

Assurance Argument

New Mexico Highlands University - NM

8/31/2015

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. The mission statement is developed through a process suited to the nature and culture of the institution and is adopted by the governing board.

Like many institutions across the country Highlands has been struggling with developing a clear, broadly supported mission during a period of rapid change in our state, the nation, and higher education. Highlands requires a mission that acknowledges our role as an Hispanic serving institution, while still emphasizing diversity and inclusivity. We require a mission that reflects our significant graduate programs and research productivity, while still remaining true to our history of providing an accessible undergraduate education grounded in the liberal arts. Our mission should highlight our goal of educating students to excel in a rapidly changing, technology-based, international environment, while not losing sight of our commitment to the history and culture of our region. Such a mission has not been easy to craft.

The mission adopted in 2003 was extensive, and was widely regarded as lacking clarity. In 2009, in what in retrospect may have been an over-reaction to these problems, Highlands adopted a new mission statement of only one line:

Education through teaching, research, and service.

The [NMHU Strategic Plan 2009](#) went on to expand that mission through statements of our vision and core values:

The Vision: *New Mexico Highlands University will provide an inspiring multicultural learning environment that promotes excellence, empowerment, transformation, and global understanding.*

The Core Values: *Advancement of knowledge, student success, a diversity of ideas, accessible education, community, individual well-being, sustainable practices, and multiculturalism.*

These statements do indeed provide an accurate description of the purpose and values of Highlands

University, however, the mission statement itself has been criticized as lacking any element that that uniquely applies to Highlands.

The mission and strategic plan adopted in 2009 remain in effect while we proceed with the development of our new strategic plan. That process began in October 2014, and, as for the previous two strategic plans, is designed to engage the NMHU and broader communities in addressing questions of identity, priorities, and direction. This process was developed and coordinated by the Provost and Vice-President of Academic Affairs, Dr. Teresita Aguilar. Dr. Aguilar issued an invitation to the campus community to participate by nominating internal and external representatives to the Strategic Planning Steering Committee. Dr. Aguilar used this input to select a representative, diverse committee as is evidenced by the [Strategic Planning Steering Committee Membership](#).

The Steering Committee adopted an [initial timeline](#) and developed a process to engage a broad group of stakeholders. The process included a large kick-off event and on and off-campus forums to determine draft priorities. Stakeholders were asked to consider what Highlands is, could be, and will be within the next five years. At the time of this writing information gathered at those events has been summarized by the Steering Committee in the [HU Vision 2020 Proposed Priorities](#) draft document. This document is available on the NMHU website for public discussion and comment. While the strategic planning process has been slowed by the committee's desire to allow input by our new president, a [summary report](#) from the committee is under review at the time of this writing. The finalization of a new strategic plan will take place in the fall of 2015.

The Steering Committee agreed that the current mission statement does not adequately reflect the mission of Highlands University. Though the Steering Committee did not develop or propose a new mission statement, [they agreed](#) that our current mission needs to be expanded to more accurately reflect our mission as a public, comprehensive, open enrollment university serving a diverse undergraduate and graduate student population in multiple settings.

1.A.2. The institution's academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.

Fundamental to the Highlands mission, however articulated, is a commitment to providing a university education to historically under-served populations. This goal, the main purpose of establishing Highlands more than 121 years ago, has only gained in importance during the past century and is now recognized not only as a vital need for our state, but for our country as a whole. As evidence of our commitment to this goal, Highlands is dedicated to maintaining an unprecedented level of access through open enrollment at the undergraduate level, extremely low tuition, and the recruitment and support of diverse populations.

Highlands is proud to be an open enrollment institution. At the undergraduate level this means that a prospective student need only demonstrate the attainment of a high school diploma or GED to be enrolled at NMHU ([Undergraduate and Graduate Catalog, pg.11](#)). Testing is used solely for the purpose of placement in support programs and developmental courses, not for admission decisions.

At the graduate level no graduate program at NMHU requires applicants to take the Graduate Record Examination. However, regular admission to graduate programs at NMHU requires a 3.0 undergraduate GPA in the relevant program of study and demonstrated interest and ability in the area of study. Even applicants with undergraduate GPAs below 3.0 can be admitted on a provisional basis, with a recommendation from the department ([Undergraduate and Graduate Catalog, pg.17](#)).

Highlands is dedicated to affordability. Keeping higher education affordable is a priority for our state,

but it is also a major challenge. NMHU is dedicated to improving this situation, and we are proud of our accomplishments. The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) report, *Tuition and Fees in Public Higher Education in the West: 2014-15*, demonstrates that Highlands University has the [fourth lowest undergraduate in-state tuition and fees](#) and the [second lowest graduate in-state tuition and fees](#) of all public, four-year institutions in the Western United States.

These data demonstrate that NMHU has been working for more than a decade to keep fees and tuition extremely low for all students. Even given a necessary reliance in the past few years on modest tuition increases to offset decreases in other sources of funding, Highlands has stayed true to our mission of providing an accessible and affordable university education.

Enrollment Profile

Highlands maintains open access and extreme affordability because we understand these efforts are central to our core mission of recruiting and retaining historically under-served populations. At Highlands, that specifically means low-income, first-generation college students, particularly those from ethnic minority groups. For the past ten years, we have maintained a student body that is consistently 50% Hispanic with an additional 15% from other ethnic minority groups ([Fall End of Term Enrollments](#)). Highlands was one of the first federally designated Hispanic Serving Institutions and was a founding member of Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities ([HACU](#)).

According to 2013 data from the [US Census Bureau](#), there are approximately 54 million Hispanics in the United States, comprising 17% of the population. In [New Mexico](#), Hispanics make up 47% of the population, making them the largest ethnic group in the state. Helping this population earn university degrees is of vital importance to our nation and our state.

Providing Native American students access to a university education is of particular concern in New Mexico. New Mexico has one of the largest Native American populations in the nation, ranking sixth among the states in raw numbers of Native Americans (behind California, Oklahoma, Arizona, Texas, and New York). New Mexico's population was 12% Native American in 2010, ranking us third in the nation behind Alaska and Oklahoma ([The American Indian and Alaska Native Population: 2010, US Census Bureau](#)). There are [22 sovereign Indian nations](#) located at least partially within our geographic borders, including the Navajo Nation, two Apache tribes, and 19 Pueblos.

The Highlands student body has remained at about 7% Native American for the past decade; however, the University is continuing efforts to increase those numbers. Highlands has established agreements with 23 Native American tribes (all 22 from New Mexico and one from Texas) to promote higher education opportunities for Native American students at Highlands through tuition scholarships and student support.

The diversity in our student body is increased by a significant number of international students. In the [spring of 2015](#) the university enrolled 84 international students from 28 countries.

In addition, the following points illustrate our success in recruiting and retaining diverse populations:

- Historically about 20% of our [first-time freshmen students](#) come from families with incomes below federal poverty thresholds.
- Data from the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) suggest that approximately 50% [of first-time freshmen](#) are first-generation college students.
- The percentage of international students in the student body has increased from 1.3% in fall 2000 to [5.9% in the fall of 2014](#).
- The percentage of African American students in the student body has increased from 2.6% in

the fall of 2000 to [6.6% in the fall of 2014](#).

Highlands recognizes our obligation to provide support services tailored to the specific needs of the student populations we serve. These student support services are discussed in section 3.D.1.

In addition to our diverse student body, Highlands is also proud of the diversity evident in our faculty and staff. Twenty-seven percent of our tenured/tenure track faculty and 74% of our staff are Hispanic ([NMHU Factbook](#)). Of the tenure-track faculty for which we have data, 49% are first-generation college students. A few are first-generation high school students. Two of our four deans, our Provost and our President are the first in their families to earn a college degree. Three of the members of the executive leadership team are also Hispanic. Our faculty vividly understands the importance of earning a college degree.

The People Behind the Data: President Sam Minner

My father was a miner, a soldier, and a steelworker and he devoted his life to my mom, me, and my two sisters. My parents were the perfect role models for me. They were people of high integrity and admired by everyone. Although they encouraged me to set high goals, they also taught me to keep gratitude above expectations and that life recipe has served me well over the years. My childhood years were spent fishing, roaming the woods near my home, baseball, and growing up in a community where everyone knew me, cared for me, and made sure to talk to my parents if I was doing something I should not be doing. In other words, it was a perfect childhood. When I told my parents I would be attending university and not going to the steel mill, they did what they always did---they wished me all the best, helped me as they could, and communicated by word and deed that they were behind me all the way. The foundation they established for me added to the wonders I found at university have truly made for a great life. I consider myself an extremely fortunate individual.

It is a very special American tradition that all citizens irrespective of birth circumstances, ethnicity, and or socioeconomic status have a fair chance of achieving what has been called the America Dream. The hope of that dream was engineered into the nation by virtue of the establishment of high-quality public institutions of higher education that were accessible and affordable. Like so many other Americans, my personal and professional successes, my perspective on the special role of our democracy in the world, my appreciation of the aesthetic dimensions of life, and so many of the choices I have made in life have been and continue to be shaped by my experience at university. My experience at an accessible and affordable public institution of higher education was quite literally transformational. Today, our system of higher education and its hope to transform lives is at risk. Too few Americans attend a college and university. Too few who do attend graduate. And, too many who attend and graduate take on crushing debt that significantly limits their life choices. For these reasons, we must be diligent in protecting the traditions of Highlands. High quality. Accessibility. Affordability. Those ingredients helped me, as a first-generation college student, achieve a wonderful life. A life of deep purpose and meaning. A good job. The ability to see the beauty of the diversity of the human condition as well as the common threads across all humankind.

I am a first generation college student. I am lucky to have had the opportunity to attend a university. We simply must provide that opportunity to all who can benefit from it. We do that at Highlands and I am so very proud of that.

Degree Recipient Profile

Enrolling a diverse student body from traditionally under-served populations is only the first step in fulfilling the Highlands mission. We must also ensure that we are supporting those students through to

degree completion. Highlands has experienced increases in the number of [degrees awarded per year](#) almost every year for the last nine years.

Degrees Awarded per Year (Sum/Fall/Spring)

	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15
UG	360	349	297	357	352	360	433	457	467
GR	318	357	333	357	343	407	397	387	432
Total	678	706	630	714	695	767	830	844	899

This success in graduating Highlands students is reflected in the institution's [degrees per enrollment](#), a ratio of the number of degrees awarded in a given year for every 100 students enrolled that same year. This metric is generally considered a measure of the overall productivity of an institution. As can be seen, Highlands does very well on this measure in comparison with our selected peer group (listed at the back of the [Performance Effectiveness Report](#)) and in comparison with the other 4-year institutions in the state.

Measure	Institution	09-10	10-11	11-12	12-13
Total Degrees and Certificates per 100 Student FTE	Highlands	25.0	23.6	25.7	28.3
	Peer Average	20.0	22.9	22.7	23.2
	NM 4-year Institution Average	19.4	19.8	20.9	21.6
Bachelor's Degrees per 100 UG Student FTE	Highlands	19.2	19.0	19.2	22.3
	Peer Average	15.6	16.5	16.9	17.7
	NM 4-year Institution Average	14.4	14.4	14.6	15.6
Graduate Degrees per 100 GR Student FTE	Highlands	35.2	31.6	37.3	39.7
	Peer Average	33.9	38.9	34.6	35.3
	NM 4-year Institution Average	32.1	31.8	36.2	37.7

Almost 3/4 of the 2014-2015 baccalaureate degree recipients were female, 58.3% were Hispanic, and 6.9% were Native American. Among master's degree recipients 48.1% were Hispanic and 4.9% were Native American ([NMHU Degree Recipients, Summer 2014 through Spring 2015](#)).

As one 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. The latest rating (2014) has Highlands at Number 74 in the nation. This ranking is particularly impressive given that it is based upon the raw number of master's degrees awarded to Hispanic students. At 44%, Highlands is 7th in

the nation in the percentage of master's degrees awarded to Hispanic students.

The People Behind the Data: Laurel Carr

[Laurel Carr](#) is a first-generation college student who earned her B.A. in health with minors in chemistry and psychology at New Mexico Highlands University. She is currently a biology graduate student at Highlands and is conducting research to help determine how much impact humans and livestock have on bacteria in the Gallinas River, the primary water supply for Las Vegas. Her research is being funded through a \$6,000 grant from New Mexico Water Resources Research Institute. Laurel plans on attending medical school after earning her M.S.

“Highlands has a very supportive academic environment and the faculty facilitates educational and research opportunities. I’m very grateful to them as well as the New Mexico Water Resources Research Institute for funding my research,” Laurel said.

Academic Programs

Highlands University is organized around one college and three professional schools. The College of Arts and Sciences provides the foundation of a liberal arts education to all undergraduate students, as well as majors programs in 22 areas. The School of Education, School of Social Work and School of Business, Media and Technology expand on that liberal arts foundation by providing professional degrees in areas of interest to our students and importance to our state. As part of its mission to serve the individual student through personal attention, Highlands maintains open enrollment, small classes, and low tuition. The University also reaches out to communities throughout northeastern New Mexico through distance education programs, internet courses, and on-site instruction at centers located in Albuquerque, Farmington, Rio Rancho, Roswell and Santa Fe. The centers operate as extensions of the main campus in partnership with local two-year institutions. As such the degree programs offered at the centers are exactly the same as those on the main campus, and the faculty teaching in those programs serve as members of the university-wide academic departments.

Student Support Services

Highlands has multiple student support programs to advance student academic and social integration. These include:

- Student Support Services (section 3.D.1)
- Accessibility Services
- Native American Student Services
- Academic Support Services
- International Education Center
- Language Learning Center
- Writing Center
- Achieving in Research Math And Science (ARMAS) Center

Among the goals of these programs is to empower and encourage students to build collaborative relationships with faculty, staff and peers. These services are discussed in Criterion 3.D.1 and 3.D.2.

1.A.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.)

Strategic planning, and specifically the use of the strategic plan and mission to guide the budgeting

process was identified as an area in need of improvement in the [2009 HLC Report of a Visit](#). This topic is covered in Criterion 5.C.1

Sources

- 1500 20091030 Continued Accreditation - Team Report
- 2000 to 2014 Enrollments
- 2013-15 Graduate and Undergraduate Catalog
- 2013-15 Graduate and Undergraduate Catalog (page number 11)
- 2013-15 Graduate and Undergraduate Catalog (page number 17)
- Biology Graduate Student Studies Bacteria in Gallinas River
- Council of University Presidents Performance Effectiveness Report 2014
- Degree Productivity at New Mexico Highlands University
- Degrees Awarded Per Year
- Factbook NMHU 2014-2015
- Fall End of Term Enrollments by Level, Ethnicity and Gender
- First-Time Freshmen at NMHU 2000 to 2013
- Graduate Tuition and Fees at Four-Year Institutions in the WICHE Region Table 6
- HACU
- Hispanic Outlook May 2014
- HU Vision 2020 Proposed Priorities April 27 2015
- International Education Center Spring 2015 enrollment data
- New Mexico Tribes and Pueblos
- NMHU Degree Recipients Summer 2014 through Spring 2015
- NMHU Draft Retention Plan 2015
- NMHU Strategic Plan 2009
- NMHU Strategic Plan 2009 (page number 1)
- Quickfacts New Mexico US Census Bureau
- Quickfacts US Census Bureau
- Strategic Plan 2015 Draft Summary Report July 2015
- Strategic Plan 2015 Draft Summary Report July 2015 (page number 3)
- Strategic Planning Committee Membership
- Strategic Planning Timeline Revised Jan-28 2015
- The American Indian and Alaska Native Population- 2010, US Census Bureau
- Undergraduate Tuition and Fees at Four-Year Institutions in the WICHE Region Table 4

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 institution clearly articulates its mission through one or more public documents, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans or institutional priorities.

The 2009 Strategic Plan, including the mission statement, is posted on the New Mexico Highlands University website. The University articulates its mission in the following documents:

- [NMHU Strategic Plan 2009 \(page 1\)](#)
- [Undergraduate and Graduate Catalog](#)
- [Student Handbook](#)
- [Faculty Handbook \(page 1-1\)](#)

These documents also include the statements of vision and core values of the University, as described in section 1.A.1.

The website also shares documents related to the strategic planning process that began in the fall 2014 semester (see section 1.A.1 for a description of these documents).

1.B.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.

As described in section 1.A.1, Highlands' current mission statement, "Education through teaching, research, and service", is widely regarded as a generic statement that does not adequately capture the unique mission of our university. Even so, it does reflect our main priorities. In addition to the mission, vision, and core values, the 2009 Strategic Plan also includes 124 action steps. This is widely agreed to be a weakness of the plan, as it results in a document much more prescriptive than strategic. However, these actions steps do serve to illustrate the priorities of the University and our ideas regarding specific ways to meet those priorities.

1.B.3. The mission document or documents identify the nature, scope and intended constituents of the higher education programs and services the institution provides.

The nature and scope of the services provided by Highlands are clear in the mission statement: Education through teaching, research and service. As a publicly funded state institution our intended constituencies are the students of New Mexico Highlands University and the citizens of the state of New Mexico.

Sources

- 2013-15 Graduate and Undergraduate Catalog
- 2013-15 Graduate and Undergraduate Catalog (page number 11)
- Board of Regents Policy Guide
- Faculty Handbook
- Faculty Handbook (page number 5)
- NMHU Strategic Plan 2009
- NMHU Strategic Plan 2009 (page number 1)

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

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

1C.1 *The institution addresses its role in a multicultural society.*

While our very brief mission statement does not explicitly address diversity, the vision statement specifically references "an inspiring multicultural learning environment" and "global understanding". In addition, the [2009 Strategic Plan](#) lists both "A diversity of ideas" and "multiculturalism" among our core values. As a founding member of HACU it is clear that multiculturalism has long been a key part of the University's mission. A new strategic planning process is underway, and among the [stated priorities](#) outlined for the process are the promotion and enhancement of diversity and multiculturalism.

Throughout this document we will address how we meet these aspects of our vision, core values and priorities in many ways. Among them are:

- The diversity of our student body (see section 1.A.1)
- Specific academic program and courses addressing multiculturalism and global understanding (see section 3.B.4)
- Attention to multiculturalism in our cultural events and co-curricular activities (see section 3.E.1)

1.C.2 The institution's processes and activities reflect attention to human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

Highlands is committed to engaging in conscious, reflective and ongoing reviews of the role played by diversity in our processes and activities. In the spring of 2015 the Provost/VPAA formed the [Provosts' Diversity Council](#) to discuss the explicit role of diversity at New Mexico Highlands and investigate what practices at the University might support or impede the expression of diverse perspectives and behaviors. Over the semester the Council developed a [vision and strategy](#) for the initiative, a [model](#) of the role of diversity initiatives and Highlands, and sponsored the 2nd state-wide [New Mexico Diversity Summit](#). The efforts of the Council will continue in the 2015-2016 academic year.

Throughout this document we give examples of the ways in which the University values human diversity in our support for our diverse student body (section C.3.6), our academic programs and courses (section 3.B.4) and in our cultural events and other co-curricular activities (section 3.E.1).

The People Behind the Data: Tara Trudell

Highlands media arts student [Tara Trudell's](#) documentary narrative film *Poem Home* was selected for screening at the 38th annual American Indian Film Festival. Tara, who is of Sante Sioux and Spanish Mexican heritage, is the daughter of John Trudell, an American Indian activist. As a young child, Tara lived with her family on Alcatraz during the Indians of All Tribes reclamation in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

“With *Poem Home*, I wanted to connect again with the energy of being young and fearless on Alcatraz, where I learned to walk and run,” Trudell said.

“Tara Trudell’s film is very intimate and powerful, with personal remembrances of her early life, including the American Indian activism of the time and the relationship with her stepmother, Tina Manning Trudell,” said Michael Smith, director and founder of the American Indian Film Festival.

Sources

- Diversity Council Retreat April 2015.pdf
- HU Vision 2020 Proposed Priorities April 27 2015
- International Student Services
- Native American Student Services
- Native American Student Services Report
- New Mexico Diversity Summit II Agenda June 2 2015
- New Mexico Tribes and Pueblos
- NMHU Diversity Initiatives Model
- NMHU Diversity Overview & Suggested Areas for Planning
- NMHU Strategic Plan 2009
- Provost's Diversity Council 2014-15.pdf
- Strategic Plan 2015 Draft Summary Report July 2015
- The American Indian and Alaska Native Population- 2010, US Census Bureau
- Trudell Film to Screen at American Indian Film Festival

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 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.

New Mexico Highlands University was established through the [New Mexico State Constitution](#). Our obligation to the public has always been fundamental to our actions, as documented throughout this document.

1.D.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.

As a state-controlled, publicly-funded institution the education of our students is our primary purpose. We have no private investors, parenting organizations, or other supporting interests to answer to.

1.D.3 The institution engages with its identified external constituencies and communities of interest and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

Our relationships with our constituencies have developed over decades and are informed through multiple paths of communication. In many cases we use formal assessments to determine the needs of the organizations and communities we serve and our capacity to meet those needs. In other cases much more informal processes are used. We are not just the faculty, staff, and students of New Mexico Highlands University, we are also members of the groups that we serve. And it is often through those memberships that the needs of our constituents, and our capacity to meet those needs, are explored. In some cases the University has entered into formal partnerships with our constituencies. In other instances our response to a community need is the result of a simple request. Examples of all these processes are presented below.

Formal Partnerships

Given our historical focus on teacher education, NMHU has been a natural home for several initiatives focused on education throughout Northern New Mexico. Perhaps our largest educational outreach program is the [Center for Education & Study of Diverse Populations](#) (CESDP). The primary mission of the CESDP is to assist communities in improving the quality of education for all citizens including, students, families, educators, and community members. The 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 NMHU, CESDP works across New Mexico. Its primary mechanism for meeting its mission is through collaboration with communities and organizations, and this is reflected in the diverse array of partnerships the CESDP has developed. During its 22-year history, CESDP has provided 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 over 9,000 educators, administrators, parents, school board members, policy makers, and state and federal Department of Education personnel.

One example of a CESDP program is the [National Professional Development Program](#) for science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) teachers, based at New Mexico Highlands University. The program provides elementary and secondary STEM teachers in five rural districts an opportunity to learn strategies for effectively meeting the educational needs of English Language Learners while earning a master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction, with an emphasis in ESL. The first cohort of 15 elementary school teachers and 15 secondary school teachers graduated in December of 2013. A second cohort of 30 teachers began their program in spring of 2014 and will graduate in summer of 2017.

The [Northeast Regional Education Cooperative](#) (NREC) was established in 1984 by the New Mexico State Department of Education. NREC is one of nine regional education cooperatives in New Mexico and is located on the campus of New Mexico Highlands University. The cooperative provides training, technology assistance, administration support, grant administration, and other services to the Pecos, Mora, Santa Rosa, Wagon Mound, West Las Vegas, and Las Vegas City school districts.

The [Advanced Placement New Mexico](#) (AP) program, is part of a national nonprofit educational association of colleges, universities and high schools, monitors introductory-level college curricula and then designs courses, materials, and professional development to deliver the curricula in middle schools and high schools. National examinations are administered to measure the knowledge and skills of students who have taken AP courses. The program encourages colleges and universities to grant credit and/or advanced placement to students' representative of their achievement. In cooperation with the Public Education Department, AP New Mexico runs [summer institutes](#) for teachers throughout the state.

The [New Mexico Forest and Watershed Restoration Institute](#) (NMFWRI) is a statewide effort based at New Mexico Highlands University 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 that reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire and restoring ecosystems that suffer from natural fire exclusion. Our sister institutes in Arizona and Colorado were authorized at the same time. NMFWRI is funded by the federal Forest Service and by the New Mexico Legislature, and has a state-wide mandate. 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. Because the institute does not undertake projects alone, an overarching value is collaboration with other groups and government agencies. This collaboration is reflected in their last newsletter, [Forests and Watersheds](#), released during the latest legislative session. The articles in it were written both in-house and by invited collaborators, with an eye to demonstrating the importance of working together across political and property boundaries. The articles cover water and vegetation management, economic development, and finding money for landscape treatments, all issues at the center of NMFWRI's work. 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.

