Assurance Argument

University of Wyoming - WY

Review date: 6/24/2024

Introduction

The University of Wyoming

UW has a proud tradition of educating the people of Wyoming and beyond. It was established as the state's 1862 Morrill Act land-grant university in 1886 and serves as Wyoming's only public university. Our enrollment in Fall 2023 included 10,913 students from 51 states/territories and 72 countries. Students can choose from 217 degree programs, including 35 certificate programs, 90 bachelor's programs, 57 master's programs, and

35 doctorate/professional programs. In addition to campuses in Laramie and Casper, our online programs reach students throughout the state, nation, and world.

Introduction to HLC Assurance Argument

As detailed within this Assurance Argument, UW has achieved many goals and met many challenges under the strong leadership of President Edward Seidel and Provost & Executive Vice President Kevin Carman.

This argument represents the work of many dedicated UW faculty and staff. Monthly meetings of the HLC preparation team, beginning in Fall 2022, consisted of 26 faculty and staff members from across the university.

In Fall 2022 this group began a systematic review and update of HLC criteria evidence, including creating a crosswalk between old and new criteria. The shift in criteria, as well as new leadership and multiple new initiatives at the university, drove our decision to produce a substantially new assurance argument rather than updating our 2019 document. The first draft of that new assurance argument started in July 2023. As each section was completed, it was reviewed by the HLC preparation team and others for accuracy and completeness.

Supported by approximately 530 pieces of evidence, the assurance argument demonstrates how our institution meets each of HLC's five criteria and 18 core components. This introduction highlights key accomplishments since HLC's 2019 campus visit.

CRITERIA 1

In January 2023, the University of Wyoming released its new strategic plan, Forward for Wyoming 2023+, to guide activities through 2027. The university website includes public information about the current plan and the historical processes that produced current and past plans. In line with key goals, UW's annual research expenditures (~$130m) and doctoral graduation rates (90 students/year) will allow it to rise to R1 status next year. Additionally, UW's application for Carnegie Community-Engaged institution was approved in January 2024.

UW's new strategic plan includes a value for "growth, health, and leadership capacity of all members of the university community." In support of that goal, in 2022 UW launched Saddle Up, a week-long, pre-semester program designed to prepare first-year students for academic success. In alignment with its land-grant mission and with its status as the only 4-year institution in the state, UW is growing its online and hybrid online degrees and noncredit learning experiences.

The hires in 2022 of a new VP for Governmental Affairs and Community Engagement position and a new VP for Online and Continuing Education will help UW increase external engagement and respond to constituent needs. The development of new centers and programs, including Wyoming Outdoor Tourism and Recreation Initiative (2022), the Wyoming Innovation Partnership (2021), the Wyoming DataHub (2022), the Science Initiative facility (2022), the Wyoming Advanced Blockchain Lab (2020), and the Neltje Center for Excellence in Creativity and the Arts (2022), were developed with the extensive input of statewide partners.

Though UW announced that it will eliminate its Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion following March 2024 legislative action to reduce UW's block grant by $1.73 million (the budgeted biennial amount for that office), President Seidel is optimistic that many of the university's programs that serve its varied student

populations—including many programs that existed before the DEI office was created in 2017—can continue to meet the needs of all members of the UW community.

CRITERIA 2

The Division of Research and Economic Development is in a multi-year process of updating policies and streamlining procedures to ensure ethical conduct of research. The unit has already made a number of changes to ensure professional standards and compliance, including the adoption of Cayuse for electronic research administration. To support ethical research conditions, UW increased stipends for graduate assistantships in 2022 and will increase them again in FY25.

Undergraduate general education courses establish baseline expectations for ethical use of information. Three required courses include outcomes focused on evaluation, integration, and documentation of information.

In 2020, UW moved to Acalog as its academic catalog management program. This adoption ensures that information about academic offerings and program requirements are up-to-date, consistently presented, and transparent to students. UW's successful application for status as a Carnegie Community-Engaged campus (based on 2018-19 data) provides abundant information about student access to community engagement and experiential learning activities.

UW Regulation 2-15 governs the university's position on academic freedom. Additionally, recognizing the need for the University of Wyoming to be active in local, state, and larger conversations about civic engagement, President Seidel issued a statement on the value of civil discourse in November 2022, and he convened a working group to develop recommendations around freedom of expression.

CRITERIA 3

UW approves new programs without regard to the mode of delivery, meaning that there is a default expectation that quality is consistent across modes. Ellbogen Center for Teaching and Learning faculty development sessions provide support faculty in teaching effectively across a range of delivery contexts. As UW shifted to online and

hybrid learning during the pandemic, the Ellbogen Center provided training for 400+ faculty to help maintain quality of programming.

UW has a student-to-faculty ratio of 13:1. Since HLC's last visit, UW increased attention to low-enrollment programs in an effort to more effectively redirect staff and other resources to programs it sees as most relevant to the current economic and cultural context.

CRITERIA 4

UW's strategic plan establishes clear targets for recruiting/enrollment, retention/persistence, completion, and post-graduation success. The inclusion of key performance indicators in the current strategic plan provides clear targets for data collection and analysis.

To improve its response to changes in enrollment and funding, UW revised UW Regulation 2-13 to streamline processes for program reconfiguration, elimination, and consolidation. UW has also updated its comprehensive program review process and programs are conducted approximately every seven years. Despite a pandemic-disrupted review timeline, many programs have now completed their first review.

UW maintains specialized accreditation for many of its programs, and its list of accredited programs and colleges is updated routinely. In 2023, the College of Education successfully transitioned to the Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation (AAQEP) for its accreditation.

UW has continued to improve processes for assessment of learning. In 2019, UW relocated institutional assessment duties into an assessment unit located within the Ellbogen Center for Teaching and Learning. That unit developed an institutional plan that now drives ongoing assessment expectations across academic programs.

UW has substantially overhauled its course approval process. Still managed by Academic Affairs, the Office of the Registrar, and the University Course Review Committee, the process now occurs within Curriculog and includes a clearer workflow that includes multiple checks for course rigor, prerequisites, common-course numbering, and expectations for student learning.

UW has expanded the role of its Office of Transfer Relations and released a new Standard Administrative Policies and Procedures document to better guide transfer practices. That policy directs all units to follow American Association of College Registrars and Admissions Officials (AACRAO) best practices guidance, especially for determining course-level equivalency.

CRITERIA 5

UW allocates resources in alignment with its mission and priorities. This is accomplished in part by the ongoing process of developing unit-level strategic plans aligned to the overarching university strategic plan. The Office of Institutional Analysis (OIA) provides ongoing data to support planning and decision-making. The UW Board of Trustees carries final authority for university operations, and a variety of shared governance processes, policies, and planning ensure that internal constituencies are represented in those efforts.

The 2023 launch of a School of Computing represents a major effort to put UW on the forefront of technological advancements. UW has also increased investments in distance and online education, including hiring a new Vice Provost for Online and Continuing Education and a set of instructional designers to provide faculty development and support for online ed and new programs.

Major new infrastructural investments since HLC's last visit include the Science Initiative building (March 2022), parking structure with new campus police offices (March 2023), major renovation of the UW Law School (August 2024), Transit Maintenance Services Building (Spring 2022), West Campus Satellite Energy Plant (completed Fall 2021), a major overhaul of War Memorial Stadium (2023-2025), and a new natatorium (2023-2026). In line with the campus master plan and the UW housing plan, construction on two major new housing and dining facilities is currently underway, with a target completion in Summer 2025.

Job qualifications and descriptions for staff in financial aid, academic advising, and other areas ensure that students are served by well-trained individuals. The Institutional Assessment Plan provides opportunities for improved integration of assessment of student learning into broader planning processes.

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We look forward to your review of the Assurance Argument. Please provide any questions to our HLC Accreditation Liaison Officer, Dr. Steven Barrett, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education at: steveb@uwyo.edu

1 - Mission

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

1.A - Core Component 1.A

The institution's mission is articulated publicly and operationalized throughout the institution.

1. The mission was developed through a process suited to the context of the institution.
2. The mission and related statements are current and reference the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development and religious or cultural purpose.
3. The mission and related statements identify the nature, scope and intended constituents of the higher education offerings and services the institution provides.
4. The institution's academic offerings, student support services and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.
5. The institution clearly articulates its mission through public information, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans or institutional priorities.

Argument

UPDATED 5-23-2024

1a1. In January 2023, the University of Wyoming released its new strategic plan, Forward for Wyoming 2023+, to guide its activities through 2027. Throughout the development process, activities were extensively documented on the university website, with pages including information about committee memberships, meetings and timeline, unit-level and other feedback sessions, and other workshops to inform the development of the plan's values and goals. The process intentionally included feedback related to institutional structure and context, student success, innovation and research investments, campus insights, desired outcomes and products, and administrative vision. Given UW's status as the only 4-year university in the state, the planning committee ensured opportunities for statewide feedback, including an online portal in early Fall 2022 for comments and suggestions on the preliminary draft.

1a2. As the only public university in the state, UW serves simultaneously as a land-grant, flagship, and research institution. Its commitments to scholarship, outreach, and service necessarily extend to all corners of the state and require ongoing and intentional efforts to assess the needs and values of a broad range of constituent groups and stakeholders.

UW MISSION: As Wyoming's university, we unlock the extraordinary in every person through education, research, innovation, engagement, and service.

UW VISION: Use our unique strengths to make Wyoming and the world a better place.

The newly adopted strategic plan is driven by five strategic goals: (1) enhance student success; (2) pursue institutional excellence; (3) provide a supportive community; (4) engage with and serve the state of Wyoming; and (5) cultivate financial stability and diversification. Each of these goals has been assigned to a VP-level administrator, who is tasked with ensuring that these goals are translated to action and assessed for impact. Further, President Seidel has identified specific presidential goals, each of which is connected to multiple components of the university strategic plan. He is committed to investing resources towards these goals, which he believes will produce measurable impact in support of the university's mission.

1a3. Our new strategic plan details the scope, nature, and intended beneficiaries of UW's programs and services:

VALUES

- Access to an affordable, high-quality education.
- Real-world education where students learn by doing.
- A welcoming and supportive learning community fostered by integrity, inclusivity, freedom of expression, and respect.
- The growth, health, and leadership capacity of all members of the university community.
- Wyoming's wild and working lands as an asset to be utilized, understood, stewarded, and treasured.
- Our partnership and engagement with Wyoming communities in the creation and exchange of knowledge and resources.
- Our role as a catalyst for innovation and economic vitality.

VALUE PROPOSITIONS

- Wyoming's land-grant mission: UW is a unifying force expanding intellectual opportunity, advancing economic and cultural vitality, and contributing to the well-being of the communities that call Wyoming home.
- Size: UW leverages our scale to offer a diverse set of disciplines, perspectives, and ideas and connect accomplished professionals, students, and communities.
- Collaboration: UW is an intellectual powerhouse that fosters transdisciplinary collaboration to address the most complex challenges facing Wyoming, America, indigenous nations, and the world.
- Community: UW is a vibrant and supportive community where people learn, explore, create, and work together to achieve great things.

While UW's primary constituent group is residents of the state—and the university's primary obligations are providing relevant research and educational programs to serve that group—UW also recognizes that drawing out-of-state and international students to UW brings many benefits to the institution and to the state.

1a4. UW's current mission emphasizes its role as an essential contributor to education, research, and

creative and economic activities across the state. Evidence that UW investments align with this mission is abundant across this report, and the following examples illustrate key efforts:

Education: UW consistently ranks among the best values for higher education, including a [#5 ranking by Credit Summit in 2023](). Because UW is mandated by the state constitution to keep costs of attendance "as nearly free as possible," the university strives to make undergraduate and graduate degrees attainable for traditional and adult students across the state.

As Wyoming's only four-year university, [UW provides a wide slate of degree programs](), with over 100 majors and 100 graduate programs across its seven colleges and schools. With stakeholder input, the university responsibly adds programs in response to state needs. For example, since HLC's last visit, UW has added degrees in construction management, ranch management and agricultural leadership, and outdoor recreation and tourism management. UW [Launched 8 fully-online undergraduate programs]() for Fall 2024. By 2025, UW anticipates being able to offer at least 12 fully-online undergraduate degree programs and will continue to grow beyond its currently available 27 online graduate programs and 28 online certificates and endorsements. The university also [reviews low-enrollment programs]() on a regular basis, actively identifying those that are obsolete or no longer in demand. The university is currently completing a process for [eliminating 7 bachelors and 10 graduate degree programs](). These efforts reflect an understanding of shifting trends in higher education enrollment, and they also reflect UW's mission to serve residents across the state. Though Wyoming ranks in the top ten in the country for high school degree attainment, it ranks near the bottom in post-secondary attainment. This gap means that UW has room to improve in terms of delivering accessible degree programs for adult learners.

Research: In late 2023, the American Council on Education announced that, beginning in 2025, universities spending $50M in total research and graduating 70 doctoral students per year will be classified as an R1 research institution. UW's annual research expenditures (~$130M) and doctoral graduation rates (90 students/year) will thus allow it to rise to [R1 status next year](). UW has also made strategic investments and updates to the research administration offices, including an emphasis on research development and broader impacts coordination through participation in [Center for Advancing Research Impact in Society]() programming.

Innovation: In February 2024, the university received a [grant from NSF]() to accelerate research translation and staff its Technology Transfer Office adequately. In Spring 2024, UW hired a [new director for the Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation](). The center helps bring together university units and other collaborators to advance the state's prioritized and emerging economic sectors.

Engagement and Service: In January 2024 UW's application for recognition as a [Carnegie Community-Engaged]() institution was approved. The [application document]() details UW's extensive ongoing efforts to collaborate with community partners (local, regional/state, national, global) for the reciprocal and beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources, including:

- [UW Extension](), with offices in each of the state's 23 counties and the Wind River Indian Reservation, which supports rural communities facing contemporary challenges and changes.
- The [Wyoming Business Resource Network](), a collaboration with the Wyoming Business Council to assist all businesses, big and small, throughout the state.
- The [Wyoming School-University Partnership]() and the Trustees Education Initiative, which have launched multiple programs to address Wyoming's K-12 teacher shortage and network with pre-K providers around the state. The three most recent programs launched with help

from the Trustees Education Initiative: the High Altitude Pathways Program for rural education, the Wyoming Teacher Mentor Corps, and the Master Educator Competency Program.

- The Civil Legal Services Clinic in the College of Law, which provides free legal services to qualifying Wyoming residents who can't find free services through other agencies.
- The Wyoming Latina Youth Center, which exposes Latina high school students to college life while gaining the skills and resources to pursue college degrees.
- The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program in the College of Business, which helps low- to moderate-income families in need of tax-filing help.
- The Science Initiative Roadshow, a team of undergraduate and graduate students from UW, along with UW instructors, who travel throughout the state facilitating hands-on learning for K-12 students.
- Annual science, music, art, and sports camps and competitions that bring K-12 students from around Wyoming to UW.

Finally, UW's enrollment profile remains consistent with its mission and commitments. More importantly, the university's commitment to accessible, affordable education is reflected by its welcoming admission standards and low cost of attendance; programming for low-income, and first-generation students; first-year learning community for students admitted with support; and a new academic recovery initiative for first-year students on academic probation after their fall semester. Other resources for entering students include Saddle Up (a week-long pre-semester academic success program for incoming freshman), TRIO Programs, multi-faceted tutoring programs, and a variety of academic support centers described more fully in 3d. In an ongoing effort to retain more of Wyoming's top high-school graduates, UW has the Trustees Scholar program, which covers full cost of attendance for up to 100 freshman each year, and UW has also expanded the capacity of its Honors College.

1a5. The university maintains both a Strategic Plan website and a Strategic Planning website. The former focuses on disseminating clear information about the current plan while the latter documents the historical processes that have produced current and past plans.

To help make UW's mission, vision, values, goals, and priorities accessible to the public, the university provides a short version (intended for external audiences) as well as a more extensive version that includes an implementation plan (designed to help internal units better align their efforts to key metrics and commitments). Additionally, the university's mission is publicly shared on UW social media accounts, the student code of conduct, a display in the Union visitor center, and first-year student guidebooks.

By late 2024/early 2025, many units on campus will have unit-level strategic plans aligned with the institutional plan. Many of these unit-level plans will be linked directly from unit home pages, and the public availability of these plans for specific constituencies helps further increase overall visibility of institutional goals.

To ensure that the mission continues to be at the forefront of day-to-day operations and ongoing decision making, the university publishes an annual update on progress toward strategic goals. The board of trustees reviews the update as a part of their Annual Schedule of Items to Approve, Discuss or Report.

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1.B - Core Component 1.B

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

1. The institution's actions and decisions demonstrate that its educational role is to serve the public, not solely the institution or any superordinate entity.
2. The institution's educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes, such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization, or supporting external interests.
3. The institution engages with its external constituencies and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

Argument

UPDATED 5-23-2024

1b1. Consistent with its land-grant status, UW engages in a variety of activities that extend UW's intellectual and cultural resources to public audiences across the state. Continuing efforts include serving as a home or partner for UW's Agricultural Extension Service, the Wyoming School-University Partnership, Wyoming Public Media, the Malcolm Wallop Fund for Conversations on Democracy, a variety of state youth days and summer programs, and legal, educational, and health clinics.

New or expanded efforts since UW's last report include:

- A major role in the Wyoming Innovation Partnership, a governor's initiative launched in 2021 to impact the state's economy by facilitating collaborations of state and local entities.
- A presidential initiative to develop clear principles for freedom of expression. A 2023 working group report provides recommendations to ensure that the university serves as a forum for a variety of perspectives and values.
- Our successful 2023 application to be recognized as a Carnegie Community Engaged university, which will increase and help solidify a variety of community engagement opportunities for students and faculty.
- Ongoing efforts with Wyoming community colleges to improve seamless transfer of students to UW; as of Fall 2021 UW has signed MOUs with in-state community colleges regarding universal Block Transfer Mapping (formerly called 2+2 plans) pathways.

In alignment with its land-grant mission and with its status as the only 4-year institution in the state, UW is growing its online and hybrid online degrees and noncredit learning experiences. This effort will extend educational and career advancement opportunities to people around the state who are not able to attend in person. Additionally, a statewide common course numbering system has enabled 98% articulation of courses offered among UW and Wyoming's community college system.

As noted in 1b2, numerous policies ensure that the will of the trustees, foundation, donors, and state legislators do not unduly overdetermine the university's actions and decisions.

1b2. A variety of policies ensure that the university maintains focus on and control over its educational responsibilities. As a public, non-profit institution, concerns about return to investors or contributions to a parent organization are not directly applicable to UW.

Ongoing efforts to secure state funding, establish new sources of revenue, and maintain strong enrollment levels require UW to balance its obligations in relationship to diverse stakeholder groups. Because UW depends on unusually high levels of state funding and is guided by a board of gubernatorial-appointed trustees, the institution takes special care to ensure that these groups do not inappropriately influence university operations. Historically, State of Wyoming funding to the university has been allocated as a block grant rather than a performance-based model, which has allowed UW the needed degrees of freedom to allocate resources in a timely way to meet mission-critical needs. However, some legislators are proposing a revised funding model, which may be considered in the 2025 legislative session.

Additionally, the university maintains board of trustees bylaws and conflict of interest policies that limit the potential for self-interested board members to exert undue influence over university practices. The board's conflict of interest policy and board members' practice of signing statements acknowledging potential conflicts demonstrates its ongoing efforts to uphold ethical principles and shield UW decisions that personally benefit individual trustees.

The University of Wyoming Foundation is guided by its mission as an independent 501(c)(3) organization and has an MOU with the University of Wyoming. UW Regulations and policies guide investment policy, patents, and copyright on university innovations (University Regulation 9-1), vendor relationships and consulting relationships, and bidding and procurement to limit the opportunity for partner organizations to apply unreasonable pressure on university activities.

Beginning in 2023, employees are required to submit an annual disclosure of conflict of interests, allowing the university to better track and intervene in cases where their additional roles may be at odds with the university's educational responsibilities. Similarly, the Research and Economic Development Division provides guidance on conflicts of interest and commitment in research and requires researchers to submit annual interest disclosures when relevant.

Budget reports—both for the university and for its foundation—provide evidence that educational responsibilities drive expenditures. Unlike many other institutions of its size and scope, UW also generates procurement reports that allow for close scrutiny its practices related to sourcing goods and services.

Annual reports from UW's Excellence in Higher Education Endowment are additional evidence that discretionary funds are not being misspent. The endowment fund allows the university to establish state-funded endowed faculty positions to advance teaching and scholarship in the areas of distinction defined in the university's strategic plan. The report describes spending related to (1) the Excellence in Higher Education Endowment (a continuation of legislative reports prepared annually); (2) other faculty positions identified in legislative appropriations; and (3) privately endowed faculty positions. The 2023 Excellence Endowment report will be available in Fall 2024.

1b3. Recent processes provide ample evidence of the university's commitment to engaging with external stakeholders. Several of UW's recent, major initiatives—including general education revision, strategic planning, and freedom of expression policy development—have included external

committee members and other efforts to gather information about needs and perspectives of constituent groups.

The university uses UW in Your Community events as a way to gather input from stakeholders around the state.

New programs including Wyoming Outdoor Tourism and Recreation (WORTH) Initiative (2022), the Wyoming Innovation Partnership (2021), the Wyoming DataHub (2022), the Science Initiative facility (2022), the Wyoming Advanced Blockchain Lab (2020), and the Neltje Center for Excellence in Creativity and the Arts (2022) were developed with the extensive input—and plans for long-term involvements—of statewide partners. Additionally, the newly hired Vice President for Governmental Affairs and Community Engagement position in 2022, as well as a presidential goal focused on external engagement, will help UW increase communication about and respond to other constituent needs.

The hiring in late 2022 of a new VP for Online and Continuing Education was driven in part by a recognition that UW needs to provide online programs to better serve the state. Wyoming currently ranks in the bottom quartile of states for adult degree attainment (<30% hold a bachelor's degree), and National Student Clearinghouse data indicate that over 5,500 in-state adult learners pursue online higher education programs out of state. A key goal in the short term will be to identify and launch degree and certificate programs that can better meet the needs of Wyoming citizens and workplaces.

UW's application for Carnegie Community Engaged Campus status further details UW efforts to respond to the needs of Wyoming communities. The Office of Engagement and Outreach (established in 2017) continues to provide institutional leadership for advancing community engagement and relationships with its partners. This office seeks to create an environment of engaged education and scholarship, working to build collaboration between UW and its constituents to address complex economic and social challenges and opportunities facing UW and Wyoming. Further, a Revised MOU in 2022 with Wyoming's Wind River Reservation spell out goals for engagement with these constituencies. The University of Wyoming High Plains American Indian Research Institute (HPAIRI) has as its primary goal the facilitation of education and research collaboration between tribal communities in Wyoming and UW faculty, staff, and students. Additionally, UW supports informed citizenship across the state through its Wallop K-12 Curriculum Project. Funded in part by the National Endowment for the Humanities to support integration of the humanities across civics education in Wyoming, this collaboration with statewide organizations and additional corporate funders provides a library of virtual multimedia resources (created by UW faculty among other contributors) for K-12 Social Studies and English Language Arts Teachers for classroom use.

Many UW colleges, schools, and departments maintain external advisory boards who provide non-binding guidance in support of the unit's educational mission. The College of Business Advisory Board, for example, "brings together outstanding business professionals who are friends of the University of Wyoming and leverage their collective expertise to help ensure that the College's current and future vision and undertakings are grounded in real-world business relevance and excellence."

At the immediate community level, UW continues to pursue strong relationships with Laramie and its residents. Various town-and-gown initiatives include the annual Big Event and Service Saturdays The university is expanding a campus restorative justice programming into the broader community, UW is working on sponsored law-enforcement intervention training in which the City of Laramie

and Albany County officers, and, in alignment with Title VI, it developed a plan in 2023 to help ensure that limited-English-proficient qualified participants could have meaningful access and opportunity to participate in UW programs, activities, and services.

Finally, UW's pandemic response efforts were driven not only by campus community health but also by the university's desire to serve as a state leader in effective, informed action. By sponsoring a vaccine clinic, making COVID testing available to the Laramie community, publishing economics research related to COVID, and creating informational videos and workshops around safe practices for the community and as UW is a campus open to the public a COVID-19 Mitigation Standard Procedure and Policy was created in 2023 to further keep the campus safe, the university response demonstrated a commitment to supporting emerging constituent needs.

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1.C - Core Component 1.C

The institution provides opportunities for civic engagement in a diverse, multicultural society and globally connected world, as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

1. The institution encourages curricular or cocurricular activities that prepare students for informed citizenship and workplace success.
2. The institution's processes and activities demonstrate inclusive and equitable treatment of diverse populations.
3. The institution fosters a climate of respect among all students, faculty, staff and administrators from a range of diverse backgrounds, ideas and perspectives.

Argument

UPDATED 5-23-2024

1c1. UW's new strategic plan includes a value for "growth, health, and leadership capacity of all members of the university community." Additionally, Goal 1 of the plan is to "prepare students for life and adaptation to a changing and increasingly digital world" In support for these aims, UW offers a range of curricular and co-curricular opportunities for students' post-graduation success.

In terms of curriculum, UW's existing general education program (adopted in 2015) aligns with AAC&U Essential Learning Outcomes, a nationally recognized set of outcomes that promote a sense of social responsibility, and well as strong and transferable intellectual and practical skills such as communication, analytical, and problem-solving skills. The university expects that its new general education program (in development now, with a Fall 2026 launch target) will include experiential education as a required component. That revision process is informed by national and regional perspectives including American Association of Colleges & Universities as well as the National Association of Colleges and Employers and the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education. Attention to these research-based perspectives should help UW achieve a strong, coherent general education program that prepares students for informed citizenship and workplace success.

Aside from the general education program, UW degree programs also attend to outcomes and activities that will prepare students for personal, civic, and/or vocational success, either through alignment with professional accrediting bodies or through UW's in-house academic program review process, which typically requires programs to gather information about comparator programs and evaluate the currency of their program outcomes and features.

In terms of co-curriculum, in 2023 UW adopted a new university assessment plan with institutional-level learning outcomes. Assessment for these outcomes will include attention to student learning through co-curricular and student support activities. This change should allow us to better track and strategically expand a wide range of current offerings that support student civic and vocational growth.

UW's Advising and Career Exploratory Services Center (ACES) provides a variety of career support events, including job fairs, career counseling, and internship information. This institution-level

center is supplemented by college-level centers such as the Johnson Student Success Center, which supports College of Business students from early application and enrollment stages, through their academic programs, and on to career services and career exploration.

Since UW's 2019 HLC Accreditation Argument, several colleges and programs have begun requiring students to use UW's co-curricular transcripting platform (called SOAR). This platform allows programs to set goals for and track student participation in a variety of co-curricular experiences. The UW Honors College requires its students to complete a first-year badge as well as advanced badges in Global and Cultural Perspectives, Arts and Humanities Integration, Social Justice Engagement, STEM Investigation, Leadership and Teamwork Readiness, and Advanced Capstone Training. The platform also connects students to over a dozen Laramie-based non-profit agencies. providing opportunities for them to work with these agencies through volunteer service, internships, and research projects.

A Spring 2023 *UWyo* magazine article, "Life After Undergrad," provides anecdotal evidence of the way that UW curricular and co-curricular experiences have prepared students to embrace a range of opportunities after their undergraduate program. Recent electrical engineering graduate Gareth Flowers, for example, reported taking advantage of career fairs and the Susan McCormack Center for Student Success in the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences, and the student also noted the value of skills learned at UW, like working collaboratively and thinking logically. Other students in the article note the value of undergraduate research opportunities they have participated in at UW.

The UW Student Opinion Survey provides strong longitudinal evidence that students have highly valued their educational experience. Additionally, Saddle Up (launched in 2022) is a week-long, pre-semester program designed to prepare first-year students for academic success. It includes programming to help students take even earlier and fuller advantage of the curricular and co-curricular opportunities available to them at UW.

1c2. Since 1890 UW has been "equally open to students of both sexes, irrespective of race or color," and the university has strived to improve policies and processes for achieving equity and inclusion. After the departure of UW's first Chief Diversity Officer in 2021, the university restructured its Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and hired a Vice President for DEI in 2022. In 2023 and early 2024, the VP for DEI led the office through strategic planning to identify priorities for coming years.

These strategic plans [of the ODEI] will be revisited as the university responds to a March 2024 legislative action to reduce UW's block grant by $1.73 million--the budgeted biennial amount for the university's Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. The legislature had initially also demanded that no state funding be spent on any DEI-related activities, functions, or programs, but the governor vetoed that line of the footnote, citing a desire to avoid inadvertently put federal grant dollars at risk. In response to the legislative action, the president quickly assembled a working group, composed of faculty, staff, students and administrators, which produced a report reviewing UW activity related to DEI. Also, in May 2024, following discussion with its board of trustees, the university announced that it would eliminate its Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to comply with the legislative directive.

The president is optimistic that many of the university's programs that serve its varied student populations—including many programs that existed before the DEI office was created in 2017—can

continue to meet the needs of all members of the UW community. In achieving the university's core missions of teaching, research, outreach, and service, UW will remain committed to its values and strategic goals, including those related to protecting academic freedom and freedom of expression; being open and welcoming to all; supporting and treating everyone fairly and respectfully; being politically neutral as an institution; basing hiring and grading exclusively on merit; encouraging inquiry instead of advocacy in the classroom; and considering the needs of all students, faculty and staff. To help achieve these commitments, UW has announced a new position, titled the Vice Provost for Access and Engagement.

In cases where "preferential" programs are deemed essential to help students—such as the [Wyoming Latina Youth Conference](#) and [Women in STEM](#) conference (part of the Women in Engineering initiative)—private funding sources will be pursued. [Federal Title VI compliance](#), support for [religious accommodations](#), and [Americans with Disabilities Act](#) coordination will be reassigned to other UW units. The university will continue to meet requirements necessary for athletic and academic accreditation compliance, nondiscrimination training related to state and federal law, and access programs for military veterans, Pell Grant recipients, first-generation college students, nontraditional students, low-income students, and people with disabilities.

Since HLC's last site visit in 2019, UW has also created an [Office of the Ombuds](#), designed to support inclusive and equitable treatment of students, faculty, and staff. This independent resource assists in conflict resolution and complaint process support. The university has also integrated and improved various student complaint processes, a move meant to ensure more equitable treatment of all students, and it has created a centralized "[Report a Concern](#)" page to promote more effective responses to a range of potential ethical violations. Additionally, in 2019, the university created a [restorative justice program](#), which provides training to faculty, staff, and students, and a [Flexible Work Arrangement](#) policy adopted in 2021 recognizes that these arrangements can help UW meet the operational needs of the university while supporting employees' needs in equitable ways.

Regarding individuals with disabilities, UW adopted a [Public Event and Program Accommodations policy](#) in 2022 to ensure that UW-sponsored events are reasonably accessible to the UW community and the broader public. Additionally, the university has substantially expanded its guidelines and policies to ensure website accessibility.

Through early 2024, UW had offered:

- Multiple centers focused on supporting specific student populations, such as the [Pokes Pride Center](#), [Veterans Services Center](#), [Multicultural Resource Center](#), and the [Native American Education, Research, and Cultural Center](#). Beginning in spring 2019, and facilitated by the Office of DEI, Multicultural Affairs partnered with the UW Counseling Center to offer a support group through the [Multicultural Resource Center](#) for students of color, named the Student of Color Circle. Similar opportunities are also being planned for multiracial students, women of color, and LGBTQ+ students. Multicultural Affairs also partners with programs such as the Outdoor Program to provide additional opportunities for diverse groups of students.
- A variety of events that engage the campus in exploring contemporary perspectives on diverse human values and experiences. Some Major events and organizations that host events include the [Shepard Symposium](#) on Social Justice, the [Martin Luther King, Jr. Days of Dialogue](#), and event by the [United Multicultural Council](#).
- Training for students, faculty, and staff support UW in upholding its role in a multicultural society, including programs related to sexual harassment and discrimination policies. Specific examples include [NO MORE](#) sexual assault and domestic violence awareness, [Green Dot](#)

bystander intervention, ADA Website Compliance, and Safe Zone training.

The future of these programs will be reconsidered through the remainder of 2024 as the university restructures following the elimination of the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. UW remains committed to student support services (emotional and mental health, health and wellness, food and nutrition, academics and tutoring, activities and interests, housing and finances, and post-graduation and career services), summer institutes and programming (e.g. the Shepherd Symposium, Latina Youth, etc.), the wide variety of student organizations, scholarships, awards, and assistantship programs.

The Black 14 Social Justice Summer Institute was a high school program offered in 2022 and 2023 for students interested in individual freedom of expression, civil rights and social justice, and exploration of diversity, equity, and inclusion principles. The institute represented an effort by UW to acknowledge and create dialogue around the 1969 dismissal of 14 black football players who requested permission to protest during a game against BYU. In May 2024, members of the group chose to suspend its involvement in the institute after Wyoming government leaders eliminated funding for UW's Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. President Seidel is hopeful the event will be revised in 2025 with support from private funding. UW anticipates that other similar programs, such as Latina Youth Conference, MLK Days of Dialogue, and the Shepherd Symposium will continue to be offered.

In terms of hiring and employment, UW Regulations 4-1, 4-2, and 4-3 and related policies have guided institutional practice and help to promote and protect the representation of diverse perspectives on campus. An Equal Opportunity, Harassment, and Nondiscrimination policy document outlines the university's current non-discrimination policy. Beyond this document, the university has provided guidelines for search committees about fairness in recruiting and training. An Equal Opportunity Report and Response Unit investigates alleged violations of UW policies related to discrimination, harassment, sexual misconduct, and violence in the workplace. Additionally, the Employee Handbook provides guidance related to retaliation for employees who file good-faith complaints of harassment, hostile environment, or retaliation. Additional information on the Fairness in Hiring webpage aligns UW policy with additional relevant federal policies. This range of policies and processes demonstrate the university's commitment to recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce and finding a diverse pool of applicants, while engaging in merit-based hiring practices.

1c3. UW engages in a range of efforts to foster a climate of respect. Saddle Up—UW's week-long pre-semester program for incoming students—introduces students to five key principles in the student code of conduct: community, integrity, social consciousness, respect, and responsibility. Other new and ongoing efforts to make UW a site of respect include a No More campaign (against domestic violence and sexual assault), Green Dot bystander intervention training, Safe Zone, and centralized Accessibility Resources page, which includes support for employees and guidance as well as guidance regarding accessible website design and technology purchasing.

UW's Green Dot offers evidence that these kinds of efforts make a difference. As a finalist for the Clery Center's 2023 Campus Safety Impact Award, UW's Green Dot program was recognized for contributing to a 10 to 20 percent reduction in sexual assaults and similar or greater reductions for stalking, intimate partner violence and sexual harassment.

A [2023 working group](#) developed a set of recommendations about freedom of expression, including possibilities for "cultivating a campus culture of civil discourse and constructive dialogue among members of the university community." This group continues to identify and has begun to implement specific action items in support of the principles.

Additionally, current UW academic offerings allow students to engage with diverse perspectives. The [general education program](#), currently in revision, tentatively includes a Humanities and Fine Arts requirement with a focus on helping students "develop critical, creative, and interpretive skills needed to function in an increasingly diverse world and contribute to society as educated and culturally competent citizens." In terms of curricular offerings, a range of existing courses, alongside graduate and undergraduate majors and minors in [International Studies,](#) provide opportunities for students to engage with diverse perspectives. Under a new director (as of Fall 2023) programs in the [School of Culture, Gender, and Social Justice](#) may be restructured in coming years.

One strong and continuing effort to promote an awareness of global perspectives is UW's support for study abroad through the [UW Education Abroad Office](#). The university offers extensive scholarship support for study-abroad programs through the largest land-grant university study-abroad scholarship endowment in the country. Additionally, ongoing international partnerships in over 40 countries help create lasting opportunities for students to travel with research faculty and to engage in projects of cultural, scientific, and environmental value. Since HLC's last visit, UW's launch of the [Cowboys Abroad portal and a partnership with Shorelight](#) make student access to global perspectives even easier.

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1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary

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

Summary

The University of Wyoming's recently updated and publicly accessible strategic plan, mission, and values reinforce its ongoing commitment to its land-grant state and its role as the state's only four-year institution. The strategic plan was developed through a collaborative process involving various stakeholders, including statewide partners, advisory boards, and community members. The mission and related statements emphasize the university's focus on the public good, through meaningful instruction, research, public service, and economic development. To support its mission, the university engages in various activities that extend its intellectual and cultural resources to public audiences across the state. UW also provides educational and career advancement opportunities to people around the state through online and hybrid degrees, non-credit learning experiences, and seamless transfer pathways from community colleges. UW's 2024 success in achieving Carnegie "Community Engaged" status is an indicator of the range of its curricular and co-curricular opportunities that prepare students for engaged citizenship and workplace success in a multicultural society.

Sources

There are no sources.

2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

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

2.A - Core Component 2.A

The institution establishes and follows policies and processes to ensure fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing board, administration, faculty and staff.

1. The institution develops and the governing board adopts the mission.
2. The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, human resources and auxiliary functions.

Argument

UPDATED 5-23-2024

2a1. The university adopted its [new strategic plan](), including an updated mission statement, in early 2023. As extensively detailed on the [Strategic Planning pages]() of the university website, that process was a collaborative one that included several institution-wide development phases and culminated in [approval by the board of trustees]().

2a2. UW strives for integrity in all functions, as illustrated throughout its institutional policies. Additionally, the university seeks to maintain policies that reflect current best practices, and it has recently gone through a multi-year process updating all of university regulations and supporting policy documents. The following updated regulations now guide the university's institutional commitment to honest and fair dealings regarding governance, finances, employment, and faculty and student expectations. Supporting these top-level regulations are a variety of Standard Administrative Policies and Procedures. The recently concluded effort to separate regulations from administrative policies allows policies to be amended more easily in response to changing contextual factors.

