



NMHU HLC Probation Areas and Resolutions, Fall 2017

Evidence linked at www.nmhu.edu/hlc

Core Component 1.A: a broadly endorsed and formally approved mission statement including mission documents that guide university operations.

Completed: A new mission statement, vision, core values, and strategic goals were approved by all campus groups and the Board of Regents in spring 2016. The HU Vision 2020 has been broadly distributed to campus, including on the website, in the catalog, in posters and business cards, and in the strategic planning and budgeting process.

Key Documents: **HU Vision 2020; 2016-2017 mission accomplishments.**

Core Component 2.A: 1) a personnel handbook for visiting and adjunct faculty approved by the Board of Regents and 2) evidence of development and approval processes consistent with shared governance procedures at the university.

Completed: The contingent faculty handbook was approved by the Board of Regents in spring 2016, after approval by the Faculty Senate and General Faculty. It is available on the faculty resources web page and has been e-mailed to all contingent faculty.

Key Documents: **Contingent faculty handbook.**

Core Component 3.C: 1) formal approval of an institutional process and policy for evaluation of visiting/adjunct faculty; and 2) a coherent plan for orientation and professional updating of visiting/adjunct faculty along with evidence of implementation of the plan.

Completed: The Contingent Faculty Handbook contains both an evaluation process and an orientation process, both of which have been implemented from fall 2016-fall 2017.

Key Documents: **Contingent faculty handbook; contingent faculty evaluation checklist.**

Core Component 3.D with regard to the additional locations: 1) adequate budget allocations for effective operations, teaching and learning; 2) adequate physical facilities for teaching and learning; and 3) appropriate attention to student concerns about these matters.

Completed: Our most complicated probation area, this resulted from a mixture of Highlands not showing adequate evidence of services at the centers and lack of responsiveness to student concerns. In the assurance argument, we showed the full extent of budgets, physical facilities, and faculty and staff resources. The Farmington and Santa Fe centers completed action plans to enhance services. For responsiveness, we launched the Power of Service campaign, the Business Office helpline, and created a student services coordinator position.

Key Documents: **Assurance Argument 3.D.; Santa Fe and Farmington action plans; responsiveness initiatives; student services coordinator job description.**

Core Component 4.B with regard to the additional locations and the main campus: 1) a formally approved assessment plan for informal (not embedded into degree programs) co-curricular programs/experiences that the university claims contribute to student learning outcomes and 2) the plan must include clearly stated goals, evidence-based methodology for assessment, a regular assessment schedule, a report template that includes "closing the loop" and dissemination of assessment information to key stakeholders, an incorporation of co-curricular program assessment into the officially approved university assessment handbook.

Completed: The co-curricular assessment process was formally approved in fall 2016 and included in the assessment handbook. All co-curricular programs have completed assessments for the 2016-2017 academic year and are beginning the 2017-2018 cycle.

Key Documents: **Assessment handbook; co-curricular outcomes assessment reports.**

Core Component 4.C: 1) formally approved 2015-19 plan for improving student retention, persistence and completion; 2) integrated planning process and endorsement/approval by required governance groups and internal officials in development of the plan; and 3) realistic and justified goals and objectives, robust evaluation and design, institutional coordination and oversight, adequate resource allocations, and progress in implementation.

Completed: The retention plan, including clear retention goals, was approved by the Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, Student Senate, and Board of Regents in fall 2016. The plan is being implemented by the retention advisory council. The council created a retention plan update and retention accomplishments for 2016-2017 in fall 2017.

Key Documents: **Retention plan; 2016-2017 retention update; 2016-2017 retention accomplishments; participation in HLC Persistence and Completion Academy.**

Core Component 5.A: 1) University accomplishments, plans and results in increasing and stabilizing its CFI, primary reserve ratio, and university reserves; 2) use of new institutional capital planning strategies demonstrating progress to keep projects on time, within scope and on budget and 3) mission-driven, integrated and transparent strategic planning and budgeting decisions.

Completed: VPFA Max Baca has been working to improve our CFI and reserves; CFI improved from .51 in FY14 to 1.84 in FY15 and 2.37 in FY16. Director of facilities has created a procedure for building renovations and construction over \$1 million, which has been approved by the Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, the Campus Budget and Planning Committee, and the Board of Regents. These procedures were put in place for the restoration of the Trolley Barn, which was completed on time and on budget. A new strategic budgeting and strategic planning process was created and implemented in fall 2016-fall 2017, with all units/departments tying their budget requests to their strategic plans, and then prioritized by the executive management team and president.

Key Documents: Budget process; budget requests; budget priorities; Facilities Management Procedures for Building Renovation and Construction Projects Over \$1 Million; CFI information and reserves in assurance argument 5.A.

Core Component 5.B: 1) Board professional development, a self-assessment process, and engagement with the governance and HLC accreditation processes and 2) annual evidence that the Board understands and follows its fiduciary responsibilities and demonstrates policy-making in the best interest of the university.

Completed: The Board of Regents attended a professional development, including a self-assessment, with the Association of Governing Boards in fall 2016. The regents continue to meet and discuss fiduciary and policy-making in the best interest of the university, tied to the strategic plan, as demonstrated through Board of Regents packets and minutes. The Board receives regular updates on the HLC accreditation process and held a special Board of Regents meeting in September 2017 to carefully review the assurance argument.

Key Documents: Board packets; Board minutes; Board training and self-assessment.

Core Component 5.C: 1) completed integrated planning process; 2) accomplishments attained for the Strategic Plan-HU Vision 2020, as endorsed by all governance groups and approved by the Board of Regents and 3) sustained processes for strategic plan implementation, implementation of established budget procedures, and sustained accountability reporting.

Completed: After the HU Vision 2020 was approved, an annual strategic planning process was created by the Office of Academic Affairs. All departments/units have created a strategic plan aligned to the strategic goals and have made their budget requests linked to the strategic plan. The VPs have reported their main accomplishments toward Vision 2020 in the 2016-2017 mission accomplishments and have created the executive strategic plan.

Key Documents: HU Vision 2020; executive strategic plan; department and unit strategic plans; 2016-2017 mission accomplishments.



NMHU Assurance Argument Executive Summary

Component 1: Mission

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

In January 2015, Highlands launched our HU Vision 2020 process to revise our mission, vision, core values, and strategic priorities. Our previous mission, because of its simplicity and generality, lacked sufficient direction to guide university processes. Our goal was to develop a mission clearly identifying our commitment to excellence in undergraduate and graduate education, accessibility, opportunity, diversity, and to the history and culture of our region.

To lead the HU Vision 2020 process, the provost/VPAA formed a strategic planning committee composed of staff, faculty, students, administrators, and community members. Through community and campus forums and surveys, as well as dialog with the student, faculty and staff senates, we received comprehensive feedback to develop a strong vision statement, mission, values, and strategic priorities that directly speak to our heritage of opportunity and social mobility.

The Board of Regents unanimously adopted the clarified mission on February 26, 2016, and the Higher Learning Commission approved the mission statement in May 2016. The HU Alumni Board and HU Foundation Board also endorsed the mission and Vision 2020.

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

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

Core Values:

Excellence, Diversity, Accessibility, Responsiveness

Strategic Goals for 2020:

1. Highlands University will achieve academic excellence, academic integration, and student success.
2. Highlands University will achieve strategic enrollment management.
3. Highlands University will achieve a vibrant campus life.
4. Highlands University will be a community partner.
5. Highlands University will achieve technological advancement and innovation.
6. Highlands University will achieve enhanced communication and efficiency.

1.B: The mission is articulated publicly.

The New Mexico Highlands University's mission statement is included in the HU Vision 2020 and articulated publicly on our website, in our undergraduate and graduate catalogs, on posters and TV displays throughout our main campus and centers, and on cards distributed to staff, faculty, and students. In addition, our mission statement and HU Vision 2020 are readily available to the campus community through additional public documents both in print and on our website.