[The Ben Lujan Leadership and Public Policy Institute](#) consists of five different projects all 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 [Northeastern New Mexico Library Group](#) is a partnership of local libraries, all of which collaborate in assessing resources, and ensuring that 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 city librarians meetings. The city library institutions are New Mexico Highlands University (NMHU), Luna Community College (LCC), New Mexico Behavioral Health Institute (NMBHI), Las Vegas City Schools (LVCS), West Las Vegas City Schools (WLVCS), United World College (UWC), Fort Union (FU), and the Carnegie Public Library (CPL). The City Librarians Committee'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.

Dual Credit

NMHU has had a longstanding concurrent enrollment program for high school students. The Dual Credit Program was established in 2007 by Senate Bill 943 and extended to include summer terms in 2008 by Senate Bill 31. The program allows high school students to enroll in college courses at postsecondary institutions (universities, colleges, and community colleges) prior to high school graduation, giving them enrichment opportunities and first-hand experiences with the requirements of college-level work. Dual credit students receive both high school and college credit simultaneously. Tuition and standard fees are waived by NMHU 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 on-line, distance education, advanced placement, or dual credit class prior to their graduation from high school (see Senate Bill 561, 2007). Currently at Highlands all dual credit students are enrolled in regularly scheduled classes on the main campus. The dual credit program is discussed further in sections 3.A.3, 3.C.2 and 4.A.4.

Other Community Needs

In many instances the University specifically 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 & 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.

Currently, Las Vegas' sole operating movie theater is a local drive-in theater that only operates on weekends during the summer. In an attempt to increase the opportunities for students and community members to go to the movies, without having to drive to Santa Fe, the University began sponsoring Cineflix in Ilfeld. Recently released movies are shown two or three times a week in Ilfeld on the big screen, in high definition with BluRay and Surround Sound. These events are free of charge and open to both students and community members.

Finally, as stated in the introduction to this section, we are often aware of community needs because we are members of various community groups. As documented in the [2013-2014 survey of Faculty](#)

[Non-teaching Productivity](#), 72.9% of the faculty who responded to the survey participated in some form of public service (with schools, government, non-profit organizations or businesses). All together, respondents spent a total of 727 days in public service.

The People Behind the Data: Façade Squad

New Mexico Highlands students and staff lend a hand again to paint commercial buildings as part of MainStreet de Las Vegas' ongoing [Façade Squad](#) project. Highlands University student athletes and staff have provided the elbow grease for Façade Squad painting projects dating back to 2009. Participating teams include women's soccer, men and women's cross country, football, women's basketball, and rodeo.

Façade Squad works to revitalize downtown commercial buildings to attract more local customers and visitors. Façade Squad also works to preserve the history and culture of Las Vegas, and build community pride.

This year, Eugenia Leonova, a 26-year-old MBA student from Moscow, wielded a paint brush. She is also creating a website for MainStreet as part of her internship with the nonprofit. "This town has very unique history and the buildings are beautiful, with such an interesting mix of architectural styles," Leonova said. "It's really important to retain them."

Media arts student Andrew Fann also lent a hand on May 25, videotaping all day. Collins said he will produce a professional four-minute video for MainStreet to post on YouTube.

Donnelly Library Book Discussion Series

Donnelly Library's scholar-led reading and discussion programs allow students, faculty, staff, and community 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 spring 2012 Civil War reading group, [Beyond Gettysburg: The Wars Within the War](#); the fall 2013 literature reading group, [Let's Talk About It: Muslim Journeys: Literary Reflections](#); and the spring 2015 biology reading group, [Cancer: History, Research, & Ethics](#). The library also provides public programming such as film screenings and lectures. During the spring and fall of 2013, the library hosted scholar-led film screenings and lectures made possible by the [Bridging Cultures Bookshelf Muslim Journeys grant](#). These programs explored Muslim cultures and were attended by both students and community members with attendance between 16 and 33 attendees. In the fall of 2015 the library will be starting programming on Latino American history and culture made possible by a National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the American Library Association (ALA) [Latino Americans 500 Years of Grant](#) award.

Community Use of University Facilities

New Mexico Highlands University believes that university buildings and other facilities should be made available, under reasonable conditions, to non-university organizations for certain activities. These activities must foster the educational, cultural, recreational, civic, moral, religious, or social development of the community ([Policies and Procedures for Use of Campus Facilities](#)).

These [facilities](#) include:

- Melody, Centennial and Central Parks
- Wilson Sports Complex: (3,000 person capacity) basketball courts, racquetball courts, and

tennis courts

- Perkins Stadium: (3,800 person capacity) football field, track, practice fields
- Sala de Madrid: (250 person capacity) large open space with built-in stage and small atrium area can be set up to accommodate auditorium or banquet-style seating
- Kennedy Lounge: (150 person capacity) large open space can be set up to accommodate auditorium or banquet-style seating
- Natatorium
- Ilfeld Auditorium: (718 person capacity)
- Gene Torres Golf Course

The Wilson Sports Complex is heavily used by students, staff, and community members. Individuals use the basketball court, racquetball courts, and Fitness Center. Wilson Complex is also used by the community for large-scale athletics events such as annual Stu Clark High School Basketball Tournament (approximately 6,000 attendance).

The [HU Wellness Program](#) is housed at the Wellness and Fitness Center, an exercise center in the Wilson Sports Complex open to students, staff, and community members. The HU Wellness Program provides physical assessments and consultations to students, staff, and community members. The assessments include evaluations of flexibility, body fat, muscular strength, muscular endurance, and cardio respiratory endurance. The Wellness Program staff then conduct consultations with participants to review the results of the assessments and to make recommendations regarding individualized exercise programs. Participants can then return to the Wellness Program for additional consultations regarding the effectiveness of their efforts. From [September 2013 to August 2014](#) the program staff provided 446 assessments and 319 consultations. Eighty-five of the assessments and 98 of the consultations were provided for community members. In addition, the program staff made seven presentations as part of their educational outreach efforts.

The NMHU Swimming Pool is unique in Northwestern New Mexico in that it has a deep end, allowing the University to offer courses in lifeguard training and scuba diving. The pool has heavy community usage.

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 in fact is listed in the City Master Plan as a permanent green space. In addition, a local restaurant offers a lunch and dinner menu and complements services and events at the golf course. Other community events are held at the golf course for special holidays such as Easter and the Fourth of July.

Sources

- Advance Placement New Mexico Summer Institutes
- Advanced Placement New Mexico
- Ben Lujan Leadership Institute
- Bridging Cultures Bookshelf Muslim Journeys Final Report 2014 January
- Cancer Reading Group Spring 2015
- Center for the Education and Study of Diverse Populations
- Civil War Reading Group 2012 Spring
- Dr. Robert Bell Fine Art Print Lecture Series Spring 2015
- Dr. Robert Bell Permanent Collection of Art at Kennedy Hall
- Faculty Non-teaching Productivity Report 2013-2014

- Fiesta de la Hispanidad March 27 in Ilfeld
- Forest and Watershed Newsletter 2015
- Gene Torres Golf Course
- Highlands Helps Main Street Paint Historic Buildings
- Music Department Spring 2015 Season of concerts and performances
- Muslim Journeys Literary Reflections Reading Group Fall 2013
- National Professional Development Grant (Federal) Report[1]
- Native American Student Services
- Native American Student Services Report
- New Mexico Constitution
- New Mexico Constitution (page number 50)
- New Mexico Forest and Watershed Restoration Institute
- New Mexico Highlands University Libraries Annual Report 2013-2014
- New Mexico Highlands University Libraries Annual Report 2013-2014 (page number 7)
- New Mexico Tribes and Pueblos
- Northeast Regional Education Cooperative
- Notification of Latino Americans 500 Years of Grant award email 2015 06 11
- POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR USE OF CAMPUS FACILITIES
- Statistics on All Buildings
- The American Indian and Alaska Native Population- 2010, US Census Bureau
- Wellness Center Yearly Report 2013-2014
- Wellness Program

1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary

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

Summary

Highlands holds an important place in the history and future of New Mexico, and attempting to capture the depth and breadth of that place can be a complex and confusing process. Our 2003 and 2009 missions and strategic plans were developed through broadly inclusive, reflective processes, intended to capture these intersecting complexities. The same is true for our new strategic plan, which needs further input from constituencies and Board of Regents approval.

Those inclusive, reflective processes have not resulted in entirely satisfactory language. There is a strong feeling in the Highlands community that we have yet to develop a mission that truly captures the unique properties and purpose of our University. And we seek to develop a strategic plan that can effectively guide us as we build upon that uniqueness, achieve that purpose, and face current and future opportunities and challenges. We are currently working to take what we have learned through our past efforts to develop a plan that will better designed and articulated to meet our vision and needs.

Throughout this section we have presented evidence showing that, even given the perceived deficiencies in the past and current mission statements, Highlands does have a clear understanding of our fundamental purpose; to provide an affordable, accessible, quality university education to historically underserved populations. In addition, the current mission statement does accurately reflect the shared understanding that the roles of teaching, research and service at Highlands are to support and develop the education of our students. Finally, all of these documents and processes have included an understanding of the importance of respect for and attention to human diversity and a multicultural environment to meeting that purpose.

Opportunities for Improvement

In the [Team Report](#) from our 2009 accreditation visit, the team stated that observed that, while the mission statement (which was new at the time) had been widely disseminated, it was still "unevenly reflected in the units' mission statements." The team also reported having heard that "a variety of institutional constituencies expect the University academic administration to play an important role in educating academic units to recognize that student assessment is driven by mission and that continual monitoring of the relationship of the units' assessment to mission is necessary."

These issues have not been adequately addressed since that visit. While the University did develop unit-specific strategic plans that were based upon the mission (see section 5.C) those plans, the University mission, and the University Strategic Plan were never fully utilized as guides for the operations of the University. With the current process underway to develop a new strategic plan, as well as the advent of new leadership at Highlands, the University has an excellent opportunity to improve in this important area.

Sources

- 1500 20091030 Continued Accreditation - Team Report
- 1500 20091030 Continued Accreditation - Team Report (page number 14)

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

Highlands' commitment to integrity and ethics is evidence in multiple documents relevant to its policies and functions. Numerous policies at New Mexico Highlands University that relate to institutional integrity can be found on the University website. These include links to policies appropriate to the governing board (Board of Regents), bargaining unit (tenured/tenure-track) faculty, visiting/adjunct faculty, staff, and students. These policies deal with all aspects of the institution's function, including academics, student life, finances, personnel regulations, and other issues. Policies routinely include the processes, procedures, and protocols necessary for their implementation. Examples include:

- [Board of Regents' Policy Guide](#). This includes policies regarding conflicts of interest, discrimination, and sexual harassment.
- Academic: Includes [Current Collective Bargaining Agreement](#), [Faculty Handbook](#), [Visiting/Adjunct Faculty Handbook \(Draft\)](#), [Student Catalogs \(Undergraduate and Graduate\)](#) [Academic Integrity Policy](#).
- [Communications & Technologies: Includes E-Mail, Media, Data Access](#)
- Facilities, Property & Safety: Includes Parking, Facilities Use, Firearms, Safety Policies
- Financial: Includes Travel, Disbursements, Cash Handling
- Human Resources: Includes [Classified Staff Grievance Procedure](#) (in [Personnel Policies](#)), [Sexual Harassment Policy](#), [Discrimination](#)
- Advisory Staff Senate: Includes [Bylaws](#), [Constitution](#).
- Research: Includes [Intellectual Property](#),
- Student Affairs: Includes [Student Code of Conduct](#), [Student Academic Integrity Policy](#), [Campus Housing](#)
- Athletics: Includes [NCAA Division II regulations](#), [Collective Bargaining Agreement](#), [RMAC regulations](#), Title IX guidelines and compliance, [NMHU volleyball policy](#), [Faculty Athletic Representative/Administrator responsibilities](#), [Athletic Emergency Action Plan](#), [Track Team policies](#), [Men's Basketball Team rules](#), [Football Team policies](#); [Wrestling Team rules](#), [Women's basketball rules](#), [Women's Softball Rules](#), [Strength & Conditioning Policies](#), and [NMHU Baseball Player's Contract](#).

NMHU promotes ethical behavior in faculty, staff, and students. As part of this commitment, faculty and staff undergo a comprehensive process of annual performance evaluation. In addition, there are reappointment reviews for probationary faculty, and comprehensive evaluation processes for tenure and promotion of the bargaining unit faculty. Tenured/tenure-track faculty members are evaluated

using the process defined in [Article 23](#) of the [Collective Bargaining Agreement](#), while the evaluation process for visiting and adjunct faculty is delineated in the (draft) Visiting & Adjunct Faculty Handbook, [pages 7](#) and [17](#) (see section 3.C.3 for a discussion of these processes).

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:

- [Collective Bargaining Agreement Grievance Procedure](#)
- [Student Handbook Grievance Procedure](#)
- [Faculty Handbook Grievance Procedure](#)
- [Visiting & Adjunct Faculty Handbook Grievance Procedure](#) (draft)
- [Classified Employee Grievance Process](#):

While the Advisory Staff Senate is a consultative body intended to provide for the resolution of the concerns of the University's support staff, there are only limited mechanisms--notably the [Grievance Process](#)--in place to address staff concerns.

Student misconduct, complaints, appeals, and grievances are addressed as promptly as possible. If the complaints are not of an academic nature, the Office of Student Affairs and the Faculty Senate Student Affairs Committee handle their disposition, per the policies and procedures spelled out in the requisite section of the NMHU [Student Handbook](#), the [Code of Student Conduct](#). Academic appeals are reviewed by the associate vice president for academic affairs who either makes a decision or forwards the appeal to the Academic Affairs Undergraduate (or Graduate) Subcommittee. After the Committee has made its recommendation, and if the appellant is not satisfied with the recommendation, he or she has the opportunity to appear in person before the Committee to appeal the recommendation. The final decision is made by the vice president of academic affairs, with consideration of the Committee's recommendation. The process is outlined in Section V of the [Faculty Handbook](#).

Sources

- 2013-15 Graduate and Undergraduate Catalog
- Adjunct Visiting Faculty Handbook Draft 2015-2016
- Adjunct Visiting Faculty Handbook Draft 2015-2016 (page number 7)
- Adjunct Visiting Faculty Handbook Draft 2015-2016 (page number 17)
- Associated Students of NMHU Constitution
- Board of Regents Policy Guide
- Collective Bargaining Agreement
- Collective Bargaining Agreement (page number 39)
- Collective Bargaining Agreement (page number 56)
- Emergency Action Plan-Athletics 2012 07 12
- Faculty Athletic Representative -Administrator Responsibilities
- Faculty Handbook
- Faculty Handbook (page number 24)
- Faculty Handbook (page number 27)
- Faculty Handbook (page number 48)
- Information Technology Services Policies
- Men's Basketball Team Rules

- NCAA-Division II Manual--15-16
- New Mexico Highlands Football Program - Mission Statement General Rules Policy
- NMHU Baseball Player Contract
- NMHU Wrestling Team Rules 2015
- Personnel Policies and Procedures
- Personnel Policies and Procedures (page number 7)
- Personnel Policies and Procedures (page number 8)
- Personnel Policies and Procedures (page number 48)
- RMAC Manual 2015-16
- Softball--Bylaws 2015-2016
- Staff Advisory Senate Bylaws
- Staff Advisory Senate Constitution
- Strength-Conditioning Policy
- Student Academic Integrity Policy 1-9-15
- Student Handbook 2014-2015
- Student Handbook 2014-2015 (page number 42)
- Student Handbook 2014-2015 (page number 50)
- Student Handbook 2014-2015 (page number 79)
- Student Handbook 2014-2015 (page number 82)
- Student Handbook 2014-2015 (page number 83)
- Student Handbook 2014-2015 (page number 94)
- Track Team policies 2015-2016
- Volleyball Policies
- Women's Basketball Rules

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

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 portals, a main portal that includes information for current students, the University community and the general public and a separate portal for prospective students.

Information on academic programs, including admission and graduation requirements, program descriptions, and academic policies related to maintenance of good academic standing and program completion is all available through both web portals and through the [Undergraduate and Graduate Catalog](#).

The current [Undergraduate and Graduate Catalog](#) lists the faculty of each department or program. Departmental sections of the NMHU website list faculty and their research specializations. Some of these listings contain links to individual faculty webpages. The NMHU website also provides access to the Faculty & Staff Directory, which provides complete contact information for bargaining unit and full-time visiting and term faculty.

Information on tuition, fees, housing costs, meal plans, scholarships, and other forms of financial aid is available through both web portals, as is the Net Price Calculator as required by the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA). Highlands utilizes the [Net Price Calculator](#) made available to the University through our participation in the Voluntary System of Accountability. Students can check their financial accounts and status online through the myNMHU Self-Service Banner system. 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 of the North Central Association of Colleges and Universities. The status of the University's accreditation is noted on the [website](#). The accreditation status of the university is also stated in the [Undergraduate & Graduate Catalog](#).

Academic programs that are accredited by their respective professional organization/accrediting body also note that information on their program webpages and in the [Undergraduate and Graduate Catalog](#).

Sources

- 2013-15 Graduate and Undergraduate Catalog
- 2013-15 Graduate and Undergraduate Catalog (page number 7)
- Graduate Student Handbook 2014-2017

- Highlands University Accreditations
- Staff Advisory Senate Bylaws
- Staff Advisory Senate Constitution
- Student Handbook 2014-2015
- Student Handbook 2014-2015 (page number 88)
- 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. The governing board's deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.

As a public educational institution established in the New Mexico State Constitution, Highlands University is overseen by its Board of Regents, which consists of five members (Article XII, [Section 11](#) and [Section 13](#) of the [New Mexico Constitution](#)), one of whom is a New Mexico Highlands University student, appointed by the governor of the state of New Mexico. Of the four non-student members of the board, no more than three can be members of the same political party. The New Mexico Higher Education Department provides oversight for all of New Mexico's state-supported post-secondary institutions. The Board of Regents functions in accordance with the Regents' Policy Guide.

All meetings of the Board of Regents (Regents) are governed by the requirements of the New Mexico Open Meetings Law, Section 10-15-1 et. seq. N.M.S.A. In addition, [Section III of the Board of Regents Policy Guide](#) states the following:

"The transaction of business shall be in conformance with the New Mexico Open Meetings Act, Section 10-15-1 et. seq. N.M.S.A."

"Notice to the public of the regular meetings of the Board of Regents will specify the date, time, and place thereof and will state that a copy of the agenda will be available in the University Relations Office and at such other locations chosen by the President of the University, at least twenty-four (24) hours prior to the meeting. Notice will be by mail, facsimile machine, or electronic mail at least ten (10) days prior to the meeting."

2.C.2. The governing board reviews and considers the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies during decision-making deliberations.

As noted above, membership on the Board of Regents represents diverse political opinions and viewpoints—including the viewpoint of students through the membership of the student regent. The open meetings of the Board of Regents are required by law to be open to the public. This ensures a balancing of different constituencies during deliberations and policy formation. Further, open meetings help ensure all interested parties and constituencies are given an opportunity to provide

input in the decision-making process.

Meetings of the Regents, as documented through their [meeting minutes](#), regularly include reports, both written and oral, from a wide variety of institutional constituencies. These include reports from Admissions, the NMHU Foundation, Faculty Senate, Student Senate (Associated Students of New Mexico Highlands University), Staff Advisory Senate, Executive Leadership members and the President. In summary, both internal and external constituencies are considered during the decision-making process.

2.C.3. The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials' ownerships interests, or other external parties when such influence would not be in the best interest of the institution.

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 appearance that may 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 Board of Regents' Code of Conduct ([Policy Guidelines Section VII](#)), which can be accessed through the university website's online documents page.

2.C.4. The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the administration and expects the faculty to oversee academic matters.

Per [Section I](#) of the Regents' Policy Guidelines, "Section 21-3-4 N.M.S.A. provides that New Mexico Highlands University shall be 'controlled and managed' by its Board of Regents and that the board shall constitute a body politic and corporate, and shall have power to sue and be sued, to contract and be contracted with, and the title to all property belonging to the University shall be vested in the board and its successors."

[Section II](#) of the Regents' Policy Guidelines contains the following statement: "In carrying out its responsibilities, the Board of Regents may delegate limited powers to its University President and individuals and groups within the University as far as institutional operations are concerned, but such delegation of authority does not relieve the Board of its ultimate responsibility for the entire institution. The Regents are the final institutional authority for New Mexico Highlands University and reserve to themselves the right to consider and determine, if in the exercise of sound discretion it is deemed necessary, any matter relating to the University."

The faculty play a key role in the administration of the University. [Section IX](#) of the Regents' Policy Guidelines notes that the University's faculty play an essential role in shaping academic policy. 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. In addition, [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" The regents have delegated to the faculty a substantial role in the administration of the University, particularly in the area of academics. Faculty are given the primary role in maintaining and promoting "the intellectual quality and reputation of the institution." The faculty also have the right to review and recommend which students are entitled to degrees awarded by the University.

Sources

- Board of Regents 3-30-2015 Meeting Minutes
- Board of Regents Policy Guide
- Board of Regents Policy Guide (page number 5)
- Board of Regents Policy Guide (page number 7)
- Board of Regents Policy Guide (page number 8)
- Board of Regents Policy Guide (page number 15)
- Board of Regents Policy Guide (page number 22)
- Board of Regents Policy Guide (page number 24)
- Faculty Handbook
- Faculty Handbook (page number 15)
- New Mexico Constitution
- New Mexico Constitution (page number 50)
- New Mexico Constitution (page number 51)

2.D - Core Component 2.D

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

Argument

New Mexico Highlands University is committed as an institution to freedom of expression and academic freedom. That commitment is embodied in a number of documents.

All members of the university community are committed to freedom of expression, exercised responsibly. [Section VI](#) of the Board of Regents' Policy Manual 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 Handbook also defines the right of academic freedom for faculty of NMHU. Academic Freedom is also explicitly incorporated into [Article 15](#) of the Collective Bargaining Agreement. The article states that: "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 draft [Visiting & Adjunct Faculty Handbook](#).

The NMHU 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

- Adjunct Visiting Faculty Handbook Draft 2015-2016
- Board of Regents Policy Guide
- Board of Regents Policy Guide (page number 11)
- Collective Bargaining Agreement

- Collective Bargaining Agreement (page number 26)
- Collective Bargaining Agreement (page number 59)
- Faculty Handbook
- Faculty Handbook (page number 15)
- Faculty Handbook (page number 18)
- Graduate Student Handbook 2014-2017
- Personnel Policies and Procedures
- Research Policy Handbook
- Research Policy Handbook (page number 18)
- Staff Advisory Senate Constitution

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. The institution provides effective oversight and support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff, and students.

As discussed in section 1 of the NMHU [Handbook on Research Policy](#), all research conducted at New Mexico Highlands University is subject to review by appropriate faculty research compliance committees. The Faculty Senate's [Faculty Research Committee](#) (FRC) provides general oversight, formulates research policy, reviews proposals and allocates a limited amount of money 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 NMHU. 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 handbook. Research involving animal subjects is governed by the policies contained in [Section 8](#) of the handbook; proposals for research involving animals must be reviewed and approved by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC).

Both the IRB and the IACUC had originally been constituted as subcommittees of the Faculty Research Committee of the Faculty Senate. However, in 2008, by action of the faculty, both became stand-alone committees to reflect the reality that they report to federal agencies, not the faculty.

The IRB applies for and receives Federal Wide Assurance from the Office of Human Research Protections (part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) every three years. Our last assurance was received in the fall of 2012.

2.E.2. Students are offered guidance in the ethical use of information resources.

The question of how to provide guidance to students and faculty is a complex one. While the University supports ethical research practices, measuring our success in fostering ethical conduct in our faculty and students is much more complex. 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. Ethical violations in these disciplines potentially result in dismissal from the program, and students are informed of this.

