

Missouri State University - Springfield, MO

Team Report

HLC ID 1449

Review Type: Comprehensive Evaluation

Open Pathway

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Context and Nature of Review

Review Date

03/30/2026

Review Type

Comprehensive Evaluation

Scope of Review

- Assurance Review
- On-Site Visit
- Federal Compliance

Institutional Context

Missouri State University (MSU), founded in 1905 as the 4th District Normal School, is a regional public university system located in Springfield (main campus), West Plains, and Mountain Grove, Missouri, with 26,001 students enrolled in 2026. It offers 99 undergraduate majors, 121 minors, 114 undergraduate certificates, 67 graduate degrees (including professional doctorates) and 113 graduate certificates. MSU has been continuously accredited by Higher Learning Commission since 1915; it is currently on a 10-year review cycle in the Open Pathway.

In recent years, MSU has undergone a series of significant leadership transitions. President Williams was appointed in 2024, followed by the appointment of Provost Phillips in 2025. In the same year, the institution established the position of Vice President for Strategic Enrollment Management and appointed its inaugural vice president. The university is also currently conducting a search for a Chief Financial Officer. In addition, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness was created in 2024 to oversee the Office of Assessment and Accreditation and the Office of Institutional Research, with the goal of strengthening and expanding institutional capacity in strategic data use, accreditation, compliance reporting, assessment, data analytics, and research. During this period, the Office of Institutional Research experienced substantial staff turnover, with all but one staff member departing in 2024, which temporarily slowed the institution's program assessment efforts.

Although MSU has not been placed under any form of financial monitoring by HLC, its Composite Financial Index (CFI) scores have fluctuated over the past five years. Discussions with the Board of Governors, the University President, and the Cabinet indicate that the institution is taking deliberate and strategic steps to address financial challenges through its newly adopted 2025–2030 Strategic Plan and associated key performance indicators.

In summary, MSU's current context is characterized by multiple senior leadership transitions, ongoing financial complexities, and corresponding opportunities for strategic growth and development,

particularly in the areas of assessment, enrollment management, retention, and student success.

Interactions With Constituencies

Monday, March 30, 8:20am-8:45am: President and Cabinet Members

President, Chief of Staff, VP for Community and Global Partnerships, Chief Information Officer, VP of Legal Affairs & Compliance, VP for University Advancement, Director of Internal Audit and Risk Management, VP for Administration and Finance, Interim VP for Marketing and Communications, Provost & VP for Academic Affairs, Athletics Director, AVP Finance and Accounting, VP for Student Affairs, Director of Assessment and Accreditation

Monday, March 30, 8:50am-9:50am

Chief of Staff, VP for Administration and Finance, VP for Enrollment Management, Provost and VP for Academic Affairs, VP for University Advancement, Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness, Director of Institutional Research, Consultant of Assessment and Accreditation, Chief Academic Strategy Officer, Director of Financial Aid, Dean of Graduate College, Director of Marketing and Communication and Graduate College, AVP Finance and Accounting, Assistant Director of Accounting and Budgeting, Director of Budgeting and Accounting

Monday, March 30, 9:50am-10:50am Open Forum for Criterion 3

83 staff members, 39 faculty, 5 students

Monday, March 30, 11:00am – 12:00pm

Group 1: Assessment Council, Office of Assessment and Accreditation (OAA), Student Affairs Assessment Committee, CGEIP (gen ed), Graduate Council/faculty, Student Success Council, faculty, Assessment Specialist, Assistant Director of Residence Life, Housing and Dining Services, Director of Office of Institutional Research, Assistant Director of Facilities and Operations, Director of Academic Advising and Transfer Center, Associate Provost of Office of Institutional Effectiveness, Associate Dean of Graduate College, Associate Dean of Finance, Economics and Risk Management, College of Business' Coordinator of Accreditation, Assessment & Enrollment Management, Deputy Chief Information Officer, Director of Academic and Student Services Athletics, Director of Career Center, Associate Dean of Counseling, Leadership & Special Ed, VP for Student Affairs, Career Resources Specialist, AVP for Student Affairs, Associate Provost for Student Success, Director of Assessment and Accreditation, Registrar, Assessment and Accreditation Consultant.

Monday, March 30, 11:00am – 12:00pm

Group 2 Academic Deans

Dean of Darr College of Agriculture, Dean of College of Natural and Applied Sciences, Dean of College of Business, Dean of Libraries, Dean of McQueary College of Health and Human Services, Dean of Graduate College, Dean of College of Education, Dean of Reynolds College of Arts, Social Sciences, and Humanities

Monday, March 30 12pm-1pm Lunch Meeting with 14 Students

Monday, March 30 1:30pm-2:30pm Open Forum for Criterion 4

90 staff members, 17 faculty members, 5 students

Monday, March 30 2:45pm- 3:15pm Faculty Senate and Faculty 14 in attendance including Faculty Senate Chair, past chair, chair-elect, and 11 faculty members

Monday, March 30 2:45pm- 3:15pm Open Forum for Criteria 1 & 2 80 staff members, 16 faculty members

Tuesday, March 31 8am-8:45am Meeting with Board of Governors

3 Board of Governors members: Board chair, Vice Chair and Chair of Risk Management and Audit Committee, Past Chair and Chair of Finance and Facilities Committee

Tuesday, March 31 8:50am-9:50am Campus Tour with 2 Student Ambassadors

Tuesday, March 31 8:50am-9:50am Meeting with Staff Senate and Staff 135 staff total

Tuesday, March 31 9:50am-10:50am with External Advisory Board members

Online: 1 Reynolds College of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities, 2 Darr College of Agriculture, 2 College of Education, 1 Chemistry, 1 College of Business, 1 College of Health and Human Services, 1 College of Business Executive Advisory Council, 1 McQueary College of Health and Human Services.

In Person: 1 Reynolds College of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities, 1 Computer Science

Tuesday, March 31 9:50am-10:50am Student and Academic Support Services

Directors, Associate Directors or Coordinator of these offices: Business Advisement Center, Academic Advising and Transfer Center, MCHHS Student Success, Professional Education Services, Senior Academic Advisor, Academic Advisors, Student Learning Services, Citizenship and Student Learning, Academic and Student Services-Athletics, Student Engagement, Residence Life, Housing and Dining Services, Campus Recreation, Student Engagement Coordinator, Assistant VP of Student Affairs/Dean of Students, Student Resource Center, Counseling, New Student Orientation, Student Care and Support, Student Resource Center, Residence Life, Education Abroad Advisor, Employee Wellness Program, Career Center, Office of Education Abroad and 1 faculty member

Tuesday, March 31, 11:30am-12pm Exit Meeting

President, Provost and VP for Academic Affairs, Director of Assessment and Accreditation

Additional Documents

None

1 - Mission

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

1.A. Mission Alignment

The institution's educational programs, enrollment profile and scope of operations align with its publicly articulated mission.

Rating

Met

Rationale

1.A. Missouri State University (MSU) provides ample evidence that demonstrates alignment with its mission as a public-affairs-oriented state university through documentation provided to the Review Team, multiple sections of its public-facing website, and discussions with stakeholders during the on-site visit.

First, MSU's mission as a public-affairs-oriented university, an identity that was first articulated in 1995, is clearly and publicly articulated at various levels. In the "About MSU" tab on the university's main website, public affairs mission, initiatives, events and alignment with the university's current strategic plan are prominently featured. The Review Team's onsite interviews and forums with faculty, staff, and students found that the university embraces this mission.

The university's mission is clearly articulated in and across the robust general education program with 15 separate Learning Outcomes. One manifestation of the abiding focus by MSU on public affairs as its main mission is the fact that public affairs mission was adopted by the Faculty Senate as a focus of the general education program back in 2011, long before the new strategic plan was implemented and most of the current upper administration arrived at MSU. This is an important indicator that the focus on public affairs is not merely a new, potentially transitory result of the new strategic plan.

MSU's new strategic plan "Igniting Opportunity 2025-2030" was officially launched on 22 September 2025 and was created as the result of a robust process that was led by a Strategic Plan Committee (SPC) that included faculty, staff, student, alumni, and community voices. All stakeholders were invited to participate in that initiative, as was made clear by comments offered in various meetings held during the site visit. The new mission focus on public affairs at MSU is front and center in the public-facing strategic plan website. The strategic plan encompasses five goals that present a comprehensive approach to sustaining and growing MSU as a public state university. Each goal is led by "Implementation Teams," consisting of personnel from across the university. Implementation has begun in this academic year (Year 1), utilizing a Strategic Planning Online software (SPOL) that MSU purchased in August 2025. The fact that MSU recently reorganized its various Institutional Research and Data processes into a new Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) in 2024, is also an indication that MSU is serious about implementing the new strategic plan.

The OIE coordinates Institutional Research, Assessment and Accreditation, Enrollment Management Systems and Reporting, and Project Management and Organizational Effectiveness. Since OIE is new and a director only recently hired, data on the effectiveness of the strategic plan implementation have not yet materialized. This may be an area of interest for MSU in future review cycles as additional data become available following continued implementation of its strategic plan and when the plan's long-term impacts can be assessed.

MSU has integrated its mission effectively into the various elements of the student experience such as in its new student orientation program (SOAR), the general education program, and capstone courses across academic programs. The Center for Academic Success and Transition (CAST) office sponsors several programs that instill the university's public affairs mission into the undergraduate student experience. One notable example, seen in the evidence documents and also described in favorable terms in various in-person meetings is the new mandatory GEP101 class organized and administered by the First Year Programs office in CAST. This 2-credit course is an innovative way to integrate the university's mission into each new cohort of first-year students. A similar focus for first-year honors students is available in the UHC110 Honors Freshman Seminar. Sustaining student mental health and well-being are also part of the CAST mission, and MSU appears to devote substantial resources to the functioning of CAST, especially important in light of the university's robust work to increase first-generation and under-represented student enrollment and retention.

MSU's student demographics provide a positive picture of the growing diversity of its student population in terms of residence, age, and under-represented students. MSU also hired a new Vice President for Enrollment Management in 2025 to coordinate undergraduate admissions, recruitment, financial aid, student services and dual credit programs, serving Goal 3 of the new strategic plan. This was a critical hire for MSU for several reasons, including the potential "demographic cliff" that MSU faces and potential cuts to higher education at state and federal levels. MSU has a goal of increasing total student enrollment to 30,000. Close monitoring of enrollment trends and their impact on tuition revenue remains a critical area for MSU.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

1.B. Mission and Public Good

The institution's operation of the academic enterprise demonstrates its commitment to serving the public good.

Rating

Met

Rationale

MSU provides ample evidence that it links its educational mission to serving the public good in local, regional, and international contexts. The MSU library participates in the Ozarks Studies Institute and hosts the online, fully peer-reviewed *eJournal of Public Affairs*. MSU has developed a number of partnerships at local, regional and national levels that are providing career pathways for graduates. One of these career pathways is MSU's partnership with Burrell Behavioral Health to offer a PsyD degree program starting in 2022. Burrell helps MSU sustain this program with a substantial financial contribution while students have access to important on-site training opportunities. This partnership also serves the local community by providing greater access to mental health resources. This successful partnership was also described in the Review Team's meeting with MSU's external advisory boards in highly affirmative terms.

Another important MSU initiative that allows the university to serve the public good is the recently created Innovation, Design, Entrepreneurship, and Arts Commons (IDEA) located in downtown Springfield. The IDEA Commons has several components such as an Innovation Center and Free Enterprise Center that illustrate MSU's strong commitment to serve the local and regional populations. Faculty and staff commented in the campus meetings that IDEA Commons has already been an important new initiative through which MSU serves the locality and makes a real difference.

Several of MSU's initiatives and partnerships developed since 2021 further illustrates MSU's commitment to community engagement and to providing opportunities for students. One example is the Alliance for Healthcare Education partnership that involves MSU and other regional educational entities to provide access to affordable healthcare in that part of the Midwest region and to increase the region's number of healthcare professionals who will provide that expanded care.

MSU also partnered in 2023 with state K-12 schools, the State Department of Labor, and other groups to address Missouri's teacher shortage. That partnership has already yielded impactful results in the number of teacher apprentices trained and their combined earnings, and in the amount of tuition costs that those apprentices saved while earning university credits. This success was further confirmed by a member of the external advisory board in a meeting, stating that these opportunities for MSU students are growing and yielding important positive results in the local school system.

Another example was given by a member of the Springfield Fine Arts community, who commented on the critical role that MSU students have played in the local arts scene, and MSU's support for the local newspaper, *Springfield Daily Citizen*, which connects the local population to community events. On MSU's website, it is stated that MSU students provide more than 420,000 hours of total

Community Service annually, which points to MSU's commitment to serving the wider public good.

MSU also maintains an international presence and provides services for its international communities. For example, the Division of Community and Global Partnerships provides a host of services for international students, faculty, and study abroad participants. MSU has 1,600 students from 91 countries, and it also has established agreements with several Chinese universities to bring students to MSU.

Finally, frequent mention was made in meetings with academic deans and faculty that MSU's aspiration to move to Research 2 status will significantly enhance MSU's ability to serve the public good. Examples included the possibility of more grant funding for student research, increased ability of MSU to address longstanding local and regional issues in new or enhanced co-curricular programs, and the potential for deans to build stronger alliances with external groups that serve the public. One unit that was mentioned frequently by students and faculty was the criminology program and their role in the university's service to the public good.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

1.C. Mission and Diversity of Society

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.

Rating

Met

Rationale

MSU fosters civic engagement through curricular and co-curricular experiences and opportunities. For example, MSU's College of Education takes the lead in ensuring the university services various sectors of society in several important initiatives. Most notable is the Center for Rural Education that MSU started in 2023 to address the needs of rural schools by creating a consortium of rural schools, supporting grow-your-own teacher programs, promoting dual credit opportunities, and fostering professional development for teachers.

Other MSU academic units are also serving the wider public in some important and innovative ways, including the many different projects sponsored by the Sociology, Anthropology and Gerontology Department that serve under-represented student populations. The university's webpage and documentation provided in the Assurance Argument attest to MSU's wide scope of successfully serving a diverse and multicultural society. The members of the External Advisory Board also provided affirmative testimonies of impacts of those initiatives that reach beyond MSU and Springfield.

MSU's Division of Student Affairs provides robust supports and complementary initiatives to serve its diverse students, among which are the Student Resource Center (aka "The Bear Cave"), the Office of Access and Success Programs specifically dedicated to enhance the persistence and retention of first-generation and low-income students, and the Trio Upward Bound program that serves students in Springfield public schools to successfully transition to enroll in and graduate from MSU. The university also provides support for students with disabilities through the Disability Resource Center. Its Veteran's Center is fully staffed, and its Ursa Experience Program supports incoming first-year or transfer students before the start of the Fall semester.

In meetings, MSU staff expressed particular pride in the lively campus that serves a diverse range of students as illustrated in the monthly schedule of "Heritage Months" devoted to specific groups, e.g., September is Latino/a/x Heritage month, October focuses on LGBTQ+ Heritage, November features Native American Indigenous Heritage, etc. A separate Heritage Month focus occurs on campus each month of the academic year, and the schedule is impressive in its coverage.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

Criterion 1 Summary

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

Missouri State University clearly aligns with its stated Mission to be a state university focused on public affairs.

MSU's public affairs mission to train students as "citizen scholars" who can serve the public is clearly evident throughout its documentation, public-facing web pages, and in the comments provided by stakeholders in the on-campus meetings during the site visit. The university's mission is also woven seamlessly into each part of the new strategic plan currently in its first year of implementation. It became abundantly clear in the on-campus meetings that the mission has driven every element in constructing and implementing the new strategic plan, and that members of the university participated in the envisioning, planning and current implementation of the plan.

MSU's public affairs mission has also guided a variety of campus program, academic, co-curricular, and even physical improvements. Equally impressive was the high degree of commitment to the mission and the success of the new strategic plan expressed by faculty, staff and students. MSU faces some financial and demographic headwinds, but the Review Team observed a unanimous positive attitude towards the university's overall mission and the new strategic plan by various stakeholders in and outside the university, the latter being represented by robust external advisory boards.

MSU also provides strong evidence that it serves a diverse society through several university-led initiatives that serve various populations. Examples include the Veteran's Center, the Student Resource Center, and several creative initiatives to serve under-privileged groups.

MSU's enrollment profile also aligns with its mission, as evidenced in the robust opportunities that have already been developed at local, regional, national and international levels. Further, the real-time success of many of these opportunities was evident in feedback shared by various university constituents, including members of the external advisory boards. Students also voiced strong and consistent evidence of the importance of these opportunities to achieve their career goals. It is evident that community engagement is alive and well and embedded throughout MSU's programs. The faculty, staff, and students are engaged in the mission and the strategic plan of MSU.

2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

In fulfilling its mission, the institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

2.A. Integrity

Actions taken by the institution's governing board, administration, faculty and staff demonstrate adherence to established policies and procedures.

Rating

Met

Rationale

MSU demonstrates a commitment to integrity by emphasizing ethical and responsible behavior. One of the core values supporting its public affairs mission is ethical leadership, focusing on "making informed decisions and engaging with others through integrity and transparency to pursue [MSU's] goals." Ethical leadership is practiced by the Board of Governors (BOG) and by MSU's administration, faculty, staff, and students. During an open forum session, it was stated that "ethical leadership is everywhere" from hiring practices and training to classroom policies and focus on fairness to institutional focus and policies on non-discrimination.

MSU's operating policies and procedures are clearly explained on various publicly available websites. The comprehensive online Policy Library, maintained by the Office of Legal Affairs and Compliance, provides a one-stop resource for locating both governing and operating policies in an easily searchable webpage. The Policy Library is a frequently accessed resource for policy reference and guidance, as demonstrated by its recent website usage and engagement data, and confirmed by the information provided by faculty and staff during the site visit. Policies also are outlined and clearly communicated in the faculty handbook, the employee handbook, and the student code of rights and responsibilities. The Board of Governors (BOG) approves governing policies, and the president, in consultation with the cabinet, approves operating policies. MSU is committed to adhering to established policies and procedures as demonstrated by its Ethics Hotline-Whistleblower Policy.

Maintaining academic integrity is a focus at MSU, guided by the Academic Integrity Council and detailed procedures outlined on the Academic Integrity website and discussed during the visit. As noted during discussions with faculty and staff, academic integrity is being updated to address the impact of AI. Additionally, MSU values feedback to support its ethical leadership, and has a Faculty Handbook Revision Committee that reviews suggestions and comments submitted via the website. The Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities and the Employee Handbook also seek feedback from the campus community and are regularly updated, as noted in the web materials and reinforced during the campus visit.

MSU uses data to support responsible behavior and consistent practices. There has been a

reinvestment in data infrastructure and governance to ensure the use of common definitions and centralized data for decision-making across campus. This process is being led by the recently created Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE), which integrated the offices of Institutional Research and Assessment & Accreditation. OIE has created various PowerBI data dashboards and works closely with constituents to tailor the reports to their needs. The benefits of this new office and the standardization of data were communicated during site visit meetings. For example, OIE collaborated with the Dean of the Graduate College to create a custom dashboard solution that helped identify actionable items. Additionally, OIE created a data dashboard for the English Department program review process that helped them review the past five year's data for their various programs. Furthermore, MSU operates in a fiscally responsible and ethical manner, as demonstrated by more than 30 years of "unqualified opinion" with no reportable findings in its external audits. The Internal Audit and Risk Management director reports directly to the BOG and operates with the autonomy needed to ensure integrity. The director and the team's accomplishments, including their work identifying potential risks, were highly praised during our discussion with the BOG.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.B. Transparency

The institution presents itself accurately and completely to students and the public with respect to its educational programs and any claims it makes related to the educational experience.

Rating

Met

Rationale

MSU provides detailed information about its educational programs, policies, and procedures to students and the public through a comprehensive, easily searchable website. The admissions webpage communicates detailed information for various groups, including traditional learners, adult students, international students, Veterans, and transfer students. The tuition, costs, and fees webpage delineates costs by undergraduate, graduate, and international students. It includes typical costs and a net price calculator to help students and the public better understand costs. MSU recently changed from program fees to college fees to reduce student confusion, and complex programs, such as nursing, provide a cost breakdown on their website. The majority of students (66%) responding to the 2026 *HLC Student Opinion Survey* agreed/strongly agreed that they received clear information about the cost of their education. Additionally, the majority of students (83%) who responded to the survey agreed/strongly agreed that the communication they received from MSU about the overall enrollment process was clear. MSU's clear communication was further emphasized during discussions with students during the site visit.

