

Standard One: Mission and Purpose

Description

The mission of Fitchburg State University, approved by the Board of Trustees in December 2009, and updated to reflect university status in Fall 2010, is as follows:

Fitchburg State University is committed to excellence in teaching and learning and blends liberal arts and sciences and professional programs within a small college environment. Our comprehensive public university prepares students to lead, serve, and succeed by fostering lifelong learning and civic and global responsibility. A Fitchburg State education extends beyond our classrooms to include residential, professional, and co-curricular opportunities. As a community resource, we provide leadership and support for the economic, environmental, social, and cultural needs of North Central Massachusetts and the Commonwealth.

The mission statement informs the Fitchburg State vision and core values. The FSU mission also assigns with the MA Board of Higher Education Mission Statement and the MA Department of Higher Education's Mission for the State Universities.

Vision

Fitchburg State University will be nationally recognized for its excellence in teaching and learning in current and emergent fields, for its commitment to transforming lives through education, and for its dedication to public service. In order to achieve this, we will:

- Prepare students for a global society through curricular innovation and program development
- Achieve academic excellence by investing in our faculty and librarians in their pursuit of knowledge, professional competency, and scholarship
- Employ innovative uses of technology in the library and across our campus to maximize student learning
- Create a culture of diversity to meet the needs of the region and enhance the personal and academic lives of the university community
- Build partnerships within our community to provide real-world opportunities for our students and collaborative solutions to community issues.

Appraisal

The mission statement, vision statement, and core values are available online and in printed publications. In the widely distributed February 2021 NECHE Accreditation Survey, the majority of the FSU community reported being aware of the mission, vision, and core values. Familiarity with the university's mission statement was high (rating familiar or somewhat familiar: 99% Staff/Administrators, $n = 97$; 96% Faculty and Librarians, $n = 102$; 81% Students, $n = 401$). Similarly, most respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the university is fulfilling its mission (Staff/Administrators 95%; Faculty and Librarians 86%; and Students 85%). The mission statement remains appropriate and relevant with a large percentage of respondents as well (Staff/Administrators 91%; Faculty and Librarians 88%; and Students 89%). To continue to reinforce the university's commitment to its mission, framed mission, vision, and core values have been displayed in campus buildings.

The university does not have an official established timeline for review of the mission statement. Historically, the mission statement is reviewed in developing the five-year strategic plan, but a formal cycle should be incorporated. Although it was decided not to have an official review of the mission statement in the 2020-2025 planning process, the mission was at the core of the work of the strategic plan.

The mission is clearly reflected in the curriculum and across the university, as evidenced by our Institutional Learning Priorities, the General Education program, and the array of academic and curricular programs offered. The mission is also clearly seen throughout the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan (See Standards Four-Six).

A core component of the FSU mission and vision is our focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Significant efforts have been made for the cultural diversity of the university's student body to better reflect surrounding regional demographic changes. According to the 2020 Institutional Factbook, 26.3% of the undergraduate day student population are minoritized (up from 8.4% in 2010), which is an appreciable change since the last NEASC visit (See Standard Five). 15% of the faculty population is diverse, up from 7% in 2010 (See Standard Six).

Our university vision calls upon the university to build partnerships within our community. There is a long history of engagement between the community and the university, giving us a solid base to deepen relationships and add new ones in the furtherance of the region's community and economic development. Since its establishment in 2008, the Douglas and Isabelle Crocker Center for Civic Engagement has enhanced collaboration between FSU and the community by engaging students through civic-learning and community-based research and internships. In September 2015, the Center's efforts were expanded to include activities focused on community investment and establishing meaningful partnerships between the university and local citizens and organizations.

A coalition of agencies is working to revitalize a key section of Fitchburg with the Reimagine North of Main project, and FSU is playing a key role. Through the Crocker Center, students and faculty are helping reinvigorate the diverse and densely populated neighborhoods north of Main Street. Leaders of the Reimagine group include representatives from City Hall, the university, the Fitchburg Public Schools, NewVue Communities and the Montachusett Opportunity Council. They share a dedication to improving the quality of life in the neighborhood, focusing on public safety, economic development and entrepreneurship, education, housing, health, and community engagement. The end result of the effort will be a reimaged North of Main neighborhood where people want to live, work, play, and invest.

Goal 3 of the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, "to be an engine of social, economic, civic and cultural development in our city and in the region," reflects our continued commitment to serving the community in which we live.

Projection

University leadership, led by the Assistant Vice President, Institutional Research and Planning (AVPIRP), will create a review cycle for the Mission, Vision, and Core Values, which will be submitted to governance by May 2022. The proposal will call for a review of the Mission Statement no later than May 2024, in advance of the next Strategic Plan.

Standard Two: Planning and Evaluation

Fitchburg State University is continuously engaged in planning and evaluation efforts and places a high emphasis on improving institutional effectiveness through data-informed decision-making. The Office of Institutional Research and Planning (OIRP), created in 2015 and led by the Assistant Vice President, Institutional Research and Planning (AVPIRP), centralizes and provides oversight to assessment, institutional research, and strategic planning activities.

Planning

Description

After implementing the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan, the university recently created and enacted the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan. The current strategic plan was written with a commitment to academic excellence and education justice, and towards creating a student-ready university. These strategic plans provide a guide for decision-making and a structure to evaluate the effectiveness of the university's performance.

The process for the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan was launched at a campus-wide Development Day on September 3, 2019 during which the Commissioner of the Department of Higher Education (DHE) highlighted the importance of addressing the DHE's Equity Agenda as part of Fitchburg State's plan and the President stressed his administration's commitment to an open, inclusive process. The planning process, led by the AVPIRP and an external consultant with experience in public university planning, featured five theme committees and a steering committee, involving 92 members of the campus community. The process included the development of numerous planning assumptions that reflected the external factors impacting both the institution and higher education in general, both presently and in the future. Demonstrating its commitment to the process, the university adhered to the timeline during the pandemic and created a meaningful and comprehensive strategic plan that was approved by the Board of Higher Education in December 2020. Upon the approval of the plan, the university launched a new webpage, outlining and celebrating the new plan.

The 2020-2025 Strategic Plan has six achievable goals that align with our mission, vision, and core values: 1) Forge innovative paths to knowledge acquisition, career readiness, social mobility, and lifelong learning; 2) Become a model student-ready university and narrow the achievement gap; 3) Be an engine of social, economic, civic, and cultural development in our city and region; 4) Establish inclusive excellence, innovation, and environmental stewardship as signature strengths; 5) Assert our distinctive value proposition and institutional learning outcomes boldly and widely and; 6) Steward physical and financial resources responsibly and navigate a path to long-term organizational sustainability.

FSU has a history of successfully developing and implementing strategic planning. The Division of Academic Affairs developed an Academic Strategic Plan in alignment with the 2010-2015 Strategic Plan and annually tracked its progress. Due to the academic-centered nature of the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan, the Division of Academic Affairs utilized the Strategic Plan itself as their strategic planning document. The plan was tracked annually and a summary document was created. All divisions of the University contributed to a comprehensive summary document

that was then utilized during the 2020-2025 strategic planning process.

With the approval of the new 2020-25 Strategic Plan, the development of new comprehensive divisional plans began in Spring 2021. Both Academic Affairs and Student Affairs used their annual reporting system to aggregate and synthesize strategic initiatives planned by the various units within their divisions, resulting in a collaborative and engaged divisional planning process. Institutional Advancement completed their [divisional strategic plan](#) in November 2021.

Within the Division of Academic Affairs, units complete an assessment of their prior year Action Plan, which clearly connects annual objectives to the strategic plan. For AY20 and AY21, units were also asked to report and reflect on pandemic-related impacts and lessons learned. The Vice President for Academic Affairs uses the annual reporting process to assess unit effectiveness, demonstrate progress toward the strategic plan, set priorities and allocate resources. The Division is currently developing a long-term [academic plan](#).

Within the Division of Student Affairs, annual goals are focused on both student learning and effectiveness, and are informed by the university mission, strategic plan, institution-wide learning priorities, and division mission as well as departmental missions and priorities. Units also track key performance indicators over time to monitor trends and changes in effectiveness. The Vice President for Student Affairs uses the annual reporting process to assess unit effectiveness, demonstrate progress toward institutional goals, set priorities, allocate resources, and tell the story of unit impact on the student experience. The Division of Student Affairs is currently developing a five-year plan.

The university's budget planning process spans twelve months and includes prioritization based upon the current strategic plan. Since FY17, funding requests beyond the base budget are submitted via the Petition for Strategic Funding Request Form, which maps funds to the strategic plan. Internal factors, such as anticipated enrollments, as well as external factors, such as state appropriations, are also key elements of the budget planning process, which culminates in a proposal that incorporates multi-year projections. The Board of Trustees verifies that resource allocations are consistent with the mission and strategic plan and that they contribute to the university's long-term financial stability and advance its strategic viability. The University Foundation board meets four times per year to review fundraising efforts, set policies and approve their budget.

Divisions across campus create their own unit's strategic plan. For instance, the Information Technology Strategic Plan, created in 2009 and updated in 2015, is reviewed annually and guides project priorities and requests for strategic funding. A new strategic plan will be created in 2022 based upon the university's 2020-2025 Strategic Plan.

In addition to their 2019-2022 Strategic Plan, the Library produces annual reports, all of which are available on their webpage.

The Office of Admissions produces annual recruitment plans that guide the office's priorities and activities and establish new student enrollment goals for the following year.

Appraisal

The results of institutional planning are consistently monitored and evaluated in order to

measure success of implementation. The university's record of creating and implementing strategic plans on a five-year cycle powerfully illustrates its commitment to long-range planning that prompts actions across the university spectrum. Highlights from the 2015-2020 plan include the creation of Institutional Learning Priorities, creation of the First-Year Experience seminar, a revision to the General Education (LA&S) program, the creation of the Center for Faculty Scholarship, the expansion of the peer mentoring program, the creation of new 4+1 programs, and the implementation of the SSC Navigate advising platform. Furthermore, strategic planning has evolved over the years, with the 2010-15 and 2015-20 plans clearly identifying institutional priorities and shared core values.

There is evidence that the majority of faculty and staff are aware of the strategic plan and its role in driving decision-making and resource allocation. In a survey conducted in January of 2021, 82% of faculty and staff respondents reported being familiar or somewhat familiar with the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, versus 74% with the 2015-2020 strategic plan. Given that the 2020-2025 plan was approved by the BHE in December of 2020 and that the campus was operating remotely for the academic year, this level of familiarity with the new plan is positive. Also, the university distributed a brochure to all employees in February and September of 2021 in order to increase awareness. In the same survey, 69% of faculty/staff respondents either strongly agree or agree that university's strategic plan drives decision-making at the campus-wide level and 58% either agree or strongly agree that the university's strategic plan drives decision-making at the department level. Finally, 56% of faculty and staff respondents felt that resource allocation was either adequately or very well aligned with the strategic plan. It is possible that awareness is related to faculty/staff involvement with the budgeting and planning processes, where strong links to the strategic plan are drawn, as well as to Town Hall meetings, which provide opportunity for strategic plan updates to the campus. The robust set of metrics associated with the 2020-2025 plan will serve as a means to annually update the campus community on the plan's status. Additionally, the stronger connection of the plan to annual reporting that many departments are making will further strengthen faculty and staff awareness moving forward. For example, the June and November 2021 Academic Affairs Divisional Meetings focused on the Academic Plan's development, providing an opportunity for greater awareness and participation.

In terms of student awareness of the strategic plan, 41% of students reported being familiar or somewhat familiar with the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, versus 34% for the 2015-2020 plan. As with faculty/staff, there exists a greater awareness of the new plan versus the old plan, which is positive, but a significant gap in student awareness overall exists. To that end, the university launched a student-designed infographic in Fall 2021 to increase student awareness of and engagement with the plan which has been displayed in student-frequented spaces.

The creation of the OIRP has facilitated the assessment of our strategic planning efforts. The university tracked 300 completed action items related to the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan, with 100% of strategic initiatives being addressed. The 2020-2025 Strategic Plan contains a comprehensive set of metrics which represents a new level of transparency and accountability for the university. Additionally, the Assistant Vice President of Institutional Research and Planning, in conjunction with the Vice President of Student Affairs and the Chief Information Officer are currently evaluating planning and assessment tools that will allow for holistic

university-wide planning and assessment reporting and tracking.

Annual planning is prevalent across the university and over time has increasingly been tied to the strategic plan. In Spring 2021, the divisions of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs utilized the annual reporting process as the basis for creating longer-term divisional strategic plans.

At the divisional level, long-term planning, as evidenced by planning documents, is inconsistent. The lack of plans in some areas makes it difficult for the campus community to be informed of the longer-term strategic goals within these divisions and how their priorities are aligned with the rest of the campus. For example, the lack of a long-term financial plan makes it difficult for the campus to be fully aware of spending priorities and the rational underpinning of the budget process and spending decisions. The development of the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan provides an opportunity for all divisions to create long-term strategic plans that will clarify priorities, inform resource allocation and provide greater transparency to the campus community.

Both Technology and Finance and Administration plan to develop strategic plans that support the goals outlined by Academic Affairs and Student Affairs. In general, all divisions possess annual plans that guide their priorities and resource allocation.

The university, supported by OIRP, closely monitors registration and enrollment trend data and utilizes that data in short and long-term budget and resource planning. The university has successfully contracted with external consultants (EAB and Academic Partners) to reach short and long-term enrollment goals and mitigate expected demographic (and more recently pandemic) related challenges. In Fall 2020, the University implemented EAB Academic Performance Solutions (APS) which provides access to key performance metrics that give visibility across student, HR, and finance data to department chairs, deans and other senior leadership to support academic planning and budgeting. Additionally, OIRP regularly administers three national survey instruments (NSSE, CSI and MYSA) that provide aggregate and benchmarking data that inform resource allocation and planning. Most recently, the OIRP administered two surveys to measure effectiveness in responding to the pandemic as well as to provide useful information for continued pandemic response planning (see Standard Eight).

Evaluation

Description

FSU regularly assesses student learning in accordance with its Program Review Guidelines and associated annual assessment reporting, which together represent a comprehensive seven-year cycle of continuous review and improvement. The Program Review Guidelines, last updated through governance in 2018, is the university's standardized process for academic program review and evaluation that guides departments through the entire self-study process, including learning outcome assessment, data review, external evaluation, and the development of a five-year action plan. Externally accredited programs follow the accreditation cycle and process of their accrediting agencies. Effective AY17, the E Series template was incorporated into the academic annual assessment report in an effort to support program review, with the intent to be annually collecting substantive information that would feed into, and ease the creation of, the self-study. The OIRP provides support, standardized data sets and oversees the review cycle. The Director of Assessment, a full-time professional position charged with maintaining a

culture of assessment, supports and guides departments throughout the seven-year cycle.

The Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs and Students Affairs utilize their comprehensive systems of annual reporting to evaluate their effectiveness, set priorities and allocate resources. All Vice Presidents submit annual reports to the President in June. The President then creates an annual report that is presented to the Board of Trustees in September.

The university is evaluated annually by the DHE via the Performance Measurement Reporting System, which is a public-facing dashboard consisting of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) deemed priorities for state universities. These KPIs include retention and graduation rates, freshmen credit accumulation, completion of gateway courses, and undergraduate and graduate enrollments, aggregated as well as seen through the lens of the DHE's Equity Agenda. Many of these measures are included in the comprehensive set of 2020-2025 Strategic Plan metrics, which serve to elevate the level of evaluation and transparency of the plan.

The DHE contracted with the EY Parthenon Group in FY21 to conduct a stress test for the state university system. This analysis, which reviewed both historical and projected enrollment and financial data, was designed to measure each university's financial viability in the coming years. Fitchburg State was deemed to be on solid footing and in the top tier amongst peer institutions.

The university's and university affiliates' financial statements are audited annually by an external accounting firm and are reviewed by institutional leadership, the Board of Trustees and the State Comptroller's Office. The University also undergoes reviews and audits by the Quality Assurance Bureau, the State Auditor's Office, and the Board of Higher Education.

Led by the VP of Institutional Advancement, the University engaged the UMass Donahue Institute to determine the economic impacts of the Fitchburg Theater Renovation Project. The resulting report, released in November 2021, will guide planning and fund raising efforts.

The university's Information Security Policy and the Information Technology Disaster Recovery Plan have been approved through legal review and the state, and are affirmed and approved as part of our state, PCI, and financial audits.

The OIRP annually provides statistics about retention, graduation rates and other student success data. Students and faculty are often surveyed about their experiences and that information is disseminated to stakeholders. A number of national instruments (National Survey of Student Engagement, Ruffalo Noel Levitz (RNL) College Student Inventory, RNL Mid-Year Student Assessment, RNL Adult Student Priorities Survey) are administered to assess student engagement and satisfaction. Several data analytic and integration platforms (EAB Navigate, EAB Academic Performance Solutions, and EAB Edify) are utilized to support planning and measure institutional effectiveness. Both undergraduate and graduate students are surveyed upon graduation, and undergraduate alumni are surveyed at one, three and five years post-graduation. Surveys cover such areas as advising, diversity and inclusivity, online learning, adult student experiences, and campus climate, and data are disaggregated by demographic information such as race and ethnicity in support of the equity agenda (see Standard Eight).

Appraisal

The university utilizes the strategic and annual planning processes to track and evaluate its

operational and administrative effectiveness. The aggregation of unit reports into divisional reports and then one institutional report represents a holistic system of evaluation.

Academic departments, through departmental assessment and curriculum committees, recognize the connection between teaching and learning strategies and the evaluation of student outcomes. The program review process includes an annual assessment report, a self-study, an external evaluator, and a five-year action plan. Those academic programs with external accreditation benefit from the rigorous self-study process dictated by their professional association. All components of the program review process are reviewed by the Provost, appropriate dean(s), and the director of assessment and together represent a comprehensive system of evaluation and continuous improvement.

With the creation of the OIRP, the reporting of academic assessment activities has become centralized and more systematic. For AY21, 100% of academic departments submitted an annual assessment report, including new sections devoted to strategic planning. Along with non-academic unit annual reports, these reports allow the VPs of Academic Affairs and Students Affairs to assess their divisions' operational effectiveness. The implementation of a university-wide planning and assessment tool will allow for a more holistic and systematic approach to the reporting and evaluation of non-academic activities.

The OIRP serves as an integral part of Fitchburg State University. It readily creates and distributes surveys, reviews the data, and quickly returns results to interested parties. The office annually compiles data on student retention and graduation rates, and these studies provide demonstrable evidence of institutional effectiveness. Relevant stakeholders review detailed data by sub-populations to measure progress toward the goals of the strategic plan and the DHE Equity Agenda. The administration of numerous national and institutional surveys, as well as various analytics platforms, provides data related to institutional effectiveness and student experiences, including feedback from former students.

The university has become increasingly data-informed and data-savvy, with the result being an increased demand for data. The purchase of EAB's Edify, a data integration and visualization platform, will facilitate data collection and sharing across campus. The recent implementation of the APS analytics platform allows for academic program evaluation and benchmarking.

Ten years of "clean" financial audits, coupled with the recent FY21 DHE "Stress Test," indicate that the systems of checks and balances serve to keep the university on solid financial footing.

Projection

Long-term divisional plans will be developed no later than calendar year 2022, to be in line with the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan. Moving forward, all divisional plans will be finalized and published within one year of the strategic plan.

Standard Three: Organization and Governance

Governing Board

Description

Fitchburg State University is one of six comprehensive State Universities in the Massachusetts higher education system; like its sister institutions, the university's governance procedures and organizational structure are largely mandated by either state law or collective bargaining agreements. The official governing body is the Board of Higher Education (BHE), which is staffed by the state's Department of Higher Education (DHE), led by the Commissioner of Higher Education. The composition and responsibilities of the BHE are enumerated on their website. The BHE is the statutorily created agency in Massachusetts responsible for defining the mission of and coordinating the Commonwealth's system of public higher education and its institutions.

At the local level, FSU is overseen by eleven voting members of a Board of Trustees. Massachusetts law delineates the roles of the Board of Trustees and the chief operating officers of the state universities. Nine are appointed by the governor and serve terms up to five years; these appointments are renewable one time. A student trustee, elected by the student body, serves a one-year term, and the Alumni Association elects an alumni trustee who serves a five-year term. No trustee may serve more than two consecutive terms. The Board elects its chairperson from among its members.

The duties and responsibilities of the Board of Trustees are defined in the General Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Chapter 15A, Section 22. This law states that FSU trustees are charged with the fiduciary management of the institution, including determination of fees, establishment of personnel management policy, staff services, and the general business of the institution. They elect the university President with the approval of the Board of Higher Education, adopt an annual plan of financial operation, award degrees in approved fields, and develop the university's mission statement consistent with the mission of the Commonwealth's system of public higher education. The trustees conduct an annual evaluation of the President based on goals they have jointly established with him. This review is forwarded to the BHE, which is the hiring authority for all chief executive officers in the state university system.

The Board of Trustees, operating under Bylaws revised in October 2000, meets at least four times annually; the chairperson, the university president, and five trustees may, through petition, call special meetings. The meetings and minutes are public, and executive sessions are limited to purposes specified in the by-laws. There are five standing Trustee committees: Academic Affairs, Student Life, Administration and Finance, Personnel, and the Executive Cabinet. Trustees complete a bi-annual self-assessment evaluation that evaluates the board's understanding of their roles, responsibilities, and the university's mission and financial health.

Newly appointed Board of Trustees members are welcomed by FSU's President and provided with orientation materials that include general information on the university including our strategic plan, trustee responsibilities, financial items, academics, and human resources.

Beginning in fall 2020, the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education (BHE) established a training curriculum for all public higher education trustees as directed through a bill signed into law by Governor Baker. Topics covered include fraud prevention, open meeting law, state finance, conflict of interest, public records law, procurement, and fiduciary responsibility. The BHE hosts an annual trustee conference to continue to provide professional development.

Trustees are appointed by the state Public Education Nominating Council. Their Criteria to Guide the Appointment of Trustees includes attention to gender and ethnic qualities that seek to balance the board.

Appraisal

Massachusetts law clearly specifies the authority and responsibility of the DHE and the individual campuses; and the university's governance structure, mandated by the collective bargaining agreements, effectively allows for participation by all segments of the FSU community. Further, while these governance processes have not been locally created, they clearly allow for effective communication across all campus stakeholders.

The Board of Trustees' meeting announcements are posted to the university's website, and all meeting minutes are posted to BoardOnTrack.com. All Board of Trustees meetings are open and include an opportunity for public comment on each agenda.

Through collaboration between the university and the DHE, trustees are provided orientation and continued professional development. This collaboration is facilitated by a position at the state level from the Director of Trustee and Government Relations who also attends board meetings and is available for consultation. Several board meetings during the year also include presentations by university staff about specific areas and initiatives within the university to continue to increase board members' knowledge and understanding of university operations.

The board fulfills its duties and responsibilities as outlined by Massachusetts General Law. Regular attention to financial matters, academic program development, and policies are visible in board meeting agendas. Although the university mission is at the core of all agenda items, more explicit attention might be paid to the institution's progress in fulfilling its approved mission as stated in their duties and responsibilities. Additional meeting time through a retreat may allow for such given the full agendas during the academic year. The self-assessment instrument used by trustees was implemented in 2012. Positive results from self-assessments indicate a functioning board with 88.3% of the 2020 responses in the strongly agree and agree category. The board has not yet engaged in an external perspective to assess its effectiveness.

Composition of the board is managed at the state level with one of the seven supporting attributes of the Criteria to Guide the Appointments stating, "Gender and ethnic qualities that contribute to balance the 'face' of the board to resemble that of the college or university and the community." The state has generally paid attention to these criteria.

Internal Governance

Description

Massachusetts General Law Chapter 15a, section 9 clearly defines the authority and responsibilities of the university President who has the responsibility for establishing the structure of the administration. In July 2015, Dr. Richard S. Lapidus was appointed President and increased the number of Vice Presidents from two to four, including a Vice President for Finance and Administration, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Vice President for Student Affairs, and a Vice President for Institutional Advancement. The roles and responsibilities of each administrator are defined and kept on file, along with the procedures for their selection, in the office of the Human Resources and Payroll Services.

The President is advised by an Executive Cabinet (EC) composed of the Vice President for Academic Affairs, Vice President for Finance and Administration, Vice President for Institutional Advancement, Vice President for Student Affairs, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, Associate Vice President for Finance and Administration, the Chief Information Officer, the Assistant Vice President for Institutional Research and Planning, Associate Vice President for Human Resources and Payroll Services and Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management. In addition to weekly standing meetings with the EC, the President meets each week with the Vice Presidents individually and collectively.

All EC members hold regular meetings with their staff, facilitating communication and information sharing across all campus constituents. In 2014, within Academic Affairs, a dean structure was implemented, with deans overseeing four Divisions (Arts and Sciences, Health and Natural Sciences, Education, and Business and Technology). Prior to this dean model, all academic department chairs reported directly to the Provost. With the 2020 resignation of the Dean of Business and Technology, the university did not replace that dean as a budget savings strategy resulting in three academic deans now overseeing the four schools. A Dean of the School of Graduate, Online and Continuing Education has remained consistent.

At the beginning of each academic year, the President hosts two opening addresses, one for classified personal and administrators and the other for faculty, librarians, and administrators. These addresses typically review major past events and forecast those expected in the new academic year. In addition, the President holds campus forums two to three times each year, repeating them twice in one day to accommodate faculty and staff scheduling demands. These forums often include the Vice Presidents, allowing information sharing across the divisions. In addition to the President's "open door" policy, he also holds open office hours one day per week so that anyone in the university may share their insights directly with him.

The structure of academic governance at FSU, as in the other state universities, is governed by contractual agreement between the DHE and the Massachusetts State College Association (MSCA). The duties and responsibilities of department and library program area (LPA) chairpersons are defined by contract; they are elected by department faculty in accordance with procedures established by Article VI of the contract and may serve up to three consecutive three-year terms. In addition to meeting with department faculty/librarians, chairs meet at least monthly with their academic dean. Four times per year, the VPAA meets with all deans and department/LPA chairs. The Academic Affairs leadership team meets weekly with two meetings of all members including one with an academic department/LPA chair representative,

one with the Associate Vice President and deans, and one with deans only.

A separate contractual agreement between the DHE and the MSCA outlines the responsibilities of the university and faculty teaching in the School of Graduate, Online and Continuing Education (SGOCE). SGOCE programs are part of the overall portfolio of academic programs within the departments. Graduate program chairs and evening undergraduate program managers administer these programs with the majority of these positions held by full-time faculty. Twice per academic year, the Vice President of Academic Affairs and the Dean of the SGOCE convene meetings that include deans, department chairs, library program area chairs, graduate program chairs, and undergraduate program managers.

At the departmental level, governance begins with curriculum committees, which meet to consider new course offerings, program revisions, and new program development. Approved proposals, along with those made by faculty/librarians, students, or administrators and those relating to changes in academic or student life policies are then submitted to the All University Committee (AUC). The AUC is comprised of eight faculty/librarian members elected by their peers, three administrators appointed by the President, and three students selected by the Student Government Association (SGA). Three standing subcommittees—Curriculum, Academic Policies, and Student Affairs—as well as *ad hoc* committees deal with special issues. The Curriculum and Academic Policies committees are composed of 16 faculty/librarian members appointed by the MSCA, three administrators appointed by the President, and three students selected by the SGA; while the Student Affairs committee is comprised of nine students, five administrators, and five faculty/librarian members. The AUC recommends approval or disapproval to the President who has the final authority on each proposal.

There is a separate, contractually defined governance structure for review of graduate policies and curriculum. Departments with a graduate program also have a graduate curriculum committee, which may recommend changes to graduate curriculum or policies. After review and approval by the departmental graduate curriculum committee, proposals proceed to the department chair. If both the graduate program chair and the department chair approve the changes, they are reviewed by the Graduate Council. The Graduate Council then makes a recommendation of approval or disapproval to the President who has the final authority. The Graduate Council, as defined with the MSCA contract, is composed of 10 faculty members appointed by the MSCA, three administrators appointed by the President, and one degree-seeking graduate student elected by the other Graduate Council members.

Graduate program chairs, undergraduate program managers, and SGOCE adjunct faculty meet at the beginning of every other academic year. These meetings include professional development, department meetings, and updates from the SGOCE Dean, VPAA, and President.

The Extended Campus Office, which resides within SGOCE, oversees all contractual partnerships. Each partner signs a one-year Letter of Agreement (LOA) with the university that is reviewed annually by university leadership, with final approval by the VPAA and VPANF, and uses the NECHE policy on contractual arrangements as the guiding structure of the agreement. The LOA outlines delivery of courses and programs, including syllabi review, schedules, instructor credentialing, course evaluations, maximum enrollment, and instructional hours, as

well as financial aspects including registration, payment schedules, and costs per credit.

Appraisal

The President, EC, and other campus leaders regularly meet with staff and faculty. Formal and informal meetings provide adequate pathways to communicate and provide feedback. Within Academic Affairs, agendas for deans' and chairs' meetings are set in advance with members submitting items of interest. Additional formal planning efforts resulting from these meetings are often addressed through subcommittees or in summer planning groups.

The shift to an academic dean structure facilitates more immediate and direct communication between department chairs and deans providing additional support to academic departments.

The All University Committee's (AUC) and Graduate Council's consistent activity attests to the widespread campus participation in governance. Both the AUC and the Graduate Council have regularly updated websites to support access to information regarding proposals and to facilitate participation in the governance process. In addition both the AUC and the Graduate Council compile a summary document of all proposals and decisions allowing the campus community to easily review all curriculum and policy changes impacting the campus.

The Fitchburg State University Today newsletter provides widespread communication to the entire campus community. Published biweekly, the newsletter includes current events and announcements. Archived newsletters can be found on the university website.

Student representation to the AUC is the governance voice of the student body. To assist the student members of the AUC and its subcommittees, the Student Government Association (SGA) has been holding weekly open meetings, inviting students to express their concerns to their representatives. SGA also holds special interest forums on topics such as parking as well as social events, which encourage students to mingle with university leadership.

The contractual partnership's LOA emphasizes protection of students, assurance of course rigor, and financial transparency. The LOA outlines student services, course withdrawal policies, refund policies, student complaint processes, and grading and fair practices policies. If a partnership needs to be terminated the LOA outlines processes for students to receive credit from the university and/or the partnering agency to support students for the planned length of the agreed-upon program. Partners are required to meet with the Associate Dean of SGOCE, the Academic Department Chair, as well as the appropriate academic dean multiple times a year to review student progress, address issues, and plan for upcoming programs.

These formal and informal efforts illustrate the downward and upward flow of communication and the active participation in decision-making among all segments of the FSU community.

Projections

The Board, in consultation with the President, will finalize a plan to secure an external perspective on board effectiveness to be conducted by the end of Spring 2023.