Many academic programs have dedicated ethics courses integrated into their programs of study; examples include the graduate programs in Natural Science, Chemistry, and Environmental Science &

Management, which incorporate [INDP 692 Research Ethics and Integrity](#). Students in the course receive information on ethics in science, for example handouts like this one, "[On Being a Scientist: A Guide to Responsible Conduct in Research: Third Edition](#)". In addition, presentations on research ethics have occasionally been incorporated into the program for Faculty Development Week. Every principal investigator who submits a research proposal to the IRB must complete the online training module offered by the Office of Human Research Protections. Copies of the certificate of completion must be submitted to the IRB.

During the 2008-2009 academic year, when our team for the Academy for the Assessment of Student Learning surveyed faculty, staff and students regarding traits desirable in New Mexico Highlands University graduates (see section 4.B.1), many University stakeholders identified civic engagement and social responsibility as requisite characteristics for our graduates. Addressing these traits was determined to be beyond the scope of our initial project, but since then has been an ongoing interest. Once we have fully implemented our integrated system of university-wide assessment, we will undertake the complex question of developing and measuring social responsibility among our students.

2.E.3. New Mexico Highlands University has policies in place to promote integrity and academic honesty.

- *Student Academic Integrity:* The Academic Affairs Committee has developed a comprehensive academic integrity policy. It is detailed in both the current [Student Handbook](#) and [Undergraduate and Graduate Catalog](#), and is referenced in syllabi by many instructors. 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 Office.
- *Research Integrity Policy:* 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:* 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 draft [Adjunct and Visiting Faculty Manual](#) provide enforcement for non-tenured/tenure-track faculty.

Examples of processes used at the New Mexico Highlands University to ensure equitable enforcement of these policies are provided in Criterion 2A.

Sources

- 2013-15 Graduate and Undergraduate Catalog
- 2013-15 Graduate and Undergraduate Catalog (page number 34)
- Adjunct Visiting Faculty Handbook Draft 2015-2016
- Adjunct Visiting Faculty Handbook Draft 2015-2016 (page number 10)
- Collective Bargaining Agreement
- Collective Bargaining Agreement (page number 27)
- Collective Bargaining Agreement (page number 57)
- Faculty Handbook
- Faculty Handbook (page number 26)
- NAS Responsible conduct in Research
- Psychology Graduate Program Behavioral Agreement

- Research Policy Handbook
- Research Policy Handbook (page number 13)
- Research Policy Handbook (page number 119)
- Research Policy Handbook (page number 131)
- Research Policy Handbook (page number 158)
- S15_INDP692_ResEthics_Syllabus
- Student Handbook 2014-2015
- Student Handbook 2014-2015 (page number 34)

2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary

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

Summary

New Mexico Highlands University has effectively:

- Established policies, procedures, and guidelines that buttress the integrity and ethical conduct of its, Board of Regents, administration, tenured/tenure-track and visiting faculty, students, staff, and other stakeholders and constituencies.
- Developed functional and clear grievance procedures allowing faculty, staff, and students to report integrity or ethical violations and resolve disputes.
- Established workable grievance and disciplinary procedures to guide the institution in responding to integrity and ethics violations;
- Publicized and made available documents (via the web) that accurately advertise NMHU admissions requirements and processes, faculty and staff qualifications, educational costs, and control and accreditation status;
- Maintained a Board of Regents appointed by the state governor (as outlined in the state constitution and state statute), that holds public meetings as mandated by statute, and disseminates meeting agendas and minutes in a timely fashion;
- Established policies and procedures adequate to delegate day-to-day management of the institution to the appropriate administrative officials and to the faculty;
- Established policies that clearly demonstrate that the University is committed to freedom of expression and intellectual pursuit; and
- Provided mechanisms that ensure that faculty, students and staff apply knowledge responsibly and ethically.

Opportunities for Improvement

The university has in place the policies and procedures necessary to promote ethical and responsible conduct. Nonetheless there remains a good deal of work yet to do in solidifying and regularizing some of the documents. For example, the [handbook for visiting and adjunct faculty](#) is still in draft form, and needs to be finalized and approved by the Faculty Senate and Board of Regents.

The delivery of information to students and other stakeholders represents another opportunity for improvement. The website makes available information about NMHU's programs, faculty and staff, costs, resources, accreditation status, etc., but can be hard to navigate. Efforts are underway to make the website more easily navigable and user-friendly. The University also needs to do a better job of telling the story of the university, and to raise awareness of the prospects for success of those attending NMHU.

Sources

- Adjunct Visiting Faculty Handbook Draft 2015-2016

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. Courses and programs are current and require levels of performance by students appropriate to the degree or certificate awarded.

As described in the [Course Catalog \(page 31\)](#), 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. In this case, the graduate students in 500-level courses will be required to demonstrate graduate-level proficiency in the work. Courses numbered 600 or above are for graduate students only.

The [Academic Affairs Committee](#) of the Faculty Senate reviews and approves the creation, deletion, and revision of courses or programs to help ensure that courses and programs are current and at the required level of performance appropriate to the degree or certificate awarded. The process for submitting proposals to the committee is described in the [Program Proposal Guidance](#) document.

In addition to overseeing course and program changes, the Academic Affairs Committee also oversees regular program reviews to give faculty the opportunity to evaluate their program's strengths and to ask for assistance with challenges. Program reviews give faculty an opportunity to evaluate the currency of their programs and to formulate plans for the future. The process for program review is described in the [Academic Program Review Procedures 2015](#).

Several programs also have third party accreditation, which helps to ensure that programs meet recognized standards of the profession. Third party accreditation is discussed in more depth in section 4.A.1 of this document.

3.A.2 The institution articulates and differentiates learning goals for undergraduate, graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate, and certificate programs.

Highlands University offers undergraduate education at the associate degree level and at the bachelor's degree level. The university offers graduate education at the master's degree level. The minimum associate degree requirements, minimum bachelor's degree requirements, the requirements for the bachelor of arts curriculum, the minimum degree requirements for the bachelor of science curriculum, and the requirements for a second bachelor's degree are articulated in the [Undergraduate and Graduate Catalog](#). The *associate degree* requirements include fulfillment of the general requirements for graduation; 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 requirements 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 retirement. A *second bachelor's degree* must meet all requirements for that degree.

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

Programs describe their learning objectives when they propose new programs or revise current programs. The section of the Academic Affairs Committee's [Program Proposal Guidance](#) document on proposed changes recommends that proposals for programmatic changes include a section that articulates the academic goal(s) and objective(s) for the program. All academic programs are required to have a plan for assessing the extent to which their students master their learning outcomes. The learning outcomes are also articulated and assessed during the program review process. Core Section 4.B.1 of this document discusses program learning outcomes in greater detail.

3.A.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).

Programs and courses are offered at Highlands University's main campus in Las Vegas, at centers in Albuquerque, Farmington, Rio Rancho, Roswell and Santa Fe, online, and via ITV. 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. Academic programs are required to include students from all centers at which they offer their program, as well as students in their distance education programs in their outcomes assessment activities.

Distance Education

In 2011 Highlands submitted a change request to the Higher Learning Commission to become accredited to expand our distance education programs to 20% or more of total degree programs. An

on-site visit was conducted and the team recommended that [the change be approved](#). The rationale for the recommendation reads in part "Demonstrations reveal that the system and support staff are robust. The use of distance education aligns well with the mission of the institution and serves the remote and underused areas of New Mexico well." [HLC New Mexico Highlands University Distance Ed Report of a Visit \(page 9\)](#).

Currently Highlands offers [six bachelor's and seven master's degree programs](#) that are provided 50% or more through distance education methods. Three programs, the BSN in nursing, the master's in business administration, and the master's in human performance, leisure and sport can all be completed entirely online. The BSN is a degree completion program for licensed nurses who already have earned an associate degree. Highlands has no plans to offer any other undergraduate degree programs completely online in the near future.

As documented in the 2011 report and visit, the IT help desk, Writing Center, library, academic advisers and financial aid advisers are all regularly available through distance delivery methods. The report concluded "A system is in place, works well and it was clear to the visiting team in meetings with staff and faculty that the institution is committed to addressing challenges it faces." [HLC New Mexico Highlands University Distance Ed Report of a Visit \(page 7\)](#).

The number of Highlands students taking online courses has been increasing since the 2011 visit, and [as of spring 2015](#) a full third of our students (1,268) were taking at least one course via the web.

Students Enrolled in Online Courses by Fall Semesters

Fall 2012	Fall 2013	Fall 2014
932	992	1,244

Over 18% (618) of students enrolled in the spring 2015 semester were taking all of their courses via the web. Only a minority of these students (19%) were full-time, degree-seeking.

Online-Only Students by Level, Full/Part-time and Degree/Certificate-Seeking Status

	Full-time	Part-time	Total
Graduate Degree/Certificate Seeking	62	197	259
Undergraduate Degree/Certificate Seeking	55	268	323
Non-degree Seeking	4	29	33

The [Instructional Technology Committee](#) of the Faculty Senate reviews and reports on the effectiveness of distance education activities to the Faculty Senate. This committee also reviews and recommends revisions of the [Distance Education Policy Manual](#) as needed. The latest revisions to the manual were completed during the 2014-2015 academic year and were [approved by the Faculty Senate](#) at the end of the spring semester. Those changes included re-defining Distance Education according to widely accepted standards; specifying the distance education modalities used at NMHU by changing from one general "distance" category to four categories including Enhanced, Hybrid, Online Synchronous and Online Asynchronous; providing detailed information on copyright limitations; and specifically addressing issues regarding student identification.

New Mexico recently joined the [WICHE State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement](#) and Highlands

is in the process of applying to join the state agreement. The Instructional Technology Committee conducted a review of the requirements during the 2014-2015 academic year and provided a list of recommendations to the Faculty Senate in the spring semester. Currently Highlands uses a decentralized system for the administration and oversight of distance education programs. While there is agreement that primary oversight for the development and delivery of these programs should remain in the academic unit, the committee has recommended the identification of an administrative office to oversee these efforts. That recommendation has been sent to the Provost and will be a topic of discussion this fall.

The Centers

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 articulation agreements that are designed to allow students to complete their general education requirements at the community college and, in some cases, begin their major program of study. Students then complete the requirements for the baccalaureate degree at the NMHU Centers. Consortium agreements between Highlands and the community colleges allow students to be concurrently enrolled and receive financial aid for courses taken at both institutions. Three of the five Centers have a full-time Director and all have support staff to assist in the coordination and delivery of programs.

The majority of the programs offered by the Centers are undergraduate and graduate degrees in education, business, and social work. In addition to the full degree programs, most of the Centers serve as distance education sites, and a variety of courses in various disciplines that originate on main campus are offered via ITV or through the Internet.

The Highlands [Rio Rancho Center](#) was established by the NMHU Board of Regents in 1997. The Center is a collaboration with Central New Mexico Community College. The Rio Rancho Center offers bachelor's degrees in business administration, elementary education, special education and social work. Master's degrees in business administration, education, and social work are also offered.

The Highlands [Farmington Center](#) was established by the Board of Regents in 1996. The Farmington Center works in partnership with San Juan College ([articulation agreement with San Juan College](#)) and has an articulation agreement with Diné College ([articulation agreement with Diné College](#)). Diné College is the first tribally controlled college in the United States and is located on the Navajo Reservation in Tsaile, Arizona. In addition to undergraduate and graduate programs in business, education and social work, the Farmington Center also offers undergraduate degrees in psychology and criminal justice studies.

The Highlands [Santa Fe Center](#) was established by the NMHU Board of Regents in partnership with Santa Fe Community College ([articulation agreement with SFCC](#)). The Santa Fe Center offers bachelor's degrees in business administration, special education, elementary education, and early childhood education. It offers master's degrees in business administration and education. In January of 2015 the Highlands Santa Fe Center became part of the [Santa Fe Higher Education Center](#) (HEC) at SFCC. The HEC is a coordinated effort among four universities and SFCC to offer bachelor's and master's degree programs in Santa Fe, which lacks a 4-year institution even though it is the state capital.

The Highlands [Roswell Center](#) works in partnership with Eastern New Mexico University in Roswell. It offers the only accredited master of social work program in southeastern New Mexico. While the Center began by offering both graduate and undergraduate degrees in social work, the undergraduate

program has been discontinued and currently the master in social work program is the only program offered at NMHU Roswell. Courses are offered in the evening and on weekends to accommodate working students.

The Highlands [Albuquerque Center](#) offers both graduate and undergraduate degrees in Social Work.

Highlands also operated a center in Ratón, New Mexico for several years. The Ratón Center differed from the others in that it did not operate in cooperation with a local community college (like the Rio Rancho, Farmington and Santa Fe Centers) or focus on a specific degree program (like the Roswell and Albuquerque Centers). Rather, it was designed to provide limited access to college courses in an area of New Mexico with no institutions of higher education. The Ratón Center provided dual credit courses for local high school students and support for students enrolled in Highlands' on-line degree programs (such as nursing and business). It did not offer any degree completion programs on-site. The Ratón Center was closed in the spring of 2014 due to extremely low enrollments, although various degree programs continued to work with Ratón students who were close to degree completion throughout the 2014-2015 academic year.

In the past Highlands has also identified locations in Española, New Mexico, as a center. These locations were mostly used to provide graduate education degree programs to cohorts of teachers from local school districts. Because of this cohort model enrollments in Española were extremely variable, and for some semesters no students were enrolled there. Española is no longer designated as a center; rather it is reported as a distance education location those years when we have an active cohort.

The [number of students taking courses at our Centers](#) has been increasing; currently about a third of our students take at least one course at a Center either face-to-face or via ITV. Since many of our students take courses at more than one location, or at a physical location and via the web, the headcounts in the following table are duplicated.

Headcounts by Campus

(headcounts are unduplicated for each campus but duplicated across campuses)

	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	Fall 2014
Albuquerque	276	288	321
Farmington	120	146	160
Rio Rancho	387	447	442
Roswell	39	42	41
Santa Fe	158	157	173
Total	980	1080	1137

Dual Credit

The dual credit program at NMHU and its guidelines are discussed further in section 4.A.4 of the document.

Sources

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- Academic Program Review Procedures 2015
- Albuquerque Center
- Articulation Agreement with Dine College
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- Articulation Agreement with Santa Fe Community College
- Distance Education Policy Manual - Final 2010
- Faculty Handbook
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- ITC SARA Recommendations With Faculty Senate Revisions Summer 2015.pdf
- NMHU Distance Education Manual 2015 Faculty Senate
- Rio Rancho Center
- Roswell Center
- Santa Fe Center
- Student Headcount and Credit Hours by Campus Where Classes Are Taken Spring 2015
- 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 general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings, and degree levels of the institution.

The mission of New Mexico Highlands University is, "Education through teaching, research, and service" ([Course Catalog](#)). The University emphasizes a balanced curriculum that promotes undergraduate study that is firmly grounded in the liberal arts and sciences. Our current core curriculum has been in place since 1997. There have only been a few modifications since then to reflect course changes at the discipline level. The general education curriculum includes the 35-hour state-mandated common core (see below), as well as our proficiency requirements (in math, English, and computer proficiency). Our general education curriculum also has some additional requirements, not part of the state-mandated core, illustrating Highlands' commitment to ensure that 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 upper-division literature class, and two credits in physical education. NMHU originally established four goals for our general education courses: (1) mastery of communication skills, (2) mastery of critical thinking skills, (3) basic information and intellectual procedures, and (4) ability to access and manipulate data and other forms of communication. These goals have since been superseded by the adoption of four, university-wide traits described in section 3.B.2.

New Mexico's Higher Education Department (NMHED) 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 ensured that courses meeting common-core requirements at one institution are accepted at all other institutions in the state. The purpose of this initiative was to ensure that students could easily transfer within the state without having to repeat general education core

courses. The [General Education Core Transfer Module](#) specifies the courses that are guaranteed to meet general education requirements at any New Mexico college or university. A link to the General Ed Core Course Transfer Curriculum of the NMHED website is given in the Highlands University [Course Catalog](#). On the NMHED webpage, courses in the state core matrix are listed by institution under each of the five general education areas.

As with the other 4-year 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. Highlands University students are also required to take an additional 5 hours of extended core requirements with 2 hours in physical education and three hours of literature. These requirements can be found in the [Course Catalog](#).

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

3.B.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.

The Academic Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate holds the primary responsibility for the development and assessment of the NMHU core curriculum. As stated in section 3.B.1, the general education requirements were first developed in 1997. In the fall of 2007, that committee reviewed the core curriculum to determine if our institution-specific core requirements placed an undue burden on our students. 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.

After the common core and articulation agreements noted above in 3.B.1 were developed, 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 include Area I: Communication Competencies, Area II: College Algebra Competencies, Liberal Arts Math Competencies, Statistics Competencies, Area III: Laboratory Science Competencies, Area IV: Social and Behavioral Science Competencies, and Area V: Humanities and Fine Arts Competencies.

As described in the [NMHU Assessment Handbook 2014-2015](#), instructors of core curriculum courses are expected to align their learning outcomes with both the New Mexico state-mandated core competencies for the relevant core area and with the university-wide outcomes for our common core.

The below four traits are part of [university-wide assessment](#). These traits are concepts and skills that Highlands University believes all college 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 reflected, as appropriate, on course syllabi for general education requirements.

Attainment of core competencies is assessed yearly as part of our university-wide outcomes assessment process. Assessment of the core curriculum is covered section 4.B

3.B.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.

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. The traits are concepts and skills that we believe any graduate of Highlands University should possess. Academic programs work to ensure those traits are developed in their programs, and faculty work to ensure those traits are covered in their courses. While not required, the faculty in some academic programs have developed matrices to indicate where in the program each trait is introduced, where it is practiced, and where proficiency is expected. Each program is expected to align assessment of the traits along with assessment of the program specific learning outcomes. Additional discussion and examples are in section 4.B.1.

3.B.4 The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity of the world in which students live and work.

The University's vision statement reads "New Mexico Highlands University will provide an inspiring multicultural learning environment that promotes excellence, empowerment, transformation, and global understanding" ([Course Catalog](#)). Three of the Core Values of the university emphasize the University's commitment to human and cultural diversity; the values of diversity of ideas, community, and multiculturalism.

A basic indication of our commitment to multiculturalism is the fact that all undergraduate students 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. These are described below and in the [Course Catalog](#).

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 School of Social Work offers many classes that address 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 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 minor in [Native American/Hispano Cultural Studies](#). The MS in Clinical/Counseling Psychology program requires a course in Multicultural Psychotherapy and Counseling ([PSY 677](#)) and their students are specifically evaluated on their ability to work with clients from diverse ethnic

backgrounds. Other examples of classes that have a special emphasis on human and cultural diversity include [ANTH 274](#) Indian Cultures of North America, [ENGL 318](#) Chicano/a Literature, [HLTH 415](#) Health, Culture & Diversity, [NURS 431](#) Community Health Nursing, [POLS 328](#) Comparative Political Systems, [PSY 477](#) Culture and Mental Illness, [SPAN 330](#) Introduction to Hispanic Literature, and [SOC 429](#) Gender, Culture, and Society.

In addition to the academic programs that address diversity, the university also offers students access to different cultures through campus organizations and events. As described in the [NMHU Chartered Student Clubs and Organizations 2014-2015](#) list, many student organizations such as the International Club, MEChA de NMHU, and the Native American Club help students explore diverse cultures.

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 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.

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

The [Faculty Non-teaching Productivity Report 2013-2014](#) indicates that 83.3% of the respondents to the survey published or presented their work during the 2013-2014 academic year. Faculty members also share their contributions to scholarship on campus at the annual Faculty Research day. The [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, faculty, 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 [Spring 2014](#) report and the [Fall 2014/Spring 2015](#) report, Highlands faculty members are active in publishing, research, and other forms of creative work.

Highlands currently has [94 active grants](#) involving research, scholarship and service totaling over 28 million dollars. As documented in section 5.A, revenue from grants and contracts constitute the second largest source of overall revenue for the University.

Students share their contribution to scholarship and the discovery of knowledge at events like the annual Student Research Day. The oral presentations and poster presentations are described in the [Student Research Day Program 2015](#). Highlands students also present their research at professional conferences. Here are just two examples:

The People Behind the Data: Marcus Garcia and Felicia Archuleta

[Marcus García](#) won first place for his research at the Western Alliance to Expand Student Opportunities annual conference in Tempe, AZ. "My research focused on identifying genes required for spermatogenesis — sperm development — in a mutant mouse strain," García said. "We mapped four genes in the chromosome five region of the DNA that might cause infertility. "We found that three of the genes are likely not causing male infertility, and suspect the fourth gene is responsible for the infertility." Marcus worked in the reproductive biology lab of Carol Linder. "Working in Dr.

Linder's lab gave me valuable research methods and analysis experience. I learned techniques like genotyping, protein isolation and quantification, animal colony maintenance, tissue collection, and sperm analysis.”

[Felicia Archuleta](#), a graduate student in the Natural Resource Management program, presented her research paper, Prescribed Fire: A Proposed Management Tool to Facilitate Black-Tailed Prairie Dog, to scientists from throughout the world at the 22nd International Grassland Congress in Sydney, Australia. “Black-tailed prairie dogs are considered a vital keystone species in grassland ecosystems,” Felicia says. “The goal of my study is to determine how seasonality and frequency of prescribed fire affects Black-tailed prairie dog expansion, a process that is not well understood.” For her study, Felicia mapped and analyzed 18 years of historical controlled fire research within her 316-acre study area. She used remote sensing and geographic information systems technology, along with ground surveys and high-precision global positioning systems, to outline black-tailed prairie dog colonies.

Creative Work

In addition to formal research projects, Highlands students and faculty produce a number of creative works every year. These include concerts and performances by the [music and theater programs](#), and through exhibits of art work. Highlands is proud to be one of the few institutions in the country with an art foundry and the [Iron Tribe](#) conference is held regularly at Highlands and features art exhibits and performance iron art by international and national contemporary iron artists. [David Lobdell](#) was the founding president of the Western Cast Iron Art Alliance and is instrumental in drawing professional artists from around the world to this conference.

The People Behind the Data: Mike Kubista

[Mike Kubista](#) published his war essay in *The Rumpus*, a leading online literary journal. “I had a gut feeling that I needed to record my experiences in Iraq,” said Mike. “Writing enlightened me and helped me process the complexity of my situation as well as my own terrors and inadequacies.” Mike is a decorated two-tour Iraq veteran and English graduate student at Highlands University.

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- Iron Tribe 2015 02 09
- Music Department Spring 2015 Season of concerts and performances
- New Mexico Highlands University Faculty Activities Report Fall 2014 and Spring 2015
- New Mexico Highlands University Faculty Activities Report Spring 2014
- News Releases That Highlight Student and Faculty Research & Recognition
- News Releases That Highlight Student and Faculty Research & Recognition (page number 5)
- NMHU Chartered Student Clubs and Organizations 2014-2015
- Student Presents Research in Sydney
- Student Research Day Program 2015

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 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.

A hallmark of a small university is the opportunity for students to have close interactions with the faculty. Highlands supports this by maintaining a low student to faculty ratio. In the fall of 2014 that ratio was 13 to 1 ([Common Data Set 2014-2015 \(page 25\)](#)). This ratio allows faculty to be very accessible to students and for students to get to know their instructors. Highlands supplements our faculty with full-time, master's-level instructors of entry-level English and math courses. This ensures that all sections of those courses are small (less than 25) allowing for personal instruction.

Continuity of faculty is shown in the number of tenured and tenure-track faculty at the university. The [total number of tenured and tenure-track](#) has remained around 90 for the past six years. Faculty are limited to serving on two Senate Committees in any given year. This ensures that the majority of faculty members are involved in service to the University.

Faculty have oversight of the curriculum through the Academic Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate. The [Faculty Handbook](#) states that the Academic Affairs Committee is responsible for reviewing and recommending approval or disapproval of new or revised majors, minors, core curriculum, and other offerings of courses reflected in the university catalogue. The [Academic Affairs Committee Program Proposal Guidance](#) document states that the discipline/department should be involved with the development of course and program proposals and that faculty within a discipline/department must vote on a program proposal prior to its submission to the respective school or college Dean.

As outlined in the [Faculty Handbook](#), the Faculty holds primary responsibility for the establishment of academic credentials, recommendations for hiring, and criteria for evaluation of faculty members. This issue is also addressed in the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). As described in the agreement, [Assistant Professors](#) shall hold an earned doctorate or terminal degree in their field or related field. Individuals who are "all but dissertation" may be hired with the approval of the program faculty and administration, but completion of the doctorate will be a condition for tenure. In certain disciplines a master's degree appropriate to the discipline will meet the degree requirements. The academic credentials for [Associate Professors](#) and [Professors](#) are also defined in the CBA. Adjunct faculty are appointed by the department chair after consulting with the department faculty who will be most closely associated with the position. As part of that appointment process, department chairs are expected to do a formal review of the academic credentials. Adjunct faculty and other non-tenure track faculty are not required to hold terminal degrees, however any instructor teaching a graduate-level course must have a terminal degree. While faculty have the primary responsibility for these responsibilities, all faculty appointments and evaluations are subject to the review and approval of the administration.

Faculty have the primary responsibility for the assessment of student learning. At Highlands University there are three distinct tasks for the assessment of student learning outcomes and all three involve faculty ([Assessment Handbook 2014-2015 \(Page 3\)](#)). The first assessment task is the assessment of the Core Curriculum and this task is overseen by the [Outcomes Assessment Committee of the Faculty Senate](#). The second assessment task is the Academic Program Assessment. Academic Program Assessment includes Outcomes Assessment overseen by Academic Program Faculty; Program Review overseen by the Academic Affairs Committee and the Office of Graduate Studies; and Program Specific Accreditation overseen by Academic Program Faculty. The third assessment task is the University-Wide Assessment and this task is overseen by the Outcomes Assessment Committee of the Faculty Senate.

During the 2014-2015 academic year, the Outcomes Assessment Committee of the Faculty Senate had a sufficient number of members to carry out the committee's responsibilities ([Faculty Senate Committee's Members 2014-2015 \(page 3\)](#)).

3.C.2 All instructors are appropriately qualified, including those in dual credit, contractual, and consortial programs.

Highlands is not involved in any contractual or consortial programs, so all faculty teaching at the university are hired through the same process and based upon the same qualifications. These are discussed in section 3.C.1. This includes instructors of dual credit students. Currently Highlands does not offer any courses designed solely for dual credit students. Dual credit students are enrolled in regular classes at the main campus, which ensures that they receive the same level of instruction as all other Highlands students.

3.C.3 Instructors are evaluated regularly in accordance with established institutional policies and procedures.

The evaluation of tenured and tenure-track faculty is outlined in [Article 23](#) of the Collective Bargaining Agreement. All tenured and tenure-track faculty are evaluated annually. 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.

Students evaluate all courses through course evaluation surveys made available online through self-service banner at the end of every semester. Students are sent emails like the [Global Evaluation of](#)

[Faculty by Students - Spring 2015 email](#), encouraging them to complete the evaluation. Course evaluations need to be completed by students before they can view their final grades online.

3.C.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.

We are very excited to announce the beginning of the [Center for Teaching Excellence](#) (CTE) at Highlands. This is the first ever center devoted to supporting the professional development of instructors at Highlands. The proposal for the CTE was approved at the [September 24, 2014](#) meeting of the General Faculty and supported by the administration. 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." The university has just hired a full-time [Director for the Center for Teaching Excellence](#) who began in the fall of 2015.

At the beginning of every academic year, before the first week of classes, there is a week-long [Faculty and Staff Professional Development and Orientation Week](#). As can be seen in the fall 2015 schedule there are sessions on a wide variety of topics from advising to teaching strategies to cultural awareness. Sessions this year included sessions on: best practices for responding to and reporting sex offenses by the [HU-Cares](#) director; effective student advisement; governance processes at Highlands; active learning, i-clicker use, and numerous online tools for teaching; grant development; tenure and promotion procedures; and a variety of university resources.

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. In the 2014-2015 academic year two faculty members were awarded \$1,500 each. Erika Derkas, a professor in the sociology program, attending a "Training the Trainers" program at the [Mid-South Peace and Justice Center](#) in Tennessee directed at training grassroots community organizers. Edward Harrington, a professor in the music program, attended a training on the use of Pro Tools, a state-of-the-art set of software tools for composing, recording, editing, and mixing music.

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 professional meetings, though some have elected to use these funds for other resources to support their professional development.

[Article 21](#) of the Collective Bargaining Agreement 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.

Highlands has awarded [17 faculty sabbaticals](#) in the past five years, 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. As examples, Carol Linder, a professor in biology, spent the [fall, 2013 semester at Johns Hopkins University](#). Her research uses genetic mouse models to identify genes and understand the mechanisms required for spermatogenesis; the ultimate goal is to provide insight into human male infertility. She gained experience in a variety of cell-based techniques, including immunofluorescence microscopy,

transient transfections, apoptosis assays, pulse-chase radioisotopic analysis of protein trafficking, transmission electron microscopy (in the microscopy core facility), immunoprecipitation, and analysis of DNA content using flow cytometry. The majority of these techniques can be conducted using equipment already in place at Highlands to enhance her research and laboratory teaching.

3.C.5 Instructors are accessible for student inquiry.

All faculty are required to hold an appropriate number of regularly scheduled office hours, and to be available to students via email and by appointment. For tenured and tenure-track faculty members the [Collective Bargaining Agreement](#) states "Faculty members are required to be available to students by scheduling and honoring office hours and by special appointment when necessary. It is required that a faculty member make herself available five hours per week, over at least three (3) days, during normal working hours. These hours shall be posted on the faculty member's office door and on Banner Web. In extraordinary circumstances, exceptions may be approved by the Dean."

Faculty teaching exclusively online may hold office hours via synchronous chat time online. Students may also contact instructors by email and by telephone.

3.C.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.

Advisors in [Student Academic Support](#) and [Student Support Services](#), as well as staff in offices such as [Financial Aid](#) all receive support for their professional development in the form of webinars, seminars, workshops, training sessions, and conferences.

The [Personnel Policies and Procedures \(page 21\)](#) 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."

Sources

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- Academic Affairs Committee Program Proposal Guidance Fall 2012 (page number 3)
- Academic Support Staff Professional Development for FY 2014-2015
- Assessment Handbook 2014-2015
- Assessment Handbook 2014-2015 (page number 3)
- Center for Teaching Excellence Proposal Final Fall 2014
- Center for Teaching Excellence Proposal Final Fall 2014 (page number 2)
- Collective Bargaining Agreement
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- Common Data Set 2014-2015
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- Search and Screen Process
- Student Support Services Staff Training for FY 2014-2015

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. The institution provides student support services suited to the needs of its student populations.

The Office of Student Support Services and the Office of Academic Support provide advising and additional services to Highlands students. Student Support Services is a federally funded "Trio" program. Trio programs were established by the U.S. Congress to help low-income Americans enter college and graduate. These programs are funded under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, and are designed to help students overcome class, social, academic, and cultural barriers to higher education.

To qualify for the Student Support Services program students must be either 1) a first-generation college student, 2) from a low-income family, or 3) have a documented physical or learning disability.

The program offers the following services:

- Academic Advisement
- Career & Major Exploration
- Study Skill and Student Success Strategies
- Tutoring
- Peer Mentoring
- Supplemental Grant Aid
- Social, Educational and Cultural Enrichment Opportunities
- Financial Aid Assistance
- Assistance for Students with Disabilities

[Student Support Services](#) is an extremely successful program. In the 2014-2015 academic year they served 305 students and exceeded all of their performance goals. Their goal was to have at least 55% of their participants return for the succeeding year and the actual percentage was 81%. At the end of the year 86% of their participants were in good academic standing (the goal was 60%). Perhaps most impressively, at an institution where only 20% or less of first-time freshmen graduate in six years, 24%

of the 2008 first-time freshmen cohort who participated in Student Support Services graduated.

Unfortunately at the time of this writing we have just learned that our Student Support Services program did not receive renewed funding from the Title IX TRIO grant program. We are currently investigating ways to continue offering these services to our students.

The Office of Academic Support offers an array of services with special emphasis on academic advisement. Academic Support advises students who do not qualify for the Student Support Services/TRIO program and the services are open to all Highlands students. The Office of Academic Support organizes new student orientations before the fall and spring semesters and provides outreach to all admitted students encouraging them to attend the orientations. This office coordinates retention efforts such as [Early Attendance](#), [Early Alert](#), and midterm alerts. These programs allow instructors to flag students in Banner who are at risk in their classes. Students who are flagged by the alerts are then contacted by advisors to help get them back on course in their classes. In the [2014-2015 academic year](#) there were 428 students reported to the Office of Academic Support Services through Early Alert and 214 of them were contacted. Improvement on the 50% contact rate is needed.

Both the Office of Academic Support and Student Support Services employ students as peer mentors to help fellow students succeed academically. The [mentor schedule](#) gives examples of the type of workshops peer mentors lead. The [Peer Mentors job description](#) outlines the role of the peer mentors in the Freshman Forum class and how the mentors assist first-year students with the transition to Highlands. This is described further in section 4.C.3.

The [Office of Accessibility Services](#) works with students and programs to arrange for academic accommodations; advises faculty, staff, and management on disability issues, and advocates on issues of concern to students with disabilities. Accessibility Services also advises students on academic, career, and transitional issues and provides referrals where appropriate. The Office of Accessibility Services provides services to students who apply and qualify under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The Office of Accessibility Services ensures that all faculty and students understand university policies regarding accessibility by requiring that the following statement be attached to all course syllabi at Highlands. An email is sent out before the beginning of each semester by the Coordinator of Accessibility Services containing the statement and reminding all faculty of this requirement.

“In accordance with federal law, it is university policy to comply with the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA). If you believe that you have a physical, learning, or psychological disability that requires an academic accommodation, contact the Coordinator of Disability Services by phone at (505) 454-3188 or 454-3252, via e-mail at desquibel@nmhu.edu, or visit Room 108 of the Felix Martinez building on the Las Vegas campus. If you need the document upon which this notice appears in an alternative format, you may also contact the Coordinator of Disability Service.”

Support for Highlands' Native American students is offered through the [Native American Student Services Office](#). The director of the office is a member of the Laguna Pueblo tribe. The office provides academic advising, assistance with financial aid and scholarships, and outreach to schools and communities to provide information about higher education to the Native American citizens of our state. The office also provides support for the Native American Club, a chartered student club for indigenous students.

Highlands supports the physical and emotional health of our students through a partnership with El Centro Family Health Center. Since 1992, [office visits for medical issues](#) are free for students and

students receive a discount on laboratory tests and prescriptions.

In 2012 the Office of Student Affairs expanded the contract with El Centro Family Health Center to provide [mental health services](#) for students. A mental health counselor is available on campus two days a week and at the El Centro offices three days a week. The success of this initiative is demonstrated by the fact that 458 behavioral health appointments were held with Highlands students in FY2015. The overwhelming majority of those appointments were held on the Highlands campus.

In 2010 Highlands expanded services related to violence prevention and response. The Center Advocacy Resources Education Support ([HU-CARES](#)) program provides a web of collaborative services and support to students who are victim/survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking and suicide prevention. Services include counseling, advocacy, and connect with community service providers. HU-CARES also provides [educational outreach](#) and prevention, and coordinates trainings for students, faculty, and staff.

3.D.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.

Highlands University provides for learning support for students through several offices including the Writing Center, the Language Learning Center, tutoring services through Student Support Services, and ARMAS.

Assistance with writing is provided by the [Writing Center](#) which helps students with all stages of the writing process. The Writing Center states in its [mission statement](#) that it "welcomes undergraduate students in all disciplines who want guidance with papers in any field."

For language classes, the University has the [Language Learning Center](#) provide supplementary instructional support to students taking classes in Spanish and American Sign Language (ASL), the two languages regularly offered at Highlands University.

Academic Support Services provides tutoring in person and online for several courses. The tutoring schedules for [Fall 2014](#) and [Spring 2015](#) show that tutors provide assistance with a range of classes in the subject areas of math, business, physics, computer science, psychology, biology, and chemistry.

The ARMAS (Achieving in Research, Math, and Science) Center provides support for Highlands STEM students. [Student support](#) provided by ARMAS includes supplemental instruction in STEM gateway courses, academic coaching, math tutoring, textbook lending, STEM internships and research fellowship opportunities, and on-campus, academically-engaging student employment.

Highlands University has processes for directing entering students into courses for which the students are adequately prepared. First-time freshman are placed in English and math classes based on placement scores from the ACT or SAT exams ([Academic Support Policies and Procedures \(page 4\)](#)). Students who have not taken the ACT or SAT take the COMPASS Test to be placed into the appropriate Math and English classes ([Academic Support Policies and Procedures \(page 6\)](#)). In addition to placement scores staff advisors for new freshmen are directed to take into account the student's background, characteristics, and current circumstances while advising them.

Students are given the opportunity to test out of the computer science proficiency requirement by taking the Computer Science Proficiency Exam (CSPE) ([Academic Support Policies and Procedures](#)

([page 2](#)). Students are also given the opportunity to test out of the language proficiency requirement. The [Spanish Test Out Procedure](#) describes the process for students to test out of the Spanish classes.

Students who are undeclared 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 ([Academic Support Policies and Procedures \(page 6\)](#)). 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.

The [Career Services Center](#) supports the mission and goals of the University by assisting students and graduates to explore and pursue meaningful internship experiences and careers related to their academic studies. Career Services posts internship and career opportunities, gives class presentations and workshops, offers resume writing assistance and interviewing preparation, and hosts two career fairs annually.

3.D.3 The institution provides academic advising suited to its programs and the needs of its students.

Highlands recognizes the crucial role of accurate and timely advisement to ensure students are on track to attain their degrees. That is why in the fall of 2010 we adopted the Degree Works (called Degree Audit here at Highlands) advisement platform. 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, advisors, and staff. The system allows for the development of a clear four-year plan for graduation as part of the Planner feature. Students that are undecided can be advised using the “What If” feature, which allows for exploration of all content areas. [Close to three-quarters](#) (72%) of our currently enrolled, degree-seeking students have at least one advising note in their Degree Audit file and close to half (47%) have had a note added during the 2014-2015 academic year. This is an improvement from the 2013-2014 academic year when those percentages were 50% and 33% respectively. Those increases are reflected in every class of degree-seeking students.

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 advisors 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 ([Academic Support Policies and Procedures \(page 4\)](#)).

When a student declares a major, the student is automatically assigned a “default faculty advisor” in the primary advisor 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 advisor) to generate a list of all students who have declared that major who have not yet been assigned to another faculty advisor, and to access contact information and academic transcripts for those students.

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 advisors. If the program wishes to change the primary advisor, the administrative assistant in the department can make that change in Banner and in Degree Audit.

While each student is assigned a primary advisor, Banner actually allows for multiple advisors to be identified for each student. This is extremely useful, since often student advisement is offered by more than one faculty or staff member (such as a minor advisor, a staff advisor from Student Support Services, or a center director). Programs can assign multiple advisors to students, and any faculty member can assign him or herself as an advisor if the student gives access. Degree Audit will indicate the primary advisor.

The details of the advisement system may 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 advisors, 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 are expected to engage in advising as part of their workload. This expectation is noted under the role of "teaching and advising."

In the spring term of 2014, the faculty supported a proposal brought forward by the administration to change the bachelor's degree from 128 credit hours to a minimum of 120 credit hours. This policy was approved by the Board of Regents and implemented in the Fall of 2014. Consequently degree plans, maps and advising needed to be modified to accommodate this change.

3.D.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).

The [Information Technology Services \(ITS\)](#) department provides the information infrastructure that supports the university's administration, staff and students. The [2015 Technology Resources and Improvement Plan](#) outlines the technology resources currently available at the university and the department's plans for improving these services. This is discussed further in section 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. The [Society of American Foresters' Committee on Accreditation](#) noted in their 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 programs. The [Music Department Spring 2015 Season of concerts and performances](#) shows an active schedule of public performances in Kennedy Lounge, Ilfeld Auditorium, and the Student Union Building. Ilfeld Auditorium is a versatile performance space with a seating capacity of over 700 as seen in the [Ilfeld Auditorium Technical Information](#) document. [Ilfeld Auditorium 2014 Calendar of Events](#)

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. The Ray Drew Gallery located in the Thomas C. Donnelly Library is used for Bachelor of Fine Arts shows at the end of every spring semester. During the spring 2015 semester, there were three

student shows ([Ray Drew Gallery 2015 Spring Calendar](#)). Exhibit space is available in Burriss Hall, the building that houses the Fine Arts program. Kennedy Hall houses the Dr. Robert Bell Collection as well as seasonal exhibitions, and the Dr. George Talbot Print Study Room.

Several programs have developed strong 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. The program maintains a close working relationship with the Las Vegas Medical Center (the state psychiatric hospital). The program also works with the Las Vegas City Schools, Somos Familia, the San Miguel/Mora/Guadalupe Community Mental Health Center, and the TriCounty Family Justice Center in providing practicum placements for its students ([Psychology Accreditation Self Study Report, page 2](#)). The Counseling Program in the School of Education also requires practicums of its students and provides a list of practicum / internship agency sites in the [Counseling Program Student Handbook \(page 25\)](#). The [Full Agency Partner List for the School of Social Work 2015](#) gives the names of the current agencies that the School of Social Work contracts with for field practicum opportunities for BSW and MSW students. This list is organized by campus.

The School of Education has strong relationships with school districts throughout Northern and Central New Mexico to provide in-school experiences for their students. One example is the [Professional Development School](#) (PDS) program, a literacy education partnership with several schools from the Las Vegas Schools District, Rio Rancho Schools District, and Albuquerque Schools District that has been in place since 2010. Two of the required reading courses in the teacher education curriculum are taught by Highlands faculty in the schools, and students complete a 2-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.

Students in the Department of Exercise and Sport Science can complete practicum placements at the [Wellness Center](#), and Media Arts students gain hands-on experience through the Program for Interactive Cultural Technology (see sections 1.D.3 and 3.E.1 respectively for more on these programs).

The New Mexico Highlands University Libraries support teaching, research, and community activities of New Mexico Highlands University. Faculty input is valued for collection development and library material and 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 1-credit library research classes every semester. Donnelly Library at the main campus in Las Vegas is open 80.5 hours per week during the semesters. Donnelly Library has over 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 chat at the Donnelly Library's reference desk by librarians with MLIS 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 staffed with full time library associates. 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, 33 online databases, 38,565 electronic journals, and 207,506 electronic books are 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 Highlands patrons to borrow items directly from other participating academic libraries. ([New Mexico Highlands University Libraries Annual Report 2013-2014](#))

3.D.5 The institution provides to students guidance in the effective use of research and information resources.

Librarians provide instruction to individual classes upon the request of instructors. According to the [2013-2014 Library Annual report](#), Donnelly librarians gave 56 instructional sessions to 669 students. Library instruction is provided in person, online, and via ITV. The library regularly offers two classes LIB100: Library Research and LIB400/500 Advanced Library Research. The [Library Research course](#) familiarizes students with academic library resources and prepares them in the research process. The Advanced Library Research course facilitates students' use of academic library resources for the purpose of discipline-specific research.

The required general education class English 112: Freshman Composition II introduces undergraduates to the effective use of information. The [course description](#) states that the class is an "introduction to the analysis and interpretation of textual sources and the writing of documented papers, emphasizing use of secondary sources, bibliography, organization of material, and effective presentation of research findings."

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- New Mexico Highlands University Libraries Annual Report 2013-2014 (page number 31)
- New Mexico Highlands University Libraries Annual Report 2013-2014 (page number 44)
- Peer Mentors description
- Professional Development Schools
- Psychology Accreditation Self Study Report.pdf
- Psychology Accreditation Self Study Report.pdf (page number 21)
- Questions and Answers on Title IX and Sexual Violence
- Ray Drew Gallery 2015 Spring Calendar
- Society of American Foresters COA Action Final Acc NMHU 2013
- Society of American Foresters COA Action Final Acc NMHU 2013 (page number 6)
- Spanish Test Out Procedure
- Student Health Center
- Student Support Services Report Summer 2015
- Tutor Schedule Fall 2014
- Tutor Schedule Spring 2015
- Wellness Center Yearly Report 2013-2014
- Writing Center About Us
- Writing Center Mission Statement

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 Co-curricular programs are suited to the institution's mission and contribute to the educational experience of its students.

Highland's 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 university's supports over fifty [chartered student clubs and organizations](#). The groups include social clubs, religious clubs, academic associations, athletic clubs, professional organizations, and honor societies. The clubs and organizations offer students a means of building community, developing leadership skills, and engaging with different subjects.

The student government, the Associated Students of New Mexico Highlands University, involves students with the governance of the university and helps student senators to develop their leadership skills.

In addition to student organizations, other campus groups provide students with ways of enhancing their education. For example, the New Mexico Highlands University chapter of Sigma Xi: The Scientific Research Society has [30 active members](#) who organize activities like public [science cafes](#), [science trivia games](#), [science fairs](#), and [lectures](#) which provide the campus with ways of learning more about scientific research outside of the formal classroom setting.

Students can also learn about faculty research outside of the classroom through lecture series such as the [Women's Studies Brown Bag](#) program. On Fridays at noon throughout the spring and fall semesters, students can hear faculty from many disciplines present on their publications and ongoing research. These brown bag programs also give a space where students can ask faculty questions about their fields in an informal setting.

In addition to the student support services discussed in section 3.D.2, the ARMAS (Achieving in Research, Math, and Science) program provides students with opportunities to become more involved with the STEM disciplines outside of the classroom. The opportunities include [internships](#) that allow students to work with local area 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 who are early in their academic careers to work with a faculty member in their research laboratories; a [formal faculty/student mentoring program](#); and [student employment](#) at the ARMAS Center which engages students further in their academic work.

New Mexico Highlands University sponsors 12 athletic programs who compete at the NCAA Division II level; five for men and seven for women. In addition, NMHU has a club Rugby team that competes regionally and nationally. These sports provide NMHU students with many opportunities to excel in classroom, community, and in the athletic arena. As a member of the Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference (RMAC), NMHU student athletes compete against 16 other conference schools located in Colorado, Nebraska, New Mexico, South Dakota, and Utah. Besides opportunities for varsity and club sports, NMHU offers an intramural program and physical activity courses through its general physical education curriculum. In fact, NMHU requires two credits of Physical Education in its extended core curriculum. Participation in these many physical activities provide the opportunity for NMHU students to be mentally and physically active, fit, and healthy for life.

Several of the co-curricular opportunities that are made available to students are also open to the public which helps the university build ties to the community and to provide the community a service. These are covered in section 1.D of this report.

Cultural Activities

As “Northern New Mexico’s University” and the only four-year institution of higher education in the northeast quadrant of the state, Highlands plays a unique role in supporting cultural activities in the region. The university’s faculty, students, and staff work in collaboration with community organizations to provide a wide variety of cultural activities. A few of these are highlighted below.

Musical and Theatrical Performances

The music program's concerts and performances are a valued cultural experience in the region and give music students an on-campus place to perform outside of the classroom. Highlands sponsors a number of groups that offer all students (and in many cases, staff and community members) opportunities to engage in musical performances. These include Concert Choir, Madrigal Choir (El Coro de la Tierra Alta), HU Singers, Pep Band, Mariachi (Vaqueros de la Sierra) and Jazz Ensemble. The Jazz Ensemble, for example, features instrumental students, local musicians, and incorporates vocal students as well. The music program sponsored nine performances in the [spring 2015 semester](#) alone.

The music program has a long-standing relationship with the Santa Fe Symphony and has worked with such renowned orchestra conductors as Catherine Sailer and Franz Vote. Catherine Sailer conducted the symphony and choirs when during a production of Handel's Messiah and Franz Vote was part of a major Bach festival that featured choirs, vocal students, instrumentalists and community members. The Music Department is planning a Mozart Fest with Maestro Vote and the Santa Fe Bach Chorale collaborating with the NMHU choirs for Spring 2016 where we will perform in Ilfeld, and also in the Lensic in Santa Fe.

The music and theater programs staged the full musical Grease in 2014 with 1400 audience members, and Nightmare Before Christmas with life-sized puppets in fall 2014. They also presented a series of pieces combining several songs from different musicals including Chicago, Wicked, Cabaret, Into The Woods, Working and Closer Than Ever, incorporating dance and a central theme. During this time theater students were trained in set and lighting design, and stage management. In the spring of 2016 they will be producing the full musical of Into The Woods.

The theater program also started the "Zero Theatre" NMHU club where interested students can put on full productions of plays with guidance and support. Some of the plays put on include "Bug" by Tracy Letts, "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare Abridged!" by the Reduced Shakespeare

Company, and "Rumors" by Neil Simon. The Performing Arts Club is also engaged in community outreach, performing for the Mayor's Annual Ball on several occasions and for events at NMHU.

The New Mexico Highlands University Fiesta de la Hispanidad celebrated its 21st annual performance in March of 2016. This event, held at Ilfeld Auditorium, brings together performers from the University, the community, and across the state in a celebration of Hispanic culture. The event is extremely popular.

New Mexico Highlands University has also signed an MOU with the National Hispanic Cultural Center in Albuquerque in order to expand the reach of cultural events and programs from the national center to the main campus.

Art Shows and Events

Donnelly Library has a donated art collection of more than 1,775 pieces, some of which is loaned to faculty and departments. Highlights of the library's art collection include an extensive fine art print collection, totaling more than 1,500 prints, representing the history of Western printmaking. The collection includes 16th century Durer woodcuts, and works by Goya, Whistler, Picasso, Matisse, and Chagall. The art collection also includes work by artists central to Highlands' history, including Ray Drew (for whom the library's Ray Drew Gallery is named) and Elmer Schooley.

Members of the public have the opportunity to view and learn about these collections, as well as other works, by visiting the three Galleries at Highlands University: the Ray Drew Gallery, the Burriss Hall Gallery, and the Kennedy Hall Gallery. The [Ray Drew Gallery](#) exhibits include art from the permanent collection, student work, and work by regional artists. The Kennedy Hall Gallery is the home of the [Dr. Robert Bell Permanent Collection of Art](#). The donor of this collection, Dr. Bell, gives lectures which include the viewing and discussion of original works of art. In the [spring 2015 semester](#), Dr Bell gave lectures on the history of Japanese printmaking and on several important artists such as William Blake, Kathe Kollwitz and Eugene Delacroix.

Hands-on experience is provided by clinical practica (covered in section 3.D.4 of this report), field experiences and internships. In addition, hands-on experience is provided through such programs as the Program for Interactive Cultural Technology (PICT) in the Media Arts Department is focused on getting students into communities, working on projects of importance to community organizations. Many PICT projects and students are funded through agreements with the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs and the Americorps program. A [recent example](#) is an interactive exhibit that allows visitors to experience Pueblo life circa AD 1300 at the Coronado Historic Site in Bernalillo, New Mexico.

The People Behind the Data: Monica García

“The media arts students’ innovative work makes this historic site more accessible to the public through interactive elements like the Build Your Own Pueblo touch screen and an engaging mobile app of exhibit information,” said Ethan Ortega, historian and archaeologist for Coronado Historic Site. “The graphics and design they developed for the exhibit are stunning, drawing you into the story of what it was like to live in the Kuaua village in ancient times. The video blends beautiful imagery, historical photographs, and a well-written script to capture the mystery of the site.”

[Monica García](#) is in the PICT program and is a member of the Picuris Pueblo. “As a member of the video team, I was able to identify areas at the Taos Pueblo where filming wouldn’t violate the sacred areas, which was rewarding,” García said.

3.E.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.

Through classes and internships students are involved with the advancement of knowledge, which they can present at events like the [Student Research Day](#). Student success is promoted through a variety of services such as the [ARMAS](#) program and the student support services described in Core Component 3.D. Students are exposed to a diversity of ideas in classes such as the ones described in Core Component 3.B.4 and through co-curricular activities described above. Education at Highlands is made accessible through affordable tuition and through the student support services described in Core Component 3.D that support students in the education. Community is built at Highlands in academic programs and through campus activities. Individual well-being of students is aided by programs like [HU Cares](#) and the [Wellness Program](#) and facilities such as the [Fitness Center](#) and the [Natatorium](#). Sustainable practices are valued. Multiculturalism can be seen both in our student body, campus events, campus services, and in the curriculum.

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- Associated Students of NMHU Constitution
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- Dr. Robert Bell Permanent Collection of Art at Kennedy Hall
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- Galleries at Highlands University Rack Card
- HU Cares
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- Student Research Day Program 2015
- Wellness Program
- Women's Studies Brown Bag Schedule 2012-2015

3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary

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

Summary

New Mexico Highlands University provides high quality education to all of its students. Regular program review by the Academic Affairs Committee ensures that programs are current and at the required level of performance. 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. Several programs also have third party accreditation, which helps to ensure that the courses and programs are current and at the required levels of performance by students appropriate to the degree or certificate awarded.

Highlands's general education program is appropriate to its mission, educational offerings, and degree level. Programs and courses offered at the university recognize the human and cultural diversity of the world. Students and faculty contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge and share their research through presentations and publications and their creative work through exhibits and performances.

To support effective, high-quality programs and student services, Highlands has a sufficient number of qualified faculty who are regularly evaluated. Faculty and staff are supported in their professional development. Highlands University provides support for student learning and effective teaching through the Student Support Services program, the Office of Academic Support, the Writing Center, the Language Learning Center, the ARMAS program, and the Career Services Center. Students are provided with appropriate academic advisement. The university has the necessary information infrastructure, scientific laboratories, performance spaces, exhibit spaces, clinical practice sites, and libraries to support effective teaching and learning.

Co-curricular programs at Highlands University are suited to the institution's mission and contribute to the educational experience of its students. Students have the opportunity to enhance their educations through clubs and organizations, student government, and campus academic and cultural programs.

Opportunities for Improvement

Perhaps our greatest opportunities for improvement in this area are in relationship to our distance education programs and our Centers. In the process of applying to the HLC for approval to offer our programs via distance education we learned a great deal about those programs and engaged in a university-wide effort to ensure that all students could access services online, including admissions, registration, financial aid, Donnelly Library, the bookstore, career services, the Writing Lab, and support from Educational Outreach Services and Information Technology Services. With the adoption of Degree Audit comprehensive advising can occur online, and communication between advisors increased, regardless of where that advisor was located.

But there is still much to be done. Many of our students take courses at multiple sites and through multiple modalities and the University needs to agree upon a standardized method to track these enrollments over time. Although our outcomes assessment system was specifically developed to allow

for the assessment of learning outcomes in students at our Centers and in our distance education programs we have not yet instituted a process for producing and reviewing those data on a regular basis. As noted by the Instructional Technology Committee, Highlands needs to agree upon an appropriate administrative home for our distance education programs to allow for effective oversight. The new Center for Teaching Excellence must be developed in such a way as to provide support for effective teaching among the faculty at the Centers and for faculty teaching online.

The University's long-range goals for expansion of these programs are being discussed. What criteria should be used to determine which additional degree completion programs (for undergraduate students) should be offered at the Centers? What graduate and professional programs are in demand at our Center locations? What is the current capacity (facilities, faculty and staff) for expansion at the Centers? How should needs assessments be conducted to answer these questions?

The Centers and distance education programs are central to the ability of Highlands to meet the educational needs of our dispersed, largely rural service area. The success and growth of these programs is testimony to that fact. Those programs are also central to the overall health of the University, in addition to the need to increase enrollments and engagement on the main campus where the majority of our faculty and staff are based. Even with our progress, the opportunities and challenges in this area are significant, and will remain a major focus on University planning in the coming years.

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. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews.

All academic units at NMHU participate in regular program review. The Academic Affairs Committee (AAC) of the Faculty Senate oversees this cyclical process and notifies units of their review ([Program Review Schedule- AAC](#)). The AAC is comprised of representative faculty from the university departments and schools. The program review process was updated by the AAC two years ago and a new program review manual was created ([AAC Program Review Manual](#)). Previously, undergraduate program review was conducted by the AAC while graduate program review was conducted by the Council of Graduate Coordinators. The former process was redundant and separated each unit's programs into undergraduate and graduate components. The purpose of this update was to consolidate the undergraduate and graduate program review processes and provide more meaningful information to the unit. In 2013-2014, two units went through this new internal review process: English and Forestry. Following this review, the AAC met and revised the manual to its current version and continues to consider modifications needed to strengthen the review process.

Generally, programs are reviewed every five years. For academic programs holding accreditation from external organizations, program reviews are scheduled in parallel with and as a part of the accreditation process. Faculty members conduct this review according to the guidelines in the manual. This regular program review provides each academic program with an opportunity to evaluate its strengths and challenges. Additionally, it is a process that provides a vehicle for programs to discuss future plans for building upon successes and addressing challenges. Specifically, units are asked to evaluate the following:

- Mission of the unit and how it relates to the mission of NMHU
- 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 and NMHU
- Assessment of student learning outcomes
- Future direction of the program

Once the program review is submitted to the AAC, a subcommittee of the AAC meets with the program chair and dean to discuss the program and clarify elements and issues of the program. Following this meeting, the AAC subcommittee prepares a written evaluation with recommendations to the Vice President of Academic Affairs (VPAA) and dean. If the program has a graduate component, the Dean of Graduate Studies is also included. The VPAA reviews the program and meets with the unit faculties, chair, and dean. Following this meeting, the VPAA drafts a written summary and response to the program. Finally, a representative of the program will report back to the AAC the results of the review.

4.A.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.

NMHU complies with state guidelines related to the transfer of credit and evaluates all credit it transcripts. The Office of the Registrar conducts the analysis of the transcript upon admission into the university. These procedures are described in the [NMHU Graduate and Undergraduate Catalogs](#). NMHU accepts transcripts from regionally accredited institutions or candidates for regional accreditation. Students receive credit for completed coursework, as long as it has an appropriate grade and can be applied to a degree at the university. Transcripts from accredited institutions are evaluated on a course by course basis or by completion of an associate degree. In accordance with state law ([Chapter 21, Article 1B NMSA, 1978](#)) the General Ed Core Course Transfer Curriculum is used to evaluate general education courses. In addition, NMHU 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 ([List of Articulation Agreements](#)).

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.

NMHU does not award credit for experiential learning. However, for veterans and international students the university relies on evaluation by responsible third parties. NMHU uses the American Council on Education (ACE) through the Department of Defense's Joint Statement of Transfer (JST) for veterans. Under this program, veterans send their transcripts to ACE and ACE notifies the university the amount of credit recommended for courses and occupations. NMHU's policy is to accept all coursework for veterans approved by ACE that can be applied to a program of study. In addition, the university utilizes World Education Services (WES) to evaluate most international student transcripts.

Finally, NMHU allows students to demonstrate competencies for proficiency courses within the core. When proficiency is demonstrated, students are not transcribed credit, but instead the course requirement is waived. To demonstrate computer science proficiency students may take a written examination created by the Computer Science discipline that is administered by Academic Support Services. For language proficiency, students can demonstrate proficiency in a second language through criteria established by the Department of History, Political Science, and Languages.

4.A.3. The institution has policies that assure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.

NMHU adheres to the policies outlined in the transfer of credit section of the [Undergraduate and Graduate Catalog](#), New Mexico general education [Common Core](#), and [articulation agreements](#), as described in sections 4.A.2 and 3.B.1.

4.A.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.

The prerequisites for courses and other academic requirements (admission to professional schools: Education and Social Work) are determined by each academic unit. Prerequisites are requested by program faculty and are approved by the [AAC through a curriculum approval process](#). Once requests are approved, information is sent to the Registrar's office so that the prerequisite is recorded and implemented into our Banner system. Students are prevented from registering for courses if they have not met the prerequisite.

Academic units also determine course rigor and expected student outcomes for their program offerings. Once established by the academic unit, rigor is evaluated within the Outcomes Assessment, Program Review, and approval processes by the academic unit and AAC.

The dual credit program at NMHU follows strict guidelines created by the State of NM and NMHU. These guidelines have undergone significant revision over the years, as NMHU has offered dual credit through Memorandums of Agreement with Public Schools for over eight years. The dual credit program is housed in our Educational Outreach Services (EOS) program and offers courses normally at the 100 and 200 level. Students in the dual credit program enroll in regularly scheduled courses and blend into the college classroom with NMHU students; therefore equivalency is guaranteed. However, dual credit students are evaluated for success every semester and must reapply every semester for continuation. In order to apply for dual credit courses, students must take a placement examination, submit ACT scores, and academic transcripts.

4.A.5 The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.

Since 1950, individual programs at NMHU have investigated and received accreditation by nationally recognized accrediting and approval organizations.

Externally the three professional schools (Business, Media and Technology; Social Work; and Education) and some disciplines within the college (Arts and Sciences) maintain professional accreditation. The participation of program faculty and staff is an integral part of maintaining these accreditations:

- [Business Graduate and Undergraduate Programs](#) - ACBSP (Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs)
- [School of Social Work](#)- CSWE (Council on Social Work Education)
- [School of Education](#) – CAEP (National Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation) Previously NCATE
- [Rehabilitation Graduate Program](#)- CORE (Council on Rehabilitation Education)
- [Chemistry Undergraduate Major](#)- American Chemical Society Approved
- [Nursing Program](#) – CCNE (Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education)
- [Psychology Graduate Program, Clinical/Counseling Track](#)- Master's in Psychology Accreditation Council
- [Forestry Undergraduate Program](#) -Society of American Foresters

The School of Education regained its NCATE accreditation (now the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP)) since our last HLC visit in 2009. NMHU was among the first group of institutions to hold NCATE accreditation when the organization was incorporated in 1954. However, in 2006, it was determined that the school met all NCATE standards except for Standard 2: Assessment System and Unit Evaluation. Due to the deficiencies noted in this standard, the School lost its accreditation, but maintained accreditation by the State of New Mexico to offer teacher education programs. Beginning in 2008-2009, the faculty in the School of Education revised its conceptual framework and created school-wide themes demonstrated in this mnemonic: “Reflective practitioners and professionals practice leadership with knowledge in culturally inclusive, diverse and authentic settings.” In addition, the school adopted the online student portfolio system, “Chalk and Wire” to aid in student advisement and data collection to help identify and improve challenging areas in the curriculum. As a result of [these efforts](#) the School of Educations successfully [gained accreditation in 2012](#). The accreditation of the school involves programs on the main campus and at our centers and provides a regular review of teacher education programs at NMHU.

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 [NMHU website](#).

4.A.6. The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution assures that the degree or certificate programs it represents are 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).

NMHU regularly evaluates the success of its graduates through a variety of sources. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Research (OIER) conducts several surveys to address this area. The [Alumni Survey of the Class of 2010-2011](#), conducted in the summer of 2014, surveyed alumni three years after their graduation. Results showed that both undergraduate and graduate alumni report high levels of satisfaction with their jobs. Ninety-six percent of undergraduate alumni and 84.5% of graduate alumni report that they are satisfied or very satisfied with the intellectual and personal challenges of their jobs.

In the fall of 2009 the OIER conducted a study examining the [effect of degree attainment on the income](#) of first-time freshmen and transfer students at NMHU. In this study, 1555 students (714 first time freshmen and 841 transfer students) were tracked through the NMHU Banner system, the New Mexico Department of Labor, and the National Student Tracker Service. The mean income of NMHU graduates in this study was \$7,240 higher than the mean income of students with no earned degree.

OIER tracks the subsequent educational enrollment of NMHU alumni through data from the National Student Clearinghouse and found that 60% of NMHU baccalaureate degree recipients enrolled in a 4-year institution after graduation ([Subsequent Enrollment of New Mexico Highlands University Alumni](#)). Of these students, close to 30% earn a master's degree. Twenty-three baccalaureate alumni earned doctorates (including JD). Also, 31 of the baccalaureate alumni who earned masters degrees are currently enrolled in four-year institutions, suggesting that they are also working on doctorate degrees. A more detailed analysis of [STEM degree](#) recipients conducted in revealed that 225 students received baccalaureate degrees in the STEM fields at NMHU from the fall of 2000 through the summer of 2011. Of these alumni, six have earned doctorates, and 25 have received master's degrees. This indicates that 37% of NMHU STEM baccalaureate degree recipients have earned a graduate degree or are currently enrolled at a 4-year institution. This percentage is slightly higher than the percentage for all degrees at NMHU.

The [Student Satisfaction Survey](#) is a state mandated survey given out to graduating students. For the spring 2015 survey, 224 completed surveys were submitted to OIER. Results showed that students were very happy with the quality of the instruction in their major and at NMHU, and the value of their education relative to cost. In addition, 95% of respondents were very satisfied or satisfied with their preparation for work or graduate school. Eighty-seven of the respondents (41.6%) reported that they planned on continuing their education and fifty-five already had a job in their field.

In addition to the surveys sent out by OIER, the School of Education (SOE) surveys alumni and employers every five years ([SOE Alumni and Employer survey](#)). Results and analysis of the 2011 survey are included in the [2011 NCATE accreditation report](#). The SOE uses these data in their assessment system to improve the quality of instruction and program offerings. Overall, 93.6% of alumni and 96.9% of employers were satisfied or very satisfied with the preparation in their content areas, while 97.9% of alumni and 92.8% of employers were satisfied or very satisfied with the teaching, counseling, or leadership skills of the NMHU alumni.

Finally, the [Educate to Career College Rankings Index](#) ranks Highlands 207 out of 1,224 colleges and universities in terms of "which schools did the best job of improving the earnings and attainment of quality employment of their students". The rankings are based upon "the quality of students when they enter a given college, the total costs related to attending the college, and the outcomes of the students when they enter the labor market. The rankings results are determined by which schools did the best job of improving the earnings and attainment of quality employment of their students."

The People Behind the Data: Mariano Ulibarri

A recent graduate from the masters program in Media Arts, [Mariano Ulibarri](#) has received national attention due to his work with the makerspace movement. As a result of his Parachute Factory makerspace in Las Vegas and his work with libraries throughout the state, Mariano was invited by the Harvard Graduate School of Education to help catalyze a national network of maker educators.

"I'm trying to support what I believe is a better way to learn that will help prepare our kids for a rapidly changing world where they need to adapt to new technologies and paradigms. Connecting with this Harvard group and seeing seeds of maker education sprouting all around the country validates what I do and motivates me to continue," Mariano says.

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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. The institution has clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals.

NMHU's processes for the assessment of student learning are specified in the [NMHU Assessment Handbook](#). The Outcomes Assessment Committee of the Faculty Senate developed the current version of the Assessment Handbook in 2014-2015. This version was approved by the Faculty Senate in the spring of 2015. The duties and responsibilities of the [Outcomes Assessment Committee](#) are located in the Faculty Handbook and include the initiation and monitoring of the university's assessment processes and recommendations for policy changes.

NMHU has established three distinct, but interrelated processes for the assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals. These three processes are assessment of the common core (General Education Assessment), assessment of academic programs (Annual Outcomes Assessment, Program Review, and Program Specific Accreditation), and assessment of the educational efforts of the University as a whole (University-Wide Assessment). Each process has a different timeline and is evaluated by different entities within the university. Support for all assessment activities is provided by OIER.

Assessment Task		Timeline	Overseeing Entity
Assessment of the Core Curriculum		Data collected every fall semester; Reports developed every spring.	Outcomes Assessment Committee
Academic	Outcomes Assessment	Data collection complete at the end of the academic year; Reports developed every fall.	Academic Program Faculty
			Graduate programs: Office of Graduate Studies and Academic Affairs

Program Assessment	Program Review	5 year cycle	Committee Undergraduate programs: Academic Affairs Committee
	Program Specific Accreditation	Varies by program	Academic Program Faculty
University-Wide Assessment		Utilizes data from Gen Ed and Outcomes Assessment processes; Reports developed every spring.	Outcomes Assessment Committee

NMHU has identified three basic steps that underlie each aspect of our assessment system: defining student learning objectives, evaluating student success in achieving those outcomes, and 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 aggregated to provide information regarding specific courses, major programs, the core curriculum, and the university as a whole.

To enhance and align our outcomes assessment processes at the University, NMHU 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 NMHU in 1998, and that had evolved from a somewhat standardized institutional portfolio approach in the early 2000's to a more program-specific approach by 2008. That system generated outcomes assessment data unique to each program but that was 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 or not we are imparting the knowledge, traits, and skills we value into our baccalaureate and graduate degree recipients.

During the 2008-2009 we surveyed our faculty, students and staff to identify outcomes that represented the desired characteristics of our graduates (which we decided to refer to as traits). As a result of that survey, four traits were identified:

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 reflected on course syllabi and in the program level assessment plans for academic units. Faculty members upload all academic program outcomes assessment data and core curriculum data into Banner. The decision to develop a Banner-based data collection system was based upon the recognition that there was no central depository of outcomes assessment data at the University. Essentially academic program coordinators collected the data and wrote the reports, but those data were not shared or stored. By having all outcomes assessment data entered into Banner we have gained the ability to run university-wide analyses, to analyze trends over time, and to answer

questions regarding disaggregated groups of students, such as students in online courses vs. those in face-to-face classes.

Assessment of Core Curriculum

The evaluation of the common core curriculum is essential to NMHU's mission. This process serves two distinct purposes, to assess the extent to which our students demonstrate the four core traits and to assess the extent our students have attained the learning outcomes identified by the State of New Mexico's Higher Education Department (HED) ([HED General Ed Competencies](#)). In 2008, the HED mandated that all public universities evaluate the common core requirements using 32 state competencies. For this assessment, instructors identify assignment(s) to be used to assess mastery of the core competencies, and the NMHU traits most closely related to those competencies. Data are uploaded using the same system as for the assessment of academic programs. This system was first used in the spring of 2015 and eventually will allow for the tracking of attainment of the competencies, and the NMHU traits, over time.

Academic Program Assessment

The goal of our annual academic program outcomes assessment is to determine how effectively programs 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 their own outcomes assessment systems. Although many aspects of the assessment plans vary by program, there are general requirements that programs must follow ([Outcomes 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 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 entered by their faculty for the previous academic year. The program faculty then review the reports, interpret the data, and discuss how the data will be utilized for program improvement. These reports are returned to OIER and are posted on the University website where they are available to current and prospective students and their parents.

Currently, NMHU uses a peer review system to provide feedback to academic 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. In addition, every five years, academic programs participate in program review. Outcomes assessment data are incorporated into this review, including how the data have been used to improve practice.

In addition to the annual outcomes assessment process, each academic program undergoes a process of program review overseen by the Academic Affairs Committee. The process for program reviews was discussed in Criterion 4.A.1.

4.B.2. The institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and co-curricular programs.

NMHU's focus on advancing knowledge and student success, outlined in the [2009-2014 Strategic Plan](#), emphasizes our goal of all graduating students exhibiting the knowledge, traits, and skills we value. The four traits are mastery of knowledge, effective communication skills, critical and reflective thinking skills, and the effective use of technology. By embedding these traits into course objectives and program learning outcomes, the university has created a system to evaluate the achievement of learning outcomes for its curricular programs (see section 4.B.1.).

Our assessment plan does not yet specifically address assessment of our co-curricular programs, but steps are being taken in that area. Co-curricular activities such as practicum and internships, conference attendance, research activities, and artistic works are already embedded in the outcomes assessment plans of many academic programs. In addition, we are currently in the process of developing an assessment plan for our First Year Experience program, which will include an assessment of the four traits.

NMHU also participates in external measures of student learning and experiences, such as the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) and the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE).

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 was administered in [2008-2009](#), as a part of NMHU's participation in the Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA). 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. Results of the CLA indicated, that although our unadjusted percentile ranks were quite low for incoming freshmen on all variables (4 to 14), the adjusted percentile rank (for entering academic ability) was much higher (21 to 72). Analysis of the comparison group of schools showed that they are vastly different from NMHU. For example, 50% of the schools were private and the number of students receiving Pell Grants was 31% (compared to NMHU's 51.8%). Also, the mean Barron's selectivity rating was 3.3 (on a 7 point scale). Open enrollment institutions, like NMHU, have a score of 1.

