Lake Superior State University - MI

HLC ID 1337

STANDARD PATHWAY: Reaffirmation Review   Visit Date: 11/7/2016

Thomas Pleger
President

Stephanie Brzuzy
HLC Liaison

Becky Timmons
Review Team Chair

Debra Mooney
Federal Compliance Reviewer

Graciela Caneiro-Livingston
Team Member

John Comerford
Team Member

Kim Jacobs-Beck
Team Member

Context and Nature of Review

Visit Date

11/7/2016
Mid-Cycle Reviews include:

- The Year 4 Review in the Open and Standard Pathways
- The Biennial Review for Applying institutions

Reaffirmation Reviews include:

- The Year 10 Review in the Open and Standard Pathways
- The Review for Initial Candidacy for Applying institutions
- The Review for Initial Accreditation for Applying institutions
- The Year 4 Review for Standard Pathway institutions that are in their first accreditation cycle after attaining initial accreditation

Scope of Review

- Reaffirmation Review
- Federal Compliance
- On-site Visit
- Multi-Campus Visit (if applicable)

There are no forms assigned.

Institutional Context

Lake Superior State University (LSSU) is a comprehensive, public, regional university located in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan. The 115-acre campus overlooks the Michigan and Ontario twin cities of Sault Ste. Marie, the St. Mary's River, and the Soo Locks. It currently has an enrollment of around 1800 full-time undergraduate students and 442 part-time undergraduate students. LSSU has gone through three name changes and was first accredited in 1968. LSSU is currently on the Standard Pathway and offers 25 associates programs and 72 bachelors programs.

The team visited the main campus in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan and met with the Board, the President and his staff, university staff, and students. LSSU has had declining enrollment for 15 years and a change in leadership, including the presidency, in the past four years. They completed the Academy for Assessment of Student Learning in the summer of 2016. LSSU offers a variety of programs and a general education framework to support its mission. It has been approved for distance education courses and programs, but not approved for correspondence education. In 2012 monitoring reports were submitted and continuing accreditation granted on the following topics: 1) A monitoring report demonstrating the development and implementation of a university assessment of student learning plan that includes a clear process for collecting, disseminating and implementing assessment results. 2) A monitoring report indicating progress in implementing the new shared governance model, including results achieved and impact on the new organizational structure. 3) A monitoring report demonstrating a clearly defined tenure and promotion process aligned with the faculty collective bargaining agreement. and 4) A monitoring report demonstrating the development and implementation of an IT Strategic Plan, a professional development plan for IT staff and professional

development and training in technology for faculty and staff.

Interactions with Constituencies

President

Director of Physical Plant

Director of Athletics

Administrative Assistant to the President

Interim Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs

Director of Admissions

Vice President of Enrollment Services and Student Affairs

Interim Vice President for Finance

Associate Vice President for Human Resources

Special Assistant to the President

12 Students

Deputy Title IX Coordinator and NCAA Compliance

26 Faculty

Academic Assistant

Director of Educational Enrichment and Access

7 General Education Committee Members

Interim Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

Registrar

Director, Financial Aid

Associate Provost

Chair, Arts and Letters

Chair, School of Nursing

Bookstore

Associate Director Campus Life and Housing

Chair, Board of Trustees

Staff Accountant and CSO Finance Specialist

Accounts Payable

3 Staff Accountants

Executive Director--LSSU Foundation

Library Clerical Support

Student Government President

Student Government Representative

Academic Services Director

HR Generalist

Admin Assistant, Campus Life and Housing

Director, Campus Life and Housing

Science Lab Manager

Lead Systems Engineer, IT

Assistant to the Provost

Academic Assessment Specialist

Director of Charter Schools

Coordinator, Sponsored Programs

Director, IT

Systems Engineer (IT)

Assistant Registrar

5 Admissions staff

Director of IT/Enterprise and App Servicing

Director of Sault Chamber of Commerce

Director, Alumni Relations

Mayor of Sault Ste. Marie

Facility Management Supervisor

Administrative Asst., College of Arts and Sciences

LMS Admin/Information Tech Specialist

Director, Native American Center and Campus Diversity

Photographer/Writer, Integrated Marketing

Payroll/HR Specialist

EHS specialist

Academic Librarian/Faculty

Human Resources Generalist

Director, Facilities

Supervisor, Facilities

Occupational Health And Safety

Director of IT--Users

City Manager, Sault Ste. Marie

City Economic Development Director

Science Lab Technician

Coordinator, International Student Compliance

Manager, Registrar's Office Services

Manager, Counseling Services

Registered MA, Health Care Services

Director, University Health Services

10 Members of Assessment Committee

Additional Documents

- Lake Superior State University Lakerlog, Fall 2016.
- Financial aid leveraging and retention narratives attached along with comparison of last year's and this year's financial aid scholarship parameters.
- Letter of Agreement signed in 2015 establishing the University Advisory Committee on Promotion and Tenure.
- Institutional assessment http://www.lssu.edu/assessment
- Assessment Committee http://www.lssu.edu/sharedgovernance/assessment/index.php

Minutes from the Assessment Committee
http://www.lssu.edu/sharedgovernance/assessment/documents.php
- Assessment Academy project
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/academy_project_home.php
- General Education assessment
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/generaleducation.php
- Program Review
http://www.lssu.edu/sharedgovernance/assessment/SLOAP3.php
- Board Approved Budget: The General Fund Budget Detail (Final 2017) 2016 11 08.pdf
- Revenue/Expense Narrative referred to in PPT: Budget Letter to Campus.pdf.
- HLC Ratios: Ratios.pdf.
- Key contractual sections related to graduate instruction.

1 - Mission

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

1.A - Core Component 1.A

The institution's mission is broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations.

1. The mission statement is developed through a process suited to the nature and culture of the institution and is adopted by the governing board.
2. The institution's academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.
3. The institution's planning and budgeting priorities align with and support the mission. (This sub-component may be addressed by reference to the response to Criterion 5.C.1.)

Rating

Met

Evidence

- The mission statement of LSSU was adopted by the Board in 2011 after input from the university community. The review team learned from the faculty and staff that all University constituents were invited to participate in the development of the Laker CAFE.
- In discussions with the President, faculty and staff, they shared that the CAFE--Culture, Academics, Finance, and Enrollment--areas of focus were used as the guiding strategic plan for the campus. The strategic plan is a work in progress and was still being formalized during the visit.
- Current planning at LSSU is oriented towards transformation of the institution. The budget and strategic planning align to the mission through the efforts of the Strategic Planning and Budget Committee. Several faculty and staff members stated during a forum on this criterion that academic and support programs derive their mission from that of the university. Conversations with the faculty and staff revealed that students are at the center of the life at the university, from the classroom to the facilities and other service areas.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

1.B - Core Component 1.B

The mission is articulated publicly.

1. The institution clearly articulates its mission through one or more public documents, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans, or institutional priorities.
2. The mission document or documents are current and explain the extent of the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development, and religious or cultural purpose.
3. The mission document or documents identify the nature, scope, and intended constituents of the higher education programs and services the institution provides.

Rating

Met

Evidence

The mission of LSSU is evident.

- It is publicly articulated on its websites and on posters, posted in every building, and clearly drives institutional decision-making.
- Although broad in its scope, the new areas of focus (CAFE) set forth by the Board and President will move the University toward an updated strategic plan.
- It is clear that LSSU is a teaching-focused institution, and that real efforts are made to enhance and support student learning, evidenced largely through the activities of the Title III grant.
- LSSU is keenly aware of its service area, including Native American students from surrounding nations, Canadian students. However, LSSU recruits students primarily from Michigan.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

1.C - Core Component 1.C

The institution understands the relationship between its mission and the diversity of society.

1. The institution addresses its role in a multicultural society.
2. The institution's processes and activities reflect attention to human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

Rating

Met

Evidence

LSSU understands the relationship between its mission and the diversity of society. Using the mission and the strategic plan (CAFE) as a guide.

- The University sits on an international border, is proximate to a number of Native American communities, and enrolls a student body with more Native American students than other state institutions. These present remarkable opportunities for teaching and experiential learning about diversity and inclusion. The University may consider changes to the curriculum and co-curriculum to make this more central to the student experience. Faculty and staff also report that there had been no significant diversity training in recent years. Certain minority groups (GLBT, African American, etc.) may not be represented in significant enough numbers to feel naturally comfortable in the campus community, and special efforts should be made towards their inclusion. Finally, search processes should include intentional plans to identify and encourage diverse candidate pools.
- LSSU staff shared that the Native American Center offers intrusive support services, educational programs, and service opportunities.
- Student activities and other campus events, such as the monthly coffee with the President, aim at increasing appreciation of diversity. The faculty, staff, and students stated that everyone is invited to these events to learn different perspectives from the President and others at LSSU.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

1.D - Core Component 1.D

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

1. Actions and decisions reflect an understanding that in its educational role the institution serves the public, not solely the institution, and thus entails a public obligation.
2. The institution's educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes, such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization, or supporting external interests.
3. The institution engages with its identified external constituencies and communities of interest and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

Rating

Met

Evidence

LSSU shows commitment to the Sault Ste. Marie residents and the region through the Arts Center, Aquatic Research Laboratory (ARL), the Environmental Analysis Laboratory (EAL), the Health Care Simulation Center, events hosted at the Shouldice library, collaboration with the Bayliss Public Library, outreach initiatives, educational initiatives, and many recreational opportunities through the Norris Center, LSSU Athletic Camps, and Regional Outdoor Recreation Center. LSSU's commitment to the public good is one of it strengths.

- The mayor and other community leaders attended the open sessions during the team's visit. They spoke of both broad and strong community support for the University and its mission.
- In the summer of 2016, LSSU invited the public to see pre-released movies in the Arts Center.
- Annually the LSSU hosts the Women's Walk. Held each fall, the Women's Walk benefits LSSU women's sports. Since the inception eight years ago, LSSU stated that $400,000 in total money has been raised.
- LSSU raises funds and seeks donors for academic scholarships: a memorial golf tournament with the proceeds benefiting fire science students and an engineering scholarship endowment which was established in 2016.
- The Michigan legislature approved nearly $9 million in funding for an expansion of LSSU's Aquatic Research Lab. The expansion will include an improved hatchery facility, as well as expanded research and classroom space, state-of-the-art research and fish disease testing labs, a community visitor's center, and K-12 discovery area.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary

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

Evidence

LSSU's mission guides the institution and demonstrates its commitment to the public good. The mission is prominently displayed throughout the campus. The adoption of the Laker CAFE (culture, academics, finance, and enrollment) goals reinforces and supports the vision and the core values. The strategic plan will be integrated, but needs to be further reviewed and refined.

The team read the assurance argument, examined an array of documents cited in the argument and made available on campus, and interacted with multiple constituencies. Following an analysis of these data, the team concludes that Lake Superior State University meets Criterion One.

2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

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

2.A - Core Component 2.A

The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions; it establishes and follows policies and processes for fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing board, administration, faculty, and staff.

Rating

Met

Evidence

- The University has a clear and public policy designed to prevent conflict of interest in decisions involving faculty, staff, and trustees. During the meeting with the Board, the Trustees stated that they signed an oath of office and conflict of interest statement. Employees interviewed also remembered this commitment to avoid conflicts of interest.
- Audits are publicly available on the website and completed in a timely basis (November for the year ended the previous June). Recent audits reflect no significant concerns.
- Polices for purchasing, hiring, and other processes are publicly available, clear, and represent a mature and positive organizational culture.
- The current administration's commitment to transparency was applauded by many. The President communicates with the campus frequently, including monthly open forum coffees. An interesting example of transparency was the sharing of information regarding Course and Program fees. While faculty and staff in departments believed these funds were building up and available for equipment and supply expenses, the practice by the prior administration (beginning in 2010) had been to borrow these funds for other operational purposes. The choice to be transparent about the situation has led some not to trust the legitimacy of the budgeting process, but is also a strong indication that the administration will share information (good and bad) with the campus.
- Offices and professionals trusted with student information take confidentiality and federal privacy requirements seriously, as evidenced by training, policies, and forms. The full faculty and staff is made aware of FERPA requirements on an annual basis through e-mails from the Registrar's Office.
- All campus community members report a strong affinity for the institution and its mission. Faculty and staff spoke proudly of their close and caring relationship with students, and students confirmed this environment during the student open forum.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.B - Core Component 2.B

The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public with regard to its programs, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, control, and accreditation relationships.

Rating

Met

Evidence

- The institution's publications (i.e. catalogs, handbooks, etc.) and website present a full and complete representation of student and employee requirements, responsibilities, and costs. The website is especially detailed and contains assessment reports and financial information not often available to the general public.
- The LSSU website includes a listing of tuition, fees, and a scholarship calculator that can predict a student's merit aid. As the institution shifts to a greater emphasis on need-based aid and room and board scholarships, the current calculator will be outdated and a new method for students to estimate costs will be required.
- Evidence and interviews support that the University has been more active in human resource development, including training on Title IX and other improvements.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.C - Core Component 2.C

The governing board of the institution is sufficiently autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution and to assure its integrity.

1. The governing board's deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.
2. The governing board reviews and considers the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations.
3. The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests or other external parties when such influence would not be in the best interest of the institution.
4. The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the administration and expects the faculty to oversee academic matters.

