.B. for more information about the deliberations, policy-making, and training of the regents.

2.C.2. Before each Board of Regents meeting, each regent receives and reviews an extensive packet of materials prepared by the internal constituencies of the university. Each major administrative unit includes a report, providing essential information and action items on [academics](#), [finances](#), [strategic enrollment management](#), and [student affairs](#), including contributions to the strategic plan (examples taken from the February 3, 2017 meeting). Representatives of the [Faculty Senate](#), [Staff Senate](#), and the [Associated Students of New Mexico Highlands University](#) (Student Senate) also provide a report, voicing the concerns of their constituencies. The Board of Regents weighs the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations as further documented in the Board of Regents minutes, which archive the conversations and deliberations that take place at these public meetings. Packets and minutes from the past academic year are linked below as examples:

Board of Regents Packets (Materials Reviewed)	Board of Regents Minutes (Actions Taken)
<u>October 28, 2016</u>	<u>October 28, 2016</u>
<u>December 2, 2016</u>	<u>December 2, 2016</u>
<u>February 3, 2017</u>	<u>February 3, 2017</u>
<u>April 21, 2017</u>	<u>April 21, 2017</u>
<u>April 28, 2017</u>	<u>April 28, 2017</u>
<u>May 31, 2017</u>	<u>May 31, 2017</u>
<u>July 26, 2017</u>	<u>July 26, 2017</u>
<u>September 6, 2017</u>	<u>September 6, 2017</u>

In addition to the materials provided, each Board of Regents meeting is attended by leaders of the administration, staff, faculty, and students, who represent their constituencies and provide input as needed. Administrative attendees at the meetings include the president, the provost/VPAA, the vice-president of strategic enrollment management, the vice-president of finance and administration, the vice-president of advancement, and the dean of students. In addition, the Student Senate president, the Staff Senate president, and the chair of the Faculty Senate attend the meetings, give reports and provide direct representation for their internal constituencies.

Meetings of the Board of Regents are open to the public, and external constituencies may directly present their concerns to the regents during the "Persons Wishing to Address the Board" agenda item at every regular meeting. As noted in section 2.C.1., membership on the Board of Regents represents diverse political opinions and viewpoints, including the viewpoint of students through the membership of the student regent.

2.C.3. Members of the Regents serve the public trust and have a clear obligation to fulfill their responsibilities in this regard. The Regents and the university are cognizant of potential conflicts of interest that might arise and are prepared to address these effectively to avoid even the appearance of impropriety. Management of actual and apparent Board conflicts is guided by the [Regents Policy Guide](#), publicly linked from the Board of Regents web page. The Board of Regents also receive regular training from both the state of New Mexico and from the Association of Governing Boards (AGB), with the last AGB training taking place on December 7, 2016. For more information on the probationary concerns related to such training, see 5.B.

2.C.4. [Section IX of the Regents Policy Guide](#) defines the relationship between the Regents and the administration, delegating day-to-day management of the institution to the president and other administrators: "The Board of Regents, having delegated to the University President authority for the executive control and management of the institution, recognizes that its chief executive officer must enjoy certain rights conducive to the exercise of presidential responsibilities," and providing an [extensive list of management duties](#).

[Section IX of the Regents Policy Guide](#) grants the university's faculty an essential role in shaping academic policy. Per that guide, the Regents have delegated to the faculty a substantial role in the administration of the university, particularly in the area of academics. [Section IV of the Faculty Handbook](#) explicitly states that: "The faculty at NMHU is an important and vital part of the operation

and administration of the University. Consequently, the Regents have delegated certain authority and privileges to the faculty. These are identified in detail in the Faculty Handbook and the Faculty Constitution contained within the handbook." Areas of oversight include, taken directly from the [Faculty Handbook](#):

- formulation of institutional aims;
- creation of new colleges, schools, departments, and disciplines;
- major curricular changes;
- requirements for admission and graduation, and for honors and scholastic performance in general;
- approval of candidates for degrees;
- regulations affecting student life and activities;
- policies of appointment, dismissal, and promotion in academic rank;
- and general faculty welfare.

The faculty exercises this role through the Faculty Senate and the Academic Affairs Committee, in partnership with the provost and the Office of Academic Affairs.

Sources

- 04-21-17 BoR meeting material
- 05-31-17 BoR meeting material
- 07-26-17 BoR meeting documents
- 09-06-17 BoR meeting documents
- 09-06-17 BoR Minutes - DRAFT
- 4-28-17 BoR meeting material
- 4-28-17 BoR meeting material (page number 46)
- 4-28-17 BoR meeting material (page number 98)
- 4-28-17 BoR meeting material (page number 105)
- 4-28-17 BoR meeting material (page number 106)
- 4-28-17 BoR meeting material (page number 113)
- April 21, 2017 BOR Minutes
- April 28, 2017 BOR Minutes
- April 8, 2016 BOR Minutes
- December 2, 2016 BOR Minutes
- December 2, 2016 BOR Packet
- Faculty Handbook 2017-2018
- Faculty Handbook 2017-2018 (page number 15)
- Faculty Handbook 2017-2018 (page number 16)
- February 3, 2017 BOR Minutes
- February 3, 2017 BOR Packet
- February 3, 2017 BOR Packet (page number 39)
- February 3, 2017 BOR Packet (page number 59)
- February 3, 2017 BOR Packet (page number 85)
- February 3, 2017 BOR Packet (page number 101)
- July 26, 2017 BOR Minutes
- May 31, 2017 BOR Minutes
- New Mexico Constitution
- New Mexico Constitution (page number 50)

- New Mexico Constitution (page number 51)
- October 28, 2016 BOR Minutes
- October 28, 2016 BOR Packet
- Open Meetings Act Compliance Guide 2015
- Regent Meeting Minutes - NMHU
- Regents Policy Guide
- Regents Policy Guide (page number 8)
- Regents Policy Guide (page number 15)
- Regents Policy Guide (page number 19)
- Regents Policy Guide (page number 20)
- Regents Policy Guide (page number 23)
- Student Senate Resolutions BOR 2-3-17

2.D - Core Component 2.D

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

Argument

2.D. All members of the university community are committed to freedom of expression, exercised responsibly. [Section VI of the Regents Policy Guide](#) identifies the board's role in protecting the academic freedom and freedom of expression of all members of the campus community. In [Section IV of the Faculty Handbook](#), the faculty are assigned responsibility for the preservation of academic freedom; the [Faculty Handbook also defines the right of academic freedom](#). Academic freedom is also explicitly incorporated into [Article 15 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement](#), which states: "Academic freedom includes the right to study, discuss, investigate, teach, and publish. Academic freedom applies to both teaching and research. It includes the freedom to perform one's professional duties and to present differing and sometimes controversial points of view, free from reprisal." Faculty members are nonetheless reminded that with academic freedom comes great responsibility. The CBA further enjoins faculty to "remember that the public may judge their profession and their institution by their statements. Hence, they should at all times strive to be accurate, should exercise appropriate restraint, should show respect for the opinions of others, and should indicate that they are speaking only for themselves."

Any tenured/tenure-track faculty member who feels his or her right to academic freedom has been abridged may appeal such action through the [Grievance Procedure](#) outlined in Article 29 of the CBA; non-bargaining unit faculty may appeal to the grievance process incorporated in the [Contingent Faculty Handbook](#) and [Faculty Handbook](#). Highlands has had no grievances filed related to academic freedom in the past decade.

The [Research Handbook](#) provides additional perspective on academic freedom in the context of research and scholarship. [Section 2.1](#) of the handbook observes that: "The mission of the university depends upon rules of fairness, honesty, and respect for the rights of others. All faculty members are afforded the freedom of inquiry, thought, expression, publication, and peaceable assembly, which are all rights protected under the Constitution of the United States. Faculty also has the right to engage in external consulting as allowed by the university. These principles hold for all faculty without regard to race, age, religion, color, national origin, ancestry, sex, physical or mental handicap or serious medical condition, spousal affiliation, sexual orientation or gender identity as defined by the New Mexico Human Rights Act."

Sources

- CBA 2016-2019
- CBA 2016-2019 (page number 28)
- CBA 2016-2019 (page number 60)
- Contingent Faculty Handbook
- Contingent Faculty Handbook (page number 17)
- Faculty Handbook 2017-2018

- Faculty Handbook 2017-2018 (page number 15)
- Faculty Handbook 2017-2018 (page number 16)
- Faculty Handbook 2017-2018 (page number 30)
- Regents Policy Guide
- Regents Policy Guide (page number 11)
- Research Handbook
- Research Handbook (page number 18)

2.E - Core Component 2.E

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

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

Argument

2.E.1. As discussed in Section 1 of the Research Handbook, all research conducted at New Mexico Highlands University is subject to review by appropriate faculty research compliance committees. The Faculty Senate's [Research Committee](#) provides general oversight, formulates research policy, reviews proposals and allocates a limited amount of funding for faculty research and dissemination, and organizes events for the presentation of faculty and student research. The university's Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects (IRB) provides oversight for all research involving human participants conducted under the auspices of Highlands. All research proposals involving the use of human participants must be reviewed and approved by the IRB. Comprehensive policies and procedures for human participants research can be found in Section 7 of the Research Handbook. Research involving animal subjects is governed by the policies contained in Section 8 of the Research Handbook; proposals for research involving animals must be reviewed and approved by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC). The IRB applies for and receives approval from the Office of Human Research Protections (part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services), and is [currently approved through October 31, 2018](#). The IACUC applies for and receives approval from the Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare (part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services), and is [currently approved through February 28, 2020](#).

2.E.2. The University Libraries provide students with information on the ethical use of information resources through [its website](#), [library tutorials](#), [supplemental library instructions](#), and classes on the use of library resources at both the [100](#) and [400/500 level](#). One of the library course objectives is to "design strategies to avoid plagiarism."

The [Academic Integrity Policy](#), discussed below, offers further guidance to students on ways to avoid improperly using information resources.

For freshmen, the required English composition courses, particularly [English 112: Freshman Composition 2](#), include extensive discussions on the use of information resources. As per the course description, "Progressing from rhetorical and contextual analysis, students develop essential research questions to drive their academic inquiry, and they produce extended essays in MLA format based upon their research in libraries, academic search engines, and the internet, and with academic journals, magazine articles, blogs, movies, documentaries, and other texts."

In addition to the resources offered by the library, many degree programs explicitly mandate that their students and faculty subscribe to discipline-specific ethical codes. Among the programs at the University with such requirements are social work, counseling, psychology and business (examples: [Psychology](#), [Counseling](#)).

2.E.3. The university's [Academic Integrity Policy](#), developed by the Academic Affairs Committee and approved by the Faculty, Administration, and Board of Regents, clearly defines academic integrity and the consequences for not following those policies. The policy is included in the current [Student Handbook](#), [Undergraduate](#) and [Graduate Catalog](#), and linked on the [Faculty Resources page](#).

In addition, the university has subscribed to Turnitin, a software package used in conjunction with the Desire2Learn learning management system that allows students and instructors to check written work for plagiarism. Faculty routinely receive training in the use of the Turnitin software and D2L through the university's Educational Outreach Services.

The current Research Handbook enjoins those involved in research to conduct themselves with integrity, and Section 11 deals comprehensively with all aspects of research misconduct.

Faculty academic integrity for members of the bargaining unit is enforced through the [Collective Bargaining Agreement, Article 16](#) (Employee Investigations) and [Article 28](#) (Procedures for Dismissal of a Tenured Faculty Member for Cause or Dismissal of Tenure-Track Faculty during His or Her Appointment Contract). Provisions in the [Policies and Procedures Manual](#) provide enforcement for administration, staff, and non-tenured/tenure-track faculty.

Sources

- CBA 2016-2019
- CBA 2016-2019 (page number 29)
- CBA 2016-2019 (page number 57)
- Counseling_Program_Student_Handbok
- Counseling_Program_Student_Handbok (page number 23)
- ENGL 112 Resources
- Faculty Handbook 2017-2018
- Faculty Handbook 2017-2018 (page number 29)
- Faculty Resources - NMHU
- Find Information - NMHU
- Graduate Catalog 2017-2018
- Graduate Catalog 2017-2018 (page number 18)
- LIB100 Syllabus
- LIB400-500 Syllabus
- Library Tutorials - NMHU
- NMHU_AminalAssurance_2016-2020
- NMHU_IRBApproval_Thru181031
- Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual
- Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual (page number 14)
- Psychology_Graduate_Program_Behavioral_Agreement
- Reference, Research & Information Services - NMHU
- Student Academic Integrity Policy
- Student_Handbook
- Student_Handbook (page number 57)
- Undergraduate Catalog 2017-2018
- Undergraduate Catalog 2017-2018 (page number 20)

2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary

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

Summary

The evidence presented throughout Criterion 2 shows how Highlands is dedicated to communicating ethically with our faculty, staff, and students through clear policies and procedures, achieving our Strategic Goal #6: *Highlands University will achieve enhanced communication and efficiency.*

The evidence presented also shows that Highlands's Board of Regents is committed to achieving Highlands' core values of excellence, diversity, accessibility, and responsibility. The board's decision-making, as documented in the Board of Regents packets and minutes, demonstrates the input of all university constituencies, inclusive shared governance practice, alignment to the HU Vision 2020, thus allowing Highlands to further its six strategic goals.

Sources

There are no sources.

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

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

3.A - Core Component 3.A

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

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

Argument

3.A.1. To ensure all courses and programs are current and require an appropriate level of performance, Highlands utilizes a shared governance process to create, delete, and revise any program or course. This process is overseen by the [Academic Affairs Committee](#) of the Faculty Senate, and outlined in [Program Proposal Guidance](#) and [How to Submit Course or Program Proposal to Academic Affairs](#). All changes are initiated by faculty via their academic departments then reviewed and approved by the appropriate academic dean. Changes then go the Academic Affairs Committee for extensive scrutiny, discussion, and approval ([documented in the Academic Affairs minutes](#)) before finally being approved by the provost/VPAA. At every step of the process, these groups and individuals ensure that the courses and programs are current and are at the required level of performance appropriate to the degree or certificate awarded. Once approved by all parties, the completed forms are sent to the registrar for implementation and presented to the students through the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalog, our online system Degree Audit, and the Highlands web site.

As described in the catalog, [undergraduate and graduate courses](#) are given course numbers according to the level of performance required by the student. Lower-division courses are numbered from 100 through 299. Upper-division courses are numbered from 300 through 499. Courses numbered from 500 through 599 are for graduate students; undergraduate students may be enrolled in the same course under a 400 number, where they earn undergraduate-level credit. In this case, the graduate students in 500-level courses are required to demonstrate graduate-level proficiency in the work. Courses numbered 600 or higher are for graduate students only.

The State of New Mexico also closely monitors the appropriateness of courses and academic programs through its Higher Education Department, requiring that new master's degrees be approved prior to implementation. Content of courses in the [state transfer core](#)—a 35-credit module that is standard across all community colleges and universities in the state—are defined and monitored by the state.

Several Highlands programs, such as social work, business, and education, also have specialty

accreditation, which helps to ensure that programs meet recognized standards of the profession. Specialty accreditation is discussed in more depth in section 4.A.5. of this document.

3.A.2. Highlands University offers undergraduate education at the associate and bachelor's levels. The university offers graduate education at the master's degree level, with the appropriate requirements articulated in the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs:

The [associate degree requirements](#) include fulfillment of common degree requirements; at least 64 credit hours; minimum cumulative grade point average of 2.0; and fulfillment of the discipline requirements for graduation. For the associate degree, C or better grades are required in all courses listed as major requirement for the degree.

The [bachelor's degree requirements](#) include fulfillment of common degree requirements; completion of the university's general education requirement (includes proficiency course requirements, if required, and core curriculum course requirements); a total of at least 45 credits in courses numbered 300 or 400 level; a cumulative grade point average of at least 2.0; and at least 120 total credit hours. For the bachelor's degree, no credits below C may be counted toward a major or minor, and a C or better grade may be required for support courses in some majors and minors. The requirements for the [bachelor of arts curriculum](#) include one major of at least 30 credits; one minor of at least 20 credits (or a second major or associate degree). The [bachelor of science curriculum](#) requires one major of at least 30 credits selected from the list of approved B.S. degree major programs and a minor of at least 20 credits in one of the fields of science other than the field of the major and at least eight credits in mathematics, including Math 155, Applied Calculus I or Math 211, Calculus I. A combined science minor, a second major in a B.S. degree field other than the field of the first major, or an associate degree in a science field may be substituted for the minor requirement. A [second bachelor's degree](#) must meet all requirements for that degree.

[The master's degree requirements include](#) at least 32 semester credits of 500- or 600-level courses of which at least 15 credits must be at the 600 level. None of the coursework may have been used for another degree, except for dual master's programs, nor may a 500-level course be used for credit if the 400-level counterpart has been used for a bachelor's degree. Master's students must complete an oral comprehensive examination and a thesis, field project, or professional paper, which is to be a report of an independent and original investigation done under the supervision of a member of the graduate faculty with the advice and cooperation of the committee members and other graduate faculty. All graduate students must maintain a GPA of at least 3.0.

Specific descriptions and requirements for each academic program and certificate are described within the individual programs' sections of the [Undergraduate](#) and [Graduate Catalog](#).

Specific programs and certificates define their learning objectives when they propose new programs or revise current programs. The section of the Academic Affairs Committee's [Program Proposal Guidance](#) includes a section articulating the academic goals and objectives for the program, "Academic Goal(s) and Objective(s). This is a description of the goal(s) and objective(s) of the program. Goals and objectives should be tied to NMHU's mission and strategic plan elements." All academic programs are required to have a plan for assessing the extent to which their students master their learning outcomes. These reports clearly articulate the learning outcomes for all undergraduate and graduate programs. The learning outcomes are also articulated and assessed during the program review process. Section 4.B. of this document discusses program learning outcomes in greater detail.

3.A.3. To guarantee program quality and consistency of learning goals, Highlands employs a centralized system where academic programs, requirements, and staffing are overseen by the

academic department and respective academic dean. Academic programs and courses offered at the centers or via distance education are all required to have the same learning objectives and basic structure as those offered face-to-face on the main campus, as per the [Distance Learning Manual](#).

Faculty teaching at the centers or online are held to the same standards, hiring practices, faculty credentials, evaluation, and learning outcomes as main campus faculty. These processes guarantee quality across all locations and modalities.

Department chairs and deans are responsible for ensuring quality through appropriate evaluation of faculty, classes, and programs. Academic programs are required to include students from the centers and online, if applicable, in their outcomes assessment activities.

Highlands is committed to quality of its distance and online educational programs. In 2011, we hosted a successful evaluation visit from the [HLC regarding our distance education programs](#). We have also joined [SARA, the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements](#), to ensure quality and oversight of distance education, with a comprehensive review of [SARA standards by the Faculty Senate in 2015](#).

Quality and learning goals are further enforced by staffing the centers with full-time faculty. See section 3.C. for further discussion of faculty resources at the centers.

Currently, all dual credit students attend the Highlands Las Vegas campus to take classes taught by regular Highlands instructors.

We have no contractual or consortial arrangements for other groups to offer courses to our students.

Sources

- Academic Affairs Committee Minutes - NMHU
- Distance Learning Manual
- Distance Learning Manual (page number 7)
- Faculty Handbook 2017-2018
- Faculty Handbook 2017-2018 (page number 26)
- General Ed Core Course Transfer Curriculum
- Graduate Catalog 2017-2018
- Graduate Catalog 2017-2018 (page number 21)
- HLC New Mexico Highlands University Distance Ed Report of a Visit
- How to submit course or program proposals to the Academic Affairs Committee
- ITC SARA Recommendations With Faculty Senate Revisions Summer 2015.pdf
- Program Proposal Guidance
- Program Proposal Guidance (page number 5)
- Undergraduate Catalog 2017-2018
- Undergraduate Catalog 2017-2018 (page number 19)
- Undergraduate Catalog 2017-2018 (page number 21)
- Undergraduate Catalog 2017-2018 (page number 27)
- WICHE SARA

3.B - Core Component 3.B

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

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

Argument

3.B.1. The mission of Highlands states, “New Mexico Highlands University is a public comprehensive university serving our local and global communities. Our mission is to provide opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students to attain an exceptional education by fostering creativity, critical thinking and research in the liberal arts, sciences, and professions within a diverse community.” To support this, the university emphasizes a balanced [core undergraduate curriculum](#) firmly grounded in the liberal arts and sciences. The general education curriculum includes the [35-hour state-mandated common core](#), as well as proficiency requirements (in math, English, and computer proficiency) and extended requirements that include a literature course and two courses in physical fitness.

Much of our core is mandated by the state and is consistent across all universities and community colleges in New Mexico to facilitate the transfer of general education credits. New Mexico's Higher Education Department spent several years working with various stakeholders, including the state's higher education institutions, to develop a 35 credit hour general education common core curriculum. In 2005, the New Mexico Legislature passed the [Post-Secondary Education Articulation Act](#), which mandated that courses meeting common-core requirements at one institution are accepted at all other institutions in the state; the state of New Mexico, via the NMHED and with input from the public universities/colleges, is currently revising that core. A link to the [General Ed Core Course Transfer Curriculum of the NMHED](#) is given in the [Undergraduate Catalog](#), where courses in the state matrix are listed by institution under each of the five general education areas, facilitating transfer.

As with the other institutions within the state, undergraduate students at Highlands University are required to take 9 hours in Area I: Communication, 3 hours in Area II: Mathematics, 8 hours in Area III: Lab Science, 6-9 hours in Area IV: Social/Behavioral Sciences, and 6-9 hours in Area V: Humanities and Fine Arts for a total of 35 hours of the core curriculum.

Our [general education curriculum](#) also has some additional requirements that are not part of the state-mandated core, illustrating Highlands' commitment to ensuring all of our students will acquire an education that is broadly relevant to living and working in our complex, modern society. These requirements include two classes in a second language, one literature class, and two credits in physical education. [A review of general education requirements from across the state](#) demonstrated that our requirements were equivalent to those of our sister institutions. In addition, the faculty expressed the strong belief that the additional requirements were a necessary reflection of our mission and of our goals for our core curriculum.

The Academic Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate holds the primary responsibility for the development and assessment of the NMHU core curriculum, per the duties and responsibilities of the committee in the [Faculty Handbook](#).