Regardless of the differences between the comparison group of schools and NMHU on the CLA, the value added scores were respectable (average 61). This means that after adjusting for our students' entering academic ability, the difference between our freshmen and graduating seniors' performance was higher than 61% of the comparison schools.

In [2014-2015](#), NMHU repeated the CLA with 68 freshmen and 32 seniors participating. As before, 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, as before, the value added scores were impressive, placing NMHU in the 73 percentile among CLA schools. More specifically, NMHU seniors scored well-above the expected score of 1014. These data indicate that although students are entering with low scores, the value added benefit of attending NMHU is higher than 73 percent of other CLA institutions.

CLA Senior Value Added Scores Spring 2009 and Spring 2015

(Note: the value added standard deviation score was a new measure added in the 2014-2015 report)

	Expected Senior Mean Score	Observed Senior Mean Score	Value Added (SD)	Percentile Rank
2009	1072	1064		61
2015	1014	1033	.044	73

In the spring of 2009, 2011, and 2014, NMHU participated in the [NSSE](#) as a part of our participation in the VSA. By participating in NSSE, we are able to compare NMHU's performance to schools

similar to NMHU, as well as all participating public master's-granting institutions in New Mexico and bordering states. For the 2014 survey, 419 first year students (freshmen and transfers) and 687 seniors were invited to participate. The overall response rate was 23.2%. While this response rate is disappointing, it is not significantly different than the response rates for our peer group schools or our response rates from 2009 or 2011.

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. Results indicated that first year students at NMHU 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 peers (reflective and integrative learning, discussion with diverse others), but significantly lower in the area of supportive campus environment.

The use of CLA and NSSE has provided NMHU with cross-sectional institutional and value-added data, as well as comparison data to peer institutions and groups. In addition, the combination of these surveys with our outcomes assessment system, regular program reviews, and accreditation of varying units, provides NMHU with a combination of processes to evaluate student learning across its curricular and co-curricular programs.

4.B.3. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.

Through annual outcomes assessment, regular program review, program accreditation, assessment of the common core, and other assessment initiatives like CLA and NSSE, NMHU uses data collected to inform programmatic changes and improve student learning. The external review by program accrediting agencies provides a benchmark for programs to show how student indicators and data collected are used to inform practice. Currently, the three professional Schools ([School 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 for some of their programs. The accreditation reports for each of these programs shows the linkage between assessment and the use of these data to improve student learning.

For example, in the 2011 [NCATE report](#), the School of Education (SOE) listed several program improvements related to the assessment of student learning. Instructors teaching the capstone Knowledge of the Profession course meet regularly to gather information about teacher candidate preparation, in regards to readiness for student teaching. Data are collected on a Field Experiences Disposition Inventory from cooperating teachers in the K-12 school system, as well as the SOE report card. These data revealed that despite two field-based experiences prior to student teaching, SOE student teachers were not wholly prepared to begin pre-service teaching. Therefore, the Department of Teacher Education faculty increased the number of hours of both field-based experiences (Field-Based 1: 28 to 30 hours; Field-Based 2: 42 to 60 hours) to help increase readiness. Overall, since the fall 2009 semester, the SOE documented 93 programmatic changes and 52 data discussions. The SOE collects data using three triangulated measures: Key Gateway assessments, supplementary course level assessments and qualitative assessments. Data from each of these areas is collected and analyzed regularly and presented to a school-wide Assessment team for review and to provide input and analysis. Twice each year (beginning of fall and spring semesters), data from the previous year is presented to department faculty in the SOE to assist in planning and setting priorities for the semester.

In 2009-2010, the Outcomes Assessment Committee prepared the [Core Competencies Assessment report](#), to analyze data collected from courses within the general education curriculum. As described above, this assessment aligns with the [New Mexico State Competencies](#) and identified learning

outcomes for courses. This report lists each state competency, how it is measured, assessment results, and how the results were used to make improvements. For example, for the mathematics-algebra competency of “Students will graph functions,” assessment results showed that 40% of the 115 assessed students had definitely or partially mastered the competency. From this analysis, math faculty expanded the assessment to include problems on finding the axis of symmetry and reflections. In the laboratory science competency of “Students will describe the process of scientific inquiry,” 100% of the students in Geology 101 mastered the competency. With these results, the geology faculty decided to continue to dedicate the first week of the course to the understanding and practicing of the scientific method. This analysis of the core curriculum by the Outcomes Assessment Committee will continue in the fall of 2015.

Assessment reports for academic units are published on the OIER website for undergraduate and graduate programs. These reports show how programs use information gained from the assessment system to improve student learning. In the [2013-2014 outcomes assessment for the undergraduate Biology program](#), faculty found that 93.3% of biology students met the student learning outcome, “be able to effectively communicate and critically analyze biological knowledge.” However, even though most of the students met the outcome, the faculty decided to create more scaffolding in preparation for the senior project course to ensure more student success. In the [2013-2014 assessment report for the Psychology graduate program](#), analysis of the student learning outcome, “apply knowledge of cross-cultural differences to the understanding and practice of psychology,” faculty found that 100% of the students met the criterion and concluded that the program was successful in meeting the program goals. In sociology, the [2012-2013 Assessment Report](#) found that 82.7% of students met their goal of demonstrating critical thinking and understanding of sociology. However, even with this high percentage, the faculty decided that they wanted to increase the number of students receiving an A or a B on this criterion. They worked to develop additional writing assignments to help students reach their goal. Even with this change in [2013-2014](#), the sociology faculty saw a decrease in students meeting this goal (70.5%) and again expanded the writing assignments to incorporate more critical and reflective thinking. Sociology faculty will be monitoring this criterion in next year's outcomes assessment report to monitor changes from their programmatic improvements.

4.B.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.

NMHU has a demonstrated record of using best practices to assess student learning. The faculty generated assessment systems within the general core curriculum, academic programs, and schools shows substantial participation by faculty and instructional staff in these assessments.

Each of the three assessment tasks in NMHU’s outcomes assessment system are conducted in collaboration with program faculty. These tasks are described in the [NMHU Assessment Handbook 2014-2015](#). Faculty and instructional staff are responsible for identifying measurable learning outcomes, designing rubrics, and collecting and analyzing data. In order to enhance and align the assessment of student learning, NMHU joined the [HLC’s Academy for the Assessment of Student Learning in 2008](#). This participation helped align our assessment system along four core traits identified by faculty, staff, students, and administrators. This system alignment allows us to aggregate our student learning outcomes data across programs and tie the outcomes, ultimately, to NMHU’s vision of what it means to be a Highlands graduate.

Additionally, with our three professional Schools (School 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) holding accreditation or approval, NMHU demonstrates the use of methodologies and processes to reflect good practice. These

accreditations are discussed in section 4.A. For example, in the SOE, the school-wide assessment system aligns with the four university-wide 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.

The Outcomes Assessment Committee of the Faculty Senate provides clear guidelines and templates for programs to generate our bottoms-up assessment of student learning. In our [Assessment Handbook](#), programs are directed to identify the mission of their academic program and provide a clear description of three to five student learning outcomes that relate to the program mission and are linked to the four university-wide student traits. In addition, programs must identify multiple measureable means to assess each outcome and provide clear criteria to judge whether or not the outcomes have been met. Also, instructors are expected to have clear learning outcomes for their courses that align to the outcomes of each major program. For those programs with accreditation, alignment with outcomes from these agencies.

While all of the above processes reflect good practice, the review of the assessment data by a variety of entities at the university, including the AAC, OAC, OIER, Graduate Office, and VPAA/Provost, provides multiple means of input to program faculty and instructors to inform practice. In addition, the external review by program accrediting agencies and use of employer and alumni data assures that NMHU is assessing student learning not only at the university, but also in preparation for the job market or more advanced degrees. The culmination of these data and publication through NMHU's OIER website makes the information available to future students and their families, as well as members of the community, current students, and faculty and staff.

Sources

- ACBSP 2007 November 29 Letter
- ACBSP 2007 October Outcome Assessment Process Plan
- ACBSP 2013 Quality Assurance Report 2013 revised CPC
- Assessment Handbook 2014-2015
- Biology UG Assessment Report 2012-2013
- Biology UG Assessment Report 2013-2014
- Chemistry 2010 American Chemical Society Periodic Review Form- 5 yr
- Collegiate Learning Assessment Report 2008-2009
- Collegiate Learning Assessment Report 2014-2015
- CORE accreditation letter
- Faculty Handbook
- Faculty Handbook (page number 32)
- HED Gen Ed Competencies-All Areas
- NCATE Institutional report Nov 2011
- NCATE ltr of approval
- New Mexico Highlands University HLC Assessment Academy Impact Report final 4-2
- NMHU Core Competency Assessment 2010-2011.pdf
- NMHU National Survey of Student Engagement 2014 Report
- NMHU Strategic Plan 2009
- Nursing CCNE Self-Study NMHU 2014
- Nursing Letter of Accreditation

- Psychology Accreditation Approval Letter11_16_11.pdf
- Psychology Accreditation Self Study Report.pdf
- Psychology GR Assessment Report 2013-2014
- Social Work Accreditation letter
- Society of American Foresters COA Action Final Acc NMHU 2013
- Sociology Assessment Report 2013-2014
- Sociology UG Assessment Report 2012-2013

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. 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.

NMHU is committed to providing a high-quality university education, but recognizes the challenges associated with this commitment. As an open enrollment institution that is both accessible and affordable, we honor our responsibility to provide necessary support to students from traditionally under-served populations. In 2007 the NMHU Retention Committee developed the [NMHU Draft Retention Plan 2007-2008](#) which identified five major issues and numerous action steps to help achieve our retention goals. That draft plan was never officially adopted by the University and the committee disbanded. There were several attempts to reconstitute the retention committee in the following years, but the lack of a formally recognized plan and an administrative office charged with overseeing implementation of that plan resulted in retention efforts that were largely uncoordinated, inconsistent, and unevenly evaluated.

Even given this lack of coordination and oversight, NMHU did succeed in implementing several of the action steps from the 2007-2008 plan, including tracking of athletes in Banner (see below), implementing a comprehensive first year experience program for all freshmen (see below), adopting Degree Works software for advisement (section 3.D.3.), completing the Viles and Crimmin Residence Hall (section 4.A.1), and expanding the Early Alert program to include two additional points of data collection and student contact (section 3.D.1).

In 2014, NMHU hired a retention coordinator in the Office of Academic Support Services and reconstituted the Retention Committee. As a result, an updated retention plan was created ([NMHU Draft Retention Plan 2015-2019](#)). In this new plan the committee updated the goals identified in the 2007 plan and identified new action steps, recognizing the progress the University had made since the 2007 plan. The retention and graduation goals set in our new draft plan are:

- increase first-time freshmen fall to spring retention rates to 85%

- increase first-time freshman second year retention rates to 55%
- increase first-time freshman four-year graduation rates to 10%
- increase first-time freshman six-year graduation rates to 25%
- increase first-time total transfer student four-year graduation rates to 50%
- increase first-time total transfer student six-year graduation rates to 60%
- increase AA transfer student four-year graduation rates to 80%
- increase AA transfer student six-year graduation rates to 90%

The following section explains why we consider these goals appropriate and achievable for Highlands.

Points 4.C.2 and 4.C.3. will be addressed together in order to eliminate redundancy and add to a coherent narrative.

NMHU has a long history of collecting and analyzing information related to student retention, persistence, and degree completion through annual reports completed by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Research (OIER). The University publishes its enrollment, retention, and graduation data on the OIER website, under the heading "Enrollment and Retention." We track and report on first-time freshmen, first-time transfer students, and athletes annually. A breakdown of retention and graduation rates for the past eight years was reported in the [Draft Retention Plan 2015-2019](#) as a basis for creating the University's retention goals. More specifically, the following reports are found currently on the OIER website related to collecting and analyzing information on retention, persistence, and completion of programs:

- [2000 to 2014 Enrollments](#)
- [Fall 1987 to Fall 2014 Enrollments by Fall Semesters](#)
- [First-Time Freshmen Retention and Graduation Rates](#)
- [First-Time Transfer Students Graduation Rates](#)
- [Athlete Academic Success Rates 2005-2008](#)
- [Athlete Enrollment and Graduation Rates](#)
- [Athletes at NMHU 2000-2014](#)

OIER also reports enrollments and degrees awarded by academic program. The [Enrollment and Degrees Awarded by Program](#) report breaks down the number of declared majors and degrees awarded from 2005 through 2014 for each academic program at the University. These data are shared annually with academic programs for consideration in their outcomes assessment and program review procedures. The report is also available on the NMHU website.

Data on undergraduate student graduation rates are summarized in the following table from the [Draft Retention Plan 2015-2019](#). The dates at the top of the table refer to the year the data were collected, not the year that cohort of students began at Highlands. So, for example, the 2014 four-year graduation rates apply to students who began at Highlands in the fall of 2008. As can be seen, our 4-year graduation rates for first-time freshmen are shockingly low, and have been for many years. Our six-year graduation rates are better but still far below that of most of our peer institutions. Graduation rates for transfer students are higher than for first-time freshmen, particularly if they transfer in with an associate degree, but we know our students deserve better. This is the basis for the retention and graduation goals listed above.

Retention and Graduation Rates Past Eight Years

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014

Freshmen 2nd Semester	69%	72%	71%	78%	72%	74%	75%	78%
Freshmen 2nd Year	53%	45%	45%	48%	51%	55%	47%	48%
Freshmen 4-Year	6%	4%	6%	5%	9%	8%	6%	10%
Freshmen 6-Year	25%	21%	19%	19%	21%	16%	18%	17%
All Transfer 4-Year	43%	51%	50%	48%	41%	42%	40%	41%
All Transfer 6-Year	51%	48%	49%	57%	55%	55%	51%	49%
Transfer with AA 4-Year	71%	72%	65%	68%	67%	65%	69%	69%
Transfer with AA 6-Year	80%	74%	81%	75%	75%	73%	76%	75%

In the [NMHU Draft Retention Plan 2015](#), six issues were identified and action steps created to help us meet our retention and graduation rate goals. The first issue recognizes that prior retention efforts at Highlands lacked coordination, oversight, and university support. The creation of a new retention plan, re-creation of the Retention Committee, and hiring of a retention coordinator in the Office of Academic Support Services helps to alleviate that issue. The second and third issues address increasing opportunities for academic and social integration for our students. The fourth issue focuses on supporting students who are academically under-prepared and the fifth issue recognizes the need to develop and evaluate interventions to support student learning throughout the University. The sixth issue recognizes the fact that there is much about our students that we still do not know, particularly our non-returning students.

Retention of First-time Freshmen

In the report, [First-Time Freshmen at New Mexico Highlands University Fall 2000 to Fall 2013 Cohorts](#), the University examined factors related to first-time freshmen retention and graduation rates for the previous 13 years. Fall to spring retention rates varied between 80% and 71% over this time period, with the highest retention coming in 2003. Cohort size was significantly related ($p < .05$) to retention, with larger cohorts yielding lower retention rates. The report includes analyses of the relationships between retention and graduation and a number of variables including pre-existing characteristics of our freshmen (e.g., gender, ethnicity, residency, academic preparation, family income) and their experiences at the University (e.g., Pell Grants, scholarships, unmet financial need, first semester initiatives, identification during the Early Alert process, fall GPA).

The most significant finding from this report was that 80% of students who began as first-time freshmen at NMHU did not earn a degree from the University in six years. Sixty percent did not have a four-year degree from any school and were not enrolled anywhere in six years. Some factors significantly impacted retention and graduation, such as family income, academic preparedness, Early Alert, and first semester GPA. But an analysis of these factors indicated that even the most "favored" students were still at a significant risk of not earning a college degree. The report showed that even though 17% of first-time freshmen were ranked in the top 20% of their high school graduating classes, only 40% of that group earned a bachelor's degree from Highlands in six years and 32% had not earned a degree anywhere. Even when students earned a 3.5 GPA or above in their first semester, only about 45% earned a bachelor's degree from Highlands in six years.

These findings helped Highlands to realize that attempts to identify our "at-risk freshmen" were in a sense just a tangent. *All of our freshmen are at risk of not graduating.* While we need to understand the specific differing needs of our freshmen students and work to address those needs, we also understand that if we want to help our first-time freshmen succeed we must design interventions that

include all of our freshmen.

In the fall of 2014 the Provost hired a full-time Coordinator of Academic Enrichment Programs who lead a year-long process to develop an evidence-based, comprehensive Freshman Experience Program for all first-time freshmen at NMHU. The main purpose of this program is to support the academic and social integration of freshmen, as well as provide the supports necessary for students to have a successful first semester. The program includes 15 [interest-based learning communities](#) (LCs) linking two core or major courses with a 1-credit Freshman Forum (FF) course that is required of all first-time freshmen and counts toward the 120 credits required for graduation. These learning communities ensure that freshmen are enrolled in three courses with the same, small cohort of about 20 students. The courses are linked by a common theme, integrative assignments, and close coordination among the faculty teaching the courses. The LCs incorporate community-based activities and peer mentors to provide our freshmen with an active, exciting, supported learning experience.

This comprehensive program follows best practices identified by the National Center for Postsecondary Research, and was developed by the Freshman Forum Committee. The membership on this university-wide committee includes faculty and staff from various constituencies. While NMHU has offered Learning Communities and other first year experience programs to in-coming freshmen for many years, we have experienced problems, including inconsistent implementation, minimal professional development, and lack of continuity and direction. This is the first time in NMHU history that a comprehensive Freshman Experience Program was presented to the Academic Affairs Committee for review and approval.

A history of our learning community and first year experience programs, as well as an overview of our new program is described in the [NMHU Freshman Experience Program Proposal](#) that was approved in by the Academic Affairs Committee in the fall of 2014. The Freshmen Experience Advisory Committee met throughout the year to plan the implementation of the program, and the instructors in each of the fifteen learning communities met multiple times to develop a plan for their community. In June of 2015 a seven member team was accepted to attend the National Summer Institute on Learning Communities at the Evergreen State College. The team included three faculty members who are teaching in learning communities, a staff advisor, the Coordinator of Academic Enrichment Programs, the Director of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Research, and the Provost/Vice President of Academic Affairs. The experience provided us with valuable ideas and feedback on our campus plan that will be shared and refined by a larger planning group. The Freshmen Year Experience Program will be fully implemented in the fall of 2015 and we will have our first evaluation data on the program at the end of the semester.

Retention of Transfer Students

Over half of our undergraduate students come to Highlands as transfer students. In addition, over 70% of our undergraduate [degree recipients](#) began their career at Highlands as transfer students. Both four and six year graduation rates for [transfer students](#) (41 to 50% and 48 to 57%, respectively) are far higher than graduation rates for first-time freshmen. All of our students at our Centers are transfer students, and the majority of them either have or will earn an associate degree from our partner institutions. While our main campus also has a large population of transfer students, they are much less likely to have an associate degree. We regularly have some transfer students on the main campus who transfer in as freshmen.

While we have not researched our transfer students as intensively as our first-time freshmen we do know that they share some of the same barriers to graduation including difficulty financing a college education and ineffective advising. To address the first issue Highlands has devoted an increased

amount of funding for [scholarships](#) specifically aimed at transfer students. We now have three scholarships devoted to in-state transfer students, the Dean's Transfer Scholarship, the Presidential Transfer Scholarship and the Legislative Endowment Scholarship. In addition, in-state transfer students who have earned and maintained eligibility for the New Mexico Lottery Scholarship can transfer that scholarship to Highlands. Both transfer and first-time freshmen students from out-of-state are eligible for the New Mexico Success Scholarship and the New Mexico Opportunity Grant. Transfer students coming to the main campus may also be receiving athletic scholarships.

The second issue, effective advising, is one that impacts all students at Highlands and is discussed below. Several of the action steps in the 2015 Retention Plan are related to learning more about and designing retention initiatives for our transfer students.

Retention of Student Athletes

In the [Draft Retention Plan 2007-2008](#), NMHU recognized that the tracking of athletes in Banner was imperative to help with our retention efforts. In response to action steps identified in that plan, tracking of retention and graduation rates in student athletes is now possible. In 2014, approximately 15% of all undergraduate students were funded athletes. Prior to 2008, athletes were not coded in our Banner system, making our ability to track student athlete enrollment, retention, and graduation more difficult. While the NMHU Athletic Department regularly reports data to NCAA and that data is made available on the NMHU website (see the first two reports listed below), those graduation rates are limited to first-time freshmen. The NCAA academic success rates do include both freshmen and transfer students. We now code all athletes in Banner and regularly track their data.

- [Athlete Academic Success Rates 2005-2008](#)
- [Athlete Enrollments and Graduation Rates](#)
- [Athletes at New Mexico Highlands University 2000-2014](#)

The report, [Athletes at Highlands 2000-2014](#), provides an analysis of retention and graduation rates of student athletes who received athletic scholarships compared to all other students. Comparisons were disaggregated by in-state versus out-of-state students, and freshmen versus transfers. The analysis revealed that, generally, students athletes at Highlands graduate at about the same rate as comparable students. The only group of athletes that graduated at a significantly higher rate than comparable non-athletes were in-state student athletes who began at Highlands as freshmen (33% compared to about 20% for all other freshmen). When desegregated further by sport some further differences emerge. In many sports freshmen student athletes graduate at higher rate (in some cases much higher rates) than all other freshmen. Partly in response to these data the new football coach at Highlands was instructed to recruit more in-state, freshmen students for the team, which is has done.

Retention Initiatives Aimed at All Students

Just as it is clear that all of our first-time freshmen students can be considered at-risk for not graduating, the graduation rates presented above strongly suggest that all of our students can benefit from retention initiatives. The areas discussed below are examples.

Advising

Satisfaction with advising is a relatively weak point for Highlands in the [Student Satisfaction Survey](#). About 13% of graduating senior report that they are dissatisfied or strongly dissatisfied in our advising services. Poor advising does not just result in student dissatisfaction, effective advisement can be one of the most important factors related to degree completion. In recognition of this problem

Highlands adopted the Degree Works software in the fall of 2011 and began the development of individualized degree plans for all students. In addition, greater attention has been given to have more full-time faculty advise students in the major. The goal of our advisement system is that all students will have regular contact with a faculty advisor. The Degree Works software program allows us to advise and track students through their academic program. In addition, students may access their own degree audit to track progress and monitor planing and advisement notes. Degree Works software is available through mynmhu.edu for all faculty, staff, and students. In the fall 2014, the Provost and Registrar's office collected four year plans from all academic programs which are being inputed into Banner and Degree Works by the Registrars office. These plans will provide a road map for students to follow as their progress through their degree. Two-year degree maps were also generated as guides for transfer students coming in with an associate's degree in a field aligned with the bachelor's degree major.

Student Life

NMHU realized it had a housing problem that hindered social integration and influenced retention. Completion of the Viles and Crimmin Residence Hall in 2009 was a major step forward in providing quality housing options for students who live on campus. The [Draft Retention Plan 2015](#) includes action steps involving several other issues related to the quality of campus life. These include surveying our students regarding activities, meal plans and housing on campus and working the Associated Students of Highlands University to use the results of the survey to develop a plan for improvement. This topic was also raised by numerous constituencies during the strategic planning focus groups and open forums in AY 2014-15 as an area needing attention and improvement.

Support for Under-Prepared Students

As an open enrollment institution, NMHU has a responsibility to support students that are not academically prepared for college-level work. The [College Readiness 2014](#) report prepared by the NM Higher Education Department found that approximately 50% of NM high school graduates required remediation in numeracy or literacy. The percentage is higher for Hispanic (68%), Native American (57%), and low-income students (79%). Because of our open admissions policies, 60% of first-time freshmen at NMHU need remediation in at least one course.

In addition, the Math and English programs created interventions in their core courses to help address remediation issues of first-time freshmen. In 2014, math faculty created a five-day per week Math 120 course that moves students through Math 100 and Math 120 by providing two additional hours of supported problem solving. In 2013, English faculty added a co-requisite Engl 111/Engl 106 course based on the Accelerated Learning Program at the Community College of Baltimore County. This model allows students to take credit-bearing composition courses while still receiving developmental writing instruction.