Integrity in governance

- Authority for officers and overall organization of the university ([UW Regulation 1-1]())
- Shared governance ([UW Regulation 1-4]())
- Governmental relationships ([UW Regulation 12-4]())
- [UW Code of Ethics]()

Integrity in finances

- Investment ([UW Regulation 7-7]()) and private fundraising activity ([UW Regulation 12-1]())
- Establishment of an internal auditor ([Board of Trustees Bylaws Section 6-3]()) and the Fiscal and Legal Affairs Committee, responsible for protecting the financial health and reputation of the

university in all audit-related areas (Board of Trustees Bylaws Section 7-2)

Integrity in human resources

- Equal opportunity (UW Regulation 4-1) and other policies related to human resources and employment (UW Regulations 5-2 and 5-3, and the related Employee Handbook)
- Tenure, promotion, post-tenure, and annual review policies (UW Regulation 2-7), academic dispute resolution (UW Regulation 2-2), dismissal of academic personnel (UW Regulation 2-6)
- Hiring Toolkit, providing extensive guidance for hiring processes

Academic integrity

- Student conduct (UW Regulation 11-1)
- Student academic dishonesty (UW Regulation 2-114)
- Revocation of degrees (UW Regulation 2-120)

Integrity in auxiliary functions

- Intellectual property (UW Regulation 9-1)
- Oversight of athletics (UW Regulation 3-1)
- Facilities use (UW Regulations 6-1, 6-4, and 6-7, 6-8, and 6-9)

Beyond top-level regulations:

- UW's commitment to fair governance is demonstrated by recent reviews of the president (2022). The university recognizes the importance of gathering broad-based feedback about the performance of these top officers as a way to gauge perceptions about the honesty and fairness of their actions.
- UW's commitment to integrity in budgeting is enhanced by its transition to the WyoCloud financial system beginning in 2016 and later the launch of the HCM Human Resources system in 2020. This system was still relatively new during HLC's visit in 2019. Updates to procurement functions since then have further enhanced the system's ability to provide transparency for institutional transactions. Annual division reports additionally ensure budget transparency both within and beyond the university structure. Internal audits and policy documentation, including extensive publicly available budget reports and plans on the Budget Office website, provide information about the status of current budgets. An updated travel policy provides improved guidance for ethical use of funds during university-related travel.
- Regarding human resources, UW continues to adhere to hiring practices that support equal opportunity (see 1c2 and 2d). A Hiring Toolkit resource page and mandatory training for individuals involved in hiring decisions help promote integrity in initial hiring practices. Additionally, the university has now adopted the STAR-based approach for hiring staff, a behavior-based approach that reduces bias by focusing the interview process on candidates' demonstrated competencies rather than claimed values. UW Employee Relations department exists specifically to support resolution of concerns and to ensure that rights and responsibilities are clear both to employees and to the units where they work. Within HR, the Classification/Compensation unit gathers information to guide compensation decisions to ensure fair salary rates and distributions. The Equal Opportunity Report and Response unit focuses specifically on responding to concerns related to discrimination and harassment (UW Regulation 4-2), Title IX and sexual misconduct (UW Regulation 4-3), and violence in the workplace (UW Regulation 4-4).

To ensure appropriate hiring in relationship to HLC credentialing guidelines, UW has developed a [faculty qualifications faqs document](). In support of improved tracking of credentials, [WyoVita]() (adopted in 2019) serves as an electronic platform for aggregating faculty activity in relationship to research, teaching, service, and other aspects of their job descriptions.

With regard to academic integrity, UW adopted a fully revised [Student Code of Conduct]() in 2022. Additionally, in early 2023 the provost assembled a [working group to explore risks and opportunities related to generative AI](), and the university updated its academic dishonesty regulation in relationship to that group's recommendations. Further, as the university moves ahead with implementation plans related to academic freedom and freedom of expression, the Student Code of Conduct will be further updated to more clearly articulate students' and faculty members' obligations in maintaining an environment of integrity and free expression.

The Research and Economic Development unit is in a multi-year process of [updating policies]() and streamlining procedures to ensure [ethical conduct of research](). A major new component of that effort is the switch to Cayuse for electronic research administration. In 2023, UW launched its branded version of Cayuse, called [ROAMWyo](), which will reduce administrative burden, improve collaboration between researchers and administrators, mitigate compliance risks, and increase efficiency throughout grant funding cycles. Through this platform, UW has initiated a [conflict of interest reporting procedure]() for faculty that should allow the institution to better understand and track the involvement of faculty in activities adjacent to their work on campus.

Regarding issues relating to discrimination, sexual harassment, and workplace violence, the [Equal Opportunity Response Unit]() and Dean of Students office track efforts to investigate and resolve [Title IX-related complaints](). Additionally, a recent [sexual misconduct survey]() shows that the number of respondents who reported experiencing at least one instance of sexual assault at UW has declined, suggesting that university policies and actions translate into positive change.

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2.B - Core Component 2.B

The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public.

1. The institution ensures the accuracy of any representations it makes regarding academic offerings, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, governance structure and accreditation relationships.
2. The institution ensures evidence is available to support any claims it makes regarding its contributions to the educational experience through research, community engagement, experiential learning, religious or spiritual purpose and economic development.

Argument

UPDATED 5-23-2024

2b1. To ensure the accuracy and recency of publicly available information, UW diligently strives to keep its websites up to date, with most pages undergoing review on at least an annual basis. Broken-link reports are sent out regularly, and these reports typically serve to drive up basic updates to ensure recency of information. There is also a site to report broken links so they can be added to the emailed reports.

UW's consumer information webpage centralizes information related to Higher Education Opportunity Act disclosure requirements, demonstrating the university's efforts to provide easy access to information for decision making by students, parents, counselors, researchers, and external stakeholders. This page provides up-to-date information including governing structure, financial aid, faculty and staff levels, and student outcomes. Centralized cost-of-attendance information (for graduate, undergraduate, and online programs) is located on UW's Student Financial Aid website. The UW Brown and Gold Report—maintained by the Office of Institutional Analysis—is an interactive, publicly-available dashboard that allows users to learn even more about a range of university data including enrollment trends, historical tuition and fee levels, and retention and graduation rates.

The trustee regulations stipulate (UW Regulation 7-11) that "All student fees, charges, refunds, and deposits shall be fixed by resolution of the Trustees and shall be published in the appropriate university publications." The Division of Budget and Finance publishes this information in the annual Student Fee Book.

In 2020, UW moved to Acalog as its academic catalog management program. This adoption ensures that information about academic offerings and program requirements are up-to-date, consistently presented, and transparent to students.

UW maintains a complete and centralized list of all current accreditations, including a timeline for reaccreditation. Presently, all UW programs that have sought professional accreditation are in good standing. A set of art and design programs achieved first-time accreditation with The National Association of Schools of Art and Design in May 2024.

In 2020 UW created its licensure and certification website to meet federal requirements related to

transparency, including the applicability of its programs towards licensure and certification in other states and territories. This website is under current updating procedures to match the determination language changes in to 2023 Federal Negotiated Rulemaking decisions.

Beyond these centralized pages, several other web pages provide accurate and up-to-date information about the express and implied promises UW makes to its student and to other constituencies:

- The University Regulations and Standard Administrative Policies and Procedures pages provide full access to university regulatory and control structures.
- The Dean of Students Office informs students, faculty, and staff about processes for student welfare, student conduct, sexual misconduct, disability, and distress support, as well as absences and withdrawals.
- The Office of the Registrar links to the current University Catalog, recent or current course schedules, academic calendar, residency, degree evaluations, and transcript and enrollment requests.
- The Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid provides information about cost of attendance, a net price calculator, federal return of funds policies, scholarships, federal financial aid, loans, grants, and work-study.
- Housing & Dining (formerly Residence Life & Dining Services RLDS) website makes public information about contracts, dining plans, on-campus residential options/costs, and student employment opportunities with RLDS.
- UW's People Finder page offers a link to searchable institutional and web directories as a way for stakeholders to quickly find and contact UW personnel and offices.

2b2. As a secular, publicly funded institution, UW makes no claims regarding a religious or spiritual purpose. UW's mission makes a number of implicit and explicit claims about the role of research, community engagement, experiential learning, and economic development in the educational experience. The implementation plan for UW's current strategic plan identifies a number of metrics that will improve methods for gathering evidence about the impacts of these offerings.

Regarding UW's efforts to provide meaningful community engagement, the successful application for status as a Carnegie Community-Engaged campus (based on 2018-19 data) provides substantial information about student access to and participation in a range of community engagement and experiential learning activities, including the following:

- UW classified 12% of undergraduate and 14% of graduate courses as meeting their definition of community-engaged.
- 32 academic departments (37%) offer for-credit community-engaged courses.
- Nearly 2000 students were enrolled in a community-engaged course.

As noted in the 2019 Accreditation Argument, UW's Center for Student Involvement and Leadership centralizes all student involvement programs into a single unit. This center includes the Service, Leadership, and Community Engagement office (SLCE), Fraternity and Sorority Life, Veteran Services, Multicultural Affairs, Associated Students of the University of Wyoming (the university's student government), and others. By the end of 2024/beginning of 2025, the university anticipates that a new unit-level strategic plan from this center will provide specific evidence to illustrate their impact on student development. Additionally, a 2023-2024 Presidential Faculty Fellow is currently examining the feasibility of establishing an Experiential Learning Resource Center (ELRC) within

the [Global Engagement Office](#).

As noted in 3b5, UW provides extensive opportunities for students to engage in research across a range of fields. UW has increased support for [undergraduate research](#) since UW's [2019 Accreditation Argument](#). Prior to the pandemic, over 500 students participated in an annual symposium on undergraduate learning, and the university estimates that over 800 students participate annually in undergraduate research opportunities. Additionally, UW's experiential transcripting platform [(SOAR)](#) emphasizes undergraduate research as a key competency, and the [Honors College](#) (has their own SOAR requirements), the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences, and the College of Business now all require student participation in this co-curricular system.

At the graduate level, UW increased [stipends for assistantships in 2022](#) and will increase them again in FY25 in an effort to remain competitive with other schools of similar size and scope. In March 2024 it was announced by the [President of UW that the University will be expecting another $3 million to increase graduate stipends](#). Over the past 4 years, the School of Graduate Education records that approximately 500 graduate research assistantships were awarded each year.

UW does not currently collect consistent, broad-based measures of student involvement with economic development opportunities. Student interest and participation in events like the [Ellbogen $50K Entrepreneurship Competition](#) through the College of Business Entrepreneurship Program have continued to grow. Additionally, UW launched the entrepreneurship [minor](#) and [major](#) in 2019 through the Entrepreneurship Program. These academic programs are designed to increase students' engagement with economic development through internships, research, and networking. In 2023, the Entrepreneurship Program won the [Model Emerging Program Award](#) at the U.S. Association for Small Business and Entrepreneurship (USASBE) Conference.

In terms of implicit claims about the lifelong value of a UW education (including through research, experiential learning, and community engagement), the university can point to consistently high rates of satisfaction with the overall educational experience among current and past students. In [UW's 2023 student opinion survey](#), over 92% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were pleased with the education they were receiving at UW.

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2.C - Core Component 2.C

The governing board of the institution is autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution in compliance with board policies and to ensure the institution's integrity.

1. The governing board is trained and knowledgeable so that it makes informed decisions with respect to the institution's financial and academic policies and practices; the board meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.
2. The governing board's deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.
3. The governing board reviews the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations.
4. The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests or other external parties.
5. The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the institution's administration and expects the institution's faculty to oversee academic matters.

Argument

UPDATED 5-23-2024

2c1. The UW Board of Trustees is knowledgeable about the institution. Materials that help onboard new trustees provide information about duties, structures, and other aspects of trustee activity. In terms of adequate legal and financial guidance, the board of trustees bylaws and committees help the board delineate its role in overseeing financial and academic policies and practices, and in meeting its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.

From a policy and process perspective, the bylaws of the board of trustees clearly lay out the duties of the board's officers and its various committees, including Fiscal and Legal Affairs, Budget, Facilities Contracting, Financial Management and Reporting, Legislative Relations, Academic and Student Affairs, and Research and Economic Development. The Fiscal and Legal Affairs Committee takes primary responsibility for "assuring that the University's organizational culture, capabilities, systems and processes are appropriate to protect the financial health and the reputation of the University." This group works extensively with UW's internal auditor to identify any internal issues that need to be addressed.

2c2. Extensive board meeting records demonstrate this group's commitment to deliberations about which activities can best help maintain the quality and reputation of the university. The minutes, agendas, and related reports for all open board meetings are available for public inspection. Executive session minutes and agendas are not available to the public. The following deliberations provide evidence of the board's good-faith efforts to preserve and enhance the institution:

- Attaining Carnegie R1 status (2025)
- Annual budget hearings (FY2025)
- Discussion of the implementation plan as a way to achieve goals of the strategic plan

State statute requires the UW Board of Trustees membership to include perspectives from multiple political perspectives and geographic areas of the state. This requirement encourages robust deliberations that move the board beyond narrow-minded approaches for preserving the institution.

As also noted in 2c4, conflict of interest disclosures and policies help ensure that board members recuse themselves in cases where members' commitment to the university may be compromised by their other interests.

2c3. The board of trustees solicits input from the institution's internal and external constituencies during its deliberations and decision making. Evidence is available in recent meeting agendas. These agendas demonstrate the invitation of specific internal and external spokespersons to support the board's decision-making. Additional evidence of successful board of trustees deliberation is illustrated by the process that led to adoption of the most recent strategic plan.

Although the board of trustees bylaws do not mandate feedback-gathering processes during decision making, the board has historically demonstrated in practice a commitment to seeking external and internal feedback during major deliberations. Section 2-7 of the Board of Trustees Bylaws outline the public attendance at meetings directive. For example, "Public Testimony" is a standing agenda item for board meetings. Additionally, as noted on meeting agendas, "At the Board Chairman's discretion opportunity for public comment may also be provided *upon the conclusion of each topic*." These practices of gathering input from constituent groups help the board gain a broad understanding of the representative values and priorities of many stakeholder groups.

2c4. The board of trustees seeks to maintain appropriate distance from donors, elected officials, ownership interests, or other external parties when such influence would not be in the best interest of the institution. Wyoming State Statute 21-17-201 helps maintain a representative balance of political and geographic interests among board members, which helps protect the university from disproportionate pressure from any one area of the state or one side of the political spectrum. Additionally, board members must declare conflicts of interest in accordance with the University of Wyoming Board of Trustees Conflict of Interest Policy. Recently, board members signed new conflict of interest policies.

2c5. Wyoming Statutes 21-17-103, 21-17-104, 21-17-203, 21-17-204 establish the powers and duties of the university president, faculty, and board of trustees. Most relevant to this sub-criterion, 21-17-104 establishes the president as "the executive head of all the departments … with authority to give general direction to the instruction and investigations of the several schools and departments."

The board of trustees entrusts UW's day-to-day management of the institution to the administration and empowers the faculty to oversee academic matters. Specifically, UW Regulation 1-1 vests the president with "powers and duties as provided by the laws of this State and the Bylaws of the Trustees of the University of Wyoming. In addition to such duties, the President shall enforce UW Regulations as adopted hereof, and the President is hereby clothed with all authority requisite to these ends." UW Regulation 1-1 further assigns other duties across a range of positions and units. The current president's re-appointment further establishes the delegation of management to his office.

Recent UW policy changes have helped reduce the potential for over-involvement from the board. One example is revision of hiring procedures for executive positions. The VP and Dean search committee by the Board of Trustees was repealed in 2022 and the power of searching for these positions has been entrusted to the President and Provost. The Board of Trustees still have the final say on hiring of VP and Dean candidates, but the search and selection process is now outside of their purview. Through the regulation review process that started in 2016, UW reduced the amount of regulations (which require board approval) from 113 to 84. The current regulations (UW Regulation 1-103) now give the president the power to approve standard administrative policies and procedures that address areas of university governance below the level of the board of trustees.

Regarding the role of faculty in overseeing academic matters, University Faculty Bylaws (UW Regulation 2-300) place responsibility for "the establishment of educational and academic policies for the University as a whole and the promotion of the general welfare of the University, its students, and the faculty" in the hands of the faculty. This regulation additionally establishes the specific objects and authority, membership, and bylaws of the faculty senate as a formal mechanism for overseeing academic matters. Additionally, UW Regulation 7-11 establishes the composition for various administrative committees, ensuring that management and planning decisions involve representation from appropriate colleges and units across campus in student financial matters.

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2.D - Core Component 2.D

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

Argument

UPDATED 5-24-2024

UW Regulation 2-15 governs the university's position on academic freedom. Additionally, recognizing the need for the University of Wyoming to be active in local, state, and larger conversations about civic engagement, President Seidel issued a broader statement on the value of civic discourse in November 2022, and he convened a working group to develop recommendations around freedom of expression. As part of the process, a survey of students revealed that most have positive perceptions of UW's existing commitment to and support for freedom of expression and inquiry:

- Asked whether UW promotes an environment of free and open intellectual inquiry in classes, 69% of students said they agree or strongly agree, with just 8% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.
- 93% of students identified one or more sectors of campus life as having offered them opportunities to engage in respectful dialogue amid controversial or sensitive topics, with classes within their major most often mentioned.
- 58% of students said they agree or strongly agree that UW protects their access to spoken words, printed matter, symbolic messages, freedom of association, books, art, music, movies, television programs and internet sites. Sixteen percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- Asked whether UW promotes an open culture of tolerance, discussion and debate surrounding controversial or sensitive topics on campus outside of classes, 55% of students said they agree or strongly agree, with 25% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

The president's working group on freedom of expression made a number of recommendations for operationalizing and communicating the principles they developed, including:

- Ensuring all curricular decisions and changes come from, and/or are vetted by bodies made up of credentialed faculty experts.
- Adopting a gifts acceptance policy to reflect the university's commitments to institutional neutrality, academic freedom, and intellectual freedom.
- Clarifying content-neutral policies for risk assessment and content-neutral guidelines for poster distribution, exhibiting artwork, tabling, room reservations, displays in residence halls, etc.
- Clarifying language in academic dismissal policies (e.g., about "collegiality" and "safety") to reduce the potential for expression-based reasons for dismissal.
- Developing/expanding a syllabus statement about the principle of academic freedom that governs the instructional setting.
- Developing guidance for faculty and staff conducting media interviews and using social media in order to reduce uncertainty about what, and in what contexts or capacities, faculty and staff members can freely and ethically express themselves in the media.

The president has begun taking action on many of these recommendations and will continue to pursue these efforts to clarify and solidify UW's practices for protecting free expression on campus.

Recent challenges to freedom of expression at UW include a lawsuit from a Laramie community member who was prevented from tabling in the student union after posting the name of a transgender student on a banner without their consent. That lawsuit is related to another outside lawsuit, still underway, brought by six members of UW's Kappa Kappa Kappa chapter, who sued the sorority after they inducted that student into the chapter.

From a policy perspective, UW Regulations 4-1, 4-2, 4-3, and 11-1 and related policy documents (such as the Equal Opportunity, Harassment, and Nondiscrimination policy and the Student Handbook) provide guidance and protections against harassment and discrimination while balancing concerns for academic freedom and First Amendment protections. Additionally, the Office of General Counsel maintains a FAQs page to help members of campus understand the university policies related to discrimination and harassment.

UW's student code of conduct, updated in 2022, maintains the right of the student "to participate in relevant and civil discussions, inquiry, and expression activities in their academic endeavors" while acknowledging that "students have the responsibility to respect the instructor's freedom to teach and the right of other students to learn." Additionally, the handbook promotes student activism, recognizing that "student participation in community and political events is a fundamental component of students developing their own voice on current social and political issues. Furthermore, student activism creates the opportunity for the exchange of ideas through dialogue, which is critical in an educational environment." The employee handbook, updated in 2022, provides similar language to guide employees' participation and expression.

In terms of programming, UW has hosted a number of events and centers that encourage a variety of perspectives in the search for and dissemination of knowledge. Previous efforts have included the following events:

- An October 2023 presentation, open to faculty across campus, engaged participants in considering "The Importance of Difficult Conversations and How to Prepare for Them." The event was facilitated by international conflict-resolution expert Daniel Wehrenfenning.
- Both the LeaRN program with aid from the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion have offered programming and a teaching guide website focused on effectively facilitating difficult conversations in the classroom and approaching difficult students.
- Events that help provide a range of views on contemporary issues, such as recent talks by Riley Gaines (an activist advocating against trans women in women's sports), and Angela Davis (a Marxist feminist).
- The annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Days of Dialogue program has served to expand awareness about issues of oppression, foster an inclusive community, and empower individuals to act in solidarity with marginalized communities.
- Safe Zone training, the Pokes Pride Center, and the Queer Studies minor, among other efforts, have helped provide space for the perspectives of LGBTQIA+ students.
- In 2020, UW created the Black Studies Center, meant to promote the accurate history of black people and history in the state. The center launched with a webinar series to introduce the center goals to the campus community.

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2.E - Core Component 2.E

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

1. Institutions supporting basic and applied research maintain professional standards and provide oversight ensuring regulatory compliance, ethical behavior and fiscal accountability.
2. The institution provides effective support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff and students.
3. The institution provides students guidance in the ethics of research and use of information resources.
4. The institution enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.

Argument

UPDATED 5-23-2024

2e1. Since HLC's last visit, UW's Research and Economic Development Division has made a number of changes to further ensure professional standards and compliance. Most notable is the adoption of Cayuse for electronic research administration. This application represents a substantial upgrade over the previous platform in terms of transparency and efficiency.

Additionally, the research division has been restructured to provide more attention to issues of research ethics. In addition to a sub-unit focused on compliance, UW also now has a director for research security and conflict of interest. Beginning in 2023, UW now requires all employees to submit an annual conflict of interest disclosure.

Many guiding documents noted in UW's 2019 Accreditation Argument continue to drive UW's approaches related to regulatory compliance, ethical behavior and fiscal accountability in research activity:

- UW provides guidance and resources to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice. *UW Regulation 2-114* (revised 2023) and the University Policy for Responding to Allegations of Research Misconduct clearly spell out the university's expectations for ethical research. Many tenure and promotion guidelines establish appropriate disciplinary expectations related to ethical research.
- In terms of oversight and support services for faculty research and scholarship, the Division Research and Economic Development offers oversight and substantial assistance on compliance and ethical conduct of research. These include guidance for compliance areas, including an Institutional Review Board, Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee, Institutional Biosafety Committee, and Radiation Safety Committee, as well as Responsible Conduct of Research and Conflict of Interest policies.
- The Research and Economic Development Division provides support in ensuring fiscal accountability of UW grant recipients. As the university continues to expand its attention to economic development, this unit has also increased its support for ethical pursuit of marketable innovations, in part by updating UW Regulation 9-1, related to intellectual property, patents and copyrights, in 2021.

The task of maintaining professional standards falls primarily to colleges and units with professional accreditation requirements. No professional accreditation of UW programs has ever been withdrawn for reasons of non-compliance, unethical behavior, or fiscal irresponsibility.

2e2. The Research and Economic Development Division, guided by university regulation and relevant administrative policy, manages services related to integrity of research and scholarly pursuits. Key services include:

- An active Institutional Review Board group who meets monthly to review proposals and provide guidance and relevant.
- An IRB Policies and Procedures Manual for Faculty, Staff, and Student Researchers, updated in 2021.
- A webpage with guidance for instructors and students conducting research as part of human research and classroom training.
- ROAMWyo Human Ethics for all IRB protocol submissions, review processes, and approval notifications for research involving human subjects. This platform launched in January 2024.

Additional training and education in the Responsible Conduct of Research is offered throughout the year in key areas of research best practices including data management, authorship, mentoring, research misconduct, and conflict of interest. Faculty, staff, and students are invited to attend these seminars and lectures, with many recorded for future educational opportunities. Additionally, the Research & Economic Development Division provides confidential support and guidance as needed, and staff in this unit can mediate research-related conflicts with the assistance of relevant campus units.

2e3. Undergraduate general education courses establish baseline expectations for ethical use of information. Three required communication-intensive general education courses include learning outcomes focused on ethical evaluation, integration, and documentation of secondary research. This effort is supported by the University Libraries, which developed a set of modules to help provide students with a foundation in information literacy. Librarians typically offer library instruction to over 100 courses each year. A revised general education program (to be adopted in 2026) will retain outcomes related to information literacy, though the focus and location of those outcomes may shift.

Expectations for ethical use of research are reinforced through syllabus statements about academic dishonesty, both at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Research faculty educate students on the responsible use of information resources as students engage in research and writing. More centralized resources for undergraduate research (created in 2022) support ethical conduct of research for undergraduates. The Research & Economic Development Division offers educational opportunities and guest lectures—many open to students as well as faculty—on the ethical and responsible conduct of research.

Many accredited programs are required by their accrediting bodies to teach ethics of the profession, and other degree programs indicate their commitment to teaching ethical use of research in their program outcomes. The ABET Engineering accreditation criteria are an example of ethics requirements in program accreditation.

2e4. A Standard Administrative Policies and Procedures document ("Course Syllabus Requirements") requires faculty to include academic dishonesty policies, with a statement or a reference to UW Regulation 2-114 (Procedures and Authorized University Actions in Cases of Student Academic Dishonesty). This requirement serves to raise student and instructor awareness of general procedures. Additionally, sample text in the Template Syllabus provides more specific language for instructors to adapt for their own courses and to aid in initial enforcement of academic dishonesty at the instructional level. For cases of academic dishonesty that rise above the class or department level, colleges take the primary role for enforcing academic honesty and integrity policies, as appropriate to their programs, in line with UW Regulation 2-114, which governs appeals and hearings. The regulation requires that any final sanction in decisions of academic dishonesty be sent to a central repository, held in the office of the Dean of Students. The Research & Economic Development Division also has a website where research misconduct of any kind can be reported.

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2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary

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

Summary

UW has and adheres to a comprehensive set of regulations, policies, and procedures to ensure integrity, ethical behavior, and responsible conduct across its operations. These include guidelines for governance, financial management, employment practices, academic integrity, research, and facilities use. The university also has effective procedures in place to enable the board of trustees to act in the best interest of the university. In the area of research, UW maintains professional standards and provides oversight to ensure regulatory compliance, ethical behavior, and fiscal accountability. Additionally, the university has robust mechanisms in place to promote ethical and responsible behavior among its faculty, staff, and students. This includes training programs, oversight committees, and policies related to academic honesty, research integrity, and conflict of interest disclosures. A major initiative of the president focuses on improving processes and guidelines for ensuring freedom of expression across campus.

Sources

There are no sources.

3 - Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources and Support

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

3.A - Core Component 3.A

The rigor of the institution's academic offerings is appropriate to higher education.

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

Argument

UPDATED 5-23-2024

3a1. Regarding relevance and currency of its programs, UW has processes for vetting proposed new programs, majors, and minors, governed by UW Regulation 2-119 as well as a New Degree and Certificate Proposal Process Overview updated in February 2024. With the new Acalog cataloging software, designated catalog editors within program departments can now de-catalog courses at their own discretion within the open catalog edit times without needing to go through an approval process with the Registrars Office. The University Course Review Committee and the Academic Planning Committee oversee many of the processes related to approving new or modified courses. An academic program review policy (adopted in July 2018 and updated in 2023) requires programs to be reviewed every seven years (though this process is on a temporary eight-year cycle due to delays from the pandemic). The policy provides special guidelines for new programs, low-producing programs, programs on suspended admissions, and programs involved in specialized accreditation review. Additionally, retention and graduation rates (disaggregated by entry status, race/ethnicity, gender, age, campus, first-generation status, programs, and Pell grant in the first year) and surveys of student opinion also inform UW's understanding of the relevance and quality of its programs.

Since HLC's last visit, UW has increased attention to low-enrollment programs, and the institution seeks to more actively redirect resources to programs it sees as more relevant to the current economic and cultural context. UW Regulation 2-13 guides academic program reorganizations, consolidations, reductions and discontinuance for reorganization. Academic Affairs maintains a website committed to making 2-13 processes transparent. In 2021 the University underwent a large campus wide reorganization directed by 2-13. A related Standard Administrative Policy and Procedure for Academic Program Review, also provides guidance regarding potential discontinuance of programs that may have become outdated or that may not be performing as they should.

Regarding appropriate levels of performance required for programs, UW establishes and enforces its

expectations in a variety of ways:

- Through Acalog, the University Catalog provides information about regulations and policies for both undergraduate and graduate, including initial admissions requirements, treatment of transfer courses, non-credit coursework, and steps to degree completion. These policies help establish levels of expected student performance for various degree programs and types.
- Relationships with a variety of external accreditors ensure that UW programs are both current and of high quality. The public, regularly updated Accreditation Schedule demonstrates the range of external accrediting bodies who review and evaluate programs at UW.
- For students transferring to UW, the Office of Transfer Relations work with Wyoming community colleges to maintain course-level articulation so students at these partner sites achieve adequate levels of performance to continue their education at UW.
- Our membership with the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) helps ensure a level of program quality and student protections for distance education.
- A major effort in 2023 to gather curriculum maps across academic programs should provide better tracking of student performance across the range of credentials UW offers. These maps should also help programs update their programming to develop clearer paths to graduation.
- End-of-semester courses evaluations ask students to provide information about perceived level of course rigor. Additionally, 2022 NSSE data allows us to compare UW students' perceptions of course rigor against the perceptions of comparator institutions.
- As indicated in the University Catalog, colleges set undergraduate program expectations for total credit hours (120-142) and upper-level credits (42). Additional requirements, as well as criteria related to second and dual-bachelor's degrees, are also spelled out in UW Regulation 2-103.

3a2. New program proposals must include student learning outcomes as part of the application process. To support clear differentiation of learning goals across undergraduate, graduate, post-baccalaureate, post- graduate, and certificate programs, UW Regulation 2-100 offers guidance to help establish general expectations for various course levels (1000- to 6000-level).

Each academic unit is required to post student-learning outcomes for each of their programs. UW's adoption of Acalog in 2020 allows learning goals to be made more visible to prospective and current students and other stakeholders. At present, however, not all units have posted program-specific learning outcomes to this central repository and are still working with the new assessment office to update their learning outcomes.

Additionally, beginning in 2023, UW's Assessment of Student Learning unit began gathering curriculum maps from undergraduate programs. This pilot program will be expanded to require all departments to demonstrate mapping of student outcomes for all programs, including graduate, post-graduate, and certificate programs.

We anticipate that finalization of new general education program requirements (likely in 2025) will initiate campus-wide revision of undergraduate curricula, including major requirements and program learning goals.

Regarding certification programs specifically, recent HLC updates and new Title IV eligibility requirements ensure that UW will continue to improve guidance to programs for establishing clear

and appropriate learning goals for certificate programs. A new program process described in UW Regulation 2-119 now requires that any certificate programs be vetted.

During HLC's last visit, reviewers audited UW for syllabi related to 5000-level courses, cross-listed courses, and online courses. Though HLC's previous review found that some graduate program objectives were at lower levels than expected, ongoing processes have encouraged and will continue to encourage attention and updates to graduate programs. Currently graduate programs are working with the assessment office to produce their own learning outcomes. For example, the May 2024 approval of a new PhD in English will drive a larger-scale overhaul of learning outcomes across that department. Additionally, the institution-level academic program review process implemented in 2018 has helped programs better understand their accomplishments and shortcomings. Because the process includes a site visit from external peer reviewers, it has allowed the departments to better gauge how their program is doing compared to other similar programs across the US. This process has also helped programs adjust program outcomes and quality expectations to better align with their peers and national trends.

3a3. UW seeks consistency across all modes and sites of delivery. UW approves new programs without regard to the mode of delivery, meaning that there is a default expectation that quality is consistent across modes. Assessment for online programs is integrated within other ongoing program-, college-, school-, and institution-level processes. Similarly, required syllabi elements are consistent across modalities and locations. Additionally, the university's academic program review process is proving to be a helpful mechanism for ensuring consistency among programs offered at a distance and with partner organizations.

The Office of Online and Continuing Education now manages development of new online programs, including guidelines and support for recruitment, marketing, course design, accessibility, student assessment, program assessment, student services, and academic support. These supports help ensure learners are pursuing the same learning outcomes as in-person programs and that programs are offered consistently across modalities.

Ellbogen Center for Teaching and Learning faculty development sessions provide support faculty in teaching effectively across a range of delivery contexts. During the rapid shift to online and hybrid learning during the pandemic, the Ellbogen Center provided intensive training for over 400 faculty to help them maintain quality of programming in modes that were new to many of them. Rubrics and other materials/courses from Quality Matters have helped UW evaluate online course and program design.

In terms of in-state articulation, responsibility for ongoing course- and program-level articulation with Wyoming community colleges resides with departments and is coordinated by the Office of Transfer Relations. Articulation with Wyoming community colleges in lower-level coursework occurs on an annual basis. UW's participation in the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) and National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) provides affirmation that UW student learning outcomes and course delivery approaches are consistent with those offered by other schools regionally and nationally. In cases where UW programs are delivered in agreement with partner organizations (such as medical degrees offered through the WWAMI regional partnership, MOUs allow for monitoring of consistency and quality of offerings.

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3.B - Core Component 3.B

The institution offers programs that engage students in collecting, analyzing and communicating information; in mastering modes of intellectual inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.

1. The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings and degree levels of the institution. The institution articulates the purposes, content and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements.
2. The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.
3. The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity and provides students with growth opportunities and lifelong skills to live and work in a multicultural world.
4. The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their offerings and the institution's mission.

Argument

UPDATED 5-23-2024

3b1. UW continues to require all undergraduate students to complete its general education program (University Studies 2015) with one major exception: In 2023, the First-Year Seminar component was paused in response to increasing budget pressures. The FYS created capacity and staffing issues that were untenable. Since that point, UW has maintained a 30-credit-hour general education requirement but allows students to substitute any other USP-designated course in place of the First-Year Seminar. The change allows First-Year Seminar courses to continue to be offered by individual programs that wish to do so.

Beginning in 2020, UW initiated the process of developing a new general education program. The university anticipates a campus-wide vote on basic program requirements and features in Fall 2024. AAC&U Essential Learning Outcomes, NACE Career Competencies, and data about comparator institution programs have guided initial recommendations for revised content, outcomes, and focuses. Additionally, in line with institutional strategic plan emphases on engaged learning and readiness for digital environments, UW anticipates including Digital Literacy and Experiential Learning requirements in the new general education program.

Given a national context in which an increasing number of students transfer multiple times among institutions, UW hopes to develop a set of transfer-friendly set of policies to limit loss or duplication of credits for transfer students. Additionally, UW anticipates more fully integrating social and personal responsibility outcomes, in part through the addition of an experiential learning requirement in its new general-education program. The new program should also encourage greater use of UW's SOAR platform to track experiential/co-curricular learning.

Details about the general education revision and new program/certificate approval processes are

made publicly available on the UW website. Those processes have included a range of feedback stages to ensure that the new program will be aligned with the university mission, program offerings, and stakeholder perceptions about essential skills for students' post-college success.

3b2. UW's existing gen-ed program, University Studies 2015, is underpinned by the AAC&U [American Association of Colleges & Universities] Essential Learning Outcomes. As noted in 3b1, the current gen-ed revision process is informed by national organizations including AAC&U, NACE [National Association of Colleges and Employers), and WICHE [Western Interstate Commission of Higher Education]. Those frameworks point clearly toward a set of content and competencies that will directly inform the new general education program. In cases where UW seeks to go beyond those frameworks—specifically in categories of digital literacy and experiential learning—the draft outcomes have been guided by national and international frameworks.

The draft mission statement for the emerging general education program points towards the kinds of broad knowledge, intellectual concepts, and key skills that the university seeks to impart in its undergraduate students:

UW's current general education program is designed to develop citizens for a dynamic, global world. Effective citizenship requires students to be ready to pursue immediate goals as well as adapt to significant personal, cultural, and workplace changes they may not be able to imagine or anticipate. Accordingly, UW's program is designed to foster essential skills and mindsets that will prepare students to succeed in whatever fields of opportunity they choose upon graduation. The program aims to:

- Introduce students to ways of thinking and understanding across disciplines, and with respect to interdisciplinary challenges, such that they become critical thinkers, successful problem solvers, and effective collaborators and leaders.
- Provide learning opportunities to broaden students' horizons of knowledge and help prepare them for opportunities, relationships, and impacts they may not yet imagine.
- Promote exploration of knowledge in areas of students' personal interests and values.
- Develop skills that prepare students to be productive, ethical, and inclusive members of a diverse world and that are of value to the workplace, community, and to them as individuals.
- Prepare students to become life-long, self-aware learners.

3b3. UW Regulation 2-105 states that UW's general education program should "produce citizens able to function in a complex and changing society." UW's USP 2015 general education program does not include a diversity requirement, though it does require students to complete a "Human Cultures" course that includes outcomes related to diversity and multiculturalism. And, though there is not a campus-wide diversity requirement, the College of Arts & Sciences requires its students to complete an "A&S Core" that includes both Diversity and Global elements. Additionally, the College of Agriculture, Life Sciences, and Natural Resources, the College of Health Sciences, and the College of Education each participate in accreditation programs that require attention to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

In its revised general education program, UW will continue to embed outcomes focused on participation in a multicultural world across several of its required courses. Tentative Experiential

Learning and Digital Literacy requirements should additionally provide students with applied skills for living and working in a multicultural world.

Beyond general education, UW provides a range of opportunities for students to develop skills for living and working in a multicultural world. The university offers degrees in International Studies, Native American and Indigenous Studies, African American and Diaspora Studies, Gender and Women's Studies, and Religious Studies. Many degrees encourage a minor in international Studies or include a concentration with a focus on multiculturalism (such as the Cultural & International Tourism Concentration within the Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Management degree.) A number of centers on campus, such as the Native American Education, Research, & Cultural Center, and the Multicultural Affairs Center, further support faculty and students in exploring a diverse and multicultural world.

Over a dozen student organizations provide extracurricular opportunities for or about diverse cultures. Examples include the Asian Internal Martial Arts Association, Bangladesh Student's Association, Central Asian Student Association, Engineers Without Borders, Friends of Nepal at the University of Wyoming, Hillel at the University of Wyoming, and National Society of Black Engineers at UW.

UW is home to the largest endowment for education-abroad funding of any land-grant public institution, thanks to the Richard B. and Lynne V. Cheney Study Abroad Scholarship Endowment. Nearly 400 UW students engaged in study abroad in 2021. In June 2024 UW has eleven undergraduate students selected for the Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Benjamin A. Gilman award for study abroad projects. Additionally, around 500 international students study at UW annually, and a 2023 contract with Shorelight Education aims to double that number in the coming decade. These efforts and experiences are supported through the Global Engagement Office (comprising Education Abroad, the Center for Global Studies, International Students and Scholars, and the English Language Center). Additionally, the Office of Service, Leadership, and Civic Engagement facilitates Alternative Spring Break projects that allow students to engage with and understand cultural differences in domestic and international settings.

The implementation plan for UW's current strategic plan sets metrics that will direct units, beginning in 2024, to better measure and track how well UW prepares students for engagement with an increasingly multicultural and technological world.

3b4: The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their offerings and the institution's mission.

UW entrusts colleges and departments with determining adequate scholarly and creative productivity for its faculty. As noted in UW's 2019 Assurance Report, the institution has adopted WyoFolio to better aggregate and track overall faculty publications, grant, and other relevant scholarly endeavors. Notably, UW ranked 91st on the National Institute of Inventors' "Top 100 U.S. Universities Granted Utility Patents in 2022" list. In FY2021, over 1,000 UW-/co-owned patents and over 2,000 UW IP agreements were signed through the Wyoming Technology Transfer and Research Products Office.

Additionally, two of UW's five strategic goals directly articulate the importance of strong research, scholarship, and creative work. To support this commitment, in 2022 the university hired a former associate director for programs at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food

and Agriculture as its Vice President for Research and Economic Development. UW's Research and Economic Development Division (REDD) oversees the origination, organization, and execution of UW's research mission. Ten centers report to REDD, and in FY2022 this unit oversaw $139M in research expenditures (2023 Fact Book). The division is currently modernizing its grant proposal and administration processes, which should facilitate faculty and student productivity appropriate to a research-intensive, land-grant, flagship university. REDD's 2023 Annual Report shows the progress it has already made, including efforts to increase the breadth, size, effectiveness, and impacts of UW's knowledge enterprise.

UW continues its efforts to create strong research partnerships across units. Most notably, the newly created School of Computing aims to serve as an interdisciplinary hub to "provide University of Wyoming students, faculty and staff, and Wyoming businesses and citizens with the computational tools, skills and approaches to drive transformation and innovation in the state." Additionally, the Science Initiative Building, occupied in 2022, now houses the Center for Advanced Scientific Instrumentation and the Center for Integrative Biological Research. These interdisciplinary centers are designed to "form an innovation nexus to stimulate external funding and research productivity and to train the next generation of Wyoming science scholars, teachers, and researchers." The Neltje Center for Excellence in Creativity and the Arts (launched in late 2022) similarly aims to establish UW as a leader in the education and development of visual, literary, and performing artists and as a catalyst for Wyoming's creative economy (including inter- and multi-disciplinary efforts).

To promote a campus-wide culture of scholarship of teaching and learning, the UW Ellbogen Center for Teaching and Learning launched an initiative in 2018. More recently, the Ellbogen Center hired a new faculty development specialist in scholarship of teaching and learning, who will further support this important form of research. Past programs, including 2018-2020 Students as Partners-based projects, have engaged students in inquiry-based projects. Between 2018 and 2023, a range of events and activities have engaged nearly 200 faculty in activities to disseminate scholarly inquiry about teaching practices.

UW estimates that over 800 students participate annually in undergraduate research. An annual Undergraduate Research and Inquiry Across the Disciplines event continues to have substantial student participation. Multiple programs, including McNair Scholars, INBRE (IDeA Network of Biomedical Research Excellence), EPSCoR (Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research), the Honors College capstone, and senior design engineering courses provide undergraduate students with opportunities to engage in research and to showcase creative endeavors. Workshops and mentoring offered by these programs help to develop students' understanding of ethical research conduct. The Global Engagement Office continues to support student research through the Center for Global Studies; in 2022-2023, the center supported 15 student and 13 faculty research projects through its International Research Grant Awards. Their Fall 2023 newsletter illustrates the range of faculty and student research engagement that is supported by this program.

A small working group convened in 2020 provided recommendations for better administering, supporting, and encouraging students to apply to major national and international scholarships. UW's External Scholarships page and a Scholarship Advisor in the Honors College both now serve to support the exploration and application to Fulbright and other prestigious scholarship programs. As reported by the Faculty Director for Major Scholarships in 2021, UW received membership in the National Association of Fellowship Advisors (NAFA).

Graduate education and research are core to the mission of a flagship university in creating and disseminating new knowledge and nurturing the next generation of scholars. Graduate enrollment

has increased by 12.6% since 2018, and graduate degree attainment reached a [record 2022-2023](#),
 Over the past several years UW has increased [graduate assistantship stipends](#), making the
university's more competitive in its ability to attract strong graduate students.

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3.C - Core Component 3.C

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

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

Argument

UPDATED 5-23-2024

3c1. UW is a Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action employer and provides this information on our prospective employee application website. Additionally, a Diversity Climate Survey administered in 2019 provided UW with important information to guide UW efforts related to diversity among faculty and staff. Throughout 2023, the Vice President of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion led the office through strategic planning, which included a goal of increasing recruitment and retention of diverse employees. These strategic efforts will need to be revisited, and where appropriate, redistributed as part of the university's elimination of the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. As part of the reorganization of DEI efforts UW is creating and will be hiring a new Vice-Provost focused on access and engagement.

According to UW's 2023 Fact Book, 10% of UW faculty identify as members of a minority group, while 68% identify as White. The UW faculty is slightly more diverse than the student body (75% White). UW's racial make-up is more diverse than the state of Wyoming's, where over 92% of residents identify as white.

UW's Native American Education, Resource, and Cultural Center has continued to extend alliances and programming with the Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapahoe tribes of the Wind River Reservation. According to the 2023 Fact Book, the number of Native American students enrolled at UW is 69 of 10,913 students, or 0.6%.

3c2. A major capacity study conducted in 2017-18 by Huron Consulting helped UW gather important information about instructional capacity. That study found "pockets of departments and academic units that are approaching current capacity constraints at varying levels of target utilization" but optimistically concluded that "increased academic section size and scheduling management combined with higher utilization targets can accommodate additional students with limited additional instructional effort." Partially in response to the Huron study, administrators at UW have taken steps to better manage faculty resources. One key step has been a more consistent program review process (including review of low-enrollment and -completion programs), which allows the university to more quickly identify programs with low completion numbers to reallocate resources when discontinuance is warranted.

UW's student to faculty ratio has remained relatively constant over the past decade (currently 13:1). Between 2017 and 2022, the number of full-time faculty has varied from 710 (Fall 2022) to 730 (Fall 2018) and is currently sitting at 721 faculty as of fall 2023. The number of endowed positions has increased to 62 total endowed deanships, chairs, professorships, and fellowships in 2024, up from 36 such positions in 2017.

To reduce unchecked development of new programs, UW approves changes or additions to academic programming only when units can show capacity. UW Academic Affairs has created an existing degree/certificate change checklist. Also, college-level curriculum committees, such as the Academic Program Committee, and the Graduate Council serve as checkpoints for proposed new or revised programs.

Professional accreditation bodies also provide assurances for some programs that staff levels are appropriate. For example, UW College of Business successfully completed their reaccreditation process in 2021. That process requires colleges to show that they meet quite specific guidelines regarding faculty and professional staff resourcing. Similarly, in order to transition to accreditation with AAQEP (completed in 2023), the College of Education demonstrated levels of staffing aligned with that organization's standards.

In terms of faculty sufficiency for carrying out non-classroom academic tasks, UW is committed to assessment of student learning. As detailed more extensively in Criteria 4, the decision to move institutional assessment into the Ellbogen Center for Teaching and Learning (in 2018) is now providing more centralized and extensive expertise for maintaining ongoing assessment practices. This process is supported by a university-level Assessment Committee comprising members from all colleges as well as Academic Affairs and other academic support units and programs. College-level assessment coordinators help disseminate information about new programs and policies back to their colleges and units.

3c3. All UW instructors are appropriately qualified, including those in dual credit, contractual, and consortial programs, and UW policies are informed by HLC guidelines. UW Regulation 2-1 describes degree qualifications for all academic personnel. This regulation notes that assistant professors, associate professors, and professors should "normally" hold the terminal qualification for their field. Academic Affairs works with Human Resources on verifying tenure-track faculty holding terminal degrees in their field and maintains records of tenure-track faculty vitae and transcripts in the WyoVita system. In 2019, that database was expanded to include transcripts for all academic personnel. UW Regulation 2-1 also requires that instructors have at least a master's degree and preferably one year of additional study or experience in the relevant field of study. A transcript

review conducted in 2019 verifies that UW faculty are adequately credentialed for their academic roles. When UW hires new instructors, it conducts a transcript verification process to ensure the qualifications of those employees by following HLC qualifications guidelines.

3c4. At UW, instructors are evaluated regularly in accordance with established institutional policies and procedures. Annual review processes for instructors are governed both by university-wide regulation and by supplemental department policy. UW Regulation 2-1 (sect. IV) describes reappointment, tenure, and promotion for tenure-track and tenured faculty, and UW Regulation 2-7 more substantially defines these processes. UW Regulation 2-4 (including Appendices A, B, C, and D) similarly describes appointment, review, and promotion processes for academic professionals, as well as reappointment processes for academic professionals on temporary contracts.

Most academic positions are evaluated in relationship to common national categories of service, research, and teaching, and may also include advising, extension, administration, and professional development. Working definitions for several of these categories are offered in UW Regulation 2-7, and departments are charged with developing appropriate criteria for the categories that are informed by their disciplines, as well as specific criteria to distinguish expectations at each promotion level, as described in UW Regulation 2-9.

UW Regulation 2-9 addresses faculty workload, in line with AAUP guidelines. This regulation acknowledges that ensuring teaching effectiveness requires a balance with other components of academic job descriptions. UW Regulation 2-5 establishes processes for evaluating teaching, including student evaluations and peer observation. UW uses Watermark CES (formerly EvaluationKit) to administer and manage student evaluation surveys.

3c5. In the initial process for most academic hires, applicants are required to provide evidence of teaching effectiveness. During retention and promotion processes, peer observation and student evaluation data are mandated by UW Regulations and help ensure that teaching is adept and up-to-date.

UW Regulation 2-4 (revised in 2021) requires that non-tenure-track lecturers "exhibit a commitment to ongoing professional development in the discipline." A 2023 policy provides updated guidance for assessing teaching effectiveness, and lecturers who receive "below expectations" in annual evaluations are supported in improving their teaching through a performance improvement plan (as described in IV.G of UW's policies for Implementing and Evaluating Rolling Contracts)

In support of instructors' professional development:

- Many departments provide full or partial funding for relevant professional development requests.
- The UW Libraries and the Ellbogen Center for Teaching and Learning both maintain a set of print and online resources focused specifically on higher education and disciplinary pedagogies.
- The Ellbogen Center for Teaching and Learning offers responsive professional development activities, including Rapid Course Design workshops, teaching and learning academies with programming focused on technology and teaching, faculty learning communities focused on

critical thinking, universal design for learning, and the scholarship of teaching and learning.
- UW's Learning Actively Mentor Program (LAMP) and Tier-1 Engineering Initiative provide faculty development specifically in support of best practices in STEM pedagogies. Similarly, the Communication Across the Curriculum program provides faculty development for instructors teaching communication-intensive courses. LeaRN Programs provides resources and other professional development for instructors who teach students admitted with support.

3c6. At UW, instructors and many other personnel providing academic support are accessible for students. UW Regulation 2-117 (sect. B.2) establishes that faculty are "expected to have a minimum of three (3) hours spread over two (2) days of the week of out-of-class availability to students each week". This regulation was sunsetted in January 2023 and replaced with the Course Syllabus Requirements Standard Administrative Policy and Procedures. This information is found in section B.2 of the new SAP. Depending on class delivery method, those office hours may be in person, virtual, or hybrid. Many faculty include a statement about their email availability in their syllabi. Even before the pandemic, campus adoption of Zoom (and its easy integration within UW's campus-wide learning management system) had increased instructors' availability for student questions.

2022 NSSE data indicate that UW first-year and senior student levels engagement with faculty (talking about career plans, co-/extracurricular activities, course content, and overall academic performance) are in line with levels reported by bordering-state schools and national peers.

In order to proactively identify and reach out to struggling students, the university asks faculty to participate in Early Alert grade reporting. In Fall 2023, approximately 1,500 reports were submitted by instructors teaching classes with high D/F/W rates. Since its adoption in 2018, this system has been part of a strategy that has decreased academic suspension and improved retention, in part because of increased outreach by faculty and advisors to help students adjust to college. Utilization of the Navigate platform has assisted with tracking advisor outreach to students and providing feedback to the instructors on action taken by students related to their poor grades.

Beyond faculty availability, UW supports peer tutors, peer mentors, and supplemental peer instructors across a range of programs. These peers—as supplements to rather than as replacements for faculty availability—help ensure that students have additional support for inquiries about their coursework and transitions to academic university life. The STEP tutoring program records approximately 6,500 appointments per year. STEP supplemental instruction reaches 9,000 contact hours with students per year, spread across 75 distinct courses. The Writing Center provided nearly 750 consultations in Fall 2023 and supports students from every college on campus. The Center for Assistance in Statistics and Mathematics served over 1600 students across Spring and Fall 2023 semesters. Athletes have additional access to tutors through the Academic Services unit within UW Athletics, and UW provides students round-the-clock access to the online TutorMe platform.

3c7. UW encourages and provides a range of opportunities for training and professional development. An HR-maintained Training and Development page serves as a centralized location for in-house employee training, including access to LinkedIn Learning.

Staff and other employees providing student support services are adequately trained, qualified, and/or supported in professional development, as relevant to their roles. This starts with hiring qualified

candidates for student support services, by articulating job expectations and requirements in line with best practices and recommendations of national organizations for advising (NACADA).

The training of advisors is managed through UW's Academic and Career Exploratory Services (ACES) unit. New advisors complete a multi-part training in their first year of employment, which addresses both the local context and national best practices. Ongoing meetings help advisors stay current on institutional changes. Access to NACADA webinars provides another avenue for professional training program.

Peer tutors, peer supplemental instructors, writing consultants in the Writing Center, Poke Pack Leaders, and Cowboy Coaches form an important layer of student support at UW, and these student employees receive training aligned with national organizations and practices. Peer tutors and supplemental instructors earn certification through CRLA (a national organization for college professionals who focus on student academic success). Writing consultants and undergraduate writing fellows complete training aligned with International Writing Center Association principles. Tutors in the Center for Assistance with Statistics and Mathematic receive in-house training, and Cowboy Coaches receive pre-semester training and are supervised by staff from the Office for Student Success and Graduation.

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3.D - Core Component 3.D

The institution provides support for student learning and resources for effective teaching.

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

Argument

UPDATED 5-23-2024

3d1. Longitudinal data from an annual student opinion survey continues to show positive attitudes about the range of UW student support services. Key findings from Spring 2023 results include:

- Over 70% are "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with academic advising services, the UW Counseling Center, career planning and job placement services, student health services, and tutoring support.
- Over 80% are "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with UW Psychology Clinic, college-level career support, University Disability Support Services, and computer/technology support services.
- Over 90% are "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with library services/support, intramural sports, fine arts and cultural programming, and UW Food Share Pantry.

Less positive scores included those focused on student health insurance (40.3% "satisfied" or "very satisfied"), financial aid services (58.7%), and residence halls services/programs (49.1%).

UW has significant populations of students who are first-generation, non-traditional, academically under-prepared, online, and international. The university has centers and programs that provide supports tailored specifically to these students:

- The UW Bridge Program (formerly Synergy), established in 1999, provides first-year support for students who are admitted with conditions. The Bridge Program has expanded its learning community model and other services for students admitted with support, from 30 students to over 400 each year.
- The Student Educational Opportunity program, which includes Gear Up, Upward Bound, Student Success Services, McNair Scholars Program, and statewide Educational Opportunity Centers, offers support for students from low-income, first-generation, minoritized, and military veteran backgrounds.
- The International Students and Scholars office provides assistance to international students for visas, financial aid, transfer, enrollment verification, and other support services. It also provides orientation sessions for new international students and offers other programming to

create a welcoming environment for these students.

- Robust technology support is provided by UW Information Technology, which maintains numerous computer labs and classrooms**,** provides trainings for students, maintains free and discounted software licenses for students, and offers troubleshooting and repair services.
- Admissions Counselors that handle recruitment and enrollment specialists around the state are positioned to provide support and resources to rural Wyoming and potential transfer students.
- A First Generation Scholars program (initiated in 2019) and the Native American Education, Research, and Cultural Center (created in 2017) help support these two historically under-served groups at UW.
- A range of support services and centers that recognize and support the UW's multicultural student body.
- Disability Support Services has updated a variety of resources and processes for UW community members with disabilities.

During the pandemic, UW was able to allocate over $3M in CARES Act funding toward IT hardware and software (equipment, materials, and supplies, exclusive of funds spent towards other important salary and consulting investments). These funds helped extend the already-strong support offered by UW Information Technology.

3d2. UW provides preparatory and ongoing learning support targeted to its student population. With an acceptance rate around 97% and a high percentage (>30%) of first-generation students, UW understands the need to provide support for incoming students who are not yet fully prepared for college.

During the pandemic, UW discontinued its traditional on-campus summer orientation and now onboards new students through New Student Days (one-day events that allow students to start the class registration process, learn about campus resources, scholarships and financial aid, and check out campus), a summer webinar series, and a weeklong Saddle Up program the week before classes begin. Saddle Up also partially replaces First-Year Seminar courses, which were largely discontinued in 2022, due in part to increasing difficulties in staffing these courses. Preliminary data from 2022 suggest that Saddle Up had a positive impact on fall-to-fall retention.

An agreement with Laramie County Community College allows students to register for and take co-curricular math courses, which provide developmental math support simultaneous with college-level math on the UW campus. CLEP, and Math Placement Exam, and other procedures additionally help students determine which courses they are prepared to enter. UW adoption of Acalog (in 2021) also helps students clearly identify necessarily program pathways and course prerequisites.

Summer and Fall Bridge programs support students who come to UW with low ACT scores or gaps in college-prep courses. For over two decades, Bridge programs have impacted retention through targeted efforts to help students build a sense of community, adopt academic identity, and develop successful habits of mind through high-impact practices. Both Saddle Up and Bridge programs include peer mentors as part of their support models.

Academic recovery and probation support helps students reset academic habits and understand their options when they fall short of overall GPA requirements. UW is experimenting with a new model that includes peer life coaches as a support element provided for students on probation. As this is in the trial phase information/data about this new academic and probation support model will not be

available until around Fall 2024.

Peer tutoring is available through STEP Tutoring, the Writing Center, the Center for Assistance with Math and Statistics, the Oral Communication Center, and other units.

In 2018, UW launched a Transfer Relations Office (formerly the transfer success center) to better support transfer students, who are an increasingly important target for recruitment. The Transfer Relations Office directly supports transfer students (through peer mentoring, first-year experience courses for transfer students, and orientation programs tailored to transfer student needs) and facilitates transfer success through collaborative articulation agreements, a reverse transfer process, an annual statewide Articulation Summit with Wyoming community colleges, and other ongoing efforts. In Fall 2022, UW began offering a voluntary Saddle Up (week-long prep program) option for transfer students.

To help ensure consistency across program modalities and locations, UW strives to ensure that students beyond the main Laramie campus have equitable access to appropriate resources. Online students also have access to online tutoring resources matched to UW's online programs, including TutorMe 24/7 online support. The UW Online Student Resources page provides information about other services that help improve program quality and increase equitable access to resources.

3d3. UW's central advising office (ACES) provides students with career counseling information and access to the Focus2Career preparation platform, which includes an exploratory module to help students identify majors that fit their interests. In addition to this centralized center, colleges and programs also provide specialized advising for students in their programs. Adoption of Navigate (2022) has helped increase communication and record-keeping across staff who provide advising to students throughout their time at UW. Navigate also includes a powerful data-analytics tool that allows advisors to identify students who may be at risk of not being successful in their degree path. UW-Casper staffs two academic advisors for its academic programs. These advisors work closely with ACES and follow similar training, communication, and availability protocols.

3d4. Since HLC's last site visit, UW has continued to make substantial investments in resources and infrastructure to support effective teaching and learning. UW opened its $100M Science Initiative building in 2022 and is currently in the process of a $40M renovation of the UW College of Law building. It has also made smaller upgrades to the Coe Library Learning Commons (2021), and Student Success and Graduation Hub (2024). Planning committees and task forces focused on facilities, housing, and classroom space each work to direct future development. Budget documents and planning and use processes provide evidence of action in support of those long-range plans.

As reported in UW's 2019 Assurance Argument, the University of Wyoming maintains several important cultural and informational repositories, including the American Heritage Center, Libraries (including the William Robertson Coe Library and four branch libraries), Geology Museum, Art Museum, and the Wyoming Natural Diversity Database. Additionally, UW extends student and faculty access to facilities through a variety of partnerships and applied-practice centers, including the regional WWAMI medical program, clinical sites for pharmacy and nursing students, the on-campus K-8 Lab School, a Speech and Hearing Clinic, the UW Literacy Research Center and Clinic, Psychology Clinics, the University Counseling Center, and family practice residency site in

Cheyenne. The High Plains American Indian Research Institute is working to create a repository of past research projects that have been conducted by the University of Wyoming and partners from tribal communities in the region. The Visual Arts building (new in 2012) and Buchanan Center for the Performance Arts (major renovation complete in 2015) are modern facilities that provide performance and exhibition spaces appropriate to programs in creative arts.

During the pandemic, UW was able to use CARES Act and other funding in support of infrastructure and access. Investments included laptops and hotspots for distance learning as well as increased Zoom capacity, including outfitting classrooms with cameras and microphones. UW's Information Technology unit provides support for major academic platforms that support teaching and learning (including Canvas (WyoCourses), Navigate, Handshake/SOAR, YuJa, Penji, TutorMe, HonorLock, and Acalog/Curriculog) as well as computer lab software packages. The UW Libraries are currently engaged in major negotiations with database providers to maintain high levels of access for students and faculty. The Libraries have had a successful negotiation with the Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries & Elsevier organization.

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3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary

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

Summary

The University of Wyoming (UW) has processes in place to ensure the rigor and currency of its academic offerings. Regular program reviews, both internally and through external accreditors, help ensure the relevance and alignment of learning outcomes. UW's participation in regional and national organizations provides affirmation that UW student learning outcomes and course delivery approaches are consistent with those offered by other schools regionally and nationally. To provide all undergraduates with a strong foundation for lifelong learning, UW is actively revising its general education program, guided by national frameworks and stakeholder input, and intends to integrate new requirements related to experiential learning and digital literacy.

Under leadership of a new VP for online and continuing education, UW has centralized support and guidelines for online program development. Faculty development opportunities, such as those provided by the Ellbogen Center for Teaching and Learning, help instructors effectively teach across modalities. Substantial investments in information technology (on campus and for distance students), research infrastructure, and instructional facilities help ensure an environment for effective teaching and learning. UW's new School of Computing will serve as an interdisciplinary hub, with computational tools, skills and approaches to benefit UW students, faculty and staff, and Wyoming businesses and citizens.

Sources

There are no sources.

4 - Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

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

4.A - Core Component 4.A

The institution ensures the quality of its educational offerings.

1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews and acts upon the findings.
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 ensure 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 ensures 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 ensures that the credentials 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.

Argument

UPDATED 5-23-2024

4a1. Just before HLC's last site visit, UW updated and extended its practice for regular program reviews. A Standard Administrative Policy and Procedure adopted in 2018 provides guidelines for ongoing institutional program reviews. This process uses a framework of continuous improvement and requires a self-study that allows a program to examine the quality of its curriculum, climate, and scholarly activity as a whole and explore areas for improvement. Departments undergo external peer review as part of this evaluation process, which helps departments and administrators understand what peers are doing to stay relevant in the field. Comprehensive program reviews are conducted approximately every seven years. Though the pandemic disrupted activities at the University, some program reviews continued through an on-line process rather than a full site visit. UW us currently on a temporary eight year cycle as some program were not able to go through their scheduled review and had to be shifted. Some of the issues departments experienced were sudden retirements leaving open faculty/staff positions, a need to resume research practices, and industry reviewers not being available at the time as they needed time to resume normal practices.

To help the University of Wyoming better respond to changes in enrollment and funding, UW initiated major revisions to UW Regulation 2-13 Standard Administrative Procedures and policy document (as well as a related administrative policy and procedures document), which will streamline processes for program reconfiguration, elimination, and consolidation. The new 2-13 Standard Administrative Procedures and policy document will be available later in 2024. This process drives annual attention to graduation and enrollment numbers for all graduate and undergraduate programs and suggests possible actions for any program graduating fewer than 5 undergraduates or 3 masters-level students per year. The process includes a period of review to seek feedback from stakeholders including the faculty senate, the staff senate, the Associated Students of UW (the student governing body), and other interested parties.

The first major recommendations from this process were delivered to the university president in November 2021, and additional activities since that time have provided new information to guide decisions about program consolidation and elimination.

4a2. UW directly relies on in-house resources to evaluate credit and continues to use solid processes for evaluation. As reported in 2019 Assurance Argument:

- For on-campus courses, UCRC institution-level curriculum committee evaluate courses for credit-worthiness (in accordance with 2023 revised Course Approval Process SAPP). These review processes help ensure that courses meet institutional and federal guidelines. With respect to credit for experiential learning (such as internships, co-ops, and other practica) curriculum committees help ensure that adequate checks are in place. For some colleges, internships can only be earned when such coursework is affiliated with a faculty sponsor. Other programs require a contract specifying expectations for the student, workplace sponsor, and campus contact. For example, students in the Master's of Public Administration (MPA) program must complete a three-credit internship. That internship involves a faculty mentor, a workplace mentor, and a contract written by the student and mentors.
- The Transfer Relations Office maintains up-to-date information to help support transfer/transfer-equivalency of credits, especially from regionally-accredited U.S. colleges and universities, from in-state community colleges, and pre-college courses, including AP, IB, and CLEP. Wyoming transfer students can use the WyoTransfer Website to check their credit equivalencies and any transfer student can use the UW Transfer Catalog webpage to check their credit equivalencies.
- To further support fair transfer of in-state community college credits, UW maintains the Transfer Catalog and a set of Block Transfer Maps (formerly 2+2) transfer degree plans. Departments are working on transferring from 2+2 to the new Block Transfer Map format. These are reviewed on a fairly regular basis, connected to UW's student information system, and often reviewed/updated during annual catalog reviews to ensure that transferring credit is equivalent to credit earned on campus.
- For courses taken during study abroad, UW relies on partnerships, standard international credit conversions, and UW departmental review of syllabi to help ensure that returning students can achieve appropriate credit for their experiences.

In addition to these practices:

- UW is a member of NC-SARA and participates in nationally recognized best practices for registrar activities and processes.

- UW will undergo focused exploration of best practices for transcripting experiential education as the university deepens its commitment to community engagement. With the proposed inclusion of an experiential requirement in its general-education program, UW will develop guidelines to ensure that students engage in substantial experiences to meet this requirement.

4a3. UW seeks to be an attractive option for students transferring from other institutions. Thus, UW has invested in efforts to streamline transfer, while still assuring the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer. Since HLC's last site visit, UW has expanded the role and reach of its Office of Transfer Relations. Additionally, in June 2023, UW released a new Standard Administrative Policies and Procedures document to better guide transfer practices. That policy directs all units to follow American Association of College Registrars and Admissions Officials (AACRAO) best practices guidance, especially in relationship to determining course-level equivalency.

For in-state transfer, UW maintains an equivalency catalog through ongoing articulation relationships with Wyoming community colleges. Additionally, the university maintains a website that allows students to look up courses that the University of Wyoming has previously accepted from regionally accredited U.S. institutions, and UW's Transfer Catalog interface further helps students understand UW equivalencies. UW is currently implementing a statewide, legislatively mandated effort to develop a common-course numbering system that includes using the same course numbers, course subject codes, and standardized credits per course for courses with identical or highly similar content and learning outcomes. Additionally, UW hosts an annual Articulation Summit with in-state community colleges, providing a venue for UW departments to develop and update articulation agreements with those colleges. The Office of Transfer Relations maintains a current list of all programs that have been articulated with in-state community colleges.

When a direct match to a Wyoming course has not been previously established, university faculty (usually at the department level) review the course to determine whether direct equivalency is appropriate, or, alternately, whether general electives and/or general-education credit can be awarded.

Wyoming had been a member of the WICHE Interstate Passport program, allowing students to block transfer lower division general education courses. While WICHE discontinued Interstate Passport program in 2023, UW will maintain its commitment to support credit mobility for transfer students.

4a4. UW adequately exercises its authority over course and program quality, including prerequisites for courses, course rigor, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs.

Since HLC's last site visit, UW has substantially overhauled its course approval process. While still managed by Academic Affairs, the Office of the Registrar, and the University Course Review Committee, the process now occurs within Curriculog and includes a clearer workflow that includes multiple checks for course rigor, prerequisites, common-course numbering, and expectations for student learning.

Additionally, UW maintains clear and responsible policies and practices regarding:

- [Prerequisites for courses](#): Prerequisites are clearly identified in Acalog**.** Requirements for previous course completions, GPA, class standing, and test scores are enforced through the Office of the Registrar via automated transcript checks when students register for courses. Individual petitions for waiver of prerequisites are handled at the program level.   Additionally, curriculum mapping (coordinated institutionally by UW's assessment unit in 2023) guided programs to revisit and update degree pathways, including course prerequisites.
- *Course rigor*: [UW Regulation 2-100](#) provides general guidance to distinguish expectations for various levels (from 1000- to 6000-level courses). New courses are reviewed and approved by multiple committees, as stipulated in [Course Approval SAPP](#). This process provides additional assurance that course rigor is aligned with the course level. A [curriculum mapping](#) process (initiated in 2023 and overseen by the Office of Assessment) will enable better institution-level evaluation of the rigor and reinforcement of program outcomes.
- *Expectations for student learning*: [Program learning outcomes](#) are linked from a centrally maintained website. Program learning outcomes will eventually also be listed within Acalog. Outcomes are informed when appropriate by national organizations and professional accrediting bodies, but UW maintains final authority over the learning expectations for all programs it offers.
- *Expectations for student participation.* UW transitioned UW Regulation 2-108 to a [Standard Administrative Policies and Procedures](#) document regarding student absences in Fall 2023. The [Student Code of Conduct](#) spells out additional expectations regarding appropriate student participation.
- *Access to learning resources—facilities*: With the goal of maintaining high-quality instructional spaces, [UW Regulation 6-7](#) mandates an annual review of space assignments and utilization. The review pays particular attention to the availability of classroom space for instructional purposes. More broadly, the [University Facilities Council](#) advises the president on facility and space planning. The council is guided by key principles that "enable and support the mission of the University to provide a quality education, conduct world-class research, scholarship and creative activity, and provide service to, and engagement with the state" and that "support student success, including recruitment, retention, and graduation." New facilities construction, detailed in 5a, provides evidence that UW's authority for providing access to learning resources is exercised in effective ways.
- *Access to learning resources—s*upport programs: [UW Regulation 8-1](#) addresses the university's commitment to providing technology resources in support of administrative, research, service, and instructional functions. Though no UW regulation mandates the provision of resources to support learning, UW's commitment to providing effective resources for its diverse student populations is evident throughout this accreditation argument (especially 1c, 3c, 3d, and 3e).
- *Access to learning resources—COVID response.* During the pandemic, [UW received and allocated federal funds](#) to help maintain student access to learning resources. Efforts included sending out laptops and hotspots and making investments to expand online and asynchronous
- *Faculty qualifications*: [UW Regulation 2-1](#) describes the appropriate qualifications for academic personnel, while allowing for flexibility by establishing that "general qualifications for faculty designation... may be waived or modified at the discretion of the President and the Trustees." However, UW's general practice is to fill tenure-track or tenured faculty positions, as well as most extended-term-track and extended-term positions, with people who hold terminal degrees in their fields. [Academic Affairs and Human Resources](#) jointly review faculty hires to ensure their degrees are accurate for their positions and Academic Affairs uses [HLC guidelines](#) to help determine faculty credentialing.

UW does not directly provide lower-division dual-credit courses or programs for high school students. If high school students enroll in UW courses, they are in "regular" sections with no special syllabi, requirements or accommodations.

Wyoming community colleges are relied on to enforce quality for any dual- or concurrent-enrollment agreements they establish with UW. The university's ongoing articulation relationships with the community colleges help them to understand and translate UW requirements and expectations to high school instructors who teach dual-enrollment courses that can be transferred to UW. UW maintains a dual enrollment agreement with the Albany County school district.

Since 2016, UW has facilitated a Pathways from Prison program with the Wyoming Women's Correctional Facility. This program replaces previous UW engagement with Second Chance Pell Grant programs. The Pathways from Prison program is delivered by faculty positioned within on-campus departments with appropriate credentials, and they receive additional training for adapting their curriculum for incarcerated students who have limited internet access, reduced access to campus resources, and restricted time to work on class assignments.

4a5. UW maintains specialized accreditation for many of its programs. Its list of accredited programs and colleges is updated routinely as notifications of decisions are made, and the list indicates the next cycles for reaccreditation. UW centrally tracks reaccreditation cycles for all specialized accreditation and maintains formal letters of (re)accreditation.

At present, all eligible programs for which specialized accreditation is sought are being accredited, and there has been no loss of accreditation since HLC's last site visit. In May 2024, the Visual Arts Department (and related design and textile programs offered through Family and Consumer Sciences) has achieved first-time accreditation with the National Association of Schools of Art and Design.

In 2023, the College of Education successfully transitioned to the Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation (AAQEP) for its accreditation. This move was motivated by interest in AAQEP's holistic, peer-oriented process, a contrast with a narrowing of accreditation pathway options that resulted when NCATE (its previous accrediting body) became a part of CAEP.

4a6. UW considers the IPEDS standards to be appropriate to its mission and context, and it uses these standards to calculate first-time, full-time cohort retention and graduation rates.

UW gathers data about graduate success from multiple sources, helping us understand graduates' plans, experiences, and perceptions of UW's educational value after they leave the university.

- The Office of Institutional Analysis provides time-to-degree reports for every program at UW. This information is used by college advisors and is part of information considered in program reviews.
- The Office of Institutional Analysis tracks and publishes longitudinal first-time, full-time graduations. The 2022 data show UW's long record of increasing 4-, 5-, and 6-year graduation rates since 1980.
- In response to 2023 Department of Education guideline changes, UW is working on launching

a website where it will make available federally required gainful employment statistics and data. This website will represent a refinement and extension of data UW already publishes through its annual First Destination Survey, which helps us gather information at the institution and college level about graduates' immediate plans after completing their degree at UW. Data from 2023 survey indicates graduates have a career outcomes rate of 73.9%, with an average weighted bachelor's salary of $56,636.

- The Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System (SLEDS) reached a major milestone in 2023: the initiative released the first Post Secondary Education Workforce Outcomes in Wyoming Dashboard, which displays the Wyoming employment rate and annual salary information for graduates of Wyoming's community colleges and UW. Moving forward, this dashboard will serve as an important way for UW, the state, and others to understand the impact of UW degrees on state employment.

- In 2023, UW entered an MOU with the U.S. Census Bureau to participate in the Post-Secondary Employment Outcomes (PSEO) database. Tracking earnings by degree field, degree level, and graduation cohort for 1, 5 and 10 years after graduation, this national database will give UW a better national understanding of the employment of graduates.

- Admissions provides weekly reports to departments and colleges tracking admission rates to their programs. This tracking helps with operational decision making. This information is also available in PowerBI reports. Further, UW publishes reports at census-date that show enrollment yield rates for undergraduate and graduate and professional program applications.

- For programs that typically include licensure at or after graduation, UW tracks student success rates in comparison to national licensure exam rates. UW rates compare favorably with those national rates, with some programs (e.g., College of Business, Counselor Education, Pharmacy, Speech-Language Pathology) substantially outperforming national averages.

- Some colleges and departments track post-graduation employment for their graduates. Such units include the College of Law as an example.

- An oral history project, currently underway through the UW Alumni Association, will provide a repository of narratives that will provide indirect information about UW graduates' success.

- Longitudinal data indicates that student satisfaction with the overall UW experience has remained strong across 20+ years of data collection. Additionally, 2022 NSSE data provides information from graduating seniors about their evaluation of their experience at UW. Though 81% rate their overall experience as "good" or "excellent," their evaluations of UW contributions to specific skills or knowledge are slightly lower than evaluations of seniors at national and stretch peers.

- UW gathers information about the success of its Division I athletes, and UW data compare favorably against national averages for athletes. Specifically, the 2022 NCAA report indicated that UW had an average graduation success rate of 93% for student-athletes. (This number is based on NCAA Division I Graduation Success Rate calculations, not Federal Graduation Rate methodology).

Since quality of credentials is related to the quality of student preparation prior to their enrollment at UW, the university also provides annual feedback to all Wyoming high schools. The information provided compares each high school's graduates attending UW to other Wyoming high school students attending UW, and to the overall first-time population. Information includes admission rates, enrollment, retention and graduation rates, and distributions of course grades in courses with the highest enrollments. Similarly, each Wyoming community college receives feedback reports regarding transfer student performance and enrollment at UW. The report provide information comparing the specific community college to other Wyoming community colleges, out-of-state colleges, and UW undergraduates overall. They also include enrollment, grades, retention and

graduation rates, and demographic information.

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4.B - Core Component 4.B

The institution engages in ongoing assessment of student learning as part of its commitment to the educational outcomes of its students.

1. The institution has effective processes for assessment of student learning and for achievement of learning goals in academic and cocurricular offerings.
2. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
3. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty, instructional and other relevant staff members.

Argument

UPDATED 5-23-2024

4b1. Since its last HLC assurance argument, UW has continued to make changes to improve processes for assessment of learning across campus. In 2019, UW relocated institutional assessment duties from Academic Affairs into an assessment unit located within the Ellbogen Center for Teaching and Learning. As a part of this move, UW now has four staff members with substantial job percentages allocated toward institution-level assessment processes and tracking. Since 2021, an associate director of assessment oversees the work of an assessment data specialist and a specialist in scholarship of teaching and learning. Additionally, the associate director of assessment chairs an ongoing assessment coordinators committee, which includes assistant and associate deans for all colleges and schools. This group serves as an increasingly important conduit for promoting a culture of institutional assessment back to individual departments. One result of a full-time associate director position is more consistent attention to assessment, involving more people, across a vertically integrated range of units, than UW has managed in past efforts.

An early effort of the assessment unit was to take stock of the current efforts and gauge the kinds of support that units most wanted and needed. This effort emerged from UW's 2020 and ongoing participation in the HLC Assessment Academy, and one result of that effort was the survey-based Spring/Summer 2021 Assessment of Student Learning Report. Of the nearly 87% of programs (undergraduate and graduate) that responded to a survey about their current assessment activity, nearly half (48.7%) were at the "Tier 1" level, meaning the program "has a robust assessment process that is clearly documented and explainable and encompasses (1) assessment of student work on multiple levels and (2) exemplary processes and practices that are scalable to the university community." Information gathered through this process also revealed key challenges among programs rated as Tier 2 or Tier 3, and that information has been used to drive Assessment Academy topics and workshops offered multiple times throughout the year. The relocation of assessment into UW's center for teaching and learning has also created better alignment of faculty learning communities with topics related to assessment (including informal assessment of learning, the design of instruments to assess learning, approaches to scaling assessment to program and degree, improving students' critical thinking, and using Canvas to better support assessment of learning.)

Beginning in late 2022, the assessment unit undertook a curriculum mapping project requiring all departments to submit curriculum maps for their programs. For units who have historically been

resistant to assessment, this task will provide a basis for further assessment activity. For units who have already been engaged in assessment, this task invited revisiting of existing maps to help them identify targeted assessment projects in the coming years (Institutional Assessment Plan).

Significantly, the assessment unit has generated the "University of Wyoming Institutional Assessment Plan for Student Learning" to guide assessment activity through 2027. That plan is well into implementation stages and includes institutional learning outcomes that will help focus the aggregation and analysis of diverse assessment efforts, including not only direct program-level assessment of student learning but also co-curricular, holistic, and other measures of the student experience, including NSSE/FSSE data, data from UW's co-curricular learning platform (SOAR), and information about the impacts of UW's general education program.

In addition to the assessment unit and staff located within the Ellbogen Center for Teaching and Learning, there is also an assessment coordinator within Student Affairs. Each department within Student Affairs is guided to articulate program-specific learning outcomes, with attention to audience served, scope of program, application of learning, and the level of behavior modification. Top-level outcomes for Student Affairs focus on leadership development, personal development, practicing inclusivity, and community engagement. The assessment coordinators in Student Affairs sits on the assessment coordinators committee and has increased Student Affairs participation in faculty learning communities focused on assessment. The new Student Affairs Strategic Plan unit includes a number of evaluation metrics that will contribute to indirect assessment of student learning and broader student experience.

Related to cocurricular assessment, the assessment unit has helped both the Honors College and the criminal justice-sociology department develop assessment processes related to valued but unassessed program requirements for students to attend speaker series and engage in other activities.

Relocation of assessment to the Ellbogen Center for Teaching and Learning has also meant a shift from an "enforcement" mentality to a "support" orientation. The priority of the assessment division has shifted toward helping units better identify and capture the impact of existing efforts, often in ways that take best advantage of capacity and disciplinary/professional constraints. This has also meant an effort to reduce duplicative work required in the old enforcement model, which required programs to repackage accreditation assessment efforts for institutional reporting.

Another small but important process detail that improves assessment of student learning is the effort to form assessment-focused faculty learning communities composed of *groups* of program faculty, rather than of individual faculty. This small change seems to increase program-level ownership for assessment and create program-level cohorts to carry assessment efforts forward.

4b2. The 2021 report on assessment for student learning indicated that about half of existing programs have already been engaging in processes that "close the loop" in terms of using assessment results to drive curricular and pedagogical change in ways that improve student learning.

For programs who are not yet closing the assessment loop in ways that lead to improved student learning, the 2023 requirement for all programs to submit curriculum maps should be an important step in guiding these programs to identity and pursue ongoing questions of importance (and then move onward to assessment cycles that may lead to improved student learning).

Through the relocation of assessment into the center for teaching and learning, it has become easier to highlight and promote effective assessment efforts as part of faculty development offerings. For example, the December 2023 Assessment Academy featured presentations from faculty from engineering and from nursing, who shared transferable success stories related to their assessment processes. These events help to leverage good assessment in one program to impact student learning in other programs. The UW Assessment office hosted a 2024 Assessment Academy in March of 2024, it included presentations on Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Planning.

On the institutional scale, it is possible to understand UW's successful efforts to attain R1 and Community Engaged status as a recognition of the extensive long-term assessment work done elsewhere. Such research has established the positive impact of undergraduate research experiences, service-learning, and experiential education. Similarly, inclusion of an experiential requirement in UW's new general education program reflects an appreciation for the ways that these kinds of activities improve long-term student learning. (For example, the support for adopting a general-education experiential learning requirement was supported in part by sub-committee work to explore best practices and innovative pedagogies.)

Within or in connection with UW's Ellbogen Center for Teaching and Learning, units focused on scholarship of teaching and learning, critical thinking, STEM pedagogies, and communication across the curriculum provide formal and informal support to faculty in developing questions to drive assessment, evaluating student work, and identifying relevant pedagogical changes based on analysis. Direct assessments of student work and indirect assessments of teaching practices (such as those conducted by the Communication across the Curriculum program in Fall 2022 and Spring 2023), in connection with broader research and other assessments, help UW identify gaps in teaching and promote activities that have been shown to improve student learning.

Recent academic program reviews also provide evidence that departments and colleges are making regular adjustments to curricula in response to indirect assessments of student learning (gathered, for example, through exit surveys or other holistic assessment means.)

Course evaluations help programs identify and remedy cases where poor teaching negatively impacts student learning. UW Regulation 2-10 provide guidance for faculty Performance Improvement Plans in cases where faculty receive problematic course evaluations. The Ellbogen Center for Teaching and Learning also provides a consultation service to faculty, which involves a faculty development specialist observing a class, providing supportive feedback, and making suggestions based on best practices that can help improve student learning.

Most programs with professional accreditation are required to demonstrate action based on ongoing assessment. For example, ABET requires the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences to demonstrate that results of student learning assessment are systematically utilized for the program's continuous improvement actions.

In terms of improving student learning based on large-scale indirect assessments (including NSSE/FSSE data), the university currently adopts a pragmatic approach focused on capacity and appetite: discussions of these results focus on identifying findings in which there is shared capacity and desire to take action. Student Affairs' Strategic Plan, for example, shows how that unit will make use of NSSE/FSSE data in relationship to their efforts related to student belonging and inclusivity.

4b3. The website for the assessment unit with the Ellbogen Center for Teaching and Learning provides a range of evidence that their institutional assessment planning and practices are informed by good practices. With regard to "substantial participation" in assessment efforts, over 85% of programs participated in the Spring/Summer 2021 Assessment Survey. Nearly half of those programs were placed in the top level, Tier 1, which typically indicates that programs are engaging faculty beyond only a department chair or assessment coordinator.

Staff in the assessment unit attend national conferences and participate in national organizations to stay abreast of good practice. The director of assessment tracks participation and attendance at assessment-related conferences, institutes, and workshops. The assessment unit has also sponsored faculty in academic programs to attend assessment-related conferences of special relevance to their programs. Across 2022-2023 and 2023-2024, the associate director of assessment estimates that at least 25 people (representing most college- or school-level units on campus) have participated in national conferences related to good practice. Spreading attendance at these events among teams (many of whom also sit on the UW Assessment Coordinators Committee) has also helped ensure that new lessons make their way into conversation and planning for future assessment efforts. The Assessment Unit also tracks participation in their own assessment learning communities programs/workshops.

Evidence that UW bases their efforts on good practice can be seen in the following components of the Institutional Assessment Plan for Student Learning:

- Adoption of institutional learning outcomes (that are now distinct from general-education outcomes).
- A shift from a focus on assessment processes to a focus on student learning. (This may seem like a small change, but it represents an effort to create an assessment culture clearly focused around a commonly shared value for students and student learning.)
- Increased attention to synthesizing information from major/degree programs, general education, and co- and extracurricular learning. Prior to the current plan, these elements had often been siloed rather than integrated.
- Greater emphasis on curriculum mapping as an essential program practice.

Several texts and frameworks currently guide the work of the assessment unit:

- Barbara Walvoord's book, *Assessment Clear and Simple (2ⁿᵈ)*. Especially in developing UW's institutional assessment plan, the Assessment Committee found Walvoord's discussion of "digestion systems" for effective action to be persuasive and helpful.
- Various resources from the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NIOLA) are in use as frameworks to guide program-level assessment design.
- Consultation with and feedback from faculty development specialist Kevin Gannon.
- The book *Meaningful and Manageable Program Assessment* (by Laura Massa and Margaret Kasimatis). This book has been used as a foundation for Assessment Learning Communities and has become a valued text for many academic programs as they revised curricula, outcomes, assessment methods, and analysis.
- Participation in the HLC Assessment Academy, which produced a variety of indirect impacts on assessment processes and practices.
- Results of Sam Houston Survey of Assessment Culture. This survey has helped UW establish that many members of the institution share the perception that assessment improves student learning. This survey has also revealed that there is room to better highlight assessment

successes.

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4.C - Core Component 4.C

The institution pursues educational improvement through goals and strategies that improve 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, 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

UPDATED 5-23-2024

4c1. UW's strategic plan (and related implementation plan) establishes clear targets for recruiting/enrollment, retention/persistence and completion/post-graduation success. All five strategic goals contribute to these efforts, and several execution strategies and key performance (especially for Strategic Goal 1) set measurable pathways for gauging the institution's success. The strategic plan also identifies leaders for major implementation strategies, meaning responsibility for achieving these goals is distributed clearly.

Alongside the strategic plan, a Presidential Goals 2023-2026 document sets additional targets for student excellence, investing in personnel, cultivating external relationships, engaging in long-range and strategic planning, and determining budget priorities. Like the strategic plan, all of these goals have subcomponents that will positively impact student retention, persistence, and/or completion.

4c2. The inclusion of key performance indicators in the current strategic implementation plan provides clear targets for data collection and analysis. UW has in place many units and processes that allow the university to effectively analyze data in relationship to its goals related to retention, persistence, and completion.

A key unit is the Office of Institutional Analysis, whose central charge is to "provide reliable, comprehensive, and authoritative information about the institution to support planning and decision making at UW...to support the institution's mission, values, and goals related to the success and learning of our students, as well as overall institutional effectiveness." The Office of Institutional Analysis also contributes data to the university's Consumer Information page, which serves the public through accessible, transparent information.

The 2023 Fact Book illustrates some of the information that UW gathers and makes available publicly. Additional public data include official enrollment counts, retention and graduation rates, and degrees awarded. The Office of Institutional Analysis also contributes information about UW through the national Common Data Set, which allows external entities to gather standard information about UW.

To support Wyoming high schools and community colleges, the Office of Institutional Analysis publishes feedback reports to these institutions that include information on retention and graduation rates for their students and graduates who enroll at UW. The Brown and Gold Report, is a public website designed for prospective students and their parents. It provides interactive and up-to-date visualizations of key measures about UW's students, tuition and fees, retention and graduation rates, degree programs, post-graduation plans, and credit hours.

As an institution offering NCAA Division 1 athletic programs, UW actively tracks information about student-athlete persistence and completion, through the Academic Progress Report and Graduation Success Rate.

The Office of Transfer Relations (established 2018) collects data to support the development of transfer policies and course articulation to support retention and persistence efforts. Additionally, the adoption of the Navigate platform for advising and other student-level data (in 2022) is enabling UW to better track course enrollment patterns and to intervene more quickly in cases where students are at risk of probation or departure.

4c3. Several efforts help UW actively improve retention, persistence, and completion efforts in light of data gathering and analysis. Key examples include:

- A Data Governance Committee created in 2018, which initially reported directly to the Office of the President and has now become the Data & Reporting department now reports to the vice presidents for academic affairs and information technology, is guiding dialogue on definitions, processes, and structures for more effectively sharing data across divisions in the university.
- Increased oversight and intervention for low-enrolled courses. In 2023-24, UW developed a course enrollment report to facilitate identification of undersubscribed courses. This report allows programs to proactively reach out to students to encourage them to register for courses at risk of cancellation (i.e., undergraduate courses of less than 10 students and graduate courses of less than 5 students).
- Office of Institutional Analysis reports focused on areas of specific concern and opportunity including a 2023 exploration of persistence of full-time first-year students enrolled in high-fail courses, and reports exploring predictors of first-time and transfer student success (2019 and 2022, respectively).
- The Strategic Enrollment Management committee and its working groups, supported by additional advisory groups, have helped drive collaborative, well-informed decision making for enrollment, advising, and student success. A process is currently underway (as of early 2024) to set new goals and an implementation timeline for an updated Strategic Enrollment Plan.
- A Student Success Institutional Transformation Task Force has recently taken over the work of a Course Management Strike Force that had previously studied enrollment patterns to determine how resources could be shifted to better support student progress through their majors. This task force is new and information will start being available coming Fall 2024.
- Data related to low-enrollment and low-completion programs (gathered through UW's

Regulation 2-13 process) have helped the university eliminate underperforming programs.
- A longitudinal study of the impacts of UW's Early Alert program is currently underway. Early Alert allows faculty to provide academic feedback on student performance during the fourth week of classes, long before mid-term grades are assigned.
- The hiring in early 2024 of an Assistant Director for the Ellbogen Center for Teaching and Learning, which will further increase that unit's focus on meaningful data collection, both for support of student learning and for broader trends in persistence and completion.
- Annual time-to-degree reports.
- Closer interaction between UW's Compliance and Review Specialist and the Office of Institutional Analysis. Since 2021, this increased interaction has supported data needed for program review self-studies and National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements reporting processes.

Beyond these large-scale efforts, Units directly involved with student retention—especially LeaRN Programs and the Student Educational Opportunity (SEO) programs—collect program-level data related to their curricular and co-curricular efforts. The Office of Institutional Analysis is working with the Student Success and Graduate Hub to make available a dashboard with student retention, GPAs, and probation rates. These internal dashboards will help key UW administrators identify factors which support student success.

4c4. UW processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs reflect common and accepted practice. Specifically, UW uses IPEDS definitions and formulas for retention and graduation rates both on different populations and for programs, and the university follows well-established procedures that guide other data collection processes.

Additionally, UW is a participant in the Student Achievement Measure (SAM) program. This allows students and external stakeholders a richer set of measures about student progression toward completion and has allowed UW to participate in various national initiatives such as the APLU Powered by Publics project focused on reducing the achievement gap in degree attainment.

At the state level, UW participates in the Statewide Longitudinal Educational Data System, which aggregates data important for education and workforce policies and programs across the state. SLEDS allows UW and other state entities to consider student success and outcomes in the workforce, determine programs and courses that may be in short supply in the state and enhance articulation across Wyoming institutions, and assist the state in identifying certificates and degrees that currently provide economic value or will provide economic value in the future.

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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

UW actively pursues educational improvement by setting ambitious yet attainable goals for student retention, persistence, and completion rates. The university exercises authority over course and program quality through rigorous approval processes and clear policies on prerequisites, course rigor, and faculty qualifications. UW has robust systems for evaluating and accepting transfer credits, ensuring that credits earned elsewhere meet the institution's academic standards. Additionally, UW uses comprehensive processes and practices to ensure the quality and integrity of its academic programs and operations. Since the last HLC visit, UW has made significant investments in support of ongoing assessment of student learning outcomes, including the hiring of an associate director of assessment in the Ellbogen Center for Teaching and Learning.

Sources

There are no sources.

5 - Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning

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

5.A - Core Component 5.A

Through its administrative structures and collaborative processes, the institution's leadership demonstrates that it is effective and enables the institution to fulfill its mission.

1. Shared governance at the institution engages its internal constituencies—including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff and students—through planning, policies and procedures.
2. The institution's administration uses data to reach informed decisions in the best interests of the institution and its constituents.
3. The institution's administration ensures that faculty and, when appropriate, staff and students are involved in setting academic requirements, policy and processes through effective collaborative structures.

Argument

UPDATED 5-23-2024

5a1. The UW Board of Trustees carries final authority for university operations, but a variety of shared governance processes, policies, and planning ensure that internal constituencies are represented in those operations. This assurance starts with UW Regulation 1-101, which establishes the procedures for modifying and approving university regulations, including review by internal constituencies.

Various UW Regulations establish the role of governance bodies for staff, faculty, and students:

- UW Regulation 1-3 establishes the bylaws of staff senate.
- UW Regulation 2-300 establishes the bylaws of university faculty.
- UW Regulation 2-301 establishes faculty senate bylaws.
- The Constitution and Bylaws of ASUW (UW's student government) establish the authority of the Associated Students of the University of Wyoming and their responsibility in governance of the university. The presence of the ASUW President as an ex officio member of the board of trustees provides an opportunity for direct relationship between the student body and the board of trustees.

Board of trustees bylaws and committees delineate the board's role in overseeing financial and academic policies and practices, and in meeting its legal and fiduciary responsibilities. Minutes of board meetings also help illustrate how their actions are informed by extensive input from internal constituent groups. Some recent minute topics are the annual budget, the dei state legislature issues, and approval of new programs and certificates for some examples.

From a policy and process perspective, the bylaws of the board of trustees clearly lay out the duties of the board's officers and its various committees, including Fiscal and Legal Affairs, Budget, Facilities Contracting, Financial Management and Reporting, Legislative Relations, Academic and Student Affairs, and Research and Economic Development. The Fiscal and Legal Affairs Committee takes primary responsibility for "assuring that the University's organizational culture, capabilities, systems and processes are appropriate to protect the financial health and the reputation of the University." This group works extensively with UW's internal auditor to identify any internal issues that need to be addressed.

The massive updating of university regulations and related standard administrative policies and procedures (completed in 2023) involved appointing appropriately representative working groups. The University of Wyoming Policies and Procedures Vetting Process outlined the process for internal constituencies to review and provide feedback during that process.

The development and approval of new degrees, minors, and certificates is carried out through a clear process described in UW Regulation 2-119 and several supplemental checklists that require the involvement of administration and relevant faculty. This regulation provides extensive internal discussion before new programs are brought to the board, but places final decisions about legal, financial, and academic impacts in the hands of the trustees.

For administrative hires, a search committee handbook describes standard processes, including representation from relevant campus units.

5a2. UW gathers data through its in-house units and through targeted consulting contracts. The Office of Institutional Analysis (OIA) provides ongoing data to support planning and decision-making, including financial aid awarding strategies. OIA provides information on faculty lines and employee IPEDS data. The office additionally provides annual feedback reports to Wyoming high schools and all the Wyoming community colleges to help them assess the success of their students at UW. Specific recent reports produced by OIA include a longitudinal review of transfer student trends at UW (Fall 2022), an exploration of impacts of high-failure-rate courses on first-time, full-time students (Fall 2023), and a review of international student success (Fall 2019). Also in 2023, the office provided data about low-completion programs, enabling the provost to make recommendations for program elimination or restructuring.

The academic program review process implemented by UW in 2018 provides a major, ongoing form of data-gathering to inform program-level decision-making. The 13-part self-study guidelines direct programs to gather information from and about faculty, students, staff, and other relevant constituencies. OIA and the Compliance and Review Specialist made special data forms to help gather the information needed for the self studies.

Analyses produced by national consultancies also support UW's decision-making. Recent examples include:

- A Strategic Enrollment Management Plan (2017). The Strategic Enrollment Management Plan was developed by a task-force of 46 members, including 13 faculty, 17 staff, and 16 administrators, in consultation with Huron Consulting. The work of implementing this plan continues to engage a variety of students, staff, and faculty. A new strategic enrollment planning process, with consulting firm Ruffalo Noel Levitz, began in 2023.

- [Staff Classification & Compensation Study](#) (with Deloitte, 2023). This study has provided a range of recommendations regarding compensation philosophy, pay policy, job architecture, and pay matrix updates.
- An [Institutional Capacity Analysis](#) (2018), prepared by Huron Consulting.
- An evaluation of [UW's pandemic response plan](#), prepared by Public Knowledge and conducted with the Ellbogen Center for Teaching and Learning.

5a3. UW Regulations [1-3](#), [2-300](#), [2-301](#), and the [bylaws](#) and [constitution](#) of the student government ensure the participation of staff, faculty, and student governing bodies, including their roles in guiding academic policies and processes.

Evidence of adequately representative involvement in academic programming is also demonstrated in the minutes and documents of several [faculty senate committees](#), as well as the Academic Planning Committee, the Graduate Council, the Budget Planning Committee, the University Studies Program Committee, Assessment Coordinators and Assessment Planning Group, and course revision and approval committees at both the college and university levels. Each of these committees is guided by a clear scope of responsibility and by appropriate policies. Additionally, the [development and approval of new degrees and certificates](#) is carried out through a clear process that requires the involvement of administration, relevant faculty, and students and staff where appropriate.

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5.B - Core Component 5.B

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

1. The institution has qualified and trained operational staff and infrastructure sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered.
2. The goals incorporated into the mission and any related statements are realistic in light of the institution's organization, resources and opportunities.
3. The institution has a well-developed process in place for budgeting and for monitoring its finances.
4. The institution's fiscal allocations ensure that its educational purposes are achieved.

Argument

UPDATED 5-23-2024

5b1. Hiring processes were updated prior to HLC's last site visit, and those processes help ensure the alignment of qualifications and job activity. Job qualifications and descriptions for staff in financial aid, academic advising, and other areas ensure that students are served by well-trained individuals.

Opportunities for ongoing staff training are extensive. LinkedIn Learning complements other training for topics including human resource processes, compliance with federal policies, and new systems and technologies.

Though listening sessions and campus dialogues have revealed low morale and job satisfaction across many operational staff, the university has recently filled some major gaps in in the registrar's office, human resources, distance education, admissions, and financial aid. Beginning in 2022, with assistance from Deloitte Consulting, UW undertook a staff classification and compensation study and carried out a related series of campus-wide surveys, interviews, and focus group. Those efforts led to the "Case for Change" organizational change effort, to be carried out in the coming year.

With a renewed commitment to Online and Continuing Education, UW has increased investments in staff and infrastructure for this effort, approving the hiring of a new set of instructional designers to provide faculty development and support for online ed and new programs. As of Fall 2023, UW employed approximately 1900 non-faculty employees, who help with all facets of the university from operations to academic support.

In terms of infrastructure, UW continues to invest in maintaining adequate facilities to support its wide range of operations. UW adopted a new Campus Master Plan in May 2020. Guided by five Big Ideas (Discovery and Learning, Residential Roots, Student Life Experience, Pedestrian-Friendly, and Welcoming Campus), this plan provides clear prioritization for ongoing infrastructural developments over the next two decades. The plan also identifies key needs for existing space and facilities (pp. 36-37), which the university is taking steps to address as appropriate.

Major new infrastructural investments since HLC's last visit include the Science Initiative building (March 2022), parking structure with new campus police offices (March 2023), major renovation of

the UW Law School (August 2024), Transit Maintenance Services Building (Spring 2022), the West Campus Satellite Energy Plant (completed Fall 2021), and a major overhaul of War Memorial Stadium (2023-2025). UW College of Business and Honor's College received Heywood funds for facility improvements in 2023. In line with both the campus master plan and the UW housing plan, construction is currently underway on two major new housing and dining facilities. Construction on these facilities is expected to finish in Spring 2025.

5b2. In light of its overall structures and resources, UW maintains a careful eye in development of strategies and key performance indicators. This approach is most visible in its strategic planning documents. Specifically, the development of specific implementation strategies and key performance indicators illustrate the institution's reasonable and incremental approach to achieve the goals of the strategic plan. Additionally, those metrics were defined in collaboration with the units most responsible for achieving them, and each strategy is assigned to an administrative lead. Similarly, each of the Presidential Goals has been assigned to a relevant administrator(s) most capable of overseeing progress towards the goals.

For many programs and units, such as the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences and the College of Education Teaching programs, professional accreditation agencies require programs to demonstrate that adequate financial, staffing, and other resources are in place to ensure effective program delivery.

While the university has a long history of working effectively within its allocated state budget, it also makes additional annual funding requests to the state. During the legislative process, UW reports on current successes, as well as new opportunities that may benefit from additional funding. At the 2023 Legislative Session, for example, fiscal year, the legislature approved $120M in supplemental requests. UW's long success in receiving supplemental budget funding is some measure of the strong relationship between the university, the state legislature, and the various constituencies that both entities seek to serve. The hiring of a new vice president for governmental affairs and community engagement in July 2022 provides an additional conduit for engaging with government policymakers.

A specific resource threat that UW is working to mitigate is the national enrollment "cliff." The drop in enrollment will be especially acute among Wyoming's high schools and will likely be coupled with decreasing state revenue from oil, gas, and other mineral royalties. Awareness of this two-part danger is a strong motivator for UW's continued attention to diversifying streams in support of its budget as well as diversifying its recruitment efforts in the coming years. UW's responses to previous budget cuts demonstrates how the university has both scaled back when necessary and also made effective arguments for maintaining budget levels to maintain key priorities.

As a final note about sufficiency of resources, the strategic plan directs the provost and vice president of budget and finance to conduct internal process audits with staff and relevant other users (faculty, students, stakeholders) to identify process bottlenecks that are having an outsized, negative effect on productivity and morale.

5b3. As reported in its 2019 Assurance Argument, UW has effective processes in place for monitoring its financial health. UW Regulation 7-1 serves as an essential policy, mandating close

attention to budgeting and expenses. UW Regulation 7-10 provides additional guidance regarding reserve accounts. Additionally, the board of trustees review and approve the budget for the coming year. Review by the trustees begins in mid-April and runs through final approval at the May meeting.

Logistically, quarterly budgeting information is available internally through the WyoCloud financial system (beginning FY2019), and the analysis is additionally shared with the board of trustees' Budget committee. WyoCloud additionally offers account analysis reports that provide up-to-date snapshots of revenue and expenditures. UW's transition to WyoCloud as its Enterprise Management System, initiated in 2016, was completed in 2019. Now available in the system are a variety of reporting dashboards: Budget and General Ledger, Board of Trustees, Chart of Accounts, Procurement and Payment Services, Grants Management, Human Resources, Role Specific Reports, Business Intelligence and Data Visualizations, and Executive Leadership.

UW's internal auditors regularly work with the trustees to identify priorities for focused consideration. Further, UW undergoes an external audit of finances annually to monitor and ensure compliance with financial laws and regulations.

UW also completes the Standard & Poor's Rating Services questionnaire annually and has had regular conversations regarding ratings and bonding authority. In 2022, UW's AA- long-term rating on outstanding Facilities Revenue Bonds was reaffirmed.

5b4. UW operated in Fiscal Year 2024 with a budget of approximately $630M. To ensure that fiscal allocations support educational purposes, UW Regulation 7-1 serves as the key guide to the development of an annual operating budget and for transfers among UW units. Other relevant policies include:

- UW Regulations 7-2, 7-7 and 7-8, which relate to expenditures, investment and management of university funds, and signature authority.
- Standard and departmental "Receipt and Handling of University Funds" policies and procedures.
- UW Regulations 6-4, 6-7 and 6-9, which relate to use of buildings, space allocation and projects.
- UW Regulation 9-2, which articulates an indirect cost policy.

Additionally, the University's budget planning timeline and its new-program proposal policy (which involves the faculty senate, deans, provost, president, and the board of trustees) ensure that resource allocations are made in a systematic way, in line with strategic planning, and focused on educational purposes. Academic program review policies implemented in 2018, as well as updated academic management procedures, also help ensure that resources are allocated in support of identified educational needs.

Through 2021, UW had used a centrally managed process for allocating positions in response to retirements, shifting enrollment patterns, and strategic priorities. However, members of academic affairs and the budget and finance division are currently drafting a new set of policies that will allow colleges and schools to retain faculty lines that go vacant.

Supplementing UW's budget is a foundation endowment that has now grown to around $790M, this

is up from close to $450M in 2017. Additionally, UW's intentional efforts over the past several years will allow it achieve Carnegie R1 status in 2025, making it more competitive for major federal research dollars. UW continues to maintain eligibility for Federal Student Aid programs.

Wyoming's status as a boom-and-bust economy means that UW is accustomed to persisting through downturns. Significant cuts to UW's block grant were imposed by the state legislature in 2010, 2014, 2017, 2018, and 2020/2021. Even during economic downturns, UW efforts have enabled the institution to continue delivering effective programs appropriate to its central educational priorities.

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5.C - Core Component 5.C

The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning and improvement.

1. The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities, including, as applicable, its comprehensive research enterprise, associated institutes and affiliated centers.
2. The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning and budgeting.
3. The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.
4. The institution plans on the basis of a sound understanding of its current capacity, including fluctuations in the institution's sources of revenue and enrollment.
5. Institutional planning anticipates evolving external factors, such as technology advancements, demographic shifts, globalization, the economy and state support.
6. The institution implements its plans to systematically improve its operations and student outcomes.

Argument

UPDATED 5-23-2024

5c1. UW allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities. This is accomplished, in large part, by the ongoing process of developing unit-level strategic plans that will be aligned to the overarching university strategic plan. Most of these unit-level plans should be in place by December 2024 to early 2025. Targeted implementation strategies and key performance indicators for the university strategic plan provide another method by which resources are allocated in alignment with focal goals and priorities of the institution.

Additionally, internal budget processes require ongoing and proposed allocations to be aligned with the university strategic plan on an annual basis. Once these internal processes have been completed through a presidential review, college deans and vice presidents are given the opportunity to confer with the board of trustees about their priorities. The president then presents a full budget to the board, the Fiscal Year 2025 Budget was proposed in May 2024 and had final approval in June 2024. The trustees are guided by Bylaw section 7-9, which establishes a committee to ensure that decisions are aligned with the university's academic mission. Any proposed centers are reviewed by the board of trustees, with consideration of the alignment of such centers with the academic and research missions of the university. Similarly, any supplemental requests to the state legislature must also be aligned with the strategic plan and mission. Internal Risk Audits process documentation demonstrates how overall mission and priorities drive resource allocation.

UW engages its students in revenue issues. Its current block tuition structure takes into account recommendation priorities and input from the student governing body. This group also participates annually in the fee book review process.

With regard to UW's research enterprise, Strategic Goals 2, 4, and 5 all draw research and entrepreneurship into larger-scale efforts and goals to increase revenue, provide meaningful learning opportunities, and provide service to the state. To ensure alignment of allocations for research, the

Research and Economic Development Division is guided by UW Regulation 9-2 (revised in 2021), which articulates distribution and expenditure of indirect costs. In FY 2023, the research division reports that it exceeded $150M in total research expenditures for the first time.

5c2. The adoption of an Institutional Assessment Plan (2023) will provide opportunities to better integrate assessment of student learning into broader planning processes. Already, the Division of Assessment utilizes campus information to inform their assessment allocations. Another major process for linking student learning with resource allocations is academic program review. This process includes a visit by an impartial external review team, who provides a report that guides investment in faculty and other resources. Like professional accreditation reviews, this internal process can help identify major gaps in instructional capacity, clarity of outcomes, and resource needs. Simultaneously, colleges have autonomy to put forward their own annual budgets, allowing them to make larger-scale investments in support of operations, planning, and student learning.

At the institutional scale, several goals and performance indicators in the strategic plan encourage collaborative efforts across budgeting, planning, operations, and student learning. For example, as part of Strategic Plan Goal 5, a study of winter and summer session course offerings is currently underway and should lead to better utilization of campus resources in service of its academic mission. Similarly, a 2018 institutional capacity study (which synthesized instructional and residential capacity, student support and administration, growth potential, cost per credit, and prospective student perceptions, among other factors) will inform planning, facilities, program assessment, and resource allocation through the end of the decade. UW's long-term master plan also informs facilities decision-making and investments, with major maintenance allocations made in consultation with Information Technology, including the IT space planning group. Operations allocations are based on rolling prioritization on a 5- to 7-year scale.

Investments in new resident halls take into account best practices for holistic residential living and learning, meaning UW anticipates these new spaces will contribute to overall educational quality.

Internal auditing at UW allows a high level of insight across budgeting, operations, and planning, with consideration for mission and strategic priorities. The purpose of UW's Internal Audit department is to provide independent assurance and consulting services designed to add value and improve university operations. The department helps the University of Wyoming accomplish its strategic objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of governance, risk management, and control processes.

5c3. UW's planning processes consider the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups. In general, task forces, standing committees, and the board of trustees are formed with an eye towards representational make-up to ensure that internal and external constituencies are engaged in planning processes. Specifically:

- The board of trustees bylaws and Wyoming state statutes mandate that trustee membership must be balanced in terms of political party and geographical representation. These documents additionally require appropriate representation for committees, meetings, voting, and other activities.
- Faculty senate, staff senate, and student government bylaws require certain representation for

committees, meetings, and voting.
- Administrative committees also demonstrate diverse perspectives, including representation from different units, colleges, and demographic groups of the university community.

The development process for UW's Campus Master Plan, completed in May 2020, included several work and listening sessions with task force committees, executive leadership, students, faculty and staff, and the general campus community. The process also included gathering input about the University from Wyoming communities. The Campus Master Plan provides a framework for decision making and strategic development to address infrastructure needs, environmental sustainability, and economic development over the next 20 years. Planning elements include use of green space, land use, new buildings, rehabilitation of buildings, repurposing of existing buildings, pedestrian/traffic flow, and other considerations.

Another example of broad representation in planning are the processes leading to the current strategic plan. The Strategic Planning Council and Team consisted of 60+ members representing a range of internal constituencies. The process was also informed by a number of alumni and Wyoming community members who participated in a Spring 2021 strategic plan survey. Similarly, the general education revision process currently underway includes committees comprising a range of internal constituencies and representation from Wyoming's community colleges. That process also included a survey that was distributed statewide to gather external constituent feedback. UW's effort to achieve Carnegie "Community Engaged" status also involved a large committee major input- and feedback-gathering processes from internal and external stakeholders.

5c4. As noted in 5b, a 2018 capacity study continues to provide UW with an understanding not only of current capacity, but also of projected opportunities for recruitment and enrollment. The school's Enrollment Management, Student Affairs and Academic Affairs departments, as well as the Presidential Cabinet are currently working with Ruffalo Noel Levitz, a national higher education consulting firm, to develop an updated strategic enrollment plan.

Annually, UW Risk Management produces a report of survey results about perceived risks to the university's strategic objectives. The survey also provides a measurement of culture and ethical conduct. The report helps equip the campus to implement controls for addressing risks to strategy, culture, and operations. Survey results are widely distributed, beginning with the Board of Directors, Presidential Cabinet, the Enterprise Risk Management Advisory Committee, staff and faculty senates, and other key stakeholder groups.

The 10,913 students enrolled at the start of the fall 2023 semester mark the university's lowest attendance since the 1997-1998 school year. The university recognizes it needs to find ways to incentivize university programs that grow their enrollment. The trustees have also indicated to the Senate Education Committee that building up UW's student body is part of their formula for making the university more financially independent from the state. Because Wyoming enjoys relatively strong financial support from the state, budget planning processes are designed to be responsive to the state's use of bi-annual budget forecasts.

Academic program review and additional ongoing program review processes also allow the university to more nimbly respond to economic downturns than it has in past years. At a more fine-grained level, UW closely monitors enrollment at the course-level and cancels low-enrollment courses. Over a period of years this process has allowed departments to better allocate required

courses across multiple semesters. The current administration's ongoing attention to program performance, guided by UW Regulation 2-13, provides another mechanism for effective planning in relationship to fluctuations in enrollment and revenue.

5c5. Institutional planning anticipates external factors that will require response, and many elements of the current strategic plan affirm UW's commitment to innovation and adaptation in response to local, national, and global factors.

The investment in and 2023 launch of a School of Computing represents a major effort to put UW on the forefront of technological advancements. This unit will serve as an academic hub for computing and digital skills, and it aims to provide UW students, faculty and staff—as well as Wyoming businesses and citizens — with the computational tools and approaches to drive innovation in the state.

This launch of the School of Computing – alongside existing efforts to boost UW's science and engineering research capacity – likely played a role in Laramie being recently named as part of an Intermountain-West Nuclear Energy Corridor Tech Hub. This hub, which includes a partnership with Idaho, aims to position the two states as global leaders in small modular reactors. The Wyoming and Idaho partnership was one of 31 tech hubs awarded funding in 2023 (from over 370 applicants nationwide). Each is eligible for up to $75M in federal money for its efforts.

Pursuit of federal funding represents one UW's major strategic approaches to diversifying funding, especially as the university anticipates that state support will continue to dwindle as oil and gas revenues decline. Additionally, strategic plan goals related to increasing international enrollment represent another effort to diversify funding for UW operations. Efforts to increase out-of-state domestic enrollment are well underway and represent an effort to get ahead of anticipated declines in in-state graduation rates. Ongoing efforts to attract transfer students, especially from Wyoming community colleges, are motivated by UW's strategic goal of increasing educational attainment and implementing four-year bachelor's degree plans statewide. The Office of Transfer Relations reflects a strategic investment toward recruiting and supporting Wyoming residents who may not otherwise matriculate to UW. Significant expansion of undergraduate degree programs (including eight new fully-online programs to be offered in the Fall 2024) are also expected to increase enrollment and enhance revenue.

Presidential working groups are another way that the university strategically allocates attention to emerging issues of concern. Recent or ongoing working groups include those focused on generative AI, freedom of expression, and university structure. More established committees, including a University Course Review Committee and a fiscal and legal affairs committee also help the university responsibly anticipate and respond to challenges related to revenue sources.

On the smaller scale, other examples of programming that helps prepare administrators, faculty, and staff for contextual change include:

- An array of faculty development programs and services, provided in-house through the Ellbogen Center for Teaching and Learning, that help instructional faculty maintain an up-to-date understanding of technologies for teaching and learning, universal design and inclusive teaching practices, emerging trends in program and certificate development, and national and global shifts in higher education. During the rapid shift to online and hybrid teaching in 2020,

over 400 faculty participated in rapid-response training to help them adapt to the context.
- Professional development opportunities related to generative AI. Examples from the Ellbogen Center include a Spring 2023 Discussion Series and two Spring 2024 academies focused on teaching with AI. Many departments are also providing program-level training to help faculty adapt to generative AI.
- Technology workshops and other training opportunities offered through UW's Information Technology, which help faculty and staff stay current on the variety of applications they must use in order to effectively carry out their teaching, research, and service.
- LinkedIn Learning opportunities that make available over 13,000 courses to employees at any time.

5c6. Through the close alignment of the institutional strategic plan to (1) implementation strategies and performance indicators and (2) unit-level strategic plans, the university is able to systematically move the entire enterprise in directions that will improve its operations and the quality of student learning opportunities. Similarly, the campus master plan provides long-term direction for major investments in operations and educational quality.

Additionally, by maintaining a clear and up-to-date understanding of its operations and operational needs, the university is able to develop and adapt plans as necessary. This understanding is made possible through ongoing planning, reporting, and documentation processes, including:

- Weekly, monthly, and semester-based enrollment data from the Office of Institutional Analysis, which support decision-making about recruiting, marketing, and student retention.
- Interactive dashboards to look at persistence, retention, and graduation to help employees determine the effectiveness of programs.
- Clear assessment processes, now directed by the adoption of an Institutional Assessment Plan.
- Academic program review processes, initiated in Summer 2018, that allow each academic program to assess overall quality, not only in terms of student learning but also in relationship to a variety of other operational factors, including advising, climate, career development, current faculty composition, the range of faculty scholarly activity, and department culture.
- Annual department reviews and other planning supported by the Office of Institutional Analysis. Many standard reports of historical data related to students, faculty, salary data, credit hours offered, class size, type of faculty teaching, grant information, and other relevant information were offered until 2016. Information is being redeveloped in the business intelligence system and will be available through WyoCloud.

Additional review processes, including for new programs, low-producing programs, and suspended or discontinued programs regulated by the UW 2-13 Regulation. There are additional reviews defined in the Standard Administrative Policy and Procedure for Academic Program Review (Page 1) help ensure that the university can adequately staff and deliver the programs it offers, given existing and projected staffing, needs, and resources.

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5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary

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

Summary

University of Wyoming effectively engages its internal constituencies through shared governance processes, policies, and procedures. The recent overhaul development of regulations and policies involved working groups with appropriate representation. Multiple regulations codify the roles of staff, faculty, and student governing bodies in institutional operations and academic decision-making. Faculty, staff, and students are additionally involved in setting academic requirements, policies, and processes. Regulations require multi-stakeholder involvement for approving new academic programs, and training is provided to department heads on overseeing academic policies and processes. UW utilizes extensive data sources, both internal units and external consultants, to inform decision-making. Recent examples include data analyses on student success, strategic enrollment planning with consultants, compensation studies, pandemic response evaluation, and more. An established academic program review process gathers program-level data as well.

Sources

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