3.B.2. The content of the core is grounded, both at the state and university level, in the idea of a broad-based, liberal arts education. After the development of the common core and articulation agreements noted above in 3.B.1., the NMHED led a series of task force meetings with the goal of developing a recognized set of [general education core competencies](#) that all students completing the common core in the state are expected to achieve, along with assessment suggestions. The general education competencies are Area I: Communication; Area II: College Algebra, Liberal Arts Math, Statistics; Area III: Laboratory Science; Area IV: Social and Behavioral Science; and Area V: Humanities and Fine Arts. The content of all general education classes is, by law, required to align with the state-defined core competencies, and all of Highlands' general education classes had to be certified by the state. Officially approved courses are included as part of the [statewide transfer matrix](#).

In addition, and as described in the Highlands [Assessment Handbook](#), instructors of core curriculum courses are expected to align their learning outcomes to the university outcomes. As discussed in more detail in 4.B., Highlands has developed four fundamental traits that we believe all Highlands graduates should possess:

1. Mastery of content knowledge and skills
2. Effective communication skills
3. Critical and reflective thinking skills
4. Effective use of technology

These traits are integrated, as appropriate, into the learning outcomes of our general education courses. As examples, the syllabi of [Bio 212: General Biology 2](#), [Econ 216: Principles of Macroeconomics](#), [Forestry 105: Humans and Ecosystems](#), and [Hist 100: The Western World](#), all explicitly link the four traits to their course-level learning outcomes.

3.B.3. The four core traits expected of all Highlands' graduates, described above in section 3.B.2 and in depth in section 4.B.1, are directly related to this issue. Academic programs work to ensure these traits are developed in their programs, and faculty work to ensure the traits are covered in their courses. Each program is expected to align assessment of the traits with assessment of the program specific learning outcomes, and evidence of this is provided in the outcomes assessment reports of each academic program, as discussed in 4.B.1.

Trait #1, mastery of content knowledge and skills, directly engages students in collecting, analyzing, and mastering modes of inquiry or creative work in their chosen academic field. Traits #2 and #3, effective communication skills and critical and reflective thinking skills, directly focus students in collecting, analyzing (critical thinking), and communicating information. Trait #4, effective use of technology, helps students develop skills adaptable to changing environments.

The learning outcomes of each undergraduate and graduate program are aligned to the four traits, as documented in the Outcomes Assessment Reports, documented in 4.B., guaranteeing all programs are actively engaging students in mastery of content knowledge of skills, effective communication skills, critical and reflective thinking, and effective use of technology.

3.B.4. One of the four core values of the university is diversity, and Highlands has always valued human diversity and multiculturalism. One basic indication of our commitment to multiculturalism is the fact that all undergraduate students must demonstrate proficiency in a second language, either by a proficiency assessment or two semesters of a language other than English. Many of the programs and courses offered by the university emphasize cultural diversity and recognize the human and cultural diversity of the world in which students live and work.

The School of Business, Media and Technology offers numerous undergraduate courses with an explicit focus on international perspectives, and the MBA program has a complete concentration in [international business](#). The School of Education offers a [major and a minor in early childhood multicultural education](#), a [minor in bilingual education/TESOL](#), and a [minor in English as a second language](#). At the graduate level, the School of Education offers [certificates in TESOL \(teaching English as a second language\)](#) and [bilingual education](#).

At the [undergraduate level](#) and the [graduate level](#), the Facundo Valdez School of Social Work offers many classes addressing cultural diversity with a special emphasis on Hispanic, Native American, and other diverse populations of New Mexico and the Southwest. At the graduate level, the School of Social Work offers a master of social work degree with a concentration in [bilingual/bicultural clinical practice](#).

Many programs within the College of Arts and Sciences address cultural diversity. The college offers a [master's degree in Southwest studies](#), a [major in Spanish](#), a [minor in Native American/Hispano cultural studies](#), and a [minor in women's studies](#), as well as a large number of courses dedicated to multicultural issues and the culture of the Southwest, as listed throughout the [undergraduate](#) and [graduate catalog](#).

In addition to the academic programs that address diversity, the university also offers students access to different cultural perspectives through campus organizations and events. As described in the [NMHU Chartered Student Clubs and Organizations 2016-2017 list](#), many student organizations such as the International Club, Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan (MEChA), and the Native American Club help students explore diverse viewpoints.

As discussed in 1.D., Highlands has many formal partnerships that recognize and further the education of diverse populations, including the Ben Lujan Leadership and Public Policy Institute and the Center for Education and Study of Diverse Populations. Student services such as Peoples Center for Indigenous Knowledges and the ARMAS tutoring center, as discussed in 1.C. and 3.E. respectively, further emphasize Highlands' commitment to human and cultural diversity.

Perhaps most importantly, Highlands has an extremely diverse student population (see section 1.A.2.), allowing our students to directly interact with students with different backgrounds, faiths, belief systems, and cultures.

3.B.5. As indicated in the [Collective Bargaining Agreement](#), Highlands tenured and tenure-track faculty members are responsible for and evaluated on work in the three areas of teaching/advising, scholarship, and service. Even with a teaching load of 12 credits each semester, the Highlands faculty produces an impressive array of research and creative works, much of which involves students.

Faculty members share their contributions to scholarship on campus at the annual Faculty Research Day. The [2017 Faculty Research Committee Research Day Program](#) shows a sampling of the research that Highlands faculty members are conducting, and the research day gives faculty members an opportunity to present their findings to students, colleagues, and staff. Faculty members also share their contributions to scholarship, creative work, and more through the Faculty Activities Report. As can be seen in the [2016-2017 Faculty Activities Brochure](#), Highlands faculty members are active in publishing, research, and other forms of creative work. Further faculty activities are highlighted through [news articles on our website](#).

In fiscal year 2017, Highlands received more than \$11 million in grants involving research, scholarship, many of which directly impact students, as detailed in the [grants highlights](#), produced by our Office of Research and Sponsored Projects.

Highlands also celebrates the scholarly and creative work of its faculty through the [Power of Excellence](#) program, which highlights research, creative, and grants achievement. [During 2016-2017](#), seven faculty and staff members were recognized as Power Authors (those who have published a book or served as an editor on a major work between July 1, 2015 and June 30, 2016), three more were recognized as Power Artists (who have presented a major art project between July 1, 2015 and June 3, 2016), 23 as Power Grantees (faculty or staff who received \$100,000 or more in grants or contracts between January 1 and December 31, 2016), and 11 faculty, staff, and one student were recognized for their work on initiatives to incorporate high-impact practices into the classroom.

In addition to formal research projects, Highlands' students and faculty produce a number of creative works every year. These include concerts and performances by students from the [music program](#) and through [students exhibits of artwork](#). Highlands is proud to be one of the few institutions in the country with an art foundry, and the biennial [Iron Tribe](#) conference, which features art exhibits and performance iron art by international and national contemporary iron artists, is held at Highlands.

As appropriate, undergraduate and graduate students perform and present original research and creative projects. As per the [Graduate Catalog](#), master's students complete original theses, professional papers, or other capstone projects as part of their degree requirements. Students share their contribution to scholarship and the discovery of knowledge at events like the annual Student Research Day. During the [2017 Student Research Day](#), 18 students gave oral presentations and another 16 presented posters.

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3.C - Core Component 3.C

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

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

Argument

3.C.1. Highlands has a large number of committed faculty members, allowing the university to maintain a low student to faculty ratio of 15-to-1, as per our [IPEDS Common Data Set 2016-2017](#). Highlands employed 97 tenured or tenure-track faculty, including 54 tenured faculty (per the [2016-2017 faculty list](#), created and maintained by the Office of Academic Affairs). The size and scope of our tenured or tenure-track faculty, including the continuity provided by those 54 tenured faculty, give Highlands sufficient numbers to provide oversight of the curriculum, academic credentials, and assessment of student learning. Tenured and tenure-track numbers have been steady over the past decade, hovering in the low to mid-90s:

Number of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty, 2010-2016

2010	96
2011	90
2012	92
2013	99
2014	93
2015	91
2016	94

Source: [2016-2017 Factbook](#)

As per the [CBA](#), all tenured or tenure-track faculty members are required to participate in teaching,

research, and service, including service on the Faculty Senate committees that oversee curriculum (Academic Affairs), academic credentials (Faculty Senate, with a [new policy created in 2017 based on the revised HLC guidelines](#)), or outcomes assessment (Assessment committee). The chair of the Faculty Senate, the secretary of the Faculty Senate, and the chair of Academic Affairs are provided with [course releases per the Faculty Handbook](#) to lead in these activities. For additional support, department chairs are given course releases [per the CBA](#) to oversee curriculum, credentials, and outcomes assessment.

Per the [2016-2017 IPEDS data set](#), Highlands employed 138 full-time faculty and 111 part-time faculty. The table below provides the ratio of classes taught by full-time versus part-time faculty, as calculated by FTE. This number provides the most accurate measure of who is actually teaching classes and not receiving release time for administrative or research work:

Percentage of Full-time versus Part-time faculty, AY16

	FTE	Percentage
Full-time Faculty	120.03	63%
Part-time Faculty	71.28	37%

Source: [2016-2017 Factbook](#)

Of those full-time faculty, 105 out of the 138 (76.1 percent) had a doctorate or other terminal degree.

Many of our contingent faculty are hired on full-time contracts, complete with benefits, on what Highlands defines as retained term (carries an expectation of being rehired) or term (hired for a fixed amount of time). Other faculty members are hired on part-time contracts as per-course faculty and are capped at teaching two classes per semester. Definitions of these faculty categories are included in the [Faculty Handbook](#). Per-course faculty, called adjuncts at many universities, teach two or fewer classes per semester, with many of our per-course teaching only a single class or acting as field supervisors for education and social work students. Term faculty are usually full-time instructors for the year, teaching four or five classes per semester with minimal service and research expectations. Retained term have similar duties and expectations as their tenured and tenure-track peers, although with more of a focus on teaching and less on research. The exact headcount numbers are as follows:

Numbers of Contingent Faculty, Fall 2016, by Headcount

	Per-Course	Term	Retained Term
Arts and Sciences	26	23	7
Business	4	13	0
Education	28	5	0
Social Work	73	9	2
Total	131	50	9

Source: [Fall 2016 contingent faculty list](#)

The School of Social Work employs a larger number of contingent faculty than our other programs for several reasons. As a pedagogic strategy and as part of professional training, Social Work places

its students in contact with working social work professionals, and many of those per-course faculty are full-time social workers. A significant number (more than 20) of those per-course faculty are field consultants, who oversee students engaging in field practicums. These faculty are not instructors of record, but instead work with the full-time field supervisors in community agencies to oversee the professional development of students. The Social Work program is also partially funded by a Title IV-E Welfare Training Program grant, which allows us to extend our offerings to underserved locations and populations. Highlands' Social Work program is accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (see 4.A.5), and all staffing decisions are made in alignment with those accreditation standards.

Our faculty numbers and continuity of faculty allow us to keep our student-to-faculty ratio low, providing our students with the access to academic excellence that is central to our mission.

3.C.2. As outlined in the [Faculty Handbook](#) and [CBA](#), the faculty holds primary responsibility for the establishment of academic credentials, recommendations for hiring, and criteria for evaluation of faculty members. In spring 2017, the Faculty Senate created the [Minimum Faculty Qualifications Guidelines as an appendix of the Faculty Handbook](#), utilizing the HLC's updated requirements. This document clearly defines the [minimum qualifications by course level](#) and the policies for establishing [tested experience](#).

Department chairs, deans, and the provost/VPAA have enforced this policy for fall 2017.

Credentials for tenure-track and tenured faculty members are higher than the minimum credentials, and defined by the [CBA](#). Such faculty members are required to hold a Ph.D. or other appropriate terminal degree, as well as to have a demonstrated record of teaching, research, and service. Additional qualifications are listed in job descriptions.

[The hiring process for faculty and employees](#) mandates a verification of credentials through inspection of the CV and official academic transcripts to ensure appropriate qualifications, which are kept on file in HR.

Highlands is not involved in any contractual or consortial programs. Highlands does not offer any courses designed solely for dual credit students. Dual credit students are enrolled in regular classes at the Las Vegas campus, which ensures that they receive the same level of instruction as all other Highlands students.

3.C.3. Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty Evaluation: The tenured and tenure-track faculty are unionized, and their evaluation procedure and the forms are outlined in [Article 23 of the CBA](#). All tenure-track faculty members are evaluated annually, and all tenured faculty members are evaluated every other year. Article 23 also describes the reappointment review evaluation of all tenure-track faculty members that is done yearly until faculty are granted tenure and the process for promotion/tenure evaluation. The promotion process to associate and full professor is also described in Article 23, and post-tenure review, which can be launched if there are identified problems in the biennial review, is discussed in [Article 24](#).

Student Evaluations of All Faculty: Students evaluate all courses through surveys made available online through self-service Banner at the end of every semester. Students are prompted to complete course evaluations before they can view their final grades online. [The evaluation questions](#) were revised [by the Faculty Senate in the 2016-2017 academic year](#) to improve their relevance. The results of student course evaluations are explicitly used in both the evaluation of tenured, tenure-track, and contingent faculty, to support Highlands' mission of teaching excellence.

Contingent Faculty Evaluation: Prior to the creation of the Faculty Association and the ratification of its Collective Bargaining Agreement in 2007, all faculty—tenured, tenure-track, contingent—were covered by the evaluation and orientation procedures in the Faculty Handbook. Once the CBA took effect, tenured and tenure-track faculty were covered by the evaluation and orientation procedures in the CBA, and there was an increasing lack of clarity as to how contingent faculty were to be evaluated and oriented. While most of these faculty were evaluated and oriented at the department level, the NMHU Faculty Senate worked for several years, through its Faculty Affairs subcommittee, to draft a Contingent Faculty Handbook that would regularize orientation, evaluation, and other policies for these faculty. Highlands was cited by the HLC for our lack of consistency and inability to produce evidence that all contingent faculty were being evaluated and oriented. The HLC's specific language in the [action letter](#) was, "formal approval of an institutional process and policy for evaluation of visiting/adjunct faculty; and a coherent plan for orientation and professional updating of visiting/adjunct faculty along with evidence of implementation of the plan."

As per section 2.A. of this argument, the [Contingent Faculty Handbook](#) was created by the Faculty Senate through a shared governance process that included contingent faculty and approved by the Board of Regents in spring 2016. The handbook has been in effect since that date and includes the procedures for both the evaluation of contingent faculty and orientation and professional updating, as described below.

The new Contingent Faculty Handbook contains a comprehensive evaluation procedure for all contingent faculty. The process is forked: full-time faculty who have the expectation of being hired the next year (retained-term faculty) are evaluated in a fashion similar and on a similar timeline to their tenure-track and tenured peers; per-course faculty are evaluated each semester. [The process is described in the handbook](#): "All visiting and retained term faculty shall participate in annual evaluation, following the guidelines and timeline established for Bargaining Unit Faculty in the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) for tenure-track and tenured faculty."

Term and per-course faculty are evaluated on a semester by semester basis, including classroom observations in their first semester and then recurring observations of every four semesters afterward. The process is described fully in [the Contingent Faculty Handbook](#): "Term and per-course faculty members undergo evaluation every semester, and continued employment is contingent upon good performance. Every new term or per-course faculty member will be observed in the classroom during his or her first semester's employment. After their first semester, Term and Per-course faculty employed continuously will undergo a classroom observation—under the terms outlined below—every two years (four semesters)." The department chair or dean "should schedule a post-observation conference (including the term or per-course faculty member (and the observing faculty member, if different from the chair or dean) within two weeks of the observation. The term or per-course faculty member should receive a written report of the observation and the post-observation conference for signature before it is sent to the provost's office and placed in his or her personnel file."

Appropriate forms for the evaluations and observations are linked on the [Faculty Resources page](#) along with a [classroom observation form](#) and [evaluation form](#). Since these evaluations are explicitly tied to rehiring contingent faculty, department chairs, deans, and the provost/VPAA's Office are responsible for making sure these are completed.

Implementation of Contingent Faculty Evaluation: The evaluation process has been successfully implemented for the past two semesters. The [2016-2017 Contingent Faculty Checklist](#) documents the completed observations and evaluations. All completed evaluations and observations are archived in the Office of Academic Affairs where they are available for inspection. Of the 205 per-course and

term contingent faculty who were instructors of record and thus required observation, 115 received classroom observations; an additional five did not return to the university. Since the Contingent Faculty Handbook mandates a two-year window for classroom observations, the remaining will be completed this fall. To better synchronize contingent faculty evaluation timeline with the tenured and tenure-track evaluation timeline, department chairs have until [October 1, 2017 to complete observations and evaluations for the 2016-2017 academic year](#). Several changes in staffing were made as a result of these evaluations, including several faculty members not rehired as a result.

Highlands is committed to providing our contingent faculty with meaningful evaluations that allow them to improve as teachers and that allow department chairs, deans, and the provost to make hiring decision in the best interests of our students.

Contingent Faculty Orientation and Professional Updating: The [Contingent Faculty Handbook](#) specifies the orientation and professional development process for all such faculty, as under the direction of the director of the Center for Teaching Excellence, working closely with the appropriate Faculty Senate committees, the CTE Advisory Board, the provost/VPAA, the associate VPAA, and the Educational Outreach Services director: "All contingent faculty must complete new faculty orientation before they begin teaching. The exact dates of orientation will be specified in your contract. There will be both in-person and online options available." The online orientation, utilizing our Desire 2 Learn learning platform, is online and available for contingent faculty that cannot come to the Las Vegas campus for Professional Development Week.

Such faculty also take part in [professional development week](#): "All contingent faculty are required to take part in pre-semester professional development activities," and "all per-course, term, and retained term faculty are welcome and encouraged to participate in other professional development opportunities throughout the year. These include workshops held throughout the semester by the Center for Teaching Excellence (located in the Victoria de Sanchez Teacher Education Center). Faculty at the centers can participate in many of these via remote access."

By requiring these activities in the contract, NMHU ensures that these will happen. These processes have been implemented since fall 2016, with [fall 2016 Professional Development Week](#) and [fall 2017 Professional Development Week](#), with all contingent faculty included in these events, as per the provost/VPAA ([fall 2016](#), [fall 2017](#)).

In addition, ongoing professional development activities and programs for contingent faculty are offered throughout the academic year by the Center for Teaching Excellence through programs offered on the Las Vegas campus, through online webinars, and on-site at the centers, as discussed in 3.C.4.

3.C.4. [The Center for Teaching Excellence](#) (CTE) was created by the faculty and administration of Highlands in 2014. The founding director of the CTE, Dr. Diana Marrs, began her appointment in fall 2015 and has engaged in a comprehensive needs assessment and interest inventory in order to design and implement specialized faculty development programs. She has also offered professional development activities to prepare faculty for design and delivery of high-impact practices (HIPs) and online teaching.

This center is devoted to supporting the professional development of instructors at Highlands. The center's mission statement reads: "The Center for Teaching Excellence serves the New Mexico Highlands University community by providing programming, resources and support for quality teaching and advising, and for the assessment of effective student learning. These services are intended to contribute to faculty members' continued professional development." [By offering over](#)

[130 events last year](#), the CTE has proved invaluable in supporting teachers in their teaching and professional development.

Every year, the CTE helps to organize [Professional Development Week](#), an on-campus professional development for all faculty and staff. There are sessions on a wide variety of topics from advising to teaching strategies to cultural awareness. Sessions this year focused on utilizing our four traits (learning outcomes), outcomes assessment, curriculum mapping, faculty resources, co-curricular evaluation, mentoring Indigenous students, and information on D2L and Zoom.

Faculty members can apply for the [Pino Endowment for Faculty Development](#) to receive funds for professional development in the areas of teaching, research/scholarly activity, and service to the university and community.

As per [Article 33](#) of the CBA, tenured and tenure-track faculties are also supported with professional development funds within their unit budgets. The majority of the faculty use these funds for travel to conference and other professional meetings. The most recent CBA (2017) raised the travel money available from \$700 to \$1,500 per tenured and tenure-track faculty member.

[Article 14](#) of the CBA describes the sabbatical leave program for tenured and tenure-track faculty. A sabbatical leave is awarded to provide time and resources for qualified bargaining unit members to revitalize themselves through writing, scholarship, travel, research, and/or further formal educational study, which will contribute to the member's ability to discharge his or her obligations to the university. [In the last five academic years](#), Highlands has awarded 19 sabbaticals to faculty members across the university. These experiences have allowed our faculty to develop skills and collaborative relationships that they then bring back to enhance their research and teaching at Highlands.

3.C.5. All faculty are required to hold an appropriate number of regularly scheduled office hours, be available to students via electronic means, and by appointment. For tenured and tenure-track faculty members, the [CBA](#) mandates five hours per week over at least three days, during normal working hours. The [Contingent Faculty Handbook](#) follow the same basic requirement, mandating a minimum of 1.5 office hours per week for every three credit hours taught. Faculty are required to post office hours on their doors and in Banner.

3.C.6. The [Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual](#) states “all hiring and promotion decisions shall be based on the demonstrated qualifications of interested candidates, including past work performance, education and relevant work experience.” Per the [Search and Screen Procedures](#), when a job opening is announced, the position supervisor and the search committee defines the minimum qualifications appropriate for that position, including educational attainment and work experience, which are included in the job advertisement, and screens applications accordingly. CVs of credentials are kept on file in the Human Resources department.

The annual Professional Development Week includes staff, and other activities are planned throughout the year by the Center for Teaching Excellence. Staff members receive support for their professional development in the form of webinars, seminars, workshops, training sessions, retreats, and conferences ([Strategic Enrollment Management examples](#), [Student Affairs examples](#), [HR examples](#)).

Highlands offers staff and faculty an [Employee Educational Assistance Tuition Reduction program](#), which waives tuition for employees (up to eight credits per academic semester) and allows employees up to four hours off a week to attend these classes. Seventy-eight employees utilized the tuition wavier program in fall 2016, 82 in spring 2017, and 51 in summer 2017.

In 2017, Highlands launched the [Power of Service initiative](#), which includes a full slate of customer service training throughout the year, available to all staff and faculty. The [HU: Learning Happens Here program](#) was launched in fall 2016 to enhance a learning culture among employees by highlighting and sharing faculty's professional advancement. Faculty members hold lunch seminars where they discuss their research and scholarly interests with staff, contributing to the spirit of collaboration at Highlands.

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- SEM Professional Development
- Student Affairs Professional Development
- Student Evaluation Questions

3.D - Core Component 3.D

The institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching.