Poor class attendance is linked to low GPAs and thus, retention, persistence, and degree completion. In response to this finding, the Early Alert Attendance system was fully implemented in the fall of 2013. This system allows faculty to record in Banner if students are not attending courses or not performing well. These at risk students are contacted by the Office of Academic Support Services to provide services. Previously, only 100 and 200 level course students were reported, at a specified time of the semester. Now, early alert is available throughout the semester for all undergraduate and graduate courses. However, the Office of Academic Support Services found that advisors are only able to contact approximately half of the students reported through early alert. The [2015-2019 Draft Retention Plan](#) identifies action steps that may be taken to help increase student contact.

Another area for improvement noted by the [2015-2019 Draft Retention Plan](#) is the coordination of campus-wide tutoring services. Currently, NMHU offers many tutoring services, including the Learning Center run through Student Support Services, the Language Learning Center, the Writing Center, various athletic team study halls, and the ARMAS Center. However, these tutoring services are not coordinated. The Retention Committee recommended that coordination may help to reduce duplication of services, share resources, and provide systematic evaluation of the various programs. Also, a linkage of the tutoring services to Early Alert may help students improve their performance.

Faculty development programs designed to help faculty develop more effective and engaging teaching strategies to work with academically under-prepared students have been offered through ARMAS. Most of these sessions have been implemented with faculties in the STEM disciplines. These types of programs will also be offered to a wider audience through the Center for Teaching Excellence and are anticipated to positively impact student retention.

4.C.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).

Highlands generally uses IPEDS and Common Data Set (CDS) definitions in our reporting. Exceptions might occur for measures that do not have standard IPEDS or CDS definitions, such as degrees per enrollment, or specialty analyses designed to answer specific questions of interest to the University. Definitions for measures reported to the State of New Mexico are generally defined by the NM Higher Education Department, often through consultation with the New Mexico Accountability Workgroup, a committee of institutional researchers from the state's seven 4-year institutions that serves as a technical advisory committee for the Council of University Presidents and the HED.

Sources

- 2000 to 2014 Enrollments
- Athlete Academic Success Rates 2005-2008
- Athlete Enrollment and Graduation Rates 2008-09 Cohort
- Athletes at Highlands 2000-2014
- Degree Productivity at New Mexico Highlands University
- Enrollment and Degrees Awarded by Academic Program 2014
- Fall 1987 to 2014 Enrollments
- First-Time Freshmen at NMHU 2000 to 2013
- First-time Freshmen Retention and Graduation Rates
- First-time Transfer Students Graduation Rates
- Freshman Experience Program and Learning Community Descriptions
- Higher Education Department - College Readiness in New Mexico 2014
- NMHU Degree Recipients Summer 2014 through Spring 2015
- NMHU Draft Retention Plan 2007-2008
- NMHU Draft Retention Plan 2015
- NMHU Draft Retention Plan 2015 (page number 8)
- NMHU Freshman Experience Program Proposal 2015
- Scholarships at NMHU December 15 2014
- Student Satisfaction Survey Report 2015

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

NMHU regularly participates in activities that improve and evaluate our educational programs, learning environments, and support services. The continuous evaluation and improvement cycles sustain best practices and support our academic vision of providing an inspiring multicultural learning environment that promotes excellence, empowerment, transformation, and global understanding. We have presented a record of our academic policies and procedures regarding regular program review, and the ongoing assessment of student learning, as well as our analysis of retention, persistence, and degree completion rates and implementation and revision of programs to continually improve student learning.

Opportunities for Improvement

At the time of the 2009 HLC comprehensive visit Highlands was participating in the HLC Academy for the Assessment of Student Learning. Through that participation we developed an [assessment process](#) that is anchored in the ongoing activities of our academic programs, yet generates data which can be used for the assessment of learning of our general education curriculum, academic programs, and the university as a whole. We are excited about the potential of this system, but we realize that we are far behind where we wish to be in its implementation.

In the 2009 report of a visit the team [expressed concern](#) that some academic departments were not as engaged with the NMHU Student Assessment Academy Project as are others and that departmental implementation of student assessment was still uneven, with some departments are utilizing the Assessment Handbook guidelines more effectively than others. The team also [noted that](#) knowledge of the Voluntary System of Accountability and the Collegiate Learning Assessment was minimal.

There certainly has been improvement in these areas, as documented in this section. However, departmental understanding and utilization of the new system is still uneven. We expect this to improve this fall, after all programs receive feedback from their peers on their assessment plans and reports. We also confidently expect that, starting this fall, the body of assessment data stored in Banner will be large and robust enough to allow for both the university-wide and desegregated analyses that this system was designed to produce. By the time of our next visit, in 2019-2020, our assessment system should be fully implemented, widely understood, and producing high-quality data and analyses that are consistently used to guide university planning and improve student learning outcomes.

Highlands continues to struggle with improving the retention and graduation rates of our students, as was recognized in [2009 team report](#). These have not improved since the last comprehensive visit. We strongly believe that a major factor in this continued struggle is the lack of a formally adopted, comprehensive retention plan to guide long-term, high-quality retention initiatives. We have a [draft plan](#), and several major initiatives have already been implemented or are underway (the Freshmen Year Experience program and the adopted of Degree Works are two examples) but these initiatives

require coordination at an administrative level.

The new President of Highlands, Sam Minner, has been [given six goals by the NMHU Board of Regents](#). One of them is to develop and implement an effective student retention plan. At the time of this writing the President is preparing an Enrollment Management Plan that will include student retention. This plan should be available in the near future. Highlands is committed to ensuring that any students who enrolls here is on a strong path to a degree.

Sources

- 1500 20091030 Continued Accreditation - Team Report
- 1500 20091030 Continued Accreditation - Team Report (page number 18)
- 1500 20091030 Continued Accreditation - Team Report (page number 21)
- Assessment Handbook 2014-2015
- NMHU Draft Retention Plan 2015
- The Las Vegas Optic July 5 2015

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. The institution has the fiscal and human resources and physical and technological infrastructure sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered.

The university's resources come in many different forms. In this section we will specifically cover economic resources, faculty and staff, facilities, and technological resources.

Economic Resources

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. Each year Highlands submits financial information to the HLC, which is then used to develop a composite financial index (CFI). For FY2012 that index fell below the threshold used by the HLC to identify institutions experiencing financial difficulties. In the Financial Indicators Report, Highlands documented that at least part of the problem arose from errors in the calculation of depreciation and capitalization costs, however, these were not determined to be the primary factor. The primary factors behind the deteriorating financial indicators were: a five million dollar overrun in the construction of the new student union building due to a poor performing general contractor, their termination and costs for a replacement contractor, which was covered with financial reserves. Additional factors included declining state appropriations due to the nationwide recession; decreases in funds received from federal grants and contracts; a one million dollar investment in the Highlands Stable Isotopes (HSI) project, which has just started producing revenue; and declining enrollments.

While the University has acted to reduce operating expenses, those reductions have not matched the

declines in state appropriations and funds from grants and contracts. This has resulted in a net operating loss in FY10-FY12. Those losses were covered through financial reserves, which, along with other demands on reserves listed above, have resulted in reserve funds that are below a level that is healthy for the University. The preliminary ending financials for the University composite financial indicator could result in “Above the Zone,” which is good news. However, these figures are preliminary and we are still in the middle of our annual audit. All financial indicators look positive for the University. The University is still concerned with its financial outlook and will continue to address this with prudent financial practices over the next several years. The conclusion of the previous HLC review was that the situation was not severe enough to require action. The [review](#) stated:

“Even though the University expects their CFI to remain ‘Below the Zone’ and given the positive outlook for the State of New Mexico in regards to state allocation and the revenue outlook for HSI, the team feels that there is nothing immediately dire that warrants immediate attention from the HLC. Most of the decline with the CFI is attributed to the \$1,000,000 investment with HSI, the \$5,000,000 overage of a capital expenditure, stagnant enrollment and reductions in state allocation.”

Budget Overview

Currently Highlands receives funding from several sources:

- State of New Mexico general fund appropriations
- Tuition and fees revenues collected from enrolling students
- External funding from research activities involving grants and contracts
- Interest and investment income
- Sales and services revenue from auxiliary enterprises on the campus
- Other revenue
- Capital grants

Total revenues excluding capital grants have increased by 1.9% from FY08 to FY14 and 4.2% during the last three years of that time period. These modest increases overall disguise the large degree of fluctuation in our revenues due to the recession. State general fund revenue still has not recovered to FY08 levels and revenue from grants and contracts has been declining.

Change in Total Revenues in Thousands, FY08 to FY14

	FY08	FY09	FY10	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY14	7-yr change	3-yr change
State general fund	35,511	33,241	31,268	28,371	27,606	29,218	30,124	-17.9%	8.4%
Tuition and fees	7,984	8,678	8,025	8,982	10,470	10,915	11,412	30.0%	8.3%
Grants/contracts	15,514	17,065	19,315	18,690	15,886	16,685	15,239	-1.8%	-4.2%
Sales/services/other	2,915	4,050	3,866	7,884	6,630	6,388	5,752	49.3%	-15.3%
Interest and investment income	787	-670	1,418	1,430	676	1,201	1,402	43.9%	51.8%

Capital appropriations	5,761	5,975	10,141	10,292	2,840	330	230	-	-
								2404.8%	1134.8%
Total Revenue	68,472	68,339	74,033	75,649	64,108	64,737	64,159	-6.7%	0.1%
Total Revenue w/o Capital Appropriations	62,711	62,364	63,892	65,357	61,268	64,407	63,929	1.9%	4.2%

Source: NMHU Audit Reports [FY08](#), [FY09](#), [FY10](#), [FY11](#), [FY12](#), [FY13](#), [FY14](#)

As a result of our revenue declines, along with the issues with capital outlays for the Student Union Building discussed earlier, Highlands has instituted measures to decrease our operating expenses.

Change in Total Operating Expenses in Thousands, FY08 to FY14

	FY08	FY09	FY10	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY14	7-yr change	3-yr change
Total Operating Expenses	60,745	69,694	73,713	74,181	67,247	63,205	63,106	-14.4%	-6.2%

Source: NMHU Audit Reports [FY08](#), [FY09](#), [FY10](#), [FY11](#), [FY12](#), [FY13](#), [FY14](#)

Even given the decreases in operating expenses Highlands has had to rely upon reserve funds to meet expenses, resulting in a decrease in net assets. This trend has been halted over the last three years, but we have not yet been able to replace those assets. As a result the university's ending cash balance has suffered a serious decline.

Net Assets in Thousands, FY08 to FY14

	FY08	FY09	FY10	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY14	7-yr change	3-yr change
Net Assets	76,192	73,598	72,621	72,644	67,899	68,666	67,907	-6.5%	0.0%

Source: NMHU Audit Reports [FY08](#), [FY09](#), [FY10](#), [FY11](#), [FY12](#), [FY13](#), [FY14](#)

Ending Cash Balance in Thousands, FY08 to FY14

	FY08	FY09	FY10	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY14	7-yr change	3-yr change

Ending Cash Balance	43,673	27,276	30,689	22,357	17,631	6,859	7,806	-74.6%	-55.7%
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Source: NMHU Audit Reports [FY08](#), [FY09](#), [FY10](#), [FY11](#), [FY12](#), [FY13](#), [FY14](#)

State Funding for Higher Education

In 2012, New Mexico began a major change in the [state funding formula for higher education](#). Consistent with the state’s commitment to participation in the Complete College American initiative, the funding formula was changed to reflect a heavy emphasis on performance outcome measures. While the previous funding formula had emphasized the number of student credit hours generated at each institution, the new formula dropped that metric and replaced it with the number of student credit hours completed. In addition, [the new formula](#) added three new outcome measures, the number of degrees awarded (with different funding levels associated with the different degree levels), the number of degrees awarded in STEM-H fields (STEM plus health), and the number of degrees awarded to students who were Pell grant eligible (a measure of success with at-risk students).

Each year a specific percentage of overall state funding is allocated according to the rate of growth institutions demonstrate on the outcome measures. Some of this funding can be new funding, but a portion will always be a reallocation of funds awarded to the institution the previous year. These aspects of the formula have proven challenging for two reasons. 1) Since institutions that were already excelling on a specific measure may have little room for growth, they will do poorly under a formula that awards only growth. 2) Since the formula includes a reallocation of funds from the previous year, there is the potential that even if an institution demonstrates slight growth on all the measures, the institution could ultimately lose funding if their rate of growth is less than the average across the state.

These changes to the state funding formula for higher education have had the unintended result of impeding some aspects of institutional strategic planning. It is difficult to determine what effects institutional changes will have on state funding for the institution. For example, at Highlands when departments propose new academic programs they are required to project the revenues to the institution that would be generated by the new program, including increased revenues from state appropriations. That is impossible to do under the new funding formula since any increase in SCH or degrees awarded would only generate new revenue if that increase were larger than the average increase demonstrated by the other state institutions. New Mexico has been working to address these issues. For example, the [Legislative Finance Commission](#) has included two guidelines to the formula:

- Hold Harmless – for institutions that have increased award production over time (i.e., such institutions shall not be harmed through the re-distribution of performance funding even if their increase is lower than the state average)
- Stop/Loss – limits loss of funding for institutions that have failed to increase award production over time

Even with these guidelines, however, it remains extremely difficult to project how much, if any, increase in state funding might result from a new academic program or changes to an existing program.

The uncertainty in the funding formula is made even more complicated by the uncertainty in predicting state revenue growth. New Mexico depends heavily upon oil and gas revenues, and these are notoriously difficult to predict with any accuracy even in the relatively short term.

Human Resources

Even with the reductions in operating expenses Highlands has remained focused on our primary mission of instruction and student support. Highlands has not engaged in any reductions in force, and our number of tenured/tenure-track faculty and full-time staff have remained within the same basic range for the past five years, even given our drop in enrollments.

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Tenured/Tenure-Track Faculty	96	90	92	99	93
Full-time Staff	373	355	355	386	365

Source: NMHU Factbook 2010-2011, [NMU Factbook 2011-2012](#), [NMHU Factbook 2012-2013](#), [NMHU Factbook 2013-2014](#), [NMHU Factbook 2014-2015](#)

Campus Physical Environment

Highlands University continues to invest heavily in improvements to its campus, including the development of the [NMHU Master Plan](#), an effort that began in 2009. In the summer of 2010 the Master Plan was completed and approved by the NMHU Board of Regents. As part of the development of the plan it was found that Highlands has adequate classroom space for an additional one thousand students. The plan reported on the condition of each building and the estimated cost of bringing each building to acceptable building standards.

One of the most interesting aspects of the campus master plan is that it addresses the physical points of entry between the Highlands campus and the rest of the Las Vegas community. The plan identifies several major points of entry (such as 8th Street and National Avenue, and 9th Street and Washington Avenue), which introduce travelers to the university. The plan discusses the placement of buildings, signage, lighting, and landscaping that will highlight these areas as distinctive and welcoming introductions to the campus.

Capital projects completed and planned range from the construction of large scale buildings, such as our new residence hall, our new student union, the renovation of the Lora Shields Science Building and the planned renovation of the historic Trolley Building, to small enhancements upgrading the look and feel of the campus, such as improved signage and lighting. Together, these projects have helped revitalize the campus, allowing us to better meet the needs of the Highlands' community. The residence hall, student union, and Lora Shields projects were all awarded [Leeds Certifications](#).

During the 2012 legislative session, the University's Board of Regents and Administration made the renovation of the "Trolley Building" their top capital priority and a general obligation bond was passed providing \$6 million for the project. An additional \$2.3 million in severance tax bonds was approved in 2013 bringing the available balance to \$8.3 million. This historic building is envisioned as the new home for the University's successful media arts program. The Las Vegas Railroad and Power Company Building, or Trolley Building, was erected in 1905. The building is listed in the State Register of Cultural Properties and the National Register of Historic Places. The Office of Cultural affairs has indicated it is pleased to support New Mexico Highlands University's efforts to repair and reuse this structure. The idea of using a historic building to house a cutting-edge technology program is one way that Highlands honors its history and culture while at the same time immersing its students in 21st century educational opportunities.

The facilities currently used by the Media Arts Department are in poor condition and have never been

optimally functional as academic housing for this program. Classroom and studio space is inadequate and the program is desperately short of office space for new faculty. The current facility does not support the technological character of the program adequately. Additionally, program expansion is impossible due to space constraints. NMHU anticipates significant growth in this area once the building is renovated to provide adequate studio and classroom space. The Trolley building will be designed to meet LEED Silver certification.

Technological Infrastructure

Highlands has emphasized [developing and maintaining](#) a high level of classroom technology. Currently 95% of NMHU's classrooms are equipped with a Smart board and projector for instructional use. The University also maintains 226 computers (or related devices) in classroom computer labs. In addition, the following technological resources have either been implemented since 2010 or are scheduled for the 2015-2016 academic year.

Network and Shared Resources

- Network: Applied for a Cyber-Infrastructure Grant that will allow for an Independent Research Network. The approach is twofold as it will attract research faculty and provide NMHU with a robust secondary network.
- Bandwidth: Since 2009, ITS@NMHU gradually increased the network bandwidth performance from 200MB to 1GB.
- Wireless: Added 50+ wireless access points (WAPS) from 2009 to present throughout the residence halls. to provide efficient access services for students' personal computing devices. In addition within the residence halls the transition from a local area network infrastructure to a wireless will be completed by July 2015. The outcome will allow for efficient wireless access services to students utilizing their personal computing devices.
- Shared Resource: Signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with UNM for shared access with their Center for Advanced Research Computing (CARC), in addition, leverage UNM purchasing power to obtain cost savings on technology goods and services.

Software

- Banner Document Management (BDM): In an effort to improve administrative efficiencies, increase departmental access to records and reduce costs associated with the labor and storage of paper records by digitally consolidating university documents. NMHU will utilize BDM for document imaging and archiving of student, employee, alumni, and financial records, as well as serve as the Official Copy of record for university documents.
- Online Student Advisement: Implemented online advisement tool called Degree Works in an effort to assist students with degree planning.
- Email: Completed MS Exchange project that validated all NMHU email addresses.
- Licensing Agreement: Worked with Microsoft (MS) to ensure the transition from the legacy MS operating system to the current MS Office 2013 through an enterprise agreement. Secured the following site licenses for Adobe Acrobat, Creative Cloud, and AutoCAD for campus use.

Security

- Physical: Increased the number of campus security cameras and code blue poles for student and staff security.
- Network: Integrated a web filter called Iron Port that protect faculty, staff, and student records and research from cyber threats, while maintaining institutional compliance with regulations

and policy.

- Antivirus: Converted to an antivirus solution called Forefront to protect NMHU end users from virus and spyware attacks ensuring uptime throughout the NMHU staff and student's public computing environment.
- User Authentication: Obtain 100% compliance with both student and staff with single sign on access through the implementation of MS Active Directory

Teaching and Learning

- Technology Integration: Worked with Educational Outreach Services (EOS) to migrate away from an ITV platform to a cloud base video system i.e., Zoom allowing the offering of additional courses for students, in addition to, assisting EOS with the implementation of Turnitin a plagiarism preventive tool along with the implementation of Desire2Learn (D2L).

2015-16 Scheduled Improvement Planning

- Hardware Infrastructure Assessment: During 2015, multiple computer labs were assessed and it was determined that a replacement plan should be developed and executed next year for 2016-2017.
- Data Cabling Upgrade: All residence halls' data cabling will be upgraded from CAT 3 to CAT 6 to meet the data and video demands of the students currently residing in the halls.
- Business and Power Continuity Assessment: During 2015 an assessment was performed that identified a significant number of faulty power supply units. A deployment schedule was created and the units will be deployed upon arrival of order shipment. To minimize network downtime NMHU will explore the utilization of a network monitoring tool i.e., PRTG to address outages and system bottlenecks.

5.A.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.

The Constitution of the State of New Mexico, [Article XII, Section 11](#), specifically establishes NMHU as a state institution of higher education. As a public, non-profit 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 NMHU Board of [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."

5.A.3. The goals incorporated into mission statements or elaborations of mission statements are realistic in light of the institution's organization, resources, and opportunities.

The [NMHU Mission Statement](#), adopted by the Board of Regents in October of 2008, is: *Education through teaching, research, and service.* [Our strategic goals are:](#)

- Strategic Goal I: Advance knowledge and promote student success.
- Strategic Goal II: Promote a respectful and stimulating living and learning environment.
- Strategic Goal III: Promote the educational, social, cultural, and economic advancement as well as the environmental sustainability of the region.
- Strategic Goal IV: Develop effective and efficient academic and administrative processes,

systems, and structures that support continuous improvement.

- Strategic Goal V: Enhance the University’s reputation and external support.
- Strategic Goal VI: Increase student enrollment by 3% per year over the next five years.

Progress on the majority of these goals is documented throughout this Assurance Argument. The final goal, an increase in enrollment by 3% a year from 2008 to 2012, did not materialize. In fact, the goal was only met in the first year (from fall 2008 to fall 2009).

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Fall Total Enrollment	3,261	3,765	3,809	3,804	3,768	3,740	3,560

Source: [Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Research](#)

After a smaller increase in 2010, and no increase in 2011, the University began experiencing overall decreases in enrollment. These decreases have been mirrored in the majority of institutions across the state and across the nation. As of this writing, Highlands has just selected a new President and a new Dean for the College of Arts and Sciences. Developing and implementing a plan to increase enrollments will be a primary focus for these new administrators.

5.A.4. The institution’s staff in all areas are appropriately qualified and trained.

Prior to hiring any staff, the appropriate administrator develops a job description. The minimum qualifications (education and experience) are determined by the administrator. 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 trainings on an annual basis. The trainings conducted during the past year have covered such topics as Customer Service, Conducting Meaningful Performance Evaluations, and Preventing Harassment and Discrimination in the Workplace.

The university has a generous [Educational Assistance Program](#) that allows full-time and part-time staff to enroll in university courses (up to 8 credit hours of tuition is waived) to further their education. Employees are allowed release time from work to attend one course per week.

The People Behind the Data: Henrietta Maestas

During my time at NMHU I never anticipated earning any type of degree. I came to work for NMHU as the department secretary for the School of Education and it was there I was fortunate enough to obtain a mentor who encouraged me to return to college; it was then I became passionate about obtaining a degree in business. It took me eight years to earn the degree working full-time and taking only one class a semester until I was able to handle additional credits outside of work hours. I earned a Bachelor of Business Administration with a concentration in Management, cum laude, in May of 2011. This degree allowed me to become very familiar with the world of business and prepared me for what I really wanted to pursue. After working in higher education for over eight years I decided to pursue a Master of Arts in Educational Leadership and completed the degree in May 2013. I felt this degree would best suit my desire for leadership knowledge and practice. I am currently enrolled in the doctoral program in Educational Leadership at New Mexico State University

while still employed full-time at Highlands. This semester I will continue to benefit from the Employee Assistance Program as I will be granted four hours a week to complete an internship in the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Research. I am a first generation college student and the attainment of any degree has been very meaningful for me personally and has allowed me to serve as a wonderful role model for my two young daughters.

5.A.5. The institution has a well-developed process in place for budgeting and for monitoring expense.

Highlands recently hired a new Budget Director who is developing a [new budgeting process](#) that focuses on a timely exchange of information and inclusive decision-making. This mirrors to some extent processes that have been in place in the past. Budgets are monitored through the Banner system, with unit heads and their administrative assistants having 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 reviews unit budgets on a monthly basis to ensure that actual expenditures match the budgets, and quarterly reports are provided to the university administration.

Sources

- 1500 20140306 Financial Indicators - Action Letter
- 2000 to 2014 Enrollments
- 2015 Technology Resources and Improvement Plan
- Board of Regents Policy Guide
- Employee Tuition Policy
- Factbook NMHU 2014-2015
- Financial Indicators Report Letter
- Higher Education Funding Formula Update_LFC
- Higher Education Funding Formula Update_LFC (page number 10)
- Highlands Honored for Sustainable Building Practices
- HLC Panel Analysis of Financial Report Nov 2013
- New Mexico Constitution
- New Mexico Constitution (page number 50)
- New Mexico Highlands University Budget Process Draft
- NMHU Audit Report FY2008
- NMHU Audit Report FY2009
- NMHU Audit Report FY2010
- NMHU Audit Report FY2011
- NMHU Audit Report FY2012
- NMHU Audit Report FY2013
- NMHU Audit Report FY2014
- NMHU Factbook 2011-2012
- NMHU Factbook 2012-2013
- NMHU Factbook 2013-2014
- NMHU FY 2016 Total Final Budget Submission
- NMHU FY 2016 Total Final Budget Submission (page number 6)
- NMHU Master Plan 2010
- NMHU Strategic Plan 2009

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. 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.

New Mexico Highlands University is overseen by its Board of Regents (BOR), which is composed of five members, one of whom is a New Mexico Highlands University student, appointed by the governor of the state of New Mexico. The New Mexico Higher Education Department provides oversight for all of New Mexico's state-supported post secondary institutions. The Board of Regents functions in accordance with the [Regents Policy Guide](#).

As part of the standing agenda the BOR receives regular reports from the President, Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs, Vice President for Finance and Administration, Dean of Students, Vice President for Advancement, the Faculty Senate, the Staff Advisory Senate, and the Associated Students of New Mexico Highlands University. Examples of these reports can be found in the minutes from the regular BOR meeting on [March 30th, 2015](#). All agendas and minutes from BOR meetings are posted on the NMHU website.

The BOR also makes use of subcommittees. Currently there are three subcommittees, Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and Finance and Administration. A Board member chairs each subcommittee, which typically (but not always) meet the week before any regularly scheduled BOR meeting.

5.B.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.

The New Mexico Highlands University administrative structure is illustrated in our [organizational chart](#). While that structure plays the central role in the oversight and day-to-day operations of the university, it shows only part of the governance structure of the University. That structure also includes the Board of Regents, Faculty Senate, the Staff Advisory Senate, and the Student Senate (Associated Students of New Mexico Highlands University). All of these organizations have policies and/or procedures in place to ensure regular input from each other.

As documented in section 2.C.2, the Board of Regents as part of the standing agenda receives regular written and oral reports from each of these groups. The [Faculty Senate membership](#) includes representatives from the library, the Student Senate, the Staff Advisory Senate, the Faculty Association, the University President and the Vice President for Academic Affairs. A member of the Faculty Senate is charged with attending the Student Senate meetings. Committees of the Faculty Senate regularly meet with other university constituencies. For example, the [Academic Affairs Committee membership](#) includes both the Director of Admissions (the Registrar) and the Vice President for Academic Affairs, 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.

Progress on Governance Issues

In the [report of the 2009 comprehensive](#) visit the team noted that "Team interviews confirm that the Faculty Association and Faculty Senate are unsure of how the two should function when their areas of authority and responsibility apparently overlap. More dialog will be necessary to resolve this issue which was mentioned to the Team by members of both University bodies." Significant progress on this and other governance issues has been made since the time of that visit.

Much of this progress is documented in revisions to the Faculty Handbook. The current co-chairs of the Faculty Senate report the following changes, among others:

- Changes in statements to clarify the autonomy and authority of the Schools, the College and the Departments were made to indicate areas where they have the primary authority and responsibilities and those areas where they participate in the activities.
- The entire Dean Section was revised to reflect and address the concerns of the faculty and the administration about the selection, evaluation, removal and absence of the Deans.
- The Department Chair section was revised to address concerns about the term, the eligibility and the selection process. Updates were made to reflect the current practices for evaluation of the chair, and the procedures for addressing the extended leave of absence of the chair were clarified.
- Membership on the Senate was changed to allow faculty with administrative duties to become members as long as they have faculty contracts.
- To better centralize the research activities, the Institutional Review Board and the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee were removed from the Handbook and placed in the NMHU Research Handbook associated with the Research Office.
- Considering the increasing importance of distance education, a new committee, the Instructional Technology Committee, was added.
- In response to the development of the Collective Bargaining Agreement where these areas are addressed, the following sections were removed from the Handbook: faculty personnel records, leaves, faculty benefits, salary, evaluation procedures and faculty workload.

These changes have helped to strengthen the role of the faculty in University governance and to clarify the respective roles of the Faculty Senate and Faculty Association. Representatives from both groups worked on these revisions.

5.B.3. Administration, faculty, staff, and students are involved in setting academic requirements,

policy, and processes through effective structures for contribution and collaborative effort.

The New Mexico Highlands University faculty has assumed the responsibility for framing "policies and standards that maintain the fundamental academic integrity of the University and that promote the academic interests and needs of the faculty" ([Faculty Constitution, Section IV of the NMHU Faculty Handbook](#)). Specifically, the faculty has, subject to the authority of the Board of Regents, the right and primary responsibility to review and initiate recommendations in regard to the following (from the [Faculty Constitution, Section IV of the NMHU Faculty Handbook](#)):

- Reevaluation and formulation of institutional aims.
- Creation of new colleges, schools, and departments or divisions.
- Major curricular changes.
- Maintenance of climate of academic freedom.
- Maintenance of standards and procedures of accountability concerning professional faculty ethics and responsibilities.
- The identification, recognition, and honoring of qualified recipients of honorary degrees, subject to the approval of the vice president for academic affairs and the president.
- Maintenance of requirements for admission and graduation, and the promotion of an optimal learning environment throughout the University by the establishment of standards concerning grading, appeals of grades, class attendance, examinations, academic honesty, students honors and awards, and for the approval of candidates for degrees.
- Influence on regulations affecting student life and activities.
- Actions on plans for the study of educational concerns.

The [Faculty Senate](#) exercises these responsibilities through a system of committees including the Academic Affairs Committee, Faculty Research Committee, Faculty Affairs Committee, Faculty Grievance and Reconciliation Committee, Student Affairs Committee, and Outcomes Assessment Committee, among others.

More information on this issue can be found in sections 3.A.1 and 5.B.2.

Sources

- 1500 20091030 Continued Accreditation - Team Report
- 1500 20091030 Continued Accreditation - Team Report (page number 14)
- Board of Regents 3-30-2015 Meeting Minutes
- Board of Regents Policy Guide
- Faculty Handbook
- Faculty Handbook (page number 10)
- Faculty Handbook (page number 16)
- Faculty Handbook (page number 23)
- Faculty Handbook (page number 32)
- NMHU Organizational Chart July 2015
- Revisions to the Faculty Handbook Since 2008

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 The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities.

The University's unrestricted budget is largely supported with revenues from state appropriations, tuition and fees plus some relatively minor resources. Indeed, in the current budget year, the state appropriation and tuition and fees respectively accounted for approximately [69 and 29 percent of total revenue](#).

The University's budget office, under the supervision of the Vice President for Finance and Administration, works collaboratively with the various academic and administrative units to develop the budget. The budget is developed in a way that is meant to be consistent with the University's mission and strategic goals. The [budget office's processes](#) includes the distribution of time tables, budget guidelines and instructions, which are tailored to allow departments the necessary guidance and time for the preparation of budget requests. Departments are asked to provide justification for budget increases based upon the University's mission and strategic goals.

Budget requests are reviewed based on prior year spending and priorities for the coming year. Such priorities typically include new programs and initiatives, salary increases and major capital improvements. The University President presents these at one or more campus wide forums, inviting comment and feedback before making a final budget recommendation to the Board of Regents. Further oversight is provided by the Faculty Senate's [Financial Planning Committee](#).

Highlands financial management follows state and university policies, which require quarterly financial reports to the Board of Regents. The Board has constituted a [Budget and Finance sub-committee](#), which closely reviews these reports as well as the [annual financial audit](#).

Points 5.C.2 through 5.C.5 will be discussed together in order to avoid duplication and increase coherency.

In the [2009 HLC Report of a Comprehensive Visit](#) the visiting team recommended a monitoring report on strategic planning and finances. Specifically the team asked that "attainment of the second year strategic goals, year-end budget reports, and audited reviews for Year 1 and Year 2 of the

NMHU Five-Year Strategic Plan document how the budget has been allocated and spent to achieve goals articulated in the strategic plan."

The rationale for the requested monitoring report was as follows: "The Team concurs that New Mexico Highlands University has resolved the executive governance and financial challenges stated by the 2000 Team and the 2004 focused review Team. The University provided evidence to this Team that it has turned its attention to well documented strategic goals and that it has used an inclusive process to complete a strategic plan to address those goals. NMHU should provide the Higher Learning Commission with strategic plan evaluative data which will characterize the University's progress through the second year of this plan. As well, fiscal reports should clearly indicate that funding has been made available to assure attainment of these goals."

At the time of the fall 2009 visit NMHU had just adopted our current [Five-Year Strategic Plan](#), and by the end of that semester unit-specific strategic plans had been developed by each unit at the University (see, for example, the [School of Business Administration](#) and [International Education](#) unit-specific plans for 2010). During the 2010-2011 academic year, the Strategic Planning Committee devised a [process for collecting data](#) from the individual units to assess progress on implementing the strategic plan. Units were asked to report on five action steps from their unit-specific plans and provide evidence regarding the current status of those initiatives (see, for example, the progress reports from the [Library](#) and [Media Arts Department](#)) .

The monitoring report was submitted in August of 2012. [The HLC response](#) to the monitoring report was positive and no further reports were required. The [team concluded](#) that "The monitoring report submitted by New Mexico Highlands University provided strong evidence of the effective implementation of the strategic plan and the many successful initiatives that flowed from the plan. As well, the financial issues, particularly with respect to State funding, were clearly set forward, as well as the University's approach to those challenges." They noted that in dealing with those financial challenges "NMHU has taken as its conscious priorities the following: minimal impact on the core mission, minimal impact on faculty and staff, and maintenance of the University's forward momentum."

As documented in section 5.A., Highlands has experienced increased financial difficulties since the submission of the 2012 monitoring report, but our priorities have remained the same. The very recent loss of funding for our Student Support Services program presents a serious challenge to those priorities that we are currently trying to address.

In relation to strategic planning, after reviewing all of the unit progress reports submitted in 2011-2012, the [Strategic Planning Committee concluded](#) that "the current action steps included in the plan do not serve their purpose of guiding strategic activities among the university units. Units are successfully engaged in activities that clearly support the objectives and goals of the plan, but those activities are not reflected in the current action steps". As a result, the committee recommended that the 2009 Strategic Plan be reviewed and modified in the fall of 2012. In fact the committee never met after the spring of 2012 and the strategic planning process was not continued. The reason for this seemed clear to many involved. The planning process had never been sufficiently linked to decision-making at the University. While the unit-based activities connected to the 2009 Strategic Plan continued, without a clear purpose the unit-specific plans and reports did not materialize.

Enrollment Planning

Highlands, [like many institutions across the country](#), has been experiencing a decline in student enrollments over the past few years that has adversely effected our finances and the vibrancy of our

main campus.

[Fall End of Term Enrollments](#)

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Total	3484	3726	3604	3621	3765	3806	3809	3768	3740	3560

There are signs that the downward trend has halted. As of the first day of classes in the fall 2015 semester [enrollments are up](#) by 2% in both headcount and student credit hours. In addition, the fall 2015 first-time, full-time, degree-seeking freshmen cohort currently stands at 301, compared to 274 in 2014.

The WICHE [Knocking on the College Door Report](#), 8th Edition, predicts that the number of high school graduates, which had been declining since 2008-09, will now begin to increase in New Mexico until 2024-25. Specifically, they are predicting that in [New Mexico](#) "graduating classes will then increase by about 1% on average annually through 2024-25, when they will reach a new high of 22,300 before dipping back in the last several projected years."

Thanks to our [Campus Master Plan](#), the stability of our academic programs, and the overall stability of our faculty, Highlands has a good understanding of our current capacity and our capacity for growth. Unfortunately state funding has been and remains difficult to predict, largely due to the fluctuations in oil prices that drive a large portion of state revenue. Declining enrollments that we are just beginning to address and the need to build up financial reserves contribute to difficulties in predicting what resources will be available over the next few years.

Current efforts underway at the University, including our ongoing strategic planning process, our new President, and the hiring of a new Budget Director (filling a previously empty position) should combine to provide a clear plan for growing both enrollments and revenue and ensuring that those efforts and others across the University are consciously directed toward achievement of our strategic goals.

Sources

- 1500 20091030 Continued Accreditation - Team Report
- 1500 20091030 Continued Accreditation - Team Report (page number 28)
- Board of Regents Policy Guide
- Board of Regents Policy Guide (page number 16)
- Budget Process and Instructions FY14
- Census Report on College Enrollment Decrease September 2014
- Educate to Career
- Enrollment Report First Day of Fall Semester 2014 2015
- Faculty Handbook
- Faculty Handbook (page number 31)
- FEEDBACK FORM FOR UNIT SPECIFIC PLANS 2010
- Higher Education Department - College Readiness in New Mexico 2014
- International Education Strategic Plan 2010
- Library Unit Specific Strategic Plan Progress Report 2011-2012
- Media Arts Unit Specific Strategic Plan Progress Report 2011-2012
- New Mexico Highlands University Budget Process Draft

- NMHU 2012 Strategic Planning and Finances Monitoring Report HLC Reponse
- NMHU 2012 Strategic Planning and Finances Monitoring Report HLC Reponse (page number 4)
- NMHU Audit Report FY2014
- NMHU FY 2016 Total Final Budget Submission
- NMHU Master Plan 2010
- NMHU Monitoring Report-Strategic Planning & Finances
- NMHU Monitoring Report-Strategic Planning & Finances (page number 16)
- NMHU Strategic Plan 2009
- Recent Enrollment Trends at NMHU
- School of Business Administration Strategic Plan 2010
- Strategic Planning Process at New Mexico Highlands University 2010
- WICHE Knocking At The College Door 8th Edition
- WICHE Knocking At The College Door 8th Edition (page number 10)
- WICHE Knocking At The College Door New Mexico 8th Edition

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 The institution develops and documents evidence of performance in its operations.

Effective evaluation requires clear, measurable goals, and accurate data to assess progress toward those goals. This has been, and continues to be, a major focus at Highlands. One major effort has been our involvement in a process coordinated by the New Mexico Higher Education Department (HED) to assess the effectiveness of higher education state-wide. This includes a decades-long program of reporting common and institution-specific performance measures to the HED, New Mexico Department of Finance and Administration, and State Legislature. Those measures include bi-annual reports to the state legislature and the yearly publication of the Council of University [Presidents' Performance Effectiveness Reports](#). The HED then uses these data and others to publish its [annual report](#) on the state of higher education in New Mexico.

Taken together, these efforts have resulted in a good, ongoing understanding of the state of higher education in New Mexico, and have allowed the state to develop and support focused initiatives, such as the dual-credit program and other P-20 initiatives, targeted programs to address documented workforce needs in the state, such as the Nursing Program, an increase in articulation agreements among the universities to allow for seamless transfer, and support for Complete College America initiatives such as the elimination of traditional remedial courses. However, there are still concerns within HED and the state universities that the current performance measures give an incomplete and somewhat inaccurate picture of higher education in the state. The only graduation rate included in the performance measures is the six-year graduation rate of students who began at an institution as first-time freshmen. This exclusive focus on first-time freshmen graduation rates ignores the reality of a state where many students attend multiple institutions of higher education before graduation. This is illustrated by the fact that, at NMHU, at least 70% of our undergraduate degree recipients begin at Highlands as transfer students, not as first time freshmen ([NMHU Undergraduate Degree Recipients, 2014-2015](#)). In addition, none of the current performance measures address the issue of post-baccalaureate education.

For these reasons, the New Mexico Higher Education Department, in collaboration with the Council of University Presidents and the institutional research offices of the state universities, are engaged in a process of *identifying new performance measures*. The state is considering the adoption of new measures that are in alignment with Complete College America initiatives and with the emphasis on performance-based funding in the state's higher education funding formula. Individual institutions also have the opportunity to propose new measures. Highlands is in the process of proposing a measure based upon [degrees per enrollment](#) as we believe that provides a more comprehensive picture of the activities of the university than just first-time freshmen graduation rates. If approved by the NMHED we would begin reporting on this measure in FY 2017.

New performance measures mean little, however, without useful data that can be used to set goals. In New Mexico, each university has a state-selected set of comparison institutions which are used to generate data to set performance benchmarks. The comparison groups are to a large degree institution specific, and are published at the end of the Performance Effectiveness Reports. For many years, a great deal of concern was expressed that these comparison groups were not appropriate for the institutions. For example, Highlands' comparison group was made up of institutions that began as normal schools, resulting in a group of institutions that did not share our emphasis on open-enrollment or our robust and varied graduate programs. In 2009 the New Mexico Higher Education Department set as an educational priorities *the development of new comparison groups* for each state university so that reasonable data for performance benchmarks can be obtained.

We began this process at Highlands by asking key stakeholders to prioritize the institutional characteristics that they felt should be used in identifying our peer group. The final list of characteristics included open-enrollment policies, minority serving, percent of undergraduate Pell grant recipients, and a high percentage of graduate enrollments. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Research developed a list of all public, master's-granting institutions in the country along with IPEDS data on each of the variables listed above. That list was then reviewed by an ad-hoc committee of the Faculty Senate and the administration, and a final list of new peer institutions was jointly selected. This inclusive process was considered necessary since the make-up of our comparison group has implications for every aspect of the University, including benchmarks for learning outcomes, graduation rates, enrollment, staffing patterns, funding goals, and salaries. The new peer group was approved by the University in 2009-2010 and by the HED in 2010. Data from those institutions has since been used to develop appropriate benchmarks for the University in key performance areas (see, for example, the [Performance Effectiveness Report](#)).

Developing clear, measurable goals with appropriate benchmarks is just one part of successful evaluation. The university also needs to have consistent access to accurate data by which to judge our attainment of those goals. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Research has primary responsibility for ensuring that data relevant to all aspects of the University is publicly available to all constituents. The importance of this for a well-functioning university is illustrated by the fact that one of the eight benchmarks identified in the report of the 2000 NCA accreditation visit was specifically directed at institutional research. Since then Highlands has made institutional research a priority. The Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (OIER) now has a full-time director and two full-time institutional researchers. The OIER developed a mission that specifically documented the role of the OIER in providing data for institutional assessment and planning. Since that time, the OIER has focused on providing a wealth of data on their web site related to enrollments, degrees awarded, graduation rates, university publications, the VSA College Portrait, and other reports related to issues important to the University.

The OIER also serves as the public repository of the results of academic outcomes assessment. Assessment of our academic programs, core curriculum, and student learning is covered in detail under Core Component 4. Evaluation of other units at the University is generally conducted at the level of the individual units. For example, the professional schools (business, education, and social work) must maintain and report specific assessment processes to their respective accrediting agencies in order to maintain specialty accreditation status. Many other programs at the University are funded through grants and have specific evaluation procedures. The effectiveness of the Business Office is measured through its ability to allocate adequate resources for the functioning of the University and manage the budget appropriately and transparently. Its ability to meet these goals is documented in Core Component 5.A of this report, and through the yearly audit reports available on our website. Donnelly Library has specific goals that are developed in accordance with the Association of College and Research Libraries and the American Library Association Standards. Their progress in meeting

these standards is documented in their yearly reports (more detail on Donnelly Library is presented in Core Component 3.D).

5.D.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.

Throughout this document are examples of organizational changes that have been implemented in the past several years in order to increase institutional effectiveness at New Mexico Highlands. The most important of these may be our adoption of an evidence-based, comprehensive plan for a First-Year Experience program, described Criterion 4.C.2 and 4.C.3. Our extensive efforts in developing an integrated, university-wide outcomes assessment program are described in Criterion 3.B.2, and our intent to finally implement the Center for Teaching Excellence as described in Criterion 3.C.4.

In addition, Highlands has been making a concentrated effort to improve organizational communication and efficiency through the implementation of two programs designed to increase our use of online, paperless processing of all documents. This effort is particularly key to meeting the needs of students, faculty and staff at disparate geographic locations. This includes a completely online application process for all students (except for International students), the implementation of the Banner Document Management System (DMS), and the implementation of Banner Workflow. Workflow is an application in Banner that lets us automate, simplify, and direct the flow of Banner information and procedures across the university. It uses maps of business processes to speed completion of tasks while ensuring consistency and accuracy.

The Banner Document Management System (DMS) is the only imaging and document management systems that launches documents and content directly from Banner. Several departments are currently using DMS. Human Resources is fully utilizing the system. The Business Office is using it for some process; for example Purchasing is set up so that when a Purchase Order is “printed,” it goes straight into DMS. The Registrar’s Office is in the process of using it but since this requires scanning older transcripts into the system this is taking some time. Other departments have been trained in the use of the DMS but have not yet begun fully using it.

Sources

- Council of University Presidents Performance Effectiveness Report 2014
- Degree Productivity at New Mexico Highlands University
- New Mexico Higher Ed Depart Annual Report 2013
- NMHU Degree Recipients Summer 2014 through Spring 2015

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

Highlands has a great many high-quality resources that allow us to meet our mission. Those include:

- A talented, well-qualified, stable faculty
- Dedicated and well-trained support staff
- Academic programs that support a strong liberal arts education while meeting the specific interests and needs of our students and the State of New Mexico
- A long history of capital improvement projects that have resulted in an attractive campus that is well-designed to meet the needs of our students, faculty and staff
- A campus Master Plan that accurately describes our facilities and capacity, and guides our capital projects
- A high-quality technology infrastructure that undergoes continual, planned maintenance and improvement

Strategic planning and stable finances have been, and continue to be, challenging for New Mexico Highlands University. HLC teams from both the 2000 and 2009 comprehensive visits recommended monitoring reports on both of these issues. While the 2004 and 2012 monitoring reports both demonstrated significant progress and were accepted by the HLC, it is our assessment here at Highlands that the progress demonstrated in those reports was not maintained.

Opportunities for Improvement

There is wide-spread acknowledgement among the Highlands community that we can no longer operate under a system of sporadic and inconsistent strategic planning. We absolutely must have a well-developed, widely-supported strategic plan that is actively utilized to guide decision-making at the University. That plan must be supported by decision-making processes, including budget development processes that are inclusive, transparent, and clearly linked to the strategic plan. Finally, all of this must be institutionalized to the point where it is an accepted part of our daily operations. It must become the basis for how Highlands University works. All of these suggestions are consistent with the five proposed Priorities and revised Core Values recommended by the Strategic Planning Steering Committee for *HU Vision 2020*.

The new Strategic Plan must bring into central focus the need to increase enrollments, improve student retention and graduation, and strengthen the relationship between the University and the communities it serves.

The New Mexico Highlands Board of Regents has acknowledged the urgency of these needs in [the six goals](#) set for the new President:

- Develop a plan for outreach to the community, faculty, students and staff that will provide opportunities for effective communication with all constituencies. The plan should emphasize

the accessibility and visibility of the president.

- Develop and implement an effective marketing and recruitment campaign for the university, in other words tell the Highlands story.
- Establish student-centric events and programs on campus.
- Evaluate the senior management team and develop a professional development plan for that team.
- Develop and implement an effective student retention plan.
- And prepare a plan to improve the academic reputation and standing of the university and increase the quality of student learning at the university

The President has already begun to work on these goals through the development of a comprehensive enrollment management plan. At the same time, the Provost is heading the efforts to develop the new strategic plan. Both of these initiatives should have demonstrated progress by the time of our comprehensive visit in September.

This is an exciting time for New Mexico Highlands University.

Sources

- 1500 20040322 Focused Visit Mandated - Team Report
- 1500 20040322 Focused Visit Mandated - Team Report (page number 2)
- 1500 20091030 Continued Accreditation - Team Report
- 1500 20091030 Continued Accreditation - Team Report (page number 18)
- NMHU 2012 Strategic Planning and Finances Monitoring Report HLC Reponse
- The Las Vegas Optic July 5 2015