The Board will conduct a review of its by-laws by the end of Spring 2022 and identify a permanent review cycle. It will commit to an annual retreat as part of its meeting schedule.

Standard Four: The Academic Program

Overview

Fitchburg State's academic programs are aligned with our mission to prepare students "to lead, serve, and succeed by fostering lifelong learning and civic and global responsibility." Our Institutional Learning Priorities (ILPs) provide a coherent framework for what we want our students to know, be able to do, and value upon graduation, regardless of program of study.

The university has 15 academic departments that offer 34 undergraduate majors, over 50 minors, and 4 undergraduate certificates; 10 departments also offer graduate programs. Programs are structured around student learning outcomes, which identify knowledge, skills, and methods of inquiry to be acquired. These outcomes, along with program requirements, are published in the catalog and on the website. Undergraduate day program Bachelor degrees, including Bachelor of Arts (BA), Bachelor of Science (BS), and Bachelor of Science in Education (BSE), are designed to be completed in four years. Bachelor degrees offered through the School of Graduate, Online and Continuing Education (SGOCE) are consistent with day counterparts, including major requirements, general education requirements, and academic standards for admission and satisfactory progress. While Bachelor degrees through SGOCE can be completed within four years, students may progress at a pace that fits family and career responsibilities. Several SGOCE undergraduate certificates are available to meet needs for career advancement or change. The Honors Program, approved by the Board of Higher Education as a Commonwealth Honors Program, is open to eligible undergraduates in all day programs.

Graduate programs, including Master of Arts, Master of Arts in Teaching, Master of Education, Master of Science, Master of Business Administration, the Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies (CAGS), and a variety of post-baccalaureate and certificate programs, are designed to prepare professionals for advancement in their fields and for additional post-graduate work. The institution offers 20 Master's programs, which require between 30 and 60 credits, and two CAGS programs. Each program has minimum standards for admission and retention. Students must complete graduate degrees within six years. Most programs require research appropriate to the discipline and program level. All but two graduate programs require a comprehensive exam, practicum, internship, thesis, capstone, or clinical experience as a final assessment.

In addition to these degree and certificate programs, the Center for Professional Studies (CPS) supports life-long learning by offering online and face-to-face non-credit professional development options in a variety of professional areas including programming focusing on equity and social change. The CPS also manages the Adult Learning in the Fitchburg Area (ALFA) program, a program for local seniors that includes participants from over 20 surrounding communities seeking personal enrichment and other non-credit community-based courses.

The university Catalog, the publicly-available central reference point for all undergraduate and graduate academic programs, includes admissions requirements; program objectives, descriptions, and requirements; course descriptions; faculty listings; and academic policies. Program, policy, and curriculum changes that move through governance throughout the year take effect in the following Fall; the catalog is updated annually to incorporate these changes,

assuring consistency and reliability. The catalog is available solely electronically to ensure that all users are referencing the most up-to-date version. The university website includes additional information, such as student learning outcomes for individual programs and four-year plans of study that provide detailed course sequences for each undergraduate day program. The documents outline program goals and requirements, communicate program expectations to students, and provide a framework for maintaining coherent design of degree programs.

Assuring Academic Quality

Description

Fitchburg State has an effective system of academic oversight that has a clearly defined structure and allows input from administrators, department chairs, faculty, students, and, where appropriate, outside evaluators. Academic quality is ensured through collaboration between faculty and administrators to oversee, evaluate, and update programs and curricula, including the development of new programs. The Division of Academic Affairs provides leadership and organizational support for student learning and faculty development and, in collaboration with faculty, is responsible for academic oversight and assuring academic program quality. Academic Affairs is led by a Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs (VPAA), supported by a leadership team consisting of three academic deans, a Dean of Graduate, Online, and Continuing Education, a Dean of the Library, an Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs, an Assistant Dean for Retention and Student Success, and an Assistant Vice President for Institutional Research and Planning. The university has established Schools (Arts and Sciences, Business, Education, and Health and Natural Sciences) that each represent a group of connected academic departments and programs. Each academic department is managed by a department chair, who reports to their respective dean, who in turn reports to the Provost/VPAA. Department chairs play a critical role in maintaining academic standards by leading the department curriculum development and review process, ensuring curricular standards are met, and overseeing course schedules and faculty evaluation.

In Fall 2019, the university renamed the School of Graduate, Online and Continuing Education (SGOCE), formerly the Division of Graduate and Continuing Education. Programs offered through SGOCE are managed by a faculty program chair that serves as a liaison between SGOCE and the Academic Department. SGOCE is housed within the division of Academic Affairs and has a dean who is responsible for overseeing the operations of the school, with academic departments responsible for ensuring the academic quality of all credit-based degree programs in their areas, including graduate and undergraduate programs offered through SGOCE. Degree specializations originate in the appropriate academic department. If there is no corresponding academic department, as is the case with some graduate certificate programs, designated graduate curriculum committees perform the appropriate functions.

Overall, the university has seen an increase in online and hybrid course delivery. Online and hybrid course enrollment among undergraduate day students increased by 45% from 2015-2019. Two of the five undergraduate evening programs in SGOCE transitioned to 100% online programs, and one created an online program pathway in addition to maintaining a campus-based option. To support online undergraduate programs, many online general education

courses were developed to ensure all students can complete general education requirements.

Graduate programs have also significantly shifted from evening face-to-face courses to online over the last 10 years. As of Fall 2020, eight of the 14 Masters Programs were offered online (four with campus-based and online program options) and nine of 11 graduate certificates were offered online only. The number of students enrolled in fully online programs increased over twelve-fold, from 140 students in Fall 2014 to 1722 students in Fall 2020.

Matters that pertain to the institution's undergraduate day, evening, and online academic programs, such as program creation, modification, or deletion; course creation or deletion; and the core curriculum start within an academic department. Each department has undergraduate curriculum committees made up of faculty and students within the department; departments that have graduate programs also have graduate curriculum committees or designated faculty responsible for faculty curriculum reviews. Once changes are approved at the departmental level, they are brought to the All University Committee (AUC), as set forth in the MSCA contract Article VII, which then assigns those proposals to the standing sub-committees (Curriculum, Academic Policy, and Student Affairs). Each of these sub-committees has a fixed number of members drawn from faculty, librarians, students, and administrators, per the contract. Graduate curricula and policy changes are brought to the Graduate Council. AUC and Graduate Council actions must be approved by the President. New programs of study must also be approved by the Board of Trustees and the Board of Higher Education. The AUC and Graduate Council websites contain overviews of processes and archives of approved actions.

To ensure students complete degrees in the allotted time, department and program chairs, in conjunction with Academic Affairs, build and maintain course schedules based on curricular requirements, two-year rotations, program reviews, student needs, and faculty availability.

The Director of Assessment is responsible for strengthening university assessment culture by guiding collaborative planning, systemic implementation, and analysis of collected data to make informed decisions that enhance student learning experiences and the institution's operations. Assessment of student learning outcomes, part of the program assessment process, is coordinated by the Director of Assessment and conducted by academic departments annually.

Each academic unit (department, division, school) submits an annual assessment report, which includes a reflection on how their accomplishments and challenges for the year align with the goals and action plans that were established the previous year. The academic units then complete an action plan and updated goals for the following year. The process is outlined on the Assessment webpage. Undergraduate and graduate programs, including the General Education program, undergo a more comprehensive review every seven years, unless they have external-program accreditation reviews on a different cycle. The program review process includes a departmental, faculty-prepared self-study that addresses various areas of the program, including effectiveness of curriculum, analysis of student enrollment data, analysis of student success data collected as a part of a program's Outcomes Assessment Plan, and appraisal of the department's personnel and resources. The review process also includes a visit by and report from an external evaluator. Programs must prepare a response to the external evaluator's report to Academic Affairs as part of their review cycle, providing updates and

clarifications based on external reviewer comments and their own plans for program improvement. Department chairs meet with their dean and the Provost to review the external report and discuss action items. Departments then prepare an action plan based on the department self-study and the external report. This process assures that academic planning and evaluation are aligned with efforts to enhance the institutional mission and program objectives.

For programs seeking external accreditation, that process replaces the program review process, though it includes the same elements, including external evaluation. Several FSU programs are state and/or nationally accredited, including Business Administration, Computer Science, Education, Human Services, Nursing, School Counseling, and Technology Education. Accrediting agencies, in addition to NECHE, include: Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology; Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education; The Council for Standards in Human Service Education, and the International Assembly for Collegiate Business Education. In addition, the Criminal Justice program is Quinn Bill-certified by the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education, making CJ graduates eligible for the Policy Career Incentive Pay Program.

In addition to the standard review process, extended campus programs have additional layers of review. Extended campus programs, partnerships in which the university has engaged in a contractual arrangement to deliver credit-bearing courses and programs, also include a bi-annual meeting with each partner and an annual contract review and approval process, which ensures that students taking classes off-site with partner organizations have adequate access to facilities, learning management systems, and required learning activities at each location. The university ensures extended campus students have access to resources such as the library, IT support, and the writing and tutor centers to assist students. Clear descriptions of the resources available are shared with students and published on the university website.

When program requirements are changed or if programs are eliminated, the university maintains consistency with NECHE and Department of Higher Education (DHE) policy. For program changes, FSU makes arrangements with enrolled students so as not to disrupt their path to completion. Students complete degree requirements according to year of entry, so modifications to curricula do not interfere with degree completion. One example is the recent General Education program changes: communication about the changes has been shared with students, faculty, and staff; and the General Education Program Area Chair shares regular email updates with faculty and advisors so they will be prepared to assist current students navigating the former General Education program and new students under the new requirements.

If a program were to be eliminated, the request must first go through the academic department, then university governance, and finally the President. When programs are closed, the university stops accepting applicants for the program, communicates the change to any current applicants and prospective students, and notifies all current students in the program. The program chair develops a teach-out plan with each current student to make sure they can complete the program in which they started, or to assist them to change programs if they prefer. The decision to close a program is carefully reviewed with consideration of program demand, potential enrollment options, faculty and university support, and financial viability. FSU closed several programs that had lower enrollments or no longer met student needs, including the MEd Education Technology in 2017, the MAT Earth Science in 2016, the Graduate

Fine Arts Director Certificate in 2018, and the Not-for Profit Leadership Certificate in 2019.

Results of program review provide a rationale for program related budget requests. Departmental budget requests are made annually in February of the preceding fiscal year to the VPAA and the Office of Financial Services in the form of program budgets as well as one-time Strategic Funding Requests. Final budget recommendations are made by the Executive Cabinet. The President submits the budget for approval to the Trustees. Similarly, department chairs annually submit recommendations for full-time faculty positions to the VPAA, who then presents these recommendations to the President for approval so that the positions can be advertised nationally each fall. Budget requests for specific program needs in SGOCE, such as supplies or travel funds, are made through the program chairs to the SGOCE Dean or the Associate Dean for extended campus and CPS programs. Final decisions on SGOCE budget requests are determined through the annual budget approval process.

Students completing an FSU degree demonstrate collegiate-level skills in English. Undergraduates must have completed a minimum of four English classes in high school prior to admission. Incoming students with a high school GPA above 2.7 are enrolled into a college-level writing course, Writing I, in their first semester. Students with a high school GPA below 2.7 must complete a writing placement test and are then enrolled in Writing I or Basic Writing depending on their score. Undergraduates are required to complete 12-15 credits of foundational general education courses in their first year, including Writing I and Writing II. At both the undergraduate and graduate level, international applicants from countries that are not English-speaking are required to complete the TOEFL exam or another approved Language Proficiency exam such as Duolingo prior to admission. Minimum required English Language scores for admission are posted on the International Admissions [website](#).

FSU has recently developed programs to support students whose first language is not English. The Heritage Language Program focuses on the promotion of multilingualism and multiculturalism. The goal is to create a continuum of support for students for whom English is not a first language through strategies that celebrate their multilingualism, leverage their cultural assets to further their academic success while enriching the campus community, and provide a social network to promote a sense of belonging. Key components include a [Multilingual Scholars Peer Mentor program](#) to provide co-curricular support for English Language Learners (ELL) and heritage language speakers; a Multilingual Scholars Seminar to provide credit-bearing support in writing, reading, and speaking as well as specific assignment support; implementation of a process by which students with seals of bi-literacy will receive college credits; and a multidisciplinary certificate in "Spanish for the Professions" that can be linked with any major to build a pathway for students with the bi-literacy seal and other heritage language speakers, currently piloted with the Nursing department.

Appraisal

FSU has a long history of assessment protocols that provide a transparent and effective system of review and improvement. Current program review guidelines, coupled with external accreditation processes, provide a clear path for all programs to be regularly reviewed and evaluated. This cycle, along with annual reporting requirements, ensures that the curriculum

offered to all students, in all locations and modalities, is regularly assessed and improved. All programs submitted for external accreditation have succeeded in receiving these distinctions.

Fitchburg State students successfully complete their programs in a timely fashion. For undergraduate students who enrolled as first-year students, the average time to degree completion is 4.3 years. The average credits earned at graduation is 125.

There has been a significant increase in online course programs over the last several years. FSU's existing comprehensive course development and review process has been operational for decades, ensuring academic quality in online courses. Moreover, an academic department chair workgroup that included the Provost and AVP of Academic Affairs, faculty members, department chairs, deans, and the director of digital learning was formed. As a result, FSU developed a new faculty-training module focused on online learning standards and practices that all faculty are automatically enrolled in. In addition, a rubric was developed to assist academic department chairs as they review each new online course along with the Director of Digital Learning before students gain access to the course site. As with face-to-face courses, students have the opportunity to complete evaluations for online courses.

In addition, in 2018 the university was approved for participation in the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements which improves distance education program quality and provides valuable oversight through its membership requirements that include assurance that the university integrates online learning into its regular planning and evaluation processes and that curricula for online learning offerings are comparable in academic rigor to programs offered in traditional instructional formats. A new Instructional Technologist position has been added as well as 1.5 new staff positions over the last four years in SGOCE to provide frontline support to the increasing number of online students.

Our infrastructure to support extended campus programs is robust and collaborative. In order to ensure that the academic quality standards of extended campus partnership programs are the same as on-campus programs, FSU requires that partners who offer degree programs meet with the Associate Dean of SGOCE, the academic department chair, as well as the appropriate academic dean multiple times per year to review student progress, address issues, and plan for upcoming programs. The university also reviews each course schedule, syllabus, and instructor credentials using the same guidelines as on-campus courses. This ensures that our partner agencies follow university syllabi, grading, academic integrity policies, and contact hour guidelines. Each syllabus is reviewed using a comprehensive 28-point rubric that is shared with the partner organization. All partner instructors are evaluated the first time they teach and then subsequently every three times thereafter by a university program chair or their designee.

Undergraduate Degree Programs

Description

Undergraduate degree programs at Fitchburg State are designed to provide students with an introduction to broad areas of human knowledge through their general education requirements, and in-depth mastery of at least one field of study through their major. Through the General Education program, students demonstrate competence in English communication

skills, scientific and quantitative reasoning, and critical thinking across a range of disciplines.

In accordance with its mission, FSU provides a diverse program array to prepare students for a wide range of academic and professional pursuits after graduation. Students completing an undergraduate program are expected to choose a major course of study before the end of their sophomore year, though they are encouraged to do so sooner. The major consists of a minimum of 33 semester hours of coursework. Students must also complete 51 semester hours of coursework to satisfy general education requirements, and an overall minimum of 120 semester hours of coursework for graduation. Students must maintain a minimum GPA of 2.0 in their major and overall in order to complete their undergraduate degree. Some programs require a higher GPA for continuation in the program, for internship work, and for graduation.

Degree requirements are integrated into the major, with 10 of FSU's 34 undergraduate majors offering both BA and BS degrees. Most majors offering both degrees distinguish the BA from the BS by the addition of world language competency at the Intermediate II level. All programs and program requirements are listed in the [Undergraduate Catalog](#). Over the past 10 years, FSU has awarded 7987 Bachelor degrees, of which 7462 were B.S., 128 B.A. and 397 B.S.E.

Appraisal

The university is committed to providing students exposure to broad learning and an opportunity to develop knowledge related to personal and social responsibility, in addition to skills for professional success. While all majors require at least 33 credits of coursework in the program, credit totals vary widely by program, with some majors, particularly those with external accreditation, offering fewer opportunities for student electives. For example, the Nursing program requires 62 credits in the department and 34 credits from cognate departments, some of which satisfy general education requirements. With an additional 18 credits required to complete the General Education program, Nursing students have only six credits of free electives. Similarly, students completing initial licensure in Education are restricted to only one free elective credit. Some majors without external accreditation or licensure, for example Engineering Technology/Electronics and Construction Management, have no room beyond the required courses for free electives. The combined major and general education requirements of several other programs do leave room for more exploration by students (11 free elective courses in English Studies/Literature, eight free electives in Economics and in History, seven free electives in Sociology, and six free electives in Communications Media/Film and Video, as examples). Given that not all non-externally accredited majors provide this free elective space for students to pursue additional knowledge and understanding outside the major, the institution should evaluate its academic portfolio with an eye to ensuring that all students have sufficient access for this exploration.

BA degrees represent a small percentage of the baccalaureate degrees conferred by Fitchburg State (2% over 10 years). In 9 of the 10 majors offering both the BA and BS, the curriculum for the degrees are identical, with the only distinction being the requirement for up to 12 language credits for the BA. This structure has created a disincentive for students to pursue the BA. Only the Biology program has changed its curriculum to differentiate BS and BA degrees internally, both in terms of the classes required and the total number of credits (fewer for the BA).

It is important that the university come to a greater consensus and intentionality between the BA and BS degrees. A chairs' working group was formed in AY19 to examine the BA/BS disparity and make recommendations for increasing the number of BA degrees awarded. Among the group's recommendations was to develop institutional definitions of the two degrees, to make clearer to students the respective benefits of a degree that focuses more on the humanities (BA) and a degree that tends to emphasize science and math (BS) for their long-term goals. The group also recommended collaboration with Admissions to make the definitions of both degrees plain to incoming students, to help them choose which degree best suits their academic and professional objectives. Ultimately, since degree requirements reside in the major, the issue raises the question of curricular revision (as the Biology program has done) to create definitional alignment among and intentionality regarding our degree programs.

General Education

Description

The General Education program, known as the Liberal Arts and Sciences (LAS) program until its name change in Spring 2021, underwent significant revision as the result of six years of outcomes assessments and a 2014-15 program review. Recommendations from the program review were taken up by the LAS Council in 2015-16, which then designed a revised curriculum during 2016-18. Feedback from the campus community throughout the review and revision process informed the new curriculum, which was approved by the All University Committee (AUC) and the President in May 2019. The new program, implemented for all incoming first-year students beginning Fall 2021, requires 51 credits in General Education coursework; up to nine credits may be used for both General Education and the major curriculum.

The 51-credit General Education program is a coherent set of courses aligned with Institutional Learning Priorities. Implemented in Fall 2021, the curriculum is designed for students to acquire a set of core competencies, gain exposure to a broad range of disciplinary knowledge, and develop critical reasoning and analytical skills that prepare them for success in the world of work and as informed members of society. Students begin with a five-course sequence ("Foundation," 15 credits) in their first year. These foundational courses provide essential knowledge and skills related to Reading, Writing, Information Literacy, Quantitative Reasoning, World Languages, Speaking, and Listening. In the broadest portion of the curriculum ("Exploration," 27 credits), students engage in a range of disciplinary ways of knowing through courses that explore diverse perspectives, civic learning, ethical reasoning, logical thinking, personal wellness, as well as inquiry and analysis in various fields of study. In the final portion of the program ("Integration," 9 credits) students bring all their General Education learning together in integrative courses that include hands-on, high-impact learning opportunities (internships, study abroad, civic engagement, student/faculty research, or creative projects). Alternatively, students may conclude the General Education program by completing a minor or a second major in a different discipline, to give them a second area of in-depth learning.

Students enrolled in our state-approved Commonwealth Honors Program satisfy a portion of the General Education program by taking at least six honors courses, two semesters of a language, and two semesters of Honors Thesis (30-31 credits total).

Appraisal

The new General Education program addresses areas for improvement identified during the General Education program review, including the need for a required First Year Seminar; better alignment between learning outcomes and course requirements; expanding high impact practices including interdisciplinary learning opportunities; and designing a curriculum through which students would logically progress from introductory to more advanced coursework.

A group was formed in 2019 to guide the process of implementing the new curriculum, including coding the campus degree audit system. A General Education Subcommittee of the AUC Curriculum Committee was formed through governance in AY20 to evaluate and make recommendations to the full Curriculum Committee on General Education course proposals. In its second year of operation and in anticipation of the Fall 2021 launch of the new curriculum, the subcommittee recommended approval of 623 General Education course designations. In addition, it developed learning outcome guidance documents and provided context for consideration of individual proposals. With the Fall 2021 implementation of the new curriculum, the course review work has now reverted back to the AUC Curriculum Committee.

In Spring 2021, the President approved a Program Area for General Education to serve as the centralized locus for general education as a distinct yet interconnected university program. The Program Area facilitates the implementation, delivery, and assessment of the General Education curriculum and builds relationships with departments and offices across campus in order to amplify the purpose and value of liberal arts and sciences education for all students and university stakeholders. Programmatic modifications to the General Education curriculum are proposed through the AUC governance process, with departments maintaining control over developing and scheduling General Education courses, and governance committees maintaining control over approving individual courses for General Education designations.

The Major or Concentration

Description

While the General Education program provides undergraduates a substantive introduction to the broad areas of human knowledge, the required major ensures in-depth study in at least one disciplinary or interdisciplinary area based on specific learning outcomes. Students also have the opportunity to pursue knowledge and understanding through free electives; the number of free electives available to a student varies with their chosen program of study. Students can track their progress in meeting the requirements for graduation in a variety of ways, including through the program requirements listed in the catalog, the sequence of courses provided in the four-year plans of study, the individualized web-based degree evaluation available online through Degreeworks, and meetings with their academic advisors.

All undergraduate students are required to complete 33-62 semester hours in their major, as outlined in the catalog and by degree audit records. Each major is designed around a set of learning outcomes, published on the department's website, and provides the opportunity for students to develop knowledge and skills specific to the area of study through intentionally sequenced courses within the major. Departmental curriculum committees, composed of

faculty and students, regularly review the appropriateness of program requirements as well as units' success in preparing students for fields of study. Programs are required to assess learning outcomes annually, and reflect on these outcome data and curricula in their self-studies.

Departments may seek approval through AUC governance to designate up to nine credits of a major curriculum for General Education credit. In order for AUC committees to recommend approval of major courses for this "MAJ" General Education designation, a department must demonstrate that its major course's learning outcomes are aligned with the respective learning outcomes of the 51-credit General Education program. Such overlap of learning outcomes demonstrates the relationship between general education and major curricula.

FSU was awarded a 2020 Davis Educational Foundation Grant to integrate career competencies into program curricula and expand internship opportunities, particularly for majors from traditional liberal arts and sciences disciplines. The Career Services and Advising Center (CSAS) has begun collaborating with faculty from 11 academic departments to develop core career competencies and map those competencies to disciplinary and general education curricula. Staff from CSAS are also working to create a comprehensive internship and employer relations model to support students in building skills for the world of work.

Appraisal

The 2020-2025 Strategic Plan's Goal One highlights our commitment to provide experiential learning opportunities to all undergraduates. Beyond our education licensure programs, 13 academic programs require students to complete an internship, practicum, or capstone experience, while 10 programs offer the opportunity to complete an independent research project or internship as a major elective. Professional programs such as Communications Media, Education, Human Services, and Nursing align curriculum content with practical experience through a required internship or similar culminating experience. The new General Education program also requires students to complete at least one integrative high impact practice, which expands experiential learning to all students regardless of major.

The undergraduate curriculum has experienced several additions in majors and concentrations in the past five years. In addition to the changes to the General Education program described previously, new programs include a Cybersecurity concentration within the Computer Information Systems major and a Technical Theater concentration within the Communications Media program (2017); an Public Health Science major in the Earth and Geographic Science Department, an Educational Studies major in the Education department, and a Strength and Conditioning concentration in the Exercise and Sports Science Department (2018); and a Biochemistry concentration within the Chemistry major (2019). The addition of such programs supported Goal One of the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan to strengthen academic programs in order to prepare students for success in the workforce. Areas for new program development were informed by national data provided by Gray Associates and EAB to evaluate student demand, competition, job opportunities, and other environmental and market factors.

While all majors are structured intentionally for students to progress from introductory through advanced levels of learning, the course numbering system is not uniform across programs.

While higher numbers (i.e., 4000) can relate to more advanced courses in given majors, they do not always do so, which can cause confusion for students that may impact course enrollment.

Graduate Programs

Description

The School of Graduate, Online and Continuing Education (SGOCE) offers 14 Masters degrees, 11 graduate certificates, and two Certificates of Advanced Graduate Studies (CAGS) with seven concentration options. FSU also offers graduate programs in Education in cooperation with 32 Extended Campus partners through contractual arrangements. FSU contracted with an Online Program Management provider, Academic Partnerships, in 2017 to help with outreach and promotion of three online accelerated graduate programs. These accelerated programs, which offer seven-week online and face-to-face courses, include the MBA, the M.Ed. in Curriculum and Teaching, and the M.Ed. in Educational Leadership and Management. Enrollment in these programs now represents 59% of all graduate enrollments in SGOCE.

Through SGOCE, FSU strives to provide quality graduate programming to students that is responsive and accessible to workforce and community needs and delivers quality services to support students, faculty, and community members. Graduate programs are designed to provide students with advanced knowledge and skills in their professional field of study beyond the level of a Bachelors degree. Those graduate programs that have an undergraduate program in the same field build on the knowledge and competencies required at the undergraduate level; for example, the M.A. in Applied Communication Studies builds on the B.S. in Communication Studies, moving beyond introductory courses and developing communication skills to application of those skills in the field and applying theory to application.

Academic departments are responsible for overseeing graduate program curriculum and setting standards for graduate-level learning in their program. Each graduate program is managed by a program chair hired through SGOCE in collaboration with the academic department responsible for the graduate program. The program chair is responsible for coordinating faculty hiring and faculty assignments and working with the academic department to qualify faculty in accordance with departmental guidelines. All graduate faculty are given a rank based on the qualifications defined in the DGCE faculty contract, which specifies required professional and academic experience for each rank. The program chair also serves as the primary advisor for students in the program. Larger graduate programs may have additional academic advisors managed by the program chairs. All departments have a graduate curriculum committee or a designated group of faculty for conducting curriculum reviews. The role of the department chair in relation to graduate programs varies somewhat depending on the school, but overall the department chair is responsible for overseeing graduate programs within their department, which includes leading program review processes with the program chair, managing the program learning outcomes to insure alignment with related undergraduate programs, overseeing the faculty hiring process across the department, and maintaining academic assessment processes and departmental accreditation standards across programs where relevant.

Program learning outcomes with possible career pathways are developed and managed by the

academic department and are reviewed during the designated program review process with the program chair and related academic department faculty/administrators. Program learning outcomes are listed on each undergraduate program website; the process of updating graduate program learning outcomes is nearly complete. Graduate programs at FSU prepare graduates for professional careers. All programs include elements of applied learning that vary by program, but might include class assignments that embed workplace activities or projects, practica, field experience, and internships. While all graduate programs encourage contributions to scholarly research and several programs offer a thesis option for a student's capstone experience, there are limited opportunities for university-sponsored research for graduate students beyond their program requirements.

Graduate admission requirements ensure that students admitted to graduate degree programs are qualified for advanced academic study. Minimum admission requirements for all graduate programs include a professional resume, a personal statement, and an official transcript from a regionally accredited baccalaureate degree-granting institution. Additional requirements for specific programs might include a writing sample, one or more references, an RN license for the Nursing program, or passing MTEL scores for licensure-based Education programs. International student admission also requires submission of scores from an approved English Proficiency exam that demonstrate the applicant has met the minimum score requirement. Details of the requirements for international applicants are posted on the Admissions website. Admission requirements for each program are posted in the university catalog. Academic departments work with SGOCE and the Admissions office to review and determine admission standards as well as manage the review of applications and confirmation of admission decisions.

Evaluation of the student experience takes place through a survey distributed to all students upon graduation, a bi-annual survey focused on perceptions of adult and graduate students, and course evaluations that take place each academic term. Survey data is used by academic departments and SGOCE for program and service assessment.

In addition to the creation of more online options, three 4+1 programs have been added to meet the needs of students and the community. One is the Criminal Justice 4+1 graduate program that began in Summer 2017. The Criminal Justice 4+1 program is unique as it requires students admitted into the undergraduate police academy track to complete their four-year program, then complete their police academy training on campus as part of their graduate requirements. Students finish the program with a completed academy credential and then move into the remainder of their online graduate program, which they can complete within one year. The Education and Business Administration departments also implemented 4+1 program options in 2020 allowing for qualified undergraduate students to move into a Master's program within their discipline. In addition to the three graduate online accelerated (seven-week courses) programs, the university also has six other seven-week accelerated hybrid or online program graduate options. Examples include the Applied Communication Studies Program, offered 100% online, and the Educational Leadership and Management Program, a hybrid program with some technology enhanced courses that include campus-based meetings.

Appraisal

FSU has succeeded in increasing the number of online programs and the number of students enrolling in graduate programs. This shift in graduate education from campus-based to more online programs is a result of initiatives in both the 2015-2020 and 2020-2025 Strategic Plans to develop new, flexible curricular modes to serve the needs of a changing student population and meet student and workforce demand for more online options. Projected demographic shifts in the Northeast over the next 10 years show an expected decline in traditional-age college students. Increasing the number of graduate and adult programs that attract non-traditional students is therefore one of the strategies FSU has implemented to maintain enrollment and continue to serve the education needs of the region.

Part of this shift has involved creating more online courses and technology-enhanced classes within existing programs and also creating new online programs or moving some face-to-face programs to an online-only modality. Technology-enhanced classes include some face-to-face and some online components within a course. Another part of the shift included establishing the contract with Academic Partnerships in 2017 to help expand enrollment in key online programs through marketing and promotional support.

The results of these changes can be seen in the number of online courses offered between 2015 and 2019. The number of graduate online courses offered increased 71% between Fall 2015 (68 sections) and Fall 2019 (116 sections). Fall 2020 was not included as most courses moved to an online or remote modality due to the pandemic. Prior to Fall 2017, FSU had approximately five 100% online graduate program options; as of Spring 2021, that number increased to 22, including 11 graduate certificate options. In addition to more credit-based programs moving online, the Center for Professional Studies has also added more online options for professional development and in 2019 partnered with Mindedge, an education company that partners with universities to offer non-credit professional programming, to add approximately 100 online program options across a variety of fields. The ALFA organization, offering education enrichment opportunities for adult residents in the community, also moved to 100% online programming during the pandemic and will continue to offer some online and some face-to-face programming in the future.

In an effort to increase access for graduate students and better align admission practices with professionally-focused program outcomes, the SGOCE eliminated GRE/GMAT scores as part of the admission requirements beginning Fall 2017 for all graduate programs. This decision was part of larger university discussions around admission requirements. It was determined that the GRE/GMAT scores were not the best indicators of success for our graduate programs as many students are working professionals who may have been out of school for a time but could succeed in the programs due to work experience regardless of test scores. In addition to that change, various service processes were updated including the establishment of application, registration, and billing deadlines specific to the online accelerated programs.

One area for continued work is to further assess student experiences. In AY21, 75% of graduating survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed that FSU graduate school provided them with a higher level of learning than their undergraduate experience. It will be important to monitor student satisfaction and retention with the growth online and respond accordingly.

Another area of focus will be increasing the number of research opportunities available for graduate students, which will include seeking out research grants, providing graduate students with training opportunities to learn about grant writing, seeking out and encouraging participation at professional conferences within a student's discipline and field of practice, and seeking out additional opportunities to support graduate faculty research.

Transfer credit

Description

In Fall 2021, 254 undergraduate transfer students were enrolled at FSU; 64% were full-time. The university's policy on transfer admission, which is consistent with the NECHE Transfer and Award of Academic Credit Policy, can be found on the website and in the undergraduate and graduate catalogs. Undergraduate transfer credit is granted for courses completed at regionally accredited colleges and universities for which the student received a 1.7 or better and which correspond to ones offered at FSU. Courses that do not fit the degree program may be counted as fulfilling free electives for the four-year curriculum. Lower-level undergraduate transfer equivalencies are determined by the Registrar while upper-level undergraduate ones are determined by departments. No graduation credit is awarded for pre-collegiate-level or remedial work designed to prepare students for collegiate study.

A maximum of 75 credits may be transferred from two-year institutions and 90 total credits may be transferred from four-year institutions. However, in order to reduce barriers for students pursuing their Bachelors in Nursing degree, the university will allow RN to BSN students to transfer 88 credits from two-year institutions. At least 50% of any major or certificate program must be earned at FSU, and students must complete at least two courses at FSU for any earned minor. This ensures that students meet their chosen program of study's learning outcomes. Graduate students may transfer in up to six credits from another regionally accredited university or equivalent with permission from the program chair. Courses must have been completed within six years of degree completion and have not been previously counted toward an earned master's degree. Courses must also have a minimum 3.0 GPA to transfer.

The university participates in MassTransfer, a collaboration led by the Massachusetts DHE between community colleges, state universities, and the University of Massachusetts. FSU works with state partners to create a seamless transfer process for students. MassTransfer drives the strategic planning efforts around transfer enrollment in areas such as creating statewide foundational course equivalencies and transfer pathways to help transfer students successfully complete Bachelors degrees by maximizing the transfer of credits taken at community colleges or other state institutions. Institutions that are part of MassTransfer participate in the Commonwealth Commitment, which freezes tuition for all four years if students meet the specified benchmarks. All MassTransfer agreements are posted on the MassTransfer website with a link on the university website. Course by course articulation agreements with state community colleges are posted on the Registrar and Admissions websites. Department chairs oversee the viability of course transfers and substitutions.

FSU has developed guaranteed admission agreements with the RN-BS in Nursing program for

students at four regional community colleges as well as a guaranteed admission 4+1 program at Mount Wachusett Community College for both our undergraduate day and online accelerated Bachelors of Business Administration programs.

Appraisal

In response to increasing demand for workers within health science professions, FSU created a career pathway built around a seamless transition from RN-BS Nursing programs. The university established guaranteed admission agreements for the RN-BS in Nursing program with several community colleges. This program allows students to be pre-admitted into a Bachelors program upon admission to their Associates program, with the understanding that they will successfully complete their Associates degree and move directly into the Bachelors program. Students admitted through the guaranteed admission process receive pre-advising into the program. The agreement with Mount Wachusett Community College (MWCC) has been the most successful to date: in the first cohort that completed their degree at MWCC and moved directly into FSU's program, 25 students started their RN-BS Nursing program at FSU. In addition to the RN-BS Nursing program, FSU has a guaranteed admission program in Business Administration with MWCC. These agreements are listed on the [website](#).

Goal One in the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan focused on improving academic programs and several strategies included action items for improving transfer student processes, increasing access, building more transfer pathways, and improving community partnerships. The strategic plan reflected the MassTransfer goals for expanding access for transfer students statewide through collaborative and seamless partnerships. FSU has statewide MassTransfer Pathways for 19 different disciplines and over 250 transfer agreements with individual colleges. While participation in the MassTransfer collaboration has been beneficial for students and for the institutions involved, the Commonwealth Commitment is very restrictive so a small number of students benefit from the program's 10% rebate or frozen tuition and fee rate. For example, in Fall 2021, there were no students enrolled with the Commonwealth Commitment; in Spring 2021 just one student was enrolled. To increase access and decrease student cost, in 2018 FSU approved a change in the number of credits accepted from transfer students, increasing from 60 to 75 credits from 2-year institutions and from 75 to 90 from four-year institutions, decreasing the minimum residency requirement for undergraduate students from 45 to 30 credits. In addition, the RN to BSN program was made more transfer friendly by increasing the maximum number of transfer credits to 88 in 2016.

In Spring 2021, FSU approved a comprehensive and student-focused policy regarding the transfer of general education courses. Various pathways, aligned with the overall number of transfer credits, provide a more efficient and transparent transfer process while reducing the likelihood of unused credits. In addition, an ad-hoc taskforce was created in Fall 2020 to help identify and address additional barriers and service challenges for transfer students. This taskforce will complete a report with recommendations for service and support structures for both online and campus-based transfer students. This task forces continues to meet in AY22.

Integrity in the Award of Academic Credit

Description

The university's degrees and other credentials are consistent with the NECHE Policy on Credit and Degrees and align with best practices of US institutions of higher education. The academic departments are responsible for overseeing program and degree changes and naming practices as well as content, program length, and program level. Curricular changes proposed by academic departments must be approved through the governance process, which helps to ensure consistency with industry and higher education standards. The Office of Institutional Research and Planning assists with approving and finalizing the Classification of Instructional Programs codes assigned to all degree programs to ensure alignment with national standards. A minimum of 120 credits is required for a Bachelor's degree, and a Master's degree requires a minimum of 30 credits. The Bachelor's degree credential requires that no more than 50% of the credits within a student's major can be transferred and students must complete a minimum of 30 credits at FSU. Graduate students can transfer a maximum number of six credits, so they must complete a minimum of 24 credits in their degree program.

All degree requirements are posted in the catalog and on the website. To assist students in completing their degree requirements and provide students with the opportunity to see which courses are being offered in upcoming terms, the university has a live seats list that publishes a one-year calendar showing all course offerings and their associated attributes. Four-year plans of study, which outline course sequences for each undergraduate day program, are published on the website to assist students in academic planning and completing their degree within four years. A two-year course rotation for each SGOCE program is made available on the website to assist students in planning for the completion of their program. An online degree evaluation resource, Degreeworks, outlines which courses are needed for each program, and displays courses a student has successfully completed and requirements they still need to complete. Graduate and undergraduate students are able to track their degree progress in real time using Degreeworks, which connects individual student records to degree paths in the catalog.

FSU maintains authority and administrative oversight for the academic elements of all courses that receive institutional credit. This is true across all modalities and locations in which credit-based courses are offered. The university is responsible for approving, reviewing, and assessing course content, reviewing competencies and course outcomes and how they link to program outcomes, and working with departments to oversee the approval of instructors. The university sets admissions criteria, manages the admission review process, and oversees registration, retention, and evaluation of prior learning credits and transfer credits.

FSU also has 32 Extended Campus/contractual partnerships that are managed within SGOCE. The related academic department is responsible for managing the academic curriculum, which is overseen by the Extended Campus Office along with the Associate Dean of SGOCE, the academic deans, and the department chairs. Extended Campus programs that offer degrees are managed by an FSU graduate program chair, who also advises the off-campus students. The program chair oversees the curriculum review process on behalf of the related FSU academic department. All curriculum changes must be approved by the academic department and the Graduate Council and/or AUC. An SGOCE representative, in collaboration with a representative from the academic department, meets at least once or twice a year to review program data,

discuss challenges, and plan for continuous improvements. Each academic year, the Extended Campus partners sign a detailed contract with the university, which obligates them to follow the same procedures and policies, share the same standards for review and approval of programs, courses, and faculty, and have the same curriculum as their on-campus iterations. The Extended Campus Handbook details these policies and procedures.

University procedures ensure that Extended Campus faculty hiring, course, program, and syllabus approval adhere to or exceed university standards. Accordingly, multiple levels of review exist for these programs. An SGOCE representative, the program chairs, and appropriate deans meet with the agencies offering degree programs each year to review processes, curricula, and other pertinent issues. Agency teacher licensure programs are reviewed by the state every seven years, and all previously approved course syllabi are reviewed every three years. FSU program chairs and appropriate deans participate in the syllabi reviews.

FSU offers opportunities for qualified high school students to enroll in university courses through dual enrollment as well as through our state-designated Early College Program. FSU works with internal and external partners to ensure these students receive academic support and advising appropriate to their special program status. Courses offered through our new Early College Program are taught by either full- or part-time university faculty with adjunct hiring following the standard vetting and approval process used across the university.

The institution requires that all programs offered for accelerated time periods, at extended campus locations or online, maintain the same academic outcomes and rigor as those offered during more traditional time periods and modalities. All courses, regardless of location or delivery format, must meet the same requirements as campus-based courses.

Learning outcomes for all graduate and undergraduate programs are created by the academic department. The department is responsible for ensuring that course requirements are appropriate for the level of credit assigned and that content is appropriate to the field of study.

Placement testing is required for first-year students with a high school GPA below 2.7, first-year students taking calculus-based math, and some transfer students to assure appropriate preparation for entry-level English and math courses. No credit toward graduation is awarded for pre-collegiate-level or remedial work designed to prepare the student for collegiate study.

The Admissions Office, Academic Departments, AUC, and the Graduate Council are responsible for overseeing and reviewing continuation, termination, and re-admissions policies. These academic policies, once approved through governance and by the President, are published in the university catalog along with policies related to academic standing.

Online and extended campus students must meet the same entrance and retention criteria as those in on-campus programs, and are afforded the same access to services and the library. Information about academic support can be accessed by students from a distance on the distance learning website. To protect academic integrity, all FSU students must create a student account at the time of course registration or at the time of admission. All students receive a unique student ID number and a unique FSU email address and Falcon Key, which are used to register for courses and gain access to email, Blackboard, and Degreeworks. Security standards

for course access are overseen by the Chief Information and Security Officers.

FSU offers many ways to help students advance in their academic programs such as establishing and maintaining articulation agreements with community colleges, offering dual enrollment, and awarding credit through prior learning assessment (PLA), Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, College Level Examination Program, and military experience. Other experiences for which credit is awarded such as study abroad, internships, independent study, and service learning must include academic components.

FSU does not offer competency-based programs but does have a prior learning assessment (PLA) option, which allows undergraduates to earn up to 30 credits through portfolio assessment. Students must demonstrate prior work or life experience in order to qualify for PLA credit and credits must be aligned with courses. All students earning PLA credit must demonstrate Bachelors-level learning and articulate how their experience relates to course outcomes as applicable. PLA credit does not count towards the minimum.

Every member of the university community is expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. Students repeatedly encounter the university's [Academic Integrity Policy](#), which is included in each course syllabus as well as the university catalog. The Academic Integrity Policy is also located in the [Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Process Handbook](#) and the [Student Handbook](#). An [Academic Participation and Honesty online tutorial](#) created by the library and embedded in the First-Year Experience includes an overview of the Academic Integrity Policy, citation styles, and tips on avoiding plagiarism. In addition, international graduate and undergraduate students participate in an academic integrity workshop run by the library as part of their onboarding process. New faculty participate in academic integrity professional development sessions as part of the New Faculty Academy. Academic integrity topics such as plagiarism are discussed through the Center for Teaching and Learning and other faculty professional development platforms. Some degree programs, particularly ones that lead to professional certifications such as Nursing, Education, Human Services, Criminal Justice, and the Police program, have additional academic and professional integrity standards. [Information on reporting an academic violation](#) is available on the university's website.

Appraisal

FSU has met the educational needs of a changing population by creating flexible, responsive programs while maintaining high standards in the awarding of academic credit in all locations and modalities. FSU has added the Early College Program to assist first-generation college seekers, has updated programming for non-traditional Bachelors-seeking students, and is working to identify unique programming needs to address systemic inequities, through faculty professional development in designing and updating curriculum to address inequities, assessing and understanding academic resource and service gaps related to access, and working with the local community and employers to identify and create professional development and other programming related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). The Center for Professional Studies has created a number of non-credit courses focused on DEI for a variety of audiences. The process of determining how to update and assess our curriculum and service through a DEI lens has started, but more work is needed to clarify action plans and assess outcomes.

Navigate, the Student Success Advising Platform, was implemented in AY18 as the Student Success Collaborative and has improved communication to students about upcoming deadlines, encouraged student registration, and made it easier for students to sign up for advising appointments. The Navigate system was made available to graduate students in summer 2021.

In June 2019, FSU was approved as a State Designated Early College Program, demonstrating the institution's commitment to the principles of that designation of equitable access, academic pathways, student support, and connection to career and effective partnerships.

FSU updated the Credit for Prior Learning through Portfolio Assessment Process in Fall 2021. Changes included enrolling students in a self-paced online module to assist them with portfolio completion and allowing them to submit portfolios electronically. Students are now required to submit an essay as part of the process in which they discuss how their prior experiences relate to the learning outcomes in the course for which they are seeking credit. The name was changed from the Life Experience Credit Award Program (LECAP) to Prior Learning Assessment (PLA). Additional strategies to educate students on the PLA program need to be considered.

FSU also received State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) approval in 2018 which requires annual review and renewal. SARA approval requires institutions to meet national standards for online programming offering the same level of quality as face-to-face courses and programs. Online courses, in addition to being reviewed and approved by department and/or program chairs, must be reviewed and approved by the digital learning coordinator and the appropriate academic dean. The developmental and approval process is detailed here.

Projections

The academic deans will collaborate with academic departments to pursue curricular redesigns that differentiate the BA from the BS beyond the language requirement, beginning in AY22.

Academic departments will undertake an evaluation of program course numbers beginning in AY23 to ensure numbers are consistently applied to indicate lower and upper level courses.

Academic deans will work with chairs to evaluate major requirements and open up space for elective options. A summary report of findings will be produced for every program by Fall 2024.

SGOCE will work with graduate chairs to explore the need for additional opportunities for student participation in research grant-writing and conference presentations. A multi-disciplinary recommendation will be developed by May 2023 and presented to the Provost.

The SGOCE Dean will explore strategies to increase student awareness of and utilization of the PLA and CLEP exam options by Spring 2023.

The university will formalize a transfer student taskforce that will regularly review and update services and processes for transfer students in AY23.

Standard Five: Students

Description

In Fall 2021, Fitchburg State University enrolled 6,751 students. There were 2,504 full-time undergraduates, 852 part-time undergraduates, 520 full-time graduate students, and 2,875 part-time graduate students. FSU does not offer any PhD programs. There are 13 programs that are 100% online with 2,920 students enrolled in 2021. There are four programs that are partially online (50-99%) with 480 students enrolled in 2021. In AY20, there were 138 international students. Approximately 3% of students receive instruction through FSU's other instructional locations through contractual arrangements. In Fall 2021, 1,046 students resided in residence halls, 42% of the full-time undergraduate population.

FSU enrolls significant numbers of nontraditional students. In Fall 2021, 41% of undergraduates identified as first-generation, 20.6% of undergraduates were 25 years old or older, 33% of undergraduates received Pell grant assistance, and 31% of newly enrolled students were transfer students. FSU offers dual enrollment programs, with 136 students enrolled in 2020. As of May 2020, 12.5% of undergraduates had enrolled in disability services.

In Fall 2021, 53.7% of undergraduates identified as female (46.3% as male). 69.4% of graduate students identified as female (30.6% as male). FSU began collecting non-binary gender information in Fall 2017. In Fall 2021, 1.7% of undergraduates and 0.6% of graduate students identified as Trans Man, Trans Woman, demigender, genderqueer, or questioning.

In Fall 2021, 65% of undergraduates identified as White, 14.1% of students as LatinX/Hispanic, 12.6% as Black/African-American, and 2.6% as Asian. 74% of graduate students identified as White, 6.6% as LatinX/Hispanic, 6.6% as Black/African-American, and 3.3% as Asian.

Admissions

FSU describes the students it seeks to serve within its mission statement, vision, and core values. FSU is committed to providing a high-quality educational experience that is also inclusive, integrated, and equitable. Our vision is founded on the principles of social mobility and economic prosperity for all. The 2020-2025 Strategic Plan includes the goal of "forging innovative paths to knowledge acquisition, career readiness, social mobility, and lifelong learning." The undergraduate population includes students traditionally under-served in higher education, including first-generation, low-income, and non-traditional students. Our undergraduates represent primarily the Massachusetts community, with 92% residing in state.

The mission of the Office of Admissions is to provide information about academic program offerings, academic services, and experiential opportunities to prospective students. The Office of Admissions has a recruitment plan that includes strategies to enroll a variety of student populations: first-year, honors, transfer, local, students of color, student-athletes, international, students with disabilities, out-of-state students, and Summer Bridge students.

The organization of enrollment management has shifted over the last ten years. A former Dean of Enrollment position was eliminated in 2015, resulting in Admissions and Registrar moving under the VPAA and the student accounts and financial offices moving under the VP for

Administration and Finance. In 2021, a new position of Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management (AVPEM) was created to coordinate admissions, financial aid, and marketing with a focus on undergraduate enrollment. The AVPEM is a vital member of the senior leadership team, bringing a strategic vision, tactical skill set, and active engagement to the development, coordination, and implementation of a university-wide enrollment management process that addresses recruitment, enrollment, and graduation of students, disbursing financial assistance and scholarships, and marketing FSU to local, regional, and international constituents.

Graduate, online, and continuing education admissions has moved from the Office of Admissions to the School of Graduate, Online and Continuing Education (SGOCE). The purpose of this move was to align graduate admissions decision-making and communication to the recruitment and enrollment work taking place in the SGOCE. However, the Office of Admissions still handles all frontline support for both the graduate and undergraduate programs.

All undergraduate students are admitted based on admission standards set by the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE). FSU admits students who, based on high school GPA (college GPA for transfer students), standardized test scores, and involvement in school and community activities, demonstrate potential for success in our programs. To maintain their desired enrollment and evaluate success in their program, the Nursing department has higher admission standards than the DHE. The Communication Media and Criminal Justice programs also had higher standards in the past 10 years, but recently brought them in line with current DHE standards. Students participating in FSU's Summer Bridge Program are able to meet DHE's standards after successfully completing the program. FSU also participates in the DHE's test optional pilot program through which applicants can opt to not submit SAT/ACT scores and to have their high school GPA be the main basis for admission.

Graduate students are evaluated and admitted based on a variety of admission standards that may be specific to the program to which they're applying. Admission consideration is strongly based on performance in undergraduate degree program, overall cumulative undergraduate GPA, and work experience. In addition, consideration is given to those with strong letters of recommendation, a strong statement of purpose and writing sample, and successful passing of Massachusetts Test for Educator Licensure (for Education only). Admissions requirements vary by graduate program; some programs (e.g., teacher preparation and counseling) may also evaluate candidates for fit and aptitude in their fields. The graduate application review process varies by program. The program chair reviews applications for some programs and for others a staff member may review applications based on criteria set by departments. Standardized tests such as the GRE and GMAT are not required for admission into any graduate programs.

FSU's recruitment strategies are centered on core values of accessibility and affordability. The university evaluates success (via such metrics as retention and graduation rates) of all sub-populations to ensure that all students are successful and this information is used to inform admissions. For example, our Nursing, Communications Media, Criminal Justice, and Summer Bridge programs all have adjusted admission guidelines to balance success and student access.

Over the last three years, FSU accepted 85.4-88.4% of first-year undergraduate applications. Of these accepted applications, 19.5-26.3% of applicants enrolled. Transfer students are accepted

at a higher rate (93.8-93.3%) and are significantly more likely to enroll (51.3-63.1%). Graduate students are also accepted at a higher rate (98.6-96.5%) and more likely to enroll (66-71.5%).

The Admissions office participates in undergraduate and graduate college fairs, high school visits, on-campus visits, academic program information sessions, and panels for school guidance counselors. SGOCE participates in graduate fairs, virtual information sessions, open houses, and workforce development events. SGOCE also visits community colleges, employers, and community agencies. SGOCE and Admissions collaborate on recruitment activities such as international recruitment planning, transfer student outreach, and marketing plans. The 2015 purchase of Slate, a comprehensive higher education CRM, followed by the hiring of technical expertise in 2020, supports strategic recruitment of all student populations.

FSU employs several methods to assess student readiness for collegiate study; one is placement testing. First-year students with a high school GPA of less than 2.7 or in a major that requires pre-calculus are required to take Accuplacer placement tests (Writeplacer, Quantitative Reasoning, Algebra, and Statistics Test, Advanced Algebra and Functions Test). Graduate students entering the Masters of Computer Science take the Accuplacer Computer Science tests (C and Java). Language placement exams for international students are administered through WebCAPE. Remote testing is available and students can retake placement tests once.

The College Student Inventory (CSI) is administered to first-years prior to Fall enrollment. The Mid-Year Student Assessment (MYSA) is administered to the same population mid-year. Both identify readiness and support needs on both the individual and aggregate level. Students are connected to supports and aggregate data can be used for assessment and planning. In Fall 2020, FSU added custom questions on technology and financial need to both the CSI and MYSA related to the pandemic. Data on the risk-level of the first-year class and which supports are most needed is shared at the start of term and also filtered by race/ethnicity and gender. CSI advisor reports are loaded into SSC Navigate for advisors and FYE faculty.

Admitted students receive a number of supports. First-year and transfer students take a First-Year Experience Seminar (FYE). FYE prepares students for a successful college career by developing habits of mind, reading, and information literacy skills. Thematic sections tailor course content to the students' majors, but learning outcomes remain the same.

FSU provides support to undergraduate Latino males through the Hispanic Male Mentoring Program. This program is DHE funded and focuses on the first year. Faculty and peer mentors (with Spanish language skills) work with incoming students to provide proactive guidance.

The Academic Coaching and Tutoring Center offers workshops and in-class support for student success skills such as time management, motivation, and concentration. The SSC Navigate advising platform is used to make academic coaching appointments. The university has 20 peer mentors that provide services to both FYE and non-FYE students. In the Fall semester, peer mentors attend class alongside new students enrolled in FYE and offer workshops and office hours. In the Spring semester, peer mentors lead a variety of activities to help students learn about campus resources, participate in campus social events, and develop study strategies. Writing support is available to both undergraduate and graduate students.

Each semester has a three-week advising period, but advisors maintain contact with advisees all year. Faculty are encouraged to submit enrollment census and deficient mid-semester grades each semester to alert advisors and academic coaches. Alerts can also be generated for academic coach referral, tutor referral, financial aid referral, and attendance issues.

The Career Service and Advising Center provides a number of support services including career and academic advising, graduate school advising, mock interviews, interview room, career assessment, alumni job shadowing programs, and a number of workshops and events.

Appraisal

FSU's total undergraduate population has declined 21.6% since 2011. The majority of this decline is due to decreased numbers of full-time undergraduates, a decline of 29.6% (3558 in 2011 to 2504 in 2021). Over this same period, the part-time undergraduate population has actually grown by 17.5% (725 in 2011 to 852 in 2021). The majority of these declines occurred during the last two years. The 2011 to 2019 total undergraduate population decline was 5.2%.

The population of traditionally under-served undergraduates has increased over the past 10 years. In 2011, 14% of students identified as diverse compared to 31.7% in 2021. The quickest growing populations have been the LatinX population which has increased from 6.5% to 14.2% and the Black or African American population which has grown from 3.9% to 12.6%. The 2020-2025 Strategic Plan includes goals of doubling the undergraduate enrollment of LatinX students (to 25%). To accomplish this diversity goal, admissions created the position of Associate Director of Multicultural Outreach and Recruitment in 2020, and shifted to a new outreach-focused recruitment model. This includes forming partnerships with community-based organizations, meeting with faith-based leaders and community influencers, and outreach to precollege programs. Natural changes in local demographics will likely contribute to the diversification of the undergraduate population. The 2020-2025 Strategic Plan addresses these anticipated demographic shifts and the importance of providing the appropriate supports.

Despite the addition of dedicated transfer staff in admissions and changes in FSU transfer credit policies (see Standard Four), the number of new undergraduate day transfer students has decreased by approximately 27% since 2011, aligning with a regional decline of students at community colleges. The number of transfer students enrolling in online undergraduate programs through SGOCE, on the other hand, has increased, representing 28% of new transfer enrollment in Fall 2021. To address the declining day transfer enrollment, the transfer center, created in 2017, has developed outreach initiatives including personalized outreach to community college transfer coordinators and monthly transfer days during which students can have their transcripts evaluated and admission decisions made immediately for qualifying students. A new online orientation has been developed to assist in the onboarding process.

SGOCE has transitioned the orientation process for all new graduate students to an online platform offered three times a year, at the beginning of Fall, Spring, and Summer semesters. The orientation is recorded and shared for those unable to participate in the online sessions.

FSU's graduate student population has grown steadily over the last 10 years. From 2011 to 2021 the number of graduate students increased 36% (2,497 to 3,395). The 2020-2025 Strategic

Plan has a goal of increasing the enrollment of graduate students by 15% and increasing online enrollment by 20%. These populations have a graduation rate of 85-89%.

The population of traditionally under-served graduate students has not grown as quickly as the undergraduate population (17.6% identify as diverse). The strategic plan has a goal of increasing LatinX enrollment from 5 to 8.5% and African American enrollment from 4 to 5.5%.

The Hispanic Male Mentoring Program targets Latino freshmen for faculty and peer mentoring support. Another program that is particularly successful is the TRIO Student Support Services program (formerly known as Expanding Horizons) which serves first-generation, low-income, and students with disabilities (160 students per year). Students in this program attend pre-semester orientation programs that assist new students in adjusting to university life.

The First-Year Experience seminar is designed to build academic skills and prepare students to succeed in a college environment. Starting in Fall 2021, all incoming first-time students take the course in their first year; transfer students will be enrolled starting in Fall 2022. The course was piloted in Fall 2018, Fall 2019, and Fall 2020 (with 86, 162, and 178 students enrolled respectively). The student populations that participated in the pilot were participants of the Hispanic Male Mentoring program, pre-majors, and Education majors.

FSU has adopted several software systems to provide additional support to at-risk student populations. In 2014, FSU adopted a degree audit system called DegreeWorks. In 2015, FSU partnered with EAB to implement a new predictive analytics and advising platform, the Student Success Collaborative (SSC), now called Navigate. Navigate allows faculty advisors to see risk factors like rates of D, F, or W grades, as well as courses failed and retaken. It is used to collect data related to attendance, deficient mid-term grades, and non-registration status. It also enables student referrals to support services and assists faculty advisors in scheduling course registration advising. Navigate was utilized in Spring 2020 and Spring 2021 to gather information related to possible “walk-aways” resulting from the transition to remote learning. Utilization data reflects the level to which the system is used in order to identify and remediate at-risk behaviors. For example, in AY20 (pre-pandemic), the system recorded 14,105 advising appointments scheduled for 3,053 students with a full-time faculty utilization rate of 79%. Graduate students were added to Navigate in summer 2021 to improve communication and gain some of the service benefits available for undergraduates such as attendance tracking.

Recruitment activities are currently guided by an annual recruitment plan produced by the Admissions Office and an annual action plan created by SGOCE. Longer-term strategic recruitment plans do not currently exist.

Student Services and Co-Curricular Experiences

Description

FSU aspires to provide accessible, evidence-based programming and services to offer all students the opportunity for educational achievement. Our robust slate of student services and co-curricular experiences supports students’ academic, social, career, civic, and wellness needs. The Division of Academic Affairs provides academic and career support in addition to a Student

Success Task Force and a Transfer Student Success Task Force. The Division of Student Affairs coordinates varied student support services and robust engagement opportunities, and the Divisions of Finance and Administration and Technology and the Amelia V. Gallucci-Cirio Library ensure student opportunity and success through a variety of student-facing services.

FSU's student services are guided by the university's mission of preparing students to lead, serve, and succeed. Offices in Student Affairs—including Athletics and Recreation, the Center for Diversity and Inclusiveness, Counseling, Disability Services, Community Health Connections, Housing and Residential Services, Student Conduct, Student Development, TRIO SSS, Upward Bound, Upward Bound Math and Science, and the University Police Department—promote diversity, cultural richness, and belonging as students grow intellectually, build leadership skills, and create strong relationships. Student support offices within Academic Affairs—including the Academic Coaching and Tutoring Center, Career Services and Advising, International Education, the Crocker Center for Civic Engagement, and the Amelia V. Gallucci-Cirio Library—do the same.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion

In providing services, FSU adheres to principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion. The Center for Diversity and Inclusiveness is a hub of campus DEI programming, and a Director of Student Diversity, Equity, and Belonging Programs position was staffed in July 2021. The CDI sponsors an average of 30 events annually and supports identify-based organizations such as Black Student Union, Gay Straight Alliance, Latin American Association, and World Integrated Nations. These principles are also exemplified by the campus-wide Leading for Change committee, individual student-serving departmental efforts, and student-led initiatives.

- CDI created a “First Generation Student Programming Committee” to develop an understanding of the barriers impacting students and to develop programs.
- CDI provides strategic oversight and collaboration with staff and faculty on integrating institution-wide Heritage Month Programming.
- CDI facilitates dialogues on local, national, and global issues through the “Courageous Conversations” (formerly titled “Inclusive Conversations”) initiative.
- CDI provides a resource library and serves as a physical affinity space for Black, LatinX, Asian Diaspora, Native American, Multiracial, LGBTQ+, and multicultural students and allies.
- CDI both sponsors and collaborates to bring prominent keynote speakers on issues impacting minoritized student populations.

Health and Wellness

FSU has multiple student services dedicated to physical and psychological wellness, as well as programs oriented toward the wellness needs of targeted groups. Additionally, professional and student staff receive training to support intervention in mental health crises.

- All incoming undergraduate students must complete the online Haven: Understanding Sexual Assault active bystander training and participate in a facilitated discussion of the film Escalation, which addresses interpersonal/relationship violence and sexual assault.

- Community Health Connections partners with FSU to provide student health services at two locations near campus.
- Free Flu Vaccination Clinic and COVID-19 Testing are available on-campus.
- Counseling Services provides prevention-oriented programming such as QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) suicide prevention training, high-quality treatment services, and referral for psychological difficulties. Additional staff was added in 2021 to expand services.
- Disability Services supports a large number of students with physical and mental health disabilities who receive academic and programmatic accommodations and supports.
- FAVE (Fitchburg Anti-Violence Education) is a campus-wide effort to prevent interpersonal violence, relationship violence, and sexual assault, and to empower those affected by violence through education, trainings, and survivor support services.
- Programming includes ribbon campaigns to create awareness around domestic violence, disordered eating, and other topics; events to dispel rape myths and victim-blaming; Take Back the Night to uplift survivor voices; and collaborations with community partners.

Academic and Student Support Services

Academic, advising, and career support and guidance are available to all FSU students through dedicated offices, as well as well-publicized, individualized faculty advising and office hours.

- The Academic Coaching and Tutoring (ACT) Center offers CRLA-certified drop-in and appointment-based academic support for all students. The ACT Center sees approximately 5,000 appointments per academic year and has expanded peer mentoring to serve all incoming first-year, transfer students, and graduate and online students.
- The Career Services and Advising (CSA) Center offers academic advising to students who have not yet declared a major. CSA also offers career guidance, including Career Fairs, internship planning, and job search support, and in recent years has established a Career Success Certificate, adopted an online recruiting portal and resume book to connect undergraduate and graduate students to employers, and coordinated its first online Career Fair.
- The Amelia V. Gallucci-Cirio Library is an essential resource providing digital catalogs, journals, databases, instruction, and information literacy. Students access individual support through research appointments, an online Chat service providing direct communication to librarians, and the Personal Librarian Program for first-year and transfer students. The Outreach Librarian for Student Success supports students through events and programming.
- The Douglas and Isabelle Crocker Center for Civic Engagement increases student success by engaging students in high-impact practices and learning opportunities through community-based internships, research, and civic learning projects.
- Summer Bridge is a conditional admittance program with intensive academic and mentoring support, to promote academic success.

- The Disability Services Office (DSO) provides accommodations for all FSU students, allowing equal access to all programs and services. The DSO provides testing accommodations in their Testing Center.
- TRIO SSS helps students who are first-generation, lower-income and/or have a disability to excel at FSU, offering 160 undergraduates advising, individual support plans, peer mentoring, and financial aid and academic counseling.

Student Life Services

FSU offers programs to meet both residential and commuter students' needs. In addition to coordinating housing and parking, Housing and Residential Services offers walk-in academic support services, life skill management, Residential Learning Communities to foster a sense of belonging, and professional and leadership skills through the Residence Hall Association. Commuter Affairs offers services and programs to help commuters feel more connected to FSU.

Undergraduate transfer students who choose to live on campus have a community location in Mara Village; when capacity there is reached, transfer students are paired as roommates and placed in other upper-class residence halls. Collective placement of transfer students supports specialized programming, creating a social network to explore campus clubs and organizations.

The Office of Student Development provides student development opportunities through numerous extra- and co-curricular activities, including student employment, community service, commuter programs, and cultural programs. Other key areas offering co-curricular opportunities are Housing and Residential Services, Athletics and Recreation, the Center for Diversity and Inclusiveness, and the Library.

Campus clubs and the Student Government Association (SGA) offer leadership opportunities. Membership in the 75 currently active campus clubs, three sororities, and three fraternities is open to all students. The SGA represents students by participating in campus-wide committees and governing the committees responsible for student affairs, activities, and clubs. SGA representatives serve on 24 FSU committees, including the five major governance committees.

Leadership opportunities are also available as undergraduate employment. The Hammond Campus Center employs students in leadership roles, and students also work as Orientation Leaders, Resident Assistants, Athletic Home Game Management, Recreation Center Attendants, Intramural Officials, Peer Leaders, Campus Center Managers, Center for Diversity and Inclusiveness Program Assistants, Tutors, and Peer Mentors. Paid employment makes leadership roles accessible to all students, including those who must work to afford college.

The Department of Athletics and Recreation provides high quality athletic and recreation programs that challenge students and support their academic endeavors, extending education beyond the classroom and fostering engagement, leadership, and a lifelong commitment to health and wellness. Undergraduate athletes must meet admission standards, and Financial Aid follows all Division III NCAA regulations. Athlete eligibility requirements, published in the student athlete handbook and academic catalog, are the same as progress requirements for all students. The average student athlete GPA is between 2.9 and 3.0, and many student-athletes

are placed on MASCAC all-academic teams and the National Student Athlete Honor Society.

Admissions hosts open houses throughout the year, attended by all student-serving offices. New student orientations introduce students to support services, as does the summer-long, online “Falcon Connections” program, led by Peer Leaders. Some student-serving offices—International Education, Disability Services, TRIO Student Support Services, SGOCE—host additional open houses and orientations for targeted students.

Case Management

The Community Assessment and Risk Evaluation (CARE) Team is a multidisciplinary team that works to meet the needs of all students by addressing their safety, welfare, and academic success. Developed in 2016, the CARE Team functions as a student safety net and receives reports of behaviors and other concerns, working to address them through a comprehensive case management approach in the best interest of the student and the campus community.

The Bias Incident Response Team ensures students, faculty, and staff affected by bias or bias-related incidents have access to appropriate resources and assists FSU in its response in situations that may impact the overall campus climate around DEI. The team reviews and responds to incidents in an educational, non-confrontational, and non-punitive manner.

Policies and Procedures

Policies on student rights and responsibilities, including student conduct and grievance procedures, are well publicized, clearly stated, readily available, and consistently administered. The Student Handbook, the Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Process Handbook, and all other policies are available on the FSU student affairs website.

Individuals responsible for student services are qualified by formal training and work experience. All new hires complete a standardized HR training, including Conflict of Interest, Diversity: Inclusion in the Modern Workplace, Preventing Harassment & Discrimination, Managing Bias, Data Security and Privacy, and more. Employees receive regular check-ins for the first year, then yearly appraisals from managers.

The Office of Financial Aid assists students who, without financial assistance, would be unable to attend college. They administer federal, state, and institutional need-based aid, as well as work study, and in AY20 awarded \$43 million in financial aid to our students. The office informs students about their rights and responsibilities as financial aid recipients through our website and self-service module, print documents, and electronic communications.

The office utilizes the student information system’s auto-packager to award equitably to all students. Academic Works allows students to apply for scholarships offered by the Foundation and others. Web4 lists awards and allows them to actively accept their loans, and also shows missing items needed to complete their file. Dynamic Forms have been implemented to allow students to electronically submit forms, and Google Meets is used to help students virtually.

FSU regularly provides students with clear and timely pre-borrowing information about cost, debt, and repayment. Students and families are given information about their rights and

responsibilities as borrowers. Students must actively accept their loans, complete Entrance Counseling, and sign a Master Promissory Note in order to pay into their accounts.

The Student Accounts Office works with students and families in understanding their charges, applying financial aid to their account, and issuing any refunds they may have due to excess payments. The office is on the Enrollment Management team and Student Success Task Force.

FSU has publicly available policies regarding information that will be included in students' permanent academic record as well as policies regarding the retention, safety and security, and disposal of records. The University's Retention Standards are based on the Massachusetts Retention Schedule and follow state standards for protection. Security Plans and Policies comply with National Institute of Standards and Technology standards.

The Office of the Registrar manages FERPA forms. The Office of Student Accounts allows for Authorized Users to be created on the Bill Payment Site. Student Affairs recently created a new position to manage health records in conjunction with a dedicated Physician Assistant where students access healthcare at Community Health Connections.

Appraisal

Since 2012, a Student Success unit has been created to improve retention and review policy through a retention and equity lens. Tutoring and academic coaching have been expanded, and a peer mentoring program has been created. Career support services have been expanded and a campus-wide initiative is mapping core career competencies with curricular learning objectives. Summer Bridge has changed from a low-cost to a no-cost program and has expanded to include residential and online attendance options. The inclusion of an online option, making Bridge accessible to students who cannot live on or commute to campus during the summer, will remain. The new Outreach Librarian for Student Success coordinates programs and services aimed at improving engagement, retention, and success. According to the 2020 Climate Survey, 75% of students Strongly Agree/Agree that FSU is committed to their success (up from 70% in 2018), 90% Strongly Agree/Agree that they have the opportunity to succeed at FSU (slightly down from 92% in 2018), and 86% Strongly Agree/Agree that FSU provides the support students need to succeed academically (slightly up from 84% in 2018.)

FSU's student-serving offices have more actively centered assessment in planning since 2012. The Student Affairs Assessment Team launched in AY19 to prioritize assessment, hold student affairs departments accountable, and plan collaborative efforts. In Academic Affairs, each non-teaching department has an annual Unit Action Plan, designed to tie goals, objectives, and expected outcomes to the strategic plan. Counseling Services also collects data to understand the needs and goals of students served, which directs current and future programming.

There is an increased expectation for student affairs departments to be intentional with developing students outside the classroom, while supporting the in-classroom experience. The Office of Student Development is in the process of adopting a co-curricular model for all students that has measurable learning outcomes and supports Institutional Learning Priorities.

The Athletic Department has expressed concerns with adequately supporting student athletes

academically. As the majority of the coaching staff is part-time, with four full-time coaches, it is difficult for coaches to provide academic monitoring, study hall, and advising services for student-athletes. However, coaches are a vital source of information on student academic progress and are critical in connecting student athletes that need support with the appropriate resources. FSU should explore ways to better connect student-athletes with support services.

Focus groups during summer orientation (2016-2019) assessed students' experiences, including their engagement with student services and their understanding of orientation content, and the largely positive results have directed programming decisions. Student orientation has expanded from half-day to overnight summer sessions and blends themes of academic and student life. In 2019, 99% of new students participated in orientation, providing high exposure to student services. During orientation, Financial Aid and Student Accounts hold information sessions on paying for college and financial literacy, and they are working with the First-Year Experience group to create an experiential piece that would include financial literacy.

During COVID-19, student engagement is down by 50% or more in all extra- and co-curricular areas. Student engagement in campus services is also diminished, as on most campuses. Expanded online services, increased outreach, and new programming platforms are among the strategies departments are using to increase engagement. The COVID response survey indicated that mental health, financial, and technology services were most utilized. Falcons Supporting Falcons is a student success outreach campaign initially developed in Spring 2020. To address students' academic and personal challenges, the Student Affairs division recruited faculty and staff volunteers to outreach to all undergraduates for check-ins, appropriate referrals, and reassurance of ongoing support. Given the success of this campaign, it has been modified to focus on outreach to all first-year students each fall term and is managed out of the Office for Student Success. Starting Fall 2022, new transfer students will be included.

Years of exploring how to expand health services and provide students with a wider range of expertise led FSU to eliminate its on-campus health clinic and partner with Community Health Connections, a federally qualified health center with two locations close to campus. CHC has a sliding fee discount program and students access services using their student health insurance. CHC offers dentistry, optometry, behavioral health, and podiatry, as well as evening and weekend hours, that the university was not previously able to provide. This change allowed FSU to meet increasing demand for a broader array of services but was met with initial resistance from some students, faculty, and staff. In particular, students expressed concerns related to access and not having Health Services on campus. It is unclear if these concerns still exist, and more information is needed about the level of student satisfaction with the new health center.

In line with the strategic plan, FSU's goal is providing services which show a commitment to education justice and providing equity of opportunities to students. One strategy is redeveloping the Center for Diversity and Inclusiveness, including a new Director position, to respond both to student requests for additional support and the campus-wide need for leadership around critical dialogue, student advocacy, and strong DEI programming.

The Leading for Change committee coordinated the university's climate surveys, which indicated many students of color don't experience a sense of belonging at FSU. In response to

this discrepancy and to increased national attention to racial injustice, several student-serving departments have focused on improving their DEI commitments. Student Affairs created a DEI committee; the ACT Center implemented a diverse Peer Advisory Council to propose equitable policies; CSA hosted a First-Generation Alumni Panel; the university implemented a Bias Incident Response Protocol and Team; and Library Services formed an internal Anti-Racism Team to assess services. Most offices also implemented reading groups and staff DEI training.

FSU has recently revised its website to be geared towards recruitment and to provide a better experience for users on mobile devices. Policies on student rights and responsibilities could be more centrally located for increased ease of access (see Standard Nine). Financial Aid Dynamic Forms have been implemented to allow students to electronically submit forms, and Student Accounts takes a comprehensive approach to delivering information to students, including both print and electronic communications. Students have 24/7 access to both financial aid and student accounts information, as well as registration details through our self-service module.

FSU students have both electronic and paper options to submit their privacy requests to several offices on campus. Many offices on campus have moved to imaging systems, and this helps with record retention. The university recently purchased dynamic forms software for many offices on campus to aid in streamlining forms on campus and information security.

Although student services programs and offices are open to graduate students, a large percentage do not utilize them. For instance, of the programming provided by career services, 30% is utilized by graduate students. Counseling services reported that 5% of the students seeking mental health services were graduate students. FSU should explore if graduate students need access to these services, or if these lower utilization rates are due to the graduate student population receiving services elsewhere (e.g., employment-based benefits).

Projections

The Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management will develop a multi-year enrollment and marketing plan by Fall 2022 to achieve FSU's strategic enrollment goals.

The VP for Student Affairs will form a team in Fall 2023 to introduce a co-curricular model to the division. In Fall 2025, Student Affairs will work with all departments to evaluate the effectiveness of the co-curricular model. This team will establish a set of assessment standards and the data collected will be used to make improvements to this work in Fall 2026.

In Fall 2022, Student Affairs and Institutional Research and Planning will create and administer a student survey to assess the change to Community Health Connections. In Spring 2023 results will be reviewed by senior leadership and action items will be identified for Fall 2023.

In Fall 2022, SGOCE and OIRP will administer a survey to identify services used and desired by graduate students. In Spring 2023 a team of staff and administrators will develop recommendations, keeping in mind fees associated with varied student services.

In Fall 2022 the Senior Director of Athletics and Recreation will lead a committee to explore strategies that support student athletes' academic success. Committee recommendations will be submitted to the Vice President for Student Affairs in Spring 2023 for review and action.

Standard Six: Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship

Faculty and Academic Staff

Description

In line with our mission statement, Fitchburg State faculty and academic staff are committed to preparing students to lead, serve, and succeed, by fostering lifelong learning and civic and global responsibility. FSU's structures and processes ensure quality of instruction and support for student learning through opportunities for faculty growth and development.

The term faculty refers to teachers, lecturers, and professors at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. FSU has 191 full-time faculty members, teaching across 15 departments (see Standard 6.1 Data First Forms). Each year there are between 80 and 100 adjunct faculty teaching in our undergraduate and graduate programs. There are no teaching assistants, so all courses are taught by either full-time or adjunct faculty. Full-time and part-time undergraduate day faculty are included in the collective bargaining agreement between the Board of Higher Education and Massachusetts State College Association (MSCA), while faculty and adjunct faculty teaching for the School of Graduate, Online and Continuing Education (SGOCE) are covered by the MSCA Division of Graduate and Continuing Education (DGCE) contract.

Academic staff refers to librarians, advisors (career and advising center and TRIO Support Services Program staff), instructional designers/technology trainers, tutors and tutor center staff, Disability Services staff, and co-requisite course staff supporting students' academics.

The faculty and librarian collective bargaining agreement defines faculty ranks, qualifications, hiring and evaluation processes, and workload; it also details faculty rights including academic freedom. The Faculty Handbook defines faculty expectations and processes to ensure that faculty act responsibly and ethically while observing the established conditions of their employment, consistent with FSU's mission and purpose.

Faculty and librarians may be appointed at any rank for which they are qualified, provided that the position was advertised at that rank. Article I of the MSCA contract defines faculty and librarian ranks as well as "full-time," "part-time," "faculty," "librarian," and "tenure." Full-time tenure-track faculty are required to have a doctorate or terminal degree. The faculty consists of individuals with rankings of Instructor, Assistant, Associate, and Full Professor. Departmental faculty vary between six (Earth and Geographic Sciences; Engineering Technology) and 21 (Communication Media). These numbers are based on student need and program size.

The MSCA contract sets minimum and maximum salary ranges and governs all raises tied to promotion and post-tenure review, while the DGCE contract sets the salary ranges for all faculty working within SGOCE. The VPAA negotiates starting salary with incoming faculty hired through the MSCA contract, taking into consideration a range of factors. The Dean for SGOCE assigns ranking and stipends based on the MSCA's faculty definitions.

The Collective Bargaining Agreement provides structure in regard to teaching load, service, and scholarship expectations and opportunities. Full-time undergraduate day faculty teach a 4/4 load. These faculty members may be granted release time from teaching for a variety of

reasons. Examples include department chair, coordinator of the Honors Program, Center for Teaching and Learning, Center for Faculty Scholarship, and Crocker Center, union officer, graduate program chair, and performing grant-supported research. Reductions in workload not governed by the collective bargaining agreement must be approved by the VPAA. Faculty members may request to include SGOCE classes in their four-course teaching load, but most choose to receive additional compensation.

Faculty's right to academic freedom is acknowledged by the MSCA contract for undergraduate programs and the DGCE contract for SGOCE programs. Within MSCA Article V: Academic Freedom and Responsibility and DGCE Article IV: Academic Freedom and Responsibility, specific language outlines the agreement to promote public understanding and support of academic freedom. FSU is committed to ensuring faculty have the academic freedom to pursue their scholarly interests and to implement pedagogical practices that enhance student learning.

Undergraduate day faculty are evaluated in accordance with the MSCA contract. The contract provides well-defined expectations of all faculty members, including in the area of scholarly pursuits. Evaluation procedures assure faculty are current in disciplinary theory, knowledge, skills, and pedagogy. For undergraduate day faculty, evaluators review the narrative prepared by the faculty member, describing the faculty member's teaching effectiveness, academic advising, continuing scholarship, other professional activities, and alternative professional activities. The process also includes student, peer, and administrative evaluations.

To ensure that faculty are demonstrably effective in carrying out their assigned responsibilities, FSU follows the MSCA evaluation process and criteria for undergraduate day programs and the DGCE contract for all SGOCE undergraduate and graduate programs. The MSCA collective bargaining agreement defines the evaluation criteria and process of faculty reappointment, promotion, tenure, and post-tenure review for tenure and tenure-track faculty and librarians. Processes for the hiring, evaluation, and renewal of adjunct/part-time faculty are also enumerated in the MSCA agreement, with the primary criteria for renewal being teaching effectiveness as evaluated through student surveys and classroom observations. All faculty teaching in SGOCE are considered adjunct faculty and their evaluations follow the DGCE contract, Article IX: Evaluations. Specific criteria are outlined in the DGCE contract and include teaching effectiveness, course advising, and instructional obligations as prescribed in Section A(1) of Article VIII. The evaluation of faculty teaching in SGOCE occurs during the first instructional period of teaching in the program and any sixth subsequent SGOCE course.

Faculty teaching in SGOCE that are also considered full-time undergraduate day faculty are able to teach up to five courses a year above load, preferably one course each in the Fall, Spring, Winter, and Summer semesters. Adjunct faculty members teaching in SGOCE are able to teach up to three courses per semester.

All tenure-track positions are filled by nationally advertised searches, with attention given to recruiting for diversity. The recruitment and hiring of new faculty is a shared process which includes faculty members, department chairs, academic deans, provost, and Human Resources. As outlined in Standard Seven, the Office of Human Resources collaborates with departments to assess the needs of vacant positions and identify appropriate advertising with a clear lens

that is committed to increasing diversity within the faculty and staff ranks. At the completion of a search process, the Search Committee submits its final three candidates, unranked, to the department or library chairperson, who then submits the committee's recommendation and a separate chair recommendation to the dean. The dean makes a recommendation to the VPAA. The VPAA reviews the recommendations and makes a separate one to the President who makes the final decision. The dean makes the offer, then a letter of appointment is sent.

FSU provides opportunities for professional growth and development, including the MSCA Professional Development fund and Special Projects Grants from Academic Affairs, which are reviewed and recommended by the Center for Faculty Scholarship. Faculty are invited to participate in Development Day three times a year, and the Center for Teaching and Learning provides additional professional development opportunities. The Office of Digital Learning also offers workshops for adjunct and full-time faculty throughout the year. In addition, SGOCE offers workshops and professional development specific to online and SGOCE programs.

FSU provides processes, policies, and expectations to ensure faculty act responsibly and ethically, and provides sufficient oversight and controls that, while not intrusive or restrictive, offer impartial avenues for identifying and addressing concerns when they arise. The university HR onboarding and regular training as well as the faculty handbook document and update these processes, policies, and expectations as state standards or other internal and/or external entities identify needs or concerns.

All faculty are integrated into the department through university-instituted professional development opportunities. The integration process is multifaceted, including opportunities for mentoring and professional development. The New Faculty and Librarian Academy begins with a two-day August orientation for all new faculty. The Academy continues to provide additional resources, information, and support during the first year. Through these sessions, new full-time faculty and librarians have the opportunity to foster relationships with colleagues, network with colleagues from across the university, learn more about resources to support their work, discover new teaching strategies, and find a supportive community of colleagues and mentors. Some of the sessions included are student advising, academic integrity, the evaluation process, and active and inclusive teaching and learning strategies. For faculty teaching in SGOCE, the SGOCE program chair and the academic department oversee the mentoring of new faculty.

In order to assure a full understanding of what materials are considered a conflict of interest, faculty are required to complete Conflict of Interest Training mandated by the state, and must disclose when they wish to teach materials from which they may receive monetary gain. Copyright Regulations for course materials are also available.

FSU is committed to the regular evaluation of its academic staff's efficacy. The majority of staff members are part of the Professional Administrator bargaining unit. Staff members submit a self-evaluation twice per year in November and April. These self-evaluations, in conjunction with performance and goal-setting reviews with direct supervisors, inform an annual evaluative narrative that is drafted and submitted by the administrator's supervisor in June. The annual report highlights work that is performed, professional development activities, and process improvements/suggestions that provide the supervisor with the ability to address the following

competencies: leadership/management, communication/interpersonal skills, responsiveness, teamwork, problem solving/judgement and discretion, and job knowledge.

FSU's commitment to providing quality of service to students is reflected in its 2020-2025 Strategic Plan. Goal Two calls for FSU to strengthen its identity as a student-ready university and to continue to narrow the achievement gap. Several strategies named to achieve this goal are linked to academic staff's professional practices. This includes implementing a holistic model of student support services, staff training around equity and inclusiveness, and ensuring all process and support services adequately meet the needs of specific student populations.

In addition to individualized professional development action plans established through annual evaluations, FSU faculty, librarians, and staff are encouraged to participate in institutionally-hosted development opportunities. For example, three annual Development Days are open to all faculty and staff. These programs include topics such as the needs of students from underrepresented populations, assessment, advising, and other student support topics.

Appraisal

The number of full-time faculty (defined as tenure-track faculty or temporary faculty hired full-time with benefits) has been generally consistent since Fall 2018, ranging between 191 and 206. Female faculty rates have ranged between 52% to 57% during the same time frame (see Data First forms). Unfortunately, faculty ethnic/racial diversity has not increased, ranging between 12% to 14%. Although the university has not made significant gains in increasing the diversity among staff and faculty, there is a commitment to do so. As noted in our Vision Statement, FSU is dedicated to creating a culture of diversity to meet the needs of the region and enhance the personal and academic lives of the university community. In addition, Goal 4.1 of our 2020-2025 Strategic Plan addresses this concern: "Increase the visible diversity of our faculty and staff in order to nurture the commitment to equity and inclusion through the campus community." For instance, FSU has explored the creation of a Center for Faculty/Staff Equity and Inclusion to address Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion across campus. In 2020, a group of faculty and staff began this work and reported results and recommendations at the 2021 January Faculty Development Day, outlining proposed short-term and long-term goals.

The number of part-time Day faculty has declined 21% from 111 in Fall 2018 to 88 in Fall 2021. This decline in the hiring of part-time faculty is reflective of the decrease in day student enrollment, which has decreased by 23% over the same period. In contrast, there has been a continued increase in graduate student enrollment (15% FTE) which is mirrored by an increase in SGOCE faculty numbers from 75 in Fall 2018 to 98 in Fall 2021 (Faculty Data).

In order to attract and retain diverse faculty and academic staff, the university will continue to place emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion. A Director of Student Diversity, Equity and Belonging has recently been created. The Director's work will help support the attraction, recruitment, retention, academic and professional development of minoritized student populations including students of color, first-generation students, and LGBTQ students. The Director will lead the collaborative effort to provide a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment committed to the success of all students and a shared sense of belonging. This

position will create programming, educational opportunities, and services that address diversity initiatives and topics and will support and work in partnership with colleagues across campus.

FSU provides a mentoring program for new undergraduate day faculty in conjunction with their departmental integration. Departmental supports include assigning seasoned faculty as mentors. All departments indicate that the chair meets with new faculty on a regular basis and/or has an open-door policy to provide ongoing support. Some departments such as Education, Nursing, and Psychological Science assign specific departmental mentors, while other departments such as Humanities have mentors available for new faculty. Further exploration of the varied approaches departments use to integrate new faculty beyond the initial orientation and new faculty academy is needed.

There is a clear process for integrating new undergraduate day faculty into the university. However, as enrollment increases in SGOCE programs the need for adjunct faculty also increases in order to maintain quality programs. SGOCE does not hire full-time undergraduate or graduate faculty; therefore, all integration of new faculty is designed for this adjunct population. In order to ensure a smooth transition for new faculty, new hires in SGOCE are integrated through their program chair and are provided with training opportunities specific to SGOCE and to enhance their understanding of online and adult learning. Although there is a process in place to integrate faculty into SGOCE, this is an area to explore in order to provide a clearer and more definitive process that meets the needs of all faculty teaching in SGOCE.

New faculty have opportunities for professional development through conference funding as well as the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL). The CTL offers a variety of programs for full-time and adjunct faculty and librarians. They include mentorship of incoming faculty and librarians, grants to encourage the use of new technologies or teaching methods, pedagogical and instructional technology workshops, and annual and summer institutes. Several options for travel funding plus other grants through the Provost and President's office are available.

Starting full-time faculty salaries are set at appropriate levels through the application of the MSCA contract, which specifies minimum and maximum starting salaries. The salary history of full-time faculty between 2012 and 2021 reveals a consistent gender difference, with male faculty (including Instructors) earning \$6958 on average per year more than female faculty. This overall difference ranged from a low of \$4518 (AY14) to a high of \$10519 (AY21). The salary gap was most strongly reflected at the Professor level. In contrast, at the Assistant Professor level, the gender pay gap was much smaller, with female faculty often earning slightly more than male colleagues. Therefore, this salary difference does not appear to be driven by inequities in the hiring process. It is unclear why salaries show more divergence at the Professor level; years of service and application rates for post-tenure review are potential variables.

In addition to the close monitoring of our staff representation of diversity, it is important to note that in accordance with Massachusetts Equity Pay Act, HR will conduct a pay-equity study for faculty and staff, to assess whether there is statistical evidence of a gap in salary associated with gender or minority status. This process is expected to cross over the next two fiscal years.

Teaching and Learning

Description

FSU's commitment to teaching and learning is clear from its mission: "Fitchburg State University is committed to excellence in teaching and learning and blends liberal arts and sciences and professional programs within a small college environment." FSU is committed to assessing all academic programs and services, using the Office of Institutional Research and Planning (OIRP) to gather and share data to help improve academic programs. This office assists in the development of Assessment Reports, Assessment Plans, and comprehensive Program Reviews.

Through discussions between academic departments, the deans, and the Provost, FSU determines the requisite number of faculty for each major to ensure students are instructed by a variety of faculty. Enrollment considerations along with each major's needs and the General Education program are used to determine the number of sections of each course to offer.

FSU continually assesses institutional and program student learning outcomes in order to analyze student learning. For example, the School of Education used exit survey data to hire a new academic advisor for the largest program, Moderate Disabilities Post-Baccalaureate. Given the increase in positive feedback in the AY18 Exit Survey, the academic advisor position was expanded in Fall 2018 to include the Severe Disabilities Post-Baccalaureate program. Additional supporting data can be found under the Educator Preparation Stakeholder Survey and the Graduate Aggregate Assessment Report.

FSU seeks through the governance process to enhance the quality of teaching and learning wherever and however courses and programs are offered. In addition, the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) provides opportunities and support for undergraduate day and SGOCE programs to engage in experimentation to improve instruction. The CTL mission states, "The Center for Teaching and Learning enhances the teaching and learning experiences of all faculty, librarians, and students by sustaining, promoting, and celebrating pedagogical practice, innovation, and excellence." The Vincent J. Mara Excellence in Teaching Award, celebrated at the May Development Day, recognizes faculty who have "demonstrated a sustained excellence in teaching, a notable impact on student learning, and a dedication to innovative instruction."

Within the General Education curriculum, multiple course sections are offered by a variety of faculty. The first-year writing courses, Writing I and Writing II, are taught by both full-time and adjunct faculty and offered in various modalities such as online, hybrid, and face-to-face. The English Studies department has published goals to ensure consistency while encouraging faculty to develop themed sections with individual emphases. The First-Year Experience (FYE) course is offered by departments, ensuring flexibility in topic and focus. However, in order to propose a section of FYE, instructors must incorporate the same program learning outcomes, two of which meet General Education learning outcomes, and participate in focused professional development. In Fall 2021 31 FYE sections are offered, taught by both full-time and adjunct faculty. Graduate programs such as the Online Accelerated MBA program have multiple sections of each course that are taught by different instructors.

Our instructional techniques and delivery systems are compatible with, and serve to prepare students for, a global society through curricular innovation and program development, while

creating a culture of diversity and inclusion to meet the needs of the region and enhance the personal and academic lives of the university community. Faculty provide instruction through a variety of modalities to meet the needs of our students. In a February 2021 survey of faculty and librarians (including adjunct and SGOCE), 99% agreed that instructional methods are informed by academic and professional standards and disciplinary expectations. Faculty teaching lecture courses also reported using discussion (85%), active engagement (88%), and experiential experiences (62%). Those teaching lab/field work courses reported using lecture (46%), discussion (70%), active engagement (86%), and experiential content (75%).

Not only does the university strive to enhance the quality of teaching and learning through faculty support and assessment, full-time undergraduate day faculty are evaluated on their teaching effectiveness through observations for reappointment, tenure, and promotion. For adjunct faculty teaching in SGOCE, the DGCE Contract includes specific evaluative criteria in the area of teaching effectiveness to assure high-quality learning experiences for all students.

In addition to the full-time faculty's primary focus on instruction, with scholarship and research as secondary to our commitment to inclusive excellence in teaching and learning, day faculty members also serve on departmental, university, and professional society committees. The committee structure on campus reflects the variety of faculty appointments. The eight faculty members on the AUC are elected by the faculty at large. Additionally, there are two dozen other committees on campus which are populated through a process of self-nominations and appointments by the MSCA. A review of the committee appointments from the last several years shows a broad distribution of representation from all ranks and disciplines.