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

Argument

3.D.1. Highlands is committed to offering our students high quality student and academic support services wherever those students are located. Section 1.A.2. discusses our student support services, and section 4.B. provides the co-curricular assessments of these services. As detailed in those sections, many of these programs are focused on students who need additional academic assistance, aligning with our mission of providing opportunity and accessibility.

These student support services are appropriately funded through the [Highlands budget](#), which shows the funds available for each student support area. Our [IPEDS benchmark report shows](#) that Highlands spends a comparable amount on student services as do our peer institutions, with Highlands spending \$1,761 per FTE enrollment in FY 2015, versus \$1,801 for our comparison group; the gap is explained by our lower tuition rates. The same [IPEDS report](#) shows that our average tuition was over \$1,000 less than our peer institutions.

Resources at Centers:

In its [action letter](#), the HLC expressed substantial concerns about adequate services and resource allocation at the centers, specifically identifying that Highlands needed to show:

1. adequate budget allocations for effective operations, teaching and learning;
2. adequate physical facilities for teaching and learning; and
3. appropriate attention to student concerns about these matters.

The following concerns are addressed below.

Centers Introduction: To better serve our students, Highlands operates four main statewide centers located in Albuquerque, Rio Rancho, Santa Fe, and Farmington, a smaller site in Roswell, as well as online courses. As a result of statewide reciprocity agreements with New Mexico's many community colleges, these centers only offer upper-division and graduate level courses. The centers are focused on professional degrees, primarily social work and education, and are designed for adult-learners and part-time students to advance their careers by gaining advanced credentials.

The centers are designed to work closely with local community colleges to develop baccalaureate degree-completion programs in education, business, social work, and, at some centers, criminal justice and psychology. These programs are guided by long-standing articulation agreements ([Dine College](#), [San Juan College](#), [Santa Fe Community College](#)) that are designed to allow students to complete general education requirements at the community college and, in some cases, begin a major program of study.

The Highlands centers do not offer 100- or 200-level classes, as per articulation agreements in New Mexico. Instead, students can complete the requirements for their baccalaureate degree at the NMHU centers. Arrangements between Highlands and the community colleges allow students to be concurrently enrolled and receive financial aid for courses taken at both institutions.

The centers fulfill an important part of our mission, allowing us to better serve our “local communities” by giving our local populations, many of whom are working and face substantial economic challenges, an opportunity to complete their educations.

The [Albuquerque Center](#) is located in midtown Albuquerque, two hours south of the Las Vegas campus, and offers a bachelor's of social work and a master's of social work only. The University of New Mexico, located in Albuquerque, does not offer either a bachelor's or master's degree in social work, and the Albuquerque Center closes that gap by offering social work degrees to our state's largest population center. Highlands also partners with Eastern New Mexico University to offer a master's of social work on their [Roswell](#) campus, enrolling a single new social work cohort per year.

The [Farmington Center](#) is located in the Four Corners region of northwestern New Mexico, about 4 ½ hours from Las Vegas. The center was established in 1997 as a partner of San Juan College, a New Mexico community college, and is one of the few physical locations in the region where students can pursue an advanced degree. The center provides access to programs in business, education, criminal justice, counseling, psychology, university studies, and social work.

The [Rio Rancho Center](#) is located in Rio Rancho, a suburb 20 minutes north of Albuquerque, and focuses on education programs, helping to educate teachers, counselors, and administrators for the Albuquerque and Rio Rancho population center. The Rio Rancho Center also offers a number of classes in social work, criminal justice, and psychology.

The [Santa Fe Center](#) is located in Santa Fe, the state capital 60 minutes from Las Vegas, and is the only four-year public institution offering bachelor's and master's degrees in Santa Fe. The Center provides access to programs in business, education, criminal justice, counseling, university studies, and social work.

In order to keep educational outcomes and consistency of services and student experiences, academics are centralized at Highlands, operating out of departments. Department chairs work with the deans and provost/VPAA to assign faculty to centers based on student need, as well as schedule classes and monitor academic quality.

Centers have resources allocated to them in three main ways:

- Individual budget lines to pay for coordinators, center staff, rent and utilities, etc.
- Faculty are formally assigned to the centers, teaching their primary load at one of these locations and holding office hours at a location. These salaries are paid out of the department budgets.
- Main campus support services, including Educational Outreach Services, Information

Technology Services, Financial Aid, Registrar, Business Office, etc. provide support to students via phone and e-mail.

Student Credit Hours at the Centers: While there are several possible ways to measure the enrollment at the centers, including headcount or FTE, Highlands has found student credit hours generated by location to be the most accurate and useful tool for assessing the scope of enrollment at the centers. Because the centers are so close physically, many Highlands students will take classes at multiple locations, meaning that [headcount numbers](#) end up duplicating students. Student credit hours, which directly measure where a student took a class, are more accurate. [Absolute values are provided here](#), and percentages below:

Percentage of Student Credit Hours Generated by Location, Academic Years 2014-2015, 2015-2016, and 2016-2017

	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
Las Vegas	51.27%	49.11%	49.54%
Albuquerque	9.36%	10.30%	10.37%
Farmington	2.64%	3.10%	3.58%
Rio Rancho	6.53%	5.24%	6.45%
Roswell	0.84%	.48%	.38%
Santa Fe	2.50%	2.71%	2.52%
Off-Campus	1.13%	1.61%	1.65%
ITV	3.76%	3.55%	2.98%
Online	21.98%	23.89%	22.54%

Source: Banner Reports on Student Credit Hours Generated by Location, [Fall 2014](#), [Spring 2015](#), [Summer 2015](#), [Fall 2015](#), [Spring 2016](#), [Summer 2016](#), [Fall 2016](#), [Spring 2017](#). The 2016-2017 numbers do not include Summer 2017, as data is still being processed.

As you can see, the centers represent a significant but not overwhelming amount of our SCH generated. When totaled, Albuquerque, Santa Fe, Rio Rancho, Roswell, and Farmington make up 23.29 percent of our total SCHs.

While Albuquerque and Farmington have shown modest increases during the past several years, Rio Rancho and Santa Fe have held steady. As center enrollments have increased, resources have been shifted to the centers from other parts of the Highlands budgets, as documented below. Over the past decade, numbers at the centers have been relatively flat, as demonstrated by our historical chart of [Main Campus vs. Center Enrollment](#).

Center Faculty Resources: Highlands has made a strong commitment to assigning tenured, tenure-track, and full-time faculty to the centers. Faculty at our centers include tenured, tenure-track, and contingent faculty. All faculty are hired by their academic unit (chairs and deans) out of their departmental or school budgets. Full-time tenured/tenure-track and term faculty at the centers may participate in department meetings and other college or school events through our online and distance technology services (currently ITV and Zoom). A significant number of full-time faculty in teacher education, business, and social work are currently located in the Rio Rancho and Albuquerque

centers. The table below shows that, for our most recently completed academic year of 2016-2017, the full-time faculty numbers closely mirror the SCH's produced by the centers. The table gives the percentage of full-time faculty assigned to each location, as well as the student credit hours generated by that location from the table above.

Full-Time Faculty at the Centers, 2016-2017

	Total Full-Time Faculty	Tenured or Tenure-Track	% of Full-Time Faculty	% of SCH
Albuquerque	11.25	5	7.6%	10.7%
Farmington	5	1	3.4%	3.6%
Rio Rancho	18.5	14.5	12.5%	6.5%
Santa Fe	1	0	0.7%	2.5%
Las Vegas/Online	112.25	76.5	75.9%	76.7%
Total Center Faculty	35.75	20.5	24.2%	23.3%

Source: [2016-2017 Full-Time Faculty List](#)

The list shows the commitment of Highlands to appropriately staff the centers. There are a few nuances on the list:

Rio Rancho: Rio Rancho may appear to be over-staffed (12.5 percent of Faculty, although it generates only 6.5 percent of Student Credit Hours), but this reflects some of the online teaching activities that occur at Rio Rancho. The online business programs are popular in the Rio Rancho/Albuquerque area, and Highlands has chosen to assign faculty to Rio Rancho in order to advise and mentor these students, placing faculty members, including tenured or tenure-track members, to serve these students. Education also offers a number of online classes.

Santa Fe: Santa Fe might appear to be understaffed, but many of our full-time faculty assigned to other locations either live in Santa Fe and teach at this location, or drive from Albuquerque/Rio Rancho or from Las Vegas to teach at the center. For instance, per the [fall 2017 schedule](#), of the 16 unique classes taught at the Santa Fe Center, nine were taught by full-time faculty assigned to either Albuquerque, Rio Rancho, or Las Vegas, two to a faculty member assigned to Santa Fe, and five by per-course faculty. That ratio of full-time to part-time faculty (11/16), 68.75 percent of classes being taught by full-time faculty, is nearly identical to the university's overall ratio.

Las Vegas/Online: Technical support and faculty training for all online classes originate from the Las Vegas main campus. Because of this, all online courses are classified as "Main Campus." This helps centralize the many services we offer faculty to teach these classes at a high level. Prior to using our ITV or online services, all faculty are required to go through training with Educational Outreach Services (EOS), as per the [Distance Education Manual](#). Our Center for Teaching Excellence, discussed in 3.C.4., provides additional training and professional development for all faculty across our various sites. At the beginning of each fall semester, all faculty participate in a [professional development week](#). EOS and CTE provide workshops for faculty to attend in a variety of topics,

including use of our instructional technologies and discussions of best online practices.

Highlands offers only a few programs fully online, primarily nursing and the MBA. Most of our online classes are students either at Las Vegas or one of the centers supplementing their in-person education with an online class. It is not unusual for a Highlands student to take classes at more than one center or to take classes in Las Vegas one semester and Santa Fe the next, or vice versa. As one of our core values is accessibility, we encourage students to utilize the locations and modalities that best serve their educational needs.

Deans and department chairs are responsible for utilizing their budgets to appropriately staff the centers. To better understand and meet student needs, many of these administrators are located at the centers. For the [2016-2017 academic year](#), in the School of Education, 2.5 out of the 4 chairs (one chair is split between main campus and Rio Rancho) are assigned to the Rio Rancho campus. The current deans of education and social work split their time between main campus and their Rio Rancho and Albuquerque Centers respectively.

As the centers have grown in enrollment, faculty resources have been shifted to the centers, with data given for our last completed academic year:

Increases in Full-Time Faculty at the Centers, 2010-2016

	AY 2010	AY 2016
Albuquerque	8	11.25
Farmington	5	5
Rio Rancho	11	18.5
Santa Fe	1	1
Total	25	35.75

Source: [2010-2017 Faculty Lists](#)

The growth rate of 41 percent during that seven-year period (10.25 new positions) exceeds the growth rate of the centers during that same time period.

Center Budgets and Physical Resources: Center directors and coordinators are responsible for oversight of the operating budgets, their on-site staff, marketing, and general operating expenses of their centers. Academic departments oversee the hiring and support of their faculty who teach and advise students at the centers; therefore, instructional budgets are not overseen by center directors and are not included in the table below. For context, the table includes the percentage of our general academic budget (\$12,522,358) each of these centers represents, and compares that to the student credit hours generated from the tables above.

Center Operations and Staff Budgets, Fiscal Year 2016-2017

Center	FY 2016-2017 Operations and Staff Budget	Budget as % of Total General Academic Budget	% SCH Produced by Center
Albuquerque / Social Work	\$1,463,682	11.69%	10.7%

Farmington	\$255,928	2.04%	3.6%
Rio Rancho	\$856,821	6.84%	6.5%
Santa Fe	\$246,042	1.96%	2.5%

Source: [2016-2017 Budget](#)

Even though this table does not include the additional faculty resources committed to those centers via departmental budgets, you can see the centers are given budgets closely in line with their SCH production. The Albuquerque / Social Work budget is an outlier here, as the Social Work budget is not divided by center; so, in addition to Albuquerque, this budget also supports the Las Vegas social work programs, as well as providing support to the other sites at Rio Rancho, Farmington, Roswell, and Santa Fe. The School of Social Work budget is further supported by an annual [\\$1.7 million grant from the New Mexico Children Youth and Families Department](#) (Title IV-E) to train more social workers for New Mexico, as show in our audit.

Center Physical Resources: The centers have adequate room for effective operations:

Space Detail	Albuquerque	Farmington	Rio Rancho	Santa Fe
Overall Square Feet	12,123 sq ft.	3,229 sq ft.	25,700 sq ft.	5,338 sq ft.
# of Classrooms	6	7	15	8
# of Faculty Offices	12	7	24	1
# of Staff Offices	7	1	10	2
# of Computer Labs	2	Available on San Juan College Campus via MOU.	2	1
Library/Resource Room	yes	yes	yes	no
Student Lounge	yes	no	yes	no
Annual Rent	\$187,906	\$46,013	\$378,385*	\$95,392

Source: Data Provided by Director of Facilities. *The Rio Rancho building is owned by the NMHU foundation, and the rent received goes to fund foundation activities and student scholarships. The single cohort of Roswell students uses the facilities of Eastern New Mexico University-Roswell.

At our largest physical center, Rio Rancho, we have more than adequate space. In a report from the center director in March 2016, it was noted that the center is at 25 percent capacity during the day (Monday through Friday), and 75 percent capacity during the evenings (Monday through Friday); see the [fall 2017 Rio Rancho course schedule](#). On weekends, the center is at 10 percent capacity. The Albuquerque center director reports classroom space available Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. This center is near capacity on Monday through Thursday; [see the fall 2017 Albuquerque schedule](#). As seen through their fall 2017 course schedules, [Farmington](#) and [Santa Fe](#) offer only a limited number of classes, far below their physical capacity. Roswell, which operates on the campus of Eastern New

Mexico-Roswell, [only offers a few classes](#) to its social work cohort per semester. Highlands also performs an [annual review of space utilization for the centers](#), showing adequate space.

All centers have full-time and part-time staff on site to assist with student concerns and direct them to the appropriate center services.

Number of Staff at the Centers (Headcount), Fall 2017

Center	Number of Staff	Roles
Albuquerque	5	Dean (1/2 time on site), Field Coordinator, Office Coordinator, Library Associate, Senior Administrative Assistant
Farmington	5	Center Director, Center Administrative Specialist, Student Center Education Specialist, Social Work Field Secretary, ITV/Evening Coordinator
Rio Rancho	9	Dean (1/2 time on site), Center Manager and Admissions, Registration, and Scheduling Specialist, Senior Administrative Assistant, Financial Aid and Business Office Specialist, Recruitment and Transfer Specialist, Maintenance/Custodian, Recruiter, Administrative Assistant, Center Advocate HU Cares (serves all centers)
Roswell	2	Program Coordinator (1/2 time), Field Coordinator (1/2 time)
Santa Fe	2	Center Coordinator, Senior Administrative Assistant

Source: Center web pages, linked in table.

These staff members are there to provide immediate assistance to our center students; if they cannot resolve student issues, they are then supported by staff at the Las Vegas campus. At the larger centers, we have a wide variety of on-site services, including help with registration, financial aid, business office, and library services.

Student Services at the Centers and Online: Highlands offers a full array of student support services at each center and for our online students, with many services available in person and the rest available online or via Zoom/phone from main campus. To better communicate those services to students, we have prepared a master list of [Services at the Centers](#), which has been used to populate both the center web pages and brochures ([Albuquerque](#), [Farmington](#), [Rio Rancho](#), and [Santa Fe](#)). As the table shows, all core services are available to center and online students, with many of them having access to on-site assistance in these services. Combined with the faculty, staff, and physical resources discussed above, every Highlands student has access to the resources to complete his or her education. Some highlights of the center services include:

New Student Orientations. Early each semester, the Santa Fe, Rio Rancho, and Albuquerque centers offer new student orientations to help students navigate the NMHU website and access our various services. In addition, tours of the center, introduction to center staff and faculty, and other services are provided. As an example, see the materials from the [fall 2017 Santa Fe orientation](#).

Academic Advising. In addition to providing online support for students through the NMHU website, we support students in a variety of ways. All centers have academic advisers, for example, to aid

students in core advisement and to help connect them to NMHU faculty for advisement in their majors. Additionally, center staff are available to meet with students about their academic needs and connect them with the appropriate NMHU services. Tenured, tenure-track, and contingent faculty provide advisement at each center and help monitor student progress towards degree completion.

Technology Support. Online and ITV courses taught at our NMHU centers and online are supported by Educational Outreach Services (EOS). EOS monitors and crews all ITV courses and provides technical support when needed. Additionally, EOS provides video conferencing to help host department meetings, workshops, and graduate student oral defenses, so faculty and students at the centers are connected to their departments across our campuses. In addition, EOS monitors all online courses during synchronous sessions and provides needed technical support for faculty and students. In the fall 2016, 245 faculty and 594 students accessed this online help desk. Other services provided by EOS include student orientation and training, and faculty training and support.

Inclusion in Campus Discussions. Center and online students have been involved in providing input on a large range of campus issues, including the mission, strategic planning, and campus life, via invitations to all events and providing Zoom access to such events.

Library Services. Center and online students have access to a full array of library resources, including physical resources at Rio Rancho and Albuquerque, as discussed in 3.D.4.

Responsiveness to Student Concerns: In their discussions with the HLC and Highlands administration, center and online students expressed concern about the responsiveness of campus offices, particularly the Registrar, the Business Office, and Financial Aid. While Highlands strives to be as responsive as possible to students' concerns, we also acknowledge that it can be difficult for students to resolve the frustrations inherent in dealing with the bureaucracies of the modern university. Highlands has implemented the following changes to improve responsiveness to student concerns:

Created the Customer Relations Coordinator Position. For fall 2017, Highlands has created a [customer relations coordinator](#) to provide a one-stop shop/call center for students: "The primary duties of the customer relations coordinator are (1) to serve as student ombudsman and resolve enrollment issues on behalf of the university and its current and prospective students, by answering phones and directly communicating with students; (2) take a proactive approach on working with individuals and groups at the university to explore and develop processes/procedures that will diminish customer service issues." The president authorized the position to be filled on August 30, 2017.

Designed a Warm Transfer Protocol. The VPSEM, working with the Matriculation task force, has designed a [warm transfer protocol](#) and [student services directory](#) to help ensure that student inquiries are answered effectively and promptly. The protocol specifies: "When receiving an inquiry, first attempt to answer the question yourself--even if the question does not pertain to your office--in order to ensure callers are not transferred unnecessarily . . . Use the website, this document, and your customer service skills to provide as much information as possible without transfer. When you are not able to provide the requested information, use the correct transfer document." Because not having phone calls effectively answered from the Las Vegas campus has been the number one concern of center students, the new transfer protocol has greatly improved responsiveness and the student experience. Highlands has also begun analyzing daily switchboard data to track and improve response rates.

Replaced Personnel in Registrar, Financial Aid, and the Business Office. Highlands has replaced the registrar, the director of financial aid, and comptroller/director of the Business Office with new

personnel dedicated to improving student responsiveness. In effort to address customer service excellence and efficiently address the responsiveness from the Office of the Registrar, each center has identified key individuals to serve as liaisons and data processors.

Implemented the Business Office Help Line. The Business Office launched [a new help line in fall 2017](#) to answer questions, resolve financial inquiries, take payments over the phone, and assist students with any of the financial aspects of their enrollment.

Began Utilizing Snapshot. Snapshot is an application designed and set up by the IT services department in Banner so front-line offices can access basic information about a student's account, even if the information is external to their office. Front line office staff were trained on how to read and explain this information to students. Available information includes a student's contact information, schedule, major, adviser, admission status, financial aid award and outstanding items, housing assignment, meal plan, and summary of account charges. The intent of this initiative is to limit the need to unnecessarily transfer students to other departments when a simple answer can be provided, thus enhancing responsiveness and service to students.

Standardized Contact Logs. To better keep track of how student services are responding to student concerns, those offices now utilize a standardized contact log, which tracks student name, contact info, center/location, concern, and how that concern was resolved. These logs will allow us to better track where student inquiries come from, to identify commonly asked questions and problem points, and to improve responsiveness accordingly.

Launched the Customer Service Initiative. To improve customer service and responsiveness across the board, HR launched the [Power of Service Initiative](#): "A Power of Service team was established at the request of the president for the purpose of aligning New Mexico Highlands University (NMHU)'s values with the service we provide. Essential to NMHU's mission is our ability to provide exceptional customer service through positive interactions and knowledge shared with those we serve." This training program works to "improve staff and faculty's knowledge base and to improve the quality of service we provide to our students, staff, faculty, and community at large." [Training will take place throughout 2017.](#)

Improved Advertising of Student Services. While Highlands has always had the full range of student services available to our center and online students, we have increased our advertising of those services through our centers services table, center websites, and center and online fliers, as discussed above.

Implemented Action Plans to Improve Center Services at Farmington and Santa Fe. Farmington and Santa Fe, our two smallest centers, were cited as being of particular concern by the HLC. Each center has implemented a comprehensive action plan to strengthen the services they offer to students by making MOUs with their partner community colleges, increasing advertising and awareness of student services, and improving responsiveness, with most areas complete as of August 2017, as detailed in the [Farmington Action Plan and Evidence](#) and the [Santa Fe Action Plan and Evidence](#).

Conclusion: Highlands is fully committed to providing responsive service to all our students, whether they be on main campus, at a center, or online. We have identified responsiveness as a core value and have made enhanced communication one of our strategic goals. In spring 2017, Highlands hired a new provost/VPAA with extensive distance and online experience. Her initial plans for better supporting our online and centers students can be found in the provost/VPAA section [Executive Strategic Plan](#). While our 2015 Assurance Argument failed to provide adequate detail concerning operations at our centers, the information provided above, and the changes

Highlands has made to improve responsiveness to student concerns, demonstrates that Highlands provides effective support for student learning and teaching at all our sites.

3.D.2. Highlands University has processes for appropriately directing incoming students into courses for which they are adequately prepared. First-time freshmen are placed in English and math classes based on placement scores from the ACT or SAT exams ([Undergraduate Catalog](#)). Students who have not taken the ACT or SAT take the [Accuplacer Test](#) to be placed into the appropriate math and English classes. In addition to placement score, staff advisers for new freshmen are directed to take into account the student's background, characteristics, and current circumstances while advising them.

Students who have not declared a major are advised to arrange for career assessment through the Career Services Office to help them find the degree program that is a good fit for them. Generally, these students are enrolled in the University Studies program, which allows them to explore their interests prior to choosing another major or potentially to develop a unique course of study to match their individual needs.

Once registered, Highlands offers many services to help the academic needs of their students, as listed in 1.A.2., with the budgets and resources of those services discussed in 5.A.1. Tutoring services specifically available include:

- Writing Center
- Language Learning Center
- ARMAS (STEM subjects)
- NetTutor

To support students who may be struggling, Highlands employs an [Early Alert program](#) to direct students to these services. Faculty may flag students using early alert, early attendance, and midterm alert via Banner. Advisers in the Office of Academic Support then follow up with these students. Participation in these alerts allows instructors to flag students that may not be doing well or have poor attendance. This allows advisers to work with students to get them back on track.

3.D.3. As described in the [Undergraduate Advising Manual](#), Highlands utilizes a two-step advisement system for all undergraduate students. Upon entrance to the university, students are assigned to the Office of Academic Support for advisement. These advisers help to place students in appropriate levels of coursework in the general education curriculum. In addition, staff members help students to investigate possible majors and minors within the university. Once the student has selected a major, the student is referred to the department/school for advisement by the faculty of that discipline.

When a student declares a major, the student is automatically assigned a “default faculty adviser” in the primary adviser field in the university’s Banner system. These faculty members are chosen by the disciplines and are generally the program coordinators. This system then allows the program coordinator (or other identified default adviser) to generate a list of all students who have declared that major who have not yet been assigned to another faculty adviser, and to access contact information and academic transcripts for those students.

Highlands recognizes the crucial role of accurate and timely advisement to ensure students are on track to attain their degrees. To support this, Highlands adopted Degree Works (referred to as Degree Audit here at Highlands) advisement platform in fall 2010. Degree Audit is an electronic advisement system available to faculty, staff, and students. Contact with students is required to be documented in the system as a means of clear communication between students, advisers, and staff. The system allows for the development of a clear four-year plan for graduation as part of the Planner feature.

Students who are undecided can assess their options using the “What If” feature, which allows for exploration of all majors and minors. As per our most recent [Advisement Records in Degree Audit](#) report, 90 percent of our freshman have at least one advising note in Degree Audit for fall 2015 and fall 2016. This is a significant improvement from the 2013 and 2014 semester when those percentages were 49 percent and 69 percent respectively. Advising is a substantial component of our retention efforts, as discussed in 4.C.

Once a semester the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Research generates a list of all declared majors in each program with contact information for each student. That list is then sent to the department chairs or school deans for distribution to the program coordinators. The program coordinators are then responsible for ensuring that all the majors in that program are assigned to appropriate faculty members as primary advisers.

The details of the advisement system might differ from program to program. For example, some programs have a faculty member designated for undergraduate student advisement, while other programs may distribute advisement responsibilities among all the faculty. No matter how a program chooses to handle the identification of faculty advisers, all programs are required to document contacts with students in the file and Degree Audit, and the goal is to have a minimum of one documented advising contact with each student every semester. In addition, all full-time faculty members are expected to engage in advising as part of their workload. This expectation is noted under the role of “teaching and advising.”

Graduate students are assigned an adviser by their graduate program, and work with that adviser to prepare a program of study by the midway point of their first semester, [as per the Graduate Student Handbook](#). Graduate students then work closely with program faculty to complete all program requirements.

3.D.4. The Information Technology Services (ITS) department provides the technological infrastructure that supports the university's administration, staff and students; these resources are discussed in 5.A.1.

The university is home to over [15,000 square feet](#) of laboratory space in over 20 individual scientific laboratories for its programs. The quality of our laboratory space has been one factor in the ability of our programs to gain and maintain accreditation in specific disciplines. The Society of American Foresters’ Committee on Accreditation noted in its 2013 summary findings and action report that “overall, facilities provided at NMHU are very impressive” and that “there are classrooms, computer/GIS labs, and research/teaching labs in the newly built Ivan Hilton Science Technology Building and the Lora Shields Science Building.” In their Chemistry 2015 Periodic Report to the ACS Committee on Professional Training, the Chemistry Department wrote that “the program has sufficient space for teaching and research labs, as well as instrumentation and storage.”

Highlands provides the necessary performance spaces for its performing arts and fine arts programs. The [Music Department spring 2017 season of concerts and performances](#) shows an active schedule of public performances in Ilfeld Auditorium and the Student Center. Ilfeld Auditorium is a versatile performance space with a seating capacity of more than 700 as seen in the [Ilfeld Auditorium Technical Information](#) document. Highlands University provides the exhibit space needed for its fine arts programs. [There are three galleries](#) on Highlands University's main campus: the Ray Drew Gallery, Burris Hall, and Kennedy Hall, all of which host student shows and other exhibits.

Several programs have developed close relationships with organizations in the region for internship and practicum sites. For example, students in the clinical/counseling track of the master's in

psychology program must complete 12 credit hours of practicum, and the program works with the New Mexico Behavioral Health Institute, Las Vegas City Schools, Somos Familia, the San Miguel/Mora/Guadalupe Community Mental Health Center, and the Tri-County Family Justice Center to provide practicum placements (Psychology Accreditation Self Study Report). The Counseling Program in the School of Education also requires practicums of its students and provides a list of practicum and internship agency sites in the [Counseling Program Student Handbook](#). The [Agency Partner List for the School of Social Work 2017](#) gives the names of the hundreds of current agencies that the School of Social Work contracts with for field practicum opportunities for BSW and MSW students.

The School of Education also has close relationships with school districts throughout northern and central New Mexico to provide in-school experiences for their students. One example is the [Professional Development Schools](#) program, a literacy education partnership with several schools from the Las Vegas Schools District, Rio Rancho School District, and Albuquerque School District that has been in place since 2010. Two of the required reading courses in the teacher education curriculum are taught by Highlands faculty on-site in the public schools, and students complete a two-hour lab experience in those schools, under the supervision of classroom teachers. Teaching the courses in the schools where the lab experience is completed allows for full integration between the course material and direct application in the classroom.

The University Libraries support teaching, research, and community activities of Highlands and follow the [Association of College and Research Libraries standards](#), as more fully discussed in the [Library Annual Report](#). Faculty input is valued for collection development; subscriptions are selected with the curriculum in mind. The [Library Committee](#) of the Faculty Senate has a formal role to play in selecting materials for the collection. Librarians provide in person, online, or ITV instruction to individual classes upon the request of instructors. The library offers several sections of a one-credit library research class every semester. Donnelly Library at the main campus in Las Vegas is open 80.5 hours per week during the semesters. Donnelly Library has more than 160,000 books and audio-visual materials in its collection and also houses the university archives and several specialized collections. Donnelly Library houses two computer labs (37 computers) for the use of students and instructional sessions. There are also 13 visitor/public computers available to students. Students may also use the library's scanner and photocopiers.

Reference questions are answered in person, by phone, email, and online at the Donnelly Library's reference desk by librarians with master's of Library and Information Science degrees and by library associates with bachelor's degrees. Interlibrary loan services are available to all students, faculty, and staff.

Distance education faculty and students are served with two small center libraries. Each library is open 40-55 hours per week and houses small, specialized print collections. Computers are available at both locations. Books, whether from Donnelly Library or interlibrary loan, may be mailed either directly to the patron, or to one of the center libraries. The library's online catalog LIBROS has 34 online databases, 47,534 electronic journals, and 246,281 electronic books available to Highlands' patrons both on-campus and remotely through the Library's web page. Highlands Libraries participate in the New Mexico reciprocal borrowing program which enables patrons to borrow items directly from other participating academic libraries.

The library website provides off-campus students a variety of services. Faculty and students have access to eReserves, interlibrary loan service, the LIBROS online catalog, more than 30 online databases, and other web-based resources. Via the Library Online Helpdesk, the library provides online research assistance, and a librarian is dedicated to assisting off-campus students. The Rio

Rancho and Albuquerque centers also maintain library staff at their center libraries to assist students, faculty and staff in meeting their information research needs.

3.D.5. Library staff help students find and use appropriate information resources by answering research questions in person at the reference desks at the main campus library, the Rio Rancho Center library, the Albuquerque Center library, by phone, by email, and by Zoom video conference calls. In academic year 2015-2016, library staff members answered 11,542 questions. Library staff also provides research assistance to students through library research tutorials posted to the library webpage. In addition to providing research assistance to individual students and creating library tutorials, librarians provide instruction to individual classes upon the request of instructors. In 2016-2017, the library gave 70 instructional section to 1,007 students, including 30 instructional sections for center or online students. Library instruction is provided in person, online, and via ITV.

Highlands also offers courses to guide students in the effective use of research and information resources. The required general education class [ENGL 112: Freshman Composition 2](#) introduces undergraduates to the effective use of information. The Higher Education Department established competencies for that class include, "Integrate research correctly and ethically from credible sources to support the primary purpose of a communication" to "gather legitimate information to support their ideas without plagiarizing, misinforming, or distorting." The library regularly offers two classes on the use of information. [LIB100: Library Research](#) familiarizes students with academic library resources and prepares them in the research process. [LIB400/500: Advanced Library Research](#) facilitates students' use of academic library resources for the purpose of discipline-specific research. Finally, most graduate programs have required 600-level courses dedicated to research methods and methodologies, such as [BIOL 600: Research Methods in Life Sciences](#), [ENGL 601: Research Methods in English](#), and [GNED 610: Education Research Interpretation](#).

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3.E - Core Component 3.E

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

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

Argument

3.E.1. Highlands' goal of providing its students with an inspiring learning environment is not restricted to the classroom. The university's co-curricular programs offer a variety of ways for students to enhance their educational experience. The assessment of our co-curricular programs, specifically tying them to the way they support our four university traits, is discussed in section 4.B, and this is our primary means of demonstrating they are suited to Highlands' mission and that such programs contribute to the educational experience.

As part of the process of revising our assessment of co-curricular programs, Highlands developed a [formal definition of co-curricular programs at our institution](#):

At Highlands, co-curricular activities are defined as out-of-class experiences that complement and extend the formal learning experience of a course or academic program. Co-curricular activities develop a student's social, intellectual, cultural, democratic, civic, and aesthetic domains. At Highlands, these domains are integrated into our four student traits, listed below. Co-curricular activities are supervised and/or financed by the institution and facilitate the attainment of Highlands' four essential traits (student learning outcomes). These experiences are ungraded and non-credited, although they may be compensated through student employment.

We divide our co-curricular activities into two main areas, with the co-curricular outcomes assessment reports provide, which give in-depth information on services, usages, and outcomes:

Academic Support Activities:

- [Academic Clubs](#): The university supports more than 20 chartered academic clubs and organizations, several of which are at the Highlands centers. The clubs and organizations offer students a means of building community, developing leadership skills, and engaging with different subjects. In 2016-2017, 237 students participated in these clubs.
- [Academic Support](#) has a mission of "providing opportunities for undergraduate students to attain an exceptional education by fostering orientation, advisement, and support services to persist towards achieving their educational goals." In 2016-2017, academic support provided 2913 advising sessions.
- [First-Year Experience Learning Communities](#) (FYE, LC) program contains both curricular and co-curricular elements. From a curricular standpoint, the LCs have freshmen enroll in three linked classes; the broader FYE program creates a number of social and academic out-of-classroom experiences for our students to achieve integration into the university community. In fall 2016, nearly half (n = 154) FYE students attended at least one peer-mentor led study

session.

- The [Language Learning Center](#), [Net Tutor](#), and the [Writing Center](#) all provide tutoring services to all students. In 2016-2017, students visited the Language Learning Center 1,493 times, and visited the Writing Center 584 times.
- The [Library](#) provides a variety of co-curricular support for research and information resources, as described in 3.D.5. and 3.D.6. In 2016-2017, the library gave 70 instructional sections to 1,007 students, including 30 instructional sections for center or online students.
- [ARMAS](#): While open to all students, the primary mission of the center is to provide support to students majoring in the STEM disciplines through the innovative delivery of proven best practices such as internships with local areas agencies (note: local internships are important as some Highlands students have family obligations which make it difficult to leave the area); undergraduate research fellowships which allow STEM students to work with a faculty member in their laboratories; math tutoring; meaningful student employment which engages students further in their academic work; supplemental instruction (SI), peer-facilitated group study, in STEM gateway courses; and the creation of a community focused on their studies. While originally funded by grants, Highlands now assumes the responsibility for funding the majority of the programs housed at ARMAS. During the 2016-2017 academic year, 742 students registered to use the center (248 or 33 percent of center users were STEM majors which represents 79 percent of total STEM majors). In the 2016-2017 academic year, there were more than 16,000 uses of the services at the ARMAS center as tracked via our Labtracker system.

Career Support Activities:

- [Career Services and the Internships Office](#) supports the university's mission, goals, and core values by empowering students to make career-planning decisions, to connect them with regional and global employers, and to provide skills in successfully obtaining employment in a rapidly changing and competitive job market. Four hundred seventy-one students attended the Career and Internship Fair, and there were 71 career service workshops and presentations.
- The Department of Exercise and Sports Sciences offers a number of career preparation co-curricular opportunities in its [fitness center](#) and [swimming pool](#).
- [Student Employment](#) has a mission to "provide on-campus job opportunities for students to gain work experience and develop their workplace skills." Five hundred six students were on-campus employees in some capacity during spring 2017.
- The [Student Professional Development](#) program offers a variety of opportunities for students to attend professional development opportunities through professional associations, campus club affiliations, and academic department initiative. Eighty two students took advantage of these opportunities in 2016-2017.

3.E.2. The core of our mission lies in the central concept of opportunity and outstanding education, and these claims are demonstrated throughout this Assurance Argument, in the assessment of student learning (Criterion 4), in our strategic plan accomplishments (Criterion 5, [2016-2017 Mission Accomplishments](#)), the enrollment profile of our students (Criterion 1), and in the academic accomplishments of our faculty and students, as documented throughout this criterion.

Highlands also utilizes external measures of the university to demonstrate our claims about opportunity and outstanding education. One such report is the annual [Performance Effectiveness Report](#) produced by the New Mexico Council of University Presidents, which compares Highlands to the other public universities in New Mexico. Regarding opportunity, this report shows that 91 percent of our students receive some sort of financial aid, much higher than comparable institutions like Eastern New Mexico (75.2 percent) or Western New Mexico (81.2 percent). Combined with our low tuition, this makes a Highlands education accessible to the students of our region.

As another indicator of our success, New Mexico Highlands University is regularly named one of the top 100 schools in the country in the number of master's degrees awarded to Hispanic students. These ratings are done by *Hispanic Outlook Magazine* based upon IPEDS data. In the [2016 rating](#), Highlands was at number 63 in the nation, ahead of schools like the University of Arizona. This ranking is particularly impressive given that it is based upon the raw number of master's degrees awarded to Hispanic students. At 45 percent, Highlands is ninth in the nation in the percentage of its master's degrees awarded to Hispanic students.

Sources

- 2016 PEP Report Council of University Presidents
- 2016-2017 Mission Accomplishments
- Academic Clubs
- Academic Support
- ARMAS
- Career Services
- Fitness Center
- FYE
- Hispanic Outlook Top 100 2016
- Language Learning Center
- Library
- Natatorium
- Net Tutor
- Outcomes Assessment Handbook
- Outcomes Assessment Handbook (page number 20)
- Student Employment
- Student Professional Development
- Writing Center

3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary

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

Summary

The systems and structures discussed throughout Criterion 3 demonstrate Highlands' commitment to our Strategic Goal #1: *Highlands University will achieve academic excellence, academic integration and student success* and our cores values of Excellence and Responsiveness. By offering sound academic policies and high-quality academic programs at all locations and through all modalities, Highlands is effectively organized around the pursuit of excellence.

Our rededication to evaluation of all faculty by formalizing the contingent faculty evaluation process further ensures that students have the quality of teaching they need to succeed. By reexamining the physical space, faculty, staff, student services, and resources available at the centers, we have better articulated the way we serve all our students, and the new initiatives targeted towards answering student concerns tie directly to our Strategic Goal #6: *Highlands University will achieve enhanced communication and efficiency* and our core value of responsiveness.

As stated in *HU Vision 2020*, the core of Highlands is its academic mission of providing opportunity for a high-quality education to our local and global communities, via our main campus in Las Vegas, at our centers, and through our online offerings. As demonstrated throughout Criterion 3, we have the resources, dedicated faculty and staff, and structures in place to continue accomplishing this important mission.

Sources

There are no sources.

4 - Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

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

4.A - Core Component 4.A

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

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

Argument

4.A.1. All academic units at Highlands participate in regular program reviews by both faculty and administration. The [Academic Affairs Committee](#) (AAC) of the Faculty Senate and the provost/VPAA oversee this process as described in the [program review procedures](#), last approved by the Academic Affairs Committee on [April 29, 2015](#) and on the timeline described in the [program review schedule and status](#). The schedule covers fall 2017-fall 2021.

Programs are reviewed every five years. Academic programs submit a written report to the AAC, which allows each academic program an opportunity to evaluate its strengths and challenges. Additionally, the process provides a vehicle for programs to discuss future plans for building upon successes and addressing challenges. Specifically, units evaluate the following:

- Mission of the unit and how it relates to the mission of Highlands
- Curriculum of the program and how it relates to the program and institutional mission
- Contribution of faculty and staff to the mission of the program
- Assessment of student learning outcomes

- Future direction of the program

If a program is externally accredited, the accreditation documents and an abbreviated program review can be accepted as long as all points required are covered in the program's review and their accreditation documents.

Once the program review is submitted to the AAC, it is evaluated by a subcommittee of the AAC. The committee closely examines the program review, and feedback and/or requests for additional information are sent to the designated contact. The program then has the opportunity to clarify and amend its review. At this point, the AAC subcommittee prepares a written evaluation with recommendations, which is then forwarded to the provost/VPAA and appropriate academic dean. If the program has a graduate component, the dean of graduate studies is also included. The provost/VPAA reviews the program and meets with the unit faculty, chair, and dean. All future funding decisions, as per the budget process described in 5.A., are designed to take into account the program review.

All program review documents, including completed program reviews and the results of the AAC subcommittee review, are archived by the Office of Academic Affairs. The AAC reviewed five of the 40 programs for 2016-2017, two are in progress, and nine are scheduled for review during 2017-2018 (five programs are scheduled for fall 2017 and four for spring 2018).

4.A.2. The Office of the Registrar is responsible for evaluating all student transfer credits by performing a transcript analysis upon a student's admission into the university. These procedures are described in the [Undergraduate Catalog](#) and [Graduate Handbook](#).

Transcripts from accredited institutions are evaluated on a course-by-course basis or by completion of an associate degree. In accordance with New Mexico's [Post-Secondary Education Articulation Act](#), the General Ed Core Course Transfer Curriculum is used to evaluate general education courses, [as described in the catalog](#). Highlands maintains [articulation agreements with the two-year institutions](#) in the state for many of its programs to aid in the determination of equivalency and degree completion. For Advanced Placement courses, [Highlands provides a matrix](#), created by the Academic Affairs Committee after input from the appropriate academic departments, for the granting of credits.

Courses without a direct equivalency are given elective credit and are transcribed as special topics at the appropriate level. Once credit is awarded, program faculty determine the equivalency for a given course and its application to the program of study.

Highlands does not award credit for experiential learning. However, for veterans and international students, the university relies on evaluation by responsible third parties. For veterans, [Highlands uses the American Council on Education](#) (ACE) through the Department of Defense's Joint Statement of Transfer. Under this program, veterans send their transcripts to ACE, and ACE notifies the university of the recommended credit for courses and occupations. Highlands's policy is to accept all coursework for veterans approved by ACE that can be applied to a program of study. The university utilizes World Education Services to evaluate international student transcripts in cases where the credits or GPA are unclear.

Finally, Highlands allows students to demonstrate competencies for [proficiency courses within the core](#). When students demonstrate proficiency, they are not transcribed credit, but the course requirement is waived. To demonstrate computer science proficiency, students may take a written examination created by the computer science discipline. For language proficiency, students can demonstrate proficiency in a second language through criteria established by the Department of

Languages and Culture. Students can demonstrate competency in mathematics or English composition by either ACT scores or the Accuplacer exam administered by the Office of Academic Support. Other courses are covered by the ["Testing Out of Classes by Special Examination" policy included in the catalog](#).

4.A.3. As per the [catalog](#), Highlands only accepts credits from regionally accredited institutions or candidates for regional accreditation: "New Mexico Highlands University accepts academic credits for transfer from institutions of higher education that are regionally accredited or are candidates for regional accreditation. Transfer students will receive full credit for coursework completed with an appropriate grade, provided the classes are appropriate to a degree at the university. Transfer course grades will not be calculated as part of Highlands University grade point average and are listed on the academic transcripts with a grade of CR. (However, for graduation, all transfer credits graded are included in the final computations for honors.) Highlands University does not award transfer credit for vocational, technical, or remedial courses and credits awarded for work or life experience."

4.A.4. The prerequisites for courses, academic rigor, and other academic requirements (such as admission to professional schools or graduate programs) are determined by each academic unit. Academic departments request prerequisites, which are then approved by the Academic Affairs Committee, academic deans, and the provost/VPAA through [the curriculum and course approval process](#). Once requests are approved for their academic rigor and suitability, the Office of the Registrar records the prerequisite and enters it into our Banner system. The Banner system prevents students from registering for courses if they have not met the prerequisite.

Academic units, academic deans, and the provost/VPAA also oversee student learning outcomes (see 4.B.), faculty qualifications (see 3.C.2.), and access to student services/resources (see 3.C.) for their program offerings.

Highlands only offers dual credit enrollment in its regularly scheduled classes on the Las Vegas campus, taught by Highlands faculty. All dual credit students are held to the same learning outcomes and level of achievements as all other Highlands students. The requirements for dual credit enrollment are listed in the [Undergraduate Catalog](#) and are overseen by [Educational Outreach Services](#). Dual credit students must reapply every semester for continuation, proving that they are meeting academic standards, further guaranteeing they are performing at an appropriate college level.

4.A.5. Since 1950, individual programs at Highlands have received accreditation from nationally recognized accrediting organizations. Our three professional schools of Social Work, Education, and Business, Media and Technology, as well as some disciplines within the College of Arts and Sciences, maintain specialty accreditation. The participation of program faculty and staff is an integral part of maintaining these accreditations:

- School of Business: [Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs, next accreditation fall 2017](#).
- School of Education: [National Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, next accreditation 2018](#).
- School of Social Work: [Council on Social Work Education \(CSWE\), next accreditation 2020](#).
- Chemistry undergraduate major: [American Chemical Society certification, next certification 2020](#).
- Counseling program: [Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs, next accreditation 2020](#).
- Nursing program: [Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education, next accreditation 2019](#).
- Psychology graduate program, master's in psychology, clinical/counseling track: [Master's in](#)

[Psychology Accreditation Council](#), [next accreditation 2021](#).

