



**Missouri State**  
UNIVERSITY



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Higher Learning Commission  
2026 Reaffirmation of Accreditation



# Introduction

Accreditation by national accreditors like the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) is a formal quality assurance process in which an independent organization evaluates a college or university to confirm it meets standards in areas such as academic programs, faculty qualifications, governance, finances and student success.

Universities seek accreditation so students, employers and the public can trust that degrees from the institution represent a meaningful level of quality and rigor, and that the school is operating responsibly. Institutions generally must be accredited by a recognized accreditor for their students to receive federal financial aid. Many academic programs at Missouri State University have additional accreditations specific to their program.

Missouri State University has been continuously accredited since 1915. Accreditation with the HLC follows a 10-year accreditation

cycle. Our last visit was in 2015, with a midcycle review in 2020. All reviews start with a peer review team. The reviews and recommendations from the peer review team are reviewed by another team at HLC to ensure that everyone is reviewed appropriately. Final recommendations/reviews come from the HLC Board of Trustees:

**[HLCcommission.org/Accreditation/Cycles-and-Processes/Comprehensive-Evaluation](https://www.hlc.com.org/Accreditation/Cycles-and-Processes/Comprehensive-Evaluation)**

Missouri State University is preparing for the next 10-year cycle visit by an HLC peer review team on March 30-31, 2026, to reaffirm our accreditation. The university has completed all required materials for submission, including the Assurance Argument. The Assurance Argument articulates how the university meets all criteria adopted by HLC. Evidence has also been submitted to support the argument.



**More about the 2026 Reaffirmation of Accreditation:**

** [MissouriState.edu/HLC/SiteVisit2026](https://MissouriState.edu/HLC/SiteVisit2026)**



# The Higher Learning Commission process

## PURPOSE

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The primary purpose of the Assurance Argument is to provide a clear, written demonstration that Missouri State University meets all four criteria for accreditation and their core components through a coherent, evidence-based narrative. The Assurance

Argument explains how the university fulfills the HLC's standards and links each claim to specific items in its evidence file, such as policies, data and assessment results.

## PROCESS AND COMMUNICATION

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Preparation for the 2026 Assurance Argument and site visit has been ongoing at Missouri State University. The HLC oversight committee was formed in early 2024 and began meeting in March of that year. Several members of the committee were part of the 2015 reaccreditation steering committee, thus providing continuity and leadership.

From spring 2024 through early 2026, the HLC oversight committee has prepared the campus for the 2026 comprehensive visit. They have done so by organizing work around the Assurance Argument, collecting evidence collection and sequencing communications to key governance and stakeholder groups.

In 2024, the committee focused on: writing early drafts of the Assurance Argument; reviewing prior recommendations from 2015 and 2020; and setting up a standing feedback form and evidence library to support draft writing. In the fall, members of the committee began holding “embedded conversations” with targeted campus offices to refine content while simultaneously updating the HLC website in preparation for broader visibility of the 2026 site visit materials. The committee also scheduled or held multiple informational meetings with the Board of Governors, Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, Student Affairs, Student Government Association, Academic Leadership Institute, University Council and others. Drafts of criteria 1 and 2 were made public for campus review and feedback through the university's HLC website.

In 2025, the committee integrated feedback from University Council and other stakeholders into drafts of executive summaries and strengths/opportunities.

Drafts of criteria 3 and 4 were uploaded to the website for campus review and feedback. Three reviewers (internal and external) completed a full reading of the Assurance Argument, edits were incorporated and the revised document was prepared for public posting. The fall 2025 communication campaign included executive summaries and presentations to governance groups. Presentations were made to specific groups of staff, student and faculty groups and others. The committee sought feedback from the entire university community in late 2025.

In 2026, final edits are being made to the Assurance Argument and the Federal Compliance report. Documents will be submitted to HLC in early March. The reaccreditation site visit is March 30-31.

President Richard B. Williams has issued campus-wide updates focused on the HLC reaffirmation process. The university's website includes the drafts of the Assurance Argument, feedback forms, agendas and minutes of the HLC oversight committee:

**[MissouriState.edu/HLC](https://MissouriState.edu/HLC)**

## EXCERPTS FROM SUMMARY

Missouri State University's mission is rooted in its identity as a community of citizen scholars dedicated to public affairs, with a focus on innovative teaching, research and service that benefits both individuals and society.

Three core pillars guide the mission and define Missouri State's values: community engagement, ethical leadership and cultural competence. These are integrated throughout the university's academic programs, student experiences and institutional operations.

Strategic planning and continuous improvement are central to how MSU operates and aligns with its mission. The university develops annual action plans and long-range strategies, such as the new Igniting Opportunity strategic plan for 2025-30, which was shaped by extensive feedback from students, faculty, staff, alumni and community stakeholders.

The university's impact extends beyond the classroom through robust local, regional and international partnerships.

Locally, collaborations such as the Alliance for Healthcare Education with Ozarks Technical Community College, CoxHealth and Springfield Public Schools aim to address workforce needs in health sciences.

Community engagement is further demonstrated through initiatives like the Center for Community Engagement, resources such as the Bear Pantry, which supports students' basic needs, and service-learning courses that contribute tens of thousands of volunteer hours.



## STRENGTHS

- Missouri State University fosters a strong, campus-wide identity with its public affairs mission.
- The 2025-30 strategic plan, Igniting Opportunity, reaffirms the mission with a vision for MSU to become the nation's leading public affairs university. The plan was shaped by faculty, students, administration, alumni and community partners, which led to more clarity of the mission, vision and values.
- The university has a commitment to investing in local, regional and international partnerships, demonstrating its dedication to the public good.

## STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES

- While public affairs is widely identified and recognized on campus, Missouri State could improve by developing an overarching plan or comprehensive public affairs program.
- On July 9, 2025, Governor Mike Kehoe signed legislation that granted Missouri State the authority to independently offer Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree programs. This legislation became effective August 28, 2025. This gives Missouri State University the opportunity to respond to workforce needs and expand academic opportunities for current and future students.
- As Missouri State University continues to expand its international engagement, the institution has an opportunity to strengthen internal clarity and shared understanding by refining the nomenclature used to describe international programs, coursework, partnerships and global locations. While current terminology is effective for external audiences and prospective students, more consistent internal language would help faculty and staff better distinguish between full academic programs, individual course offerings, and true campus or location-based operations.

# Integrity: Ethical and responsible conduct

## EXCERPTS FROM SUMMARY

Missouri State University exemplifies a steadfast dedication to integrity and ethical action across all facets of its institutional life, with a robust framework of policies and procedures that direct the conduct of its governing board, administrative leadership, faculty and staff.

Transparency and accountability are assured through regular internal and external audits, compliance with federal and state regulations, and the presence of mechanisms such as an Ethics Hotline, which provides a confidential channel for reporting concerns. These structures collectively reinforce a culture in which ethical behavior and responsible action are not only expected but actively cultivated.

The university's commitment to transparency extends to its engagement with both students and the broader public, ensuring that information about educational programs, institutional policies and financial matters is presented accurately and is readily accessible.

The Board of Governors operates with full autonomy, guided by state statutes and university bylaws, and is deeply invested in the principles of shared governance and academic freedom.

The university is committed to academic freedom and freedom of expression, principles identified in the faculty handbook and supported by clear policies.



## STRENGTHS

- Missouri State University has a committed Board of Governors that functions effectively, providing feedback and maintaining connections to the student body. The board demonstrates intentionality with its training, standards, orientation and bylaws. The board is involved with much of the work that is completed with the leadership of the university.
- The university's commitment to continuous improvement and transparency is evidenced through updates and online publication of the policy library; faculty handbook; employee handbook for administrative, professional and support staff; and the code of student rights and responsibilities.
- Transparency is demonstrated through the annual publication of student learning outcomes and student fees. Faculty use the Bright Space learning management system for their syllabi and grade books.

## STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES

- In the rapidly changing technological environment, the university has an opportunity to build on current policies and practices to address new challenges as they arise. For example, Missouri State has an opportunity to revise its academic integrity policy regarding the use of artificial intelligence.

# Teaching and learning for student success

## EXCERPTS FROM SUMMARY

Missouri State University demonstrates a strong and systematic commitment to the quality of its educational programs, learning environments and support services, ensuring that these elements consistently fulfill the institution’s mission across all modalities and locations.

Undergraduate and graduate students alike participate in scholarly activities such as research, internships, service-learning and presentations at conferences and competitions. These are all integrated into the curriculum and assessed through essays, surveys and program evaluations. The three pillars of the university’s public affairs mission — community engagement, ethical leadership and cultural competence — are embedded in coursework and are assessed annually.

Missouri State maintains a sufficient and highly qualified faculty and staff workforce to support its academic programs and student services. With more than 3,500 faculty and staff, the university ensures that instructional and support roles are filled by professionals, many of whom hold terminal degrees.

The university provides comprehensive support for student learning through a variety of academic and co-curricular services, including academic advising, tutoring, first-year transition programs, disability accommodations, counseling and career-development resources.

The university’s infrastructure — including modern classrooms, libraries, laboratories and performance spaces — is designed to foster learning and innovation. These resources are coordinated by the provost, the dean of students and the associate provost for student success to create a cohesive and supportive environment for all students.

Assessment of student learning is systematic, data-informed and embedded at the institutional, college and program levels, with involvement from the provost, the office of institutional effectiveness, college deans and faculty.

Program review is a cornerstone of Missouri State’s commitment to quality and continuous improvement. The university also maintains advisory boards and councils to oversee curriculum and program development, and has clear policies for dual credit and prior learning assessment. Through these mechanisms, Missouri State ensures that its educational offerings are rigorous, responsive to student and community needs and aligned with its mission of fostering educated, responsible citizens.



## STRENGTHS

- Missouri State University’s faculty are highly qualified. More than 90% hold a terminal degree in their field.
- Support services for students are robust and comprehensive and are available to all students. This includes attention to student success and a commitment to mental health.
- In 2024, MSU created the office of institutional effectiveness, committed to a data-informed, customer-service oriented framework that includes the office of institutional research and the office of assessment and accreditation.
- The university created an academic performance management system document that describes assessment processes at the university, college and department or school level.

## STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES

- Missouri State has a history of a robust and comprehensive program review process. However, the university paused program review after COVID, an academic realignment and a need to rebuild the office of institutional research. The university took the opportunity to develop a new program-review process in 2024 and piloted it in spring 2025. The university has an opportunity to fully implement program review in fall 2025, using dean and faculty feedback from the pilot.
- Building on student success initiatives, Missouri State University has an opportunity to strengthen collaboration among all stakeholders to improve student retention.
- The university has an opportunity to revise its general education program.

# Sustainability: Institutional effectiveness, resources and planning

## EXCERPTS FROM SUMMARY

Missouri State University demonstrates a strong commitment to effective administration, shared governance and transparent resource management through a well-defined structure that engages faculty, staff, students and external stakeholders. The university is governed by a Board of Governors that oversees policy adoption and institutional direction. The president, supported by a cabinet and various councils, manages daily operations and fosters collaboration across campuses.

The university ensures its financial and personnel resources align with its mission and support current and future needs. A robust budget process involves multiple committees and transparent communication, with resources allocated through a cost-center model that prioritizes educational purposes.

Missouri State maintains a stable financial position, supported by annual audits, competitive compensation reviews and investments in facilities and technology.

Facility improvements, including new academic buildings and renovated spaces, reflect the institution's commitment to accessibility, affordability and sustainability, further strengthened by partnerships with local employers and community organizations.

Systematic planning and quality improvement are embedded in the university's culture, with regular strategic planning cycles, data-informed decision-making and continuous assessment of academic and administrative units.

The university's planning process is collaborative, involving faculty, staff, students and external stakeholders in setting goals and reviewing outcomes.



## STRENGTHS

- Missouri State University demonstrates a commitment to continuous improvement in its strategic planning process. In 2024-25, stakeholders including administration, faculty, staff, students, alumni and community members identified shared values and five strategic goal areas in its 2025-30 strategic plan.
- The university's budget process is made as transparent as possible through committee involvement and public communication of results. These are available to external as well as internal constituents, primarily on the university's website.
- The university is dedicated to developing its infrastructure. Numerous campus buildings have been upgraded and improved, including Roy Blunt Hall. New structures, such as the John Goodman Amphitheatre, have been built. Others are in development, including the Judith Enyeart Reynolds Performing Arts Complex and the Clifton M. Smart III University Advancement Center.

## STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES

- Missouri State is committed to developing its strategic enrollment management (SEM) plan. The SEM plan is a data-informed process that aligns fiscal, academic, co-curricular and enrollment resources with the university's changing environment to accomplish its mission and ensure long-term enrollment success and fiscal health.
- The university has an opportunity to implement the strategic plan that was developed in 2024-25 and approved by the Board of Governors in June 2025.

