

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.

Following its reaffirmation of accreditation in 2006-07, Creighton University elected the Open Pathway for maintaining its accreditation status. As a component of the Open Pathway, Creighton University developed and approved a [Quality Initiative Project](#) focused on academic effectiveness and program review. An [Academic Program Review Policy](#) was developed, approved and implemented in 2013. It arises from the University's mission and University Level Outcomes, and provides a mechanism for all academic programs to undergo a regular and systematic process of review. The Office for Academic Excellence and Assessment maintains a [University-wide calendar of program reviews](#). A detailed [process flow diagram](#) and [project plan](#) were developed to ensure that a consistent process is followed for all program reviews.

Systematic program review provides a vehicle to ensure evidence of educational quality and consistency with national trends; documentation of student performance and achievement of stated program outcomes; evaluation of resources including student support, faculty and space; improvement

of educational quality and strategies for improvement; an evaluative process which identifies strengths and weaknesses with a forward-looking projection; and an emphasis on actions focused on improvement. Both external and internal reviewers are used to conduct the program reviews to ensure an objective process. Program reviews are conducted virtually, through use of WebEx conferencing software. Following the virtual program review, a Reviewers Report is submitted by the internal and external reviewers. The report includes the reviewers' recommendation on whether to *maintain*, *strengthen*, *monitor*, or *discontinue* the program. The Program Review Subcommittee of the University Assessment Committee is then tasked with reviewing the Self Study Report and Reviewers Report related to each program review and generating an Executive Summary, which includes a recommendation as well as a suggested timeline for the program's next review. Each program self-study committee prepares a response memo and action plan, which is reviewed by the responsible dean(s), who may add additional action items or recommendations. All documents are then provided to the Provost, who reviews them and makes the final recommendation to the President regarding the status of the program.

In 2013-2014, program reviews were conducted for three undergraduate and five graduate programs; the 2014-2015 cycle included six undergraduate programs, including the Honors Program, and four graduate programs within the Department of Education; and the 2015-2016 cycle included seven undergraduate, graduate and professional school programs, which included two "new" programs (reviewed after three years, per our Assessment Policy). As noted in the [Program Review Progress Report, 2013-2016](#), the decision was made to: strengthen eight, maintain seven, monitor one, suspend one (graduate program in Liberal Studies), and discontinue three (undergraduate and graduate programs in Atmospheric Science, graduate program in East-West Studies) programs; and one department (Classical and Near Eastern Studies) was being discontinued but the faculty and revised program was joining another existing department. Each program subsequently engaged in completing its Action Item Plans. Information related to those programs that hold specialized accreditation is found in 4.A.5.

4.A.2.

Creighton University evaluates all credits that are transcribed. The semester credit hour is the unit of instruction at Creighton. The University's [Credit Hour Policy](#) is based on courses taught in a standard 15-week semester, with expanded guidelines for courses not taught in the standard format or that are not classroom-based learning experiences. The policy is intended to ensure that the number of credits awarded is reasonably equivalent to the standard of three hours of combined direct instruction and student work per credit hour for a 15-week semester. Because courses are offered through a variety of delivery methods (on-campus, online, hybrid), a [Credit Hour Calculator](#) system is used to ensure that parity exists between an individual course offered both in a face-to-face format and at a distance.

The College of Professional Studies facilitates the awarding of credit for prior learning through submission of a portfolio. The [Prior Learning Assessment \(PLA\) Passport](#) serves as the guide for this process. Once the evidence of achievement of learning outcomes in the portfolio is evaluated by the Adult Learning Council, the results are sent to the Registrar's Office to document credit and course equivalency awarded.

4.A.3.

Creighton University publishes and adheres to the policies regarding the transfer of credit and transient study in the [Undergraduate Catalog](#). The University complies with state guidelines related to transfer of credit, and evaluates all credits that are transcribed. Transcripts are submitted to the various Offices of Admission as part of the admission process. Determinations regarding transfer

credit are made by the respective schools and colleges, generally by the Assistant/Associate Dean for Academic or Student Affairs.

Students accepted into an undergraduate degree program may earn college credit through successful completion of [Advanced Placement \(AP\)](#), [Cambridge A-Level](#), [College-Level Examination Program \(CLEP\)](#), [DANTES Specialized Subject Tests \(DSST\)](#), and International Baccalaureate (IB) examinations. Credit may be awarded for specific courses or as elective credit, and may or may not be eligible to fulfill general education requirements.

At the graduate level, [requests for transfer credit](#) are reviewed by the director of the individual graduate program, who makes a recommendation to the Dean on awarding of credit. The Graduate Dean grants final approval of all transfer credit. Courses without a direct equivalency may be granted elective credit. All transfer credit awarded is posted to the student's record, and the student is notified either by email or in writing.

Students in the [School of Pharmacy and Health Professions complete a waiver application](#) form if they wish to request transfer credit. The waiver application is reviewed by the instructor of the course they are requesting to waive. The instructor makes a recommendation to the Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs, who then makes the final decision regarding the transfer of credit.