- Forestry undergraduate program: [Society of American Foresters](#), [next accreditation 2019](#).

Accreditation information, including the name of the unit, accrediting or approval agency, the initial year of accreditation, the most recent year of accreditation, and date of next review, is posted on the [Highlands website](#).

4.A.6. Highlands regularly evaluates the success of its graduates through a variety of sources. The Career Services Office sent the [First Destination Survey](#) to all graduates of bachelor's degrees and associate degrees for the class of 2015-2016. Survey results helped assess the success rate of graduates' initial career activity (employed full time or part time, enrolled in continuing education, serving in U.S. armed forces, participating in a volunteer service program) and satisfaction in using Highlands' Career Services. The survey was completed by 129 of 507 graduates resulting in a 25.4 percent response rate. Of those respondents, 88 are employed full time, 22 are employed part time, and 46 are in a graduate program.

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Research (OIER) supplements this First Destination Survey with an [Alumni Survey](#) done three years after graduation. For the last completed survey, covering the class of 2012-2013, results showed both undergraduate and graduate alumni report high levels of satisfaction with their jobs. Ninety-six percent of undergraduate alumni and 92.6 percent of graduate alumni report they are satisfied or very satisfied with the intellectual and personal challenges of their jobs. 94.5 percent responded that they thought their degree improved their chances of finding employment, and 70.3 percent reported earning a salary of over \$40,000 per year. OIER is currently collecting data for the survey of the 2013-2014 class.

The [Student Satisfaction Survey](#) is a state-mandated survey given out to graduating students. For the spring 2017 survey, OIER received 436 completed surveys. Results showed students were very happy with the quality of the instruction in their major and the value of their education relative to cost. In addition, 93.0 percent of respondents were very satisfied or satisfied with their preparation for work or graduate school. One hundred twenty-eight of the respondents (34.2 percent) reported that they planned on continuing their education and ninety-five students (25.4 percent) already had a job in their field.

Highlands also turns to external measures of our students' success. Despite the challenges associated with being an open-enrollment institution, Highlands receives recognition for our graduates' social mobility. [Washington Monthly ranked Highlands #74](#) in its Best Bang for the Buck among universities in the West, a higher ranking than the state's two research universities. In 2017, the Brookings Institution, a nonprofit public policy organization based in Washington, D.C., [ranked Highlands 19th among 342 four-year public teaching colleges nationwide that help push students up the income ladder upon graduation](#), especially those from low-income families. Highlands is among select colleges that succeed in promoting opportunity, which makes for a more dynamic and fair society.

Sources

- AAC Schedule of Program Reviews 2017 08 21
- Academic Affairs Minutes April 29, 2015
- Academic Placement - NMHU
- Alumni Survey 2016
- BSW Accreditation Letter

- Business Accreditation Letter
- Business Accreditation Report
- CAEP Letter
- CAEP Report
- Chapter 21 Article 1B NMSA 1978
- Chemistry Accreditation Report
- Chemistry Accreditation Letter
- Counselling Accreditation Letter
- Counselling Report
- CSW Accreditation Letter
- Dual Credit - NMHU
- Faculty Handbook 2017-2018
- Faculty Handbook 2017-2018 (page number 26)
- First Destination Survey data results 2015-2016
- Forestry Accreditation Report
- Graduate Student Handbook
- Graduate Student Handbook (page number 6)
- Highlands a National Leader in Boosting Students Social Mobility and Earnings - NMHU
- How to submit course or program proposals to the Academic Affairs Committee
- New Mexico Highlands University Accreditation - NMHU
- NMHU Accreditation Review Confirmation of Postponement 2017
- NMHU Articulation Agreements
- NMHU Articulation Agreements
- Nursing Letter
- Nursing Report
- Program Review Procedures
- Psychology Accreditation Letter
- Psychology Accreditation Report
- Student Satisfaction Survey Report 2017
- Undergraduate Catalog 2017-2018
- Undergraduate Catalog 2017-2018 (page number 14)
- Undergraduate Catalog 2017-2018 (page number 22)
- Undergraduate Catalog 2017-2018 (page number 25)
- Undergraduate Catalog 2017-2018 (page number 26)
- Undergraduate Catalog 2017-2018 (page number 27)
- Undergraduate Catalog 2017-2018 (page number 29)
- Washington Monthly Bang for the Buck

4.B - Core Component 4.B

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

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

Argument

4.B.1. To enhance and align our outcomes assessment processes at the university, Highlands joined the [Higher Learning Commission's Academy for the Assessment of Student Learning](#) in the spring of 2008. We were interested in refining and expanding the outcomes assessment system that had first been initiated at Highlands in 1998, which had evolved from a somewhat standardized institutional portfolio approach in the early 2000s, to a more program-specific approach by 2008. That system generated outcomes assessment data that were unique to each program but not easily aggregated across programs to show university-level outcomes. Our involvement in the HLC Academy was an effort to address that limitation, and our goal for the academy was to design a university-wide assessment system to determine whether we are imparting the knowledge, traits, and skills we value into our baccalaureate and graduate degree recipients.

Utilizing what we learned from the HLC Academy, Highlands surveyed its faculty, students, and staff during the 2008-2009 academic year to identify outcomes that represented the desired characteristics, which we refer to as traits, of our graduates. [As a result of that survey, Highlands identified four traits](#), which Highlands designates university-level learning outcomes:

1. Mastery of content knowledge and skills.
2. Effective communication skills.
3. Critical and reflective thinking skills.
4. Effective use of technology.

Each academic and co-curricular program uses these core four traits to build its own learning outcomes, linking the specifics of their program to the overall learning goals of the university. These learning outcomes are clearly stated in the [program-level assessment plans for academic units](#). By embedding the four traits into program-level assessment, we allow programs to assess their individual learning goals while the university can evaluate the university's broader learning outcomes.

Highlands' processes for the assessment of student learning are in the [Assessment Handbook](#) and overseen by the [Outcomes Assessment Committee](#) of the Faculty Senate, the Office of Academic Affairs (for academic programs), the dean of students (for co-curricular programs), and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Research (OIER).

Highlands developed the Outcomes Assessment Handbook through a shared governance process, with

the last major revisions approved by the [Board of Regents on December 2, 2016](#).

Highlands has identified three basic steps that underlie each aspect of our assessment system: 1) defining student learning objectives; 2) evaluating student success in achieving those outcomes; and 3) using the results to implement improvements in programs. The student learning outcomes assessment system is based on course-level assessment supplemented by program-level data. These data are warehoused and aggregated by OIER to provide information regarding specific courses, major programs, the core curriculum, and the university as a whole.

The goal of our annual academic program outcomes assessment is to determine how effectively academic and co-curricular units are meeting program-specific student learning outcomes as well as the attainment of the university-wide traits by their students. Since 1998, department and discipline faculty have designed and implemented its own outcomes assessment systems. Although many aspects of the assessment plans vary by program, there are general requirements that programs must follow ([Assessment Handbook](#)). These include the statement of the unit's mission, a description of three to five student learning outcomes that relate to the program's mission and university traits, a description of data to be collected to demonstrate each outcome, and the criteria used to evaluate whether the outcomes are met. OIER generates reports for each academic unit summarizing data provided by its faculty for the previous academic year. The program faculty then reviews the reports, interprets the data, and discusses how the data will be utilized for program improvement. These reports are returned to OIER, posted on the university's [web page](#), and linked from departmental web pages where they are available to current and prospective students and their parents.

In the [action letter](#), the HLC identified a lack of clearly defined co-curricular assessment process. The university revised the Outcomes Assessment Handbook during the 2016-2017 academic year to [standardize a procedure for assessment of co-curricular activities](#). At Highlands, co-curricular activities are defined as non-credit bearing experiences that complement and extend the formal learning experience of a course or academic program (see 3.E.6. for a specific discussion of those programs). The goal of the co-curricular outcomes assessment process is to regularly evaluate the various co-curricular programs at Highlands, gathering data on student participation, student satisfaction, relation to the four Highlands traits, and areas for improvement. By closing the loop and providing feedback, this process helps the co-curricular activities better serve our students through improved programs and activities.

To develop this process, the Faculty Senate formed an ad-hoc co-curricular group in fall 2016, composed of staff, faculty, and administrators, and [charged it with formalizing our co-curricular assessment process for inclusion in the Assessment Handbook](#). After discussions involving all stakeholders, this group completed its process, closely mirroring the academic program process already included in the handbook and described above. The changes to the Assessment Handbook were then approved by the [Faculty Senate](#), [Staff Senate](#), and the [Board of Regents](#). The co-curricular assessment process has been implemented since spring 2017 (see section 4.B.2. for results).

At present, the process identified 12 co-curricular programs, (see 3.E.1.), and all of those take part in outcomes assessment. However, any unit that feels the primary goal of its program or activity is co-curricular (supporting the four traits) rather than extracurricular (contributing to a vibrant campus life) is welcome to participate in co-curricular outcomes assessment. Participation in the co-curricular assessment process allows programs to evaluate their effectiveness, demonstrate their contribution to the university's strategic plan and mission, and make a stronger argument regarding budget requests.

The co-curricular assessment process deliberately mirrors the academic assessment process, placing those two activities on the same level of importance. These include the statement of the unit's

mission, a description of three to five student learning outcomes that relate to the program mission and university traits, a description of data to be collected to demonstrate each outcome, and the criteria used to evaluate whether the outcomes are met. Programs must develop a plan using [the plan template](#), and once they have collected their data, report on their outcomes, plans for improvement, and results of peer review using the [report template](#).

To facilitate the collection of meaningful data for the co-curricular programs, Highlands has contracted with SkyFactor, a third-party data collection company that gives surveys to students and allows comparisons of our results with peer institutions and national benchmarks. By utilizing SkyFactor’s Student Services Assessment Suite, we have been able to collect information on the student experience with our co-curricular programs. These surveys also keep students’ responses anonymous, thus protecting the data and privacy of students. Academic clubs, career services, academic advising, and other programs utilized SkyFactor data in 2016-2017. The SkyFactor surveys ([example here](#)) provide data about student satisfaction, learning outcomes, and overall impact on their academic experience. Other data resources are included in the appendix of the [Assessment Handbook](#).

Highlands uses a peer review system to provide feedback to academic and co-curricular programs. This feedback includes information regarding the clarity of the program’s mission, the outcomes assessment data indicators, and the program’s use of data. Every five years, academic programs participate in a program review, and outcomes assessment data are incorporated into this review, including how the data have been used to improve practice.

To ensure outcomes assessment results in data-driven program improvement, an outcomes assessment in-service takes place during the [fall Professional Development Week](#). Faculty attendance at this in-service is mandatory, and it allows each program a dedicated time to discuss its outcomes assessment findings and create a narrative report that translates to concrete changes addressing shortcomings and improving students’ attainment of the learning outcomes.

4.B.2. Beginning in fall semester 2016, the Outcomes Assessment Committee began a campaign to encourage compliance with the OA process across 100 percent of programs, both academic and co-curricular. Committee members worked closely with programs to improve their assessment plans, collect data, and compose narrative reports. As a result, programs that had historically not conducted outcomes assessment now have systems in place and have completed their assessments.

All academic programs have completed an assessment of their student learning outcomes for both 2015-2016 and 2016-2017, as documented and linked on the OIER page ([Arts and Sciences](#), [Business](#), [Education](#), [Social Work](#)), and all co-curricular programs have completed an assessment of their learning outcomes for 2016-2017 ([Academic Support](#), [Career Support](#)).

Academic programs provide student-level data to OIER, keyed to a student ID number, as to whether those individuals passed or failed to pass the learning outcomes indicated in the assessment reports. Using this data, OIER disaggregates students in a wide variety of ways, from program to campus to mastery of the four traits. The OIER has aggregated the data from these reports to provide a snapshot of learning of our four traits by students at the graduate and undergraduate level, by the percent of Highlands students who met the trait according to the program-level outcomes assessment during that academic year:

Assessment of Mastery of Four Traits, 2015-2016

Trait	Undergraduate	Graduate
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Mastery of content knowledge and skills.	82.0%	91.1%
Effective communication skills.	84.8%	92.0%
Critical and reflective thinking skills.	85.1%	91.8%
Effective use of technology.	85.5%	91.7%

Assessment of Mastery of Four Traits, 2016-2017

Trait	Undergraduate	Graduate
Mastery of content knowledge and skills.	83.3%	90.3%
Effective communication skills.	87.5%	89.9%
Critical and reflective thinking skills.	84.6%	90.6%
Effective use of technology.	86.6%	92.9%

Source: [OIER data](#).

Prior to 2016-2017, co-curricular programs had been assessing their student learning outcomes on a program-by-program basis. After the [Assessment Handbook](#) formalized the process, all co-curricular programs have now assessed their learning outcomes. The university embarked on the following activities to ensure a smooth implementation of the procedure:

1. Multiple meetings with the dean of students, director of OIER, and the chair of the Outcomes Assessment Committee to discuss the procedure and workshop early drafts.
2. Submission of drafts by July 31 to the office of OIER.
3. Peer review process where various co-curricular programs read, critiqued, and suggested improvements to each other's reports.
4. A meeting during Professional Development Week where academic departments and co-curricular programs met to discuss outcomes assessment.
5. Finalization of 2016-2017 reports based on the peer feedback and uploading to the OIER website.
6. Beginning the 2017-2018 cycle with revisions of plans and collection of data.

As noted above, all co-curricular programs have completed their outcomes assessment reports for 2016-2017.

4.B.3. Through annual outcomes assessment, regular program review, program accreditation, Highlands uses data collected from assessment to inform programmatic changes and improve student learning. In fall 2017, we devoted most of the first day of our [Professional Development Week](#) to this. Our director of institutional research gave a [presentation on data usage](#), followed by our vice-president of strategic enrollment management discussing our [retention initiatives, goals, and data](#). Dr. Emily Lardner, the director of the National Resource Center for Learning Communities, [gave a keynote address](#) on “Student Learning Outcomes Assessment: How Can it Become a Win for Us and For Our Students?” The Outcomes Assessment Committee chair [gave a presentation on how to close the loop in the outcomes assessment process and why it matters](#). Utilizing these ideas, departments had break-out sessions to finalize their 2016-2017 outcomes assessment reports by explicitly discussing how they would use their learning outcomes data to improve their programs.

As part of the outcomes assessment process described in 4.B.1., all programs include a section in their

final reports on how they are using the data to make improvements to their programs. These are summarized in Outcomes Assessment Plans for Improvements for 2017-2018, broken down at the [Undergraduate](#), [Graduate](#), and [Co-Curricular](#) level. Examples of completed outcomes assessment reports for academic programs include [biology undergraduate](#), [psychology undergraduate](#), [social work undergraduate](#), [southwest studies: anthropology graduate](#), [business administration graduate](#), and [educational leadership graduate](#), and for co-curricular programs include [ARMAS](#) and [Career Services and Internships](#). All 2016-2017 outcomes assessment reports are linked from the OIER website.

4.B.4. Highlands has a demonstrated record of using best practices to assess student learning. The faculty and staff generated assessment systems within academic and co-curricular programs that show substantial participation by faculty, instructional staff, and support in these assessments.

As per the Outcomes Assessment Handbook, faculty and co-curricular staff are responsible for identifying measurable learning outcomes, designing rubrics, and collecting and analyzing data. All Outcomes Assessment Reports were written by faculty or staff members from the appropriate program, and faculty and co-curricular staff participated in the assessment sessions and workshops described above.

To better align our own processes with national best practices, Highlands joined the HLC's Academy for the Assessment of Student Learning in 2008. By participating in this Academy over four years, Highlands was able to bring a number of best practices to our campus, including up-to-date language regarding outcomes assessment, aggregation techniques, and Highlands followed up on best practices by sending two faculty members, including the chair of the Faculty Senate and the chair of the Outcomes Assessment Committee, to the 2017 HLC Professional Development Week.

Additionally, because our three professional schools of Business, Media, and Technology; School of Social Work; and School of Education as well as some programs (rehabilitation counseling, nursing, chemistry, forestry, and psychology) hold accreditation or approval (see 4.A.5), Highlands demonstrates the use of methodologies and processes to reflect good practice aligned to the national standards of those accreditors. The accreditation reports for each of these programs show the linkage between assessment and the use of these data to improve student learning. For example, in the School of Education (SOE), the school assessment system aligns with the four university traits, eight SOE themes and state and national teaching standards, including the INTASC Principles and New Mexico Public Education Department's competencies for teachers, school counselors, and administrators. Through this alignment, the SOE assesses its ability to provide high quality entry-level elementary, early childhood, secondary, and special education teachers, as well as educational leaders and counselors.

To further measure our student learning against national norms, Highlands utilizes external measures such as the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA). The CLA is administered to entering freshmen and graduating seniors in the fall and spring semesters, respectively. This test is designed to assess our students' ability to "think critically, reason analytically, solve problems, and communicate clearly and effectively." The CLA provides unadjusted scores, scores adjusted for entering academic ability, and value-added scores. The value-added score is based on the difference in performance between the entering freshmen and graduating seniors.

[In 2014-2015](#), Highlands administered the CLA with 68 freshmen and 32 seniors participating. The mean scores for freshmen and seniors were low (876 and 1033, respectively) and the unadjusted percentile rankings were low (4th and 8th, respectively, for freshmen and seniors). However, the value-added scores were impressive, which indicates how much students improved while at

Highlands, placing Highlands in the 73 percentile among CLA schools. The use of CLA has provided Highlands with cross-sectional institutional and value-added data, as well as comparison data to peer institutions and groups.

The combination our outcomes assessment system, regular program reviews, and accreditation of varying units provides Highlands with numerous processes to evaluate student learning across its curricular and co-curricular programs. The collaboration between various entities at the university, including the Academic Affairs Committee, Outcomes Assessment Committee, OIER, and provost/VPAA, provides multiple means of input to program faculty and co-curricular staff to inform practice. In addition, the external review by program accrediting agencies and use of employer and alumni data ensures Highlands is assessing student learning not only at the university, but also in preparation for advanced degrees or the job market. The culmination of these data and publication through Highlands' OIER website makes the information available to prospective students and their families as well as members of the community, current students, faculty, and staff.

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4.C - Core Component 4.C

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

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

Argument

4.C.1. Fundamental to the Highlands mission is a commitment to providing a university education to historically underserved populations, transforming lives and communities now and for generations to come. To this end, Highlands commits to maintaining an unprecedented level of access through open undergraduate admissions, affordable tuition, and the recruitment and support of diverse populations. While Highlands is extremely proud of our commitment, we recognize that accessibility without support will not necessarily lead to persistence and completion. We have a shared understanding that effective, creative and culturally relevant support services and academic programs are integral to student success, persistence, and completion. Therefore, our retention goals and efforts address all aspects of the student experience and are designed to align with our [mission, vision, core values and strategic priorities](#).

As stated in the [action letter](#), Highlands must provide evidence that the institution has ameliorated the findings of non-compliance identified in this action that resulted in the imposition of Probation, Probation Area Core Component 4.C:

1. formally approved 2015-19 plan for improving student retention, persistence and completion;
2. integrated planning process and endorsement/approval by required governance groups and internal officials in development of the plan; and
3. realistic and justified goals and objectives, robust evaluation and design, institutional coordination and oversight, adequate resource allocations, and progress in implementation.

Since 2015, the university has increasingly focused on student retention, persistence, and completion. When President Minner began in July 2015, he worked with the Board of Regents to create a new office, [Strategic Enrollment Management](#). This office provides the necessary leadership and coordination of retention, persistence, completion, and enrollment issues. Complete with its [own budget](#) and oversight of areas such as the Financial Aid Office, Office of Academic Support, the International Education Center, Office of Recruitment and Undergraduate Admissions, and Native American Services (see [organizational chart](#)), the Office of Strategic Enrollment Management is

helmed by the vice-president of strategic enrollment management (VPSEM). Dr. Edward Martinez, a tenured faculty member from the Department of Natural Resources Management who was instrumental in the forming of our ARMAS center and thus very familiar with the needs of our students, is serving in this role. This office has the resources as well as the appropriate university authority to effectively oversee and implement the university's retention, persistence, and completion efforts. To further support these efforts, the director of academic enrichment position was redefined as the [director of academic enrichment and retention](#).

After the Office for Strategic Enrollment Management launched, the university contracted with Ruffalo Noel Levitz (RNL), a company that provides technology-enabled solutions and services for enrollment and student success, to assist the university community in broadening the scope of the plan and developing appropriate goals for our student population by identifying specific freshman subpopulations based on an analysis of student outcomes data.

After the creation of this office, VPSEM formalized two committees:

1. The [Retention Advisory Council](#), which leads and directs student success initiatives to create a pervasive student-centered culture that encourages retention, persistence, and timely completion ([fall 2016 - fall 2017 minutes](#)).
2. The [Matriculation Task Force](#), which reviews policies, processes and procedures that affect student enrollment, retention, and persistence ([2016 minutes](#), [2017 minutes](#)).

As part of a campuswide, inclusive process, the Highlands community has developed the [Increasing Student Success and Academic Excellence at New Mexico Highlands University: A Retention Plan 2016-2020](#), which was broadly endorsed by the governing representatives of the [faculty](#), [staff](#), [students](#), and a final endorsement by the [Board of Regents on October 28, 2016](#). The 2020 Retention Plan builds on a draft developed over time by several earlier work groups. The adoption and implementation of the most recent 2020 Retention Plan began with the formalization in January 2016 of the Retention Advisory Council, which broadened representation of stakeholders as well as provided oversight from the newly created Office for Strategic Enrollment Management. The 2020 Retention Plan is a living document that communicates progress to all Highlands University constituents. The plan contains [mission-aligned goals](#) that are ambitious but attainable, addresses the needs of our student populations, and are appropriate to our educational offerings.

To document the progress towards the retention plan, the Retention Council distributes a yearly list of accomplishments to the faculty, staff, students, administration, and Board of Regents, with the [2016-2017 accomplishments distributed in fall 2017](#). To refine their strategies for the next academic year, the Retention Advisory Council has created [the 2017-2018 Retention Update](#), which provides more context, clarification and alignment of past goals, new goals, and plans for the upcoming year.

Highlands committed resources in 2017 to send the leaders of each Retention Advisory Council strategy team to the [HLC Persistence and Completion Academy](#). This experience resulted in an increased capacity to coordinate retention and persistence efforts across the campus community using data to inform the development of all future plans. Our initial academy focus is a full exploration of advising at Highlands and a plan to design improved advising services with the support of our mentor, scholar, and institutional cohort.

Retention Goals: Based on data indicating that our biggest losses in retention are among first-time, full-time freshmen, Highlands has historically focused its efforts on freshmen and therefore have more data on this population. In recent years, we have recognized that while transfer students are retained and complete at much higher rates than our first-time freshmen, we should focus efforts on

them as well. These goals were originally articulated in [the Retention Plan](#) and then refined in the [2017-2018 Retention Update](#) based on Highlands' work with Ruffalo Noel Levitz. In the Retention Update (each goal is linked below), targets are justified by historical Highlands and comparative nationwide data for similar institutions:

[Goal 1: Increase Persistence among Freshmen](#)

- Highlands University's 2020 fall-to-spring (2nd semester) retention goal for first-time, full-time freshmen is 80% retention fall-to-spring. The goal for the upcoming (fall 2017) cohort is 78%.
- Highlands University's 2020 fall-to-fall (2nd year) retention goal for first-time, full-time freshmen is 56.7%. The goal for the upcoming (fall 2017) cohort is 53%.
- [Additional goals for freshmen sub-populations](#) are included in the Retention Update.

[Goal 2: Increase Persistence among Transfer Students](#)

- Highlands University's 2020 fall-to-spring 2nd semester retention goal for first-time, full-time transfer students is 85%, and the goal for the upcoming (fall 2017) cohort is 80%.
- Highlands University's 2020 fall-to-fall 3rd semester retention goal for first-time, full-time transfer students is 75%, and the goal for the upcoming (fall 2017) cohort is 71%.

[Goal 3: Increase Completion among Freshmen](#)

- Highlands University's class of 2020 4-year completion goal for first-time, full-time freshmen (fall 2016 cohort) is 9.9%. The 4-year completion goal for the fall 2014 cohort is 9%.
- Highlands University's class of 2020 6-year completion goal for first-time, full-time freshmen (fall 2014 cohort) is 23.9%. The 6-year completion goal for the fall 2012 cohort is 20%

[Goal 4: Increase Completion among Transfer Students](#)

- Highlands University's class of 2020 (fall 2016 cohort) 4-year completion goal for first-time, full-time transfer students is 52%. The completion goal for the fall 2014 cohort is 49%.
- Highlands University's class of 2020 (fall 2014 cohort) 6-year completion goal for first-time, full-time transfer students is 55%. The completion goal for the fall 2012 cohort is 51%.

[Goal 5: Increase Student Success among Freshmen](#)

- Highlands' 2020 goal for academic standing is that 85% of first-time full-time freshmen will be in good academic standing (not on academic probation) after the first semester. The goal for the upcoming cohort (fall 2017) is 77%.
- The 2020 goal for average credits earned by first-time full-time freshmen in their first semester is 15 credits. That goal was exceeded with the Fall 2016 cohort, and the goal for the upcoming cohort is to maintain the average of 16 credits earned.
- The 2020 goals for the Lottery Scholarship is that 75% of the cohort who are eligible will earn the scholarship and 65% of the eligible cohort retained will have earned the scholarship. The goals for the upcoming cohort (fall 2017) is 66% of the total eligible cohort and 59% of those retained will earn the scholarship.

With Ruffalo Noel Levitz, Highlands held an on-campus [Retention Summit November 3-4, 2016](#) to review important data and to plan the next steps in our retention efforts. During the two days, more than 89 faculty, staff, and administrators participated. These participants reviewed a logistic regression model compiled from the 2011-2015 first-time, full-time freshmen data to identify which

variables (e.g. GPA, financial aid package, distance from campus, date of admission, ethnicity, etc.) had the largest impact on student retention and which populations might require more support to successfully persist and complete their degrees. A consensus was reached on intervening with several freshman subpopulations, and the group developed strategies it believes represent the best retention improvement opportunities on which to focus for these particular subpopulations.

As a result of the summit, five strategies were specifically designed to increase retention. In rank order these include:

1. [Academic Roadmaps](#): Provide all new students with an academic roadmap of all required courses in sequence that will allow for timely goal attainment.
2. [University-wide Service Culture](#): Build an exceptional learner-centered service culture that will reduce communication breakdowns and student runaround.
3. [Academic Advising](#): Develop more systematic, intentional, and seamless advising interactions for all students that emphasize relationship building and high expectations with both professional and faculty advisers.
4. [Fully Prepared for the First Day of Class](#): Provide targeted programming and/or alternate pathways for students entering the admission process late in the cycle to ensure adequate preparation for academic and non-academic success.
5. [Ensure Opportunities to Apply Classroom Learning through Internships, Practicums, and Campus Employment](#).

Each strategy has been assigned a strategy team to lead the effort in those areas, and accomplishments and use of data are discussed in 4.C.3. Because these strategies directly link to the retention needs identified by a data-driven, campuswide effort, we are specifically addressing the needs of our unique student population as well as the gaps in its educational experience.

4.C.2. To understand retention, persistence, and completion in a holistic manner, Highlands collects and analyzes data by broadly exploring institutional and specific group trends as well as examining student satisfaction and success in the realms of academics, student support and campus life. Since the creation of the Office of Strategic Enrollment Management, Highlands has increased and focused its collection and analysis of data. By utilizing our Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Research (OIER), contracting with Ruffalo Noel Levitz from 2016 to the present, and participating in the HLC Persistence and Completion Academy beginning spring 2017, Highlands provides the Office of Strategic Enrollment Management, the Retention Advisory Committee, and the campus community at large with useful data to move forward our Retention Plan.

Broad measures of retention, persistence, and degree completion are generated and analyzed by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Research (OIER). Additionally, reports on specific groups and programs such as first-time freshmen, first-time transfer students, and athletes are created and posted on the OIER web page.

In the academic area, OIER provides each department specific enrollment, retention, persistence, and completion data. Every three to four years, we conduct [the National Survey of Student Engagement](#) (NSSE), and in 2016 we conducted the [Faculty Survey of Student Engagement](#) (FSSE).

In spring 2016, Highlands partnered with Ruffalo Noel Levitz to create the [Student Retention Predictive \(SRP\)](#) model from first-time, full-time degree-seeking freshman students attending Highlands from fall 2011 to fall 2015. This regression model works to predict the probability of a student persisting using a variety of indicators such as income, financial aid package, ACT score, and GPA, among others. The SRP model was then applied to the incoming fall 2016 class and is utilized

in the ways documented in 4.C.3.

Beginning spring 2016, the Office of Academic Support worked with Ruffalo Noel Levitz to administer the [College Student Inventory \(CSI\)](#), which asks students a wide variety of questions, such as willingness to participate in advising, intention of transferring, self-perceived academic ability, and perception of higher education, among others. The CSI survey data were combined with the SRP data to create three separate detailed reports for each student. These data sets are utilized by the Office of Academic Support to better direct its student success interventions ([examples](#)).

SEM worked with Ruffalo Noel Levitz to administer the [Student Satisfaction Inventory \(SSI\)](#) to main campus students and the [Adult Student Predictor Survey \(ASPS\)](#) to center students in spring 2016. These surveys ask students to determine what services are most important to them and to rate how well Highlands is providing the services.

As part of our work with the [HLC Persistence and Completion Academy](#), we have created a [data book](#), gathering all our most important persistence, retention, and completion data into one easily accessible place.

4.C.3. The data collected from 4.C.2. have been used by the Office of Strategic Enrollment Management, the Retention Advisory Council, and the Matriculation Task Force to address retention concerns and reduce barriers to completion. This information, documented in the [2017-2018 Retention Update](#) and HLC Persistence and Completion Academy [data book](#), has been extremely helpful in moving forward our retention efforts, as described in the [2016-2017 Retention Accomplishments](#): "Since oversight of retention has been assigned to the VPSEM in January 2016 a comprehensive and student-centered strategy to support students throughout their college experience and increase the number of students completing their degree has been implemented. The remainder of this report provides a description of the objectives, strategies, and actions that have been accomplished to fulfill the goals set forth by the 2016-2020 Retention Plan (Retention Plan), including work completed with the assistance of RNL when relevant to the strategy listed."

One major outcome of these efforts was described in 4.C.1., with the Retention Summit and the five strategies resulting from that meeting. Each strategy has been assigned a team leader and has made the following improvements:

The Academic Roadmaps strategy team collected course scheduling and enrollment data for the last five years. These data will be provided to each academic department to be used for revising the department's academic roadmap. This strategy team is also collaborating with the University of New Mexico's Institute of Design Innovation project for course scheduling.

The University-wide Service Culture strategy team, in conjunction with the Power of Service team, surveyed Highlands' staff and faculty to determine topics that should be covered in the newly implemented training series. The trainings are now scheduled and will begin September 28, 2017. The team also implemented staff trainings for the new Banner query program called SnapShot, which allows staff members a quick look at important student information to better serve students without unnecessarily referring the student to other departments. A high-traffic departments meeting was also held prior to the fall 2017 semester. Departments shared their most important information with other departments to allow staff to be able to provide intradepartmental information to students. The team also facilitated, in conjunction with Campus Life, ITS, University Relations, and Athletics, a synchronized calendar system that allows students to view all campus events on the Ellucian GO application via mobile devices.

The Academic Advising strategy team collected data to identify adviser assignments, which was communicated to the academic deans so they can reassign advisers in the Banner system. All adviser designations should now be accurate. The team is also looking at data to see if students are actually majoring in the program for which they are declared so academic departments can contact students to complete major change forms. Transfer students have been assigned an adviser and a transfer student orientation was created and began summer 2017. A Student Success Planner was created and distributed to students outlining important areas to address or accomplish each year as a student progresses toward graduation.

The Fully Prepared for the First Day of Class strategy team, in consultation with the Academic Advising strategy team and the Matriculation Taskforce has developed an enrollment success contract program for first-time freshmen who are admitted within 35 days of the first day of class, are on probationary status, or have an ACT score less than 13 or an SAT less than 740. This program will begin fall 2017 with the intention of providing at-risk students with additional support.

The Ensure Opportunities to Apply Classroom Learning through Internships, Practicums, & Campus Employment strategy team has drafted a student employment pay scale matrix for suggested use by Human Resources to create student employment equity across campus. The Human Resources department has instituted a policy requiring campus departments to develop job descriptions for all student jobs and to post openings on the [Career Services website](#). A chart is being developed to align suggested campus employment opportunities with relevant majors. Human Resources convened a taskforce of stakeholders across campus to streamline the student hiring process. The strategy team developed a proposed job description and organization chart for the position of campus employment coordinator. This will be included in strategic planning proposals and supported as funding allows. The team is collecting data on the availability of internships and practicums in academic areas to identify opportunities for the incorporation of additional internships and practicums into academic programs and will be shared with the deans and faculty in the fall to assess feasibility.

In the academic area, departments reviewed data provided by OIER with department-specific enrollment, retention, persistence, and completion data as part of [Professional Development Week](#). These are used to develop department-specific strategic and outcome assessment reports that address student success and completion within the discipline, as discussed in 4.B. On a more granular level, faculty use course evaluations completed by students at the end of each semester to improve courses, thus enhancing student success.

Another example of Highlands' use of data to improve student outcomes is found in the English department's composition program. The department compiled data on passing rates in the developmental freshman composition class (106), the regular freshman composition class (111), and the corequisite freshmen composition classes (taking 106 and 111 simultaneously):

- Students just taking ENGL 111 (2013 to present) = 79.78 percent passing
- Students just taking ENGL 106 (2013 to present) = 80.13 percent passing
- Students taking ENGL 111/106 co-req (2013 to present) = 86.97 percent passing

The English department then determined that 106 was a barrier to progress. As a result, the department dropped the standalone 106 class and is now only offering only the corequisite model.

For the past two years, all freshmen have been required to participate in a first-year experience learning community, and data were used ([2016 report](#), [2017 report](#)) to reevaluate scheduling and create a block schedule that redesigned the way that core courses were offered to freshmen. Changes were made in adviser caseloads, peer mentor supervision, and our college success course.

In the student support area, reports developed using the College Student Inventory and Student Retention Predictive model data were used by professional academic advisers to better advise each student based on individual characteristics and needs. Utilizing the CS and a student self-inventory, the advisers completed a "game plan" to help the student achieve academic success ([examples here](#)). Coupled with the early alert system, this information was used by the Office of Academic Support to contact students experiencing difficulties and connect them to appropriate resources.

In the area of campus life, the Retention Advisory Council and dean of students use information obtained from the SSI and ASPS to understand and recommend resource allocation and improvements regarding services that are most important to main campus and center students. Improvements to the Campus Life Initiative are ongoing and driven by data collected at events and student input. [Surveys of student satisfaction](#) have been used to change housing policy and food service providers.

In the springs of 2009, 2011, 2014, and 2016 Highlands participated in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) as a part of our participation in the Voluntary System of Accountability. The NSSE groups items into four general themes: academic challenge, learning with peers, experiences with faculty, and campus environment. It also identifies high-impact practices. By participating in NSSE, we are able to compare Highlands' performance to schools similar to Highlands, as well as all participating public master's-granting institutions in New Mexico and bordering states.

[Results indicated](#) that first-year students at Highlands did not score significantly below any other comparison group in any area and scored significantly higher in student-faculty interactions. However, results for seniors showed some areas that were significantly higher than those of Highlands' peer institutions (reflective and integrative learning, discussion with diverse others), but significantly lower in the area of supportive campus environment. Using that data, Highlands has committed to a vibrant campus life (Strategic Goal #3 in the HU Vision 2020) and increased access to student support services, particularly for center and online students, as documented in 3.D.

4.C.4. Highlands has demonstrated its commitment to best practices in monitoring, analyzing and utilizing data to improve student outcomes through the creation of the Office of Strategic Enrollment Management to coordinate retention efforts, the engagement of Ruffalo Noel Levitz to systematize efforts and build capacity, participation in the Persistence and Completion Academy, and the prioritization of a campuswide focus on retention and completion.

At Highlands, [the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Research \(OIER\)](#) is the primary office responsible for collecting and reporting retention, persistence and completion data. OIER assists the administration, the Retention Advisory Council, and specific programs in monitoring and promoting institutional accountability and effectiveness by providing assessment and performance data, as well as consultation regarding program and educational outcome measures. OIER uses Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) definitions in guiding this process for summative measures such as first-time, full-time freshmen fall-to-fall retention and four- and six-year graduation rates. Additional annual measures defined and required by the state are collected for [Performance Effectiveness Plan Report](#). In addition, OIER assists all members of the university community with assessment of retention, persistence and completion and program evaluation endeavors by providing online access to essential resources and data.

To assist in the development of a systematic approach reflecting best practices in retention efforts, Highlands committed resources to contract with Ruffalo Noel Levitz (RNL) in 2016. Consultants provided support in identifying at-risk populations and the utilization of surveys (SSI, ASPS, CSI) to identify student perceptions of their experiences and satisfaction with Highlands as well as identifying

specific factors in students' backgrounds that would allow advisers to better support their success. Additionally, RNL provided support for further development of the 2020 Retention Plan.

The Retention Plan and Retention Update specifies goals, strategies, and responsibilities for improving the quality of student life and learning at NMHU. Therefore, following best practice, the Retention Advisory Council uses the evidence-driven improvement model of Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) Cycles, which emphasizes the importance of fact based improvement planning. This process recognizes the continuous nature of effective improvement approaches, and emphasizes consensus building through cross-functional participation during the development of the plan and implementation of the initiative.

The Retention Advisory Council takes several approaches to ensure that data collected for analysis reflect a holistic picture of retention, persistence and completion at Highlands as well as understanding persistence trends over time. A population approach allows us to use disaggregated data to identify those at risk and monitor trends vital to understanding the impact of retention strategies as well as targeting resources to support those most in need of services. Course-and-curriculum-based approaches, such as using data to identify courses with high D, F, and W rates, allow us to allocate resources such as supplemental instruction or tutoring. This approach identifies areas in which curriculum redesign may be needed and faculty can then develop grant proposals to address this (an example would be the STEMfast grant), develop their own innovative programs (an example would be the English corequisite model for development composition) or request support from the Center for Teaching Excellence. Assessing student experience is critical to evaluating effectiveness of programs and campus life initiatives. Therefore, the Retention Advisory Council uses an experience-based approach that focuses on collective student survey data about campus experiences and satisfaction, including campus life, FYE, and campus employment.

Highlands' participation in the [HLC Persistence and Completion Academy](#) has further worked to align our campus practice with national conversations about best practice in retention, completion, and persistence. The Persistence and Completion Academy is a four-year commitment, and we anticipate completing a substantial project that will boost our retention efforts on campus.

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4.S - Criterion 4 - Summary

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

Summary

The evidence presented throughout Criterion 4 demonstrates how Highlands has furthered our Strategic Goal #1: *Highlands University will achieve academic excellence, academic integration and student success*. Our systems of regular program review and yearly outcomes assessment, as well as our new system of co-curricular outcomes assessment, ensure that our programs are current, cutting edge, and serving the academic needs of our students. Highlands is striving to improve constantly the quality of our academic programs.

Our new office of Strategic Enrollment Management, the formally approved retention plan, and our engagement with national best practice through our contracting with Ruffalo Noel Levitz and our joining the HLC Persistence and Completion Academy, demonstrate how we are achieving our Strategic Goal #2: *Highlands University will achieve strategic enrollment management*. With clearly articulated targets, strategies, and a year's worth of documented accomplishments in achieving that retention plan, Highlands has concentrated its many efforts towards ensuring student success.

Sources

There are no sources.

5 - Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

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

5.A - Core Component 5.A

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

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

Argument

5.A.1. For more than a century, New Mexico Highlands University has provided exceptional educational opportunities to the residents of northern New Mexico. The university continues to have the resources necessary to fulfill its mission and meet its responsibilities to its students and the state. Highlands receives the majority of its funding from state government appropriations, a situation that will likely not change in the near future. Despite recent fluctuations in state appropriations, the university has responded effectively and appropriately. This has involved increased reliance on student tuition and fees to meet current expenses, a systematic review and reform of university operations to make them more efficient and cost effective, and the commitment to increased fundraising via the NMHU Foundation.

As required by the [HLC action letter](#), this section provides evidence that the institution has ameliorated the findings of noncompliance identified in this action that resulted in the imposition of Probation for Core Component 5.A.:

1. University accomplishments, plans and results in increasing and stabilizing its CFI, primary reserve ratio, and university reserves;
2. use of new institutional capital planning strategies demonstrating progress to keep projects on time, within scope and on budget; and
3. mission-driven, integrated and transparent strategic planning and budgeting decisions.

Resource Base: Despite a tumultuous fiscal decade that encompassed the housing bubble, the Great Recession, and a recent drop in oil and gas revenue (a major source of New Mexico's budget), Highlands' resource base has been essentially flat for the past decade. Highlands' revenue base has

several components, with percentages from 2016-2017 as follows:

- State funding (45 percent)
- Tuition (23 percent)
- Grants and contracts (22 percent)
- Interest and investment income (3 percent)
- Sales and services revenue from auxiliary enterprises on the campus (7 percent)

As a public institution, Highlands’ finances are closely monitored by the State of New Mexico, via the Legislative Finance Committee (LFC), the Department of Finance and Administration (DFA), the Higher Education Department (HED). Every year, our budget must be approved by the Board of Regents, the HED, and the DFA, with those budgets posted on the [website](#). Highlands performs yearly audits for the state, which must be approved by the Board of Regents and the New Mexico Office of the State Auditor and posted on the [website](#). Highlands also must submit quarterly budget updates to the State of New Mexico, as approved by the president and Board of Regents (examples from FY17: [Quarter 1](#), [Quarter 2](#), [Quarter 3](#), [Quarter 4](#)). These systems of accountability ensure appropriate oversight of Highlands’ financial situation by the Board of Regents and the state of New Mexico.

In New Mexico, the state allocates money for capital projects (i.e. new buildings, renovations, or special projects) separately from other funds, and all such appropriations are restricted to capital projects specified by the Legislature. The funding for capital projects can vary widely from year to year: some years Highlands is allocated a specific amount to begin a new project, and other years we are allocated only funding to address deferred maintenance. Such allocations are discussed later in this section. Without capital allocations, our revenues during the past decade have been as follows:

Actual Revenues (in thousands of dollars, rounded to the nearest thousand), without Capital Allocations, FY08 to FY16

Year	State General Fund	Tuition and Fees	Grants, Contracts, and Federal Aid	Sales, Services, Other	Interest and Investment Income	Total Revenue
FY08	35,511	7,984	15,514	2,915	787	62,711
FY09	33,241	8,678	17,065	4,050	-670	62,364
FY10	31,268	8,025	19,315	3,866	1,418	63,892
FY11	28,371	8,982	18,690	7,884	1,430	65,357
FY12	27,606	10,470	15,886	6,630	676	61,268
FY13	29,218	10,915	16,685	6,388	1,201	64,407
FY14	30,124	11,412	15,239	5,752	1,402	63,929
FY15	31,565	12,243	15,558	4,679	791	64,836
FY16	31,562	13,157	15,215	4,285	497	64,715
FY17*	29,887	15,198	14,650	4,550	1,660	65,498

Source: Audits, linked in table.

Note: Per [state administrative code \(2.2.2.10\(M\)\(3\) NMAC\)](#), the FY17 audit, which will show the

actual revenues, will not be completed until November 2017. As a result, the numbers in that row are near-final estimates. Highlands will provide the final audit when it becomes available.

Total state appropriations dipped after a FY08 peak, reflecting the housing bubble and the subsequent Great Recession. After bottoming out in FY12, state funding has been on an overall upward trend. However, FY17 saw a 7.48 percent cut from the state and FY18 saw a 0.97 percent cut from the state, both cuts due to a decline in oil and gas prices and associated services. State budgets are predicted as flat for FY19.

The decline in state dollars has been offset by increased tuition revenues, creating an overall flat budget for the university. For the 2016-2017 academic year, Highlands raised tuition by 12.5 percent; for the 2017-2018 academic year, Highlands raised tuition by 7.5 percent. Despite these increases, Highlands is still [one of the most affordable institutions in the Southwest](#), and we have deliberately kept our tuition below the Pell Grant amount to make our education accessible to students (see 1.A.2). To offset the impact of these tuition increases, Highlands is committed to providing on-campus employment opportunities for any undergraduate student who wants one, regardless of whether the student qualifies for federal or state work study. Highlands prioritizes accessibility by offering a wide variety of scholarships/grants to students, including \$6.0 million in need based aid and \$2.3 million in non-need based aid ([NMHU Factbook 2016-2017](#)).

The university has a comprehensive strategy for coping with the ongoing uncertainties of state funding. Highlands has scrutinized and frozen positions (only filling them if they are mission critical and directly aligned to strategic goals), tightened supply and travel budgets, limited discretionary spending, implemented technologies increasing efficiencies while decreasing costs, and increased student tuition and fees. These internal savings have allowed us to keep our student-centered expenditures either flat or with slight increases:

Actual Expenses by Academic and Student Services Areas (in thousands of dollars, rounded to the nearest thousand), less Capital Expenditures and Capital Depreciation, FY08-FY17

Year	Instruction and General	Student Social and Cultural	Research	Public Service	Student Aid, Grants, and Stipends	Auxiliary Enterprises	Intercollegiate Athletics	Other Expenditures
FY08	32,933	679	2,548	8,947	5,203	2,877	2,426	1,211
FY09	34,602	826	3,130	9,250	6,741	3,887	2,836	4,211
FY10	35,599	812	2,037	9,648	8,102	5,346	2,492	5,958
FY11	34,521	826	1,730	9,508	8,916	5,366	2,211	7,310
FY12	33,397	901	1,751	8,306	9,160	4,782	2,216	2,800
FY13	35,353	934	1,704	7,534	8,926	5,067	2,483	136
FY14	36,854	937	1,517	6,948	9,066	4,362	2,648	169
FY15	35,320	951	1,363	6,883	8,183	3,548	2,558	14
FY16	35,142	829	2,006	6,675	8,193	3,530	2,615	0
FY17*	38,520	1,450	1,450	6,390	8,570	3,530	3,120	0

Source: Audits.

*See note above on FY17 Audit.

As this table shows, Highlands has committed its resources to the core of our academic and student support services, both included in the Instruction and General category. Student Social and Cultural expenses covers campus life, and saw a substantial increase in FY17 due to a new \$75 student life fee to fund the Campus Life initiative. Despite budgets cuts, instruction and general expenditures have increased substantially over the past five years.

Highlands has achieved this by reducing our “Other Expenditures” category. This category included capital and unanticipated expenditures throughout the fiscal year such as equipment and building supply purchases, space rental, and use of unrestricted capital funds. Going back to FY10, this category was often substantial, negatively impacting our CFI. By addressing the expense of this category and other financial controls mentioned earlier, Highlands has gained better control of its financial situation as demonstrated by the positive impact on our CFI. Highlands now budgets such expenses into its annual budget, preventing the problems that we saw in FY11 as explained in our [2013 response to the HLC concerning interim monitoring of our CFI](#).

To further enhance the operations of the university, we have turned more to external sources of fundraising. When President Minner joined the university in July 2015, he restructured the Office of Advancement, which works with the NMHU Foundation to raise funds for the university. After hiring a new vice-president of advancement, Theresa Law, JD, CFRE, in January 2016, the Office of Advancement and the [Foundation have increased revenue available to the university](#), including:

- The HIPS (High-Impact Practices) Endowment Grant, a \$750,000 endowment matching grant in conjunction with the State of New Mexico to fund high-impact practices in the classroom. Highlands began its first two HIP projects in spring 2017.
- A gift of \$500,000 to replace the turf at Perkins Stadium.
- A \$100,000 gift to remodel the Stu Clark Building.
- A \$350,000 endowment gift to help enhance the Media Arts program.
- More than \$400,000 in new endowment and scholarship support.

Building Projects and Capital Planning Procedures: In addition to the main revenues listed above, the State of New Mexico separately allocates funds to Highlands for capital projects. This has allowed the university to complete a number of major building projects in the last decade, as documented in our [Capital Projects and State Appropriations table](#), including the Viles & Crimmin Residence Hall, the Student Center, the McCaffrey Historic Trolley Barn Media Arts Building, and an upcoming remodel of the Rodgers Hall administrative building. As documented in the table, Highlands also issues system revenue bonds to supplement some of these construction projects. The Student Center project was over budget and the completion delayed because of [legal issues with the original contractor](#), resulting in a significant impact on Highlands’ reserves during FY2012, FY2013, and FY2014.

To prevent such difficulties in the future, Highlands has adopted new [Facilities Management Procedures for Building Renovation and Construction Projects Over \\$1 Million](#). The procedure was authored by the Facilities and Planning Director, who was hired 2012, and vetted via a shared governance process that included approvals by the [Faculty Senate](#), [Staff Senate](#), and [Board of Regents](#). The new procedures document two fundamental changes to our capital projects process. The first are changes to the management structure, including the hiring of a construction manager who assist the facilities director to closely supervise projects and ensure they come in on time and on budget. Second, the Board of Regents now monitors and approves various stages of the construction

cycle, including selection of architecture firm, schematics designs, and any modifications to the scope and budget of the project.

Highlands instituted an early version of these procedures in the Trolley Barn project, which was [finished on time](#) and [under budget](#) in the fall of 2016. Highlands identified the Las Vegas Railroad and Power Company Building, built in 1905 and abandoned for decades, as the new home for its successful Media Arts and Technology program. The building is listed in the State Register of Cultural Properties and the National Register of Historic Places. After the state Legislature approved and appropriated \$8.3 million in state funding, the university issued a request for proposal in 2012 for on-call construction supervisors. This was a new process that had not been used during construction of the Student Center. Highlands formed a search committee including representatives from the Media Arts program, facilities, a student, and other constituencies. The committee ranked four submissions, and the top three firms received an invitation to interview with the Board of Regents, who awarded Progressive Construction Management (PCM) the contract. PCM participated in the search committees for architectural and general contractor RFPs. With the assistance of a construction manager, the project was closely monitored and successfully completed in the fall of 2016.

Highlands is confident that the building issues that led to the Student Center delays and subsequent negative impact on Highlands’ reserves are behind us. The success of the Trolley Barn project and the formalization of those procedures into the [Facilities Management Procedures for Building Renovation and Construction Projects Over \\$1 Million](#) provides the university with a solid foundation to complete future building projects. The policies and procedures are currently being applied to the historic Rodgers building remodel.

CFI: In the fall of 2013, Highlands was required to submit a [Financial Indicators Report to the HLC](#) because of concerns regarding the university's financial health ([HLC response here](#)). Each year Highlands submits financial information to the HLC, which is then used to develop a composite financial index (CFI). Due primarily to the 2008-2010 Great Recession and miscategorizations related to capital expenses and the “Other Expenditures” category discussed previously, our CFI has fluctuated throughout the past decade. Despite these challenges, good and sound budgetary controls have stabilized the CFI in recent years. The table below presents the various components of the CFI, weighted as the HLC requires, to create our combined CFI:

	Primary Reserve Ratio	Viability Ratio	Return on Net Assets Ratio	Net Operating Revenues Ratio	Combined CFI
FY08	1.14	1.03	1.02	0.24	3.42
FY09	0.95	1.05	-0.35	-0.40	1.24
FY10	1.14	0.83	0.02	-0.40	1.59
FY11	0.75	0.55	0.04	-0.40	.094
FY12	0.62	0.43	-0.63	-0.40	0.01
FY13	0.25	0.16	0.23	0.24	0.88
FY14	0.19	0.13	-0.01	0.20	0.51
FY15*	0.39	0.28	0.49	0.68	1.83
FY16*	0.26	0.20	1.03	0.87	2.37

Source: [CFI as submitted to the HLC](#).

*Note: FY15 and FY16 are calculated without GASB 68 liabilities, a new federal accounting guideline implemented in FY15. This new requirement mandates that institutions include pension liabilities in their financials. Highlands is part of the State of New Mexico pension system, with Highlands and its employees contributing to that system. Like many public institutions part of larger state pension systems, such GASB 68 inclusions misrepresent Highlands’ finances, as the pension system is guaranteed by the State of New Mexico, not by Highlands University. Because of this, the HLC now asks institutions to submit two CFIs as part of the annual update process. Our CFI with GASB 68 liability [can be found in our 2016-2017 HLC Institutional Update](#).

Highlands’ CFI reached a low point in FY12, which resulted from three years of state budget cuts, the completion of the Student Center, and the miscategorization of our “Other Expenditures” budget category. Highlands has taken several steps to address such problems from occurring in the future: the implementation of the new building procedures discussed above, the rebuilding of our reserves discussed below, the tightening of budget controls, and the remaking of our strategic budgeting process (discussed below).

Reserves: During the past two years, Highlands has focused on rebuilding our cash reserves as shown in the table below. To fully present the picture of our cash situation, we have gone back to FY03, to show our cash holdings before the buildup of state capital allocations:

Unrestricted Net Position (Reserves) and Cash and Cash Equivalents, FY03-FY16

	Unrestricted Net Position (Reserves) (in thousands of dollars, rounded to nearest thousand)	Cash and Cash Equivalents (in thousands of dollars, rounded to nearest thousand)
FY03	2,894	4,425
FY04	5,094	9,003
FY05	6,958	14,809
FY06	8,298	20,210
FY07	7,178	22,550
FY08	6,602	43,674
FY09	6,813	27,276
FY10	3,568	30,690
FY11	2,119	22,358
FY12	904	17,631
FY13	796	6,859
FY14	975	7,795
FY15	2,848	9,105
FY16	4,371	8,976

Source: Audits.

This table shows the full extent of our cash flow issues. From 2005-2008, there was a significant

influx of cash from the issuance of two system revenue bonds by Highlands and capital appropriations by the State of New Mexico for new buildings (Viles and Crimmin Residence Hall and the Student Union Building), renovation funds (Burriss Hall, Felix Martinez, housing, and Lora M. Shields), and millions for infrastructure improvements. These funds were then spent from 2009-2013. This capital funding was at risk of reverting back to the state, so the university aggressively completed capital projects in FY09 through FY13. Completing those projects depleted the university reserves, as is seen in the FY13 numbers.

All those building projects are now complete, and Highlands has been building its reserves back up during the past three years. Despite being a factor in our CFI, “cash on hand” has always been an unreliable indicator of Highlands’ fiscal situation. Since much of this cash was restricted funds for capital projects, it does not paint an accurate picture of our reserves. The extra \$30,000,000 in 2010 was an indicator that we had several capital projects. Our true reserve position is the “unrestricted net position,” i.e. resources that can be spent for any purpose. This has steadily been climbing after the Great Recession and the completion of multiple capital projects.

Reserves are essential to address unforeseen or unanticipated expenses, revenue shortfalls, or significant drops in enrollment. The state of New Mexico recommends a minimum reserve level of 3 to 5 percent of the “Instruction and General” category of Highlands’ budget, or about \$1 million to \$1.8 million, which Highlands now exceeds. As a public institution, Highlands has an obligation to spend the funds we receive from the state to educate our students. An ideal reserves situation for Highlands would be 145 days of our “Instruction and General” category, or \$8.4 million.

We have made significant progress in rebuilding our unrestricted reserves from less than \$1,000,000 in FY13 to more than \$4,371,000 currently. While the decline in previous reserves is regrettable and something that Highlands does not wish to repeat, that decline resulted in the completion of a state-of-the-art Student Center for our students. The new Building Policy will guarantee that all future projects are started promptly, thus preventing the cash buildup problems of 2005-2008. In addition, the closer monitor will assure that capital projects are completed on time and under budget, preventing the decline in reserves that happened in FY09-FY13.

To build cash reserves, Highlands is sweeping accounts at the end of the year, scrutinizing all discretionary expenses, delaying capital purchases when appropriate, reducing supply budgets, freezing positions when such a freeze would not adversely affect students, restructuring positions when possible, evaluating long-term leases and contracts for possible savings, and utilizing the new building policy to ensure construction projects are managed effectively. All such efforts are made in reference to our mission and our six strategic goals, ensuring essential operations are not negatively impacted.

Financial difficulties are a convergence of unfortunate events: the largest economic downturn the country has seen in decades, subsequent cuts in state funding, and a building project tangled with delays and lawsuits. Despite these challenges, Highlands has successfully completed numerous [building projects in the past ten years](#), enhancing our campus for decades to come while rebuilding our reserves to the same level as they were in 2004 before the recession.

In conclusion, we have addressed the fundamental structural problem via the [Facilities Management Procedures for Building Renovation and Construction Projects Over \\$1 Million](#), and are now on a positive upward trajectory with our CFI, and anticipate continual improvement on that front.

Strategic Budgeting: To ensure all departments and units have sufficient resources for effective operations and budget allocations directly supporting our strategic plan, Highlands implemented a

[new strategic budget process in 2016-2017.](#)

The process was developed jointly by the vice-president of finance and administration and the Faculty Senate. After discussion and approval by the [Faculty Senate](#) and administration in fall 2016, the university implemented the [process for 2016-2017](#) as documented on the [Finance and Administration](#) page. [The highlights of the yearly process include:](#)

- Spring: Strategic Planning Group (SPG) meets with president and VPFA to establish preliminary [budget priorities for the year](#), tying those priorities to the strategic plan.
- Early fall: VPFA distributes priorities to campus via e-mail; holds meetings with the campus to receive feedback on budget priorities ([fall 2016 Listening Session](#); [fall 2017 Listening Session](#)).
- Fall: Departments and units prepare [budget requests](#) based on the budget priorities, aligning them to the strategic plan, their program reviews, and their outcomes assessments.
- Late fall: Deans and vice-presidents (examples: [Academic Affairs](#), [Strategic Enrollment Management](#)) prepare their list of ranked budget priorities based on the budget requests, providing feedback to the departments and units along the way.
- Early winter: The Executive Management Team, including the president, the vice-presidents, the dean of students, the athletic director, the director of university relations, the chair of the Faculty Senate, and the president of the Staff Senate, meet to discuss and prioritize the budget requests. Each area had an opportunity to present its priorities to the team in priority order and to discuss its potential impact on the mission and contribution to the university's strategic goals.
- Early winter: Based on these discussions, the president prepares his final list of priorities.
- Early spring: The president presents the final budget to the campus community, including a [list of prioritized requests. This forum was recorded and is available to the campus and public.](#)
- Spring: [The Board of Regents approve the final budget.](#)

For every step of this process, the VPFA is responsible for making sure all relevant documents, including budget priorities, budget requests, and the final budget, are available online for the NMHU community to review.

To better communicate with the campus, the VPFA created the [Campus Budget and Planning committee](#). The VPFA meets quarterly with this committee to communicate important issues regarding the budget. This committee contains representatives from faculty, staff, and students. Minutes from these [meetings are archived online](#).

Highlands followed the new budget procedure in 2016-2017, creating a ranked list of priorities that have informed all budget decisions. There were some difficulties in the first year of implementation, primarily regarding communication between deans and department chairs, but those have been addressed via the Faculty Senate passing [a list of things to be worked on for 2017-2018](#) in the budget process. The process is set to be followed a second time in 2017-2018, [according to this schedule](#).

By explicitly tying every budget request to our strategic goals then prioritizing those requests based on their potential impact on the strategic goals, the new process is mission driven, integrated across all sectors of the university, and transparent.

The president's top 20 priorities included more than \$1,000,000 in new funding, and the total funding requests exceed \$7,000,000. Due to our budget situation, Highlands was not able to fund as many of those top requests as we would have liked, but those that have been funded are [indicated here](#). Additional requests from this list will be funded as money becomes available. While the process required quite a bit of work in the first year of implementation, and the lack of new money prevented us from funding many reasonable requests, the new budget process made our budgeting decisions

more transparent to the university community. As the new process is more deeply embedded into the culture of the university, we anticipate it will promote better discussion about the prioritization of our resources and the furthering of our mission.

Human Resources: Throughout the decade, Highlands has remained committed to its employees. We have not imposed layoffs or furloughs in either the 2009-2012 downturn or the 2016-2017 downturn, even as other institutions in New Mexico have laid off hundreds of employees. Highlands has instead frozen open positions, closely scrutinized all new hires for alignment to our mission, and tightened discretionary spending including travel and supply budgets. While this has strained the system, causing unhappiness in certain departments and units that have had open positions frozen, it has allowed us to maintain our commitment to our students in terms of staffing and quality of our programs. In fact, it is a sign of our fiscal health that we have not had to lay off any employees during the past decade.

Even with the reductions in operating expenses, Highlands remains focused on our primary mission of instruction and student support. Our number of tenured/tenure-track faculty and full-time staff has remained within the same basic range for the past five years:

Year	Staff and Administration (Full-Time)	Faculty (Tenured and Tenure-Track)
Fall 2012	355	92
Fall 2013	386	99
Fall 2014	365	93
Fall 2015	371	91
Fall 2016	361	94

Source: NMHU Factbooks, linked under Year column.

Campus Physical Infrastructure: After an extensive campus discussion that involved students, faculty, staff, administration, and the Board of Regents, the Board of Regents approved a new [Master Plan](#) on July 26, 2017. Aligned to the new university mission, this document thoroughly analyzes the strengths and weakness of campuses, lays out the path forward for improvement, and demonstrates how our current infrastructure meets the needs of our students. Highlands does a yearly analysis of classroom and building usage for the state, showing that we have more than adequate classroom space ([Las Vegas Campus, Centers](#)). The new master plan reported on the condition of each building and the estimated cost of bringing each building to acceptable building standards. Infrastructure resources at the centers are discussed in 3.C.

Completed and planned capital projects include the construction of large-scale buildings such as our new residence hall and the new Student Union Building, the renovation of the Lora Shields Science Building, and the award-winning renovation of the historic Trolley Building. Additional small enhancements such as improved signage, lighting, and xeriscaping, have upgraded the look and feel of the campus. Together, these projects have helped revitalize the campus, allowing us to better meet the needs of the Highlands' community. [The Trolley Barn](#), [Viles & Crimmin Residence Hall](#), and [Student Union Building](#) were all awarded LEED certifications. The next capital project will be the renovation of the Rogers Administration building, which was originally built as a library. In 2016, voters approved approximately \$4.5 million in general obligation bonds to fund this renovation, which includes the protection of important WPA murals on the second floor and moving the president's office suite to the second floor.

Technological Infrastructure: Highlands continues to expand and sustain a robust technology environment for academic and administrative purposes. In 2016-2017, a significant number of enterprise technology upgrades and several IT infrastructure improvement projects were completed, as per the [2016-2017 Technology Report and Improvement Plan](#). Highlights include:

- Increased the number of Smartboards in classrooms. Ninety-eight percent of NMHU classrooms are equipped with Smartboards.
- Expansion of the cloud-based video and web conferencing (VC) environment. NMHU now has 20 installations in the university's Zoom VC environment, including expansion of the cloud-based storage environment to accommodate for the expanded adoption of the new technology:
 - 12 at the Las Vegas Campus.
 - 3 at the Rio Rancho Center.
 - 2 at the Higher Education Center in Santa Fe.
 - 1 at the Farmington Center.
 - 2 at the Albuquerque Center.
- Implemented NetTutor, an online/web accessible tutoring service available to all students.
- The university performed a wireless network upgrade to its largest residential housing unit. Fifty-two wireless access points (WAPS) and six state-of-the-art network switches were purchased to improve both wireless bandwidth for the increased number of wireless devices used by students, and increased performance. The upgraded wireless network meets all new wireless communication standards and provides valuable metrics to position the university to better understand the devices used by students.
- The university upgraded and replaced 108 desktop PCs and laptop computers in its annual renewal and replacement project.
- Email services to both students and staff were upgraded to Microsoft's O365 product, a cloud-based suite of collaboration services geared to improve and enhance collaboration and reduce overall maintenance and support cost.
- Degree Works academic advising, transfer articulation and degree audit system was upgraded to the latest version. In addition, an intuitional team assembled to develop and enhance the reporting and dashboarding capabilities of the system, which is intended to inform and improve course forecasting and class scheduling processes.
- An upgrade to all desktop and laptop computers for students and staff was performed. Microsoft Windows 10 operating system and Office Suite 2016 was deployed to the university computers. In addition, the upgrade also included upgrades to Adobe Acrobat and Creative Cloud suite.

Highlands is committed to continual improvement of our technological infrastructure, as per the improvement section of the [2016-2017 Technology Report and Improvement Plan](#).

5.A.2. As a public nonprofit institution, the only superordinate entity to which Highlands reports is the State of New Mexico and its citizens. All budget decisions are under the ultimate control of the Board of Regents, and the allocation of resources maintains our primary focus on academics. This focus is illustrated in the [Regents Policy Guide](#), which states, "All other functions of the University, those dealing with fiscal affairs, student affairs, and plant operations and maintenance are to be considered supporting services to the academic function." The new budget process, described in 5.A.1., prevents any allocation of resources outside of those publicly presented to the university community and aligned to the mission and strategic goals.

5.A.3. Our *HU Vision 2020* focuses on providing opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students to attain an exceptional education, and this mission is realistic both in terms of our historical

role in northern New Mexico and through the budget we receive from the state. None of our six strategic goals take us outside of our core mission, but they focus on enhancing the systems, structures, and support available to help our students succeed.

Our strategic planning process, described in 5.C., and our budgeting process, described in 5.A., assure that the university's six strategic goals are realistic and achievable. Achievements towards those goals are documented in the [2016-2017 Mission Accomplishments](#).

5.A.4. Prior to hiring any staff, the appropriate administrator develops or reviews a job description and minimum qualifications (education and experience). During the search process, committees must ensure that applicants meet the minimum qualifications set forth in the description. If the administrator determines that there are preferred qualifications for the position, those applicants with the preferred qualifications are given preference. Prior to an offer of employment, the Department of Human Resources ensures that the candidate meets the qualifications for the position.

The university provides staff training and professional development on an annual basis, as discussed in 3.C.6.

5.A.5. As discussed in 5.A.1., Highlands has developed [a new budget process](#) that is transparent and directly connected to the strategic plan.

Once the [Fiscal Year budget has been approved](#) by the Board of Regents and the New Mexico Department of Finance and Administration, budgets are monitored through the Banner system, where unit heads and their administrative assistants have real-time access to their budgets to allow them to track and monitor expenses. Training on this process is offered on an as-needed basis. In addition, the Budget Office regularly reviews unit budgets to ensure that actual expenditures match the budgets, and provides quarterly reports to the university administration.

Highlands submits formal budgets to the Board of Regents and the New Mexico Department of Finance and Administration every year for approval, and the university completes yearly audits of its finances, all of which are linked from the Finance and Administration web page.

Sources

- 07-26-17 BoR meeting documents
- 07-26-17 BoR meeting documents (page number 123)
- 07-26-17 BoR meeting documents (page number 126)
- 2.2.2.10 NMAC (2017)
- 2016-2017 Mission Accomplishments
- 2016-2017 Technology Report and Improvement Plan
- 2016-2017 Technology Report and Improvement Plan (page number 3)
- AA Budget Prioritization
- Advancement Funds Raised 2015-2017
- Approved Budget Reports - NMHU
- April 28, 2017 BOR Minutes
- April 28, 2017 BOR Minutes (page number 6)
- April 28, 2017 BOR Minutes (page number 9)
- Budget and Planning Committee Meeting Agenda and Documents - NMHU
- Budget Listening Session FY18
- Budget Listening Session FY18 (page number 5)

- Budget Presentation and Priorities March 2, 2017
- Budget Presentation and Priorities March 2, 2017 (page number 7)
- Budget Presentation and Priorities March 2, 2017 (page number 11)
- Budget Process
- Budget Process (page number 8)
- Budget Process (page number 15)
- Budget Process Flow FY19
- Capital Over \$1M - Facilities Policies Procedures 6.6.17
- Capital Projects and State Appropriations
- CFI FY 16 - FY10 - worksheets
- Chronicle 2017 Tuition Rates
- December 2, 2016 BOR Packet
- December 2, 2016 BOR Packet (page number 114)
- DFA Approved Budget FY18
- Faculty Senate Minutes 3-29-17
- Faculty Senate Minutes 3-29-17 (page number 2)
- Faculty Senate Minutes 9-14-16
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- February 3, 2017 BOR Packet
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- Trolley Barn Budgets
- Trolley Barn Schedule

5.B - Core Component 5.B

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

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

Argument

5.B.1. In the HLC's [action letter](#), two items specifically related to the Board of Regents were identified:

1. Board professional development, a self-assessment process, and engagement with the governance and HLC accreditation processes; and
2. annual evidence that the Board understands and follows its fiduciary responsibilities and demonstrates policy-making in the best interest of the university.

All five members of the Board of Regents (BOR) and [selected members of the Foundation Board](#) met for an Association of Governing Board (AGB) training on [Wednesday, December 7, 2016](#) at the Highlands Santa Fe Center. Prior to the training, the board completed a [self-assessment](#). Dr. James Lyons of AGB facilitated the training and addressed [responsibilities of the board](#), [the self-assessment](#), [best practices](#), and the [board/foundation relationship](#).

Highlands University is committed to an ongoing program of board development. Toward that end, we shall schedule one full day of board training from the AGB (or similar national group) at least every three years. A regular board self-assessment will be conducted prior to this training. The Board of Regents have also adopted the AGB statement on governance as part of its [Regents Policy Guide](#).

New regents also receive training by the state as documented in [the training of new regents in February 2015](#) and [September 2017](#), and ongoing training taking place [September 15, 2017](#). The boards in New Mexico founded the [Higher Education Regent Council](#) (HERC), which meets regularly to discuss statewide issues facing New Mexico's universities. The last such meeting [took place in June 2017](#), with the goal of having a "coalition with its purpose to assist regents to understand, enhance and provide the best possible leadership to their member institutions and to communicate and collaborate on issues that are common to all of us."

The Regents have engaged with the HLC accreditation process throughout the past year. At every Board of Regents meeting, the Regents received an update on the HLC accreditation process, including a [midway report](#) and [drafts of the assurance argument](#). One board member attended the annual HLC national meeting in April 2017, and, if at all possible, additional members will attend future HLC meetings. A group from Highlands also attended the annual meeting and briefed the board

on accreditation issues and trends associated with best practices.

A [special meeting of the Board of Regents](#) was held on [September 6, 2017](#) to review and approve the [Assurance Argument](#).

The Board of Regents has demonstrated effective leadership regarding finances, academic quality, and student outcomes. As discussed and linked in 2.C., at every quarterly Board of Regents meeting, the Regents receive extensive packets of campus-critical information, reports from administrators, faculty, staff, and students, and take action on a number of important issues, including approval of the budget, university policies, and construction projects. The president communicates weekly with the Board of Regents, including updates regarding accreditation. His messages to the board are similar to those he sends to the faculty and staff, but also include some confidential information such as legal and sensitive personnel matters as permitted by the state's Open Meetings Act. In addition, the president meets individually with the Board of Regents chairman at least once per month and is in frequent contact with all members via phone.

With specific regards to finances, the Board of Regents chairman and the Board of Regents finance committee chair communicate regularly with the vice-president of finance and administration in person and via the telephone to ensure they are constantly apprised of the financial status of the university. The Board of Regents regularly approves components of the Highlands budget as documented in 5.A.1., including quarterly reports and the annual budget that is presented to the Higher Education Department.

To focus on the most recent examples of essential decision making, the Regents held two meetings, one on [April 21, 2017](#) and another on [April 28, 2017](#), to pass the budget and tuition increases for academic year 2017-2018. The Board of Regents packets from those meetings demonstrate the depth of material reviewed and considered by the regents, including a full presentation on the [budget and tuition situation](#) from our VPFA and explicit comments from the Regents regarding the [potential impact of tuition](#) increases on students. At that same meeting, the Board of Regents met its legal and fiduciary responsibilities by reapproving the [Open Meetings Act](#) and approving the [2017-2018 budget](#). The regents also approved half a dozen other action items related to financial and legal matters, as they do at every meeting.

This wide range of actions and deliberations taken at those two meetings are representative of the care and seriousness with which the Highlands Regents act in the best interest of the institution.

5.B.2. Highlands has strong systems of shared governance that involve all its internal constituencies in the institution's governance:

- The role of the Board of Regents is discussed in 2.C., and involves explicit participation of students in the form of the student regent and participation of the Student Senate president at all Regents meetings. As discussed more fully in 2.C., representatives of the administration, Staff Advisory Senate, and Faculty Senate participate in these meetings, and the [Regents Policy Guide](#) explicitly gives faculty shared governance over academic issues via the Faculty Senate and [the Faculty Handbook](#).
- The Executive Management Team consists of the senior leadership of Highlands and meets semimonthly to discuss issues of importance to the university. The team includes both the chair of the Faculty Senate, the president of the Staff Advisory Senate, the president, vice-presidents, dean of students, director of university relations, and athletic director. Evidence of the last nine months of these meetings is [documented here](#).
- [The Faculty Senate](#) and its subcommittees play an essential role in the governance of the

institution, as defined throughout the [Faculty Handbook](#). The Faculty Senate membership includes representatives from the library, the Associated Students of New Mexico Highlands University (student senate), the Staff Advisory Senate, the Faculty Association, the university president, and the vice-president for academic affairs. Committees of the Faculty Senate regularly meet with other university constituencies. For example, the Academic Affairs Committee membership includes both the registrar and the provost/VPAA, the Finance Committee meets several times a year with the vice-president for finance and administration to review the university budget, the Student Affairs Committee meets with members of student academic support to discuss issues such as student advisement, the Outcomes Assessment Committee membership includes the director of institutional effectiveness and research, and the Faculty Athletic Committee works closely with the coaches and staff in athletics.

- The [Staff Advisory Senate](#) includes representatives from the professional staff, service maintenance, clerical, and technical fields. As per its mission, the Highlands Staff Advisory Senate serves as a source of input regarding issues and decisions of the university as they relate to the staff. The Senate reports to the university president, and the Staff Advisory Senate president serves on the President's Advisory Council (Executive Management Team). In addition, the senate promotes the general well-being of Highlands by assisting the university in achieving its goals.
- The [Associated Students of New Mexico Highlands University](#) includes undergraduate students and one graduate student each representing the College of Arts and Sciences, School of Business Media and Technology, School of Education, and the Facundo Valdez School of Social Work. Elected student representatives serve the campus community in various ways, both formal and informal, and provide ideas and feedback to the administration that incorporate student perspectives.

The faculty and staff of Highlands are unionized in the New Mexico Highlands Faculty and Staff Association. By state law, the association is responsible for working with the Regents and administration regarding the working condition of the faculty and staff via a collective bargaining process. The faculty [Collective Bargaining Agreement](#) has been in place for a decade, and the staff is currently in the process of negotiating its first agreements.

5.B.3. The governance groups in 5.B.2. all regularly review and approve important policies and other documents at Highlands as appropriate to their sphere of influence. Examples include the development of the [HU Vision 2020](#) (see 1.A), [Contingent Faculty Handbook](#) (see 2.B), the [Assessment Handbook](#) (see 4.B), and the [Facilities Management Procedures for Building Renovation and Construction Projects Over \\$1 Million](#) (see 5.A). The dates of approvals are recorded on the front of policies and manuals, allowing interested parties to trace back the discussions to the relevant minutes of each of these bodies.

Other examples of collaborative effort include:

- Any revisions of academic policy involve the Academic Affairs committee and the provost/VPAA, as documented in the [Academic Affairs Committee minutes](#).
- The creation of the Campus Life Initiative, which included a new \$75 student fee, was made only after the Student Senate endorsed the fee, as documented via [the president's presentation to the Student Senate](#), a [Student Senate resolution](#) in support of the fee, and final discussion and approval of the fee by the [Board of Regents](#).
- The recent revision of the [Master Plan](#), which included a [survey of students, faculty, and staff regarding campus needs](#), discussion at the [Staff Senate](#) and [Faculty Senate](#), and final approval by the [Board of Regents](#).

Sources

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- 07-26-17 BoR meeting documents
- 07-26-17 BoR meeting documents (page number 10)
- 09-06-17 BoR meeting documents
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- 2017 Executive Management Team Meetings
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- Academic Affairs Committee Minutes - NMHU
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- April 28, 2017 BOR Minutes
- April 28, 2017 BOR Minutes (page number 5)
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- April 9, 2016 Board of Regents Minutes (page number 6)
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- Capital Over \$1M - Facilities Policies Procedures 6.6.17
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- New Mexico Highlands University Board Self-Study 2016
- New Regent Training September 2017
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- Outcomes Assessment Handbook
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- Regent Tuition Statement
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- Staff Advisory Senate Constitution
- Staff Senate Minutes May 1 2017
- State BOR Training

5.C - Core Component 5.C

The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.

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

Argument

5.C.1 In the HLC's [action letter](#), three areas of non-compliance were identified related to 5.C.:

1. completed integrated planning process;
2. accomplishments attained for the Strategic Plan-HU Vision 2020, as endorsed by all governance groups and approved by the Board of Regents; and
3. sustained processes for strategic plan implementation, implementation of established budget procedures, and sustained accountability reporting.

After the finalization of *HU Vision 2020*, Highlands began an integrated strategic and budgeting planning process. The provost/VPAA and the [Strategic Planning Steering Committee](#) established the [FY17 strategic planning instructions/timeline](#) and [template](#). Using these, all departments and units created and submitted a strategic plan to their supervisors. Each unit clearly identified their strategic goals and linked them to the six university goals presented in the *HU Vision 2020*. After feedback, these plans were approved and uploaded to the strategic plan and budget request web page.

Departments and units then used their strategic plans to make budget requests through the [budget process](#) described in 5.A. As part of an inclusive process consisting of department chairs, unit heads, deans, and vice-presidents, these groups prioritized their area budget requests according to their contribution to the university mission. The Executive Management Team of Highlands met on three separate occasions to review these prioritized budget requests, discussing the potential positive impact these budget requests would have on our six strategic goals. Based on those conversations, the [president prepared and presented his top priorities to the university](#) in an [open forum](#) (recorded and available on [our website](#)), and then presented the final budget to [the Regents for approval](#).

The [senior administrative leadership of the university is responsible](#) for monitoring the implementation of the strategic plans. These goal leaders work with staff and faculty in their areas as well as across the university to accomplish our strategic goals. These leaders have created the [Executive Strategic Plan](#), which details the ways that senior leadership is working to accomplish the strategic goals across the university. These accomplishments are presented in the [2016-2017 Mission Accomplishments](#), a document shared widely throughout the campus community and with the Board of Regents.

This new integrated strategic planning process has been completed through one cycle and is beginning its second. As academic year 2017-2018 begins, departments and units are analyzing their strategic goal accomplishments using a [common template](#). The provost/VPAA is reviewing these accomplishments and providing feedback in the [NM Highlands University Strategic Planning AY 16/17 Executive Summary: Closing the Loop](#). Highlands is committed to sustaining these practices, and we have already launched the [FY19 budget cycle](#), and administrators, departments, and units will continue implement the [Executive Strategic Plan](#) and the [Department and Unit Strategic Plans](#).

5.C.2. As part of the integrated planning process described in 5.C.1. and 5.A., learning outcomes, program reviews, and other evaluations of operations are explicitly factored into the [budget process](#): “Prior to the meetings, the department chair will submit their Budget Requests (form with linkages to strategic plan), their Department Strategic Plan, their Department’s most recent Program Review and Response, and their last two years of Outcomes Assessment Reports. Failure to submit these documents may result in denial of budget requests.” The [budget request template](#) includes a space to record whether or not the learning outcomes have been considered when making the request. During the 2016-2017 budget prioritization at the dean and VP level, these factors were utilized to rank certain requests.

5.C.3. As described in 1.A., Highlands engaged in a broad, inclusive process with both internal and external constituencies to create the *HU Vision 2020*, which includes the six strategic goals that guide university operations.

For the planning process described in 5.C.1., all department and unit strategic plans have been created from the ground up via discussion and input from the faculty and staff in those units and shared with the university community from our strategic planning website.

External constituencies such as our alumni association and our foundation board also reviewed and discussed the HU Vision 2020 (see 1.A.), and they are kept informed of the university’s progress through our president’s [weekly e-mail updates](#).

The president holds regular open forums about the university and the budget process, including a year-end presentation of the budget priorities to the campus. These regular meetings allow faculty, staff, and community members to voice their concerns and questions to the university’s senior administration, who utilize this feedback in the planning process.

5.C.4. The strategic planning and budget process ensures that we operate at our current capacity. By creating a prioritized list of budget expenditures, Highlands can fund those priorities if and when money becomes available, allowing us to deal with possible fluctuations, both positive and negative, in revenue.

The budget process also includes [policies for possible reduction in sources of funding](#):

The faculty, staff, and administration of NMHU recognize that academic budgets can change suddenly for a number of reasons, including reductions in state appropriations and negative enrollment trends.

In such cases, the Budget Office will immediately hold a meeting with the Campus Budget and Planning Committee to decide next steps.

In general, the options will be:

- Not funding or partially funding budget requests from the year's budget process.
- Targeted cuts or freezes to unfilled or retiring positions and lines.
- Targeted cuts or freezes to discretionary spending.
- Imposing across the board reduction of budgets, with possible exceptions for growing units/departments and other key strategic planning initiatives.

The impact of such cuts on the strategic plan should be considered before any cuts are made. Whatever cuts are agreed to by the Campus Budget and Planning Committee will be clearly and openly communicated to the campus community. Departments may be asked to prepare contingency plans based on likely budget scenarios.

The Highlands senior administration works closely with the Board of Regents to monitor funding issues at the state and campus level and is committed to taking the appropriate actions to protect the university's core operations, mission, and strategic goal in the case of adverse budget scenarios.

5.C.5. As part of the process of designing the *HU Vision 2020*, the committee worked explicitly to build a forward-looking strategic plan. A vision statement in the document expresses our commitment to future generations of students, and two of our strategic goals are strategic enrollment management (Goal #2) and technological advancement (Goal #5). Since individual unit strategic plans are aligned to these six university strategic goals, each department and unit are actively engaged in thinking about the emerging trends facing academia. The [Executive Strategic Plan](#) explicitly discusses these ideas, including a full table of emerging trends tied to each strategic goal.

Sources

- 2016-2017 Mission Accomplishments
- April 28, 2017 BOR Minutes
- April 28, 2017 BOR Minutes (page number 9)
- Budget Forum March 2, 2017
- Budget Presentation and Priorities March 2, 2017
- Budget Presentation and Priorities March 2, 2017 (page number 11)
- Budget Process
- Budget Process (page number 11)
- Budget Process (page number 14)
- Budget Template FY18
- Executive Strategic Plan
- Executive Strategic Plan (page number 2)
- Executive Strategic Plan (page number 15)
- Finance and Administration - NMHU
- FY19 Budget Process Email
- NM Highlands University Strategic Planning AY 16 Executive Summary
- President's weekly Messages-2017 - NMHU
- Probation Action Letter
- Steering Committee Membership - NMHU
- Strategic Plan Accomplishments Call
- Strategic Planning Instructions
- Strategic Planning Template
- Strategic Plans and Budget Requests - NMHU
- Unit Strategic Plan Annual Report (Template)

5.D - Core Component 5.D

The institution works systematically to improve its performance.

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

Argument

5.D.1. As demonstrated through this document, Highlands has many systems in place to document performance of its operations.

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Research (OIER) has primary responsibility for ensuring that data relevant to all aspects of the university are publicly available to all constituents. OIER has a full-time director and two full-time institutional researchers. OIER provides a wealth of data on our web site related to [enrollments](#), [race and ethnicity](#), [degrees awarded](#), [graduation rates](#), [College Portrait](#), and other reports related to issues important to the university. These reports are used throughout university planning and discussion of meeting our strategic goals. The OIER also serves as the public repository of the results of academic outcomes assessment.

The Office of Strategic Enrollment Management works closely with OIER to track retention, matriculation, and enrollment data related to our students, creating numerous reports hosted on its web page and the [data book](#) as part of our participation in the HLC Persistence and Completion Academy. The Office of Finance and Administration documents evidence of our budget situation, including [audits](#) and [annual budgets](#).

Highlands also works closely with other universities in the state through the Council of University Presidents to collate data about our higher education system in New Mexico, creating the [Performance Effectiveness Report](#), which contains statewide and university-level data about graduate rates, student satisfaction, and degree production.

5.D.2. Highlands has always been committed to continual improvement and providing the best possible education and opportunity for our students. Although being placed on probation by the HLC has been difficult, we have embraced it as an opportunity to improve and strengthen university operations.

The 2015 assurance visit found Highlands in an administrative transition. Since our new president began in July 2015, we have addressed these difficulties, putting the university on a strong foundation moving forward. In the past two years, Highlands has learned from its operational experience and built strong systems for improving student success and university operations, including:

- The revision of our mission and the creation of the *HU Vision 2020*, which includes specific strategic goals designed to move the university forward and a commitment to this mission in all university decision-making and processes. Our major accomplishments towards the *HU Vision 2020* are documented in the [2016-2017 Mission Accomplishments](#).
- The creation of the Office of Strategic Enrollment Management, which coordinates and oversees retention, persistence, and completion efforts at the university, including the

contracting of Ruffalo Noel Levitz to help us align with national best practices, as documented in 4.C.

- The restructuring of the Office of Advancement, including hiring a new vice-president to lead our fundraising efforts.
- The launch of the Campus Life Initiative, designed to create a more vibrant campus life for Highlands, which has resulted in the Arts @ HU series and the Outdoor Recreation Center.
- Changing personnel in several key positions to provide new leadership dedicated to Highlands' mission, including the provost/VPAA, vice-president of advancement, deans, human resources director, director of recruitment and undergraduate admissions, registrar, director of financial aid, and director of the office of institutional effectiveness and research.
- Increased attention given to customer service and resources at Highlands' centers, as described in 3.C.
- Improving our learning outcomes assessment process by increasing participation to 100 percent for academic departments and including co-curricular programs in assessment, as per 4.B.
- The reorganization of our HLC accreditation structure by committing appropriate personnel and resources to these important issues. The director of HLC accreditation, a tenured faculty member and chair of the Faculty Senate, began shortly after Highlands was placed on probation to organize a campuswide effort to address the probationary concerns and write this Assurance Argument, including:
 - Co-chairing with the president the HLC efforts, including holding semimonthly HLC Steering Committee meetings with a team composed of the president, vice-presidents, dean of students, chair of the Faculty Senate, president of the Staff Senate, and president of the Student Senate.
 - Constructing a website to fully and transparently present the accreditation and probationary efforts to the university community and the general public.
 - Overseeing writing teams to draft each criterion, with more than 40 faculty, staff, administrators, and students involved in the actual writing.
 - Holding monthly forums on the Assurance Argument to discuss and workshop our materials. Fifteen forums were held between October 2016 and October 2017, and all forums were streamed to all campus locations, recorded, and hosted on our website.
 - Leading a community forum (September 5, 2017) and special Board of Regents meeting (September 6, 2017) to solicit feedback on the Assurance Argument before the argument was submitted to the HLC.
 - Meeting regularly with the Board of Regents, Faculty Senate, Student Senate, Highlands' centers, and other campus groups to discuss our progress on the Assurance Argument and our probationary status.
 - Better engaging with the HLC by sending a team to the 2017 HLC Professional Development Week, a team to the HLC Annual Conference, participating in the 2017 HLC Persistence and Completion cohort, hiring a HLC peer reviewer as a consultant, and hosting our HLC liaison on campus in August 2017.

In order to better accomplish our mission and strategic goals, Highlands is committed to [providing the appropriate personnel and fiscal resources](#) to sustain our accreditation efforts moving forward.

Sources

- 2016 PEP Report Council of University Presidents
- 2016-2017 Mission Accomplishments
- Approved Budget Reports - NMHU

- College Portrait - NMHU
- Data Book 8-16-17
- Degrees Awarded
- Enrollment by Ethnicity
- Enrollment by Program
- Graduate and Retention Rates
- Highlands University Audit Reports - NMHU
- HLC Institutionalization

5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary

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

Summary

As a result of the efforts documented throughout this Assurance Argument, Highlands has established a strong foundation to accomplish our mission of serving the people of northern New Mexico and beyond. The evidence presented in Criterion 5, including our improved reserves and CFI, our new budget process, integrated strategic planning, and the efforts of our regents to act in the best interest of the university, demonstrates that Highlands has made substantial progress towards achieving our *Strategic Goal #6: Highlands University will achieve enhanced communication and efficiency*. This goal supports and enhances our other strategic goals and the core of our mission itself.

By building the systems and structures necessary to achieve excellence, and sustaining those structures through appropriate resources and funding, Highlands has resolved the inefficiencies that led us to be placed on probation by the HLC. In the past year, we have rededicated ourselves to our mission. We have strengthened our academic, student support, and administrative structures to achieve our six goals and to fulfill our vision of being “a premier comprehensive university transforming lives and communities now and for generations to come.”

Sources

There are no sources.