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

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

Aside from the 2014 formation of the Diversity Advisory Council, which endeavors to cultivate cultural competence among students, staff, faculty, and community members with the explicit intention to create and maintain an inclusive and equitable campus, Highlands celebrates diversity through a wide variety of initiatives led by students, faculty, staff, and the administration. Highlands also stresses diversity in faculty hiring, and many of our professors have diversity, equity, and social justice as a focus of their teaching and research interests. Compared to the other four-year universities in New Mexico, we have the second-highest percentage of Hispanic faculty in the state, trailing only Northern New Mexico College.

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

New Mexico Highlands actively collaborates with our external constituencies to promote beneficial collaborations in the humanities, sciences and the common good. Current partnerships include:

- Advanced Placement New Mexico
- Ben Lujan Leadership and Public Policy Institute
- Center for Education and Study of Diverse Populations
- New Mexico Forest and Watershed Restoration Institute
- New Mexico Mathematics, Engineering, and Science Achievement (NM MESA)
- Northeast Regional Education Cooperative
- Northeastern New Mexico Library Group
- Northeastern Regional Science and Engineering Fair
- La Fiesta de la Hispanidad
- Donnelly Library Reading Programs
- Kennedy Hall Gallery

In many other instances, the university asks community groups about needs that the university might help address. For example, Campus

Life responds to community needs by coordinating requests from groups that need help (i.e., Keep America Beautiful, Red Cross, Big Brother/Big Sister, Samaritan House and Salvation Army Food Drives) and communicating those needs to the student clubs.

Component 2: Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

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.

As an institution, the governing board, administration, faculty, and staff engage with policies that enforce clarity and transparency at all levels of the campus. Such policies deal with all aspects of the institution's functions, including academics, student life, finances, personnel regulations, and other issues.

Highlands is committed to making these policies easy to find for faculty, staff, and students. We have created the Faculty Resources web page, which brings together the major policy documents that affect tenure-track, tenured, full-time, and per-course instructors, including the Contingent Faculty Handbook, approved by the Faculty Senate on March 9, 2016, the General Faculty on March 23, 2016, and the Board of Regents on April 8, 2016.

For students, we revamped the Current Students web page to quickly direct them to important student services and policies. Human Resources has a web page with links to all relevant staff policies.

Financial matters at Highlands undergo several layers of scrutiny to ensure ethical procedures. Highlands employs a third-party audit firm to audit our financials every year.

In the event 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.

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.

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 maintains two web sites, an informational main site that includes information for current students, the university community, and the general public, as well as a separate site for prospective students. Highlands uses its most current catalog to populate these websites with accurate information.

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

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.

The Board of Regents has oversight of Highlands University, a public educational institution established in the New Mexico State Constitution. Five members, including a current HU student, appointed by the governor of the state of New Mexico comprise the board. No more than three can be members of the same political

party. All members, including the student member, have full voting rights on all issues. All Board of Regents deliberations and actions are closely aligned to the mission, as reflected in the publicly published Board of Regents minutes, which document all formal actions taken.

Management of actual and apparent Board conflicts is guided by the Regents Policy Guide, publicly linked from the Board of Regents web page. The Board of Regents also receive regular training from both the state of New Mexico and from the Association of Governing Boards (AGB), with the last AGB training taking place on December 7, 2016.

Section IX of the Regents Policy Guide defines the relationship between the Regents and the administration, delegating day-to-day management of the institution to the president and other administrators, and to the faculty, delegating it a substantial role in academics and administration. 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.

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

Section VI of the Regents Policy Guide identifies the Board's role in protecting the academic freedom and freedom of expression of all members of the campus community. In Section IV of the Faculty Handbook, the faculty are assigned responsibility for the preservation of academic freedom; the Faculty Handbook also defines the right of academic freedom. Academic freedom is also explicitly incorporated into Article 15 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement. The Research Handbook provides additional perspective on academic freedom in the context of research and scholarship.

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

All research conducted at New Mexico Highlands is subject to review by appropriate faculty research compliance committees. The Faculty Senate's Research Committee provides general oversight, formulates research policy, reviews proposals and allocates a limited amount of funding for faculty research and dissemination, and organizes events for the presentation of faculty and student research. The university's Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects (IRB) provides oversight for all research involving human participants conducted under the auspices of Highlands. All research proposals involving the use of human participants must be reviewed and approved by the IRB.