The School of Medicine considers admission with advanced standing into the M3 year for qualified applicants if there are places available in the class. Advanced standing admission is restricted to those applicants who are currently enrolled and in good standing at an LCME-accredited school of medicine, have achieved a passing score on USMLE Step 1 and meets both of the following criteria: have a Creighton affiliation (prior matriculation or alumni relationship/interest) and have a compelling reason to be admitted to Creighton. All applicants for advanced standing are screened by the Assistant Dean for Admissions, and then discussed by the Assistant Dean for Admissions, the Associate Dean for Student Affairs, and the Associate Dean for Medical Education to determine whether the applicant should be admitted. The Assistant/Associate Deans make a recommendation to the Executive Committee on Admissions, who makes the final decision. Students who have completed the M.S. in Clinical Anatomy at Creighton are not required to take the first-year Anatomy course, but enroll in a Teaching Practicum for the same number of credit hours.

Law students who wish to transfer to Creighton University from another ABA-approved law school are allowed to transfer in up to 45 credit hours, provided that a grade of C or higher was earned. The Associate Dean for Academic Affairs reviews the academic transcripts to determine course sufficiency.

On rare occasions, the School of Dentistry will accept transfer credits if a student is transferring from another school to Creighton as a full-time student.

4.A.4.

Prerequisites, co-requisites or other academic requirements are determined by each academic department. Prerequisite requests and changes are documented and must go through the curriculum revision process in the college or school that offers the course. Once the request is approved, the documentation is sent to the Registrar's Office. The information is then added to the student information system (NEST) as well as the respective catalog. The new information is then reflected in the student audit in Degree Works, our electronic student system. Once the change is made, students may not register for the course unless credit has been received for the prerequisite, or the student is currently enrolled in the prerequisite/co-requisite course. Individual departments are responsible for

determining if all prerequisites are met.

Undergraduate students may earn college credit through Creighton or another regionally-accredited college or university while enrolled in high school. Credit earned in this way through Creighton will already be noted on the student's Creighton transcript and considered institutional credit. Dual credit earned through other institutions will be reviewed and evaluated by the college after formal acceptance to Creighton. Faculty from high schools who want to offer a dual credit course must have at least a master's degree, [must apply to the department and college](#) in the same manner as any potential part-time faculty member at Creighton, and submit a letter of application, copies of transcripts, and two recommendations. In the 2015-2016 academic year, [Creighton University offered 7 dual-credit courses through 4 different high schools/organizations.](#)

[Undergraduate students in the second semester of their senior year are permitted to take courses for graduate credit, provided they have fulfilled all requirements for graduate work in a specific field.](#)

They may receive both undergraduate and graduate credit for these courses. They must register for graduate courses through the Graduate School. The credit earned will not be accepted as part of a graduate program unless approved by the Dean.

In the Graduate School, individual department or program committees are responsible for oversight of the curriculum and courses, to assure that courses are appropriately rigorous and program outcomes are clear. Requests for new courses, course revisions, and curriculum revisions require final approval from the Dean. Among the professional schools, individual school/college or department curriculum committees are responsible for ensuring that courses are at the appropriate level of rigor, and that the expectations for student learning are clear. Within the School of Medicine, this responsibility falls to the Educational Policy Committee; the School of Dentistry, School of Pharmacy and Health Professions, and School of Law each have a Curriculum Committee; and the College of Nursing has both an undergraduate and graduate Curriculum and Assessment Committee. In addition to the relevant committees, the programs of study offered by each of these colleges and schools are subject to specialized accreditation.

Creighton University hires faculty who have the appropriate credentials and qualifications to teach in its academic programs (see 3.C.2). In addition to evaluating prospective faculty's educational credentials and disciplinary competence, the university has guidelines related to [hiring for mission.](#)

Students have access to appropriate student resources to help them achieve their educational goals. Creighton has three libraries that serve its students – the Reinert Alumni Memorial Library, the Health Sciences Library, and the Ahmanson Law Library. Additional student resources include: Writing Center, tutoring services, EDGE, Student Support Services, Office of Disability Accommodations, Student Health Services and Student Counseling Services, and the Career Center. These resources are available for both campus and online students.

4.A.5.

Since 1924, individual programs at Creighton University have been seeking and receiving accreditation by nationally recognized accrediting organizations. This table provides information on current status for all accredited academic programs (e.g., [ACS](#), [CSWE](#), [NCATE](#), [AACSB](#), [CCNE](#), [CODA](#), [ABA](#), [LCME](#), [ACPE](#), [ACOTE](#), [CAPTE](#), [CAAHEP](#)), including the accrediting agency, initial year of accreditation, most recent year of accreditation, and the date of its next review.

4.A.6.

[Creighton University uses a variety of mechanisms to evaluate the success of its graduates](#), including employment rates, pass rates on professional licensure examinations, acceptance rates to advanced degree programs, participation rates in fellowships, internships and volunteer program. In 2014-15, Creighton University partnered with the Gallup Organization to develop a survey, called the [Creighton-Gallup Index](#), which measures workplace engagement, as well as how Creighton graduates are doing on five key dimensions of well-being: purpose, social, physical, financial, and community. The index provides evidence for understanding the worth of pursuing a college degree at Creighton University.

Sources

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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.

Since our most recent institutional accreditation site visit in 2006-2007, Creighton University established in 2008 [six University-level Learning Outcomes](#) that all university graduates are expected to fulfill. Each of the [nine colleges and schools of the university has articulated a set of learning outcomes](#), and has mapped these college or school learning outcomes on the University-level Learning Outcomes. In addition, the [Division of Student Life has similarly mapped student learning outcomes](#) in their co-curricular efforts or initiatives to both University-level Learning Outcomes as well as to standards from the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS Standards). Student learning at all levels and in all areas, both curricular and co-curricular (e.g., Mission and Ministry, Creighton EDGE), are tied to explicit and public learning outcomes.

While many faculty members and academic programs and instructors have routinely engaged in the assessment of student learning, [Creighton University constituted a University Assessment Committee in 2003](#). The committee consists of faculty members, administrators, and staff members who are appointed by the University President. This committee over sees the assessment of student learning with respect to the University-level Learning Outcomes with support from the Office of Academic Excellence and Assessment. Creighton University first adopted in 2011 a [University Assessment Policy](#). In accordance with this policy, each curricular and co-curricular program is responsible to prepare its own report about the assessment of student learning with respect to program learning outcomes, which are expected to be mapped to the University-level Learning Outcomes.

General Education

Since our last institutional accreditation site visit in 2006-2007, Creighton University adopted a common general education program, the [Magis Core Curriculum, for students in all undergraduate degree](#) programs for the first time in 2013. Each curricular component of the Magis Core Curriculum is designed to deliver one or more learning objectives, each of which is mapped onto one of the six University-level Learning Outcomes, as described in detail in the [Magis Core Curriculum Plan](#). The Magis Core Curriculum is thereby responsible to ensure that each undergraduates student has fulfilled all of University-level Learning Outcomes 2 through 6 (i.e., critical thinking, Catholic and Jesuit values, clear and effective communication, ethical reflection, and working across diversity) upon graduation from the university, while each undergraduate student's major program of study is

responsible to ensure that the student has fulfilled University-level Learning Outcome1 (i.e., disciplinary competence). The [University Core Curriculum Committee is responsible annually, beginning in 2015, to report to the Provost on the assessment of undergraduate student learning](#) in the Magis Core Curriculum.

Degree Programs

Beyond the undergraduate general education program, each college and school and multiple co-curricular programs have articulated goals for student learning and active assessment plans. Each college, school, and division's learning outcomes align with the University-level Learning Outcomes and each program has developed a plan by which student learning outcomes are annually assessed and reported. Specifically,

• Undergraduate Degree Programs

- o As indicated in the Program Assessment Summary Report for 2014-2015, 38 of 46 undergraduate degree programs (83%) had articulated program learning outcomes and mapped them onto the University-level Learning Outcomes. This is an improvement over the 2013-2014 report (48%).
- o In 2014-2015, 27 of 46 undergraduate degree programs (59%) had articulated an assessment plan; this is up from 41% in 2013-2014.

• Graduate and Professional Degree Programs

- o As indicated in the Program Assessment Summary Report for 2014-2015, 36 of 37 graduate and professional degree programs (97%) had articulated program learning outcomes and mapped them onto the University-level Learning Outcomes. This is an improvement over the 2013-2014 report (86%).
- o In 2014-2015, 35 of 37 graduate and professional degree programs (95%) had articulated an assessment plan; this is up from 86% in 2013-2014.

As of 2016-2017, 100% of all undergraduate, graduate and professional programs have articulated student learning outcomes, as evidenced in our Curriculum Assessment Maps.

Co-Curricular Programs

Division of Student Life co-curricular efforts/offerings have student learning outcomes that are mapped to University-level learning outcomes and to standards from the [Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education \(CAS\)](#). CAS standards exist for a majority of the traditional offices within student affairs, while other areas map to other outside professional associations and agencies.

- o As indicated in the Program Assessment Summary Report for 2014-2015, 17 of 17 co-curricular programs (100%) had articulated program learning outcomes and mapped them onto the University-level Learning Outcomes. This is an improvement over the 2013-2014 report (67%).
- o In 2014-2015, 17 of 17 co-curricular programs (100%) had articulated an assessment plan; this is up from 67% in 2013-2014.

[Academic and co-curricular student learning outcomes and assessment reports](#) are annually submitted through TaskStream, our university-wide assessment reporting system. Each program has completed

a [Curriculum Assessment Map](#) that includes both student learning outcomes and their corresponding assessments; taken together, these graphics represent a concise portrait of student learning outcomes and assessment plans. Annual assessment reports for individual programs are available through TaskStream, the university's assessment management system.

4.B.2.

The [University Assessment Committee annually solicits assessment reports](#) from each program offered by the university with the support of the Office of Academic Excellence & Assessment. Faculty and staff members who have responsibility for the assessment of student learning in each program submit reports on student learning with respect to the learning outcomes of the program through TaskStream. The assessment reports on student learning in each program include the following required components: (1) a [custom requirement report](#) that focuses on the discussion of intended learning outcomes and actual results among the faculty, staff, and students involved in a program; (2) the learning outcomes or objectives for the program; (3) a plan for the assessment of student learning with respect to the program learning outcomes; (4) assessment findings about student learning with respect to the program learning outcomes; (5) a continuous improvement plan for the enhancement of student learning with respect to the learning outcomes of the program; and (6) a status report on progress toward implementing the continuous improvement plans from the assessment reports for prior years for the program.

Once a program has submitted its annual assessment report to the University Assessment Committee, the Peer Review Subcommittee reviews the report of each program using a rubric, and assigns to each of the six required components of the report a rating of (1) does not meet expectations, (2) meets expectations, or (3) exceeds expectations. The subcommittee then publishes these ratings together with formative comments about the ratings for faculty and staff members associated with the program to review. The University Assessment Plan requires the University Assessment Committee, with the support of the Office of Academic Excellence and Assessment (AEA), to prepare an annual summary report of the ratings of the Peer Review Subcommittee and to submit the report to the University Provost.

The 2013-2014 report was prepared by the AEA, approved by the UAC and submitted to the Provost and Deans. The [2014-2015](#) report was prepared by the UAC, with the assistance of the AEA, and submitted to the Provost, as outlined in the policy; the 2014-2015 report included the Magis Core Curriculum (first assessment cycle) as well as annual report from the undergraduate, graduate and professional, and co-curricular programs.

General Education

[In 2014-2015, the assessment report for the Magis Core Curriculum](#) analyzed student learning with respect to the Magis Core Curriculum learning objectives in each of the six Foundations components that students are normally expected to complete in the first year of undergraduate study. The preparation of the assessment report for the Magis Core Curriculum involved (1) collection of a random sample of student work from all courses that satisfy one of the components being assessed, (2) assessment of the levels of proficiency demonstrated in the student work collected by faculty members of the undergraduate colleges using assessment rubrics developed by the university faculty on the basis of the VALUE assessment rubrics developed by the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U), (3) review and discussion of the resulting assessment data by relevant groups of faculty, including instructors of the relevant Magis Core Curriculum courses and faculty governing bodies responsible for curricular oversight in each undergraduate college, (4) the formulation of recommendations about the curriculum and the assessment process on the basis of this input, and (5)

the summary of all this input and recommendations to the University Provost on the basis thereof from the University Core Curriculum Committee.

Degree Programs

Additionally, each college and school program collected and aggregated assessment data relevant to program learning outcomes. As indicated in the Program Assessment Report Summary for 2014-2015:

- **Undergraduate Degree Programs**

- o 27 of 46 undergraduate degree programs (59%) collected and aggregated assessment data; this is an improvement over the 2013-2014 report (41%).

- o Each college is also required annually to share program assessment data with faculty and professional staff members who are responsible for delivering the degree program and to seek the input of faculty and staff members in formulating conclusions about the program assessment data. As indicated in the Program Assessment Summary Report, 27 of 46 undergraduate degree programs (59%) shared program assessment data with faculty and staff members and solicited input from them. This improvement over the 2013-2014 report (43%).

Graduate and Professional Degree Programs

- o In 2014-2015, 35 of 37 graduate and professional degree programs (95%) collected and aggregated assessment data. This is an improvement over the 2013-2014 report (86%).

- o All programs are required annually to share program assessment data with faculty and professional staff members who are responsible for delivering the degree program and to seek the input of faculty and staff members in formulating conclusions about the program assessment data. As indicated in the Program Assessment Summary Report for 2014-2015, 35 of 37 undergraduate degree programs (95%) shared program assessment data with faculty and staff members and solicited input from them. This is an improvement over the 2013-2014 report (84%).

Co-Curricular Programs

The Division of Student Life has been assessing student learning in its co-curricular offerings since the 2012-2013 academic year. The Division of Mission and Ministry has been assessing its co-curricular offerings for over 10 years, and this assessment process helped shape the University-level outcomes to explicitly include Jesuit values. Both the Divisions of Student Life and Mission and Ministry, as well as the Creighton EDGE, report on student learning using TaskStream.

- The Division of Student Life, the Division of University Mission and Ministry, and the Office of the Provost are required annually to collect and aggregate assessment data relevant to at least one program learning outcome for each co-curricular program that they offer. As indicated in the Program Assessment Summary Report, 17 of 17 co-curricular programs (100%) collected and aggregated assessment data; this is an improvement over 2013-2014 (67%), their first year of required reporting.
- Each division and office is also invited annually to share program assessment data with professional staff members who are responsible for delivering the co-curricular program and to seek the input of staff members in formulating conclusions about the program assessment data. 16 of 17 co-curricular programs (94%) shared program assessment data with staff members and

solicited input from them. This is an improvement over the 2013-2014 report (67%).

Peer Review Findings

The Peer Review Committee of the University Assessment Committee provides both summative and formative feedback to the programs, as well as provides a “cumulative rating” for each program. Programs scoring less than 5 points are deemed “not meeting expectations;” 5-9 points demonstrate “beginning progress;” and programs earning 10-15 points “meet expectations.” Programs earning 13 or more points are further denoted as “best practice programs.” These ratings, by program as well as school/college/division, are annually shared with the deans, select Vice Presidents, and Provost.

In 2015, the deans utilized these ratings to establish school, college, and university-wide goals for the 2014-2015 reporting cycle.

Deans’ Goals	Targeted Results	Actual Results
Articulation of Learning Outcomes	100%	91%
Current Assessment Plan	90%	79%
Data Analysis Meets or Exceeds Standards	50%	56%
Communications Meet or Exceed Standards	50%	39%
Current Continuous Improvement Plan	90%	69%

Most importantly—beyond plans and reports—is our achievement of student learning. In 2014-2015, 2,182 measures were used to assess student learning, including 706 for disciplinary competence, 460 for critical thinking, 225 for Ignatian values, 355 for communication, 182 for deliberative reflection, and 254 for cultural competence. Students met or achieved academic targets on 93% of all assessments in 2014-2015, ranging from 95% in disciplinary competence and cultural competence to 90% in deliberative reflection.

4.B.3.

Each program is required to submit to the University Assessment Committee a continuous improvement plan as part of its annual assessment report about student learning. The continuous improvement plan, like the rest of the annual assessment report, is subject to review by the Peer Review Subcommittee of the University Assessment Committee (see 4.B.2). As part of the following year’s assessment report, each program is required to submit to the University Assessment Committee a status report about the implementation of the previous year’s continuous improvement plan. The Associate Vice-Provost for Academic Excellence and Assessment then reviews the status report as part of the annual program assessment report (see 4.B.2).

Examples of program evaluation, reflection and action may be found in the undergraduate, graduate and professional, and co-curricular programs, but the most significant changes are found in our program of general education.

General Education

Prior to the implementation of the Magis Core Curriculum as the general education program for all undergraduate degree programs of the university in 2014-2015, the four undergraduate colleges did not share a common, intentionally designed program of general education. Instead, each college designed its own Core Curriculum, although there was some overlap in the requirements of the general education requirements for each college. Assessment of student learning in these programs of general education prior to 2014-2015 was limited and unsystematic. This is partly because [Curriculum 90](#), the general education program adopted by the College of Arts and Sciences in 1993 and the basis of many requirements of the general education programs of the other three undergraduate colleges, was defined in terms of learning objectives that proved difficult or impossible to measure at a time when understanding of the assessment of student learning was not deep or widespread in the university in general, and in the College of Arts and Sciences in particular.

The Magis Core Curriculum was expressly designed to address this deficiency by defining each of its components specifically to deliver one or more measurable learning objectives, as described in the Magis Core Curriculum Plan. Student learning with respect to University-level Learning Outcomes 2 through 6 is assessed annually by the university faculty with the oversight of the University Core Curriculum Committee according to the following process: On a rotating basis, student learning in each component of the Magis Core Curriculum will be assessed, beginning with six Foundations components in 2014-2015 (Contemporary Composition, Critical Issues in Human Inquiry, Oral Communication, Mathematical Reasoning, Philosophical Ideas, and The Christian Tradition) and four Explorations components in 2015-2016 (Global Perspectives in History, Literature, Understanding Natural Science, and Understanding Social Science).

The report of the University Core Curriculum Committee about the assessment of student learning in the Magis Core Curriculum for 2014-2015, which was approved by the University Provost in May 2016, recommends [several modifications to student instruction in the six Foundations components of the Magis Core Curriculum based on the assessment of student learning in those components of the curriculum](#). The report also designates a specific academic leader, often a department chair or an associate dean, to be responsible for implementing each recommendation and for making a progress report about implementation in 2017.

Undergraduate Degree Programs

As indicated in the Program Assessment Summary Report for 2014-2015, 28 out of 47 undergraduate degree programs (61%) took an action to improve student learning based on faculty and staff conclusions about the analysis of assessment data. This is up from 37% in 2013-2014.

Graduate and Professional Degree Programs

As indicated in the Program Assessment Summary Report for 2014-2015, 25 out of 37 graduate and professional degree programs (68%) took such an action based on faculty and staff conclusions about the analysis of assessment data. This is up from 59% in 2013-2014.

Co-Curricular Programs

As indicated in the Program Assessment Summary Report for 2014-2015, 16 out of 17 co-curricular programs (94%) took such an action based on faculty and staff conclusions about the analysis of assessment data. This is up from 50% in 2013-2014.

While academic program reviews and assessments are long-standing, expected, and annual activities, the university is becoming more systematic in planning and more explicit in its expectations of continuous improvement, based on actual student learning data. Starting with the 2014-2015 Assessment Reporting Cycle, all academic and co-curricular programs were asked to describe the process by which they synthesized results, formulated overall conclusions and planned future actions. Virtually all programs described the process of faculty discussion and sharing of results; additionally, the majority of academic programs and approximately half of co-curricular programs attested to changes introduced based upon evidence of student learning. [Creighton's academic and co-curricular programs are utilizing assessment results to modify our assessment processes, academic practices, and curricular/pedagogical offerings.](#)

4.B.4.

Creighton University's participation in the 2006-2009 HLC Assessment Academy provided an educational foundation that elevated our faculty's understanding of assessment (e.g., construction of University-Level Learning Outcomes, Peer Review processes, co-curricular assessments). More importantly, over the past 10 years, the faculty and professional staff involved in academic and co-curricular programs built upon this foundation as we adapted other best practices and have iteratively evolved our own processes, practices, and insights.

Rubric Construction and Utilization

The University Assessment Committee developed our [current rubric for the peer review of program assessment reports](#), based on the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) award-winning work of Northern Arizona University and our sister Jesuit institution, Marquette University. Likewise, the College of Arts and Sciences Core Curriculum Revision Task Force of 2010-2013, made up of Arts and Sciences' faculty members and students and representatives of each of the three other undergraduate colleges, developed the [Magis Core Curriculum assessment rubrics on the basis of the VALUE Rubrics](#) that have been developed and tested nationwide under the leadership of the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U). In both cases, small groups of faculty and academic leaders reviewed others' rubrics and suggested modifications to better fit our Creighton context and/or educational/specialized accreditation standards. These drafts were shared with the campus and the feedback received resulted in further modifications of these rubrics. The Peer Review Rubric was first piloted in 2011-2012, and the Magis Core Curriculum Assessment Rubrics were first implemented in 2014-2015.

Participatory Feedback and Evolving Documents/Practices

The Peer Review Pilot was generally successful in that it allowed the institution to evaluate the "state of assessment" or our "maturity (or lack thereof) in accepted assessment practices;" however, it became evident that our rubric did not fully communicate the university's expectations regarding best practices in assessment and were not as adaptive to our holistic learning environment (i.e., academic, co-curricular, extra-curricular) as they needed to be. The [University Assessment Committee, as a whole, and the Peer Review Committee in particular reviews both the rubric and the processes on an annual basis. Changes have been and will continue to be made as needed.](#)

Two examples illustrate these types of changes:

1. Recent visits from specialized accreditation agencies highlighted the expectation of and need for "communications" surrounding student learning. Therefore, the Peer Review Rubric was revised to require that even "beginning programs" have their learning outcomes publicly posted

or shared (e.g., website, program materials) and that programs that “meet expectations” must offer evidence of “routinely sharing learning outcomes with students and faculty.” Further, assessment findings’ “conclusions” are now required to be shared with faculty (beginning program standard) and faculty are required to meet to discuss and participate in the “drawing of conclusions based on assessment results” (meets expectations).

2. Our rubric, as illustrated in example 1, originally referenced only students and faculty, but as more co-curricular programs evidenced student learning outcomes (as aligned with one or more of the University-level Learning Outcomes), our rubric language needed to be revised to become more inclusive (e.g., “faculty/professional staff”) and expectations that collaborations between faculty and professional staff needed to be made more explicit. This change in the second cycle of review was necessary and well-received, particularly among the staff of the Divisions of Mission and Ministry and Student Life.

Ongoing Processes of Review and Development

Our annual assessment cycles have generated program assessment reports from schools, colleges, and/or divisions. The Peer Review Committee drafts a report that is reviewed by the University Assessment Committee and academic leadership (e.g., Provost, Deans, Vice Presidents). This data informs annual goal-setting by the Provost and Deans (started in 2015) as well as opportunities for additional “formative development” for Creighton’s faculty and professional staff, at both the program and university levels.

Members of the university faculty and staff have long been engaged in the assessment of student learning in some areas of the university’s academic enterprise, and particularly in colleges and schools whose degree programs are subject to specialized accreditation, such as the College of Nursing, the School of Dentistry, the School of Medicine, and the School of Pharmacy and Health Professions. This engagement became formally recognized with the formation of the University Assessment Committee in 2003 and with the university’s participation in the HLC Assessment Academy in 2006.

Among the faculty development workshops sponsored by the Professional Development Subcommittee of the University Assessment Committee is the annual [University Assessment Symposium \(2014-present\)](#). Approximately 150 members of the university faculty and staff took part in the most recent symposium in November 2015. The annual symposium features poster presentations and speakers from inside and outside the university that identify and promote best practices for the assessment of student learning.

The Office of Academic Excellence and Assessment, in conjunction with the various colleges and schools of the university, sponsors a wide variety of formative learning experiences that promote faculty and staff expertise in and engagement with the assessment of student learning. These experiences include [assessment grant programs](#), [faculty fellowships](#), and [professional development workshops](#) that are open to participation from members of the entire university faculty and staff. Faculty fellows and recipients of assessment grants are required to present their work publicly to campus audiences as a condition of receiving their fellowship or grant. Each college and school and most co-curricular programs of the university provide opportunities for professional development and formative feedback concerning the assessment of student learning through annual assessment or curriculum retreats, monthly assessment committee meetings, and special professional development programming related to assessment.

A commitment to continuously improve our students’ learning permeates our campus. Creighton’s mission states, “Creighton exists for students and learning;” our faculty and staff embody that mission in their classrooms, laboratories, practica sites, and service/mission trips. Our university values drive

annual processes, reviews and evaluations, and revisions for continuous improvements.

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4.C - Core Component 4.C

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

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

Argument

4.C.1.

The University is committed to optimizing retention for all students. A phased approach was adopted to realize this commitment. Creighton University's retention goal since 2006 has been to reach a first-to-second year retention rate of 90% for first-year students. In 2012 a goal of 92% was outlined to be achieved by 2017; in July 2016 the university implemented a new retention software system that allows faculty and staff a "one-stop location" for all retention-related notes on students.

Quantifiably, our [retention rate](#) has increased significantly (4%) since achieving 86% in 2006 for the traditional campus-based first-time student. We were well on our way to meeting these expectations, until 2016 when retention dropped to below 90% for the first time in four years. We are analyzing retention data from 2014 to 2016 in order to understand the causes of this drop. The Division of Enrollment Management is also cooperating with the Division of Residence Life and with faculty advisors of first-year undergraduate students to identify retention risks within the first 6 weeks of the first semester of study.

Critical to the University objectives to grow overall enrollment is to maintain a balanced approach in growing across all areas of the University. A percentage comes from new traditional student growth, student persistence, adult enrollments, and graduate programs. There is not a dependency on one specific market or set of strategies.

As a component of Creighton's [Quality Improvement Project](#), the University has developed a set of quality indicators. One of these indicators is retention. Retention rates for the past four years is are being collected for all graduate programs, and each graduate program director will be asked to establish a retention goal for his/her program based on the historical data. The Adult and Distance Student retention does not yet have specific defined goals, but are in the process of establishing goals as we grow this student population on campus.

To support the persistence and engagement of both online and ground students, the University implemented Starfish, an online retention tool to provide increased engagement with students as well as effective and efficient data and reporting to support student success. Bringing together data from the learning management system and the student information system, Starfish provides proactive alerts to facilitate early intervention and streamlines access to data and reporting. Initial implementation of Starfish occurred in August 2016 with select student audiences.

4.C.2.

Beginning in 2006, the University placed an increased emphasis on gathering, analyzing and tracking information and data for the purpose of improving the rate at which all traditional students are retained at Creighton. Leading this effort, the Director of Retention relies on a collaborative university-wide network of individuals and teams to positively impact the holistic development of our students. Annually the Office of Institutional Research (OIR) publishes the [University Fact Book](#) containing the University Common Data Set, which provides critical cohort data for our analysis and the subsequent actions we take to improve retention. In addition to data retrieved from the IPEDS Data Center, we use OIR developed reports on *Head Count, Detailed Enrollment by School, Status and Sex, School/College Ethnic Composition* and *Enrollment by State, Region and Country of Origin*. [Creighton's two-, three-, and four-year retention rates have risen steadily from 2008-2015](#).

The NCAA requires colleges and universities to report graduation rates of their student athletes. Implemented in 2003 as part of an ambitious academic reform effort in Division I, the Academic Progress Rate (APR) holds institutions accountable for the academic progress of their student-athletes through a team-based metric that accounts for the eligibility and retention of each student-athlete for each academic term. The APR system includes rewards for superior academic performance and penalties for teams that do not achieve certain academic benchmarks.

[The Academic Performance Progress Rate \(APP\)](#) assists with accountability and accurately reflects the progress of each student athlete. Data are collected annually, and results are announced in the spring. [Creighton's APP data for 2015](#) reflects strong academic progress by student-athletes in all sports (i.e., scores range from 974 to 1000).

Distance Education

The University's focused growth in distance education programs includes student retention strategies designed specifically for this student population. Similar to the strategies employed for traditional students, retention efforts involve schools/colleges, academic programs, and student support units from across the University. Growth of distance program enrollment has been accompanied by maturation in the organization in distance student support, evolving from program-level efforts to coordination by the Center for Academic Innovation. During 2016-2017, this responsibility will transition to Enrollment Management and the Director of Retention.

[Following commonly recognized best practices](#), distance education students are provided a comprehensive on-boarding and orientation. The distance student on-boarding process is a collaborative and coordinated effort orchestrated by the Director of Graduate and Adult Recruiting, Director of Retention, and Center for Academic Innovation. Communications and information provided to incoming distance students are managed by Enrollment Management to ensure consistency and thoroughness.

The university employs 3.5 FTE Academic Coaches to support student success and progression in distance education courses; additionally, this coach function is provided by Deltak (distance education

partner) for the programs which they support. Each distance student is assigned an academic coach, generally a [master's prepared student retention professional](#) responsible for serving as the student's unified support resource. Each student is introduced to his or her Academic Coach by the enrollment management recruiter. The Academic Coach serves as a single point of contact to assist non-traditional, adult students enrolled in graduate and undergraduate distance programs. The Coach is responsible for monitoring students' progress in completing orientation activities, providing ongoing support for academic success throughout a student's program of study, including monitoring of students matriculation through his or her program of student, proactive intervention for students at risk of failing or stopping out, and helping students navigate the various systems and support units with which they interact. The Coach becomes the students' champion and advocate to help ensure success and completion.

4.C.3.

Creighton's Student Retention Program is a collaborative effort organized by the Director of Student Retention. Creighton has many resources available to support and guide students in their growth both academically and personally. [Both proactive and responsive outreach strategies, implemented annually](#), have improved student retention. Three illustrative examples include:

- [The Creighton EDGE®](#), now in its fourth year, is an excellent example of specific persistence and retention programming. The EDGE provides peer tutoring, academic coaching, academic counseling and assistance with any issues that might impact a student's academic success at Creighton. The EDGE also includes some of the country's most innovative opportunities for alumni networking, mentoring and shadowing, as well as internship opportunities. The EDGE has also developed Learning Communities that allow students to share academic interests and experiences as they come together to discern options for pre-professional studies. We have learning communities for pre-health, pre-medical, pre-dental, pre-pharmacy, pre-physician assistant, pre-occupational therapies, pre-physical therapist and pre-law students.
- The [Center for Undergraduate Research and Scholarship \(CURAS\)](#) is instrumental in coordinating and developing research opportunities between Creighton students and faculty. In spring 2015, Creighton was named one of the top 49 universities for undergraduate research and creative projects by *U.S. News & World Report*. The number of students in the sciences registering for Directed Independent Research courses has quadrupled from about 100 students in 2007 to about 400 in 2014. CURAS has been responsible for getting many of our first-year undergraduate students involved in research, which is rare at our peer institutions. Additionally, undergraduate science research projects have resulted in approximately 150 student science scholarly presentations and 30 peer-reviewed publications per year (with undergraduates as co-authors).
- Distance student retention data is reviewed by program directors, the Director of Retention, the Graduate School, the College of Professional Studies, and the Center for Academic Innovation. Improvements are made as warranted. Examples of improvements include the addition of [GRD 600](#), the online, comprehensive orientation course for all graduate distance students, the creation of [GRD 601](#), a graduate writing support course shared among online graduate programs, and focused efforts to address progression of students enrolled in the dissertation phase of the EdD program.

Creighton's improvement in retention has been remarkable in consistency and reliability. Our steady increase in retention over the last nine years (excepting 2016) is the result of our student-focused [University Mission](#) and the significant resources we have dedicated in numerous programs and policies.

4.C.4.

The Office of Institutional Research (OIR), housed under the Office for Academic Excellence and Assessment is the primary resource for university-related data. The Office of Institutional Research completes all IPEDS reports, external surveys and questionnaires which relate to national rankings and reports as well as coordinates, analyzes and interprets data from recurring and ad hoc projects involving Creighton students, faculty and alumni. Additionally, OIR provides "snapshots" of relevant findings to Creighton faculty, staff and administrators through a yearly series of [Research Bulletins](#).

OIR follows Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) definitions and practices to calculate and report undergraduate retention and graduation rates. A collaborative effort between the Offices of Institutional Research, Enrollment Management, Registrar, and the deans of colleges and schools grew out of the needs to improve data quality and ensure consistency of reporting across the University. Where IPEDS guidance is not applicable, the team works together to define terms, set appropriate time frame to "snapshot" relevant data for reporting, reconcile data issues, and establish appropriate methods to track and monitor student retention, persistence, and completion of programs. [Examples of metrics include retention, persistence, and graduation rates for graduate and professional students](#), which are annually reported as a part of the Creighton Quality Indicators.

As part of an effort to continually review and improve student retention, OIR will collaborate with Creighton's in-house team of data analysts to identify factors that place students at risk for attrition. These factors will be used as part of a process that will routinely assess students on their likelihood to leave Creighton. Students who are identified as at risk for leaving Creighton will receive one or more interventions aimed at retaining the at-risk students. Interventions will be data driven and relevant to the factors that have placed the students at risk for attrition. For instance, students who are identified as likely to leave due to financial constraints will be notified and provided information and support pertaining to financial aid resources.

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4.S - Criterion 4 - Summary

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

Summary

Since our most recent institutional accreditation review in 2006-2007, Creighton University has demonstrated enhanced responsibility for the quality of its educational programs. Noteworthy areas of improvement include the development of a regular process of academic program review (see 4.A.1) and our partnership with the Gallup Organization to develop the Creighton-Gallup Index to measure the workplace engagement and well-being of Creighton University graduates (see 4.A.6).

Creighton University has also made significant strides since 2006-2007 toward demonstrating an enhanced commitment to the assessment and improvement of student learning. The university has articulated University-level Learning Outcomes that every graduate of the university is expected to fulfill and degree programs have articulated program-specific learning outcomes. In our area of greatest assessment weakness, undergraduate degree programs, the university has adopted a new general education program that is specifically designed both to help students in all four undergraduate colleges to fulfill 5 of the 6 University-level Learning Outcomes and to be subject to regular review and improvement through assessment (see 4.B.1). The university continues to face challenges in ensuring that every degree programs collects and analyzes assessment data and uses the analysis to improve student learning. We are, however, making steady progress in this regard under the leadership of the University Assessment Committee and with the support of the Office of Academic Excellence and Assessment (see 4.B.2 and 4.B.3).

A hallmark of Creighton University is our commitment to achieving and maintaining an unusually high rate of student retention, persistence, and completion in our degree programs (see 4.C.1). Our recent improvements in the area of student retention are due to a broadly collaborative effort in which many university departments participate (see 4.C.3). We recently experienced a small dip in our retention numbers from our historic high of over 90%. We are investigating the reasons for this dip in the hopes of correcting them (see 4.C.1).

Sources

There are no sources.