Rating

Met

Evidence

- During an HLC feedbask session, Board members reported setting clear goals for the President and engaging in regular feedback on his performance, including the first collection of campus feedback on presidential performance in recent memory. The Board and President are in complete agreement as to the direction of the institution and the President holds the full confidence of the Board. The Board perceives that the institution is looking forward again and actively working towards growth.
- Board members indicated getting better information from the staff, especially in financial areas. While the increased flow of information has shed light on some concerns, it is evidence that the Board is fully engaged in the strategic direction of the institution.
- The Board of LSSU is constitutionally autonomous in the State of Michigan and gubernatorial appointments are not based on political affiliation. Trustees report that political activity does not seem to be a factor in their appointment. The Board is collaborative, highly functioning, and independent.
- The Board takes annual action to approve and support the conflict of interest policy. Each Trustee reported being aware of his/her commitments to this policy.
- In the HLC Team's interactions with Board members, the Trustees were found to be engaged, informed, and thoughtful about the future of LSSU.
- The President and the Board report appropriate oversight activities by the Board, and no problems with Board interference with day-to-day management.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.D - Core Component 2.D

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

Rating

Met

Evidence

- LSSU's core values and other public statements and policies make it clear that freedom of expression is welcome and necessary in a learning environment.
- LSSU's programs, speakers, and events reflect an openness to different points of view and the importance of exploration in learning.
- The Student Government members made it clear in their interactions with the HLC team that their input is welcome and valued by administrators and other University leaders.
- The University provides adequate professional development support for faculty to stay active in their fields with a $1,000 annual appropriation per faculty member. These funds may be accumulated over multiple years. While many would surely wish for more, that these funds have been protected through years of declining budgets is evidence of the University's commitment to faculty development.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.E - Core Component 2.E

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

1. The institution provides effective oversight and support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff, and students.
2. Students are offered guidance in the ethical use of information resources.
3. The institution has and enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.

Rating

Met

Evidence

- LSSU has a Human Subjects Institutional Research Board with publicly available policies and procedures that reflect current protective norms.
- As an undergraduate institution, LSSU dedicates an above-average amount of time and money to research. Undergraduate research grants and (limited) support for faculty grant applications provide opportunities that most similar institutions would not be able to provide. Several unique research centers also provide student and faculty learning opportunities.
- As documented in the assurance argument and sample course syllabi, instructors have access to TurnItIn, proctoring services for distance education courses, and other means to protect the legitimacy of academic work. New students are taught academic integrity as part of the First Year Seminar.
- LSSU's Academic Integrity Policy is publicly available on the website to the public, faculty, and students.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary

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

Evidence

Lake Superior State University has a mission to serve the state and region through its academic and outreach programs. Policies and faculty/staff are student-focused and it is a point of pride on campus that students are the first priority. Rather than focusing on high "merit" students, the University's enrollment plans increasingly focus on meeting student financial need and supporting them through graduation. Transparency of processes and integrity of operations were apparent.

The team read the assurance argument, examined an array of documents cited in the argument and made available on campus, and interacted with multiple constituencies. Following an analysis of these data, the team concludes that Lake Superior State University meets Criterion Two.

3 - Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support

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

3.A - Core Component 3.A

The institution's degree programs are appropriate to higher education.

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

Rating

Met

Evidence

LSSU's degree programs are appropriate to higher education.

- Based on Curriculum Committee minutes and discussions with faculty and the administration, faculty are regularly involved in updating curricula based upon learning outcomes assessment, response to employer feedback, and grad school acceptance data.
- The Curriculum Committee's processes for approval of new or revised programs is rigorous and substantive, and includes a requirement for an assessment plan and curriculum map, based on Curriculum Committee minutes and supporting course submission forms. Course learning outcomes are submitted to the Curriculum Committee as part of the course approval process.
- Both the assurance argument and the campus visit demonstrated that discussion about the rationale for course numbering at 300/400, in order to distinguish such courses from those at the 100/200 level, is ongoing. This discussion indicates that LSSU understands the distinction between associate and bachelor's degree expectations.
- Continuity of expectations for courses across a variety of modalities is made clear through the uniformity of the Curriculum Committee's and Assessment Committee's processes for course development and continuous improvement. The TracDat assessment tool is used to gather assessment outcomes, evidence, findings and actions to be taken. Departments have access to the data and use it to drive curricular change, but use of assessment findings is not consistent across all programs. However, the use of TracDat encourages a consistency of learning outcomes and assessment practices, and supports uniformity across modalities, locations, and in dual credit contexts.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.B - Core Component 3.B

The institution demonstrates that the exercise of intellectual inquiry and the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning and skills are integral to its educational programs.

1. The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings, and degree levels of the institution.
2. The institution articulates the purposes, content, and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements. The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.
3. Every degree program offered by the institution engages students in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information; in mastering modes of inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.
4. The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity of the world in which students live and work.
5. The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their programs and the institution's mission.

Rating

Met

Evidence

LSSU has a general education model, which is articulated on its website. The General Education Plan was updated in 2015. The goals of General Education are clearly stated and are based on a traditional disciplinary breadth of knowledge framework.

- Communication requirements are met through required courses in composition and oral communication. Critical thinking and inquiry appear to be embedded in a number of these outcomes.
- One three-credit hour diversity course is a general education requirement as of 2015. Students have the opportunity to study abroad, augmenting the diversity offerings of university courses. In addition, LSSU serves the local Native American population, enriching the diversity of the campus and opportunities for interaction between students of differing backgrounds.

Although the general education program shows evidence of clearly stated outcomes, the program needs to have a clear assessment plan to provide evidence of student learning. LSSU's General Education Committee should work to improve its assessment processes for general education outcomes, whether in general education designated courses or in disciplinary courses that align with general education outcomes. Developing a culture of assessment that aligns general education with academic program outcomes is an important step LSSU needs to take.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.C - Core Component 3.C

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

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

Rating

Met

Evidence

LSSU has the adequate faculty and staff to offer current programs and student services.

- LSSU employs a sufficient number of faculty (108 full-time faculty and 74 adjunct). These numbers appear to adequately address the responsibilities of university faculty, including teaching, oversight and assessment of the curriculum, as well as advising.
- Expectations for faculty are laid out in faculty handbooks for both full and adjunct faculty and in the collective bargaining agreement between full-time faculty and the administration. Faculty are evaluated on an annual rotation. Full-time faculty adhere to a contractually-mandated minimum number of office hours and teaching load.
- Full-time faculty have an allotment of $1000 of professional development funds per year; unused funds can be accrued year after year. Faculty also participate in local professional development opportunities provided by the Faculty Center for Teaching.
- Co-curricular staff have access to professional development, though funding has been cut for staff travel, and most staff take advantage of webinars and other local professional development options as much as possible.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.D - Core Component 3.D

The institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching.

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

Rating

Met

Evidence

LSSU provides a variety of student support services, including counseling, health services, tutoring and testing, accessibility services, financial aid support, registration support, and advising through a faculty model.

- During the campus tour, it was noted that the University recently added the "Fletcher First Stop" as a single point for administrative student services. Student success programs have also been integrated under the same administrative structure as student recruitment, allowing for greater alignment of their work. Finally, it was shared that the Title III grant has allowed for several important additions to student support services, including a new Learning Commons in the Library.
- Students are placed into college or developmental courses based on ACT test scores, and students who score into developmental math have the option of doing self-paced remediation through ALEKS. Developmental writing and reading are also offered.
- During discussion with the faculty and student support staff, it was shared that faculty are examining the option of a workshop-style model to support developmental students in college-level composition, rather than the more traditional developmental course as a pre-cursor to the college writing course.
- Instruction on research and information resources is well-embedded in the curriculum at multiple points: in the English 111 course, the second of the composition sequence, required of all students, as well as within the disciplines. For example, biology students engage in a sustained research project that begins in the first-year experience course and continues through seminar courses, culminating during the capstone course. This example demonstrates a sustained research project with faculty guidance on research methodology.
- The faculty advising model appears to be of varying quality; students expressed concern about

advising both in the student opinion survey sent by HLC and in person. Both students, faculty and staff confirmed inconsistent academic advising which may result in students getting out of course sequence and not graduating on time. Faculty expressed concern about advising loads, which vary by program and average around 30 per faculty member, and indicated little to no advising training. It should be noted that the Title III grant has allowed for resources to investigate the advising process and to see where improvement might be made. The Degree Works system recently purchased with Title III grant funds could significantly enhance academic advising, student completion rates, and administrative workload.

- Student comments indicate inconsistent faculty participation and performance in student support services. Examples include midterm grades not being submitted, which was confirmed by some faculty who reported that the grade entry system was disconnected from LMS and therefore too onerous a task. It is important that faculty, staff, and students understand the expectations in the student success system and follow through with their responsibilities.

- LSSU is undergoing development of new academic spaces and has several dedicated spaces such as the Art Center, the Simulation Center and the Aquatic Research Laboratory. The university recently switched from Blackboard to a Moodle learning management system. Both students and faculty indicated some issues with Moodle and sufficient WiFi connectivity to complete assignments; faculty mentioned issues with the Moodle grade book, and students asserted that trying to turn in assignments online was at times a challenge because of intermittent WiFi outages.
- Student comments during the student drop in session indicate occasional frustration with administrative processes. Examples include referrals to multiple offices to fix a residence hall issue and financial aid forms being repeatedly lost or delayed. Students and staff acknowledged the addition of the "First Stop" center as a helpful step in the right direction. Regular and actionable assessment of student satisfaction concerns would benefit the University.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.E - Core Component 3.E

The institution fulfills the claims it makes for an enriched educational environment.

1. Co-curricular programs are suited to the institution's mission and contribute to the educational experience of its students.
2. The institution demonstrates any claims it makes about contributions to its students' educational experience by virtue of aspects of its mission, such as research, community engagement, service learning, religious or spiritual purpose, and economic development.

Rating

Met

Evidence

LSSU has numerous student organizations and activities for student engagement outside the classroom.

- During the drop in sessions, it was shared that many of these student organizations are related to academic disciplines or careers. The University encourages and supports student activities of this nature.
- Other options, such as work study, practica, internships, and research opportunities are available to students and can provide useful non-academic experience and development for students who engage in them.

There is scarce evidence that these activities are being assessed via the development of learning outcomes, although some student satisfaction surveys are being administered. Staff expressed confusion about how to assess student learning through these activities and would benefit from exploring the many models provided by professional organizations and other institutions.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary

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

Evidence

LSSU offers a variety of programs and a general education framework to support its mission. Faculty are engaged in student learning and success. Advising and co-curricular activities need more complete assessment in order to be able to respond to student needs.

The team read the assurance argument, examined an array of documents cited in the argument and made available on campus, and interacted with multiple constituencies. Following an analysis of these data, the team concludes that Lake Superior State University meets Criterion Three.

4 - Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

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

4.A - Core Component 4.A

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs.

1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews.
2. The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning, or relies on the evaluation of responsible third parties.
3. The institution has policies that assure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.
4. The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It assures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.
5. The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.
6. The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution assures that the degree or certificate programs it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission, such as employment rates, admission rates to advanced degree programs, and participation rates in fellowships, internships, and special programs (e.g., Peace Corps and Americorps).

Rating

Met With Concerns

Evidence

- LSSU has instituted a program review requirement and provided guidelines to the academic schools on how to conduct these reviews. These guidelines include a program review cycle, a detailed process, and templates.
    - The University adopted a Program Review Template in October of 2013. Each school has been required to conduct formal reviews of approximately 25% of degree programs each year, with the exception of accredited programs, which can follow an alternative timeline. The first cycle of program reviews was scheduled to start in April of 2014. The evidence submitted by LSSU and dialogue with faculty members and administration reveals that implementation of program review has been slow and has not stayed on schedule:

- Four of the twelve schools had not submitted any program reviews by March of 2015 ("MEMO Subject Line: Weighing the Baby – Program Review").
- A recent examination of the institution's Program Review document, available online, showed that at least half of the programs had not submitted program reviews.
- Conversations with the faculty and staff during an Area of Focus meeting and Open Forum Discussion on Criteria 3 and 4 revealed initial reluctance to conduct program reviews. There is not a shared understanding as to who has responsibility over the program review process.

- LSSU has clear processes for the evaluation of the credit it transcripts. Although responsibility for transfer course equivalencies rests with the Registrar's Office, the Admissions Office plays an initial role in reviewing student transcripts and transfer equivalencies. The transfer review process involves program faculty in the absence of existing course equates.
  - The list of equated courses for Michigan and Ontario institutions is available on the LSSU website; to add convenience to students searching course equates.
  - The institution's policy for granting credit for Experiential/Prior Learning is clearly stated in the Catalog; the process for the development of a Prior Learning Portfolio and its evaluation is clearly outlined in the Catalog.
  - Prospective students may find information on standardized exams for prior learning assessment on the web.

- The authority to determine initial course transferability rests with the faculty and/or deans. The Registrar's Office and other administrative staff, and faculty confirmed that LSSU's transfer policies were outlined in the Catalog and on the Admissions website. LSSU abides by MACRAO and Michigan Transfer Agreement (MTA), which has eased the transferability of general education credits from Michigan community colleges to baccalaureate institutions; according to this agreement, general education requirements are marked as completed for students with associate degrees from Michigan schools.

- The institution's Curriculum Committee, with support from the administration, ensures the quality of academic programs. The charge of the Curriculum Committee gives it authority to approve or deny proposals for changes to existing and new courses or programs, and to make recommendations regarding renewal or deletion of programs. Curriculum Committee minutes, as provided in the Sources section of the Assurance Argument, evidences the curriculum's authority.
  - Ensuring courses have sufficient rigor has been a priority for LSSU, as evidenced by the President's Council minutes for February 6, 2013, which show approval of a policy requiring a minimum of 24 credits at the 300/400-level toward achievement of a baccalaureate degree. The policy had been recommended by the Academic Policy and Processes Committee and the Curriculum Committee.

The institution provides students with access to learning resources:

- The LSSU faculty is in the process of developing matrices to define minimum academic credentials and relevant experiences as it pertains to faculty qualifications to teach the courses offered by the institution. This process, prompted by the revision to the Faculty Roles and Qualifications section of the HLC's Assumed Practices, is the result of cooperation between the LSSU administration and the Faculty Association (union). As agreed by these bodies, each department is in the process of identifying faculty qualifications for each course, for adjuncts, and for faculty members in the disciplines.

- Open Forum Discussions on Criteria 3 and 4 and the Drop-In Session with staff confirmed the existence of resources that are managed by administrative staff:
  - The Academic Success Center provides access to learning resources to students, including peer tutoring, supplemental instruction, writing and math assistance, and individual plans for students with unsatisfactory midterm grades.
  - New students have access to mentors in their intended majors through the Student First program.
  - The Title III grant has funded the Student Learning Commons, which provides learning spaces for group work, access to learning-enhancing technologies, and peer mentors.

- LSSU has established Charter School agreements with 22 Michigan schools, including several high schools; high school teachers teach "concurrent" courses at those, and other institutions, which award LSSU credit to students who successfully complete them.
  - The interim dean of the School of Arts and Sciences explained to the review team that the University employs a Concurrent Enrollment Coordinator to monitor that teachers in charge of those courses meet LSSU faculty qualifications and have the rigor of equivalent LSSU courses.
  - LSSU also offers dual credit for students who attend classes on the LSSU campus.

- Several LSSU programs have received accreditation from national accrediting agencies, and the LSSU accreditation webpage lists the academic programs that are accredited by external agencies.

- According to the Assurance Argument, the institution surveys all graduates to gather data on employment six months after graduation. Response rates have been around or slightly above 50% for the last three years reported in the assurance argument.
  - Results of the First Destination report are published on the LSSU website,
  - A summary of the annual results for the last 10 years is published on the institution's website.
  - The "Employment Trends of Employment and Salaries," available on the LSSU website, offers detail on the employment and graduate school attendance rates, including salary information. The data shows that around 97% of the graduates seeking employment who responded to the survey are employed, and around 13% attend graduate school.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

LSSU should provide: 1) a list of all completed program reviews in keeping with the approved-upon schedule; and 2) evidence that program review is being used to inform strategic planning and budgeting decisions.

4.B - Core Component 4.B

The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.

1. The institution has clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals.
2. The institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and co-curricular programs.
3. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
4. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members.

Rating

Met With Concerns

Evidence

The institution has been working toward developing clearly stated goals for student learning:

- Sources from the Assurance Argument demonstrate that since the last HLC accreditation visit of 2011, when LSSU was placed on monitoring for assessment, the institution's focus on assessment of student learning has improved dramatically.
  - The 2013 Monitoring Report outlined the actions taken during the two years since the visit: addition of the position of Associate Provost for Assessment, Education and Graduate Programs; use of Tracdat, a hosted relational database for assessment; commitment to professional development related to assessment, among other efforts.
  - LSSU continues to work towards identifying goals and student learning outcomes at the course, program, and institutional levels.

Course-level outcomes -- According to the Assurance Argument, a University audit conducted in April of 2016, showed that 92% of courses had submitted student learning outcomes:

- A review of course syllabi across the institution reveals that identification of student learning outcomes at the course level is a generalized practice.
- While that is the case, the institution lacks common terminology to refer to student learning outcomes (student learning outcomes, learning objectives, goals…).
- Some syllabi show well developed, measurable learning outcomes, where in other cases the outcomes are written in a way that place the focus of learning on what the instructor does, rather than on the students (Course Goals: "to make students aware of contemporary issues … and to provide information that will allow them to think critically about issues…;" Course Objectives: the course "will provide you with foundations for a lifetime of future learning").
- While many courses use action verbs, not all course outcomes are stated in measurable terms, as shown in the previous examples.
- General Education courses: A review of random General Education program syllabi shows that

courses have measurable student learning outcomes.

- Although the Assurance Argument states that the Syllabus Guidelines document "provides detailed instructions for faculty on how to create clearly articulated individual course goals in their syllabi," a review of this resource shows 1) a series of links to resources developed by different institutions; and 2) a series of five verbs, used as examples on how student learning outcomes must be stated ("1, Create; 2. List; 3. Describe; 4. Analyze; 5. Synthesize"). The lack of LSSU's own definition of terms and of its own detailed description of the expectations for how outcomes must be written may explain the last of consistency across schools, programs, and faculty members when it comes to the development of course outcomes.

Program-level outcomes -- The University conducted an audit of student learning outcomes across the institution in April of 2016. The audit showed that 100% of programs had submitted such outcomes:

- A review of academic programs shows that, while programs have identified goals or learning objectives for students, not all those outcomes are stated in measurable terms. For instance, one program lists the following among its student learning objectives: "will have the opportunity to complete one or more minors that complement their individual career focus."
- During the Open Forum Discussion on Criteria III and IV some faculty members teaching General Education courses shared they are redefining the outcomes of the program.

Overall, LSSU has well-developed, comprehensive and transparent processes for assessment of student learning; while that is the case, the implementation of those processes is not consistent across programs and areas of the University:

- The "VPAA Plan for Program Review," available online, lists every academic program, its program-level student learning outcomes, and due date for periodic program review. For each program that underwent program review in 2014 and 2015, the VPAA Plan shows hyperlinks to the following documents: Program Review document, Program Summary, Program Assessment Report, Course Report, and Feedback Letter to the School. The Program Review document lists common criteria (e.g., Mission and Vision); a narrative, or review, is required, as well as finding from the review and a self-assessment. Both the Program and the Course Assessment reports must state the program or course outcomes; means of assessment and criterion targets/thresholds, and tasks; findings; and actions to be taken and follow-up. The follow-up letter, from the Provost's Office, is a summative report that indicates subsequent action (such as areas were the program excels, areas that need work, whether a monitor report is needed, and timeline for next program review).

LSSU's main catalyst was to start developing effective processes for achievement of learning goals. A group of faculty and staff, who constitute the Assessment Committee, developed course and program outcomes, identified actions aimed at improving student learning, and implemented a system that requires follow-up on what was discovered through the process. LSSU has contracted with Tracdat for the collection, aggregation and reporting of data related to assessment. This system's reporting capabilities is allowing the faculty and staff to distill useful information in order to drive the institution's efforts to enhance student learning.

- The associate provost has been instrumental to the institution to promote assessment.
- A Focus Meeting with members of the Assessment Committee provided evidence that the Committee met regularly and through the summer.
- While reporting of data through TracDat has improved, the process of getting faculty buy-in has been a slow one; the institution organized "Assessment Parties" to engage and provide opportunities for the faculty to learn how to enter the data in the system; however, lack of

accountability to fulfill this responsibility is a challenge.
- Members of the Assessment Committee do not seem to know if this committee will play a role in Shared Governance after recent changes to its structure.
- The changes introduced by the Curriculum Committee to forms for new and revised course and program proposals are key to the expansion of assessment efforts; the new forms require information on outcomes and assessment; the new course proposal form asks how the proposed course outcomes will align with program outcomes.

LSSU has improved its efforts toward meeting its goals related to assessment:

- While most courses and a significant number of programs have developed student learning outcomes, records shared in the Assurance Argument state that, as of April 2016, 74% of all LSSU courses and 100% of programs had developed measures for assessing student learning; 66% of all courses and 43% of all programs were reporting their findings; and 55% of all courses and 33% of programs had identified actions related to those findings.
- The Sources section of the Assurance Argument lists evidence of academic courses and programs that assess learning outcomes and identifies actions based on the findings. For example, the assessment report for BIOL 104, Survey of General Biology, lists course learning outcomes, assessment methods, findings, and actions to be taken. The "Actions to Be Taken" column provides strategies for addressing unsatisfactory findings. At the program level, the program review for the Fisheries and Wildlife exemplifies the use of clear and measurable assessment methods, with stated targets and thresholds for achievement of the learning outcomes, as well as a list of actionable findings.
- The link to Program Review page, listed in the Sources section of the Assurance Argument, provides access to the institution's assessment reports. An examination of these reports did not find evidence that all academic programs are conducting assessment of student learning; among the programs that are, not all are reporting findings or actions taken based on those findings.
- Some academic programs utilize grades or course completion to measure achievement of student learning outcomes. For instance, the BS in Parks and Recreation program lists the following assessment method: "A minimum combined score of 70 out of a possible 100 points on both the mid-term and the final exam;" "Students will complete the ERVN courses 131and 231."
- A survey of faculty and administrative support staff conducted in the spring semester of 2015 to get their perceptions on assessment shows an understanding of the shared responsibility to assess students learning and, in the case of the faculty, the impact assessment may have on teaching. Overall, the survey comments indicate that, at least in the spring semester of 2015, assessment was perceived by some, especially among the faculty, as a time-consuming process; this is especially clear in relation to the reporting of data. There is also a perception that assessment is an imposition from the administration in response to HLC "mandates," rather than as a way to evaluate and improve student learning.
- The Assurance Argument states that analysis of survey results resulted in additional professional development opportunities for the faculty, assistance entering data in the reporting tool, and enhanced communication about assessment through the assessment website and other venues; this was corroborated by the assurance review team in Open Forum Discussion on Criteria III and IV and a Focus Meeting on assessment.

The Assurance Argument states that assessment of non-curricular programs has been ongoing and showing signs of growth, and that the Office of Student Life "has been developing an assessment structure" for its programs. However, no evidence is provided of actual assessments.

- The review team requested a focus meeting with staff providing co-curricular programming and

support services to gather evidence of assessment efforts in these areas.
- Student Life and support staff have not developed specific student learning outcomes in their areas, as revealed during the focus meeting.
- According to evidence submitted in the Assurance Argument, results of a staff survey conducted in 2015 show that a majority of staff members believe their units have meaningful goals, ways to measure, and a process to evaluate achievement of those goals; surveyed staff also stated that their units have a practice of using assessment results to improve effectiveness. Among the challenges for conducting effective assessment, the staff identifies lack of time, especially to enter reporting data, and lack of knowledge about measures to use in evaluating non-academic areas.
- The focus meeting with support staff corroborated the staff perception about assessment in their areas; the staff has a strong commitment to the students and go out of the way to provide assistance and services; understaffing in some areas present challenges to meet the institution's assessment needs; there is also a need for professional development of staff in the area of assessment of student learning (vs. student satisfaction).
- The institution had been using the NSSE to measure student engagement and benchmark its findings with other institutions nationwide. A focus meeting with support staff corroborated that LSSU has discontinued the use of the NSSE in the last year. The staff revealed that results from the NSSE have not been effectively used to assist in decisions to improve the student experience, which led to discontinuing its administration. There seems to be no plan to reinstate the administration of the NSSE.
- Assessment in Student Life seems to rely on the administration of assessments to gather input on the student experience. Survey results are being used by Student Housing to address the needs of students age 20 to 22; to bring tutoring, IS, and other academic resources to student living areas. Student Housing is also involved in surveying students on move-in day and throughout the semesters.
- The Student Activities area also relies on surveys to identify areas of improvement. The Student Government conducts a survey each semester to identify student needs; based on a concern they heard about hunger among the students, they created a food bank to address that need.
- Faculty and student surveys on assessment has resulted in plans to review the current advising model, as corroborated in focus and open meetings with faculty, staff, and students.

In its 2011 report, the HLC Review Team indicated there was no "evidence that whatever data that were either available to, or acquirable by, the institution were being analyzed to inform the planning and execution of academic, administrative, and support programs, and other activities that are important to LSSU's future."

- Since the last comprehensive review, LSSU has made significant progress in this area. There is evidence that schools and other areas of the institution use the information gathered from assessment to improve student learning:
  - The focus meeting on Assessment provided evidence of how academic programs are using assessment to improve student learning; for example, the Chemistry program's use of standardized exams from the American Chemical Society to assess students learning at the program level resulted in changes to courses to address areas where students scored below expected benchmarks; the Environmental Science program has utilized surveys of employers to ascertain the readiness of its graduates and to make improvement in certain areas; the School of Education uses the same assessments for some classes to monitor student achievement of certain outcomes; by surveying employers, the Biology Department found out that its graduates needed more quantitative skills; administration of the MFET exam in the School of Business and Engineering resulted in the identification

of information systems as an area where students needed improvement.

- Although there was initial reluctance to assessment, the Political Science Department reported the process of collecting, analyzing, and reporting data was helpful to the program; the chair of the Math and Computer Science School shared that improvements in the feedback provided to departments after program review has resulted in a better attitude toward assessment and the process
- A survey of the faculty's perceptions on assessment, included in the Sources section of the Assurance Argument, shows an average of 3.58 (over 5) agreement to the statement, "my School uses assessment data to improve student learning;" when asked if assessment data was being used by the institution in "shaping academic planning and policy-making," the average was 2.75.

While there has been significant progress, not all academic, co-curricular, and administrative units use their findings from assessment to improve student learning. This is clear from letters from the Provost and the Assessment Committee to different academic programs, as reflected in the Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Planning website.

The focus meeting on assessment and the Open Meeting on Criteria Three and Four revealed that the University lacks a plan for institutional assessment.

- Faculty and staff showed limited understanding of institutional learning outcomes (the knowledge, skills, and attitudes all LSSU graduates would demonstrate), and their alignment to academic program or general education outcomes.
- The University has recently discontinued the administration of ETS tests to measure student learning at the institutional level; when asked about the reason for the decision, members of the General Education Committee shared that results were not fully analyzed and utilized. The limited findings identified by the institution did not provide useful data. There is no plan for institution-wide assessment through standardized testing or through an internally developed instrument.

The status of the Assessment Committee as a Chartered Committee increased the visibility and importance of assessment on campus. The fact that it has ample representation of faculty helped disseminate information about assessment throughout the institution. The Assessment Committee and others have provided professional development opportunities on assessment of student learning to the campus community:

- Since 2012, the institution has provided mini grants (up to $1,000) for "Targeted Assessment Projects," funded by a Title III grant.
- The Assessment Committee organizes training on Tracdat ("assessment parties"), as an opportunity for faculty and staff to report assessment data.
- The institution hosted a renowned assessment scholar, Peggy Maki, in Fall 2012.

A focus visit with members of The Assessment Committee revealed that the future of this committee is uncertain in light of the most recent committee restructure.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

The institution must develop assessment methodologies and practices that include the following:

- All course outcomes must focus on student learning rather than on teaching or on programmatic

goals.
- All academic programs must state not only program-level student learning outcomes, but also measures of those outcomes findings, and actions taken to engage on continued improvement of student learning.
- The general education program must engage in the assessment of student learning beyond the identification of course outcomes.
- The University must identify institutional learning outcomes, measures of learning, findings, and actions to improve learning.
- The University must identify mechanisms to demonstrate that students are meeting those outcomes; if an external instrument is not used, alternate methods or instruments to measure those outcomes must be identified (e.g., rubrics).
- Student support services and co-curricular programs should develop student learning outcomes and assessment plans in their respective areas; this process is parallel to the setting and evaluation of goals that is being reported in TracDat.

4.C - Core Component 4.C

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

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

Rating

Met

Evidence

The 2012 Strategic Plan addressed enrollment growth and student engagement in campus activities and regional attractions. It established objectives related to retention and degree completion, such as: developing a benchmark school list, meeting or exceeding national retention averages for benchmark schools, and exploring retention management systems to assist in monitoring retention. The Laker CAFÉ relies on an increase in enrollment for revenue expansion and addresses the student experience and learning.

- The evidence included in the Assurance Argument shows that LSSU's retention rates for 2010-2015 have been above those of the schools it identified for benchmarking.
- The same is true for completion rates since 2011.

LSSU collects and analyzes information on student retention and completion of its programs:

- Data on student retention and completion is available on the LSSU Institutional Research website. The information available to the public through this website includes LSSU-generated reports on enrollment, 2015-2016 Common Data Set, and other reports; IPEDS 2005-2015 data sets and institutional profile; and NSSE results for 2011. Retention data, as provided by Institutional Research, is also posted on the Advising website.
- Minutes from the Retention Committee shows review of data provided by the Office of Institutional Research, including NSSE and advising survey data.
- The 2013 Faculty Survey, developed by the Retention Committee, sought to identify perceptions about advising at LSSU with the intent of improving academic advising at the

institution. Committee members analyzed the report and wrote an Executive Report with its findings. In spring of 2015, the Retention Committee conducted a similar survey among students. After conducting an analysis and comparison of the results from both surveys, the Committee developed a recommendation to explore alternate advising models and address a need for better communication about advising, as well as to develop training resources and identification of how those resources should be delivered. Links to both survey instruments and responses are available in the Assurance Argument. In open and focus meetings, faculty, staff, and students mentioned these surveys and alluded to their findings.

- Discussions with faculty, staff, and students during the team visit confirmed that the institution plans to explore alternate advising models, although there does not appear to be a set process or timeline to accomplish this goal.

The University uses information on retention and completion to make improvement:

- According to staff who attended the Focus Session on Assessment, retention and completion concerns led to the development of First Year Seminar courses in three of the schools.
- A study of academically challenging courses ("DFIW study") resulted in the identification of academic strategies to assist those students.
- A different study resulted in the decision to modify the schedule so that no classes are offered before 9:00 a.m., a fact that was confirmed during the visit by members of the Board and Cabinet, and observed by the review team.
- The Orientation Committee conducts surveys to gather feedback and implement changes to the new student orientation program. Analysis of the data collected has resulted in changes to the schedule.

Information gathered during Open and Focus Forums, on the other hand, suggests that the collection, analysis, and dissemination of institutional data is not consistent throughout the University:

- The University recently discontinued administration of the NSSE; when asked about the reasons for the decision, staff explained that not enough was done with the data to justify the investment in the survey.

The assurance argument does not address this Criterion subcomponent separately.

- During the visit, the Review Team found out that the University's Institutional Research Office is staffed by two staff members who have been on campus for just a few weeks.
- The institution reports data on retention, persistence and completion to IPEDS.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

4.S - Criterion 4 - Summary

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

Evidence

Since the last HLC review, LSSU has taken considerable steps toward meeting Criterion Four, as evidenced by the following: Implementation of a comprehensive program review process, appointment of a vice-provost who oversees assessment, formation of an Assessment Committee, purchase of Tracdat for reporting assessment results, and other achievements.

While program review has led to important findings and accomplishments for individual programs, the implementation process has been slow across academic schools. Similarly, the assessment of student learning outcomes has not been consistent. While student learning outcomes have been identified for the majority of courses, the same is not true for some academic programs. Some programs act on assessment results; other programs are slow in identifying assessment methods that provide actionable information to improve student learning. This is the case for general education, Student Life, and co-curricular programs.

The University must learn from its successes in implementing assessment practices and continue to expand on them in order to create a culture of continuous improvement. The institution must continue to provide support and resources for assessment in the form of professional development opportunities, while ensuring accountability on the part of the faculty and staff.

Given decreasing enrollment and resulting budget deficits, the University has sought to reduce staffing levels through buy-outs, voluntary departures, and layoffs. Given budgetary pressures, these changes were unavoidable and appropriate. The secondary effects of the staffing reductions (larger class sizes, fewer sections, fewer student support staff, etc.) may begin to affect the student experience in and outside of the classroom. The University's assessment program must measure these impacts to allow for prioritization of future funding to support student learning.

Based on the accomplishments to date and the challenges LSSU has faced in the implementation of a comprehensive program evaluation and a culture of continuous improvement, the review team concluded that Criterion Four has been met with concerns.

5 - Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

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

5.A - Core Component 5.A

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

1. The institution has the fiscal and human resources and physical and technological infrastructure sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered.
2. The institution's resource allocation process ensures that its educational purposes are not adversely affected by elective resource allocations to other areas or disbursement of revenue to a superordinate entity.
3. The goals incorporated into mission statements or elaborations of mission statements are realistic in light of the institution's organization, resources, and opportunities.
4. The institution's staff in all areas are appropriately qualified and trained.
5. The institution has a well-developed process in place for budgeting and for monitoring expense.

Rating

Met With Concerns

Evidence

- While enrollment has continued to decline, budgeting for the 2016-17 year planned for a greater decrease than actually occurred. The original budget called for 1997 students, which was later revised to 2020 students; 2100 student actually enrolled. This is evidence of a budgeting system increasingly based on realistic and attainable goals. The fact that the 2016-17 budget is also the first one to be balanced in some years is also reason for optimism. The key to the financial stability of the institution will be whether enrollment growth can begin to increase revenues to support increased needs for operational support.
- LSSU is refocusing its enrollment strategy in the hopes of attracting more students who are a "good match." Boosting new and returning student enrollment is the single most important indicator of the financial stability of the institution. A new enrollment plan provided by the Vice President for Enrollment Services and Student Affairs includes a restructuring of financial aid. With a 27% discount rate (17% without athletics), the University can shape more packages to meet financial need rather than continue to focus exclusively on "merit" aid which sends money to students with more college options and who are often from higher income families. Serving lower income students is a significant opportunity to enhance revenue, build headcount, and provide a meaningful service to the State of Michigan and beyond. New digital marketing plans and linkages to charter schools should also present opportunities. Retention initiatives are

even more important to growing tuition revenue and include the new services provided through Title III funding. Maintaining these services beyond the grant and making meaningful improvements in areas like academic advising (noted earlier) will also be necessary.

- Capital investments have been curtailed as budget reductions have been required. While spending on residence halls has increased to a goal of 8% of room revenue, the general campus maintenance fund has been reduced by more than half in recent years. This has not stopped all progress (i.e. an eight-year accessibility plan has been initiated) and campus facilities remain attractive and functional. The addition of the renovated South Hall will further add to this strength. However, lack of general capital investment is having impacts on technology infrastructure, physical plant equipment, and other areas. Maintaining the campus will require additional funding in the future and a deferred maintenance and equipment replacement plan should figure prominently into financial planning.

- Faculty and staff report that budget reductions have further emphasized the importance of seeking and securing grant funds. Support for these efforts are perceived by some as inadequate in terms of staffing dedicated to grant support and possible delay in responsiveness from administrative staff. The HLC team was not in a position to determine the truth of these claims, but the institution should enhance communication and collaboration to ensure grant opportunities are not missed.

- The University has been subject to a number of changes from the state regarding the funding of the MPSERS retirement system. The changes have caused a great deal of administrative work and uncertainty, including the recognition of a $17 million pension liability on their financial statements. While the details remain unclear, it is clear that the institution will be required to increase funding for these obligations for many years to come. This is further evidence that "standing still" at the institution's current resource base is not a viable option. Revenue enhancements, most likely through enrollment growth, is essential to the future of LSSU.

- To fund operating deficits in previous years, the University has effectively borrowed from health insurance and general insurance money located in the general fund. This has opened the University to some risk should several large insurance claims occur in close proximity and require significant funding for deductibles and other expenses. While this eventuality is not likely, the University should set a clear plan to repay the over $3 million borrowed from these funds. A $100,000 repayment is included in the 2016-17 budget, but no plan yet exists for future years.

- The University plans to improve its budgeting process to take into account assessment results. To that end, two new data analysts have been hired and are beginning to look at student retention and other data sources to identify opportunities where investments or realignments could result in additional tuition revenue.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

LSSU should provide interim reports after fall enrollment is known in 2018 and 2020 in preparation for its next comprehensive visit in 2022. These reports should include an analysis of enrollment patterns, operating budget deficit/surplus numbers, and the status of repayment of the general fund debt.

5.B - Core Component 5.B

The institution's governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the institution to fulfill its mission.

1. The governing board is knowledgeable about the institution; it provides oversight of the institution's financial and academic policies and practices and meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.
2. The institution has and employs policies and procedures to engage its internal constituencies— including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff, and students—in the institution's governance.
3. Administration, faculty, staff, and students are involved in setting academic requirements, policy, and processes through effective structures for contribution and collaborative effort.

Rating

Met

Evidence

- Several vice presidential level positions have seen turnover recently. The President, Board, and many of those interviewed expressed great confidence in the new cabinet team. Multiple comments were also received regarding the break-down of "silos" that had formerly divided administrative departments.
- Shared governance at LSSU remains a work in progress. Several systems have been used in recent years, with a new model implemented just this fall. While the system remains unproven, there is a commendable commitment to the importance of shared governance from the Board, administration, faculty, staff, and students. Many members of the faculty and staff reported significant trust in the administration, and expressed comfort with the need for decisions to be made after input was received.
- The HLC team found evidence that some faculty and staff were openly sharing their frustrations with students and even attempting to "rally" them around certain issues and against other faculty and staff. Using students in this manner harms them and their relationships with other faculty/staff and the institution itself. The Board, administration, faculty senate, and staff senate should make it clear this is unacceptable and allow for appropriate follow-up when students report such behavior from faculty/staff.
- The institution has a clear rhythm to decision making, as noted in their Board calendar with a special focus for each meeting.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

5.C - Core Component 5.C

The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.

1. The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities.
2. The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting.
3. The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.
4. The institution plans on the basis of a sound understanding of its current capacity. Institutional plans anticipate the possible impact of fluctuations in the institution's sources of revenue, such as enrollment, the economy, and state support.
5. Institutional planning anticipates emerging factors, such as technology, demographic shifts, and globalization.

Rating

Met

Evidence

- LSSU's last strategic plan ended in 2015, and the campus has begun to form a new one. There is strong evidence of inclusivity in the process, as faculty, staff, and students could articulate the Laker CAFÉ (Culture, Academics, Finance, Enrollment) priorities. These priorities have not yet resulted in specific goals, plans, timelines, and budgets. Articulating these clearly will be important, especially as the University seeks to build a culture of shared governance and as limited resources will force them to prioritize their planning.
- A significant limitation in institutional planning is lack of faculty/staff exposure to other institutions and widely accepted "best practices." This lack of exposure is not willful, but the result of a relatively isolated location, lack of professional development funds, and an unusually high proportion (nearly half) of faculty/staff who graduated from LSSU. The University should consider creative ways (i.e. institutional exchanges) to expose faculty and staff to the practices of other institutions.
- LSSU currently offers over 100 degree programs, a remarkably high number for an institution of this size. Some of the programs are concentrations of a certain major (i.e. Criminal Justice has eight different degree programs). This wide variety of programs results in staffing costs, course scheduling challenges, and even barriers to on-time student graduation. While the HLC team does not advocate for the elimination of program areas, there are opportunities to improve faculty workload and student success through consolidation of some concentration areas.
- The campus budgeting process is well defined, transparent and linked to the strategic plan. While additional funds have rarely been available to fund new priorities, the budget infrastructure is in place to ensure investments are made strategically.
- The institution anticipates growth in business programs, and the addition of South Hall should allow and encourage future enrollments. While there are significant concerns about the addition of an MBA program (see substantive change request), reaching out to new student populations and building new revenue streams is to be encouraged in business and perhaps in other

signature programs.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

5.D - Core Component 5.D

The institution works systematically to improve its performance.

1. The institution develops and documents evidence of performance in its operations.
2. The institution learns from its operational experience and applies that learning to improve its institutional effectiveness, capabilities, and sustainability, overall and in its component parts.

Rating

Met

Evidence

- One barrier to performance improvement at LSSU is an underdeveloped peer review culture among the faculty. Rather than a top-down feedback system, most faculty evaluation systems at other institutions are based first and primarily upon peer review. The University and the Faculty Association should consider ways to bolster this culture and practice.
- Given the requirement for budget reductions and the initiatives of new leadership, the College has undergone a number of significant changes under its "transformation plan." Integrated services and other opportunities for maintaining or even improving services while reducing costs have been pursued.
- With the hiring of additional institutional researchers and an increased emphasis on data analytics and assessment, there is potential for additional guidance as the institution seeks enrollment growth and additional efficiency.
- The current administration has provided regular and clear communication about the health of the University. Long-term data on historic enrollment and budgetary trends have helped the campus community accept the need for significant change in order to stabilize the institution.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary

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

Evidence

LSSU is facing a long-term enrollment decline that has caused significant financial problems. While the 2016-17 budget is balanced, it still fails to provide adequate funding for capital and other needs. Nor is the current revenue level adequate to cover future expenses like retirement and restoration of the general fund. The enrollment decline has slowed, but needs to be reversed in order to grow the necessary revenue. The institution is facing the problem head-on through transparency, budget reductions, and new plans for recruitment and retention. The plans and early signs are cause for optimism and the institution should monitor the situation to ensure that the negative enrollment and financial trends are reversed to stabilize the institution.

Review Dashboard

Number	Title	Rating
1	Mission	
1.A	Core Component 1.A	Met
1.B	Core Component 1.B	Met
1.C	Core Component 1.C	Met
1.D	Core Component 1.D	Met
1.S	Criterion 1 - Summary	Met
2	Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct	
2.A	Core Component 2.A	Met
2.B	Core Component 2.B	Met
2.C	Core Component 2.C	Met
2.D	Core Component 2.D	Met
2.E	Core Component 2.E	Met
2.S	Criterion 2 - Summary	Met
3	Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support	
3.A	Core Component 3.A	Met
3.B	Core Component 3.B	Met
3.C	Core Component 3.C	Met
3.D	Core Component 3.D	Met
3.E	Core Component 3.E	Met
3.S	Criterion 3 - Summary	Met
4	Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement	
4.A	Core Component 4.A	Met With Concerns
4.B	Core Component 4.B	Met With Concerns
4.C	Core Component 4.C	Met
4.S	Criterion 4 - Summary	Met With Concerns
5	Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness	
5.A	Core Component 5.A	Met With Concerns
5.B	Core Component 5.B	Met
5.C	Core Component 5.C	Met
5.D	Core Component 5.D	Met
5.S	Criterion 5 - Summary	Met With Concerns

Review Summary

Interim Report(s) Required

Due Date
12/3/2018

Report Focus
LSSU should provide interim reports after fall enrollment is known in 2018. These reports should include an analysis of enrollment patterns, operating budget deficit/surplus numbers, and the status of repayment of the general fund debt.

Due Date
12/4/2020

Report Focus
LSSU should provide interim reports after fall enrollment is known in 2020. These reports should include an analysis of enrollment patterns, operating budget deficit/surplus numbers, and the status of repayment of the general fund debt.

Due Date
3/1/2018

Report Focus
Federal Compliance Credit Hour Expectations: The institution should expand its current credit hour policy or develop a new policy that includes all delivery modalities.

Focused Visit(s)

Due Date
3/1/2019

Visit Focus
4A and 4B - LSSU should provide: 1) a list of all completed program reviews in keeping with the approved-upon schedule; and 2) evidence that program review is being used to inform strategic planning and budgeting decisions.

The institution must develop assessment methodologies and practices that include the following:

- All course outcomes must focus on student learning rather than on teaching or on programmatic goals.
- All academic programs must state not only program-level student learning outcomes, but also measures of

those outcomes findings, and actions taken to engage on continued improvement of student learning.
- The general education program must engage in the assessment of student learning beyond the identification of course outcomes.
- The University must identify institutional learning outcomes, measures of learning, findings, and actions to improve learning.
- The University must identify mechanisms to demonstrate that students are meeting those outcomes; if an external instrument is not used, alternate methods or instruments to measure those outcomes must be identified (e.g., rubrics).
- Student support services and co-curricular programs should develop student learning outcomes and assessment plans in their respective areas; this process is parallel to the setting and evaluation of goals that is being reported in TracDat.

Conclusion

LSSU's mission guides the institution and demonstrates its commitment to the public good. LSSU offers a variety of programs and a general education framework to support its mission. The strategic plan will be integrated, but needs to be further reviewed and refined. Policies and faculty/staff are student-focused and it is a point of pride on campus that students are the first priority.

The University must learn from its successes in implementing assessment practices and continue to expand on them in order to create a culture of continuous improvement. The institution must continue to provide support and resources for assessment in the form of professional development opportunities, while ensuring accountability on the part of the faculty and staff.

LSSU is facing a long-term enrollment decline that has caused significant financial problems. The enrollment decline has slowed, but needs to be reversed in order to grow the necessary revenue. Given decreasing enrollment and resulting budget deficits, the University has sought to reduce staffing levels through buy-outs, voluntary departures, and layoffs. The institution is facing the problem head-on through transparency, budget reductions, and new plans for recruitment and retention. The plans and early signs are cause for optimism and the institution should monitor the situation to ensure that the negative enrollment and financial trends are reversed to stabilize the institution.

Based upon the teams' review of the criteria for accreditation, we recommend that LSSU be limited to the Standard Pathway due to these concerns in 4A, 4B, and 5A.

Overall Recommendations

Criteria For Accreditation
Met With Concerns

Pathways Recommendation
Limited to Standard

Federal Compliance Worksheet for Evaluation Teams

Evaluation of Federal Compliance Components

The team reviews each item identified in the *Federal Compliance Filing by Institutions* (FCFI) and documents its findings in the appropriate spaces below. Teams should expect institutions to address these requirements with brief narrative responses and provide supporting documentation where necessary. Generally, if the team finds in the course of this review that there are substantive issues related to the institution's ability to fulfill the Criteria for Accreditation, such issues should be raised in the appropriate parts of the Assurance Review or Comprehensive Quality Review.

This worksheet is to be completed by the peer review team or a Federal Compliance reviewer in relation to the federal requirements. The team should refer to the *Federal Compliance Overview* for information about applicable HLC policies and explanations of each requirement.

Peer reviewers are expected to supply a rationale for each section of the Federal Compliance Evaluation.

The worksheet becomes an appendix in the team report. If the team recommends monitoring on a Federal Compliance Requirement in the form of a report or focused visit, the recommendation should be included in the Federal Compliance monitoring sections below and added to the appropriate section of the Assurance Review or Comprehensive Quality Review.

Institution under review: Lake Superior State University

Please indicate who completed this worksheet:

☐ Evaluation team

☒ Federal Compliance reviewer

To be completed by the Evaluation Team Chair if a Federal Compliance reviewer conducted this part of the evaluation:

Name: Rebecca J Timmons

☒ I confirm that the Evaluation Team reviewed the findings provided in this worksheet.

Audience: Peer Reviewers
Form
Published: 2016 © Higher Learning Commission

Process: Federal Compliance Review
Contact: 800.621.7440
Page 1

Assignment of Credits, Program Length and Tuition

(See FCFI Questions 1–3 and Appendix A)

1. Complete the *Team Worksheet for Evaluating an Institution's Assignment of Credit Hours and Clock Hours*. Submit the completed worksheet with this form.

   - Identify the institution's principal degree levels and the number of credit hours for degrees at each level (see the institution's Appendix A if necessary). The following minimum number of credit hours should apply at a semester institution:

     o Associate's degrees = 60 hours

     o Bachelor's degrees = 120 hours

     o Master's or other degrees beyond the bachelor's = At least 30 hours beyond the bachelor's degree

   - Note that 1 quarter hour = 0.67 semester hour.

   - Any exceptions to this requirement must be explained and justified.

   - Review any differences in tuition reported for different programs and the rationale provided for such differences.

2. Check the response that reflects the evaluation team or Federal Compliance reviewer's conclusions after reviewing this component of Federal Compliance:

   ☐ The institution meets HLC's requirements.

   ☐ The institution meets HLC's requirements, but additional monitoring is recommended.

   ☒ The institution does not meet HLC's requirements and additional monitoring is recommended.

   ☐ The Federal Compliance reviewer/evaluation team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

Rationale:

LSSU identifies a single policy that describes credit hour expectations for traditional face-to-face and laboratory courses. As well, expectations for independent study, seminars and compressed courses are clearly articulated. However, on-line and blended courses do not fit the existing descriptions. Related, a reviewed syllabus for an on-line course was not specific to the modality (the same syllabus for the FTF section is used).

Additional monitoring, if any:

The institution needs to either expand its current credit hour policies or develop a new policy that includes all delivery modalities.

Audience: Peer Reviewers
Form
Published: 2016 © Higher Learning Commission

Process: Federal Compliance Review
Contact: 800.621.7440
Page 2

Institutional Records of Student Complaints
(See FCFI Questions 4–7 and Appendixes B and C)

1. Verify that the institution has documented a process for addressing student complaints and appears to by systematically processing such complaints, as evidenced by the data on student complaints since the last comprehensive evaluation.

   - Review the process that the institution uses to manage complaints, its complaints policy and procedure, and the history of complaints received and resolved since the last comprehensive evaluation by HLC.

   - Determine whether the institution has a process to review and resolve complaints in a timely manner.

   - Verify that the evidence shows that the institution can, and does, follow this process and that it is able to integrate any relevant findings from this process into improvements in services or in teaching and learning.

   - Advise the institution of any improvements that might be appropriate.

   - Consider whether the record of student complaints indicates any pattern of complaints or otherwise raises concerns about the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation or Assumed Practices.

2. Check the response that reflects the team's conclusions after reviewing this component of Federal Compliance:

   ☒ The institution meets HLC's requirements.

   ☐ The institution meets HLC's requirements, but additional monitoring is recommended.

   ☐ The institution does not meet HLC's requirements and additional monitoring is recommended.

   ☐ The Federal Compliance reviewer/evaluation team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

Rationale:

LSSU maintains a record of written complaints to senior officials and has used the information from the chart to make internal improvements (e.g., to services provided at regional centers, returning excess funds). The chart (Appendix C) could be improved by listing in chronological order; 1 2015 entry is incomplete [2015SDr1].

Information provided to students about the policy and procedures for filing a complaint (be it related to gender-based discrimination, sexual misconduct [Handbook] or a grade dispute [Academic Catalog]) is accessible.

Audience: Peer Reviewers
Form
Published: 2016 © Higher Learning Commission

Process: Federal Compliance Review
Contact: 800.621.7440
Page 3

Since the Office of the Ombudsman is often an important first step for problem resolution, this information/office could be made easier to find on the website with a link in the 'resources' section on the "Academic" and/or "Student" tab of the University's webpages.

Additional monitoring, if any:

Publication of Transfer Policies
(See FCFI Questions 8–10 and Appendixes D–F)

1. Verify that the institution has demonstrated it is appropriately disclosing its transfer policies to students and to the public. Policies should contain information about the criteria the institution uses to make transfer decisions.

   - Review the institution's transfer policies.

   - Review any articulation agreements the institution has in place, including articulation agreements at the institution level and for specific programs.

   - Consider where the institution discloses these policies (e.g., in its catalog, on its website) and how easily current and prospective students can access that information.

   - Determine whether the disclosed information clearly explains any articulation arrangements the institution has with other institutions. The information the institution provides should include any program-specific articulation agreements in place and should clearly identify program-specific articulation agreements as such. Also, the information the institution provides should include whether the articulation agreement anticipates that the institution (1) accepts credits from the other institution(s) in the articulation agreement; (2) sends credits to the other institution(s) in the articulation agreements; (3) both offers and accepts credits with the institution(s) in the articulation agreement; and (4) what specific credits articulate through the agreement (e.g., general education only; pre-professional nursing courses only; etc.).

   - Verify that the institution has an appropriate process to align the disclosed transfer policies with the criteria and procedures used by the institution in making transfer decisions.

2. Check the response that reflects the team's conclusions after reviewing this component of Federal Compliance:

   ☒ The institution meets HLC's requirements.

   ☐ The institution meets HLC's requirements, but additional monitoring is recommended.

   ☐ The institution does not meet HLC's requirements and additional monitoring is recommended.

   ☐ The Federal Compliance reviewer/evaluation team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate

Audience: Peer Reviewers
Form
Published: 2016 © Higher Learning Commission

Process: Federal Compliance Review
Contact: 800.621.7440
Page 4

reference).

LSSU has robust and effective transfer policies and students resources, including a dedicated 'Transfer Specialist' position and an easy to find and informative web page with guides and 'Transfer Tools' for students. The institution is a member of the Michigan Transfer Network and has detailed articulation agreements with Sault College and the Wisconsin UW Colleges.

Additional monitoring, if any:

Practices for Verification of Student Identity
(See FCFI Questions 11–16 and Appendix G)

1. Confirm that the institution verifies the identity of students who participate in courses or programs provided through distance or correspondence education. Confirm that it appropriately discloses additional fees related to verification to students, and that the method of verification makes reasonable efforts to protect students' privacy.

   - Determine how the institution verifies that the student who enrolls in a course is the same student who submits assignments, takes exams and earns a final grade. The team should ensure that the institution's approach respects student privacy.

   - Check that any costs related to verification (e.g., fees associated with test proctoring) and charged directly to students are explained to the students prior to enrollment in distance or correspondence courses.

2. Check the response that reflects the team's conclusions after reviewing this component of Federal Compliance:

   ☒ The institution meets HLC's requirements.

   ☐ The institution meets HLC's requirements, but additional monitoring is recommended.

   ☐ The institution does not meet HLC's requirements and additional monitoring is recommended.

   ☐ The Federal Compliance reviewer/evaluation team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

Rationale:

The University uses a login system and secure testing with online proctoring technology. There are no additional costs for identity verification; there is an additional fee [of $15/hr] for live proctored exams which is communicated on the website.

Audience: Peer Reviewers
Form
Published: 2016 © Higher Learning Commission

Process: Federal Compliance Review
Contact: 800.621.7440
Page 5

Additional monitoring, if any:

Title IV Program Responsibilities
(See FCFI Questions 17–24 and Appendixes H–Q)

1. This requirement has several components the institution must address.

   - The team should verify that the following requirements are met:

     - **General Program Requirements.** The institution has provided HLC with information about the fulfillment of its Title IV program responsibilities, particularly findings from any review activities by the Department of Education. It has, as necessary, addressed any issues the Department has raised regarding the institution's fulfillment of its responsibilities.

     - **Financial Responsibility Requirements.** The institution has provided HLC with information about the Department's review of composite ratios and financial audits. It has, as necessary, addressed any issues the Department has raised regarding the institution's fulfillment of its responsibilities in this area. (Note that the team should also be commenting under Criterion 5 if an institution has significant issues with financial responsibility as demonstrated through ratios that are below acceptable levels or other financial responsibility findings by its auditor.)

     - **Default Rates.** The institution has provided HLC with information about its three-year default rate. It has a responsible program to work with students to minimize default rates. It has, as necessary, addressed any issues the Department has raised regarding the institution's fulfillment of its responsibilities in this area. Note that for 2012 and thereafter, institutions and teams should be using the three-year default rate based on revised default rate data published by the Department in September 2012; if the institution does not provide the default rate for three years leading up to the comprehensive evaluation visit, the team should contact the HLC staff.

     - **Campus Crime Information, Athletic Participation and Financial Aid, and Related Disclosures.** The institution has provided HLC with information about its disclosures. It has demonstrated, and the team has reviewed, the institution's policies and practices for ensuring compliance with these regulations.

     - **Student Right to Know/Equity in Athletics.** The institution has provided HLC with information about its disclosures. It has demonstrated, and the team has reviewed, the institution's policies and practices for ensuring compliance with these regulations. The disclosures are accurate and provide appropriate information to students. (Note that the team should also be commenting under Criterion 1 if the team determines that the disclosures are not accurate or appropriate.)

     - **Satisfactory Academic Progress and Attendance Policies.** The institution has provided HLC with information about its policies and practices for ensuring compliance with these regulations. The institution has demonstrated that the policies and practices meet state or federal requirements and that the institution is

Audience: Peer Reviewers
Form
Published: 2016 © Higher Learning Commission

Process: Federal Compliance Review
Contact: 800.621.7440
Page 6

appropriately applying these policies and practices to students. In most cases, teams should verify that these policies exist and are available to students, typically in the course catalog or student handbook and online. Note that HLC does not necessarily require that the institution take attendance unless required to do so by state or federal regulations but does anticipate that institutional attendance policies will provide information to students about attendance at the institution.

- o **Contractual Relationships.** The institution has presented a list of its contractual relationships related to its academic programs and evidence of its compliance with HLC policies requiring notification or approval for contractual relationships. (If the team learns that the institution has a contractual relationship that may require HLC approval and has not received HLC approval, the team must require that the institution complete and file the change request form as soon as possible. The team should direct the institution to review the Substantive Change Application for Programs Offered Through Contractual Arrangements on HLC's website for more information.)

- o **Consortial Relationships.** The institution has presented a list of its consortial relationships related to its academic programs and evidence of its compliance with HLC policies requiring notification or approval for consortial relationships. (If the team learns that the institution has a consortial relationship that may require HLC approval and has not received HLC approval, the team must require that the institution complete and file the form as soon as possible. The team should direct the institution to review the Substantive Change Application for Programs Offered Through Consortial Arrangements on HLC's website for more information.)

- Review all of the information that the institution discloses having to do with its Title IV program responsibilities.

- Determine whether the Department has raised any issues related to the institution's compliance or whether the institution's auditor has raised any issues in the A-133 about the institution's compliance, and also look to see how carefully and effectively the institution handles its Title IV responsibilities.

- If the institution has been cited or is not handling these responsibilities effectively, indicate that finding within the Federal Compliance portion of the team report and whether the institution appears to be moving forward with the corrective action that the Department has determined to be appropriate.

- If issues have been raised concerning the institution's compliance, decide whether these issues relate to the institution's ability to satisfy the Criteria for Accreditation, particularly with regard to whether its disclosures to students are candid and complete and demonstrate appropriate integrity *(Core Components 2.A and 2.B)*.

2. Check the response that reflects the team's conclusions after reviewing this component of Federal Compliance:

☒ The institution meets HLC's requirements.

☐ The institution meets HLC's requirements, but additional monitoring is recommended.

☐ The institution does not meet HLC's requirements and additional monitoring is recommended.

Audience: Peer Reviewers
Form
Published: 2016 © Higher Learning Commission

Process: Federal Compliance Review
Contact: 800.621.7440
Page 7

☐ The Federal Compliance reviewer/evaluation team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

Rationale:

LSSU's Title VI Program was recertified on 12/15/11 through 9/30/17.
Financial audits "did not identify any deficiencies in internal control over compliance" for years ending 2013, 2014, and 2015. The visiting team asked to see the 2015 information and it was stated that the auditors had not completed the review.

Default rates of 8.6%-12.4% do not exceed peer institutions. This data is made publically available on a comprehensive "Student Consumer Information" webpage which also includes information on crime statistics, accreditation, The Alcohol and Other Drug Policy, graduation rates, athletic participation, diversity rates, retention rates, placement rates, etc (https://www.lssu.edu/hoeanotices/).
Academic progress (http://www.lssu.edu/finaid/150rule.php) and the attendance policy for recipients of federal financial aid are on the website (https://www.lssu.edu/finaid/attendancepolicy.php)

Additional monitoring, if any:

Required Information for Students and the Public
(See FCFI Questions 25–27 and Appendixes R and S)

1. Verify that the institution publishes accurate, timely and appropriate information on institutional programs, fees, policies and related required information. Verify that the institution provides this required information in the course catalog and student handbook and on its website.

2. Check the response that reflects the team's conclusions after reviewing this component of Federal Compliance:

☒ The institution meets HLC's requirements.

☐ The institution meets HLC's requirements, but additional monitoring is recommended.

☐ The institution does not meet HLC's requirements and additional monitoring is recommended.

☐ The Federal Compliance reviewer/evaluation team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

Rationale:

Audience: Peer Reviewers
Form
Published: 2016 © Higher Learning Commission

Process: Federal Compliance Review
Contact: 800.621.7440
Page 8

LSSU maintains a very accessible user-friendly website, with detailed web pages on:
- Tuition Costs, Room and Board, and Fees
- Degree Programs
- Student Consumer Information

Required academic, policy, and payment (tuition, fees, housing) information is the Student Handbook and the Academic Catalog.

Additional monitoring, if any:

Advertising and Recruitment Materials and Other Public Information
(See FCFI Questions 28–31 and Appendixes T and U)

1. Verify that the institution has documented that it provides accurate, timely and appropriately detailed information to current and prospective students and the public about its accreditation status with HLC and other agencies as well as about its programs, locations and policies.

   - Review the institution's disclosure about its accreditation status with HLC to determine whether the information it provides is accurate, complete and appropriately formatted and contains HLC's web address.

   - Review the institution's disclosures about its relationship with other accrediting agencies for accuracy and for appropriate consumer information, particularly regarding the link between specialized/professional accreditation and the licensure necessary for employment in many professional or specialized areas.

   - Review the institution's catalog, brochures, recruiting materials, website and information provided by the institution's advisors or counselors to determine whether the institution provides accurate, timely and appropriate information to current and prospective students about its programs, locations and policies.

   - Verify that the institution correctly displays the Mark of Affiliation on its website.

2. Check the response that reflects the team's conclusions after reviewing this component of Federal Compliance:

   ☒ The institution meets HLC's requirements.

   ☐ The institution meets HLC's requirements, but additional monitoring is recommended.

   ☐ The institution does not meet HLC's requirements and additional monitoring is recommended.

   ☐ The Federal Compliance reviewer/evaluation team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

Rationale:

Audience: Peer Reviewers
Form
Published: 2016 © Higher Learning Commission

Process: Federal Compliance Review
Contact: 800.621.7440
Page 9

LSSU's materials for advertising and recruiting are detailed, informative and accurately representative via annual updates. A relatively newly formed "Integrated Marketing Group", headed by the Director of Admissions, is working to develop a cohesive and comprehensive approach.

Policies on social media and the use of photography are posted, as is the University's accreditation status.

Additional monitoring, if any:

Review of Student Outcome Data
(See FCFI Questions 32–35 and Appendix V)

1. Review the student outcome data the institution collects to determine whether they are appropriate and sufficient based on the kinds of academic programs the institution offers and the students it serves.

   - Determine whether the institution uses this information effectively to make decisions about planning, academic program review, assessment of student learning, consideration of institutional effectiveness and other topics.

   - Review the institution's explanation of its use of information from the College Scorecard, including the loan repayment rate.

2. Check the response that reflects the team's conclusions after reviewing this component of Federal Compliance:

   ☐ The institution meets HLC's requirements.

   ☐ The institution meets HLC's requirements, but additional monitoring is recommended.

   ☒ The institution does not meet HLC's requirements and additional monitoring is recommended.

   ☐ The Federal Compliance reviewer/evaluation team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

Rationale:

While program review has led to important findings and accomplishments for individual programs, the implementation process has been slow across academic schools. Similarly, the assessment of student learning outcomes has not been consistent. While student learning outcomes have been identified for the majority of courses, the same is not true for some academic programs. Some programs act on assessment results; other programs are slow in identifying assessment methods that provide actionable information to improve student learning. This is the case for general education, Student Life, and co-curricular programs.

Audience: Peer Reviewers
Form
Published: 2016 © Higher Learning Commission

Process: Federal Compliance Review
Contact: 800.621.7440
Page 10

LSSU has used their federal metrics in institutional decision-making (eg the distribution of financial aid). Student surveys (i.e. Senior Exit Survey on Gen. Ed.) are posted on the website; although how the results are related to specific institutional improvements have not been explicitly outlined since 2013 (i.e., "Digital Photo-Assessment Project's 2013 cross-walk alignment to the Strategic Plan").

Additional monitoring, if any:

Monitoring is addressed in Core Criteria Component 4B.

Publication of Student Outcome Data
(See FCFI Questions 36–38)

1. Verify that the institution makes student outcome data available and easily accessible to the public. Data may be provided at the institutional or departmental level or both, but the institution must disclose student outcome data that address the broad variety of its programs.

    - Verify that student outcome data are made available to the public on the institution's website—for instance, linked to from the institution's home page, included within the top three levels of the website or easily found through a search of related terms on the website—and are clearly labeled as such.

    - Determine whether the publication of these data accurately reflects the range of programs at the institution.

2. Check the response that reflects the team's conclusions after reviewing this component of Federal Compliance:

    ☒ The institution meets HLC's requirements.

    ☐ The institution meets HLC's requirements, but additional monitoring is recommended.

    ☐ The institution does not meet HLC's requirements and additional monitoring is recommended.

    ☐ The Federal Compliance reviewer/evaluation team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

Rationale:

The assessment pages can easily be found with a search of 'assessment'. For enhanced accessibility, it is suggested that the information be included on the Student Consumer Information page as well.

Additional monitoring, if any:

Audience: Peer Reviewers
Form
Published: 2016 © Higher Learning Commission

Process: Federal Compliance Review
Contact: 800.621.7440
Page 11

Standing With State and Other Accrediting Agencies
(See FCFI Questions 39–40 and Appendixes W and X)

1. Verify that the institution discloses accurately to the public and HLC its relationship with any other specialized, professional or institutional accreditors and with all governing or coordinating bodies in states in which the institution may have a presence.

   The team should consider any potential implications for accreditation by HLC of a sanction or loss of status by the institution with any other accrediting agency or of loss of authorization in any state.

   Note: If the team is recommending initial or continued status, and the institution is now or has been in the past five years under sanction or show-cause with, or has received an adverse action (i.e., withdrawal, suspension, denial or termination) from, any other federally recognized specialized or institutional accreditor or a state entity, then the team must explain the sanction or adverse action of the other agency in the body of the assurance section of the team report and provide its rationale for recommending HLC status in light of this action.

   - Review the list of relationships the institution has with all other accreditors and state governing or coordinating bodies, along with the evaluation reports, action letters and interim monitoring plans issued by each accrediting agency.

   - Verify that the institution's standing with state agencies and accrediting bodies is appropriately disclosed to students.

   - Determine whether this information provides any indication about the institution's capacity to meet HLC's Criteria for Accreditation. Should the team learn that the institution is at risk of losing, or has lost, its degree or program authorization in any state in which it meets state presence requirements, it should contact the HLC staff liaison immediately.

2. Check the response that reflects the team's conclusions after reviewing this component of Federal Compliance:

   ☒ The institution meets HLC's requirements.

   ☐ The institution meets HLC's requirements, but additional monitoring is recommended.

   ☐ The institution does not meet HLC's requirements and additional monitoring is recommended.

   ☐ The Federal Compliance reviewer/evaluation team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

Rationale:

Evidence shows that LSSU is in good standing with nine specialized governing bodies and is in the process of applying for accreditation of the Emergency Medical Services program.

Additional monitoring, if any:

Audience: Peer Reviewers
Form
Published: 2016 © Higher Learning Commission

Process: Federal Compliance Review
Contact: 800.621.7440
Page 12

Public Notification of Opportunity to Comment
(FCFI Questions 41–43 and Appendix Y)

1. Verify that the institution has made an appropriate and timely effort to solicit third-party comments. The team should evaluate any comments received and complete any necessary follow-up on issues raised in these comments.

   Note: If the team has determined that any issues raised by third-party comments relate to the team's review of the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation, it must discuss this information and its analysis in the body of the assurance section of the team report.

   - Review information about the public disclosure of the upcoming visit, including copies of the institution's notices, to determine whether the institution made an appropriate and timely effort to notify the public and seek comments.

   - Evaluate the comments to determine whether the team needs to follow up on any issues through its interviews and review of documentation during the visit process.

2. Check the response that reflects the team's conclusions after reviewing this component of Federal Compliance:

   ☒ The institution meets HLC's requirements.

   ☐ The institution meets HLC's requirements, but additional monitoring is recommended.

   ☐ The institution does not meet HLC's requirements and additional monitoring is recommended.

   ☐ The Federal Compliance reviewer/evaluation team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

   Rationale:

Public comments were solicited during the months of April and May from a significant number of print, radio, and newspaper outlets, in addition to posting on the LSSU website.

   Additional monitoring, if any:

Competency-Based Programs Including Direct Assessment Programs/Faculty-Student Engagement
(See FCFI Questions 44–47)

1. Verify that students and faculty in any direct assessment or competency-based programs offered by the institution communicate on some regular basis that is at least equivalent to contact in a traditional classroom, and that in the tasks mastered to assure competency, faculty and students

Audience: Peer Reviewers
Form
Published: 2016 © Higher Learning Commission

Process: Federal Compliance Review
Contact: 800.621.7440
Page 13

interact about critical thinking, analytical skills, and written and oral communication abilities, as well as about core ideas, important theories, current knowledge, etc.

- Review the list of direct assessment or competency-based programs offered by the institution.

- Determine whether the institution has effective methods for ensuring that faculty in these programs regularly communicate and interact with students.

- Determine whether the institution has effective methods for ensuring that faculty and students in these programs interact about key skills and ideas in the students' mastery of tasks to assure competency.

2. Check the response that reflects the team's conclusions after reviewing this component of Federal Compliance:

☒ The institution meets HLC's requirements.

☐ The institution meets HLC's requirements, but additional monitoring is recommended.

☐ The institution does not meet HLC's requirements and additional monitoring is recommended.

☐ The Federal Compliance reviewer/evaluation team also has comments that relate to the institution's compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. See Criterion (insert appropriate reference).

Rationale:

LSSU has policies and procedures in place to offer credit for prior learning.

" *LSSU recognizes that students may acquire expertise, skills and knowledge through individual study, employment, military training, community service or other experiences outside of the normal college setting, which is known as prior learning. LSSU credit may be awarded for prior learning through successful completion of standardized examination programs, (e.g. CLEP, Advanced Placement, DANTES), credit recommendations of the American Council of Education, or successful* Lake Superior State University: Academic Catalog 2016-17 - Academic Policies *http://www.lssu.edu/cmscatalog1617/academic-policies.php[9/27/2016 1:43:10 PM] completion of "departmental examinations". Credit may also be awarded upon successful completion of an individual Prior Learning Portfolio that documents the demonstration of learning outcomes for a specific course or set of courses. All prior learning credits are considered transfer credits and are subject to the same policies as other transfer credits. Discuss your prior learning experience with your academic advisor, chair or dean for more information. University residency requirements apply to all forms of prior learning (e.g. a minimum of 30 credits of the 124 credits required for an LSSU baccalaureate degree must be earned using LSSU coursework). See the Academic Catalog for the complete residency policy."*

Additional monitoring, if any:

Audience: Peer Reviewers
Form
Published: 2016 © Higher Learning Commission

Process: Federal Compliance Review
Contact: 800.621.7440
Page 14

Institutional Materials Related to Federal Compliance Reviewed by the Team

Provide a list of materials reviewed here:

Course syllabi:

Fall 2016
Introduction to Psychology - 10632 - PSYC 101 – 001 Andrew S Franks
First-Year Composition I - 10299 - ENGL 110 – 005 Shirley Ann Smart
Fire Protect Sys/Equip/Ind Pro - 10762 - FIRE 206 - 00N Fred Allen Newton (distance ed)
Fire Protect Sys/Equip/Ind Pro - 10762 - FIRE 206 Fred Allen Newton (FTF)
Student Diversity and Schools - 10718 - EDUC 250 – 001 Catherine Emily Chaput
Hnr Frst-Yr Sem:Hst Cul Hockey - 10451 - HONR 101 – 001 T. Allan, J. Swedene
First Year French I - 10402 - FREN 151 – 001 Megan J Burkitt
Summer 2016
Ambul Care Pr Nur:Clinical Lab - 30097 - PNUR 206 – 00 A C. Perez, L. Kabke (lab)
Spring 2016
Emergent Literacy - 20884 - CHLD 225 – 790 Patricia Ann Loper (blended)
Thermodynamics - 20518 - EGME 337 – 001 Zakaria Mahmud
Cross Country Skiing - 20671 - RECA 119 - F01 Sally A Childs (7 week session)

Lake_Superior_State_Federal_Compliance_Sept2016_Appendix_A.pdf
Lake_Superior_State_Federal_Compliance_Sept2016_Appendices_B-F.pdf
Lake_Superior_State_Federal_Compliance_Sept2016_Appendices_G-M.pdf
Lake_Superior_State_Federal_Compliance_Sept2016_Appendix_N.pdf
Lake_Superior_State_Federal_Compliance_Sept2016_Appendices_O-S.pdf
Lake_Superior_State_Federal_Compliance_Sept2016_Appendices_T-V.pdf
Lake_Superior_State_Federal_Compliance_Sept2016_Appendix_W.pdf
Lake_Superior_State_Federal_Compliance_Sept2016_Appendices_X-Y.pdf

http://www.lssu.edu/
http://www.lssu.edu/admissions/
https://lssu-uga.edu.185r.net/application/login/
http://www.lssu.edu/academics/
http://www.lssu.edu/academics/colleges.php
http://www.lssu.edu/admissions/transfer.php
https://bssmain.lssu.edu:9060/pls/PROD8/lswbxfer.P_Find_State
http://www.lssu.edu/catalog/
http://www.lssu.edu/academics/services.php
https://bssmain.lssu.edu:9060/pls/PROD8/bwckschd.p_disp_dyn_sched
http://www.lssu.edu/scheduling/ schedule
http://www.lssu.edu/scheduling/add_drop.php add/drop
http://www.lssu.edu/registrar/reverse-transfer.php

http://www.lssu.edu/registrar/graduation.php
http://www.lssu.edu/scheduling/important_dates.php
http://www.lssu.edu/provost/state_authorization.php on line
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/
http://www.lssu.edu/hlc/AccreditationReviewTeam.php
http://www.lssu.edu/procedures/
http://www.lssu.edu/ombudsman/
http://www.lssu.edu/current/ students
http://www.lssu.edu/campuslife/handbook/ handbook
http://www.lssu.edu/campuslife/campuscommunityresources.php
http://alumni.lssu.edu/ alumni
http://www.lssulakers.com/landing/index athletics
https://www.lssu.edu/testingservices/proctoring.php
https://www.lssu.edu/hoeanotices/
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/UniversityAssessmentPlan.php
http://www.lssu.edu/provost/documents/DigitalPhotoProject-CriticalOutcomelist.pdf
http://www.lssu.edu/sharedgovernance/assessment/index.php
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/2014-2015AnnualSpringSeniorSurveyonGeneralEducation-redacted.pdf
http://www.lssu.edu/ir/documents/cds_15_16.pdf
http://www.lssu.edu/ir/documents/IPEDSDFR2015_170639.pdf
http://www.lssu.edu/ir/documents/allstudentcountayr.pdf
http://www.lssu.edu/cmscatalog1617/business-administration.php
http://www.lssu.edu/cmscatalog1617/clinical-laboratory-science.php
http://www.lssu.edu/degrees/
http://www.lssu.edu/cmscatalog1617/exercise-science.php

https://bssmain.lssu.edu:9060/pls/PROD8/bwckschd.p_disp_dyn_sched course schedule

Team Worksheet for Evaluating an Institution's Assignment of Credit Hours and Clock Hours

Institution Under Review: Lake Superior State University

Review the *Worksheet for Institutions on the Assignment of Credit Hours and Clock Hours*, including all supplemental materials. Applicable sections and supplements are referenced in the corresponding sections and questions below.

Part 1. Institutional Calendar, Term Length and Type of Credit

Instructions

Review Section 1 of Appendix A. Verify that the institution has calendar and term lengths within the range of good practice in higher education.

Responses

A.   Answer the Following Question

1. Are the institution's calendar and term lengths, including non-standard terms, within the range of good practice in higher education? Do they contribute to an academic environment in which students receive a rigorous and thorough education?

☒ Yes   ☐ No

Comments:

Semesters at LSSU are 15 weeks in length with compressed terms of 7 weeks. Summer courses are 12 weeks with 4 and 6 weeks compressed.

B.   Recommend HLC Follow-Up, If Appropriate

Is any HLC follow-up required related to the institution's calendar and term length practices?

☐ Yes   ☒ No

Rationale:

Audience: Peer Reviewers
Form
Published: 2016 © Higher Learning Commission

Process: Credit Hour and Clock Hour Review
Contact: 800.621.7440
Page 1

Identify the type of HLC monitoring required and the due date:

Part 2. Policy and Practices on Assignment of Credit Hours

Instructions

Review Sections 2–4 of the *Worksheet for Institutions on the Assignment of Credit Hours and Clock Hours*, including supplemental materials as noted below. In assessing the appropriateness of the credit allocations provided by the institution the team should complete the following steps. The outcomes of the team's review should be reflected in its responses below.

1. **Format of Courses and Number of Credits Awarded.** Review the *Form for Reporting an Overview of Credit Hour Allocations and Instructional Time for Courses* (Supplement A1 to the *Worksheet for Institutions*) completed by the institution, which provides an overview of credit hour assignments across institutional offerings and delivery formats.

2. Scan the course descriptions in the catalog and the number of credit hours assigned for courses in different departments at the institution (see Supplements B1 and B2 to *Worksheet for Institutions*, as applicable).

    -   At semester-based institutions courses will be typically be from two to four credit hours (or approximately five quarter hours) and extend approximately 14–16 weeks (or approximately 10 weeks for a quarter). The descriptions in the catalog should reflect courses that are appropriately rigorous and have collegiate expectations for objectives and workload. Identify courses/disciplines that seem to depart markedly from these expectations.

    -   Institutions may have courses that are in compressed format, self-paced, or otherwise alternatively structured. Credit assignments should be reasonable. (For example, as a full-time load for a traditional semester is typically 15 credits, it might be expected that the norm for a full-time load in a five-week term is 5 credits; therefore, a single five-week course awarding 10 credits would be subject to inquiry and justification.)

    -   Teams should be sure to scan across disciplines, delivery mode and types of academic activities.

    -   Federal regulations allow for an institution to have two credit-hour awards: one award for Title IV purposes and following the federal definition and one for the purpose of defining progression in and completion of an academic program at that institution. HLC procedure also permits this approach.

3. Scan course schedules to determine how frequently courses meet each week and what other scheduled activities are required for each course (see Supplement B3 to *Worksheet for Institutions*). Pay particular attention to alternatively structured or other courses completed in a

Audience: Peer Reviewers
Form
Published: 2016 © Higher Learning Commission

Process: Credit Hour and Clock Hour Review
Contact: 800.621.7440
Page 2

short period of time or with less frequently scheduled interaction between student and instructor that have particularly high credit hour assignments.

4. Sampling. Teams will need to sample some number of degree programs based on the headcount at the institution and the range of programs it offers.

- For the programs sampled, the team should review syllabi and intended learning outcomes for several courses, identify the contact hours for each course, and review expectations for homework or work outside of instructional time.

- At a minimum, teams should anticipate sampling at least a few programs at each degree level.

- For institutions with several different academic calendars or terms or with a wide range of academic programs, the team should expand the sample size appropriately to ensure that it is paying careful attention to alternative format and compressed and accelerated courses.

- Where the institution offers the same course in more than one format, the team is advised to sample across the various formats to test for consistency.

5. **Direct Assessment or Competency-Based Programs.** Review the information provided by the institution regarding any direct assessment or competency-based programs that it offers, with regard to the learning objectives, policies and procedures for credit allocation, and processes for review and improvement in these programs.

6. **Policy on Credit Hours and Total Credit Hour Generation.** With reference to the institutional policies on the assignment of credit provided in Supplement A2 to *Worksheet for Institutions*, consider the following questions:

- Does the institution's policy for awarding credit address all the delivery formats employed by the institution?

- Does that policy address the amount of instructional or contact time assigned and homework typically expected of a student with regard to credit hours earned?

- For institutions with courses in alternative formats or with less instructional and homework time than would be typically expected, does that policy also equate credit hours with intended learning outcomes and student achievement that could be reasonably achieved by a student in the time frame allotted for the course?

- Is the policy reasonable within the federal definition as well as within the range of good practice in higher education? (Note that HLC will expect that credit hour policies at public institutions that meet state regulatory requirements or are dictated by the state will likely meet federal definitions as well.)

- If so, is the institution's assignment of credit to courses reflective of its policy on the award of credit?

- Do the number of credits taken by typical undergraduate and graduate students, as well as the number of students earning more than the typical number of credits, fall within the range of good practice in higher education?

7. If the answers to the above questions lead the team to conclude that there may be a problem with the credit hours awarded the team should recommend the following:

- If the problem involves a poor or insufficiently detailed institutional policy, the team should call for a revised policy as soon as possible by requiring a monitoring report within no more than one year that demonstrates the institution has a revised policy and provides evidence of implementation.

- If the team identifies an application problem and that problem is isolated to a few courses or a single department, division or learning format, the team should call for follow-up activities (a monitoring report or focused evaluation) to ensure that the problems are corrected within no more than one year.

- If the team identifies systematic noncompliance across the institution with regard to the award of credit, the team should notify the HLC staff immediately and work with staff members to design appropriate follow-up activities. HLC shall understand systematic noncompliance to mean that the institution lacks any policies to determine the award of academic credit or that there is an inappropriate award of institutional credit not in conformity with the policies established by the institution or with commonly accepted practices in higher education across multiple programs or divisions or affecting significant numbers of students.

Worksheet on Assignment of Credit Hours
A.   Identify the Sample Courses and Programs Reviewed by the Team

Fall 2016
Introduction to Psychology - 10632 - **PSYC 101** – 001 Andrew S Franks
First-Year Composition I - 10299 - **ENGL 110** – 005 Shirley Ann Smart
Fire Protect Sys/Equip/Ind Pro - 10762 - **FIRE 206** - 00N Fred Allen Newton (distance ed)*
Fire Protect Sys/Equip/Ind Pro - 10389 - **FIRE** 206 – 001 Fred Allen Newton (FTF)*
Student Diversity and Schools - 10718 - **EDUC 250** – 001 Catherine Emily Chaput
Hnr Frst-Yr Sem:Hst Cul Hockey - 10451 - **HONR 101** – 001 T. Allan, J. Swedene
First Year French I - 10402 - **FREN 151** – 001 Megan J Burkitt
Summer 2016
Ambul Care Pr Nur:Clinical Lab - 30097 - **PNUR 206** - 00A C. Perez, L. Kabke (lab)
Spring 2016
Emergent Literacy - 20884 - **CHLD 225** – 790 Patricia Ann Loper (blended)
Thermodynamics - 20518 - **EGME 337** – 001 Zakaria Mahmud
Cross Country Skiing - 20671 - **RECA 119** - F01 Sally A Childs (compressed/7 week session)

Programs
Business Administration - Marketing: Bachelor of Science - 124 credits
Medical Laboratory Science: Bachelor of Science – Clinical Concentration– 135 credits
Exercise Science: Bachelor of Science – 125 credits

B.   Answer the Following Questions

1. Institutional Policies on Credit Hours

    a. Does the institution's policy for awarding credit address all the delivery formats employed by the institution? (Note that for this question and the questions that follow an institution may have a single comprehensive policy or multiple policies.)

    ☐ Yes   ☒ No

    Comments:

The academic credit policy, which follows, does not address on-line or blended formats:
Academic Credit
One credit is equal to 14 hours of classroom instruction in lecture/recitation courses. For example, a three-credit course might be scheduled 9-9:50 a.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday for 14 weeks plus one week for exams. Laboratory classes, field work or other non-lecture classes meet for more than one hour a week per credit. You should expect to spend two hours of study or class preparation for each hour spent in class. The average credit-hour load for full-time students is 16 credits. A minimum of 124 credits is required for all baccalaureate degrees; a minimum of 62 credits is required for all associate degrees.

    b. Does that policy relate the amount of instructional or contact time provided and homework typically expected of a student to the credit hours awarded for the classes offered in the delivery formats offered by the institution? (Note that an institution's policy must go beyond simply stating that it awards credit solely based on assessment of student learning and should also reference instructional time.)

    ☐ Yes   ☒ No

    Comments:

Instructional and homework time is explicit in the policy for FTF courses but not for on-line or blended courses; see above.

    c. For institutions with non-traditional courses in alternative formats or with less instructional and homework time than would be typically expected, does that policy equate credit hours with intended learning outcomes and student achievement that could be reasonably achieved by a student in the time frame and utilizing the activities allotted for the course?

    ☒ Yes   ☐ No

    Comments:

Audience: Peer Reviewers
Form
Published: 2016 © Higher Learning Commission

Process: Credit Hour and Clock Hour Review
Contact: 800.621.7440
Page 5

The Policy addresses tradition FTF and lab courses.

d. Is the policy reasonable within the federal definition as well as within the range of good practice in higher education? (Note that HLC will expect that credit hour policies at public institutions that meet state regulatory requirements or are dictated by the state will likely meet federal definitions as well.)

☒ Yes   ☐ No

Comments:

The policy is reasonable for seminar and independent study courses.

2. Application of Policies

a. Are the course descriptions and syllabi in the sample academic programs reviewed by the team appropriate and reflective of the institution's policy on the award of credit? (Note that HLC will expect that credit hour policies at public institutions that meet state regulatory requirements or are dictated by the state will likely meet federal definitions as well.)

☐ Yes   ☒ No

Comments:

There is no policy for on-line and blended courses. Related, an on-line course (FIRE 206) did not have a syllabi specific to the on-line format. That is, the same syllabus is used for both FTF and on-line sections.

b. Are the learning outcomes in the sample reviewed by the team appropriate to the courses and programs reviewed and in keeping with the institution's policy on the award of credit?

☒ Yes   ☐ No

Comments:

The learning outcomes of the reviewed 1, 3, 4, and 5 credit FTF courses were appropriate.

c. If the institution offers any alternative-delivery or compressed-format courses or programs, are the course descriptions and syllabi for those courses appropriate and reflective of the institution's policy on the award of academic credit?

☐ Yes   ☒ No

Comments:

Audience: Peer Reviewers
Form
Published: 2016 © Higher Learning Commission

Process: Credit Hour and Clock Hour Review
Contact: 800.621.7440
Page 6

Academic credit for compressed format courses are appropriate.   There is no policy for on-line and blended courses; see comments under 2a regarding a syllabus review of an on-line class.

> d. If the institution offers alternative-delivery or compressed-format courses or programs, are the learning outcomes reviewed by the team appropriate to the courses and programs reviewed and in keeping with the institution's policy on the award of credit? Are the learning outcomes reasonable for students to fulfill in the time allocated, such that the allocation of credit is justified?

☒ Yes   ☐ No

Comments:

Learning objectives for compressed courses are appropriate to the course.

> e. Is the institution's actual assignment of credit to courses and programs across the institution reflective of its policy on the award of credit and reasonable and appropriate within commonly accepted practice in higher education?

☒ Yes   ☐ No

Comments:

Credit is appropriate to the programs and courses (excluding on-line or blended given the lack of a policy).

C.   Recommend HLC Follow-up, If Appropriate

Review the responses provided in this worksheet. If the team has responded "no" to any of the questions above, the team will need to assign HLC follow-up to assure that the institution comes into compliance with expectations regarding the assignment of credit hours.

> Is any HLC follow-up required related to the institution's credit hour policies and practices?

☒ Yes   ☐ No

Rationale:

LSSU identifies a single policy that describes credit hour expectations for traditional, laboratory, seminar and independent courses. However, on-line and blended courses do not fit the existing description. The institution needs to either expand its current policy or develop a new policy that includes all delivery modalities.

Identify the type of HLC monitoring required and the due date:

Institution either needs to expand its current credit hour policies or develop a new policy that includes all delivery modalities.   Due date is March 1, 2018.

D.   Systematic Noncompliance in One or More Educational Programs With HLC Policies Regarding the Credit Hour

Audience: Peer Reviewers
Form
Published: 2016 © Higher Learning Commission

Process: Credit Hour and Clock Hour Review
Contact: 800.621.7440
Page 7

Did the team find systematic noncompliance in one or more education programs with HLC policies regarding the credit hour?

☐ Yes   ☒ No

Identify the findings:

Rationale:

Part 3. Clock Hours

Instructions

Review Section 5 of *Worksheet for Institutions*, including Supplements A3–A6. Before completing the worksheet below, answer the following question:

Does the institution offer any degree or certificate programs in clock hours or programs that must be reported to the Department of Education in clock hours for Title IV purposes even though students may earn credit hours for graduation from these programs?

☐ Yes   ☒ No

If the answer is "Yes," complete the "Worksheet on Clock Hours."

Note: This worksheet is <u>not</u> intended for teams to evaluate whether an institution has assigned credit hours relative to contact hours in accordance with the Carnegie definition of the credit hour. This worksheet solely addresses those programs reported to the Department of Education in clock hours for Title IV purposes.

Non-degree programs subject to clock hour requirements (for which an institution is required to measure student progress in clock hours for federal or state purposes or for graduates to apply for licensure) are not subject to the credit hour definitions per se but will need to provide conversions to semester or quarter hours for Title IV purposes. Clock hour programs might include teacher education, nursing or other programs in licensed fields.

Federal regulations require that these programs follow the federal formula listed below. If there are no deficiencies identified by the accrediting agency in the institution's overall policy for awarding semester or quarter credit, the accrediting agency may provide permission for the institution to provide less instruction so long as the student's work outside class in addition to direct instruction meets the applicable quantitative clock hour requirements noted below.

Federal Formula for Minimum Number of Clock Hours of Instruction (34 CFR §668.8):

1 semester or trimester hour must include at least 37.5 clock hours of instruction
1 quarter hour must include at least 25 clock hours of instruction

Audience: Peer Reviewers
Form
Published: 2016 © Higher Learning Commission

Process: Credit Hour and Clock Hour Review
Contact: 800.621.7440
Page 8

Note that the institution may have a lower rate if the institution's requirement for student work outside of class combined with the actual clock hours of instruction equals the above formula provided that a semester/trimester hour includes at least 30 clock hours of actual instruction and a quarter hour includes at least 20 semester hours.

Worksheet on Clock Hours

A.   Answer the Following Questions

1. Does the institution's credit-to-clock-hour formula match the federal formula?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

Comments:

2. If the credit-to-clock-hour conversion numbers are less than the federal formula, indicate what specific requirements there are, if any, for student work outside of class.

3. Did the team determine that the institution's credit hour policies are reasonable within the federal definition as well as within the range of good practice in higher education? (Note that if the team answers "No" to this question, it should recommend follow-up monitoring in section C below.)

☐ Yes   ☐ No

Comments:

4. Did the team determine in reviewing the assignment of credit to courses and programs across the institution that it was reflective of the institution's policy on the award of credit and reasonable and appropriate within commonly accepted practice in higher education?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

Comments:

B.   Does the team approve variations, if any, from the federal formula in the institution's credit-to-clock-hour conversion?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

C.   Recommend HLC Follow-up, If Appropriate

Is any HLC follow-up required related to the institution's clock hour policies and practices?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Rationale:

Identify the type of HLC monitoring required and the due date:

Audience: Peer Reviewers
Form
Published: 2016 © Higher Learning Commission

Process: Credit Hour and Clock Hour Review
Contact: 800.621.7440
Page 10

STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS WORKSHEET

INSTITUTION and STATE: Lake Superior State University MI

TYPE OF REVIEW*:* Comprehensive Evaluation

DESCRIPTION OF REVIEW: Visit to include embedded change request to offer the Master of Business Administration. Comprehensive visit to include Federal Compliance reviewer.

DATES OF REVIEW: 11/07/2016 - 11/08/2016

☐   No Change in Statement of Affiliation Status

Nature of Organization

CONTROL: Public

RECOMMENDATION:

DEGREES AWARDED: Associates, Bachelors, Certificate

RECOMMENDATION: no change

Conditions of Affiliation

STIPULATIONS ON AFFILIATION STATUS:
Accreditation at the Master's level is limited to the Master of Arts in Curriculum and Instruction. International offerings are limited to courses in Canada.

RECOMMENDATION: no change

APPROVAL OF NEW ADDITIONAL LOCATIONS:
Prior Commission approval required.

RECOMMENDATION: no change

APPROVAL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION DEGREES:

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

RECOMMENDATION: no change

ACCREDITATION ACTIVITIES:

Institutional Change, Program: 11/07/2016;
Request to offer the Master of Business Administration.

RECOMMENDATION:

 Interim Report Due: 03/01/2018 on the credit hour policy.

Interim Report Due: 12/3/18 on enrollment and budget.

Interim Report Due: 12/2/2020 on enrollment and budget.

Focused Visit Due: 03/01/2019 on program review and assessment of curricular and co-curricular activities.

Summary of Commission Review

YEAR OF LAST REAFFIRMATION OF ACCREDITATION: 2011 - 2012

YEAR FOR NEXT REAFFIRMATION OF ACCREDITATION: 2016 - 2017

RECOMMENDATION: 2026-2027

ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE WORKSHEET

INSTITUTION and STATE: 1337 Lake Superior State University MI

TYPE OF REVIEW: Standard Pathway: Comprehensive Evaluation

DESCRIPTION OF REVIEW: Visit to include embedded change request to offer the Master of Business Administration. Comprehensive visit to include Federal Compliance reviewer.

☒   No change to Organization Profile

Educational Programs

Programs leading to Undergraduate	Program Distribution
Associates	25
Bachelors	73

Programs leading to Graduate	
Doctors	0
Masters	0
Specialist	0

Certificate programs	
Certificate	4

Recommended Change:

Off-Campus Activities:
In State - Present Activity
Campuses: None.

Additional Locations:
Escanaba Regional Center - Escanaba, MI
Bay de Noc Community College, Iron Mountain, MI - Iron Mountain, MI
Petoskey Regional Center - Petosky, MI

Recommended Change:

Out Of State - Present Activity

ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE WORKSHEET

Campuses: None.

Additional Locations: None.

Recommended Change:

Out of USA - <u>Present Activity</u>
Campuses: None.

Additional Locations: None.

Recommended Change:

Distance Education Programs:
<u>Present Offerings:</u>
Bachelor 43.0201 Fire Prevention and Safety Technology/Technician BS, Fire Science Internet

Bachelor 43.0103 Criminal Justice/Law Enforcement Administration BS, Criminal Justice - Generalist Internet

Recommended Change:

Correspondence Education Programs:
<u>Present Offerings:</u>
None.

Recommended Change:

Contractual Relationships:
<u>Present Offerings:</u>
None.

Recommended Change:

Consortial Relationships:
<u>Present Offerings:</u>
None.

Recommended Change: