## 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

1. ***The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews and acts upon the findings.***

The University of Dubuque **Academic Assessment & Department Review Handbook** outlines the procedures for academic assessment. The process for assessment has evolved and arrived at a place where all departments own the assessment process and actively take part, using it to improve student learning. Every year, each academic department completes an **Annual Assessment Document** which includes data collection, analysis, and an action plan that serves as an annual review of student learning outcomes (SLO). This document is the basis for evidence-based discussion and decision-making which then leads to meaningful programchanges. Annual department assessment is due by May 10 when data from the current academic year and an action plan are submitted to the Assessment Committee. They are reviewed and feedback is given to the head of each department by May 15. Prior to the start of the fall semester, time is allotted for individual departments to meet and discuss their assessment goals and committee feedback during faculty in-service. Departments can respond to and share their progress on their own goals and university-wide initiatives. Departments then implement changes and track their progress throughout the school year. The timeline for this process moves quickly and allows for data-informed changes to be initiated without delay.

The University has also established a **Comprehensive Academic Department Review** on a cyclical rotation. Academic departments are scheduled every five years unless they have an external accrediting body, in which case the University of Dubuque aligns with the external self-study. Devoting a year of self-study, departments perform a comprehensive review from learning outcomes and curriculum to retention and employment of graduates. Based on this review, they propose priorities for improvement. The Vice President of Academic Affairs analyzes the comprehensive reviews, provides feedback to departments, and presents a summary of findings to the Academic Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees.

1. ***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.***

The University of Dubuque ensures that all learning is appropriately evaluated. The evaluation of credit at UD begins with the course development process. As part of the [course proposal](file:///\\FACWINFILE\FACUSERS\MWard\HLC\evidence\viewfile%3ffileId=1029852)process, the [Learning Time Worksheet](file:///\\FACWINFILE\FACUSERS\MWard\HLC\evidence\viewfile%3ffileId=1029865) must be completed, which documents the expected student time investment relative to the credit hours being granted. The Faculty Curriculum Committee reviews all course proposals to ensure that they reflect an appropriate level of work.

For credit accepted from other institutions, the registrar, in consultation with the faculty, determines the course equivalency. From these equivalencies, the registrar develops transfer [articulation guides](file:///\\FACWINFILE\FACUSERS\MWard\HLC\evidence\viewfile%3ffileId=1029868) to ensure that credits are fairly and consistently granted.

College credit is awarded to those students entering the University of Dubuque from high school who have taken college-level Advanced Placement examinations with the College Entrance Examination Board. A score of 3 or higher will earn credits in accordance with the credit value of the equivalent University course. The University of Dubuque also allows students to earn credit through College-Level Examination Program (CLEP).

College credit may be granted to veterans for service schools attended. Recommendations of the Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Forces, prepared by the American Council on Education, are used to determine if credit will be allowed. Credit is accepted for successful completion of [DSST examinations](file:///\\FACWINFILE\FACUSERS\MWard\HLC\evidence\viewfile%3ffileId=1029841). Faculty members determine course equivalency and required test scores for each DSST test.   
  
In limited situations, a student may seek to earn credit through one of two alternative means: credit by examination and portfolio assessment. Credit by examination may be earned for specific UD courses by passing a special examination approved by the department chair and prepared by the instructor of a course. Credit by portfolio, administered by the Dean for Undergraduate Studies, requires the preparation of a portfolio explaining and documenting how the student achieved the specific learning outcomes for the course the student is seeking credit. The portfolio is assessed by faculty in the academic department petitioned. No more than 20 percent of the total number of credits required for the departmental major may be earned through portfolio evaluation.   
  
Internships and clinical experiences are managed by the individual academic department but are governed by a common set of expectations and assessments. Each internship must be supervised by a faculty member and includes an academic component such as required readings and journal, portfolio, paper, or a final summation activity. One credit hour requires a minimum of 50 clock hours of work. Internship experiences are assessed using a rubric based on the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education internship standards.

1. ***The institution has policies that ensure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.***

The University of Dubuque has [written policies](file:///\\FACWINFILE\FACUSERS\MWard\HLC\evidence\viewfile%3ffileId=1029866) to assure the quality of transfer credits. The University accepts all courses passed at an accredited bachelor’s degree-granting institution, provided the overall grade-point average for those courses is 2.0 or better. If the student’s cumulative grade point average at the institution from which the credits are transferred is less than 2.0, the University will accept all credit for courses in which grades earned were C or better. Transfer students enter with a class standing in accordance with the number of credits earned and accepted by the University of Dubuque for prior education at other institutions. Students entering with an Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degree from an accredited two-year or four-year institution will be considered to have completed all components of the General Education Curriculum, with the exception of the Judeo-Christian Tradition and the Capstone in the major.  
  
International students are required to provide a translated copy of their educational credentials for post-secondary work completed outside the United States and to have their academic transcript evaluated by World Education Services. This professional evaluation becomes the basis for decisions regarding the credits accepted by the University. The acceptance of transfer credits for graduate programs varies by program and is identified in the respect program catalogs.   
  
***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.***

1. *Course prerequisites*—the primary responsibility for determining course prerequisites lies with the faculty in the relevant area of study and are part of the [course proposal](file:///\\FACWINFILE\FACUSERS\MWard\HLC\evidence\viewfile%3ffileId=1029852) and revision process as determined by the Faculty Curriculum Committee and approved by the Vice President of Academic Affairs. Any exceptions to those prerequisites must be approved by the department head for the course in question. Prerequisites are listed in the College Catalog and the automated registration system is designed to require a manual override if prerequisites have not been met.
2. *Course rigor*—Attention to academic rigor is embedded in the course development and approval process. All courses must include articulated course learning outcomes (CLO’s). These outcomes are tied to the relevant program of study. The Faculty Curriculum Committees reviews courses to ensure that CLO’s are appropriate and the work meets the expectations for the course level and credit hours granted. The [Learning Time Worksheet](file:///\\FACWINFILE\FACUSERS\MWard\HLC\evidence\viewfile%3ffileId=1029865) also provides additional evidence that the time investment expected from students merits the awarding of credit.

Module Learning Outcomes (MLO’s) at the lesson level of instruction in a course are also appropriately aligned with CLO’s through a **Course Map**, developed by the faculty member instructing the course. The Course Map template was developed as a part of our HLC Open Pathway Quality Initiative Proposal in 2020. Course Maps are currently required for all 100 and 200-level courses with most 300-level courses also having a completed Course Map. These Course Maps are posted on most course Moodle pages as a part of the UD Course Page Template.

Faculty classroom observation also demonstrates attention to course rigor. All new faculty are observed in their first semester and returning full-time and adjunct faculty are periodically observed. Class observation forms provide instructor feedback and allow for dialog regarding course rigor.

1. *Expectations for student learning*—The University of Dubuque shares the expectations for students for student learning with students and the entire University community. During first-year student orientation, known as Spartan Start, the President and students sign the **Student Success Commitment**, a document that informs students that the University does have expectations that will lead to their success. Academic expectations are included in the **University Catalog** where Academic Standing is described giving expectations and consequences. These policies are overseen by Academic Affairs and the Faculty Academic Standing Committee. Faculty are required to follow the approved Course Learning Outcomes (CLO) for each course taught. They use the Course Map as a tool to align instruction and assessment to the approved CLO’s. These are then communicated to the student through the course syllabus and the course page found in the Learning Management System (LMS).
2. *Access to learning resources*—The University provides students with access to a wide range of learning resources, beginning with [academic advising](file:///\\FACWINFILE\FACUSERS\MWard\HLC\evidence\viewfile%3ffileId=1029839) through the Center for Advising and the faculty advisor. Academic support services are provided through the [Academic Success Center](file:///\\FACWINFILE\FACUSERS\MWard\HLC\evidence\viewfile%3ffileId=1029840) (ASC), as described in Section 3.D.1. [The Charles C. Myers Library](file:///\\FACWINFILE\FACUSERS\MWard\HLC\evidence\viewfile%3ffileId=1029850) services include online and hard copy resources, technology, reference personnel, and a variety of learning spaces to support teaching and learning. Students also have access to the **Smeltzer-Kelly Student Health Center** (SKSHC). SKSHC provides physical and brain health services to students and coordinates with the Accessibility Services Coordinator in the ASC as appropriate. Academic services to support students include developmental courses, TRIO-Student Support Services, Bridge Scholar Program, and Accessibility Services.

*Faculty qualifications*– All instructors are expected to meet HLC's faculty qualifications expectations. Both new faculty and current faculty must meet the faculty qualifications for each course they teach prior to the course being put on the published schedule of courses. This is documented through a [Qualified Faculty Determination](file:///\\FACWINFILE\FACUSERS\MWard\HLC\evidence\viewfile%3ffileId=1029855) (QFD) process and each QFD request requires final approval by the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

The annual expectations for faculty members are defined in the Faculty Handbook. Faculty members are expected to meet the following five criteria: commitment to the Mission, effective teaching, participation in scholarship and professional development, service to the University community, and effective student advising.

UD offers no dual credit courses or programs for high school students.

1. ***The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.***

Several programs at the University of Dubuque have achieved a specialized accreditation. Currently, those programs include:

* The University of Dubuque Theological Seminary is accredited by [the Association of Theological Schools](file:///\\FACWINFILE\FACUSERS\MWard\HLC\evidence\viewfile%3ffileId=1029847). The last comprehensive visit was held in 2014, with the next scheduled for November of 2024.
* The Aviation program’s Bachelor of Science degrees in Aviation Management and Flight Operations are accredited by the [Aviation Accreditation Board International](file:///\\FACWINFILE\FACUSERS\MWard\HLC\evidence\viewfile%3ffileId=1029848). The University of Dubuque and St. Louis University are the only private institutions within the geographic region of the Higher Learning Commission to hold this accreditation. Accreditation was first achieved in 2005. Full re-accreditation (five years) was granted following a self-study and site visit in 2020. The program is currently preparing for a re-accreditation visit in spring 2025.
* The baccalaureate degree program in nursing at the University of Dubuque is accredited by the **Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education** (<http://www.ccneaccreditation.org>). Initial program accreditation was granted in 2007. In 2014, the program was re-accredited through 2024. The **Iowa Board of Nursing** conferred preliminary approval to the pre-licensure baccalaureate program in December, 2004 and full initial approval in 2008. The program was reapproved for full six-year terms in 2014 and 2019. The nursing program is preparing for a November, 2024 CCNE accreditation visit and 2025 Iowa Board of Nursing site visit.
* The Teacher Education program maintains approval from the [Iowa State Board of Education](file:///\\FACWINFILE\FACUSERS\MWard\HLC\evidence\viewfile%3ffileId=1029861). The most recent teacher preparation program study and site visit were held in the fall of 2019. In 2019, the program received full approval through the 2026-2027 academic year.
* The Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies program is accredited by the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant ([ARC-PA](file:///\\FACWINFILE\FACUSERS\MWard\HLC\evidence\viewfile%3ffileId=1029843)). Provisional Accreditation status was granted in 2016. Continuing accreditation was granted in July 2022 with the next site visit in 2031.

1. ***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.***  
     
   A post-commencement survey of graduates is used to identify how students are using their education 6 months post-graduation. Results of the 2023 graduating class indicate that \_\_% are employed, \_\_% are active military, and \_\_\_% are pursing graduate studies. *(numbers to be provided when the survey results are complete)*

Individual program areas collect data, when available, on the success of their graduates in occupational specific examinations. For example:

* Nursing program graduates are required to take the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX®) to become licensed as Registered Nurses. The NCLEX measures the competencies needed to perform safely and effectively as a newly licensed, entry-level nurse. The pass rate of UD BSN graduates was 100% for first-time testers six of the last eight calendar years. NCLEX pass rates are generally regarded as the one of the most important measures of nursing program quality.
* The Department of Business and Accounting utilizes the ETS® Major Field Test as an assessment tool to track student learning. The ETS-MFT in business contains 120 multiple-choice questions designed to measure UD students’ business subject knowledge; the business department uses this as a benchmark for comparison with other schools and previous cohorts within the department. The department compares its graduates to an aggregate group of 20 institutions with business programs similar in nature. Since 2012 on average our students' ETS test scores have been higher (147 vs.144) than students who took the ETS test at the 20 comparison schools.
* The Department of Sociology utilizes the ETS® Major Field Test as an assessment tool to track student learning. The ETS-MFT in Sociology contains 140 multiple-choice questions designed to measure UD students’ mastery of Sociological concepts, principles and knowledge. As stated on the ETS Website, "most of the questions require knowledge of specific sociological information, but the test also draws on the student’s ability to interpret data, to apply concepts and ideas, and to analyze sociological data, theories and relationships, deductively and inductively." The Department of Sociology uses this as a benchmark for comparison with other schools and previous cohorts within the department. The department compares its graduates to an aggregate group of 20 institutions with Sociology programs similar in nature. Since 2016, on average, our students' ETS test scores have been higher, in the 140 -144 range, than students who took the ETS test at the 20 comparison schools.
* Physician Assistant graduates must pass the Physician Assistant National Certifying Exam (PANCE) administered by the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA) to obtain certification. The exam assesses basic medical and surgical knowledge. After passing PANCE, PAs are issued NCCPA certification and can use the PA-C designation until the certification expiration date, which is renewed every two years following completion of required continuing education. Re-examination to maintain certification is required every 10 years. The UD PA program has a 100% ultimate pass rate and a 96% first time taker average pass rate, exceeding the 5-year national first time taker average of 94%.

### Sources

* 2017-2018 Program Review
* 2018 Fall Fast Facts Employment
* Academic Advising Information
* Academic Council Agenda\_February 2019
* Academic Department Review Template
* Academic Success Center Information
* Alternative and CLEP Testing Information
* Annual Department Assessment Guided Implementation Discussion
* ARC-PA Webpage
* Assessment Department Review Schedule
* Assessment Department Review Schedule
* Assessment Document Template
* Association of Theological Schools Webpage.pdf
* Aviation Accreditation Board Intnernational Webpage.pdf
* Charles Myers Library Information.pdf
* Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education Webpage.pdf
* Course Proposal Form\_Undergraduate
* Faculty Qualifications Determination.pdf
* General Education Assessment Schedule.pdf
* Internship Final Evaluation Form
* Iowa Board of Nursing Webpage.pdf
* Iowa State Board of Education Webpage.pdf
* Learning Time Worksheet
* Transfer Equivalency Reports
* Undergraduate Catalog 2019-2020\_Transfer Credit Policy

## 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

***1. The institution has effective processes for assessment of student learning and for achievement of learning goals in academic and cocurricular offerings.***

The goals of the College are based on the Mission of the University of Dubuque: as a community, the University practices its Christian commitments by educating students, pursuing excellence in scholarship, challenging students to live lives of worth and purpose, and preparing students for service to the church and the world. Therefore, the University of Dubuque is committed to: a hospitable Christian environment which respects other faith traditions; relationships which encourage intellectual, spiritual, and moral development; excellence in academic inquiry and professional preparation; a diverse and equitable community where Christian love is practiced; stewardship of all God's human and natural resources; zeal for lifelong learning and service.

The [general education program](file:///\\FACWINFILE\FACUSERS\MWard\HLC\evidence\viewfile%3ffileId=1029858) at the University of Dubuque forms broadly educated students at the undergraduate level by developing competence that engages questions and challenges in a variety of life contexts and is directed toward living out one’s calling with character and conviction. The program has three major dimensions which correspond to the three general education learning outcomes. They include demonstrating foundational intellectual and practical skills, exploring the major questions and challenges in five contexts of human engagement, and developing a statement of personal calling/vocation that synthesizes knowledge, skill, and responsibility. The [General Education Curriculum Assessment](file:///\\FACWINFILE\FACUSERS\MWard\HLC\evidence\viewfile%3ffileId=1029872)rotates the focus of each learning outcome once every three years.

Assessment has become part of the culture at the University of Dubuque. Academic curriculum assessment begins with the [program proposal/course proposal and approval process](file:///\\FACWINFILE\FACUSERS\MWard\HLC\evidence\viewfile%3ffileId=1029851) which is facilitated by the Faculty Curriculum Committee. The VPAA has final approval. Each [major, minor](file:///\\FACWINFILE\FACUSERS\MWard\HLC\evidence\viewfile%3ffileId=1029869) or [course proposal](file:///\\FACWINFILE\FACUSERS\MWard\HLC\evidence\viewfile%3ffileId=1029852) must be based on Student Learning Outcomes (SLO’s). This includes submission and approval of an **Annual Assessment Document** to the Faculty Assessment Committee, which then must be approved prior to Curriculum Committee approving the major or minor.

The process for assessment as detailed in the [UD Assessment Handbook](file:///\\FACWINFILE\FACUSERS\MWard\HLC\evidence\viewfile%3ffileId=1029845) involves all departmental faculty actively taking part, using assessment to improve student learning. At the end of each academic year, using the data collected and observations made, each academic department completes an **Annual Assessment Document** with the results from the previous year. This document includes an Action Plan for the next academic year. These Annual Assessment Documents are submitted by May 10th. The Faculty Assessment Committee reviews and offers feedback by May 15th. Every August during faculty meetings, each department has dedicated time to review the feedback and begin work on the Action Plan, thereby addressing areas where improvement is needed in a timely manner.

As the assessment process has evolved and become a centerpiece of the culture at the University of Dubuque, so has the role of the **Faculty** [**Assessment Committee**.](file:///\\FACWINFILE\FACUSERS\MWard\HLC\evidence\viewfile%3ffileId=1029854) The committee has a focus on analyzing trends university-wide and serving as a resource to the departments, thus ensuring an effective assessment process.

Co-Curricular Areas such as the Wendt Character Initiative, Honors Program, Athletics and Student Life also have evaluation strategies in place to assess their contribution to the formation of students at the University of Dubuque. [Co-curricular assessment](file:///\\FACWINFILE\FACUSERS\evidence\viewfile%3ffileId=1029864) follows an OKR model (Objectives and Key Results). Each department has established specific goals/outcomes, measurement tools and benchmarks. Each goal is connected to the strategic plan and the Student Success Commitment. The data gathered is analyzed and used to determine where we have established strengths and areas of opportunities.

1. ***The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.***

Each academic department has an **Annual** [**Assessment Document**](file:///\\FACWINFILE\FACUSERS\MWard\HLC\evidence\viewfile%3ffileId=1029873) based on learning outcomes that is reviewed and updated annually for the academic majors and minors. For each learning outcome, measurement tools are identified along with benchmarks for what constitutes successful achievement. The annual assessment document ties the learning outcomes to assessment results and identifies an action plan developed in response to the actual outcomes achieved. Action Plans, developed and assessed annually, ensure that assessment data is used to initiate growth and changes based on collected data.

Likewise, the General Education Curriculum Committee is responsible for [General Education Curriculum Assessment](file:///\\FACWINFILE\FACUSERS\MWard\HLC\evidence\viewfile%3ffileId=1029863) which follows the same format as assessment in the majors, with one exception:  specific learning outcomes are assessed every three years on a rotating schedule.

Examples of change resulting from Annual Academic Assessment include *(to be added from academic department HLC surveys):*



In addition to annual academic department assessment, the university has established a **Comprehensive Academic Department Review** on a cyclical rotation. Academic departments are scheduled every five years unless they have an external accrediting body, in which case the University of Dubuque aligns with the external self-study. Departments perform a comprehensive review from learning outcomes and curriculum to retention and employment of graduates. Based on this review, they propose priorities for improvement.

Examples of change resulting from **Comprehensive Academic Department Review** include *(to be added from academic department HLC surveys):*

4. ***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.***

Academic assessment is led by the Faculty Assessment Committee.  The Assessment Committee membership has faculty representatives from both professional and liberal arts programs. The committee is fully committed to evaluating assessment processes to ensure that we are in alignment with the University Mission and that the assessment process is beneficial to each academic department in improving student learning and outcomes for our students.

Every academic department and program area can identify changes being made as a result of the assessment of student learning. Department reviews have led to changes within many academic programs. The **Annual Assessment Document** requires departments to respond to assessment data in some actionable way. For many learning outcomes, the data supports the methods departments are using. But for every department, the assessment process highlights areas for improvement too. Because of the variety of assessment goals and the small sample sizes, some programs struggle to capture reliable data. While this is a legitimate concern, the process is designed to help departments make improvements, even with limited data. When departments gather to finalize their assessment reports, they are asked to develop an action plan on what they plan to implement or improve on in the coming year. Each action plan focuses on continual improvement.

An ongoing challenge is to increase the transparency of assessment data and the improvements made in response to that data. Therefore, discussion of Assessment has become a regular part of the Academic Affairs meeting structure. Each August departments have a two to three-hour block of time for a designated department assessment meeting. The agenda for this meeting is to review the **Annual Assessment Document** from the previous year especially focused on the action plan for the current year. This is an effort to make continuous improvement a valued part of each department by allowing time for faculty and invited adjuncts to review data and contribute to the action plan. Thus, assessment and continuous growth become part of the campus culture.

### Sources

* Annual Department Assessment Guided Implementation Discussion
* Assessment and Department Review Handbook
* Assessment Document Examples
* Assessment Document Template
* Course Proposal Form\_Undergraduate
* Curriculum Committee Proposal Routing
* Faculty Handbook\_Assessment Committee Mandate
* General Education Assessment Schedule.pdf
* General Education Curriculum Assessment
* General Education Program
* Guided Implementation Discussion Examples
* Non Academic OKR.pdf
* Program Proposal Form\_Undergraduate

## 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

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.***

The University publishes goals for retention and completion of all academic programs. They are as follows:

This information helps clarify strategies to enhance student success. Student success, while on campus and long after students leave us, is the focus of our efforts. The question at the forefront is, “Are we really improving the lives of our students?” Answering this question has led to several major initiatives, include the [Student Success Commitment](file:///\\FACWINFILE\FACUSERS\MWard\HLC\evidence\viewfile%3ffileId=1029870), [First Six Weeks Task Force](file:///\\FACWINFILE\FACUSERS\MWard\HLC\evidence\viewfile%3ffileId=1029856), and the [Brain Health Task Force](file:///\\FACWINFILE\FACUSERS\MWard\HLC\evidence\viewfile%3ffileId=1029849).

Hence, we made changes to some of our processes. The Student Success Commitment remains an important contract between the institution and students. New students and the President sign a pledge each fall and the Student Success Commitment hangs in each classroom as a constant reminder to faculty, staff and students that we are partners in their academic success.

The First Six Weeks Task Force evolved into a permanent **Retention Committee** comprised of staff members from across campus (Academic Affairs, Athletics, Student Life, and Technology). The Retention Committee looks at student retention, persistence, and completion from the unique perspective of University of Dubuque students, not comparing to national averages but setting retention, persistence and completion goals with respect to our own student experience and aligned with our UD Mission.

The Brain Health Task Force determined a significant need for brain health services for students at the University of Dubuque. In answer to this need, in the Fall of 2020 the university opened the Smeltzer-Kelly Student Health Center (SKSHC). Unintentionally yet fortuitously timed to open at the beginning of the pandemic, SKSHC is a full service health center offering students access to a full-physician, physician assistants, and nursing care. In addition to physical health providers, it employs full-time counseling providers to service student brain health needs.

1. ***The institution collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence and completion of its programs.***

The University of Dubuque regularly collects and analyzes data that informs student success. The Retention Committee has focused on students who we are and are not retaining. This data is shared and evaluated throughout each semester, as we watch for trends and intervention points. UD evaluates student retention, persistence, and completion from as many different perspectives as possible.

Although the First Six Weeks Task Force identified which common characteristics could be used to predict retention (i.e. HS GPA, SES, ethnicity, etc.) the current Retention Committee looks at predictors through a lens of student observable behaviors. Committee representatives have worked within their departments to determine student observable behaviors that might impact their success at the University of Dubuque. For example, Student Life looks at meal punch data and attendance at events. Athletics tracks student-athlete class grades/attendance, athletic participation, quits and the transfer portal. Academic Affairs tracks class attendance (a part of the Student Success Commitment), weekly attendance and grades, midterm grades, and Academic Alerts. Enrollment Services tracks withdrawals and Financial Planning helps to trace Account Holds and students with outstanding balances. In addition to the departments tracking data, student support services (learning support coaches and professional advisors), who have a direct line to students, inform the data with what they hear directly from students. This allows students to receive support quickly, which in turn, improves our chances of retention.

In addition to the Retention Committee evaluating student behavioral data, Academic Affairs reviews student data regularly. This includes a review of courses with a high number of D’s, F’s and withdrawals, average GPA’s at midterm and final grade reporting, and Academic Standing. Assessment of enrollment is also a part of each Academic Annual Assessment and Comprehensive Academic Department Review. Departments review their major/minor enrollment trends in comparison to trends in higher education and national trends in their field of study, thus keeping their programs attractive and current in an effort to attract and retain students.

1. ***The institution uses information on student retention, persistence and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data.***

Each department at the University of Dubuque reviews data with a focus on retention, persistence and completion. Continuous improvement involves a constant eye to change in light of current data. Across campus, changes are implemented to better serve students, hence encouraging retention, persistence and completion:

1. Campus-wide collaboration. As the Retention Committee made progress the value of working across departments became obvious. In 2022 the fall Teaching & Learning Conference (TLC) brought together departments for campus-wide participation. Student Life, Athletics, Wendt Character Initiative, Smeltzer-Kelly Health Center, faculty, staff and coaches all came together to focus on a collaborative approach to student success.
2. Revisions to the Bridge Program. Based on retention data, program revisions to the program were made. It is now known as the Bridge Scholar Program including an interview process, scholarship, a dedicated Academic Advisor and weekly Learning Support Coach meetings.
3. Engaging athletic participation into student success efforts. In order to better serve the more than half of undergraduate students who are UD student-athletes, we added a Learning Support Coach for Athletes – Graduate Assistant (GA) to work with the Academic Success Center. The Learning Support Coaches focus on student success and retention by guiding students academically as well as serving in a social work type role. This GA position provides additional personnel dedicated to student-athletes.

On an individual course level, we look for failure patterns among early, required coursework. One area where failure was too high was in developmental mathematics.  During the 2018-2019 academic year, we implemented changes in curriculum and pedagogy that seem to be resulting in greater success Also, over the last five years, early intervention has led to a reduction in the numbers of students who are academically dismissed at the end of the semester.

1. ***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 measure*s.)**

UD utilizes Jenzabar EX® to keep student records safe and accessible. All data collected regarding the student’s academic progress is ultimately stored in Jenzabar. This is the primary source of data for analysis.

### Sources

* Brain Health Task Force - Agendas - Began 2018.pdf
* First Six Weeks Task Force - Agendas - Began 2017
* Grad Placement Report
* Income Impact on Success
* SAM
* Student Success Commitment

## 4.S - Criterion 4 - Summary

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

### Summary

The University of Dubuque strives to develop and improve academic and co-curricular programs based on sound assessment practices. Making decisions based on data is the foundation of the University of Dubuque assessment process. The Faculty Assessment Committee ensures that faculty and staff are a part of the improvement process. Cabinet members support campus-wide participation as a part of the process of evaluation, change and growth. The Teaching & Learning Conference (TLC) is an example of working across campus departments as Academic Affairs, Student Life, Athletics, Wendt Character Initiative and Schmeltzer-Kelly Health Center staff all come together. This conference allows faculty, staff, and coaches to get to know one another as they focus on student success. The University of Dubuque has a strong history of making decisions based on “what is best for the student” and an eye to the future.

Assessment is an ongoing priority. The University of Dubuque continues to work on better use of data at the course level, data-driven change at the department level and moving forward with retention, persistence and completion efforts. Collecting data regarding graduates continues to be a challenge with limited data resources available. A barrier to both effective assessment and promoting student success is cross-campus communication. This is an area we hope to remedy as we improve our data collection/storage systems and study the feasibility of a coordinated campus communication system.

### Sources

There are no sources.