A number of resources are available for students to effectively navigate their research and learning, including information resources through the library's website and supplemental instruction, the university's Academic Integrity Policy, and composition courses fostering extensive discussions on the use of information resources. The university also 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.

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.

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

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

To ensure all courses and programs are current and require an appropriate level of performance, Highlands utilizes a shared governance process to create, delete, and revise any program or course. This process is overseen by the Academic Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate and outlined in Program Proposal Guidance and How to Submit Course or Program Proposal to Academic Affairs. All changes are initiated by faculty via their academic departments then reviewed and approved by the appropriate academic dean. Changes then go the Academic Affairs Committee for extensive scrutiny, discussion, and approval before finally being approved by the provost/VPAA. At every step of the process, these groups and individuals ensure that the courses and programs are current and are at the required level of performance appropriate to the degree or certificate awarded.

Faculty teaching at the centers or online are held to the same standards, hiring practices, faculty credentials, evaluation, and learning outcomes as main campus faculty. 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, and department chairs and deans are responsible for ensuring quality through appropriate evaluation of faculty, classes, and programs.

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.

Our general education curriculum has additional requirements beyond the state-mandated core, illustrating Highlands' commitment to ensuring all of our students will acquire an education that is broadly relevant to living and working in our complex, modern society. These requirements include two classes in a second language, one literature class, and two credits in physical education. The Academic Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate holds the primary responsibility for the development and assessment of the NMHU core curriculum, per the duties and responsibilities of the committee in the Faculty Handbook. In addition, and as described in the Outcomes Assessment Handbook, instructors of core curriculum courses are expected to align their learning outcomes to the university outcomes. As discussed in more detail in 4.B., Highlands has developed four fundamental traits that we believe all Highlands graduates should possess:

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

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

In addition to formal research projects, Highlands students and faculty produce a number of creative works every year. These include concerts and

performances by students from the music program and through students exhibits of artwork. Highlands is proud to be one of the few institutions in the country with an art foundry, and the biennial Iron Tribe conference, which features art exhibits and performance iron art by international and national contemporary iron artists, is held at Highlands.

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

Highlands employed 97 tenured or tenure-track faculty, including 54 tenured faculty who are required to participate in teaching, research, and service, including service on the Faculty Senate committees that oversee curriculum, academic credentials, or outcomes assessment. Of those full-time faculty, 105 out of the 138 hold a doctorate or other terminal degree. The size and scope of our tenured or tenure-track faculty, including the continuity provided by those 54 tenured faculty, give Highlands sufficient numbers to provide oversight of the curriculum, academic credentials, and assessment of student learning.

All tenure-track faculty members are evaluated annually, and all tenured faculty members are evaluated every other year. Term and per-course faculty members (or adjunct) are evaluated on a semester-by-semester basis, including classroom observations during their first semester and then recurring observations of every four semesters afterward.

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

In 2014, the faculty and administration created the Center for Teaching Excellence, devoted to supporting the professional development of instructors at Highlands. Every year, the CTE helps to organize Professional Development Week, an on-campus professional development for all faculty and staff. There are sessions on a wide variety of topics from advising to teaching strategies to cultural awareness. Sessions this year focused on utilizing our four traits (learning outcomes), outcomes assessment, curriculum mapping, faculty resources, co-curricular evaluation, mentoring indigenous students, and information on D2L and Zoom.

The annual Professional Development Week includes staff, and other activities are planned throughout the year by the Center for Teaching Excellence. Staff members receive support for their professional development in the form of webinars, seminars, workshops, training sessions, retreats, and conferences.

3.D: The institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching.

Highlands is committed to offering our students, wherever they are located, high-quality student and academic support services, many of which are focused on first-generation and students who need additional academic assistance, aligning with our mission of providing opportunity and accessibility.

While our average tuition rates are less – often significantly – than our peer institutions, our IPEDS benchmark report shows that Highlands spends a comparable amount on student services as our peer institutions, with Highlands spending \$1,761 per FTE enrollment in FY 2015, versus \$1,801 for our comparison group.