MSU is transparent about its educational programs and clearly communicates program requirements for all degree levels. This is evidenced by its clear webpage for undergraduate and graduate majors and programs that provides operational definitions for majors, minors, and degrees, as well as a dynamic majors and programs search feature. Further demonstrating MSU's transparency regarding academic requirements, the catalogs page highlights key updates from the past year.

MSU is consistent in its public affairs messaging about fostering ethical leadership, cultural competence, and community engagement across campus, as evidenced by conversations with faculty, staff, and students. During meetings, faculty and staff shared that strides have been made in transparency, and they expressed their appreciation for the President's Listening Lunches and the President's weekly blog, *Words of Williams*. The President's blog promoted the HLC site visit and emphasized the importance of taking the time to reflect on MSU's work toward being "a community of citizen scholars dedicated to public affairs." The President encouraged faculty, staff, and students to attend the HLC forums, and this message was reinforced by MSU's clear HLC webpage dedicated to the 2026 site visit. The communication about HLC involvement was well received by the campus community, as evidenced by robust attendance at all meeting forums.

During open forum meetings, faculty and staff expressed their understanding of the university's budgetary position and potential budget issues. At a campus meeting, a staff member shared their understanding of budget cuts and appreciated the conversations about why and how these cuts were

being made. This clear messaging about budgets also was evidenced by the President's blog and the Executive Budget Committee resources and minutes webpages.

Additionally, during the site visit, faculty mentioned MSU offers a robust information-sharing and discussion platform through its University Council, established last year and comprising the President's Cabinet members, deans, staff, and faculty. The University Council's role in driving transparency and collaborative communication was cited during an open forum discussion. During several meetings, faculty and staff voiced appreciation for the administration's efforts toward promoting transparency and noted a desire for greater involvement in decision-making processes.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.C. Board Governance

In discharging its fiduciary duties, the institution's governing board is free from undue external influence and empowered to act in the best interests of the institution, including the students it serves.

Rating

Met

Rationale

Appointed by the Governor of the state of Missouri, MSU's members of the Board of Governors (BOG) represent the various congressional districts in Missouri, serve six-year terms, and bring varied backgrounds. BOG members participate in a new member orientation and comprehensive training. This was confirmed during a conversation with a subset of BOG members, where they shared their appreciation for learning from subject matter experts across campus and the nuances of the colleges in a two-day training. They also emphasized that training is on-going and they are continually provided updates from various groups during their Board meetings, including Administration and Finance, Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, and Student Government.

There are currently vacancies for the First District representative and the non-voting student member, and three members with expired terms that will continue to serve until new members are appointed. MSU previously provided slates of potential student members in accordance with Section 174.055, RSMo and is currently finalizing a new slate of potential appointments for the governor to consider, as well as encouraging potential candidates for the First Congressional District to apply. During discussions with students, student government officers noted the importance of having student representation on the BOG and expressed their strong interest in having this position filled as soon as possible. In the Review Team's meeting with the BOG, the team shared this student insight, and the BOG acknowledged the importance of student representation but noted that the Governor is in charge of the selection process and that a list of candidates has been provided for consideration.

The BOG exercises sufficient independent oversight of the institution and acts in the best interest of MSU and its students. There are clear, regularly reviewed BOG Bylaws that guide their work and outline their "powers of general control and management" over the institution. The BOG is actively involved in approving institutional strategic plans and goals. In the BOG's five meetings and annual retreat, board members review and discuss implementation plans, as noted by BOG minutes and confirmed through discussions with BOG members. The BOG committees (Executive, Finance & Facilities, Programs & Planning, and Risk Management & Audit) help advance the BOG's work by evaluating budgets, reviewing KPIs, and examining audits. As noted by the Board's Relationship to Faculty policy and the delineation of responsibilities for curricular matters through the Faculty Senate, staff concerns through the Staff Senate, graduate programs through the Graduate Council, and student issues through the Student Government Association, the institution supports shared governance and academic freedom. A review of planning documents, meeting minutes, and interviews with BOG members and with MSU faculty and staff, the Review Team confirms that the Board, administration, faculty and staff operate with clearly defined and appropriately distinct roles

and responsibilities.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.D. Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression

The institution supports academic freedom and freedom of expression in the pursuit of knowledge as integral to high-quality teaching, learning and research.

Rating

Met

Rationale

MSU demonstrates a commitment to academic freedom and freedom of expression, as reflected in its mission to create transformative experiences that benefit individuals and society from its innovative teaching, research, and service. The academic freedom section of the faculty handbook emphasizes that the protection of academic freedom extends to all faculty members, regardless of rank, tenure status, or position title, with full- or part-time appointments. The code of student rights and responsibilities guarantees free inquiry, expression, and assembly at MSU as a student right and is further supported by the expressive activity policy, which commits to “providing an environment where issues can be openly discussed and explored”.

During a lunch meeting with students, one student discussed their involvement with the student-run news organization, *The Standard*. They commended the freedom of expression available through *The Standard* and appreciated student voices being heard across campus and throughout the community. Additionally, MSU’s focus on public affairs emphasizes a learning environment that prioritizes cultural competence as one of its key pillars with a focus on “respecting multiple perspectives” and “fostering civil discourse, awareness and action”. This freedom of expression is further evidenced by the robust event offerings that offer and encourage multiple perspectives, as documented on the Public Affairs webpage.

As gleaned through campus interviews, the following examples illustrate the adherence to MSU’s academic freedom and freedom of expression policies. The Academic Integrity Policy and Procedures were revised and incorporated “AI as a broad academic freedom approach on campus” where faculty have the freedom to incorporate AI at the level they determine appropriate for their classes. Faculty felt supported in their teaching of various discipline-specific topics as evidenced by discussion during the open forums. During campus meetings with students, they noted their ability to express diverse viewpoints in classes. Overall, academic freedom and freedom of expression are supported and empowered at MSU.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.E. Knowledge Acquisition, Discovery and Application

The institution adheres to policies and procedures that ensure responsible acquisition, discovery and application of knowledge.

Rating

Met

Rationale

MSU's focus on knowledge acquisition, discovery, and application is supported by its \$14.6 million in research expenditures. The Office of Research Administration at MSU is overseen by the Vice President for Community and Global Partnerships, and this division focuses on innovation and development through collaborative research as one of its areas of focus. Additionally, the Graduate College supports stipends and thesis research.

MSU maintains policies and procedures that promote academic integrity and responsible conduct in research, scholarship, and teaching for all members of the academic community. The university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) web page clearly articulates relevant policies and procedures, along with information for training and resources. Each college has at least one IRB representative. The Office of Research Administration coordinates training and oversees compliance with research regulatory guidelines. MSU has active research compliance committees for animal and human subjects research as noted by their meeting agendas and minutes. MSU maintains an up-to-date Faculty Handbook that provides clear information about faculty-related research policies, procedures, and expectations. One impressive feature is the faculty's ability to provide suggestions for future revisions, clearly visible on the main "Faculty Handbook" webpage maintained by the Office of the Provost.

The institution's academic integrity policy provides fundamental definitions that describe "acts that constitute academic dishonesty", including cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and facilitating academic dishonesty. MSU is revising policies and procedures to align with the ethical use and disclosure of generative artificial intelligence (Gen AI). Faculty develop course-specific rules related to Gen AI to "balance innovation and integrity" and are supported by the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning through learning communities, faculty guides, and quick content resources. Faculty commented on the usefulness of these services and resources during site visit discussions.

MSU actively supports faculty and students' research and creative efforts. As highlighted during discussions with faculty, staff, students, and university leadership, there are various research funding opportunities, such as faculty and student grants and conference travel funds. Faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students are encouraged to share their research and creative activities with the campus community and have showcased their work through research symposiums and faculty panels. The focus on and support for research were further reinforced during the Review Team's tour of the labs in the new Natural and Applied Sciences building, where faculty and students,

both undergraduate and graduate, highlighted their research and lab spaces. The Honors College serves as a “research hub” and hosts *LOGOS: A Journal of Undergraduate Research*. Additionally, the *Moon City Press*, a literary press housed in the English Department, was discussed during a student lunch meeting and serves as a key example of MSU’s support for creative endeavors.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

Criterion 2 - Summary

In fulfilling its mission, the institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

Rating

Met

Rationale

Missouri State University embodies its public affairs mission of ethical leadership and acts with integrity. The Board of Governors (BOG), administration, faculty, staff, and students demonstrate ethical leadership, and this was verified through campus interviews. The institution demonstrates transparency by publishing student learning outcomes annually on the Office of Assessment and Accreditation website. MSU provides clear tuition, costs, and fees information on its website. The comprehensive Policy Library outlines clear governing and operating policies, which are also noted in the Faculty Handbook, Employee Handbook, and Student Code of Rights and Responsibilities. The Policy Library is a frequently accessed resource for policy guidance, as indicated by the past two years of usage and engagement data. During the Review Team's interviews, faculty voiced their appreciation of President Williams' blog, *Words of Williams*, as a helpful way to transparently communicate information. The BOG, leveraging its collective expertise and established processes, ensures appropriate oversight of the integrity of institutional operations. The BOG members further communicated this during a meeting where they discussed their involvement in the development of the strategic plan and its collaborative process across campus. MSU has an opportunity to continue clarifying the ethical use and disclosure of Gen AI and its link to existing trainings (such as the GEP 101 course, Student Conduct, Bear CLAW, New Graduate Student Orientation, or New Teaching Assistant Training).

3 - Teaching and Learning for Student Success

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness in fulfilling its mission. The rigor and quality of each educational program is consistent regardless of modality, location or other differentiating factors.

3.A. Educational Programs

The institution maintains learning goals and outcomes that reflect a level of rigor commensurate with college-level work, including by program level and the content of each of its educational programs.

Rating

Met

Rationale

MSU's educational offerings reflect quality and alignment with institutional mission and updates are transparently communicated in the catalog. Institutional and student learning outcomes are housed on the Office of Assessment and Accreditation website, which links to each college's degree program outcomes as well as those of MSU's General Education (GE) program. The GE program's 15 goals have specific student learning outcomes. The Public Affairs goals of ethical leadership, cultural competence, and community engagement are embedded in the general education courses and assessed through a graduating undergraduate survey with students writing brief essays on how these goals were met in their educational experiences.

MSU's Office of the Provost provides required statements to be included in all course syllabi and prioritizes the development of learner centered syllabi to support student learning. This policy statement was provided on site and is located in the addendum. Evidence shows that some course syllabi communicate student learning outcomes to students (e.g., a syllabus for a great books course references student learning outcomes by number), although not all syllabi provided in the evidence file include them. MSU's syllabus template states, "include course-learning outcomes that address the question 'Why is this course useful?' The outcomes should be broadly written to focus on what students will learn and what skills they will develop." The Provost noted in a meeting that it is an expectation that faculty include learning outcomes in all syllabi, and this was reinforced through a conversation with the deans. One area of opportunity for MSU is to ensure that this expectation is consistently met by all faculty.

During meetings, faculty and academic leaders provided examples of how assessment processes have led to course and program improvement. The Department of Languages/Cultures/Religions uses a national rubric from its professional organization to assess students' skill levels, including an oral proficiency interview, in conjunction with student surveys about their experiences. A faculty member in Nutrition and Dietetics reported that the department utilizes an External Advisory Board to identify

areas where its majors could improve (e.g., tube feeding and food allergies) and revises course content to address these areas. A staff member in the Career Center identified the goal of compiling a master list of all department and college External Advisory Boards to further support connecting curriculum with career readiness for postgraduate success.

MSU has processes and structures to ensure quality of programs and learning outcomes across modalities, including distance education and dual credit delivery. For instance, quality of rigor for dual credit courses are reflected in processes for MSU's 116 distinct dual credit courses. MSU uses an electronic system to track interest from potential dual-credit teachers and to review their qualifications in keeping with HLC guidelines. Representative syllabi from the academic colleges illustrate the same course expectations regardless of seated, online, or dual credit delivery. The Coordinator of Dual Credit-English Department confirmed during a meeting that MSU regularly collects student essays from high school students to identify patterns and trends and assess their level of performance. These assessment findings are iteratively cycled back to high school teachers offering the courses via an annual conference. Additional syllabi evidence was provided on-site to demonstrate that syllabi across additional locations and modalities are held to the same standards of rigor and quality. MSU's 58-page handbook "*Constitution and Bylaws of the Faculty*" outlines clear processes for curriculum development and governance, with the Office of the Provost providing support for using curricular technology systems and forms.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.B. Exercise of Intellectual Inquiry

The institution's educational programs engage students in collecting, analyzing and communicating information; in practicing modes of intellectual inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.

Rating

Met

Rationale

In keeping with MSU's public affairs mission, MSU's general education program for undergraduates is designed to "develop people capable of making choices that lead to thoughtful, creative, and productive lives and to responsible participation in society." The 45-credit hour general education program emphasizes integrative and applied learning, information literacy, breadth of knowledge, and public affairs courses. The results of the 2025 National Survey of Student Engagement show 67% of MSU's first-year students engaged in a high-impact practice, with 15% of seniors reporting working with faculty on a research project.

During meetings, faculty and staff referenced programs that further represent how MSU's public affairs mission intersects with fostering civic and community engagement and responsibility. One individual referenced the Bear Power program, designed for students with intellectual disabilities that provides training and certificates for employment. A program director referenced how the administration supports facilities and resources for preparing students in AI and quantum computing. An audiology student emphasized "being pushed" with rigor to succeed in patient-based off-site placements. A psychology professor described how an introductory general education psychology course integrates course content, such as memory, with the scholarship of teaching and learning research on study skills, leading to increases in student success rates. Undergraduate learning assistants for these psychology courses discuss "evidence-based learning" from their own successful experiences in the course.

Graduate programs prioritize innovation and critical thinking, as evidenced by theses, a research symposium, and numerous departmental and institute experiences that address adaptations to changing environments, such as year-long student teaching and partnerships with community organizations. The Career Center offers courses and experiences that help students identify career fields based on their skills, values, and interests. A Career Center staff member noted in a meeting that undeclared students are automatically assigned career counselors to support their exploration and encourage them to take career assessments.

MSU offers a range of experiential learning opportunities rooted in its geographical context that promote interdisciplinarity and support students' adaptation to changing environments. The Ozarks and Environmental Water Resources Institute provides student training and research opportunities in urban and agricultural land management, biomonitoring, water hazard analysis, water supply vulnerability, and flooding impacts, and the Springfield Way internship program places interns with community partners to foster community wellbeing. An Engineering professor reported cultural

competency embedded within capstone projects, while a professor in Earth, Environment, and Sustainability described capstone courses that focus on a particular community's needs. College-based initiatives, such as the MCHHS Student Research Symposium, provide undergraduate and graduate students opportunities to showcase the impacts of their research with the university community. A meeting with External Advisory Boards confirmed that MSU's experiential learning prepares graduates for success after graduation.

One area of opportunity raised by students is the need to better promote experiential opportunities, particularly those that offer interdisciplinary approaches. One student in anthropology reported that she found interdisciplinary opportunities late in her educational career. Faculty reported that interdisciplinary teaching, especially team teaching, can be challenging without a transparent and sustainable infrastructure to support it. Since MSU's strategic plan prioritizes experiential learning, developing structures for interdisciplinary approaches across departments may be useful toward meeting these goals. According to the NSSE data provided by MSU, student engagement with service learning for first-year and senior students is higher than peer institutions, while culminating senior experiences and first-year research experiences with faculty are slightly lower than peers.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.C. Sufficiency of Faculty and Staff

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

Rating

Met

Rationale

MSU's 3,524 faculty and staff members are sufficient to support its 25,000+ students.

Faculty qualifications, onboarding, and evaluation are clearly outlined in the Faculty Handbook. MSU provides adjunct and full-time faculty training on expectations for syllabi, the learning management system, textbooks, and other areas to support student learning. The Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning (FCTL) hosts an annual showcase on teaching and learning that offers a keynote speaker and faculty presentations. Its 2024-2025 annual report documented that 300 faculty participated in the annual showcase and found the information presented to be extremely useful to their teaching practice. MSU's FCTL also coordinates an annual faculty recognition program that highlights faculty members' ongoing contributions across areas, such as leading study abroad programs and community engagement. During meetings, faculty praised the FCTL for supporting their needs and a FCTL staff member noted that 45 faculty are currently enrolled in an ACUE (Association of College and University Educators) effective teaching certification course and 30 are involved in faculty learning communities focused on scholarly writing. In 2025, MSU updated its ADP with a new online platform accessible through My Learning Connection.

Faculty expectations for reappointment, tenure, and promotion are maintained by each department, and there are annual evaluations for full-time faculty and evaluations for adjunct faculty after a semester or summer term. For staff, MSU updated its Appraisal and Development Plan (ADP) with a new online platform accessible through My Learning Connection in 2025, which streamlines performance planning and reviews, as well as orientation, wellness, and compliance training. MSU offers staff up to 15 hours of undergraduate or graduate fee waivers, and Staff Senate events include book clubs, bowling and kickball leagues, and a staff appreciation week. Individual units provide onboarding materials that articulate MSU's mission (e.g., SOAR and Ursa Program description) to help staff understand their unit's contributions. MSU also offers longer-term professional development activities, including a year-long University Staff Ambassadors Program and the Master Advising Program.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.D. Support for Student Learning and Resources for Teaching

The institution provides student support services that address the needs of its student populations, as well as the teaching resources and infrastructure necessary for student success.

Rating

Met

Rationale

The Office of the Provost supports assessment on retention and degree completion, and activities designed to promote a holistic student success ecosystem. MSU provides myriad teaching and learning resources to mentor students from orientation through graduation including tutoring, wellness, and counseling services. The Offices of the Dean of Students and the Provost (via the Associate Provost for Student Success) oversee and coordinate the delivery, use, and assessment of services. For instance, an annual Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT) report shows 871 total cases in AY 23-24 classified by concerns, student level, ethnicity, major, and group affiliation.

Academic advising is required each semester for all students until they earn at least 75 credit hours and advising and student success centers are now embedded within every academic college (a change since the last HLC review). All first-year students enroll in a first-year seminar, whose instructors receive training and development and are charged with meeting 1-on-1 with each student within the first few weeks of the fall semester. About 500 of these students receive 1-on-1 academic coaching from a student success coach, typically through faculty referrals. Undeclared students are assigned a career coach and encouraged to take assessments that enable them to identify strengths and explore connections with potential majors. The ATLAS advising system is used across the colleges to document interactions and support early interventions. In a meeting, one staff member reported the value of ATLAS for gaining insight into who is supporting a student through the documented notes.

With roughly one third of fall enrollment comprised of transfer students (and higher in spring and summer terms), MSU prioritizes transfer advising for the general education program and pathway and degree planning support. Articulation agreements are posted on MSU's website along with frequently asked questions about academic advising and transfer. A Bachelor's in General Studies can be pursued by students beyond 75 credits to enable a more efficient degree path for students who may have accumulated credits without finding a degree path that suits their needs. An advising staff member described this option as valuable for students to create a more tailored degree plan utilizing courses across two or three departments.

University Libraries provides resources for faculty and students through a chatbot, consultations, information literacy instruction, and subject guide experts. Facilities and equipment are regularly updated, as evidenced by the All-Steinway project to purchase 52 Steinway and Sons pianos for music students and Blunt Hall renovations with new labs, classrooms, and outdoor learning spaces. The Library's Innovation Lab provides tools and technologies and audio and video studios for creative

production. In 2023-2024, MSU participated in AAC&U's open educational resources initiative for supporting course material affordability, and the Meyer Library supports a learning specialist with this expertise. MSU's science labs, performing arts spaces, computer labs, and exhibition centers support students' curricular and co-curricular learning. The director of Student Learning Services described PASS sessions (a revision of its previous Supplemental Instruction model) as a strategy designed to decrease DFW rates through peer-assisted tutoring and workshops that support undergraduate and graduate students. The Bear CLAW Tutoring program provided an impact report with effectiveness data for student retention. A student who tutors for Bear CLAW described the importance of the professional development and training received in alignment with her career goals. A tour of the renovated Blunt Hall Research and Teaching Labs showcased faculty and student engagement in research and the university's commitment to hands-on STEM pedagogy.

MSU offers a plethora of student support resources to address students' holistic wellbeing needs. A representative from the Counseling Center described how its services have expanded under a new model that provides case management, group therapy, and individual therapy. An expanded trainee program enables counseling and social work students to fulfill practicum and assistantship hours while increasing capacity from four to ten trainees to support students' needs. A member from the Student Resource Center described how student feedback was incorporated to increase experiential learning opportunities when launching MSU's Spring 2026 Leadership Institute, which has enrolled 20 students and includes hands-on leadership development sessions focused on the public affairs mission. Residence Life runs fifteen living and learning communities tied to majors and interests, which promote social belonging and engagement. Student retention for learning community participation is tracked annually. During meetings, staff from academic and student affairs demonstrated knowledge of one another's unit programs and services and gave examples of how units collaborate to provide holistic, tailored, and developmentally appropriate student support.