FSU places a great deal of emphasis upon academic advising for both undergraduate day and SGOCE programs. Each undergraduate day student is assigned an academic advisor within their major; pre-major students are assigned a professional academic advisor through the Career Services and Advising Center. For many SGOCE programs, program chairs are responsible for providing advising for enrolled students. However, for larger programs, such as the online MBA program, a tiered approach has been implemented providing additional academic staff to support students. In the School of Education, some of the larger licensure programs (Moderate Disabilities and Severe Disabilities) have additional academic staff that focus on advising.

To support quality advising beyond academic planning, the CTL has been restructured, with academic advising as a main pillar of its mission. The CTL has created a committee to explore additional advising support and training for all undergraduate day faculty. By adding faculty leads to assist the CTL coordinator, additional professional development opportunities have been created as well as expansion of the CTL website to include advising resources.

Faculty members embrace their contractual and mission-driven obligation to develop professionally and stay current in their fields. The MSCA contract defines continuing scholarship as contributions in any of the following categories: contributions to the content of the discipline, participation in or contributions to professional organizations and societies, research as demonstrated by published or unpublished work, and artistic and other creative activities. All faculty choose at least one, as well as one area under professional activities: public or community service or contributions to the growth and development of the university

community. Adjunct faculty teaching for SGOCE do not have a contractual obligation to develop professionally; however when faculty are hired careful attention is given not only to qualifications and degrees, but to experiences, research, and ability to stay current in the field.

While primarily a teaching institution, FSU is also committed to supporting faculty research, scholarship, and creative activities. All faculty receive Professional Development funds annually through the MSCA contract. The university provides additional funding and support through its Special Projects Grants. Each year, faculty can apply for grants, course reductions, student research assistants, and travel funds. The prestigious annual Faculty Research and Scholarship award recognizes faculty excellence in academic research, scholarship, and creative activity.

Appraisal

FSU has taken a number of steps to create a campus culture of assessment and use data to make improvements in teaching and learning. In conjunction with university-wide assessment, many departments have assessment committees which meet monthly to advance learning outcomes assessment. Assessment committees are composed of four to eight members. Tasks taken on by assessment committees include conducting direct and indirect assessment, curriculum mapping, assessment reporting, and assessment planning. Those departments that do not have their own assessment committee have an assessment liaison/coordinator who is a member of the University Assessment Research Committee and works with the department and its curriculum committee to facilitate departmental assessment.

In working to build a campus assessment culture, FSU seeks to ensure that data is used to improve the quality of instruction and provision of services. When asked if they agree that they use assessment to improve and inform student learning, 85% of faculty have reported that they strongly agree with the statement. Teaching and Learning Hours are scheduled on the Academic Calendar for the third Tuesday of every month during the academic year. The intention is that no other meetings should be scheduled at that time, to provide opportunities for faculty to engage in activities to enrich their teaching techniques. In addition to this, three Faculty Development Days are scheduled per year, at least one of which is primarily pedagogy focused. In the past five years, the university has focused on topics such as inclusive teaching, culturally-responsive teaching, assessment and grading practices, and online teaching.

FSU has made the continued assessment and enhancement of teaching and learning a priority as demonstrated by funding opportunities afforded to faculty and staff. Approximately 70% of the CTL budget has been earmarked for pedagogical grants: scholarship of teaching and learning, innovation, discussion groups, and one-time purchases. The MSCA Professional Development and Retraining fund is in part designed to support activities that “develop new teaching skills and an appropriate facility in the use of media, teaching aids, and other supportive techniques.” Funds are available for focused teaching activities, such as diversity, community engagement, Italian language/culture, Irish culture, and digital humanities. The Grant Center provides opportunities for experimentation and research as well.

Faculty and librarians report feeling supported by the university in the area of teaching and learning. Specifically, in the February 2021 faculty/librarian Survey, 90% of the faculty indicated

that they strongly agreed or agreed that FSU endeavors to enhance the quality of teaching and learning whenever and however courses and programs are offered. 85% of faculty and librarians indicated that FSU provides adequate support to improve instructional effectiveness.

FSU is committed to innovative teaching. Strategic Plan Goal 4 states that FSU will seek to: “Inspire faculty and staff to be involved and experiment, knowing their efforts will be supported through mentorship, guidance, and support.” In the February 2021 faculty/librarian survey, 86% of faculty supported the statement “FSU encourages pedagogical experimentation.” Support is provided to faculty for course redesign to meet students’ changing needs. Since 2015 the CTL has offered a yearly summer workshop on course redesign. Given that the CTL’s mission and the Mara Teaching Award criteria both emphasize innovation, there is broad awareness that pedagogical experimentation is encouraged on campus and in promotion and tenure materials.

Further evidence of pedagogical innovation comes from the 2019 creation of a First-Year Experience (FYE) course. Beginning in Fall 2021, all first-year students take a FYE seminar designed to prepare them for a successful college career. The course develops students’ habits of mind, reading, and information literacy skills in a small-class setting. Through the course, students become engaged thinkers, learners, and members of the university community. As with all of our courses, FYE has specific objectives measured by assignments within the course.

Academic Advising is another area where the university has been innovative and proactive in utilizing both advising tools and services. FSU uses DegreeWorks to facilitate monitoring each student’s academic progress and ensure they are meeting all degree requirements. DegreeWorks shows what requirements a student must still fulfill, along with the different courses that could meet that requirement. FSU has also adopted SSC Navigate, which enables advisors to identify at-risk students, monitor their progress, and easily communicate with them. Advising services were enhanced by combining various offices to create two Centers, Career Services and Advising (CSA) and Academic Coaching and Tutoring (ACT), in order to better coordinate academic and professional advising. Students who have yet to declare a major are assigned a professional academic advisor through CSA. These students are provided career guidance in conjunction with advising to identify a major that fits their personal and career goals. Academic Coaches are available for all students through ACT, as well as Peer Mentors which support students through the FYE seminar and work with transfer students as well.

FSU has enhanced its commitment to both facilitating and promoting faculty research and scholarship. In 2012, an annual publication, *A Community of Scholars*, was launched, showcasing faculty research, scholarship, and creative activities. In Fall 2017, the Provost announced the creation of the Center for Faculty Scholarship (CFS). The CFS has initiated a number of programs to facilitate and promote faculty research and scholarship. Each Spring, the CFS organizes a Faculty Research Colloquium with a panel of four presenters on a common theme, as well as a guest speaker on a related topic. In addition, the CFS organizes panels by faculty or staff on a range of topics related to research and scholarship. Each month, the CFS sponsors a talk by a faculty member in its FSU Speakers Series. In order to promote faculty scholarship, the CFS publishes a newsletter four times a year highlighting faculty from across the university and informing them of upcoming events. The CFS, in conjunction with the Library, also organizes book launches for faculty publications, and maintains a website to serve as a “go-

to” spot for faculty seeking assistance with their research.

The Provost’s office has worked to increase funding for research and scholarship. In recent years, new faculty have been provided with a research start-up fund. In addition, the Provost has increased funds for Special Projects Grants, from just over \$25,000 in 2016 to close to \$44,000 in 2019. Faculty can apply for mini-grants, course reductions, travel grants, or funding for a student research assistant. The Provost and the CFS have worked together to restructure these grants and increase their funding. The Provost has also worked with the Crocker Center for Civic Engagement to create opportunities for Community Engaged Scholarship. As faculty have continued to express a desire for more opportunities to support scholarship and research, continued attention to available and potential grant monies as well as increased opportunities for course reductions should be explored, particularly for junior faculty.

FSU has also worked to enhance student research. Faculty can apply for funding for a student research assistant from the Special Projects Grants. In addition, the CFS has funded two faculty-student research projects each of the past two Springs. FSU also has an annual undergraduate research conference where students have the opportunity to present work related to course research, creative work in the visual and performing arts, study abroad trips, community service, and more. Each year, STEM faculty host a research fair where faculty present a poster about their research and invite students to work with them. Such opportunities need to be expanded across the different Schools. Finally, as part of the new General Education curriculum, one of the High Impact Practices emphasized is faculty-student research projects.

Projections

Academic deans will work with departments to develop strategies associated with Strategic Goal 4.1 of increasing diversity in faculty and staff, with support from Human Resources. Deans will report recommendations and implement the plans for recruitment in AY23.

Academic Affairs will explore continued strategies for supporting faculty as they build their teaching, scholarly, and artistic and creative activities portfolio with attention to time and resources. Recommendations will be developed for review by 2024.

During AY23, the academic deans will collaborate with each of the Schools to explore the possibility of a more standardized department onboarding program.

Standard Seven: Institutional Resources

HUMAN RESOURCES

As of Fall 2021, Fitchburg State University employed 191 full-time faculty and 338 full-time staff and administrators, 188 part-time undergraduate day and SGOCE adjunct faculty, and 82 part-time contracted staff. The Office of Human Resources and Payroll Services assists hiring managers to assess the needs of vacant positions and identify appropriate advertising that is likely to draw a diverse candidate pool. HR reviews staffing to address the divisional representation of underrepresented groups. Professional and faculty positions require advanced degrees. Employees who are hired are compensated appropriately and consistent with federal, state, collective bargaining and employment guidelines. HR has prepared hiring materials for each union group for adherence to policy and collective bargaining requirements. Human Resources is committed to increasing diversity within the faculty and staff ranks, and have included in the hiring guide the importance of diversity and inclusion when assessing candidates. All search committee members are trained on the search process.

FSU offers regionally competitive salaries; salary analysis is conducted for each position using an array of sources. The university participates annually in the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources salary surveys. Benchmarking data for compensation analyses was purchased for administrators and faculty. The AFSCME collective bargaining agreement has a defined salary table. FSU also offers a generous benefits package through the Commonwealth and a range of holiday, personal, vacation and sick accruals. Key benefits include health insurance, life insurance, long-term disability insurance, retirement plans, flexible spending accounts, dental plans, and tuition remission. The collective bargaining agreements provide for additional leave entitlements. Employees are onboarded electronically and are required to complete online modules including training on diversity, harassment, bias, security, and a biannual ethics training per state guidelines.

Employees are evaluated per specific guidelines as defined in each of the collective bargaining agreements. There are four recognized unions at FSU: Association for Professional Administrators; American Federation of State, Municipal, and County Employees; Massachusetts Teachers Association/NEA/Massachusetts State College Association; and Massachusetts Teachers Association/NEA Massachusetts State College Association/Division of Graduate and Continuing Education. The four contracts and related Human Resources policies and training information are available on the HR website.

FSU has a well-established, comprehensive grievance system in place to hear issues and complaints raised by employees and/or their union representatives. HR investigates all grievance allegations, including allegations of discrimination. HR administers the Massachusetts State Universities Affirmative Action Plan, and the collective bargaining agreements outline the grievance process and procedures. HR addresses grievances in collaboration with the Provost as it relates to the faculty contract. The Director of Compliance, Title IX/ADA/EEO reports to HR and has oversight of all Title IX claims. The Director also serves on our Community Assessment and Risk Evaluation Team, Bias Incident Response Team, Title IX State University committee, Clery Compliance Team, Conduct Case Management and Emergency Response Team.

Professional development opportunities are available to all faculty and staff. HR provides a variety of programs ranging from professional topics for supervisors, technical support, communication, diversity and inclusion, and health and wellness. More specific professional development opportunities are provided to faculty and staff through divisions and departments. The Strategic Plan Goals 4.3 and 4.4 pertain to professional development opportunities for faculty and staff to encourage innovation and experimentation with new technologies. This has been especially important with the transition to remote work.

The Strategic Plan Goal 2.3 states: “Provide faculty and staff training around equity and inclusiveness both in and out of the classroom.” Some programs provided are Unconscious Bias, Fostering Inclusion, and The Practice and Language of Inclusion in the Workplace. Leading for Change is a voluntary collaboration of New England institutions committed to student and employee diversity best practices through use of data, institutional benchmarks, and reflective practice. The Leading for Change group conducted a Campus Climate Survey in 2018 and the results show that faculty/staff of color felt like they belonged (85% agreed or strongly agreed) and were satisfied with their experiences at FSU (90% agreed or strongly agreed). In a 2020 survey while fully remote, 70% of faculty/staff of color strongly agreed/agreed that they belonged and 74% indicated they were very satisfied/satisfied with their FSU experiences.

Appraisal

The HR department is committed to addressing changing priorities to meet organizational needs and build a more diverse constituency. Using technology to improve processes and create greater efficiencies remains a focus with recent examples including implementation of the Interview Exchange Module for job announcements and onboarding all employees, Dynamic Forms and Banner HR Electronic Workflow, and Xtender Imaging Software.

The current controls to track positions for funding and approval are manual. FSU uses Ellucian/Banner for data across campus. HR has utilized a section of this system to assist with feeding data to other departments but has not utilized the full module. Implementing the full module will greatly assist with processes related to hiring, position management, and faculty data tracking. HR and Finance have begun implementing this module, to be completed in FY23.

The hiring process for part-time contracted employees needs to better align with the benefitted employment processes; this would result in a more efficient model of hiring all employment groups. In addition, we do not have a documented compensation model for part-time employee rates for managers to review when hiring hourly staff.

HR reviews a position vacancy when it occurs; the classification is assessed to determine whether the position as outlined meets the current needs of the department and university. The data is then provided to the executive leadership group to assess personnel needs. Managers need to be able to review staffing needs prior to submitting a position replacement. The review should include exploring other strategies to fill vacancies beyond replacement.

HR has continually emphasized the importance of diversity and equity in the hiring process. Search committees are trained prior to accessing the applications, with HR playing an active role in reviewing applicants and selecting candidates to ensure qualified candidates meet

diversity goals. It remains critical that continued recruitment and hiring practices and strategies are developed to recruit diverse candidates. The demonstration of our continued commitment can be seen in Strategic Plan Goal 4.1: “increase the visible diversity of our faculty and staff in order to nurture the commitment to equity and inclusion throughout the campus community.”

HR continues to assess programming to engage staff on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion as well as traditional professional programs, including wellness and finances, strategies of working with peers, and more. HR will continue its leadership as part of the Leading for Change Committee to offer professional development programming for faculty and staff regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion at the university and departmental levels. Programming to build shared identity communities within employee groups could be developed to better engage our staff.

Policies are not reviewed according to a university-required timetable or schedule. However, HR annually reviews employee-related policies to ensure compliance to state and contractual requirements. The review would benefit from applying the Massachusetts Equity Agenda Policy and Program Audit lens to ensure inclusive language and removal of unintended barriers.

FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Description

FSU continues to experience positive results from operations and the financial position remains strong. Over the past 10 years the operating activity has produced an operating surplus with the exception of FY 19 and FY20 in which a loss was experienced primarily due to the pandemic and enrollment declines. With the exception of FY20 net assets, the university has experienced positive gains throughout this period. Since 2010, net assets have increased from \$67 million to \$135 million in FY21. The institution has intentionally balanced current operating needs with long-range planning and investment that will ensure the university’s long-term viability.

Revenues and Expenses

FSU receives funds annually as appropriated by the state legislature and approved by the governor. Over the last decade, the amount of funds appropriated to the university has remained relatively stable, representing approximately 32% of the university’s total revenue.

As a consequence of level state funding, non-appropriated funds (often called trust funds) now provide a significant portion of the revenue used to support our students’ educational needs. Massachusetts laws give statutory authority to the Board of Higher Education and institutional Boards of Trustees to administer local trust funds for projects, programs, and activities. The most significant trust fund revenues are tuition and fees, representing nearly half of total revenue (\$49.5 million in FY21). SGOCE tuition and fees make up 31% of total tuition and fees generated. Tuition and fees are evaluated annually by the Board of Trustees to ensure funding while striving to remain affordable and accessible. Affordability is a core value highlighted in the Strategic Plan. After six years of significant fee increases (FY10-16) to bridge the gap between reduced appropriations, increased costs, and unfunded collective bargaining costs, the past six years (FY17-22) FSU has held fee increases between 0%-2% annually.

Additional revenue streams include federal, state, and private grants which comprise around

8% of total revenue. In FY20 FSU received \$4.1 million in one-time federal grants as a result of the CARES Act with the anticipation of \$18.6 million forthcoming. These funds will be primarily used for direct payment to students and to offset lost revenue, refunds, and direct COVID expenses. Auxiliary services, comprising dining and residence halls, have been a steady revenue source representing approximately 14% of total revenue. However, the anticipated decline in undergraduate enrollment was reflected when FY19 residence hall occupancy fell to 80%. That decline has accelerated during COVID as Fall 2021 occupancy was at 62%. The Spring 2020 forced closure of residence halls resulted in over \$2.5 million in housing and dining refunds. The Residence Hall Trust Fund Balance fell below the required 5% reserve for the first time.

FSU receives additional support from fundraising. Money raised and grants received depending on the source, purpose, and donor intention are deposited either temporarily or in perpetuity with the university or with the Fitchburg State University Foundation. The Foundation was established in 1978 to raise and manage private gifts. The Foundation is an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation as defined by the IRS and is governed by an independent Board of Directors. Fundraising programs seek gifts for operating activities, capital initiatives, scholarship support, visiting artists and lecturers, equipment, student and faculty travel and experiential learning opportunities, teaching grants, and faculty research. Fundraising follows the Donor Bill of Rights adopted by the Association of Fundraising Professionals and along with the Foundation's Gift Acceptance Policy, Spending Policy, and Investment Policy.

The Foundation's endowment includes permanently and temporarily restricted funds, professionally invested by three independent fiduciary firms and overseen by the Board of Directors. As of June 30, 2021, the Foundation held net assets or fund balances of \$32,442,678, and the FSU Foundation Supporting Organization had \$2,458,062 in net assets. The Foundation Supporting Organization was established in 1999 to acquire and hold property on behalf of the university. The Supporting Organization is an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation as defined by the IRS and is governed by an independent Board of Directors.

Total expenditures have grown from approximately \$75 million in FY12 to approximately \$115 million in FY21. As reported in the 2021 audited financial statements, instructional expenses continue to comprise the largest component of the operating budget at 37% of education and general expenses and 32% of total operating expenses. Faculty payroll and related benefits represent approximately 86% of all instructional expenses. Other direct expenses for academic support and student services represent approximately 23% of total expenses. Indirect expenditures related to the daily operation of the institution and physical plant represent approximately 24% of total expenses. Auxiliary operations represent approximately 7% of total expenses. Auxiliary revenue and expenditures are primarily from the residence halls. Auxiliary expenditures are separately budgeted and funded from the auxiliary revenue and typically have little impact on other expenditure categories.

Student Financial Aid

FSU is committed to providing opportunities for students of varying socioeconomic backgrounds to pursue an affordable, quality education, and recognizes the role that financial aid can play in closing societal differences in education, achievement, and opportunity. In Fall

2020, 75% of students received financial aid, with the average student receiving \$9,765 in grants or scholarships and \$3,758 in loans. Federal, state and institutional grants and scholarships make up 86% of the aid awarded, with 14% in loans. The average federal student loan debt for students at graduation in 2020 was \$24,670, which remained fairly consistent over the past five years and consistently lower than the national average. In 2020, FSU committed \$2.9 million in local institutional aid, a 15% increase in commitment to financial aid.

FSU is committed to providing students the information and guidance they need to navigate the financial aid process. The Financial Aid Office maintains Title IV compliance through regular training and participation in The National Association of Financial Aid Administrators. The director of financial aid, in consultation with the AVP of Enrollment and VPFA, maintains regular communications with departments and state and federal governments.

Sufficient and Qualified Finance Staff

The finance staff are highly qualified, consisting of multiple support personnel with backgrounds in relevant fields and senior leadership that each have over a quarter century of experience. The department is led by a Vice President of Finance and Administration who has over 30 years in public higher education and 11 years as the FSU Chief Financial Officer. The finance leadership team consists of an Associate Vice President with over 28 years of public higher ed experience; Comptroller, a Certified Public Accountant with 25 years of higher ed experience; and Assistant Vice President of Financial Analysis and Planning with 19 years of higher ed experience. There are also 12 support personnel that all have multiple years of higher ed finance experience with most having an accounting, business, or finance degree.

Budget Process (Multi-year Planning)

The budget planning process begins in late Fall for the next fiscal year and continues throughout the Spring. Starting in the Fall, the Finance Office updates projected budgets based on anticipated enrollment revenue using a model that accounts for factors such as regional demographic data, state enrollment trends, and retention rates. This is reviewed by the Executive Cabinet and President to determine an overall strategy and parameters for the upcoming budget cycle. For the past five years, the focus has been on reallocating existing resources, rather than assuming revenue growth. Presidential forums are held throughout the year to provide budget updates and create dialogue about strategies and parameters. Starting in early Spring, campus-wide workshops and training sessions are offered for those new to the process. Budget templates are then sent to each department. The deans and divisional leads meet with their staff to discuss budget priorities as they relate to the strategic plan and the annual budget goals. Each department then develops their departmental budget in consultation with their divisional lead and enters their base budget into the budget module. During this process, departments may also submit requests for strategic funding which are submitted to the Budget Office with explanations for the requests. Strategic requests are then aggregated for initial review by the VPs followed by a review and approval process with the President.

This culminates in a draft budget proposal which incorporates multi-year projections along with any suggested fee increases and use of reserves. During the past ten years, the budget has

included the use of reserves in order to balance the proposed budget. This amount is often referred to as the structural deficit. The annual operating budget has shown an anticipated “structural deficit” that has ranged from a low of \$1.2M in F14 to a high of \$4.7M in FY21. This deficit has primarily been related to the undergraduate day division which has operated at a deficit during this time for all but two years while overall the university, on accrued accounting basis, has experienced positive growth for all but two of the last 10 years.

The President then submits a balanced budget to the Board of Trustees detailing expected revenues and expenditures based on expected enrollment, multi-year analysis and forecasting, proposed tuition and fee rates, and use of reserves. The budget proposals are then presented by the President and CFO to the Board of Trustees Committee of Administration and Finance for their review with a recommendation to the full board. The full board votes to approve the final budget and any use of reserves along with any fee increases. Through this process the Trustees verify that resource allocations are consistent with the mission and strategic plan and that they contribute to FSU’s long-term financial stability and advance its strategic viability. Trustees retain appropriate autonomy in all budget and financial matters, and review the audited financial statements and all interim quarterly financial reports.

The budget process closely aligns with the Commonwealth’s budget timeline in which the Governor submits a budget to the legislature in mid-January and the House and Senate release their budgets later in the spring, with the goal of having an approved budget prior to the start of the new fiscal year. The amount appropriated to FSU depends on many factors but ultimately reflects the Commonwealth’s fiscal health. In economic downturns FSU has had to realign its resources in response to legislative actions. Budget rescissions are rare with the last one happening in FY09. The university received American Recovery and Reinvestment Act stabilization funds in FY10 and FY11 to help offset the decrease. When state cuts happen FSU’s goal is to maintain access to public higher education and preserve the quality of academic programs and student services. In 2011, the Board of Higher Education, in collaboration with all state universities, updated the comprehensive budget formula, which is used to determine total resource requirements and the allocation of new funding to individual institutions.

Systems and Control

Throughout the fiscal year, budget activity is regularly monitored. Budget reports are available through a variety of electronic platforms allowing departments and management to monitor budget activity and trends. Budget transfers are generally approved by the CFO with the exception of transfers of \$50,000 or more which are approved by the President. Quarterly Financial Statements and other relevant information are provided to the Board of Trustees.

Appropriate mechanisms have been incorporated throughout the financial processes to ensure proper controls and oversight that prevent negative spending or unauthorized use of funds. Examples include automated workflow processes requiring varied levels of approval and compliance reviews, such as with procurement and accounts payable, as well as payment authorizations, which require approval by persons with increasing levels of authority depending on the amount. The systems are used to maintain separation of duties based on annually reviewed permissions and to automate these processes so authorizations are not bypassed.

FSU's and its affiliates' financial statements have been prepared using the "economic resources measurement focus" and the accrual basis of accounting in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, as prescribed by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board. They are audited annually by the accounting firm Cohn Reznick and reviewed by institutional leadership, the Board of Trustees, and the State Comptroller's Office. In addition, Cohn Reznick provides significant disclosures to the Board of Trustees along with in-depth discussions via the Board's finance committee rather than through institutional leadership. FSU has had a "clean" audit, unmodified opinion, for the past 10 years. During 2014-2016 there was one reportable finding each year regarding Federal Work Study, which has been corrected with no findings since. The annual audits are stored in the FSU archives and published on the website. FSU also undergoes audits by the Quality Assurance Bureau, the State Auditor's Office, and the DHE. FSU follows all applicable institutional, federal and state statutes, guidelines and policies. The Foundation follows all prudent and legal guidelines promulgated by applicable authoritative bodies in accordance with the Uniform Prudent Management of Institutional Funds Act.

Appraisal

The past 10 years are a tale of two financial periods. FY11-FY15 reflected a period of continued enrollment growth and a focus on playing "catch-up" from years of lack of investment into facilities and personnel. During this period FSU substantially increased its debt burden as it undertook a multi-year renovation of the Campus Center and Library. Long-term debt increased from \$26M in FY11 to \$62M in FY15 but has remained relatively flat since. FSU also experienced significant increases in student fees during this time to support debt but also because of partially unfunded collective bargaining increases. The second period, FY16 to present, reflects changing demographics of declining traditional-aged undergraduates. The administration's response is to continue to invest in the university, but without incurring significant new long-term debt and with a focus on reallocation of resources in anticipation of continued enrollment challenges. Under President Lapidus' leadership, FSU has begun the practice of reviewing every position opening at the senior cabinet level to determine the need, reallocation, or elimination of the position. Prior to COVID FSU had been experiencing a steady 2%-3% Return on Net Assets since FY16 with a 10-year average Return on Net Assets of 9.4%. During this time net assets increased from \$67M in 2010 to \$135M in FY21 and the university maintained approximately \$50M in unrestricted reserves, which represents nearly six months of operations.

In sum, FSU is in a relatively strong financial position, but it must work to maintain this position. The commitment to this effort is seen in the Strategic Plan's Goal Six: "Steward physical and financial resources responsibly and navigate a path to long-term organization sustainability." To help leadership evaluate tough decisions facing the institution and to support the development of a long-term financial plan, FSU recently implemented the Educational Advisory Board's Academic Performance Solutions (APS) and is currently implementing Edify. APS helps enable data-based decisions by analyzing and benchmarking data across the institution and against peer institutions. FSU has leveraged this data to standardize faculty line requests, evaluating requests based on demonstrated need rather than precedent, and analyze course enrollment data to plan course offerings based on demand. Edify is a data management solution that organizes data assets across campus into a single centralized platform to support real-time

decision making with a 360-degree view of students, faculty, and operations.

Revenues

Consistent with most public universities, FSU's state appropriation has grown in absolute dollars over time, but it has not kept up with increases in collective bargaining cost, fringe benefits, technology, and inflation costs. Revenue from state appropriations have grown from \$21.9M in FY11 to \$33.8M in FY21 which is approximately 39% of the total revenue. This percentage has remained stable and the university does not expect any significant changes in this pattern of state funding. Therefore the university will continue to pursue growth in other revenue streams along with right-sizing cost-containment strategies.

Non-appropriated funds (often referred to as trust funds) have become FSU's primary funding source. Tuition and fees are the primary source of revenue to fund the institution's operations. Despite our increased reliance on tuition and fee revenue, tuition has remained flat since 2001 (by statute), which means the burden has fallen on student fees. This has been particularly true when increases in state appropriations have not kept pace with collective bargaining costs, which are bargained at the state level. The lack of full funding for the collective bargaining agreements results in more payroll expenses shifting to the local trust fund accounts. In turn, the university must cover the associated fringe benefit cost which is currently set at 39.5%.

Auxiliary services, comprising dining and residence halls, had been a steady revenue source, representing 13% of the total FY19 revenue (\$15 million). However the decline in enrollment was beginning to be seen when residence hall occupancy fell to 80% in 2019, pre-COVID. Even with the enrollment decline, the housing trust fund balance was still over \$2 million prior to the forced closure in Spring 2020. This forced closure resulted in student refunds of \$2.5 million in housing and dining fees, most of which were offset by the federal Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HERFF). However, the difference, along with operating losses from the continued declining occupancy levels, resulted in the housing trust fund falling below the required 5% Residence Hall Trust Fund Balance requirement. In future fiscal years, FSU will have to subsidize the Residence Hall Trust Fund to meet the balance requirement. Occupancy continues to be a challenge with Spring 2021 occupancy dipping to 40% as result of COVID restrictions and students taking courses online. It is too early to determine the final impact on the Residence Hall Trust Fund Balance pending deployment of the additional rounds of HERFF funding, but the university is anticipating housing to have an operating loss of \$1.8M in FY22 based on anticipated 60% occupancy. These ongoing challenges and the lack of adequate residence hall trust reserves pose a significant challenge to the university's long-term financial health.

The FSU Foundation's primary purpose is fundraising to support the university. Fundraising priorities align with the Strategic Plan focus on financial aid, student experiential learning opportunities and travel, faculty development, and equipment and facilities upgrades. Specific to facilities upgrades, fundraising will contribute, along with tax credits, grants and state funding, to the major capital project to restore and retrofit a 1927 theater in the Fitchburg Historic district, to create a 1,200-seat Performing Arts Center with a 250-seat applied learning laboratory/black box theater, gallery, restaurant and retail space, which provides opportunities for students and a bridge between campus and the larger community.

Alumni giving is an important element in any Foundation strategy. In terms of donations, the funds raised by the Alumni and Advancement Office decreased from FY18 to FY19. While the amount raised by the Annual Fund increased from FY19 to FY20, the participation rate among FSU alumni decreased during this time. These and other factors led to Strategic Plan Goal 6: “Alumni engagement with FSU and their participation in annual giving will be at an all-time high, thanks in part to the establishment of a culture of philanthropy at FSU and thanks also to an investment-worthy case for support.” In order to address this decline in participation and create action items that will lead to increased participation, FSU has taken on multiple new initiatives, including the Theatre Block project, that may help to establish a culture of philanthropy. These kinds of visible campus and community improvements may raise the case for future support. It is worth noting that the Foundation plays a limited role in overall university finances, and FSU is not overly reliant on it as a revenue source; rather, alumni support illustrates connection to FSU post-graduation.

Budget Process

The process for FY21 began as planned but because of pandemic unknowns (ability to reopen, enrollment impacts, and state budgets) it was necessary for the Executive Cabinet to re-evaluate the budget in order to present a local operating budget to the Board of Trustees prior to the start of the new fiscal year. Post-COVID, FSU was initially looking at a \$16 million revenue short-fall. The state universities, working collectively with Massachusetts State College Building Authority, were able to restructure debt associated with the residence halls, saving FSU approximately \$7 million in FY21. This still left a \$9.3 million gap that needed to be addressed in order to submit a balanced budget to the Board of Trustees. The Executive Cabinet identified expenditures that would not impact the quality of education: travel, catering, and clothing were reduced by \$620,455. A hiring freeze was proposed with the goal of saving \$2 million along with a proposed furlough estimated to save \$1.6 million. Ultimately furloughs were not implemented after Fall enrollment numbers were better than projected. Given the pandemic’s sudden impact, it was determined to balance the budget by using \$4.4 million of reserves rather than more severe cuts to academic or co-curricular programs. This provides more time to evaluate the pandemic’s long-term impact on enrollment along with state and federal support.

Prior to the pandemic, FSU had already begun to undertake efforts to right-size the budget to available resources. Divisions were asked in 2017, 2019, and 2020 to submit aggregated department budgets that were 5% lower or level-funded. This also included FSU offering a Retirement Incentive Plan in 2016 that resulted in \$321,578 annual salary savings. This plan was different from previous Early Retirement Plans offered through the Commonwealth as it was funded by FSU. As personnel represent the single largest budget expense, another early retirement was offered in Spring 2021, with an annual salary savings of \$872,554. Working with the state’s Division of Capital Assets and Maintenance Management, FSU started implementing an Advanced Energy Project in 2012. The project evaluated energy conservation measures (ECM) that would upgrade older mechanical systems and reduce energy consumption and reduce FSU’s carbon footprint. The project was implemented in FY17 and included 24 ECMs estimated to produce energy savings of one million KWH per year, resulting in average savings of \$404,660 annually in utility costs. This also supports the Strategic Plan’s goal to establish

environmental stewardship as a signature strength. Another example of a longer-term view with budgeting and finances was the effort to fund a five-year plan for technology upgrades and maintenance. With technology becoming an ever more critical backbone of operations across all sectors, there was recognition of the need to sustainably fund this function.

FSU continues to make the budget and budget process more transparent, with opportunities for input at various stages. The 2015 implementation of the dean structure within Academic Affairs allows deans to work closely with academic departments, facilitating better articulation of department needs to the Provost when considering budget resources and allocations. In 2019, in collaboration with Academic Affairs, the finance department implemented Academic Performance Solutions, which allows academic deans and department chairs to access key performance metrics they can use during the budgeting process and their annual department reviews. This structure allows for even more opportunities for input and has provided support for departments to consider their budget implications on a more macro level. As this platform is new, the university will continue to provide training to ensure its full benefits are utilized.

Most recently regarding the FY21 budget, the VP of Finance and Administration held a series of town-hall style presentations entitled “What Does the Future Look Like?” This presentation attempted to connect the budget and fiscal health of the institution to enrollments. This will be an ongoing series to provide a greater understanding of the institution’s budgeting process and fiscal health. These presentations will work to address the desire for campus constituents to better understand the budget processing and allocation decisions.

Enrollment

Given that tuition and fees are the most significant source of revenue and are directly impacted by enrollment, FSU is taking active measures to forecast, plan, and monitor enrollment information to inform budget and financial operations. There has been a significant effort from financial and leadership teams to connect these items into a cohesive approach.

Similar to national and statewide trends for public education, FSU has been experiencing a decline in undergraduate enrollment. Fall undergraduate day enrollment has declined 27% (from 3,440 in Fall 2015 to 2,496 in Fall 2021). Day undergraduate enrollment is primarily composed of traditional-aged high school students and local community college transfer students, which have decreased -12% and -19% respectively this past year.

In an effort to increase out-of-state enrollment FSU implemented the Falcon Scholarship in 2017, giving out approximately \$300,000 annually. While undergraduate enrollment has declined the last four years, out-of-state tuition has remained relatively stable during that period (\$1.4 million in FY17 and \$1.2 million in FY21) which has significant financial benefit since the university, per state statute, is allowed to retain out-of-state tuition. These funds are retained in a Commonwealth fund that covers the cost of fringe benefits for employees funded through this account. Therefore, the value of retained out-of-state tuition continues to increase as the fringe benefit rate continues to increase, from 36.27% in FY18 to 39.5% in FY21. So, every dollar of out-of-state tuition retained in this account is worth nearly \$1.40 at this time.

During the past 10 years the focus on merit versus need-based aid has shifted several times due

to transitions in Admissions leadership. As part of our enrollment management engagement with the Education Advisory Board (EAB), FSU reevaluated the aid packaging policies to ensure they align with our long-term enrollment objectives. As part of that review, the university decided to redeploy resources of \$600,000 that had been allocated to a deposit incentive during the pandemic to support on-campus residency in response to our low occupancy levels.

In July 2020, FSU engaged EAB Enrollment Services to conduct a review of current Admissions operations resulting in a number of recommendations, including developing a strategic enrollment plan, optimizing financial aid, and hiring a senior-level Enrollment Management Officer. In June 2021, an AVP of Enrollment Management with extensive experience in public higher education was hired. The goal is to unify Enrollment Management with a focused, intentional strategy to address undergraduate enrollment challenges. FSU also employed EAB Enrollment Services to assist with recruitment of the Fall 2021-2023 classes. The Senior Application Campaign resulted in an increase in applications for Fall 2021 (increased by 54%, with the number of admitted students up 10%). Unfortunately, efforts to yield these applicants do not appear to be fruitful, as the number of deposited students is down 13% from last year.

FSU's School of Graduate and Continuing Education continues to experience growth primarily in the online accelerated degree programs. In 2017, FSU entered into a partnership with Academic Partnerships to provide marketing, recruitment and retention support for four programs strategically chosen to align with an online accelerated model. The initial partnership portfolio included degrees in Business, Nursing, and Education, which generated 10,776 credit hours in AY18 and has grown to 39,438 credit hours in AY21. In FY21 these programs generated \$10.8 in total revenue (up from \$3.88 million in FY18), contributing \$3.6 million to the budget. Conversely, enrollments within the Center for Professional Studies have been declining for the past three years, resulting in a loss of approximately \$115,000 annually. In an effort to counter this trend, the Center is working on a number of initiatives including expanding professional development workshops, partnering with MindEdge to expand online non-credit offerings, and seeking out employers to identify workforce needs and corresponding grant opportunities.

Sufficient and Qualified Finance Staff

In response to the continual increase in financial reporting, the need for more data driven decision making, and more transparency, in 2019 the finance department was approved to add a new position, AVP of Financial Analysis and Planning. This has helped to improve multi-year planning and analysis and to develop more transparent financial and budget reporting.

Acknowledging the significant turnover of staff at all levels during the past five years, one item that continues to be a challenge is to adequately communicate the policies and procedures that are part of maintaining a strong financial operation. Maintaining these policies and communicating these materials in a clear, transparent, and understandable way for the campus community is essential to ensuring ongoing compliance with internal and external expectations. While much of this is in routine practice, having points of clear reference easily accessible will help to reinforce and provide continued support to FSU's successful financial operations.

INFORMATION, PHYSICAL and TECHNOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Library Description

An essential hub for scholarship and learning at Fitchburg State University, the Amelia V. Gallucci-Cirio Library is where people, information, and ideas converge to support student academic success, faculty research and teaching, and community engagement. The library's goal is to create an environment that fosters intellectual curiosity and the social, cultural, and professional development of students, faculty, and staff.

A new, modernized library was opened in Spring 2016, with four floors plus an Archives and Special Collections space. The library is open 89 hours/week during the academic year (67 hours/week during COVID-19). Its facility includes seating for 596 with small tables, large tables, comfortable lounge chairs, group study rooms, a media production room, an instructional classroom with 36 computers, an information commons with 61 computers, printers, and a KIC scanner. The library strives to be a welcoming place by offering an atmosphere conducive to study and research, and meets the needs for quiet and collaborative spaces for students. The Center for Teaching and Learning is located in the Library.

The library provides access to a wide range of resources, including (as of March 2021) over 840,000 books and eBooks, 25,000 streaming videos, 28,000 streaming music files, 117,000 online and print journals, and 179 databases. To facilitate discovery of the collections, in summer 2016 the Library initiated SUMMON, an online discovery service that searches across all library collections, and in summer 2019 redesigned its website. The library employs eight librarians (including the Dean of the Library) who hold a minimum of a Master's degree in library science, six para-professionals, and six part-time staff members.

Librarians teach key information literacy skills that enable users to effectively find, manage, critically evaluate, and use information. Librarians also lead open education efforts and were recently awarded a consortium grant focused on diversity, equity and inclusion in OER creation in alignment with the Strategic Plan's goal to be a student-ready university and narrow the achievement gap. The library develops and holds programming for the university and the local community. Research Help service is offered 60 hours/week by librarians during the academic year in person, by phone, email, and chat, and beginning in July 2021 a 24/7/365 online research help service was added. Interlibrary loan, document delivery, and reserves are also offered. The Archives and Special Collections collect and maintain administrative records and historical materials that document the activities of the university and the surrounding community. These are available to faculty, staff, students, and the public for scholarly research. The Archives and Special Collections currently houses 1600 linear feet of physical records and has 20 digital collections containing over 14,000 items.

The library's strategic plan guides the collective efforts of the library staff.

Facilities Description

FSU's campus hosts 59 serviceable buildings with close to 1,000,000 gross square footage of academic and office space, and 450,000 of residential space on more than 280 acres of land. The majority of campus sits on North Street in Fitchburg, with additional acreage on John Fitch Highway adjacent to campus, Main Street, and property in Lancaster, MA.

FSU's Capital Planning and Maintenance Department provides support for the day-to-day operations of facilities and manages buildings owned by Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the university Foundation. The department utilizes the SchoolDude work order tracking system to ensure a seamless response to student, facility, and staff needs across campus. All systems, including boilers, elevators, sprinklers, are inspected annually for safety and compliance.

All campus spaces are built and maintained following current building code guidelines. Any new construction is LEED certified and recycled materials are utilized when available. All projects on campus are coordinated with the Division of Capital Asset Management or the Mass State College Building Authority for planning, coordination, and construction on campus projects.

The sciences on campus saw a revitalization in the creation of the Antonucci Science Center. Ground broke in 2010 on the creation of the science center Irvine Wing, a new space consisting of over 27,000 square feet of state-of-the-art science laboratories for continual learning and research resulting in Silver LEED certification. The existing Condike wing was also renovated thoroughly with updated labs, classrooms, and offices modernizing the entire complex by 2015.

Renovation began in 2011 on Hammond Hall and work was completed in 2016 after a full renovation of the building interior resulting in a Silver LEED certification and a newly created glass wall entryway to the building, opening the university to the surrounding city. The project included a complete rebuild of the Amelia V. Gallucci-Cirio Library, updated HVAC systems, creation of extensive student meeting space including a game room and hub for gathering and dining, and an art gallery that features work of local artisans and student projects.

In 2018, the university's new ideaLab opened on Fitchburg's Main Street, after a significant overhaul of the existing space. The \$3.5M project renovated 7,800 square feet and was featured by American School & University magazine for outstanding design in interior renovation. The lab features a state of the art game-design studio for students in the Game Design program as well as incubator co-work space that is utilized by the university as well as state officials to support small business development. Work on the existing historic theatre and storefront renovation is in the design and fundraising phase.

The McKay C renovation and lobby addition, a \$3.5M project, included creating a new lobby entryway and building an Education department suite in the existing space. The construction allowed the building to be separated from the McKay Elementary School, operated by Fitchburg Public Schools, by eliminating a connecting walking bridge between the two.

Residential spaces have seen construction renovations including new lobby, common spaces, and study areas throughout Aubuchon Hall and Russell Towers, new vestibules and roofs in Townhouses, along with significant landscaping updates. Simonds Hall was purchased in 2017, a 150-bed apartment-style residence hall, allowing for greater diversity in housing options.

In 2018 FSU participated in an Accelerated Energy Project, a \$9M project to update energy efficiencies on campus including lighting, chillers, and water systems to aid in reducing utilities.

FSU was the recipient of the 2020 Leading by Example Award from the Commonwealth of MA for outstanding public sector energy and environmental efforts in the Public Entity-Higher

Education category. This honor was received specifically due to recent LEED certification of buildings, the Accelerated Energy Project, renovations in Holmes dining hall resulting in a more energy efficient dishwasher, and electric car charging stations put in over the last few years.

Information Technology Description

FSU's Information Technology Department provides centralized support for all information technology services. Through a focused approach using a LEAN IT methodology, services have been greatly expanded, improved, and enhanced over the past decade.

All appropriate classroom spaces are mediated, with a setup consisting of a podium, Windows 10 computer with camera and microphone, DVD, speakers, projector, and laptop connection. Most rooms have a document camera and some have SmartBoards or SmartProjectors.

The core network system was replaced seven years ago and again in September 2021. The wireless system was updated and expanded in 2016 and covers all areas of campus, including most green spaces (this included replacing all edge switches as well).

The walk-up helpdesk is open six days/week for onsite support for students, faculty, and staff. Students receive free labor and warranty support for their computers and free loaner laptops if systems cannot be immediately repaired. The Technology department contracts (with other state schools) with a vendor to provide basic call center services 24/7/365, including the ability to remotely control a problematic computer. The helpdesk also has a large supply of wifi hotspots and Chromebooks that can be loaned free-of-charge to students in need.

All full-time faculty have university-owned laptops that are refreshed on a three-year cycle. Desktop systems, used by some staff and in labs, are replaced on a four-year cycle. There are 36 computer labs on campus that students use for general computing or software requirements.

In 2019, FSU moved to Google Enterprise for Education, aligning the staff and faculty email system to the student system. The inclusion of shared documents, chat, video conferencing, and electronic whiteboards has revolutionized campus communication and collaboration.

In January 2020, the main phone system was replaced with a Voice-over-IP Avaya hosted solution. Since the main phone switch and voicemail systems are no longer on campus, moves, adds, and changes are simplified and allow for home use as well.

In recent years, the university has shifted most Technology equipment spending to come from a Technology Fee paid by students. The fee has increased from \$65 per semester in 2012 to \$250 in 2020 for undergraduate day students. A comprehensive refresh plan was developed for finance in 2016 that forecasts major system refresh timeframes and estimates future costs.

In March 2019, a dedicated Technology trainer was added to the staff, who assists users with utilizing any services and systems provided. IT personnel are encouraged to attend training programs, and the department offers training to new users, training-upon-request, and free classes to faculty, staff, and students on a variety of technology topics throughout the year.

The IT department has made a number of changes to support the university's operations and academic programs. In 2015, FSU contracted with Blackbelt Help to provide 24/7/365 phone

support for all faculty, staff, and students, and IT meets with the call center manager monthly to ensure quality is maintained. In 2017, our Blackboard LMS system was migrated to a hosted, SAAS offering which can dynamically scale as needed. In 2018, the purchase of Dynamic Forms was completed, allowing for electronic approval and workflow of electronic documents on campus, replacing traditional paper systems. In 2019, an additional internet circuit using disparate pathways was configured to enhance our redundancy for connections with the outside world and bandwidth was increased appropriately. In late 2019, the university converted from a Microsoft email solution to G Suite Enterprise for Education (G Suite usage statistics) for all faculty and staff (students were already on this platform), enhancing their ability to share documents, video conference, and remote work. In early 2020, the phone and voicemail system was replaced with a cloud offering from Avaya, which enabled soft-client and cellular app capabilities which were critical during the initial COVID response. In addition, all single-use phones were provided with a panic button which sends an alert to campus police.

The refresh plan developed with the Finance department ensures technology replacements on campus are planned and funded years in advance. The strategic plan forecasts IT's direction and provides information on upcoming projects and updates for existing projects.

Appraisal

Library Appraisal

The library provides high-quality learning tools and information content to support teaching, learning, and research activities. Significant improvements have been made to the book collection, including increasing the number of ebooks to over 680,000, up from less than 2,000 five years ago. The ebook collection is now 3.7 times the print book collection. This was particularly important during COVID as it allowed online access to scholarly books and other materials in support of remote learning. Usage reflects an even greater trend towards ebooks, with annual ebook check-outs over 19,000 and print book checkouts less than 3000.

Through the library's electronic databases and journal subscriptions, over 135,000 articles were accessed in AY21. Usage of the library's online streaming academic film collection has increased as well with over 7,000 viewings of film in AY21. In the past 3 years, the library has instituted a technology lending library in order to support equitable access to technology equipment. In AY20 this collection had over 1,000 checkouts and usage is expected to increase. More information about collections and usage is available in the annual reports.

The library's information literacy program offers research classes taught in-person and through an embedded librarian program. In AY20 librarians taught 245 classes (177 in-person and 68 embedded) reaching over 4,700 students. New information literacy learning outcomes were developed in AY20 aligned with ACRL's new Framework for Information Literacy in Higher Education. As the new General Education program calls for the development of information literacy as a critical skill, the library has started creating a comprehensive information literacy instruction program. The library does not yet have an assessment plan for measuring student learning of information literacy nor for measuring the impact of the usage of library resources and services on learning. However, the 2021 Survey of Satisfaction in library resources and

services reveals high levels of satisfaction by faculty and students, with particularly high levels of satisfaction with the books and databases provided and with research help and instruction.

Librarians answered over 1,500 research questions in person or through email or virtual assistance during AY21, a 50% increase in two years. The Library created over 300 online research guides, including guides created specifically for courses, subject areas, and citation help. The guides were accessed over 185,000 times in AY21, up over 200% in two years.

The library utilizes the SUMMON discovery system allowing students and faculty the ability to search all of the library's resources from one search box from the library's newly designed (2018) website. Off-campus access to materials is made available through the use of EZProxy, now hosted off-site to improve access. The catalog system is Voyager, a legacy system that does not support the easy integration of electronic resources. Library staff are currently evaluating new library catalog systems with implementation expected in July 2022.

Led by the library, significant progress has been made in developing faculty understanding of open resources and pedagogy. Supported by a 2020 Davis Foundation grant and Academic Affairs, 16 faculty members adopted OER course materials, three created OER for courses, and 17 participated in an Open Education Community of Practice. Students are included in the process; a Fall 2020 #TextbookBroke event was held by student government. The Strategic Plan has the Goal "OER will be a resource readily available to faculty and students alike."

The library has focused considerable efforts in advancing DEI initiatives, including creating a DEI plan, a Children's Literature collection analysis using a DEI lens, internal intercultural competency training, and a university DEI guide. The Association of College and Research Libraries featured this DEI work in a 2021 Spotlight Series: Practices of Equity & Social Justice.

Facilities Appraisal

FSU has made tremendous strides in renovating current buildings over the past 10 years by working towards goals in the Campus Master Plan. While the Campus Master Plan was completed in 2007, and many of the projects identified have been completed, it continues to provide overall guidance for renovations. In 2017 the Master Plan was augmented by a campus facility assessment that was completed by the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM) for each of the state universities. This new information, along with the Master Plan, was used to develop a five-year Deferred Maintenance Plan in collaboration with DCAMM. The FY19-23 Deferred Maintenance Plan will result in FSU being able to leverage \$7.3M in state capital appropriations to complete \$16.7M in deferred maintenance and adaptation renewal. The most recent Gordian Sightlines analysis, finalized in March 2021 with FY20 data, shows that recent renovations have lowered the campus building age by 23 years, which assists in reductions for upkeep to old infrastructure. These renovations have significantly increased FSU's ability to provide up-to-date teaching and learning environments. This can be seen with the Antonucci Science Center, Hammond Campus Center, Percival Hall, and Landry Arena among other examples.

In order to be a steward of the university's physical resources, as referenced in the Strategic Plan Goal 6, Capital Planning and Maintenance continues upgrading systems across the

university based on recommendations from the Sightlines analysis. The past decade of capital projects has focused on upgrading old buildings and systems. Sightlines has recommended additional project investment in building mechanicals, an area the institution is working towards in planned and ongoing infrastructure projects. By upgrading systems and focusing on deferred maintenance, the university can become more proactive regarding facilities needs.

Winter 2020 began a campus-wide \$25M electrical infrastructure project, fully funded by DCAMM, to create a more reliable system up to modern standards. Existing structures were built in the mid-20th century by a company no longer in business, resulting in significant difficulty in replacing components. This project will update electrical systems including the main switch gear, transformers, and wiring. It will also provide new emergency backup electrical systems involving five new generators and an electrical loop system which will ensure power will remain continuous to all buildings even in an outage emergency. Through this project, the university has replaced landscaping and trees that were removed during installation.

In November 2017 the Board of Trustees approved adding the Theater Block project to the capital program. This project partially started in response to feedback President Lapidus heard during his inaugural listening tour from students about the lack of vibrancy downtown. But equally important, this project is designed to support the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan's Goal 1: "forge innovative paths to knowledge acquisition, career readiness, social mobility, and lifelong learning"; and Goal 3: "be an engine of social, economic, civic, and cultural development of the city and region." The newly completed ideaLab is only one component of an anticipated overhaul of the entire Theatre Block. The culmination of this multi-phased project will include a 250 seat BlackBox Theater and refurbishment of the original historic theater.

The Department of Environmental Health and Safety is charged with ensuring compliance regarding environmental regulations related to construction, chemical safety in academic buildings, and appropriate safety measures for maintenance staff. The department provides guidance for best safety practices and is responsible for securely removing hazardous materials.

During the pandemic, Capital Planning adjusted expectations for cleaning and disinfecting priorities, focusing on high-touch areas and restroom facilities. Much of the department's cleaning equipment was older; the university prioritized purchasing additional Kivac and Clorox 360 systems to aid in the disinfection process. Disinfectant was distributed across campus to ensure faculty, students, and staff were able to maintain their personal working space.

The maintenance and operation of the university's buildings follow all codes, safety and accessibility requirements, and guidelines. All academic properties have installed elevator or lift accessibility and each renovation project updates systems and accessibility to meet today's standards. The custodial crew uses green products on campus to further assist in environmental initiatives on campus. Annual inspections of systems occur to ensure compliance.

Information Technology Appraisal

FSU classrooms typically include a podium system, projector, and DVD player, and many include a document camera. Blackboard and Google Classroom are both hosted systems in a scalable environment to limit performance issues. Each fiscal year, \$100,000 is dedicated to upgrading

classroom equipment and an additional \$100,000 to upgrading computer labs. As CPM does physical space upgrades, the classrooms and labs are upgraded via that budget process as well.

Currently the 26 members of the IT staff maintain systems and also assist faculty, staff, and students. Robert Half metrics ([How Many Help Desk Tier 1 Personnel Do You Need?](#)) suggest that the current level of staffing is enough only to support faculty and staff, with insufficient staff to help students (full support is provided for students, including free labor on hardware repairs). However, the use of an outsourced call center and a large number of student workers helps offset the number of full-time employees needed to support daily operations ([Call Center Metrics](#)) and provide support to our student population. The call center allows for 365x24x7 support as well, providing help when users need it, not just when the physical helpdesk is open.

The transition to Google applications and services was critically important to support the university's ability to remotely teach and operate during the pandemic ([Google usage charts](#)). It provided everyone at FSU with a simple and native way to video conference, share and collaborate on documents, create and share forms, and provided unlimited online storage capabilities ([Google Applications metrics with explanations](#)). The move to Google apps has allowed faculty and staff to utilize Chromebooks in many instances as well, which has reduced costs for loaner systems. FSU has further partnered with Google as a beta site for new applications and technologies and provides necessary feedback on their new offerings.

The university's COVID-19 response revealed some key areas for improvement. The transition to remote work for faculty and staff revealed that many faculty, staff, and students do not have a basic understanding of how computers work. While IT's full-time trainer has done extensive work with users on specific applications, the lack of a core understanding of computer concepts made support more difficult once they left campus to work from home. Also, the transition of most of the campus to remote work highlighted that many staff have desktop computers and no way to easily bring equipment home. Decisions about systems have, in the past, focused more on cost reduction than flexibility and this has caused enormous support issues. With the transition to Google and utilizing low-cost Chromebooks, FSU may be able to provide mobility and reduced cost at the same time. The approval of a new Strategic Plan dictates that a new IT Strategic Plan in alignment with university goals needs to be created as well.

IT general and security policies were updated as part of a collective state-wide effort begun in 2015. These policies are available to everyone at [Technology Policies & Planning](#) and the Acceptable Use Policy is also highlighted in the [student handbook](#). Our [Information Security Policy](#) (confidential) and the [Information Technology Disaster Recovery Plan](#) (confidential) are updated annually and kept confidential due to their contents. These policies have been approved through legal review and are affirmed and approved as part of our state, PCI, and financial audits. The [Information Technology Strategic Plan](#) provides guidance for the department and the campus on strategic initiatives and directions that IT is prioritizing but needs to be updated to reflect support for the new FSU Strategic Plan.

The information security team uses numerous systems, including a SIEM system monitored by Cygilant, dual web-application firewalls, Cisco Umbrella DNS endpoint security, and Google security products to ensure data security for our campus, as well as reports through our

NextGen Checkpoint firewall. Through the use of network restrictions and these products, the university has not had a single DMCA violation in 12 years.

Projections

Human Resources and Payroll Services will develop a compensation model for part time contractors for FY22 to maintain pay equity and align with cost of living adjustments.

Human Resources, in collaboration with the Leading for Change subcommittee, will review its recruitment process (job description language, placement of announcements, outreach) to identify additional strategies to attract diverse candidates. This work will begin FY22.

Human Resources is exploring the establishment campus groups of staff and faculty in relation to shared characteristics, interests, or life experiences. This work will begin FY22.

In 2022, student affairs and finance staff will work with Massachusetts State College Building Authority on a long-term occupancy and space usage plan for implementation in FY2024.

University leadership, led by the VP of Finance and Administration, will create a long-term sustainable business model that is aligned with strategic plan priorities, the academic portfolio, and anticipated enrollments, which will be approved by the Board of Trustees in FY2025.

The finance department will complete a thorough review and updating of all financial policies and procedures by January 2023.

The library will create in FY22 a scalable, sustainable, and technology-enhanced information literacy library instruction program that achieves stated student learning outcomes for the undergraduate and graduate student populations and aligns with the Association of College and Research Libraries' Framework. An assessment plan for measuring the information literacy outcome and the effect of library resources and services will be developed for FY23.

In order to further the goal of making OER more readily available to students, the Open and Affordable Education Committee, led by the library, will adopt and implement an OER Assessment Plan in 2021. This plan will set baselines for multiple key performance indicators and track these indicators over a five-year period.

The Capital Planning and Maintenance management team will create an updated departmental Master Plan before July 2025 in conjunction with the Vice President of Administration and Finance. The Master Plan will take Gordian Sightlines Benchmarking and Sustainability reporting into consideration to coordinate projects that focus on older Net Asset Value buildings.

In 2021, the IT department will begin a series of general technology trainings for the campus to provide faculty and staff a baseline of knowledge on how computers and systems work securely; they will be viewable by on-campus and remote personnel.

Beginning in 2021, the IT department will continuously examine existing systems and applications for remote-work capabilities and take a "mobility-first" outlook when replacing or procuring systems to allow for easier transitions to work-from-home while controlling costs.

Standard Eight: Educational Effectiveness

Description

Fitchburg State University continues to build a significant culture of assessment in and out of the classroom that provides clear opportunities to measure the success of all students in all modalities and all locations. This progress can be seen in changes to the program review process and the General Education program, the expansion and assessment of co-curricular programs, and our ongoing strength in learning outcomes assessment. These measures of student success help us understand graduates' achievements due to their education. These measures have also been integrated into the strategic planning process and aligned to the mission and core values. Faculty, department chairs, deans, the Vice President for Academic Affairs, Vice President for Student Affairs, Office of Institutional Research and Planning, University Assessment Research Committee, and Student Affairs Assessment Team collaborate to collect and analyze data throughout the year, driving evidence-based improvements that support student success. This data also informs the public. Program learning outcomes are published on the website, as are annual reports and assessments.

Curricular Assessment

Under Academic Affairs, curricular assessment takes place for undergraduate and graduate programs and the General Education curriculum. Each academic department has a designated assessment liaison who works with an assessment committee or the department as a whole. Assessment liaisons, the AVP of OIRP, the Director of Assessment, and one academic dean comprise the University Assessment and Research Committee (UARC), collaboratively reviewing and making recommendations for assessment processes across departments.

UARC was established in 2017 to sustain and improve FSU's academic programming, accreditation requirements, and overall performance, through a systematic approach to assessing student learning outcomes, student success measures, and institutional performance measures. Every program is required to submit an Annual Assessment Report. In this report, each program lists Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) assessed during the last year. In addition, each program also submits an annual update to their Programmatic Assessment Plan, including all SLOs and how they will be assessed in the years ahead. Programmatic Assessment Plans include a curriculum map for required courses detailing their role in introducing, fulfilling, and assessing each of the SLOs. These documents are reviewed by the Director of Assessment and UARC, and each program receives annual feedback on the reports including the extent to which the SLOs represent verifiable statements of what students are expected to gain, achieve, demonstrate, or know by the time they complete the program. Other Academic Affairs units, such as the academic Schools and the student success unit, also submit annual reports. These Annual Assessment Reports are posted on the website.

The Programmatic Assessment Plan requires that programs establish quantitative benchmarks for each measure of student learning, and the Annual Assessment Report provides a structured format for reporting the use of this data and related benchmarks to understand learning outcomes. The Annual Assessment Report also provides valuable data for use in the seven-year

Program Review cycle. Program Reviews provide an opportunity to aggregate and reflect on measures of student learning and success over a longer period. External perspectives on this data are afforded by the reviewers who provide feedback on each self-study. The Action Plan, developed based on both the self-study and the external evaluator's recommendations, provides a critical mechanism to help ensure that data on student learning and success is used to make concrete changes to improve educational effectiveness. The identification of resources needed is an important data point of this process that can then be used as part of the department's larger resource allocation plan. The five years following the development of the Action Plan are used to implement changes and assess the curriculum in a comprehensive and thoughtful manner. Annual Assessment Reports can then be used to monitor progress on student learning and success, while serving as the foundation for the next self-study.

Graduate program assessment is the responsibility of the academic department in the same way it is responsible for its undergraduate programs. Reviews of graduate programs are conducted on the same timeline and in concert with the undergraduate program reviews.

Programs that fall under external accreditation submit an Annual Assessment Report in addition to following the review cycle and guidelines established by their professional accrediting agency. Undergraduate programs with external accreditation currently include Human Services, Nursing, Business, Computer Information Systems, Computer Science, and Education. At the graduate level, all Education and Business programs, which represent 89% of our degree-seeking enrollment, are externally accredited.

Academic programs offered through our Extended Campus Partners fall under the assessment and external accreditation processes of the School of Education. Additionally, a Letter of Agreement (LOA) between the partner and FSU exists for each academic program and regular standing meetings are held six or more times per year, allowing for further evaluation by the graduate chair and dean of the associated departments. Extended campus locations where only stand-alone professional development courses are offered have scheduled evaluative meetings once or twice per year depending on the number of course offerings.

General Education

One of the most ambitious and comprehensive efforts in the past ten years to utilize data to improve educational effectiveness involved the program review and revision of the General Education curriculum. The General Education curriculum was last revised in 2007. Ongoing assessment of the old curriculum's learning objectives took place as soon as the curriculum was implemented, beginning in summer 2008 and continuing through 2014. The process of assessing, reviewing, and refining learning outcomes related to the original objectives was supported by both a Davis Foundation grant and an AAC&U and Lumina Foundation grant.

These efforts were also informed by the NEASC accreditation process; a 2011 FSU Academic Plan that called for a review of reading, writing, critical analysis, and logical thinking across the curriculum; a possible service learning requirement; integration of Information Literacy across the curriculum; and Massachusetts Board of Higher Education efforts to promote Civic Learning, Critical Thinking, Quantitative Reasoning, and Written Communication as part of the

Vision Project. This history was used in developing the new General Education requirements.

The General Education curriculum was revised to improve student success and retention. A significant component of the revision is the addition of a First-Year Experience (FYE) seminar to aid students in the transition to college. Faculty teaching FYE courses take part in a community of practice which allows for reflection based on student feedback and which has resulted in the number of FYE learning outcomes being reduced from six to three.

Co-curricular Assessment

An important change in the past ten years has been an increased emphasis on assessment and evaluation in co-curricular programs. In 2017, a new Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA) was hired. One of her major initiatives was a more intentional emphasis on priority and goal setting along with assessments of how well priorities and goals are met. In AY18, the VPSA laid the groundwork for examining vision and mission. AY19 brought an introduction to the process of assessment: defining terms, holding workshops for skill development, and creating visionary priorities and outcomes as well as key performance indicators. AY20 was the first year that Student Affairs departments began setting and assessing annual goals and key performance indicators. Even through COVID, the division made progress on their AY20 and AY21 annual goals and performance indicators. Each year, the departments must have at least one student learning- focused goal and at least one effectiveness-focused goal. One major area of emphasis is supporting the university's vision for education justice and being a student-ready campus.

Assessment in Student Affairs is led by its VP and a division-wide assessment team, composed of staff members at all levels in the division. The team is made up of those with expertise in assessment, as well as relative newcomers, to provide a variety of perspectives on this work. Additionally, the leads from the division's 12 departments meet monthly for professional development on assessment and to report on progress in assessment initiatives. These entities engage in a full cycle of assessment including planning, using direct and indirect measures to gather data, analyzing data, and reviewing that data to propose and implement improvements.

The 2018 and 2020 Campus Climate Surveys found that although our students across demographics feel welcome on campus, our diverse students reported a lesser sense of belonging. As a result, the Provost and Vice President for Student Affairs conducted a 2020 listening tour of FSU identity-based student clubs and organizations. This led to changes at the Center for Diversity and Inclusion, including hiring the first 12-month Director and changing the role of student workers to becoming peer educators on DEI topics. Students also guide programming and support identity-based organizations within the role's new parameters.

In AY20 and AY21, Housing and Residential Services set a goal that student staff learn to engage in dialogue on DEI. After being trained in DEI during onboarding, staff members engage in discussions related to DEI in one-on-one meetings with supervisors and as part of their yearly evaluation. Student staff articulate what DEI means to them, how they impact DEI within their department role, and DEI areas of strength and challenge. Student staff reflect on the extent to which "I can engage in a discussion on diversity and inclusion" and also about specific topic areas: language/terminology use, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual identity, sexual violence,

religion, political views. Plans for assessing these goals are ongoing.

Institutional Assessment

In 2021, the university adopted Institutional Learning Priorities (ILPs), which identify broad curricular and co-curricular student learning objectives that align with the university's vision. Academic and co-curricular departments have begun the process of examining how their program curricula align with these ILPs.

The university has participated in the AAC&U VALUE Institute (previously known as the Multi-State Collaborative) since 2016, collecting artifacts using Critical Thinking and Written Communication rubrics. Student artifacts submitted to the VALUE Institute were scored by at least two reviewers and the results were analyzed and reported back to FSU. FSU also received a report on state-wide aggregate results for comparison purposes.

FSU also asks individual programs to indicate in their Annual Assessment Reports the alignment between program learning outcomes and the ILPs. In this way, both the academic and co-curricular program-level assessment efforts can be aggregated, providing data that the UARC can use to make institutional recommendations about the assessment process and the ILPs.

Programmatic trend data has been disseminated by OIRP to academic departments since 2013. Initially called Phase I Data, it included retention rates, benchmarked against the overall institutional rates, as well the number of graduates in majors and minors. Departments were asked to report on student success initiatives related to the trend data as well as SSC data in their annual reports. Trend data is now provided via the APS platform and annual reports now collect progress toward the strategic plan, which includes student success initiatives.

Actual and projected student enrollment data, coupled with a commitment to accessibility and student success, has guided decision making across the university. In 2017, FSU joined the Leading for Change Higher Education Consortium, a voluntary collaboration of higher education institutions committed to identifying student and employee diversity best practices through use of data, institutional benchmarks, and reflective practice. The Consortium was renamed the Racial Equity Justice Institute in 2018 to reflect an emphasis on closing racial educational equity gaps. Through the consortium, FSU implemented a Campus Climate Survey in 2018 and 2020.

FSU has been recognized for three consecutive years since 2019 by *U. S. News and World Report* for our success in providing Social Mobility to our students. This represents an important dimension of what our students can expect to gain from an FSU education.

Assessment Tools

The OIRP utilizes several internal surveys to collect data on student learning, satisfaction, and post-graduation outcomes. Since 2008, OIRP has issued a Graduating Student Survey to support the program review process by, for example, collecting data on student learning outcomes. This survey has recently been revised into two separate surveys for undergraduate and graduate students. In 2017, FSU launched an Alumni Student Survey to collect post-graduation and learning outcomes data. The alumni survey is sent to undergraduate alumni at one, three, and five years post-graduation and is used as part of the program review process. The campus

climate survey, administered in 2017, 2018, and 2020, has informed multiple student success initiatives, including the Reimagining the First-Year project, DEI work, and strategic planning.

In addition to these recurring surveys, many ad-hoc surveys are employed in order to measure institutional effectiveness. For example, the NEASC/NECHE survey was launched in December 2010 and January 2021 as part of the self-study process. Separate COVID-19 response surveys were administered to students, staff, and faculty in May 2020 to assess how the university was responding to the pandemic, to measure the pandemic's impact on student learning, and to inform planning for Fall 2020. Additionally, Student Affairs conducts numerous surveys and focus groups to measure the effectiveness of its programming and make improvements.

The OIRP administers several national survey instruments that allow for national and regional benchmarking and peer comparisons. These include the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) administered every two years since 2006, the College Student Inventory (CSI) annually since 2005, the Mid-Year Student Assessment (MYSA) annually since 2017, and the Adult Student Priorities Survey (ASPS) biannually since 2018. NSSE, administered to first-year and senior undergraduates, measures the extent to which students engage in effective educational practices empirically linked with learning, personal development, and other desired outcomes such as persistence, satisfaction, and graduation. The CSI is an early alert tool administered to incoming first-year students to identify at-risk students, focus advisors on key concerns, and link students to academic and student support resources. The MYSA, administered to first-year students as a follow-up to the CSI, identifies immediate student need and measures effectiveness of earlier interventions. The ASPS, administered to adult and graduate level students, assesses and benchmarks areas of priority and level of satisfaction.

The National College Health Assessment is administered every other year and informs the work of Counseling Services, Student Conduct/Case Management, and Housing and Residential Services. FSU also participated for three years in the #RealCollegeSurvey with the Hope Center at Temple University, examining students' experiences with food and housing insecurity. These data are shared with the Community Assessment and Risk Evaluation Team, our food and necessities pantry, the Falcon Bazaar, and others services for these students.

Software tools also support assessment practices. The Tk20 application is a comprehensive data gathering and reporting system designed for managing assessment activities. While uses of Tk20 vary widely from program to program, one powerful tool has been the ability of faculty to conduct rubric-based assessment of artifacts including portfolios. Other technological tools serve more to provide student success data. Implemented in Fall 2014, Navigate is a "big data" initiative that analyzes the past decade of student performance at our institution in order to provide predictive analytics related to courses and student attributes. Through tailored reports, departments are able to assess key trends and insights in student performance and identify opportunities for targeted initiatives, curricular change, or enhanced resources. It also provides a comprehensive advising platform that applies historical data analytics to current students in order to provide advisors with detailed insights, including predicted risk, for their advisees.

Additionally, Navigate is used each semester to collect data related to attendance, deficient midterm grades and non-registration status. It also allows faculty to issue referrals related to

attendance, academic coaching, tutoring, and financial aid. Navigate was also used during Spring 2020 to gather information related to possible “walk-aways” resulting from the transition to fully remote learning. Most recently, the university adopted the EAB Academic Performance Solutions (APS) platform, which provides access to key metrics across student, HR, and finance data, to department chairs, deans and other senior leadership. APS also provides national and regional benchmarking, comparing data to peers and aspirational peers, as well as structured analytics to support academic planning and budgeting.

The OIRP provides reports, data, and data analysis to its campus constituents in an effort to sustain a culture of data-informed decision-making and to support the measurement of educational effectiveness. Student success data are published on the OIRP website via the University Factbook, Common Data Set, and Student Achievement Measures. The OIRP works with various offices across campus to ensure that data is collected and stored in a way that facilitates the availability of student success data for all populations, modalities and locations. To that end, FSU is currently implementing Edify, a data integration and visualization platform, which will facilitate data collection and sharing across campus.

Appraisal

Curricular Assessment

Overall, the combined efforts of faculty, UARC, OIRP, and Academic Affairs have helped insure a transparent, inclusive, and effective data collection and reflection process, highlighted by the Annual Assessment Reports. In AY21, 100% of academic departments submitted an annual report. The process has been successful because it has yielded changes to the curriculum which have increased student success. The current program review guidelines, as approved through governance, provide a clear path for all programs to be regularly reviewed and assessed. This seven-year cycle ensures that the curriculum offered to all students, in all locations and modalities, is being assessed using direct and indirect methods and improved as needed.

An example of how data analysis led to changes in delivery can be seen in the Human Services program. Human Services assessed the program learning outcome “Students will be able to assess, analyze, and synthesize empirical research from a Human Services primary source” using papers from a research methods class. The attached [Table](#) shows results of those who achieved the proficient rating of 3 on a 4-point rubric. Between the 2018 and 2019 data collections, the class had gone back to using Open Educational Resources (OER) with suggested texts for those who preferred a book. More case studies were infused to help apply the material. Students achieving a high proficiency rating increased from 83% to 95%.

Another example of the cycle of evaluation and reflection is the Political Science program. Political Science uses TK20 to assess program learning outcomes in a portfolio submitted by fourth-year students. They have regularly improved this assessment process, producing changes that sometimes require further revision, but ultimately yield valuable data. During AY19, no data was available because of limitations that led to inter-rater reliability questions. These limitations were addressed and data collection ensued in AY20 with clearer guidelines for students on what was expected in the portfolios. The target for proficiency was 100%. The

outcomes ranged from 82% to 86% in Fall 2019. In Fall 2020, three of the four outcomes achieved 100% efficiency, while political methodology was at 96.8%. See [Table](#) for details.

Finally, within the Accelerated Online MBA program, the Capstone Integrated Business Case was used to measure several Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs), with the objective that at least 70% of graduating students should achieve a 4 or higher (out of a possible 6) on the rating scale for each ILO. 262 graduating students submitted artifacts in May 2019. The range of all 262 students was 5.10 to 5.30, and the overall mean for each criterion was 5.23. Because this fell well within the target range, no action was taken. The same data was collected in 2021 and again showed at least 70% of the 44 MBA students who submitted artifacts achieved a 4 or higher for each ILO. The rubric will be shared with all faculty who teach the course in the future.

SSC Navigate has produced data that has assisted in program reviews. Several examples of how this tool has been leveraged to increase undergraduate student learning follow. With the addition of graduate students to the platform, SGOCE plans to leverage data to improve retention, persistence, and graduation rates for graduate, online, and adult learners.

Based on SSC data, the Biology and Chemistry and Exercise Science departments discovered that students in these majors who perform poorly in lower-level classes (earned a 1.0 or lower in BIOL 1800 General Biology I or BIOL 1900 General Biology II; earned a D or F in Introduction to Exercise and Sports Science or Anatomy and Physiology I) are statistically unlikely to complete the program. In response, Biology and Chemistry required a minimum grade of 2.0 in each course and allowed students two attempts each. Exercise Science also set minimum grade requirements in order for students to progress to other courses. Both departments also updated advising to provide additional support to students struggling with these courses and encourage students who do not pass on the first attempt to explore alternative majors.

Integrating student learning data with SSC data in the Program Review process also leads to improvements in instruction and student learning. In AY19, the Psychological Science program review led to new internship requirements to increase student preparedness. This was based on gaps in knowledge students demonstrated when they had failing grades in Psychological Science courses before completing the internship. Therefore, a prerequisite was added that requires students to repeat any failed courses prior to the internship. The program review also led to the development of a Cultural Psychology course to be offered in AY22.

After the AY19 Communications Media program review, the program implemented several changes to support student learning, including participation in an Assessment Plan Workshop in May 2019 that produced updated program mission, goals, and student learning objectives. Each of the concentrations is now in the process of updating their learning outcomes to align with the department's new outcomes. The program also addressed the strategic plan's emphasis on helping transfer students complete degrees by creating a Graphic Design MassTransfer Pathway which allows transfer students to complete their degree in four semesters at FSU.

The Program Review process is also an important factor in resource allocation, allowing departments to integrate assessment findings into the budget request process. Resource allocation is often linked to initiatives that support student success by, for example, making

sure students have access to tools or resources they need for future careers. The past two Communications Media program reviews have noted that department facilities are overdue for an upgrade. There was a tentative plan to renovate these areas in 2015, but the renovation was put on hold. It is not always clear to programs why some budget requests are funded and others are not. In order to better close the loop on this review process, programs would benefit from increased transparency as to why budget requests stemming from the program review are or are not approved, which would facilitate better long-term planning in the review process.

An example of a program review impacting budgeting is the 2019 Exercise Science program review, which led to the following purchases to improve learning: Education Recognized Program application to the National Strength and Conditioning Association for the Strength and Conditioning concentration (\$500); Purchase of motion analysis equipment for teaching and research (\$20,656); Membership fee for National Association of Advisors for the Health Professions (\$175); and Equipment to support the Strength and Conditioning program (\$5,870).

For programs with licensing examinations, Nursing and Education, data from those exams is reviewed both annually and as part of program review, and the results are used to inform curricular and program revisions. FSU Nursing students have a first-time passing rate for NCLEX (which they take after completing the program) of 95%. The Nursing program uses both curricular and program-wide interventions to maintain high passing rates on the NCLEX. Over the last three years our NCLEX passing rate has increased by at least 2%. Nursing students within the program are assessed using the HESI exam to evaluate potential program areas of emphasis in preparation for the NCLEX exam.

The School of Education offers both undergraduate and graduate students the opportunity to achieve learning outcomes, pass the MTELS, and graduate in all locations and all modalities. Published pass rates for the MTELS continue to be at 100%, as this is a requirement for program completers. However, the pass rate from the previous three years fluctuated between 53.1%-58.7% when including those who haven't completed the program. Previously, MTEL prep workshops had been implemented through the Center for Professional Studies. Due to low enrollment and inconsistent attendance, the Education program made MTEL prep a co-requisite for undergraduate courses, so they can track students' satisfactory or unsatisfactory grades and first-time pass rates. The majority of MTEL prep workshops are now also online or hybrid. Curriculum changes within the Education department, as well as this emphasis on MTEL preparation, increased advising support, and participation in the FYE seminar have all been implemented in an effort to lead to an increase in MTEL pass rate for Education majors.

Based on MTEL pass rate data, the Mathematics department collaborated with Education to design content area courses to support student learning toward these exams. Current assessment data for these courses demonstrates a disparity of success rates related to race and ethnicity. Therefore, under the guidance of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Mathematics Department is proposing alternative pathways for students to demonstrate subject matter knowledge to support all of our students seeking teacher licensure.

Each program has clearly established learning outcomes that are clearly communicated to students. In conjunction with its student-centric website redesign, the University implemented

a consistent system of publishing program learning outcomes, which was adopted by all undergraduate programs and is in the process of being implemented by graduate programs.

General Education

To facilitate the approval of learning outcome designations for the new General Education curriculum and to oversee curriculum revisions in response to assessment and student success data, FSU established a standing General Education Subcommittee of the AUC Curriculum Committee for AY21. FSU also created a General Education Program Area, led by a chair and charged with creating a proposal to assess the curriculum, which was approved in August 2021. The proposal creates a General Education Ambassador and Assessment Program to provide a sustainable five-year assessment cycle. Year 1 Ambassadors have been appointed and work will begin in Spring 2022. The assessment plan proposal will pass through governance in AY22 with an implementation date of AY23. Program review will occur in AY28.

One element of the new General Education curriculum that has already begun to be implemented is the FYE seminar, developed based on the longer history of General Education assessment. Currently, the FYE consists only of the seminar (the co-curricular parts have not been developed yet) so the learning outcomes for the course are consistent with the learning outcomes for the program. The assessment materials for the outcomes are still being developed, based on the AAC&U rubrics for information literacy and reading and the reading apprenticeship model used in the three years of pilot courses. These are also learning outcomes for the broader General Education curriculum that will feed into assessment in later courses.

One of the main goals of the FYE is retention, and in Fall 2019 the retention rate was 2% higher for students enrolled in FYE than for those who are not, and 4% higher for Latinx male students, the group with the highest achievement difference on campus. Narrowing and eventually eliminating the achievement gap is a priority for FSU as well as the DHE, so these results are promising. The FYE program has also implemented a peer mentoring program for students in the FYE course. 93.1% of FYE students who accessed peer mentoring outside the classroom were retained (compared with 74.2% of FYE students who did not interact with peer mentors outside of the classroom and 82.1% of non-FYE students). 84% of freshmen who completed the Mid-Year Student Assessment (MYSA) Strongly Agreed or Agreed that the FYE was helpful.

Co-curricular Assessment

The current Student Affairs assessment process was implemented in AY20, and continues into AY21 and beyond. Though affected by COVID, the division continued the process and made progress on most goals, objectives, and key performance indicators. Below are some examples of student learning goals and results, as well as measures related to student success.

Housing and Residential Services provides opportunities for student staff to learn and practice the ability to engage in dialogue on diversity and inclusion. The student staff reported a high level of “I can completely engage” consistently across all categories of diversity presented, except for the topic of sexual violence. The results will impact future training and in-services. The student staff also were asked to “Define what diversity means to you.” The skill to verbally communicate their intentions and engage their diverse residential community will be supported

by the understanding of these baseline terms. Finally, staff were asked to identify at minimum two diversity areas of strength and two areas of challenge. Data from these survey questions guided the Housing and Residential Services Fall 2020 and Fall 2021 student staff training.

TRIO Student Support Services peer mentors gained research skills enabling them to lead one of the First Four Weeks curriculum, demonstrating familiarity with curriculum development, rollout, and assessment. Squad members submitted an activity outline that meets the learning objectives of an assigned “week” during the First Four Weeks in Spring semester. Additionally, they demonstrated their understanding of how to assess student learning by suggesting an assessment method through which comprehension of their assigned activity could be measured.

As part of the federal grant, every year TRIO SSS students learn about financial literacy. In AY21, pre-and post-test results showed that students were more knowledgeable about how to read credit card statements, check credit scores, and establish credit.

The Office of Student Development conducted the second round of a Belonging Study in AY21 comparing students who are actively engaged with those who are not. The data demonstrates that students who are engaged report a deep sense of belonging. Counseling Services, Office of Student Development, and the ACT Center were identified as the top three services that students utilize. Uninvolved students reported relying on faculty and academic advisors as a critical connection to FSU. These data have been shared with the Student Success Center and the Center for Teaching and Learning to incorporate into trainings of academic advisors/faculty.

In AY20, the Athletics and Recreation Department focused on promoting good sportsmanship for student-athletes. Team leaders and athletes participated in pre- and post-tests around a topical speaker. Team leaders gave their team a higher sportsmanship ranking in the “before” survey compared to the “after” survey. Almost all teams ranked their teams one to two points lower than what they filled out originally. The student-athletes developed a more complex understanding of sportsmanship through this assessment.

One of Counseling Services’ AY21 goals was to increase the intentional implementation of treatment plans and goals. A pilot program asked new clients to complete the Pre-Appointment Questionnaire (PAQ) during the intake process and again after the fifth session of clinical intervention. Student patients given the PAQ at intake and again at the start of a new semester were able to reflect on the mitigation of symptoms and to be more collaborative and intentional with treatment planning. By taking the PAQ twice and engaging in dialogue with the counselor, students demonstrated learning of coping strategies that assist in their progress.

In AY21, the Dean of Students, Office of Student Development, and University Police reviewed policies, procedures, and practices with an equity lens in order to support the university’s efforts at education justice and being a student-ready campus. In AY22, Counseling Services, Housing and Residential Services, and Athletics and Recreation will conduct equity reviews.

The Dean of Students is working with Institutional Research to examine student conduct data and academic standing data disaggregated by race and ethnicity. In addition, Housing and Residential Services is conducting a similar analysis for residence hall policy violations. Staff in many student affairs departments pursued training related to the Equity Agenda to support the

vision of education justice and a student-ready campus. For example, the Counseling Services' Associate Director was trained as a facilitator of the *21-Day Racial Equity Habit-Building Challenge* and led the staff in this project over several weeks in April 2021. Office of Student Development staff completed Harvard's Implicit Bias Inventory and are working with the Intercultural Development Inventory, creating individual Intercultural Development Plans.

The University Police Department (UPD) is close to completing the review and revision of policies and procedures necessary to become accredited through the International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators (IACLEA). Accreditation supports student success by providing greater accountability and competency by officers and staff in daily operations. It is anticipated that UPD will be accredited by June 30, 2022. UPD is also aligning their policies and procedures with the Council for the Advancement of Standards and the MA Police Officer Standards and Training. They have also reviewed policies and procedures with an equity lens.

Institutional Assessment

One approach to learning outcomes assessment that supports both General Education assessment and Institutional Learning Priorities (ILPs) has been the campus participation in the AAC&U VALUE Institute. This process involves collecting artifacts from students who have completed at least 90 credits, which are then scored by VALUE Institute reviewers. Participation in the VALUE Institute also provides opportunities for FSU faculty be trained as national scorers; in AY19 12 FSU faculty and staff participated. Our participation also provides an opportunity to benchmark assessment results against both national standards and peer institutions. In AY19, 88 artifacts were submitted to the VALUE Institute for the Critical Thinking VALUE Rubric.

When comparing our AY19 results with overall state-wide findings from participating institutions, our artifacts scored average for 4-year institutions. These findings will be compared to AY20 findings to determine possible effects of remote learning when made available.

In AY20, the Director of Assessment, in concert with UARC, conducted a self-study on assessment, based on the NILOA Excellence in Assessment application, in preparation of applying for future designation. The process highlighted the need for FSU to develop an institutional level assessment plan. The recent approval of the ILPs and the new General Education curriculum, combined with the emerging development of common graduate program learning outcomes, sets the stage for this work to begin.

In our Center for Professional Studies, which offers continuing education credits in various disciplines, some graduate and undergraduate credit-bearing courses, content for lifelong learning, content for businesses and organizations, and workshops, assessment is dependent on the type of content offered and instructor preferences. Programs offered in conjunction with extended campus partners are included as part of departments' program review.

The Student Success Task Force has embarked on a comprehensive and inclusive process to define student success which will include qualitative and quantitative measures. A benchmark process evaluated how similar institutions define student success and a literature review analyzed best practices for assessing it. A qualitative survey was administered in Spring 2021 to glean student, faculty, and staff perceptions of student success. In AY22, focus groups will be

hosted to discuss experiences around student success. Data from these efforts will be analyzed to craft an institutional definition for student success, with implementation in Fall 2022.

In addition to institutional data about student learning, the university collects data on student rates of retention, progression, transfer, graduation, and loan repayment to evaluate educational effectiveness. In the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan, FSU identified a goal of reaching and maintaining a retention rate of 80%. Although this goal was not met, rates have improved over the past three years, moving from 73% in 2019 to 74% in 2020 and 77% in 2021. The 2020-2025 strategic plan reaffirms our commitment to a retention rate of 80%. Retention rates for graduate, distance education and additional location programs are strong at 90-94%.

In the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan, FSU set a goal to increase the six-year graduation rate by 5%. This goal was achieved with a graduation rate of 58% in AY20. The university has set a goal of achieving a 62% six-year graduation rate as part of its 2020-2025 Strategic Plan. Graduation rates for graduate, distance education, and additional location programs are strong at 85-100%.

In evaluating the use of traditional student success data, FSU has emphasized improving equity and inclusion. In its 2015-2020 Strategic Plan, FSU set priorities of increasing the enrollment of international and LatinX students and improving six-year graduation rates of LatinX students. At the conclusion of AY20, all goals had been met, with international enrollment increasing by 41%, LatinX enrollment increasing to 12.4% and the LatinX graduation rate increasing to 54% (from 32%). The 2020-2025 Strategic Plan includes a goal of improving the student success of underrepresented populations. The university also implemented campus climate surveys in Spring 2018 and Fall 2020 to provide data on the experiences of underrepresented students. As a result of the 2018 data, the Biology and Chemistry department launched a program using peer-led focus groups and data collection to evaluate barriers for BIPOC students in STEM.

In 2018, the Assistant to the Provost and the Dean of Students conducted a study in which they reviewed ten years of data about academic standing. They found that students who went on academic probation (with a G.P.A. under 2.0) had a 4% chance of graduation, while those who had a 2.0-2.5 GPA had a 35% chance. These results led to a new academic standing called Academic Warning for students with a G.P.A. of 2.0-2.2. This designation means that a student is still in good standing but in danger of probation. Students in this category are required to meet with a coach from ACT to determine need for services. On average, 150 students per semester are flagged as Academic Warning, triggering outreach by student support offices.

FSU has a cohort default rate below the national average, which it publishes along average student loan debt upon graduation and loan repayment estimates.

Retention, persistence, and graduation rates are very strong for the graduate population. The SGOCE, with dedicated retention and student success staff, has for many years conducted targeted outreach to both registered and stop-out students in an effort to improve persistence rates and provide personalized advising services. The SGOCE staff plan to leverage SSC Navigate to better understand the success rates of graduate students by program, modality and location. The implementation of the Edify data integration platform will further facilitate this work.

In a January 2021 survey FSU faculty and staff were asked to indicate their level of agreement

with the statement, “The University develops and uses data, evidence, and information to improve educational effectiveness,” and 78% Strongly Agreed/Agreed. This demonstrates an awareness of a culture of data-informed decision-making that FSU can continue to build upon.

SSC data has resulted in numerous student success initiatives since its inception. For example, based on data indicating that students without a declared major have significantly lower graduation rates (19% vs. 52%), a policy was adopted in AY16 whereby undeclared majors would be required to declare a major within 45 earned credits. Corresponding support was provided by the Academic Advising Center. Similarly, in Fall 2015, when SSC data analytics demonstrated higher outcomes for students taking a full load, FSU implemented a “15 to Finish” preregistration policy for our incoming freshmen. SSC data also served as the impetus for the Academic Warning policy that was implemented in 2018 as well as the curricular changes to minimum grade requirements in the EXSS major and in MATH 2300, both in AY16.

In Spring 2019, Enrollment Census reporting transitioned from Banner self-service to SSC Navigate, resulting in significantly higher faculty response rates (88% versus 11%), increased reported at-risk students (211 vs. 32), holistic proactive outreach to at-risk students and access to more meaningful outcomes data. Enrollment Census reporting collects data on students that never attended, stopped attending or have missed class at the conclusion of the Add/Drop period. Students reported as at-risk receive an email encouraging them to schedule an appointment with the ACT via an imbedded link. Additionally, the ACT staff tailor outreach to students based upon the frequency of incidents of at-risk behavior.

In Fall 2019, deficient midterm grade reporting was moved from Banner self-service to SSC Navigate resulting in improved faculty participation rates (70% versus 46%), increased reported at-risk students (1,138 vs. 819), proactive outreach to at-risk students and more meaningful outcomes data. Data from the platform is reviewed and shared each semester. As an example, in Fall 2020 145 faculty identified 1,100 students with deficient midterm grades. Students that subsequently met with the ACT staff had a .98 average grade increase in their final grade.

Overall, adoption of SSC Navigate has been strong with thousands of students annually connecting with advising and tutoring through the platform. The platform also provides the ability to measure intervention effectiveness. For example, students with an appointment during AY20 had a higher Fall 2020 persistence rate than those that did not (84.8% vs. 65.6%).

Leading for Change data, which provided ten years of retention and graduation rate data disaggregated by gender, race/ethnicity, first generation and low-income status, highlighted the achievement gap experienced by our male LatinX student population. As a result, FSU instituted the Hispanic Male Mentoring Program in the Fall 2018. Now running in its fourth year, results have been promising with the Fall 2020 cohort being retained at a much higher rate (76% versus 56% for non-mentored male LatinX students.) The Leading for Change data is updated and reviewed annually and shared on the OIRP website.

Departmental Trend Data has historically provided academic offices with important student success data that allows for annual reflection and inclusion in the program review. Departments use the data in various ways. For example, for students not succeeding in the major, the

departments of Nursing and Biology/Chemistry developed advising procedures to recommend alternative programs and pathways.

Recently, based on a comprehensive data set, the Summer Bridge Program was transitioned from Student Affairs to the ACT, allowing for continued intentional support into the fall semester. Additionally, the curriculum for Summer Bridge was modified, replacing Health and Fitness with Writing I and increasing the seminar course to two credits.

Assessment Tools

Internally developed surveys such as the alumni and graduating student surveys provide opportunities to collect quantitative and qualitative data to support strategic planning, program review and curricular and co-curricular assessment. Analysis of open-ended responses in these surveys could be strengthened. Alumni, industry, and community committees provide another source of qualitative data to inform program reviews and improve student experiences.

Data on job placement outside of accredited programs is limited. Although graduating student data has been collected since 2008 and alumni data since 2017, response rates fail to support meaningful post-graduation outcomes analysis at the program level. The DHE has made forays into providing this data to the state universities in recognition of both the challenges and importance of collecting this information. Individual academic departments have had some success with response rates using their own surveys, but this approach does not support the aggregation of data at the institutional level. In AY20, a university-wide group attempted to make inroads, but the pandemic delayed meaningful progress. The OIRP is currently attempting to increase response rates with the assistance of the academic departments and the Registrar. Utilization of the individual academic departmental email accounts in sending the 2020 alumni survey resulted in some improvement in response rates (about 20% difference). However, programs with small numbers of graduates may still struggle with meaningful results even with improved response rates and when aggregated over multiple years.

In 2020, the graduating student survey was revised into two surveys, one for undergraduate and one for graduate students, to better capture distinct outcomes. The Graduation Survey for Undergraduate Students focuses on quality perceptions, learning outcomes, experiential learning, and post-graduation plans. The Graduation Survey for Graduate Students focuses on quality perceptions, motivations, learning outcomes and post-graduation plans.

AY21 graduation data on undergraduate students indicates solid achievement of intended learning outcomes with 73-86% reporting that FSU prepared them very well or well in a variety of professional and personal skills. 70% of respondents reported they had secured full-time employment, full-time enrollment in graduate school, a fellowship or an internship. This revised version of the survey does not differentiate between employment within and outside of the discipline of study; this has been corrected in the AY22 administration. Worthy of further exploration, but understandable given the circumstances of classes forced to move online and cancelled graduation ceremonies in Spring 2020, is that only 43% of respondents reported their likelihood to stay connected to the campus after completing their degree as Very High or High. Another 34% reported that likelihood as Average. Please see [Table](#) for more detailed data.

AY21 Data collected from the Graduation Survey for Graduate Students showed strong achievement of six separate learning outcomes (adapted from University of San Diego). 89.23% of graduates responded that they believed their achievement of the learning outcome “Ability to engage in critical inquiry through principle approaches to methods and through effective and ethical information search and evaluation strategies” was either excellent or above average. Also, 89.32% of graduates responded that they believed their achievement of the learning outcome “Ability to communicate effectively in presenting ideas orally and in writing” was either excellent or above average. It is notable that these results were very similar across all six learning outcomes, with results ranging from 87-89%. The Graduation Survey for Graduate Students also asked about primary expected employment status after graduation as it stands currently. It is significant that 85% of graduates listed their expected employment status as “Full-time” employment and 10% “Unemployed and actively seeking employment.”

The survey of first, third and fifth year alumni paints a more promising picture of employment and graduate school enrollment than the graduating student survey. The recent graduating student surveys reported how many students had been accepted into a graduate program, and this number was relatively low in both 2019 and 2020 (8% and 12% respectively). In contrast, the Data First forms indicate how many students actually completed a graduate program within eight years of graduation. This data indicates 27% for 2019, 23% for 2020, and 20% for 2021, consistent with data from first, third and fifth year alumni on the alumni survey. See Table.

While employment rates in a field related to their degree (61-79%) and career satisfaction (67-82%) are relatively favorable amongst first, third, and fifth year alumni, the institution is making efforts to try to improve the rate at which students have a clear pathway to secure employment or graduate study in an area related to their field of study. The university has committed to embedding career competencies into the curriculum and has secured a Davis Foundation grant of \$200,000 to fund curriculum work, faculty professional development, and the addition of an Associate Director of Internship Development and Employer Relations within the Career Services and Advising Center. This provides just one more concrete example of the manner in which the institution is continuing to reflect on and use data to inform campus priorities.

Utilization of Tk20 is inconsistent and overall the tool is not viewed as user-friendly or useful. The university is currently reviewing alternative tools that can support holistic, campus-wide assessment and planning.

NSSE provides the University with meaningful data and regional and national peer benchmarking of student experiences. Ten engagement indicators, including higher order learning, reflective and integrative learning, quantitative learning, collaborative learning, and effective teaching practices, provide valuable insights into students’ experiences in their first and senior years. FSU has also administered additional modules over the years, electing to utilize *Inclusive and Engagement with Cultural Diversity* and *Experiences with Online Learning* in 2020, due to our commitment to Education Justice and the recent transition to fully online learning. Based on multiple years of NSSE data that indicated that freshmen experienced a lower than average number of advising meetings, an effort was made to increase awareness of and participation in the opening week departmental advising meeting. NSSE data has historically been underutilized but represents an opportunity moving forward. The NSEE data

were shared with UARC during AY21 and the committee will conduct a more thorough review during AY22 and make recommendations as to how best share this data campus-wide.

The CSI provides the university with rich data at both the individual and aggregate level. Information regarding risk related to dropout proneness, predicted academic difficulty, and educational stress are loaded into Banner and SSC Navigate so that faculty and staff advisors have access. Individual student reports, detailing the results of the survey, are loaded into SSC Navigate and have been utilized in FYE seminars to support habits of mind and self-advocacy. The Retention Management System (RMS), which allows academic and student support staff to download survey data, connects resources with the students seeking them. Aggregate data provides the university with an overview of the incoming class in regards to readiness and resource needs. These data are also disaggregated by race and ethnicity. The Office of TRIO SSS uses RMS data to compare their students' Academic Motivation, General Coping Skills and Receptivity to Help to the general FSU population. Additionally, TRIO also uses the data to create advising plans for each student that enable students to build on their strengths and identify challenges for which TRIO SSS can provide support. Since AY21, the Student Success Taskforce has identified CSI data utilization as a priority for the committee.

As with the CSI, the MYSA provides the University with robust data at both the individual and aggregate level and allows academic and student support offices to easily identify and connect to students seeking their services. Unique to the MYSA is the ability to evaluate student utilization of resources and the resulting efficacy. As with the CSI, some FYE faculty are incorporating the MYSA survey into coursework in order to better support the intended learning outcomes. The Student Success Taskforce will review MYSA data during AY22 in order to identify ways to expand its application and utilization.

The ASPS provides the university with meaningful data regarding the experiences of our adult undergraduate and graduate populations. The Dean of SGOCE shares the data with the campus and uses it in divisional planning.

The May 2020 COVID Response Survey was designed to evaluate the university's response to the pandemic and its transition to remote learning, as well as to inform planning. 92% of student respondents strongly agreed or agreed that FSU had done a good job protecting students from the negative health consequences of COVID and 70% strongly agreed or agreed that FSU had done a good job transitioning to remote learning. Quiet space for completing work and sufficient time to complete assignments were top challenges, more than internet and computer access. 64% of respondents reported being concerned about their mental health and only 9% felt a very strong connection to the university, with 53% reporting very little to no connection. The most utilized student support service during the transition to remote learning was faculty advising at 26%, followed by Registrar at 25% and Library at 18%.

The Course Delivery Poll provided FSU with useful information regarding course delivery post-pandemic. In general, students indicated a preference to return to mostly face-to-face classes with some hybrid options. Students reported flexibility as the main reason for preferring online/hybrid options, with few students indicating that they learn better via online/hybrid. Students indicated the same level of preference for asynchronous versus synchronous delivery.

Overall, this data provided useful information in planning for Fall 2021 and beyond.

The 2018 and 2020 administrations of the Campus Climate Survey provided the university with robust data regarding the experiences of our students, faculty, librarians, staff and administrators. The data was disaggregated by various subpopulations including race and ethnicity and the 2018 data was benchmarked against Bridgewater State University and Framingham State University. The 2018 data and summary documents were shared with the campus community who were asked to review and reflect upon the data. Divisions and offices were encouraged to conduct meetings and identify action items that they, or the university as a whole, could undertake to improve the experience of campus members, particularly students of color, since survey data indicated this population was having a less positive experience.

An example of the resulting action is the Biology and Chemistry Department which examined the results of the 2018 survey and from those results began a concerted effort to identify a way to address the gaps. Faculty recognized that dissatisfaction could lead to a range of outcomes, including marginalization, poor academic performance, and dropping out. The group over the years has spent time applying for funding, including a Balfour Grant, engaging in book group discussions, and engaging in campus-wide opportunities to address issues on campus.

The 2018 and 2020 Climate Survey data played an important role during the strategic planning process and continues to be a major focus of the Leading for Change Committee.

FSU has an ongoing commitment to data collection and use to improve educational effectiveness across campus. In addition to ongoing program and department assessment, new Institutional Learning Priorities were developed and recently passed through governance, as was the new General Education curriculum. The campus will now work to align them with assessment strategies, allowing them to be better incorporated in future strategic planning.

Data has been strategically used to guide executive leadership during the pandemic, advance equity and inclusiveness, and navigate issues of enrollment and retention. FSU's implementation of Edify, which unifies and organizes data assets across campus into a single centralized visualization platform to support real-time decision making, is evidence of a clear commitment to data-informed planning. These efforts demonstrate our continued commitment to our mission and strategic plan, to serve all students and achieve education justice.

Projections

The General Education Program Area will implement an Assessment Plan by AY23.

Led by the VP of Student Affairs, SA departments will implement a review process in FY23 similar to academic department program review. Nationally-benchmarked standards such as those published by the Council for the Advancement of Standards will provide the foundation.

OIRP will collaborate with the Office of Alumni and Development, department chairs, Registrar, and Career Services to implement strategies to increase response rates on both the Alumni and Graduating Students Surveys in order to provide more robust data to departments by AY23.

Standard Nine: Integrity, Transparency and Public Disclosure

Integrity

Description

FSU is committed to maintaining high ethical standards and meeting its responsibilities while upholding integrity for its students, prospective students, and other audiences. These values exemplify the process of creating the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan. Integrity underscores a theme highlighted in several university academic publications, all available on the website.

Prominent among this documentation, the university catalog provides comprehensive, updated course descriptions and program listings, including links to academic policies and procedures. The university's academic integrity policy illustrates for students the requirement to submit work honestly without falsifying results or plagiarizing. This policy also defines the adjudicatory process when an alleged violation occurs and the sanctions applied if an allegation is proven.

The faculty handbook provides syllabi guidelines for both undergraduate and graduate courses with specific information regarding the inclusion of a statement about the academic integrity policy. These guidelines also provide important information about the inclusion of statements regarding services available to students with disabilities. Syllabus templates are publicly available online for faculty from our extended campus programs. A digital course review rubric is used to evaluate courses that are designed to be offered in an online format.

Academic freedom remains central to institutional integrity. The university values the opportunities provided to faculty and students as they teach, study, and conduct research. Academic freedom is defined and outlined in faculty collective bargaining agreements which are followed by administration. These agreements are also posted online for public view.

To further those objectives, the university maintains a Center for Teaching and Learning and a Center for Faculty Scholarship, each of which hosts programs every academic year designed to celebrate faculty achievements and inspire meaningful dialogue across disciplines.

Students further benefit from the university's commitment to "providing a campus environment where the ideas, values, perspectives and contributions of all students are respected" (per the catalog). A significant mechanism for this work is the annual Undergraduate Conference on Research and Creative Practice, where students are encouraged to create original work under the sponsorship of a faculty mentor and share it at an annual conference open to the campus and wider community. Classes are canceled the day of the conference to encourage attendance and participation at this celebration of student achievement. Students are also provided with opportunities to participate in key decision-making committees, such as the All University Committee (AUC).

Beyond the classroom, FSU also fosters an inclusive atmosphere. The university recognizes the importance of athletics to the university experience. Its student-athletes compete in the National Collegiate Athletic Association's Division III, and the athletic departments are committed to providing high-quality athletic and recreation programs that challenge our students to achieve their potential and support their academic endeavors. Athletics and

recreational services extend education beyond the classrooms and foster student engagement, leadership, and development. Our inclusive programs impact the physical, social, and emotional well-being of all participants and encourage a lifelong commitment to health and wellness.

FSU also has committees and policies governing responsible conduct in human subject research, animal care and use, and biosafety. Information and policies are posted online.

While these research opportunities are public, the institution takes student privacy seriously and abides by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). On the university website, the registrar's page includes information detailing FERPA's definitions and exemptions, along with mechanisms to seek redress if students believe their FERPA rights have been violated. The Registrar sends an email to all students annually reminding them that their educational records are protected and that sharing of such information without their consent is restricted. Information on FERPA is also included in the faculty handbook.

Additionally, the majority of employees, members of collective bargaining units, gain protections under contracts, posted online and available publicly. The university's Human Resources and Payroll Services Department page includes links to those documents, along with the institution's comprehensive Equal Opportunity Plan. This plan outlines expectations, as well as policies and processes governing Title IX violations, along with anti-discrimination and harassment complaint procedures. The plan, shared with Massachusetts' other state universities, is drafted in consultation with legal counsel. This updated document changes according to state and federal guidelines, and the campus community is notified annually of its rights and responsibilities. Information on how to file complaints is detailed online.

The university is supported by a professional police department whose responsibilities include compliance with the Clery Act. The HR page also includes a comprehensive list of policies affecting employees, with a thorough review of those expectations occurring as part of each new hire's onboarding process. The institution ensures that all employees receive adequate and regular training for adherence to state and federal laws, including Title IX, with all relevant training documented.

New undergraduate and transfer students receive annual training, including during orientation, about sexual assault and harassment, which defines the community's expectations of conduct.

As one of the nine state universities in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, FSU is granted the authority to award degrees by the MA Department of Higher Education (DHE). FSU demonstrates honesty and integrity in its relationship to the DHE through regular communication and attention to regulations by the university's liaison to NECHE, the Provost, and the President.

Overall, FSU expects that all members of its community, including administrators, faculty and staff, students, and members of the Board of Trustees, act with integrity in the responsible and ethical pursuit of the university's mission.

Appraisal

FSU has appropriate infrastructure to maintain ethical standards. Employees are trained to

comply with the state's conflict of interest law as required by the Ethics Commission. This involves an online module completed every two years, with completion tracked by HR.

Faculty and students are also made aware of their ethical expectations and obligations. For example, faculty must disclose authorship of assigned books in courses. The academic integrity policy is widely available and the faculty handbook outlines ethical standards and guidelines.

Students are expected to understand and apply standards of academic integrity described in the student handbook and referenced in course syllabi. Additionally, the library has created an Academic Participation and Honesty online tutorial which is embedded in First-Year Experience courses, and the library offers workshops for international graduate and undergraduate students in this area when they arrive on campus. Furthermore, professional development opportunities are provided through the Center for Teaching and Learning and during training for new faculty. The website also provides information on how to report violations of the policy.

The university is required to follow federal regulatory guidelines when engaging in activities involving human participants, vertebrates, and biosafety. Since 2012, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) has been revised and the Institutional Animal Care and Use (IACUC) and Biosafety Committees established. In 2015 a comprehensive approach to compliance was adopted. Key changes include assigning oversight for the three committees to the Dean of Health and Natural Sciences, establishing an MSCA process for nominating and appointing members to the three committees, and requiring training for all regulated activities using the online CITI training.

The institution does well at understanding and protecting privacy. Full-time employees, contractors, and faculty receive training in expectations around privacy and procedures remain strong and effective. The IT Department has clear policies and guidelines regarding information security and acceptable use, which are regularly updated and disseminated.

It is a strength that FSU has allocated resources to compliance-related matters such as Title IX and the Clery Act. This includes creating a full-time Director of Compliance as well as funding to provide guidance on the creation of the Clery-mandated annual security report. This is especially important as federal guidelines around Title IX/Clery have changed considerably and non-compliance with these expectations would put the institution at considerable risk. The Director of Compliance oversees Title IX/ADA as well as EEO/AA.

One strength for policy availability stems from the HR website. A comprehensive list of policies located there provides valuable information for employees. The website, catalog, and handbooks also contain university-wide and academic policies as well as policies for student organizations. However, policies and processes can be difficult to find because they exist in several locations across the university's website and publications. Having a centralized, searchable web page that lists all policies could make it easier to locate important information.

Another strength is the regular updates to policies that have a connection to external regulatory oversight and updates. One example is the Equal Opportunity Plan, which was revised in 2020 as a result of updated federal Title IX regulations and again in 2021 under the new Director of Compliance.

That said, it is difficult to verify when other internal policies have been updated. This does not apply to all internal policies. For example, the Student Code of Conduct has been updated recently and is available on the website. Furthermore, by virtue of the process that occurs for the university catalog and handbooks, policies are informally reviewed on an annual basis. However, there is not a standardized cycle or formal review process for updating university policies that are not anchored by external regulatory oversight. At the undergraduate level, the Student Success Task Force has been working on a proposal to establish a periodic review cycle for academic policies. Likewise, a similar proposal is in process at the graduate level, with a plan for submission to Graduate Council by Spring 2022.

There is value in establishing a standardized schedule for policy review and updates not only for academic policies, but also more globally across campus. Once policies are formally reviewed and updated, a process can be designed for updating all relevant websites and publications.

Having a published directory of policies and a standard, well-published calendar for formal policy review and updates will foster a more coordinated approach to compliance issues across the university. This will allow us to maximize student success and minimize risk for the university and its community members.

FSU sponsors a wide variety of events and regularly partners with the community. When requests occur to sponsor events, they are vetted by the appropriate divisional or departmental leader to ensure that the proposed event is consistent with the university mission. Once events are approved, they are referred to our centralized Events Management office (which was created since our last self-study) for support and oversight. Additionally, the library maintains specific policies regarding displays and exhibits at the university.

One additional strength with respect to integrity is the established guidelines, procedures, and policies for setting up and maintaining formal partnerships with companies and organizations who provide quality education at extended campuses to constituents engaged in professional development and/or formal study at FSU. The Extended Campus Office, consisting of the Associate Dean of SGOCE and an administrative assistant, oversees 31 contractual partnerships.

Each partner signs a one-year letter of agreement (LOA), which is aligned with NECHE's policy on contractual arrangements, in order to garner approval from the university. There are two LOA documents, one for professional development providers and one for providers who partner with the university to provide a degree program. The LOA, which is submitted annually for review and approval for continuation, details the partner's responsibilities and the university's expectations. The LOA explicitly outlines preparation and delivery of courses and programs, including schedule submission, instructor credentialing, course evaluations, maximum enrollment, and instructional hours, as well as all financial aspects of the partnership, including registration, payment schedules, and costs per credit.

The central pillars of the LOA are protection of our students, assurance of course rigor and integrity, and financial transparency. The LOA also outlines available student services, course withdrawal policies, student complaint processes, and grading and fair practices policies. In the event that a partnership needs to be terminated, the LOA outlines clear processes for students

to receive credit from the university and/or the partnering agency to continue to support students for the program's planned length. Partners are required to meet with the Associate Dean of SGOCE, the department chair, as well as the appropriate dean multiple times a year to review student progress, address issues, and plan for upcoming programs.

Clear complaint resolution procedures exist on the website and within institutional policy. University staff are appropriately trained and due process is followed when complaints are filed. Since the last self-study, due to a significant expansion of distance learning opportunities, the university sought approval to join the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement in 2018, and subsequently became the first public institution in Massachusetts to do so. This ensured a mechanism to process student complaints, regardless of location.

FSU has clarified its values around Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI). The creation of a position focused on diversity in admissions strengthened the campus, and the university continued its work with the Leading for Change initiative, conducting regular climate surveys of the campus community. These programs have led to learning opportunities and intentional dialogue around identity-related issues. There is a clear focus on meeting DEI needs, including the creation of a new Director post in its Center for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. A new DEI webpage has launched, and the university will audit our policies and procedures through an equity lens. The institution encourages student-led identity-based organizations and the process for those wishing to start such groups is made clear.

Finally, as part of the self-study process, a survey was administered to campus constituencies, including all students, faculty, librarians, staff, and administrators. The survey included an item about integrity, and responses were consistent across groups. The vast majority of students (92%), faculty and librarians (82%) and staff and administrators (88%) agreed that the university conveyed accurate, relevant information with integrity.

Transparency and Public Disclosure

Description

FSU employs systems and procedures to ensure it is transparent with its audiences and provides timely and accurate disclosure of information in the public interest.

The university's commitment to transparent communication with its audiences particularly emphasizes prospective students and families, as well as faculty, staff, alumni, and the community. This includes annually updated information on tuition and fees, declarations of the university's mission, vision and core values, its academic programs, admissions and financial aid processes, extended campus offerings, and affiliations with other institutions.

Importantly, FSU's various accreditations enable clear online demonstration of the university's qualifications and performance criteria. The university's Strategic Plan, and the process undertaken to develop it, are posted on the university website for all interested audiences. The university also provides a directory of the information covered under the Higher Education Amendments of 1998 on the university's Notice of Availability webpage.

The university catalogs, both undergraduate and graduate, outline academic policies and

procedures. Annual amendments to the online catalog ensure accuracy. Links to several years' prior editions exist for students to reference, so that those who begin their courses of study may follow their original track even if curricular changes occur.

FSU also publishes the courses available for an entire academic year, including Winter and Summer semesters, at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Two-year course rotations are available on the undergraduate and graduate program websites.

FSU publishes information about the membership of the Board of Trustees as well the administrative structure of the university. With respect to faculty, the university publishes profiles about continuing full-time and permanent part-time faculty on the website and in the catalog, including information about departmental affiliations, courses taught (both undergraduate and graduate), degrees held, and sabbaticals or leaves of absence.

FSU remains transparent in sharing information on how to contact employees through an online directory, inclusive of job titles, and in posting financial data for audited reports. HR provides public-facing information regarding employment opportunities and processes for employment on its webpages. Information regarding complaints is online as well.

The university website was completely redesigned in 2020, with the resulting upgrade designed to be a more user-friendly interface that will work more effectively with mobile devices. Among the heavily-visited pages on the new site is the university's online COVID-19 resource and information hub, which has been regularly updated since the beginning of the pandemic. The page includes all communications to date about the virus and the campus response, as well as links to a dashboard with regularly-updated information on testing results.

In addition to providing detailed information about academic offerings, the website contains information about our student population and campus setting, co-curricular activities, the library and technology services, and the range of support services available to students.

The research achievements of university faculty are also celebrated each year with the Community of Scholars publication created by the Academic Affairs Department.

The registrar's page includes links and information for numerous forms, policies, and procedures covering a wide range of areas of interest to students and families. The Office of Student Affairs publishes information about the student conduct process, including how to file appeals. All of this information is public-facing and accessible.

There is a significant amount of data and documentation for public review on the webpage for the Office of Institutional Research and Planning. These pages, organized by undergraduate and graduate programs, include program reviews and responses, accreditation reports and responses, graduate and alumni surveys, assessment plans, and action reports. Information about learning outcomes for undergraduate programs can be found on the webpages of each academic program. Institutional Research also shares information on retention and graduation rates, along with information on students who have transferred to other institutions.

University Police regularly post updated activity logs monthly, with data over sixty days, and work with relevant campus offices to disseminate emergency notifications as needed. The

police department aims to provide transparency about campus crime, policies, and statistics through their responsibility for Clery Act compliance.

FSU complies with Massachusetts open records laws. Its designated primary records access officer helps the university process dozens of records requests annually. These requests fulfill requirements with the Secretary of the Commonwealth's office. University Police also process numerous requests for public information, similarly logged and reported.

FSU shares its institutional story through a variety of print and digital publications, including the alumni magazine Contact (published each summer and winter), as well as the Fitchburg State University Today newsletter (published every two weeks). The university also maintains a number of social media accounts. These include accounts for administrative and academic offices, student clubs and organizations, athletic teams, and alumni groups.

Appraisal

Institutionally, the university promotes intentional and transparent strategic planning. The 2020-2025 Strategic Plan followed this same process and produced a document highlighting consistency with the university's mission and core values.

Links for students, faculty and staff, and other groups on the university's main webpage make it possible to direct those in search of particular types of information, while restricting access to student data to those with appropriate log-in credentials within the university.

In the campus survey conducted during the self-study process, constituencies were surveyed about the ability to find information about the university's policies and procedures online, in the catalog, or in campus publications. Overall, students reported higher levels of agreement with respect to finding information on the website (85%) compared to faculty and librarians (60%) or staff and administrators (58%). This trend continued with respect to finding information about university costs on the website, with students reporting higher levels of agreement (87%) as compared to faculty and librarians (50%) or staff and administrators (71%).

The differences between students and the other groups of respondents are interesting. It is possible that our new website has been effective at meeting its intended goal of providing clear information to prospective students and their families. With this in mind, additional mechanisms of providing accessible information to internal constituencies should be explored. While university staff and administrators in recent years explored the creation of a "portal" to serve internal users' needs, they concluded the available solutions were not sufficient to move forward with development at that time. Still, the responses to this survey indicate there is still an unmet need for such a resource.

This analysis is consistent with qualitative comments that were provided in response to the open-ended question about the ease of accessing information on the website and in other university communications. Many student respondents reported that the website was easy to navigate. Others indicated that the website and print communications could be streamlined in different ways (e.g., simplify website links, prioritize information of importance in the catalog, separate information for graduate students and undergraduate students, develop a single login

system to access all resources). Among faculty, librarians, staff, and administrators, comments extended to include requests for a separate location for internal information and inquiries about creating centralized, searchable locations for policies and procedures. All of these comments, along with others about visual presentation and navigation, have been forwarded to the web design team for review as they continue to work on the new website layout.

In another survey item, students overwhelmingly (85%) agreed that they could find information on goals for education and success on the website, more so than faculty and librarians (54%) or staff and administrators (58%). The numbers were lower across all constituencies for being able to find education and success goals in other campus publications. Again, students' reported ease in finding information on the website may be due to the website's efficacy in meeting the needs of prospective students and families. It is also possible that students are looking for different types of information about educational goals and success in meeting them. Faculty and librarians, as well as staff and administrators, may be looking for information about program learning outcomes or specific types of data to evaluate success.

It is important to note that the students who responded to the campus survey represented two different populations of the FSU community. About 40% (158) of the sample was graduate students, with 69% of them completing their coursework fully online. About 60% (241) of the sample was undergraduate students across all grade levels, with 70% of them completing most of their coursework in-person. Interestingly, the responses of these two groups were consistent across all of the aforementioned questions. This consistency speaks to the efficacy of the website in meeting the needs of a broad range of student populations.

The university's new website provides rich, interactive content for visitors and is friendly for mobile visitors. A [partner site](#) was developed when the university aligned with Academic Partnerships to help recruit and support students in 100% online graduate programs, for which FSU manages the curriculum. That site is being visually updated to better resemble FSU's new digital representation, and complies with Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.

With the transformed website, how content is managed has also changed, with such control centralized in Marketing and Integrated Communications. The intent of this centralization aims to promote quality control and uniformity of voice and strategy on the site. This remains in keeping with industry best practices.

The office maintaining the site created an online form for content updates, processing more than 100 requests per month. Feedback from users has been largely positive, with the ticketing system complemented by virtual and in-person consultation on larger web projects. Regarding catalogs, past editions remain easily accessed through the website and the library's archives, with an option in each section of the catalog to access a "print-friendly" page for that specific section. The catalogs provide anyone reading or reviewing the catalog's main page and its multiple sub-pages with dozens of links across many sub-categories, with clearly written and articulated policies, guidelines, contact information, and substantive explanations.

The catalogs itemize all of the university's key academic requirements, in addition to substantial overviews for conduct, university policies, facilities available, admissions determinants, costs

and fees, aid, graduation requirements, accreditation, and personnel.

Information about FSU's core values, mission, and vision is easily found. Program learning objectives are documented as well as those for the General Education and Honors Programs.

There is a clear updating and editing process for the undergraduate and graduate catalogs. The Office of Institutional Research and Planning (OIRP) and SGOCE oversee this process. Each spring, OIRP invites content experts to begin updates. Edits are made to a working catalog and proofed multiple times. End users and content owners are asked to review and make final edits during the summer before the catalog is published at the start of the academic year. Curricular edits for the catalogs are made directly by OIRP and SGOCE after these changes are approved by the President (following approval through governance in the AUC or Graduate Council).

Additionally, with respect to course offerings, the academic deans work with the chairs of academic programs to ensure that courses not being offered in a timely fashion are eliminated from the course catalog via the shared governance process.

For both the website and catalog, accuracy and consistency underline the work of many offices, with an ongoing goal of ensuring consistency across the website and catalog. Given the number of personnel and offices involved in the curation of this important information, ensuring consistency across the website and catalogs remains a challenge and warrants further study.

Information about the cost of an FSU education is important to students and families. The website provides detailed cost information for both undergraduate and graduate degrees. The Student Accounts webpages contain considerable information about cost management, including tuition refunds, loans, ePayment mechanisms, and financial problem-solving. The majority of students in our survey reported easily finding cost information on the website. Information about cohort default and loan repayment rates has been added to the Financial Aid and Student Accounts pages since the self-study was initiated. Information about typical length of study and average amounts borrowed from a variety of loan sources is also documented in the Common Data Set. Including this information on the Student Accounts webpages helps students and families plan financially for college and have important conversations about enrollment (e.g., number of courses each semester to stay "on track") and student loan debt.

There is a considerable amount of data on the FSU website and in university publications. There have been tremendous gains in transparency and public disclosure with respect to data over the past several years. The Office of Institutional Research and Planning (OIRP) has been created since our last self-study. The OIRP broadly disseminates such data, a true achievement.

Additionally, when student or program accomplishments appear in university digital and print publications, they are supported with links and references to the appropriate sources. Information about accrediting agencies is easily located on departmental/program webpages.

Learning objectives from the university catalog emphasize each academic program's benefits. Program learning outcomes are listed on the webpages for all undergraduate majors, and are in the process of being added to graduate program webpages. That said, variation exists in the content presented on departmental webpages with respect to learning outcomes and students'

achievements and success. Accredited programs tend to have more specific information on their webpages (for example, Human Services' Student Achievement Indicators). Links to pass rates for licensure exams in Nursing and Education are published on departmental webpages.

Overall, multiple and rich sources of important data on the Assessment and Institutional Research and Planning pages exist. The institutional level data on the OIRP website benefits from the context provided by the descriptions of the data source. For example, the nature of the data contained in the Common Data Set, the Institutional Factbook, and the Student Achievement Measure provide ample descriptions. Likewise, the Institutional Factbook remains easy to digest given its formatting and the nature of the information contained.

The Assessment pages provide a wealth of information, including graduate and undergraduate assessment reports. UARC conducted a review of the assessment pages in Spring 2021, which informed a reorganization of the pages to make them easier to navigate and use. OIRP is continuing to work on these pages to make it easier for visitors to interpret the voluminous data contained therein.

A challenge also exists with university social media accounts. Social media accounts exist for both the university and departments, as well as for affinity groups. Only the university accounts are actively populated and managed by Marketing & Integrated Communications (M&IC).

To maximize consistency and accuracy on the website and on social media pages, M&IC provides templates, training, and social media publishing guidelines. Department and affinity groups are advised to have new accounts reviewed and approved by M&IC. That being said, significant variability exists with respect to the content portrayed across different accounts.

Overall, FSU's practices seek to maximize transparency and timely public disclosures.

Projections

The President will convene a committee with representatives from all major divisions, including Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Human Resources, Information Technology, and Finance and Administration, to develop a master calendar for policy review and updates by Spring 2023.

Marketing and Integrated Communications will create an online policies directory by 2024.

The President will convene a committee by Fall 2022 with representatives from all major divisions, including Information Technology and Marketing & Integrated Communications, to explore ways to serve internal users' information needs. This might take the form of a credentialed "portal" or some other type of non-public interface.

The offices of Academic Affairs and Marketing & Integrated Communications will develop a process to ensure the university catalog and website are in alignment by Fall 2022.

By Fall 2022, Marketing & Integrated Communications will begin annual reviews with university offices that maintain branded social media accounts in order to ensure that the content is consistent with website and print publications.