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

To maintain positive educational outcomes and consistency of services and student experiences, academics are centralized at Highlands, operating out of departments, and Highlands has made a strong commitment to assigning tenured, tenure-track, and full-time faculty to the centers.

Highlands offers a full array of student support services at each center and for our online students, with many services available in person and the rest available online or via Zoom/phone from main campus. These services include:

- new student orientations,
- academic advising,
- technology support,
- library services, and
- inclusion in campus discussions.

To be more responsive to student needs and concerns, Highlands has

- created a new customer relations coordinator position,
- designed a warm transfer protocol to ensure student inquiries are answered effectively and promptly,
- replaced personnel in Registrar's, Financial Aid, and the Business Office,
- implemented the Business Office help line,
- launched the customer service initiative,
- improved advertising of student services, and
- implemented action plans to improve center services.

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. The details of the advisement system might differ from program to program. For example, some programs have a faculty member designated for undergraduate student advisement, while other programs may distribute advisement responsibilities among all the faculty. No matter how a program chooses to handle the identification of faculty advisers, all programs are required to document contacts with students in the file and Degree Audit, and the goal is to have a minimum of one documented advising contact with each student every semester.

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

Highlands' goal of providing students with an inspiring learning environment is not restricted to the classroom. The university's co-curricular programs - which develop a student's social, intellectual, cultural, democratic, civic, and aesthetic domains - offer a variety of ways for students to enhance their educational experience.

Highlands utilizes external measures to demonstrate our claims about opportunity and outstanding education. One such report is the annual Performance Effectiveness Report produced by the New Mexico Council of University Presidents. The report compares Highlands to the other public universities in New Mexico and shows 91 percent of our students receive some sort of financial aid, much higher than comparable institutions like Eastern New Mexico or Western New Mexico. Combined with our low tuition, this makes a Highlands education accessible to the students of our region. Additionally, Hispanic Outlook Magazine regularly named Highlands as one of the top 100 schools in the country in the number of master's degrees awarded to Hispanic students. These ratings are done based upon IPEDS data. In the 2016 rating, Highlands was number 63 in the nation, ahead of schools like Harvard and University of Arizona. This ranking is particularly impressive given that it is based upon the raw number of master's degrees awarded to Hispanic students.

Component 4: Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

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

All academic units at Highlands participate in regular program reviews every five years by both faculty and administration. The Academic Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate and the provost/VPAA oversee this process.

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

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

If a program is externally accredited, the accreditation documents and an abbreviated program review can be accepted as long as all points required are covered in the program's review and their accreditation documents. The AAC reviewed five of the 40 programs for 2016-2017, two are in progress, and nine are scheduled for review during 2017-2018 (five programs are scheduled for fall 2017 and four for spring 2018).

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

Highlands only accepts credits from regionally accredited institutions or candidates for regional accreditation, and The Office of the Registrar is responsible for evaluating all student transfer credits by performing

a transcript analysis, as described by the university catalogs, upon a student's admission into the university

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

To enhance and align our outcomes assessment processes at the university, Highlands joined the Higher Learning Commission's Academy for the Assessment of Student Learning in the spring of 2008. Utilizing what we learned from the academy, Highlands surveyed its faculty, students, and staff during the 2008-2009 academic year and identified outcomes representing the desired traits of our graduates:

- Mastery of content knowledge and skills
- Effective communication skills
- Critical and reflective thinking skills
- Effective use of technology

Each academic and co-curricular program uses these core four traits to build its own learning outcomes, linking the specifics of their program to the overall learning goals of the university.

The goal of our annual academic program outcomes assessment is to determine how effectively academic and co-curricular units are meeting program-specific student learning outcomes as well as the attainment of the university-wide traits by their students. Although many aspects of the assessment plans vary by program, there are general requirements that programs must follow, outlined in the 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's mission and university traits, a description of data to be collected to demonstrate each outcome, and the criteria used to evaluate whether the outcomes are met.

The Faculty Senate formed an ad-hoc co-curricular group in fall 2016, composed of staff, faculty, and administrators, and charged it with formalizing our co-curricular assessment process for inclusion in the Outcomes Assessment Handbook. After discussions involving all stakeholders, this group completed its process, which deliberately mirrors the academic assessment process, placing those two activities on the same level of importance.

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.

Since 2015, the university has increasingly focused on student retention, persistence, and completion. When President Sam Minner began in July 2015, he worked with the Board of Regents to create a new unit, Strategic Enrollment Management.

After the Office for Strategic Enrollment Management launched, the university contracted with Ruffalo Noel Levitz (RNL), a company that provides technology-enabled solutions and services for enrollment and student success, and formalized two committees: the Retention Advisory and the Matriculation Task Force. Highlands committed resources in 2017 to send the leaders of each Retention Advisory Council strategy team to the HLC Persistence and Completion Academy, which resulted in an increased capacity to coordinate retention and persistence efforts across the campus community using data to inform the development of all future plans.

The Retention Advisory Council takes several approaches to ensure that data collected for analysis reflect a holistic picture of retention,

persistence and completion at Highlands as well as understanding persistence trends over time. A population approach allows us to use disaggregated data to identify those at risk and monitor trends vital to understanding the impact of retention strategies as well as targeting resources to support those most in need of services.

Component 5: Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

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

As a public institution, Highlands' finances are closely monitored by the State of New Mexico, via the Legislative Finance Committee, the Department of Finance and Administration, and the Higher Education Department. Every year, our budget must be approved by the Board of Regents, the HED, and the DFA, with those budgets posted on the university website. Highlands also must submit quarterly budget updates to the State of New Mexico.

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

During the past three years, Highlands has been building its reserves, which are essential to address unforeseen or unanticipated expenses, revenue shortfalls, or significant drops in enrollment. We have made significant progress in rebuilding our unrestricted reserves from less than \$1,000,000 in FY13 to a current balance of more than \$4,371,000.

To further enhance the operations of the university, we have turned more to external sources of fundraising. When President Minner joined the university in July 2015, he restructured the Office of Advancement, which works with the NMHU Foundation to raise funds for the university. Since the restructuring, the Foundation raised more than \$1.3 million to promote high-impact practices, scholarships and capital projects.

Highlands also adopted new procedures for building renovation and construction projects exceeding \$1 million to create a management structure to ensure appropriate and efficient use of funds and resources.

Highlands followed a new budget procedure in 2016-2017, creating a ranked list of priorities that have informed all budget decisions and explicitly tying every unit's budget request to the university's strategic goals then prioritizing those requests based on their potential impact on the strategic goals, the new process is mission driven, integrated across all sectors of the university, and highly transparent.

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

Highlands is committed to an ongoing program of Board of Regents development. Toward that end, we shall schedule one full day of board training from the Association of Governing Boards or similar national group at least every three years. A regular board self-assessment will be conducted prior to this training. The Board of Regents have also adopted the AGB statement on governance as part of its Regents Policy Guide. New regents also receive initial and ongoing training by

the state. The governing boards in New Mexico founded the Higher Education Regent Council, which meets regularly to discuss statewide issues facing New Mexico's universities.

5.C: The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.

After the finalization of HU Vision 2020, Highlands began an integrated strategic and budgeting planning process. The provost/VPAA and the Strategic Planning Steering Committee established the FY17 strategic planning instructions/timeline and template. Using these, all departments and units created and submitted a strategic plan to their supervisors, clearly identifying their strategic goals and linking them to the six university goals. After feedback, these plans were approved and uploaded to the strategic plan and budget request web page. Departments and units then used their strategic plans to make budget requests through the budget process, an inclusive process consisting of department chairs, unit heads, deans, and vice-presidents. This new integrated strategic planning process has been completed through one cycle and is beginning its second. As academic year 2017-

2018 begins, all departments and units are uploading a report on their strategic goal accomplishments, using a common template.

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

5.D: The institution works systematically to improve its performance.

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Research (OIER) has primary responsibility for ensuring that data relevant to all aspects of the university are publicly available to all constituents. The Office of Strategic Enrollment Management works closely with OIER to track retention, matriculation, and enrollment data related to our students as part of our participation in the HLC Persistence and Completion Academy.