MSU's support services regularly use assessments to benchmark and improve services. A representative from Education Abroad described the inclusion of questions in the Undergraduate Exit Survey that enable them to capture students' reflections on the significance of studying abroad in their academic and post-graduation careers. The Office of Service Learning described facilitating student and community partner surveys each semester to measure students' academic achievement and NACE (National Association of Colleges and Employers) competencies. Campus Recreation described how they measure student employee skills in alignment with NACE competencies. When students reported lower critical thinking skills compared to peer institutions, Campus Recreation revised its training to more intentionally align with that competency. During a discussion with academic and student support leaders, one individual noted that an area of opportunity for the campus would be to intentionally and strategically align NACE competencies with training and professional development for all student employees.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.E. Assessment of Student Learning

The institution improves the quality of educational programs based on its assessment of student learning.

Rating

Met

Rationale

MSU's "Academic Performance Measurement System" Guide clearly outlines institutional, college, and departmental measures and assessments, including internal survey cycles and external ranking surveys, academic program reviews, general education outcomes, and co-curricular activities. The Provost oversees assessment of all academic programs and provides resources to support assessment initiatives, while the deans oversee assessment reporting for units within their colleges.

MSU reorganized its assessment offices in 2024 to strategically differentiate between external compliance reporting and internal continuous assessment of teaching and learning activities. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) was established in 2024 and integrates the Offices of Assessment & Accreditation (OAA) and Institutional Research. Evidence includes a summary of OAA meetings with key units to discuss data needs and follow-up actions, responses to faculty assessing outcomes in their general education courses, and minutes from faculty discussions on a QIP (Quality Improvement Program) focused on graduate programs. One department chair reported that the new office is "very supportive of the assessment process" and the "readily accessible dashboards are very helpful" for assessing learning and program outcomes. Grants fund assessment activities via faculty stipends, retreats, survey subscriptions, student participation gift cards, etc. Upon request, OAA provided a rotating fall and spring semester schedule through 2030 for when each academic program is scheduled for review. Spring 2026 programs under review include BS Biology, BS Mathematics, Elementary Education BSED, Clinical Lab Medical Tech BS, and Global Studies BA.

Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) are assessed through the Undergraduate Exit Survey, administered to students with 102+ credit hours, to understand students' experiences and assess institutional initiatives. This data includes public affairs essays with reflection on assignments that helped them learn the outcome and what they plan to do with the knowledge. The distribution of disaggregated students' responses to departments enables units to assess students' needs in their programs. Evidence shows the Undergraduate Exit Survey is being used by Biology, Biomedical Sciences, Hospitality Leadership, and Education Abroad to assess students' progress unique to their individual programs.

The Assessment Council includes representatives from each college and co-curricular units, such as the Career Center, to ensure assessment is conducted across curricular and co-curricular programs and to promote cross-campus conversations about assessment. A staff member in Residence Life reported his office assesses life skills gained through co-curricular experiences. Student Affairs, more broadly, has compiled learning domains that are assessed annually on a rotating basis, in addition to a five-year cycle for assessing CAS standards. During a meeting with academic and student support leaders,

several noted they found value in adding questions to the Undergraduate Exit Survey to help assess their program's services (see 3.C).

Colleges and departments monitor curriculum quality, program demand, and course performance expectations. For instance, the 2025-2030 program review for the BS in Chemistry tracks major enrollments, DFW rates in the general chemistry course, and the revision of student learning outcomes measured by course assignments and lab reports to better reflect the skills students need after graduation. A faculty leader in the College of Business described how the accreditation review of the MBA program identified a concern in students' communication competencies. In response, the Department created a one-credit course on communication skills to enhance students' skills, and this course has demonstrated improvement.

EAB summary briefs are used to assess demand and identify market differentiation for MSU programs in light of national and regional data on comparable programs. Assessment grants provide faculty and staff with incentives and support to collect, analyze, and improve programmatic offerings to enhance students' learning and overall educational experiences. OAA provides faculty with feedback on assessment best practices to help them develop more realistic learning outcomes as courses are being developed, enabling more efficient assessment. While the new assessment process is still being rolled out, most faculty expressed satisfaction with the new infrastructure and processes for assessment of student learning outcomes.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.F. Program Review

The institution improves its curriculum based on periodic program review.

Rating

Met

Rationale

MSU has developed new systems for assessment following a pause between 2020-2024. Its "Program Review Schedule" document outlines the timeline for when on-campus and online degree programs are scheduled for review each semester, from Fall 2025 through Spring 2030. This schedule reflects an established, systematic process designed to ensure the rigor and quality of educational programs across all delivery modalities. Department program reviews are now conducted on a five-year cycle, with the Office of Assessment and Accreditation creating an aggregated executive summary for academic leaders annually. Externally accredited programs can opt out of this process. The Review Team learned at an onsite meeting that MSU's assessment leaders met and agreed to eliminate the requirement for external reviewers from peer institutions from the review process. Several faculty members commented that eliminating this component did not impact the assessment process and could be included if preferred. One faculty member noted that incorporating employer survey data on students' practicums was more important for program improvement than external reviewers from other institutions.

The first cycle was piloted in spring 2025, and the Office of Institutional Research launched a data dashboard for programs undergoing review. OAA created a survey following the pilot cycle to solicit feedback on the new process and a new short annual report with four categories (restricted to five pages). Thirty-one MSU programs have specialized accreditation, as listed on the university website. Three accredited programs were reviewed in fall 2025 (music, speech pathology and audiology, public health) and were all successfully reaccredited per the addendum file.

MSU utilizes national councils (e.g., ACE, ACRO, etc.) to guide the acceptance of transfer credit and credit by examination, but deans and academic unit leaders have the ultimate authority for awarding credit. Departments offering credit for prior learning are required to determine their specific procedures for doing so and post them on their websites.

MSU collects first-destination outcomes through a survey distributed by the Career Center and publicizes this data in accordance with NACE standards and protocols. External Advisory Boards provide ongoing feedback on students' career readiness, and the Career Center is currently compiling a list of all advisory boards to use for gauging graduates' career competencies and supporting continuous improvement.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.G. Student Success Outcomes

The institution's student success outcomes demonstrate continuous improvement, taking into account the student populations it serves and benchmarks that reference peer institutions.

Rating

Met

Rationale

MSU consistently and transparently communicates goals and metrics for retention, momentum and degree completion and tracks gaps across the student population and has established an 82% retention goal for FTNIC students. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness provides data to various stakeholders (e.g., provost, councils, etc.) on student performance, including disaggregated by first-generation status, to identify and address trends. MSU's Igniting Opportunity Strategic Plan 2025-2030 outlines goals to use the Ruffalo Noel Levitz (RNL) Student Satisfaction Survey to benchmark student satisfaction and achieve improvements by 2030, including incentivizing faculty to promote the survey to ensure student participation rates. MSU plans to leverage future HLC Quality Initiative Proposals to enhance student satisfaction (page 31 of MSU's 2025-2030 strategic plan).

MSU has launched the EdSights chatbot (named Boomer Bot) to proactively outreach to students. An EdSights report shows that 769 students were flagged for follow-up via 19 proactive campaigns. Campus support units are using the data to reach out to students based on their particular needs. In a meeting, the Director of Campus Recreation described Boomer Bot as a valuable tool for early intervention and appreciated having access to the chatbot's calendar for messaging.

Trend data showing lower retention among first-generation and underrepresented students has led to specific first-year interventions, such as first-generation sections of GEP 101. The Bears Lead two-year transition program for access scholarship recipients is another strategy designed to support student retention through peer mentoring and leadership and social activities to promote belonging. In a meeting, the Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Management reported efforts to track retention by scholarship packaging and noted an expansion of scholarships specifically for transfer students to support university priorities.

MSU regularly distributes the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) to benchmark student engagement relative to peers. The 2025 results show areas of strength relative to Carnegie peers for first-year students who often enroll in service-learning courses with community-based projects (reflective of MSU's public affairs mission). Another NSSE strength was in the category of discussions with people who differ based on sexual orientation and political views. Areas for improvement for first-year students include the categories of "feel like part of the community at this institution" and "quality of interactions with faculty." Given MSU's goals to increase FTNIC retention, attention to these areas may be beneficial.

Changes in leadership have impacted the implementation of the strategic enrollment plan since 2019. A new plan is ready to launch in 2026. Overall, there is clear evidence that MSU collects a wide range

of data to monitor student success outcomes, and that numerous academic and student support units are invested in providing holistic support to students that enable thriving. One area of opportunity includes developing a plan that prioritizes and communicates key retention strategies accompanied by shared leading metrics across academic and student affairs units. One student support leader noted that there are "silos of excellence" across the academic colleges and student support units. Developing a university retention plan might enable faculty and staff to identify opportunities to work across such silos. Another opportunity is intentionally attending to commuter students' needs. Student conversations illustrated some perceptions that students living in residence halls are considered the "typical" student for programming and university messaging.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

Criterion 3 - Summary

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness in fulfilling its mission. The rigor and quality of each educational program is consistent regardless of modality, location or other differentiating factors.

Rating

Met

Rationale

MSU has clearly demonstrated a commitment to providing quality education across all levels and modalities infused by and integrated within its public affairs mission. The institution provides numerous opportunities for students to engage in rich academic and co-curricular experiences that prepare them for their post-graduate lives. Meetings with faculty, staff, and students confirmed a wide range of opportunities-- including undergraduate research, service learning, living learning communities, student employment, learning assistant and peer mentoring roles--engage MSU students and support their belonging, academic success, and career preparation. Faculty and staff receive multiple forms of training and professional development to enhance their expertise in supporting students' thriving, and teams across academic and student affairs provided evidence of multiple collaborations to support a holistic student success ecosystem.

While MSU's new assessment processes for program review are early in implementation, feedback thus far suggests faculty buy-in and appreciation for a more efficient approach that provides iterative feedback from Office of Assessment and Accreditation staff. One area of opportunity is to communicate expectations to faculty for including learning outcomes in course syllabi.

Another opportunity raised during the onsite assessment meeting was the idea of developing a Student Success Council to review data and build collaborative strategies across academic and student support units to increase student retention and thriving. Another opportunity mentioned during a meeting of academic and student success professionals was the potential to align training and professional development for student employees with NACE (National Association of Colleges and Employers) competencies. Faculty and staff also expressed enthusiasm for using external advisory boards and community partners to align and revise curriculum to enhance students' career readiness and meet regional workforce needs.

MSU is using technology such as ATLAS and the EdSights chatbot to identify students for early interventions and proactive outreach. One opportunity may be to work with units receiving chatbot data to identify follow-up opportunities. Such work could include developing protocols and best practices for outreach, as well as a mechanism to document alignment with the university's larger retention strategies and plans.

4 - Sustainability: Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning

The institution's resources, structures, policies, procedures and planning enable it to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational programs, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

4.A Effective Administrative Structures

The institution's administrative structures are effective and facilitate collaborative processes such as shared governance; data-informed decision making; and engagement with internal and external constituencies as appropriate.

Rating

Met

Rationale

MSU has effective administrative structures to execute its goals. The MSU Faculty Senate is empowered to establish policy, initiate curricular and non-curricular actions, and revise the Faculty Handbook. In 2025, it led a comprehensive review of the Faculty Handbook that involved representatives from all academic units. In onsite meetings with the faculty and Faculty Senate, it was evident that the Faculty Senate was an organized unit that had adequate input into the administrative team and the President's cabinet. The Board of Governors (BOG) also confirmed in a meeting with the Review Team that the Faculty Senate provides a verbal and written report at each of its meetings. The Staff Senate acts in an advisory capacity for policies affecting staff. Staff expressed in multiple meetings their engagement with the administration and the utility of the Staff Senate to support their constituencies. The BOG confirmed that the Staff Senate provides them with a verbal and written report at each of their meetings. The Student Government Association (SGA) serves as the official voice for the student body, participating in university committees and legislative action. In meetings with the students, the majority expressed an engagement with the University leadership. The SGA also provides a report to the BOG at their meeting. The students have a BOG seat that is currently vacant. Nominations for the student seat have been sent to the Governor of Missouri to be considered for appointment. The administration was encouraged by the Review Team to continue to provide updates to the students on this process. The Graduate Council manages graduate education policies, curricular matters, and represents the academic needs of graduate students. The role of Graduate Council was confirmed by the Graduate Dean onsite. It was demonstrated that the Graduate College supports the academic colleges with graduate students and supports tuition/fee waivers and graduate research assistants and teaching assistants for the programs in collaboration with the colleges. The development of the 2025–2030 Strategic Plan exemplified shared governance by engaging the Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, SGA, Administrative Council, External Advisory Board members, and BOG through workshops and formal reviews. The engagement was demonstrated onsite in multiple meetings and open forums with the faculty, staff, students, deans, and External Advisory Board

members.

To support the new strategic plan, MSU has restructured its administrative support to prioritize a "data-informed culture." The newly created Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) along with the current Office of Institutional Research (OIR) will support the data infrastructure needed to move the plan forward. Multiple members of OIE and OIR participated in sessions to confirm their roles and processes for data gathering.

The University maintains several structures to ensure it remains connected to both its campus community and external stakeholders. It was apparent onsite that the mission of the University is shared across the campus and the community. Appointed by the Governor of Missouri, the BOG holds ultimate authority and meets six times a year with subcommittees focused on Finance and Facilities, Programs and Planning, and Audit and Risk Management. The BOG appears engaged and well informed on University operations and finance. The BOG has invested in capital and deferred maintenance. They are also mindful of the enrollment projections and potential impacts on finance. The President's Cabinet meets weekly to coordinate business and support systems. The University Council meets monthly to update employees and gather input on university initiatives. Town hall presentations are provided on items of significance to gather input and to inform the community of matters affecting the budget and other areas. Examples of these presentations have been reviewed and they are informative. These presentations are presented and published online for full access by the campus community and confirmed in the open forum sessions.

The MSU Foundation manages partnerships, fundraising, and projects that benefit the local region, directly advancing the university's Public Affairs Mission. The BOG, External Advisory Boards, and deans all confirmed the active role that the Foundation plays in the University to support the mission. Various colleges and departments (such as Chemistry, Construction Management, and Accountancy) use External Advisory Boards of industry experts and alumni to ensure curricula remain relevant to workforce needs. External Advisory Board members from health, education, business, agriculture, chemistry, arts, and computer science all participated in the onsite meetings and confirmed the community service engagement of the University and verified that the graduates are performing at a elevated level in their fields of expertise.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

4.B Resource Base and Sustainability

The institution's financial and personnel resources effectively support its current operations. The institution's financial management balances short-term needs with long-term commitments and ensures its ongoing sustainability.

Rating

Met

Rationale

MSU has an effective resource base for the current needs of the institution and for a sustainable future. MSU demonstrates financial stability through high-level credit ratings and transparent, policy-driven fiscal management. The university maintains strong credit ratings, including A+/Stable from Standard & Poor's and A1/Stable from Moody's. The finance reports provided demonstrate total composite financial indicator scores for public institutions within and above the HLC zone for the past 4 years (including and excluding GASB).

Onsite meetings with the Vice President of Finance and the finance team explored the challenges of the financial picture. Enrollment mix challenges, state appropriation uncertainties, deferred maintenance cost and investments, increased costs to employee benefits (retirement and healthcare), and inflation were all discussed and explored. The Board of Governors (BOG) was aware of the financial outlook and is monitoring and collaborating closely with the administrative team to take action as needed. The faculty and staff appeared informed of the challenges in finance that the university may face in the future. Financial operations are guided by the Fiscal Responsibility Policy, which covers budget planning, procurement, and grants. The BOG retains final authority for fiscal policy while delegating daily operations to administrators. MSU uses the Ellucian Banner ERP system to track expenditures against budgets in real-time. MSU utilizes a cost center budgeting model (RCM). In meetings with the Review Team, deans shared that they feel particularly positive about the budgeting process and that they have flexibility to work within their budgets. Detailed annual audits and reports are made available to both internal and external stakeholders via the university website.

The university uses a structured, data-informed system to ensure a qualified workforce and competitive compensation. The staff expressed in open sessions appreciation for the benefits programs they have. Both staff and administrators expressed a desire to increase the pay of the lowest paid employees and validated some salary compression that would need to be addressed. Human Resources (HR) conducts detailed job analyses and strictly applies minimum qualifications during applicant screening. MSU prioritizes employee compensation by conducting annual salary comparisons using CUPA (College and University Personnel Association) data to remain competitive with peer institutions. These reports are also utilized at the BOG level to support pay increases as demonstrated in board agendas and minutes.

The University tracks key performance indicators (KPIs) regarding faculty rank, terminal degrees, and full-time/part-time ratios, providing annual updates to the Faculty Senate. MSU's budgeting process distinguishes between immediate operational costs and multi-year strategic

investments. Long-term commitments, such as permanent positions and debt service, are evaluated for sustainability against the 2025–2030 Strategic Plan. To ensure ongoing sustainability, MSU balances its revenue through student tuition/fees (59%), state support (38%), and philanthropic gifts. The Executive Budget Committee, which includes faculty, staff, and students, makes recommendations on allocations and fees through an annual cycle. Staff expressed that fees are explained and defined to students. Some students expressed concern about knowing what specific fees were utilized for.

MSU proactively manages its physical assets to support academic expansion and reduce deferred maintenance. The University Space Allocation Advisory Committee reviews all requests for facility modifications or additions via a formal online request process. Capital Investment has been demonstrated. Between FY21 and FY25, new construction and renovations totaled over 1.6 million square feet, funded by both internal and external sources. MSU has a dedicated strategy to reduce deferred maintenance, including a \$1 million allocation for FY25 and an additional \$6 million approved by the BOG in 2023. The BOG expressed that when opportunities for matching State and Federal funding presented itself, they moved to invest and tackle deferred maintenance and start capital projects. Strategic exits from leased properties (like the Park Central Office Building) have redirected millions back into the Maintenance and Repair budget.

Strategic investments in technology ensure the university remains responsive to modern educational needs. The Information Technology (IT) Council acts as the central body for reviewing and approving technology projects to ensure they are sustainable and aligned with institutional goals. In 2024, MSU initiated a migration to Windows 11 and launched an AI-powered chatbot in collaboration with EdSights to improve student retention and success. Despite a 9.4% increase in enrollment over the last decade, MSU remains one of the most affordable universities in Missouri, with 40% of students graduating debt-free. The Foundation audit report was provided which includes background on the foundation and mission. The most recent foundation investment policy was provided as well. The Foundation supports endowed chairs in several departments. The Vice President of University Advancement detailed onsite the role of funding for endowed chair accounts and student scholarships. The BOG and external advisory board members expressed that they work closely with the Foundation on projects and scholarships.

While enrollment has increased, the enrollment mix has changed (with more high school students gaining college credits) and may present financial challenges in the future due to decreased tuition in that population and should be monitored. External forces such as state funding and state benefit cuts may pose challenges in the future. These challenges were confirmed and discussed onsite with the Provost, Vice President of Finance, Vice President of Enrollment, cabinet members, faculty, staff, deans, and the BOG. The University is actively search for a Chief Financial Officer (CFO) to take the institution to the next level financially. That position has been vacant since the previous CFO retirement in 2023.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

4.C Planning for Quality Improvement

The institution engages in systematic strategic planning for quality improvement. It relies on data, integrating its insights from enrollment forecasts, financial capacity, student learning assessment, institutional operations and the external environment.

Rating

Met

Rationale

MSU has demonstrated active planning processes and the structure to engage in quality improvement. MSU has conducted a process to evaluate and publish a new strategic plan every five years since 1995. In 2024, MSU made a strategic decision to "sunset" its previous long-range plan a year early to develop the more robust 2025–2030 Strategic Plan, ensuring the institution remains responsive to the current external environment. Onsite it was apparent that the campus was engaged and aware of the plan. In addition, the mission of the university was apparent and demonstrated across campus. The development of the plan involved interactive workgroups. Workgroup participants included faculty, staff, students, external advisory board members, alumni, and community members. Each of these groups explained their roles in these processes onsite. Planning relies on a variety of performance measures, including financial records, external audits, student learning assessments, and reports to accrediting bodies. The plan emphasizes measurable outcomes. The plan was just enacted so measurements are being captured currently. While the university sets overarching goals, individual academic and administrative units are required to plan and map their own progress toward these goals annually. The deans expressed that they were engaged with the plan and felt supported by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) to receive the data to monitor the plan. This progress is presented to the Board of Governors (BOG) and made public. The BOG acknowledged their engagement with the process onsite. All financial documents, action plans, and progress reports are posted on the university website to ensure accountability to the public and the BOG. Documents posted to the BOG website demonstrate a deep dive into several financial components to arrive at decisions on areas of pay increases and tuition increases. The operating budget book details resource allocation tied to strategic goals. Departmental and college-level planning are integrated into the budget process. Academic units participate in a regular cycle of program review and accreditation. An academic program review schedule was provided to review and was confirmed onsite. Deans engage in action planning based on these reviews.

MSU utilizes data to improve student success, such as the use of AI-powered chatbot to improve retention and persistence. Student Affairs programs use Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) standards for departmental reviews, while the library regularly analyzes holdings to improve effectiveness. MSU uses several data resources and reports to measure their quality improvement. OIE plays a vital role in helping MSU achieve its strategic goals. By integrating data analytics, assessment practices, accreditation processes, and strategic planning, the office provides university leaders with the information and insight necessary to guide institutional strategy, improve student outcomes, and strengthen the university's mission.

MSU has also utilized external data sources (EAB and Gray DI) to supplement their internal data gathering for comparison and benchmarking. CUPA data has been utilized to assess faculty salaries. This was demonstrated in BOG materials and confirmed to be utilized by the deans. Onsite meetings with several teams demonstrated survey and data usage in areas of human resources, student housing, employee wellness, and student wellness to explain improvements in those areas of the university. MSU may want to consider an enrollment management plan that maximizes on-campus student housing, utilizes dual-credit programs for recruiting future on-campus students, and augments the enrollment population with an on-line learning population to attain the university's enrollment goals. Enrollment and its relationship to university finances may be a future review area for a site team.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

Criterion 4 - Summary

The institution's resources, structures, policies, procedures and planning enable it to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational programs, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

Rating

Met

Rationale

MSU utilizes a centralized yet participatory framework to align its resources and planning with its mission and future goals.

MSU maintains an administrative structure that balances ultimate authority with broad campus input. Appointed by the Governor, the Board of Governors (BOG) holds ultimate authority over policies and university management. They meet six times annually and use subcommittees for focused oversight of finance, facilities, and risk. They receive input from faculty, staff, and students. The President serves as the CEO, implementing BOG policies and managing daily operations with a weekly-meeting Cabinet. MSU emphasizes "participatory governance" through bodies like the Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, and Student Government Association. These groups participate in major decisions, such as the 2025–2030 Strategic Plan development and revisions to the Faculty Handbook.

The institution manages its fiscal, personnel, and physical assets to ensure long-term stability. MSU maintains "A+/Stable" (S&P) and "A1/Stable" (Moody's) credit ratings. The finance reports provided demonstrate total composite financial indicator scores for public institutions within and above the HLC zone for the past 4 years (including and excluding GASB). It uses a cost-center budgeting model, distributing funds to departments (cost centers) while maintaining centralized oversight. The academic deans feel comfortable with this model. The 2025–2030 Facilities Master Plan guides growth, prioritizing capital projects like the Blunt Hall (the STEM building) renovations and the Agricultural Innovation Hub. The recently created Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) provides predictive analytics and academic dashboards to support data-driven decision-making across the campus.

MSU employs initiative-taking planning to maintain program quality and respond to environmental shifts. The 2025–2030 Strategic Plan focuses on ensuring the institution remains responsive to the current external environment. Planning relies on a variety of performance measures, including financial records, external audits, student learning assessments, and reports to accrediting bodies. The plan emphasizes measurable outcomes. MSU utilizes data to improve student success, such as the use of an AI-powered chatbot to improve retention and persistence. OIE plays a significant role in helping MSU achieve its strategic goals. MSU has also utilized external data sources such as EAB, CUPA, and Gray DI to supplement their internal data gathering for comparison and benchmarking. The university recently hired a Vice President of Strategic Enrollment Management to focus on that area for the future. They are also actively recruiting for a Chief Financial Officer.

FC - Federal Compliance

Rating

Met

Rationale

1. Assignment of Credits, Program Length and Tuition

Conclusion: (Choose one of the following statements and delete the other.)

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

Rationale:

The evaluation of Missouri State University (MSU) reveals a clear alignment of its credit hour assignments with federal standards across traditional, online, and blended courses. MSU mandates a minimum of 120 semester credit hours for baccalaureate degrees, including a residency requirement of thirty credit hours from the Springfield campus. Additionally, the university has well-defined policies for undergraduate certificates, requiring 12 to 18 credit hours.

The General Education curriculum meets or exceeds state requirements, with comparable offerings in various programs. However, inconsistencies were identified in grading systems and the presence of measurable learning objectives across syllabi (<https://canopy.hlcommission.org/download.aspx?AddendumFileId=3915>). A more standardized approach is recommended to ensure uniformity in course outcomes.

Additionally, information on differential tuition is accessible online, further supporting transparency in financial policies. Overall, MSU demonstrates a commitment to academic quality, although specific areas for improvement have been noted to enhance compliance with accreditation standards.

2. Institutional Records Regarding Student Complaints

Conclusion: (Choose one of the following statements and delete the other.)

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

Rationale:

Missouri State University (MSU) has developed robust policies addressing academic appeals, grievances, discrimination, harassment, bullying, sexual misconduct, and the code of student rights and responsibilities. These guidelines are available in the catalog under "Student Policies" and are supported by the comprehensive Policy Library, which provides detailed resources and processes for filing appeals and complaints (<https://www.missouristate.edu/Policy/default.htm>).

Students seeking to file grievances can access specific information at <https://www.missouristate.edu/StudentGrievance/default.htm>.

Additionally, as a participant in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA), MSU outlines procedures for students residing outside Missouri regarding grievance resolution. This information can be found in the "State Authorization Student Complaint Procedure" (Missouri's State Authorization Reciprocal Agreement (SARA) portal agency), though it should be noted that the link is currently broken.

To facilitate the grievance filing process and address situations not encompassed by existing policies, MSU offers an organizational structure chart accessible on the website.

This framework ensures that MSU is compliant with accreditation standards and is committed to maintaining a supportive and fair academic environment for all students.

3. Publication of Transfer Policies

Conclusion: (Choose one of the following statements and delete the other.)

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

Rationale:

Rationale:

Missouri State University (MSU) is committed to ensuring a fair and consistent transfer experience for students between accredited institutions, both within Missouri and nationally. The university adheres to the Credit Transfer: Guidelines for Student Transfer and Articulation among Missouri Colleges and Universities and the Joint Statement on Transfer and Award of Academic Credit, approved by leading accrediting bodies.

Transfer credit policies are clearly outlined and easily accessible on the university's website, promoting transparency and benefiting prospective students. MSU provides a transfer course equivalency resource that details equivalencies for courses across most Missouri institutions and select out-of-state institutions. The university regularly reviews its transfer credit policies to align with current best practices and educational standards.

MSU also offers students flexibility in transferring to various Missouri State institutions, supported by comprehensive articulation agreements (<https://www.missouristate.edu/Transfer/#plans>).

These effective transfer processes enhance student mobility while meeting accreditation requirements, reflecting MSU's commitment to academic integrity and excellence.

4. Practices for Verification of Student Identity

Conclusion: (Choose one of the following statements and delete the other.)

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

Rationale:

Missouri State University (MSU) implements a comprehensive array of policies, guidelines, and procedures designed to verify student identities effectively. The institution employs user-specific logins combined with multi-factor authentication to regulate access across all university systems. This includes critical platforms such as the learning management system (Brightspace), financial aid services, and various computer and network resources.

To further bolster identity verification and uphold the integrity of examinations, MSU utilizes a virtual proctoring system, specifically Respondus Lockdown Browser & Monitor, for online assessments and assignments. This practice not only enhances security but also ensures a fair testing environment for all students.

5. Protection of Student Privacy

Conclusion: (Choose one of the following statements and delete the other.)

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

Rationale:

Missouri State University (MSU) has implemented a comprehensive Information Security Policy designed to protect student rights and maintain confidentiality in accordance with applicable federal requirements, including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

MSU's Information Security Policy establishes clear protections for personally identifiable student information and aligns with federal privacy standards. The institution provides accessible guidance on FERPA and the handling of personally identifiable information via its website. Procedures governing disclosure are documented and available to stakeholders.

Students may authorize release of their records through a written FERPA Waiver (Release of Information Authorization). Separate Hold or Release forms allow students to opt out of, or consent to, electronic communications (FERPA Hold Request or FERPA Hold Removal).

MSU documents and requires training for employees and contractors who handle private student information, including FERPA and role-specific cybersecurity or HIPAA training.

6. Publication of Student Achievement Data

Conclusion: (Choose one of the following statements and delete the

other.)

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

Rationale:

Missouri State University (MSU) demonstrates strong transparency and accessibility in reporting student outcomes, meeting expectations for public disclosure and accountability.

Student outcome data are publicly available and clearly organized on the website. Information is summarized into six intuitive categories—accreditation, enrollment, student achievement, retention rate, graduation rate, licensure rate, and discipline-specific exams—facilitating quick public comprehension.

Each summary category includes active links to more detailed pages, enabling stakeholders (prospective students, enrolled students, employers, and the public) to easily access deeper, program-level or metric-specific information.

The KPI Metrics Dashboard provides longitudinal data (past: 2016–2021; current: 2021–2026) for core indicators such as degrees and certificates awarded, total enrollment, enrollment diversity, and undergraduate retention and graduation rates. The inclusion of both historical and recent windows supports trend analysis and quality monitoring.

Additional KPIs—Student Success Rate After Graduation, Student Financial Obligation, and other post-graduation success measures—are available on the dashboard, offering a broader view of student outcomes beyond completion metrics https://www.missouristate.edu/OIR/_Files/MSU-2021-2026-Key-Performance-Indicators-FINAL-Fall-2022.pdf.

Data are presented in a user-friendly format with clear organization and navigation, enhancing accessibility for diverse audiences and supporting institutional transparency.

7. Standing With State and Other Accreditors

Conclusion: (Choose one of the following statements and delete the other.)

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

Rationale:

Missouri State University's (MSU) website (<https://www.missouristate.edu/provost/ProgramReview/accreditations.htm>) lists several program-specific accreditations in addition to its institutional accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). Program accreditors are clearly identified and, where provided, program-level expiration dates are included.

The university maintains good standing with the majority of the listed program accreditors. Three program accreditations are noted as lapsed or awaiting decisive action; the university provides explanatory information about each. For example, accreditation for the M.S. in Speech-Language Pathology and the Doctor of Audiology programs is recorded as having expired in October 2025. MSU indicates that it is awaiting the Accreditation Council's final decision following the council's

spring meeting in February 2026. I recommend that the visiting team follow up to confirm the Accreditation Council's final determination and any interim conditions or reporting requirements. [The Review Team received confirmation during site visit that accreditation for the M.S. in Speech-Language Pathology and the Doctor of Audiology programs have been renewed.]

In addition to program accreditors, MSU lists three state authorizing entities in its Assurance documentation: the Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development (MDHEWD), the Missouri State Board of Nursing, and the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia. A review of the college's website did not clearly identify MDHEWD as an authorizing body for the institution or specific programs. I recommend the visiting team verify MDHEWD's current authorization status and request documentation or a direct link on the institution's site or in institutional records that demonstrates the authorization relationship. [The Review Team received positive verification on site for this.]

8. Recruiting, Admissions and Related Enrollment Practices

Conclusion: (Choose one of the following statements and delete the other.)

The institution meets HLC's requirements.

Rationale:

Missouri State University (MSU) demonstrates sound, institution-wide practices that support the protection of student information, regulatory compliance, and ongoing professional development, meeting expectations for accreditation.

MSU has established and documented systematic, mandatory Code of Conduct training for employees and contractors that addresses management of sensitive student information. The structured curriculum includes compliance-critical topics such as FERPA, Title IX, and ADA accommodations, and is delivered consistently to relevant staff.

The university provides targeted, additional training and annual professional development for personnel in areas subject to enhanced federal oversight, including admission counselors, marketing staff, financial aid advisors, and athletics personnel. These role-specific efforts demonstrate MSU's commitment to maintaining current knowledge and compliance in functions that directly affect students and regulatory obligations, thereby satisfying HLC expectations for ongoing staff training.

MSU's Code of Conduct for Student Loans explicitly prohibits university employees from accepting gifts or compensation "of more than nominal value" from loan providers and from entering contracting arrangements on behalf of any educational loan lender (<https://www.missouristate.edu/FinancialAid/loans/CodeOfConduct.htm>). These provisions establish clear conflict-of-interest safeguards that protect students and the institution from inappropriate influence in student loan counseling and vendor selection.

Appendix A: Title IV Program Responsibilities

Complete this section **only if** the institution has submitted an Appendix A. Review any negative

actions taken against the institution since HLC's last Federal Compliance Review and identify any implications for the institution's current compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation or other HLC requirements. Provide a detailed rationale for any Core Components identified as met with concerns or not met.

Rationale:

Mandatory Reporting: Fraud, Abuse or Failing to Meet Title IV Responsibilities

Federal regulations require HLC to notify the U.S. Department of Education related to the following item. Do not skip this section.

Title IV Program Responsibilities

In the course of the peer review team's evaluation of this institution, have the reviewers encountered any reason to believe that the institution is failing to meet its Title IV, Higher Education Act program responsibilities (if the institution participates in Title IV, HEA programs)?

Answer (Choose one response and delete the other):

No

Rationale (If the team responded "Yes," explain the reasons for concern in detail. Otherwise, leave this section blank.):

Fraud or Abuse

In the course of the peer review team's evaluation of this institution, have the reviewers encountered any reason to believe that the institution may be engaged in fraud or abuse?

Answer (Choose one response and delete the other):

No

Rationale (If the team responded "Yes," explain the reasons for concern in detail. Otherwise, leave this section blank.):

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

Review Summary

Criteria For Accreditation

Met

Federal Compliance

Met

Core Components Ratings

Number	Title	Rating
1	Mission	
1.A.	Mission Alignment	Met
1.B.	Mission and Public Good	Met
1.C.	Mission and Diversity of Society	Met
1.S.	Criterion 1 Summary	Met
2	Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct	
2.A.	Integrity	Met
2.B.	Transparency	Met
2.C.	Board Governance	Met
2.D.	Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression	Met
2.E.	Knowledge Acquisition, Discovery and Application	Met
2.S.	Criterion 2 - Summary	Met
3	Teaching and Learning for Student Success	
3.A.	Educational Programs	Met
3.B.	Exercise of Intellectual Inquiry	Met
3.C.	Sufficiency of Faculty and Staff	Met
3.D.	Support for Student Learning and Resources for Teaching	Met
3.E.	Assessment of Student Learning	Met
3.F.	Program Review	Met
3.G.	Student Success Outcomes	Met
3.S.	Criterion 3 - Summary	Met
4	Sustainability: Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning	
4.A	Effective Administrative Structures	Met

4.B	Resource Base and Sustainability	Met
4.C	Planning for Quality Improvement	Met
4.S.	Criterion 4 - Summary	Met

Overall Recommendations

Accreditation Recommendation

Reaffirm Accreditation

Pathways Recommendation

Eligible to Choose

Conclusion

The Review Team carefully reviewed Missouri State University's assurance filing as well as the Federal Compliance Report submitted by the federal compliance officer. The team also conducted an on-site visit, during which it met with a broad range of MSU stakeholders, including faculty, staff, students, senior leadership, members of MSU's External Advisory Boards for academic programs, and members of MSU's Board of Governors. Based on its comprehensive review of submitted documentation and on-site verification, the Review Team confirms that MSU presents strong, robust evidence demonstrating compliance with all five criteria for accreditation reaffirmation.

Institutional Status and Requirements (ISR) Worksheet

Review Details

Institution: Missouri State University, Missouri

Type of Review: Open Pathway - Comprehensive Evaluation Visit

Description:

Review Dates: 03/30/2026 - 03/31/2026

☐ No Change in Institutional Status and Requirements

Accreditation Status

Status: Accredited

✓ No Change

☐ Recommended Change:

Degrees Awarded: Bachelors, Doctoral, Masters, Specialist

✓ No Change

☐ Recommended Change:

Reaffirmation of Accreditation:

Year of Last Reaffirmation of Accreditation: 2015 - 2016

Year of Next Reaffirmation of Accreditation: 2025 - 2026

☐ No Change

✓ Recommended Change: Year of Next Reaffirmation of Accreditation: 2035 - 2036

Accreditation Stipulations

General:

The institution is approved at the following program level(s): Bachelor's, Master's, Specialist, Doctoral

The institution is not approved at the following program level(s): Associate's

The institution is limited to offer the following program(s), within the approved program levels listed above: Doctor of Audiology, Doctor of Physical Therapy, Doctor of Nursing Practice, Doctor of Nurse Anesthesia Practice, Doctor of Occupational Therapy, Doctor of Psychology, Doctor of Defense and Strategic Studies, and Doctor of Education in Leadership, Learning, and Educational Change.

☒ No Change

☐ Recommended Change:

Additional Locations:

The institution has been approved for the Notification Program, allowing the institution to open new additional locations within the United States.

☒ No Change

☐ Recommended Change:

Distance and Correspondence Courses and Programs:

Approved for distance education courses and programs. The institution has not been approved for correspondence education.

☒ No Change

☐ Recommended Change:

Competency-Based Education:

☒ No Change

☐ Recommended Change:

Pell-Eligible Prison Education Program:

☒ No Change

☐ Recommended Change:

Accreditation Events

Pathway for Reaffirmation of Accreditation: Open Pathway

☐ No Change

☒ Recommended Change: Eligible to choose with an option to select an Assurance Review or Student Success Quality Initiative.

Upcoming Reviews:

No Upcoming Reviews

☒ No Change

☐ Recommended Change:

Upcoming Branch Campus or Additional Location Reviews:

No Upcoming Reviews

☒ No Change

☐ Recommended Change:

Monitoring

Upcoming Monitoring Reviews:

No Upcoming Reviews

☒ No Change

☐ Recommended Change:

Institutional Data

Academic Programs Offered:

Undergraduate Programs		
Associate Degrees:	0	☒ No Change ☐ Recommended Change:
Baccalaureate Degrees:	101	☒ No Change ☐ Recommended Change:
Reduced-Credit Bachelor Degrees	0	☒ No Change ☐ Recommended Change:

Graduate Programs		
Master's Degrees:	59	☒ No Change ☐ Recommended Change:
Specialist Degrees:	3	☒ No Change ☐ Recommended Change:
Doctoral Degrees:	11	☒ No Change ☐ Recommended Change:
Certificate Programs		
Certificates:	237	☒ No Change ☐ Recommended Change:

Contractual Arrangements:

No Contractual Arrangements

☒ No Change
☐ Recommended Change:

Off-Campus Activities

Branch Campuses:

No Branch Campuses

☒ No Change
☐ Recommended Change:

Additional Locations:

Missouri State University-Camdenton, 35 College St., Camdenton, Missouri 65020 UNITED STATES

Cassville Instructional Center (Crowder College), 4020 North Main St, Cassville, Missouri 65625 UNITED STATES

OTC Lebanon Center, 22360 Hwy MM, Lebanon, Missouri 65536 UNITED STATES

Crowder College Campus, 601 LaClede, Neosho, Missouri 64850 UNITED STATES

Nevada Instructional Center, Crowder College Moss Higher Education Learning Center, 600 West Edwards Place, Nevada, Missouri 64772 UNITED STATES

Oarks Tech (OTC) Republic Center, 584 US Highway 60, Republic, Missouri 65738 UNITED STATES

Alliance for Healthcare Education, 1423 N. Jefferson Ave, Springfield, Missouri 65802 UNITED STATES

Bentley Administrative Center, 1610 E Sunshine St, Springfield, Missouri 65804 UNITED STATES

Missouri State University - Waynesville, 600 GW Lane, Waynesville, Missouri 65583 UNITED STATES

Crowder College, 600 Ellis St., Webb City, Missouri 64870 UNITED STATES

Missouri State University - West Plains, 603 West Main

Gohn Hall, West Plains, Missouri 65775 UNITED STATES

School of Defense and Strategic Studies, 2101 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 550, Arlington, Virginia 22031 UNITED STATES

Liaoning Normal University, 850 Huanghe Road, Dalian, CHINA

☒ No Change

☐ Recommended Change: