Assurance Argument

West Virginia State University

Review date: 12-08-2025

Welcome Message for Review Team

It is my distinct honor to welcome the Higher Learning Commission to West Virginia State University (WVSU). As you engage with our campus community, you will find a University that takes great pride in its history, its mission, and its people. Faculty, staff, and students demonstrate daily what it means to embody excellence, resilience, and service.

Over the past decade, WVSU has uIndergone a period of transformation. Guided by our land-grant mission and a shared commitment to student success, we have expanded academic programs, strengthened student support services, deepened research capacity, and enhanced engagement with our local and regional communities. These collective efforts have positioned WVSU for a future defined by innovation and impact.

This Assurance Argument reflects the dedication and collaboration of our entire University community. Faculty, staff, and administrators have worked together over the past two years to assess our progress with diligence, transparency, and a commitment to continuous improvement. The resulting report is not only a demonstration of compliance with HLC's criteria, it is a reflection of who we are as an institution: proud of our achievements, mindful of our challenges, and purposeful in charting the path forward.

WVSU stands as a model of persistence and progress. We have introduced new undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral programs to meet the evolving needs of students and employers; expanded online and hybrid learning opportunities; and invested strategically in faculty excellence and research infrastructure. Notable initiatives, such as the launch of our first doctorate program in Leadership Studies, establishment of the Bachelor of Science in Cybersecurity, and the ongoing development of the new Purdy School of Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources, highlight our commitment to preparing students for the workforce of tomorrow while advancing innovation in education, technology, and sustainable agriculture.

Our progress has been supported by strengthened partnerships with state and federal agencies, community organizations, and industry leaders. Together, these collaborations have enhanced our research enterprise and reinforced our role as a catalyst for economic and social advancement in West Virginia and beyond. Most recently, the University publicly launched its boldest fundraising initiative, the State of Tomorrow Capital Campaign, with a goal to accelerate student success, fuel innovation, and strengthen WVSU's long-term impact.

The process of preparing this report has renewed our collective sense of purpose and reaffirmed our institutional values: accountability, shared governance, and student-centered excellence. I am confident that your review will affirm that WVSU is an institution that honors its historic legacy while moving forward with boldness and vision.

On behalf of the entire West Virginia State University family, I extend my deepest appreciation for your time, thoughtful review, and continued partnership in advancing higher education. We are honored to share our story with you and to welcome you to the Mountain State.

Sincerely,

Ericke S. Cage, J.D., LL.M.
President, West Virginia State University

1 - Mission

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

1.A. Mission Alignment

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

Argument

The published West Virginia State University mission statement reflects the dynamic nature of the University with its emphasis on teaching, research, and service. This emphasis provides a means for improving students' lives and transforming the Kanawha Valley and the State of West Virginia. The WVSU mission statement is grounded in the University's foundation as a Historically Black College/University (HBCU), one of the original 1890 land-grant institutions designated by the state for the education of black citizens. The University remains deeply committed to its tripartite mission of teaching, research, and service. These foundational statements guide academic planning, new program approval, budgeting priorities, and all other University actions.

The WVSU Mission Statement reads as follows: "West Virginia State University is a diverse, 1890 land-grant institution that advances knowledge through access and opportunity, innovative teaching and learning, interdisciplinary research, and impactful service. Our learners are equipped to meet the economic and social needs of the state, region, and nation, and contribute solutions to complex global challenges."

The process to develop and adopt this updated mission statement began in 2021 with engaged stakeholders across campus. A collaborative process allowed the University to evaluate multiple viewpoints of each stakeholder in an effort to produce a mission statement that encompasses the views of all involved while ensuring that the University continues to provide a high-quality education to current and future students.

In August of 2022, WVSU launched a strategic planning effort that culminated in the adoption of its new strategic plan, _Future State_ , which included the updated mission statement, vision statement, and core values. From August 2022 through March 2024, the Strategic Plan Steering Committee and subcommittee members, composed of more than 70 individuals representing faculty, staff, administration, alumni, and community members, engaged more than 500 stakeholders through focus group discussions and surveys. The Mission, Vision, and Core Values were central to the effort and were confirmed through our strategic planning process. The WVSU Board of Governors approved a final document on April 20, 2023.

The Mission Statement expresses the character of the University as it strives to meet the

academic needs of its students and contribute to the quality of life and economic development of the region. The mission may be accessed on the University's website. The University also uses social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter (now X), Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube to share the mission statement. These tools provide opportunities to communicate with constituents around the globe while promoting the goals and aspirations of the campus.

The University has 24 undergraduate and seven master degree programs, as well as one doctoral program. These degree programs align closely with meeting the needs of our community, state, and nation as noted in our mission. Of the nine occupations deemed high demand by Workforce West Virginia, WVSU has degree programs preparing students in all of the fields noted. Additionally, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook, WVSU had degree programs in several fast-growing fields including Computer Science (data science, information security, computer research), Health and Human Performance pre-professional track (pre physical and occupational therapy), Social Work and Psychology (substance abuse/behavioral/mental health counseling) and Business Administration and Accounting (actuary, financial examiner, logistician). The creation of newer degree programs, like nursing and engineering, ensure that students have the opportunity to meet continued workforce needs.

Faculty members are innovative teachers who deliver instruction via flipped classrooms, blended courses, and academic service-learning courses that promote student learning in an environment conducive to academic excellence. Faculty engage in research that enhances the classroom experience for students, and the University provides research opportunities for students and faculty alike in adherence to WVSU's 1890 land-grant status. One of the most recent examples is the opening of WVSU's Cybersecurity Innovation Center (CIC). The CIC includes a modern learning laboratory that provides hands-on experience for students in defending public infrastructure with immersive research and experiential learning. Another example is the annual West Virginia Undergraduate Research Day at the Capitol (URDC), which features presentations on creative research endeavors from student attendees of colleges and universities around the state to help members of the West Virginia State Legislature and Executive Branch understand the importance of undergraduate scholarly activities. WVSU had 10 students presenting their research in 2023, and this number grew to 20 students in 2024. Additionally, students at WVSU provided the artwork used all marketing and publication materials in 2023 and 2024. The ability to create an environment conducive to academic excellence enables WVSU to teach students in both theoretical and practical ways.

To support student learning, the university offers a variety of academic, financial, wellness, and career services to students. The Office of Retention and Student Success (ORSS) is responsible for the coordination of academic, financial, health, and social services to assist students with all aspects of student success The office first hired a single employee, a Director, in 2018 and has since grown to a staff of seven encompassing our Academic Advising Center, Supplemental Instruction, Learning Enrichment Centers/Tutoring Centers, and Emergency Student Aid. The Academic Advising Center (AAC) encompassed in the ORSS supports the work of college advisors to establish strong advising relationships and empower students to take ownership of their educational success through the provision of academic resources and individualized services that promote agency, self-efficacy, and personal growth. AAC's academic advisors have been trained to meet the standards of the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA), which promotes quality academic

advising on university campuses. The fundamental belief behind the creation of this office is that all West Virginia State University Students can be successful with the proper support, encouragement, and motivation. This speaks to the access and opportunity needed to advance knowledge as noted in the University's mission. It is this focus that creates a campus environment that welcomes, nurtures, and encourages all students at every step of their educational journey.

According to the West Virginia Higher Policy Education Commission (WV HEPC) 2023 Almanac, WVSU's student body is primarily in-state students. Slightly over half identify as female, and while the University's entire student count is 14% minority, this number has steadily increased with each incoming freshman class, up to 26% for the 2023 incoming class. About half of WVSU's students are Pell eligible, and 79% of students receive financial aid in some form. WVSU is one of the lowest-cost universities in the state, again speaking to access and opportunity critical to the University's mission. Additionally, 74% of WVSU's 2018 graduation class continued working in the state two years post-graduation, the highest percentage of any public four-year institution in the state, showing WVSU's mission to prepare students to meet the needs of the state and region.

WVSU's academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile reflect the University's core values of student-centeredness, inclusion, excellence, integrity, accountability, creativity, and resilience that shaped the University's mission. The programs and services establish a community of students, staff, and faculty committed to academic growth, service, and preservation of the racial and cultural diversity of the institution. The University enrolls a wide range of students and assists them in achieving their academic, civic, and career potential through quality academic programs. The University continues to be an affordable and accessible vehicle where low-income, first-generation college students can study in an environment that embraces diversity and advances knowledge through innovative education, interdisciplinary research, and impactful service.

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1.B. Mission and Public Good

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

Argument

West Virginia State University is committed to serving the public good. As noted <u>WVSU's vision</u> the University "inspire(s) student success and facilitate(s) innovative research that drives West Virginia forward." As an 1890 Land-Grant University, WVSU is a part of a national Cooperative Extension System designed to leverage the research-based knowledge of the University to improve the lives in the local community and beyond. One major area of public service activities delivered by the University is its Extension Service whose primary target audience is historically underserved populations.

The <u>WVSU Extension Service</u> is organized into four primary program areas which include Agricultural and Natural Resources, Family and Consumer Sciences including Healthy Grandfamilies, 4-H Youth Development, and Community Vitality and Economic Development including the Economic Development Center. Under each of these program areas is a portfolio of targeted programs that serve people throughout the state of WV. Programs include community-oriented education, research-driven insights, and pragmatic solutions aimed at tackling the most pressing issues faced by residents of West Virginia.

The <u>Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) program</u> area is committed to providing research-based educational programs and technical assistance to farmers, commodity groups, and agribusinesses, and to providing horticultural and pest management assistance to West Virginia. The program area primarily focuses on alternative agriculture, sustainability, urban forestry, cold storage/post-harvest technology, and community, youth, and adaptive gardening through hands-on workshops throughout central and southern West Virginia, reaching gardeners of all ages and experience levels. A recent addition to this Extension program area is <u>GradCAMP, which is a virtual two-semester program</u> in which scholars will learn from climate professionals in the equity and justice fields and present their research to local or regional stakeholders.

The <u>Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) program</u> offers practical information for individuals, families, and communities on eating well, managing money, raising children, maintaining health literacy, and staying active. The primary goal of FCS is to improve the well-being of traditionally underserved families and communities by providing research-based knowledge and principles applicable to their everyday lives. The primary programs of WVSU FCS are Expanded Food and Nutrition program (EFNEP), Health Literacy, Healthy Grandfamilies, Prevent T2 (type 2 Diabetes education), and the Extension Collaborative on Immunization Teaching and Engagement (EXCITE). The <u>EXCITE program</u> launched in 2023 as a subaward in collaboration with another university to increase vaccine confidence among rural and other underserved communities, populations identified by the USDA and CDC as vaccine-hesitant and limited in healthcare options.

The 4-H Youth Development program is dedicated to providing innovative educational opportunities for youth in STEM, Agriculture, Healthy Living, and Civic Engagement. The signature programs currently delivered by WVSU 4-H include Sowing Young Sprouts, School and Community Gardens, and Wildlife Education via the Claudia L. Workman Wildlife Center. The program area also curates a large lending library full of activity kits, sewing and art supplies, and curated STEM Discovery Boxes available to local public schools to supplement classroom materials at no cost. Additionally, the 4-H program works with schools to host themed Discovery Days that include activity stations, a digital Star Lab, and an augmented reality sandbox. At the 2024 West Virginia Association of Extension 4-H Agents conference, WVSU 4-H won awards for two agents involved in the Lending Library, and the 4-H Youth Development Team won a Communicator Award for Outstanding Social Media Package by a Team for its work on World Butterfly Day 2023. The Junior Master Gardener Program, started in 2022, targets grades K-8 with a focus on health, nutrition, wildlife education, plant growth and development, and natural resources. Young gardeners learn by engaging in hands-on projects and activities. Additionally, community STEM activities like summer camps and annual theme days serve youth in the community while also building educational partnerships.

The Community Vitality and Economic Development (CVED) program area is committed to improving the viability, energy, and economic sustainability of communities in West Virginia. Its focus areas include community development and regional and local economic, and small business development revitalization. WVSU operates an Economic Development Center (EDC) under the umbrella of this program area to support creative and other entrepreneurs in their business development aspirations. The EDC contains office and conference room space as well as video and sound recording and editing studios available at submarket rates to reduce the barrier to entry. CVED also partners with the new WVSU Center, a new space for the University in the heart of Charleston, to support economic growth and social change in West Virginia.

In addition to the WVSU Extension Service programs, the University offers certificates and continuing education that serve the public good and promote economic development. WVSU partners with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT, now known as Education West Virginia) to offer discounted continuing education courses as part of their TEACH Academy. These courses are offered fully online and qualify for continuing education requirements for continued licensure in West Virginia. Another example is the West Virginia State University's Certified Public Manager® Program (CPM) . This is an intensive multi-part program in which participants learn about themselves and their organizations and how to lead and manage more effectively. This is an affiliate program of the National CPM® Consortium and is designed to improve the quality and efficiency of government agencies by developing the effectiveness and professionalism of its managers. This program is also housed at the WVSU Center.

The WVSU Center, opened in downtown Charleston in December of 2023, serves as a hub for University, Extension, and Community programming. In addition to the programs from the CVED and CPM, the WVSU Center is also utilized as a space for community events such as lunch and learns and the speaker series "Conversation on Leadership" moderated by WVSU's President. These events are free to the public and focus on a variety of topics of interest to the local community.

WVSU also engages students in community activities promoting public service. WVSU

Cares Day serves the public good. It brings together Yellow Jacket students, faculty, staff, and alumni for a one-of-a-kind service opportunity. In the spring of 2024, over 200 staff, students, and partners at West Virginia State University worked across the community in an effort to show how much they care. Project sites within the communities of Cabell, Kanawha, and Putnam counties are identified. The projects may include outdoor clean-up, working with youth, literacy education, serving meals, office work, and a variety of other worthwhile endeavors.

Another example of student engagement occurs with the USDA 1890 Scholarship, which offers scholarships to U.S. citizens who are seeking a bachelor's degree at one of the nation's 1890 Historically Black Land-Grant institutions in any field of study in agriculture, food, natural resource sciences, or other related disciplines. Students accepted into WVSU's 1890's Scholars Program receive free tuition, fees, room, and board and must engage in community service projects in addition to academic requirements. In October of 2024, 1890's scholars chose campus beautification as their service project and assisted with preparing the campus for Homecoming.

WVSU partners with businesses to promote the economic development of the state and meet national and global needs, as noted in WVSU's mission. Additionally, WVSU has partnered with numerous agencies to establish scholarships for areas of economic need in the region and state, including Wellpoint WV   and Highmark West Virginia Charitable Fund, to create scholarships for nursing, public health, and social work. Similarly, WVSU began a collaboration with IBM in 2022 to address a national shortage in cybersecurity. Building on WVSU's effort to create the Cybersecurity Leadership Center and to continue to address the global cybersecurity risk. WVSU partnered with Google to expand the program and launch a Cybersecurity Clinic to prioritize hands-on training utilizing WVSU's cutting-edge CyberHive, a physical critical infrastructure Industrial Control System..

WVSU also serves the public good through programs and scholarships for underserved populations. WVSU offers TRIO programs, three federally funded programs at WVSU that help students who are either low-income or first-generation to enroll and graduate from college. One of the TRIO, Upward Bound, is a college preparatory program funded by the U.S. Department of Education that provides intensive, year-round academic services and enrichment activities to prepare students holistically for success in college. During the summer, Upward Bound students attend a six-week academy designed to provide a college-going experience, as well as give a head start on the students' next year in school. Another example of serving underprivileged students is the University's partnership with the BHER Foundation to support students who come through the WVSU Healthy Grandfamilies Program, particularly students in rural counties. WVSU also offers a confidential food pantry for students in need.

WVSU also serves the public by hosting a wide variety of free summer day and residential camps on campus. The Army Educational Outreach Camp (AEOP) High School Internships at West Virginia State University Program is one such program. AEOP is a full-time 9-week program during the summer that aims to provide an all-encompassing research experience for high school students of underrepresented minorities who are interested in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. Also, through its Athletic Department, the University traditionally offers summer sports camps for youngsters of varying ages interested in baseball, basketball, football, softball, tennis, and volleyball. They are offered either at no charge or with a registration fee, which is used to help fund the athletic

programs. Between 350 and 400 children annually receive valuable instruction from WVSU coaches and student-athletes at these camps.

In conclusion, WVSU exemplifies a strong commitment to serving the public good through its diverse academic, community, and economic development initiatives. As an 1890 Land-Grant institution, WVSU plays a pivotal role in advancing the well-being of West Virginia's residents by offering innovative research, educational opportunities, and outreach programs that directly address the unique needs of underserved populations. Through the WVSU Extension Service, 4-H Youth Development, and Community Vitality and Economic Development programs, the University actively fosters positive change in areas such as agriculture, public health, youth engagement, and economic sustainability. Additionally, the university's partnerships with local businesses, government agencies, and philanthropic organizations further enhance its ability to drive economic development and promote social equity in the region. Whether through its various educational programs, its community service efforts, or its support for underserved students, WVSU remains steadfast in its mission to improve the lives of individuals and communities, underscoring its dedication to the public good and its ongoing contribution to the state of West Virginia and beyond.

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1.C. Mission and Diversity of Society

The institution provides opportunities for civic engagement in a diverse, multicultural society and globally connected world, as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

Argument

West Virginia State University offers multiple opportunities for civic engagement, celebrating and advancing the mission to prepare our learners to meet the social and economic needs of the state, region, and nation while contributing solutions to complex global challenges. Through WVSU's foundation as both an HBCU with a liberal arts background and as an 1890 land-grant institution, diversity and multiculturalism are paramount to advancing knowledge through access and opportunity.

One example of civic engagement is through WVSU's extensive use of community members on advisory and executive boards. At the University level, there is a <u>Board of Visitors</u>, comprised of local and state executives and administrators who meet twice per year to assist the University in maintaining and enhancing the University's quality and standing in the region and the nation. Additionally, the <u>WVSU Foundation Board of Directors</u>, consisting of community members, alumni, and industry leaders, <u>acts as support to benefit West Virginia State University</u> through fundraising and management, encouraging support from stakeholders and fostering active engagement and lifelong relationships. At the College level, each of the four colleges has a <u>College Advisory Board</u> comprised of alumni, leaders, and innovators in the fields within each college who serve as ambassadors of the programs and who direct colleges on advances and trends within their fields. Furthermore, several departments have Advisory Boards or Committees. This includes Education, Leadership Studies, Nursing, and <u>Social Work</u>. These Advisory Boards are recommended or required by external accreditors and allow members of the profession to offer insight into trends affecting practice, job development, and job placement.

Another recent example of civic engagement occurred during <u>WVSU's Strategic Planning for Future State</u>. The Future State Strategic Plan Steering Committee launched with a campus-wide listening session engaging faculty and staff across campus. Over the course of the fall semester, 16 <u>additional listening sessions</u> were held to gather input from participants on the current state of the University, participants' aspirations for the University, and potential challenges to these aspirations. The listening sessions occurred on campus, off campus, and virtually with groups including faculty, staff, students, alumni, different Boards within the University, and the larger community. Additionally, a <u>survey</u> was created to gather the same information from University supporters unable to attend the conferences. This information was organized into five key areas, or pillars that formed the framework for the strategic plan..

WVSU also engages with the community through the arts and internships. These activities not only celebrate student talent but also foster stronger connections between educational institutions, local organizations, and the wider public. The following events and initiatives

demonstrate how WVSU students play an active role in shaping the cultural and professional landscape of the region:

- The marching band performed in the Charleston Christmas Parade. By participating in the parade, the Marching Swarm celebrated the many talented student musicians but also fostered stronger connections between the University and local organizations and the wider community.

- The Federal Courthouse hosted a WVSU student art exhibition. The show highlighted the creativity and talent of students. It strengthened partnerships between the University and local government bodies, and encouraged a public dialogue about the importance of art in education.

- Several students were awarded internships at the West Virginia Public Broadcasting Corporation. The students were exposed to real-world applications of their skills in media production, journalism, and broadcasting, while learning from professionals in the field and participating in a variety of projects that reached a wide audience across the state.

Additionally, WVSU plays a significant role in preserving and promoting the cultural and historical significance of diverse ethnic groups that have shaped the Kanawha Valley. In 2024, students from the University's History Department participated in an exciting archaeological dig at the Hale House in Malden, an important historical site connected to the legacy of local communities. The dig is part of a broader effort to understand and preserve the physical remnants of the Valley's diverse past, with a focus on the influence of different ethnic groups. By engaging students in hands-on projects like this, WVSU is not only fostering academic growth but also connecting the university's educational efforts with the region's cultural history.

Another major initiative that further strengthens the connection between WVSU and local history is the mural created by a University alumnus of Booker T. Washington, one of the most prominent figures in American history, and a former resident of the area. The mural is located in a tunnel leading to the Booker T. Washington Boyhood Home. This mural is an example of how the University celebrates local history and reinforces its ties to the legacy of Booker T. Washington. Initiatives like this highlight the importance of connecting historical landmarks and figures with contemporary educational practices, ensuring that the legacy of the Kanawha Valley's ethnic communities continues to be celebrated for years to come.

The annual WVSU Cares Day brings together faculty, staff, students, and alumni in a unified effort to support local organizations and communities through meaningful service projects. Each year, hundreds of volunteers dedicate their time and skills to perform service work across various sites in Kanawha and Putnam counties, making a lasting impact. Held annually since 2013, WVSU Cares Day offers an opportunity for the university to actively contribute to the well-being of the local area.

Educational opportunities for understanding diversity and multiculturalism are organized by the WVSU Cultural Activities and Educational General Assemblies Committee. The committee is responsible for planning, organizing, and developing programs such as the University's educational assemblies, artist series, Black History Month events, Women's History Month, and other culturally significant initiatives. The committee also solicits

proposals for events from faculty, staff, and students to further engage the campus community. One recent example of an activity proposed by a faculty member was the March 2024 Women's History Month Panel Discussion . The Committee received the suggestion, identified participants, and scheduled a panel with a diverse group of women working in the state of West Virginia, representing a variety of leadership roles, to discuss the evolving roles of women in Appalachia

In expanding the constituencies served by the University, WVSU has a proud tradition of educating international students with alumni residing in countries around the world including Thailand, Japan, Hong Kong, Trinidad, Jamaica, Gambia, Senegal, Spain, the Virgin Islands, Singapore, Barbados, Canada, Ecuador, Kenya, Korea, Germany, Liberia, Nigeria, China, Turkey, South Africa, Israel, India, Iran, Iraq, Malaysia, and the Philippines. The Office of International Affairs is dedicated to supporting international students and addressing their unique needs..

Student organizations also play a vital role in promoting diversity within the multicultural University community. The University supports a wide range of student organizations, including at least 16 academic national societies and 12 professional societies, each guided by faculty advisors in their respective disciplines. Notably, some groups focus on promoting minority participation on campus, such as

- The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)

- The International Student Association

- The Minorities in Agriculture and Natural Resources Association

- Pinnacle honor society for non-traditional students

Student organizations provide opportunities for students and other members of the University community to explore their academic, professional, political, social, recreational, artistic, cultural, spiritual, and community service interests. Many of these groups, such as the Student Members of the American Chemical Society, have earned national recognition from professional societies for their achievements in community outreach, career development, and service to the University.

WVSU emphasizes these programs and services because of its belief that all students have the potential to succeed in college, deserve to be treated with dignity, and should be respected for their individual differences. A fundamental principle of the University is that engagement with these resources enhances students' ability to thrive both academically and personally. This, in turn, strengthens their persistence and helps them achieve their educational goals. As articulated in the University Mission statement, WVSU prepares students to "contribute solutions to complex global challenges," equipping them for meaningful impact in an interconnected world.

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Criterion 1 Summary

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

Argument

West Virginia State University (WVSU), a historically black 1890 land-grant institution, is deeply committed to advancing knowledge through teaching, research, and service. Its mission emphasizes access, opportunity, and innovation in education while preparing students to meet the social and economic needs of West Virginia, the region, and beyond. Rooted in its HBCU heritage, WVSU's mission guides every aspect of the University from strategic planning and program development to budgeting and community engagement. The University's updated mission statement, developed collaboratively through extensive stakeholder input between 2021 and 2023, was officially adopted as part of the *Future State* strategic plan and reflects WVSU's dedication to diversity, inclusion, and transformative education.

Academically, WVSU offers 24 undergraduate, seven master's, and one doctoral program, each aligned with high-demand and fast-growing fields such as cybersecurity, nursing, and health sciences. Faculty promote academic excellence through innovative teaching methods and student-centered research, exemplified by initiatives like the Cybersecurity Innovation Center and participation in Undergraduate Research Day at the Capitol. Comprehensive student support services, coordinated through the Office of Retention and Student Success, ensure that learners, many of whom are first-generation or Pell-eligible, receive the academic, financial, and wellness resources they need to succeed. These programs affirm WVSU's commitment to access, opportunity, and equitable education.

Beyond academics, WVSU plays a vital role in public service, community engagement, and economic development across West Virginia. Through its Extension Service, the University delivers research-based programs in agriculture, family health, youth development, and community vitality. Partnerships with businesses, government agencies, and nonprofits, such as IBM, Google, and the USDA, further expand opportunities for workforce development and innovation. Initiatives like WVSU Cares Day, 4-H programs, and TRIO services demonstrate the University's commitment to civic responsibility and support for underserved populations. By integrating education, service, and research, WVSU continues to fulfill its mission of improving lives, fostering diversity, and contributing meaningful solutions to complex global and local challenges.

Sources

There are no sources.

2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

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

2.A. Integrity

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

Argument

West Virginia State University (WVSU) operates under a framework of legislative processes and administrative systems that facilitate involvement and consultation with the University community in creating institutional policies and procedures related to shared governance. The University's governing body, administration, faculty, and staff uphold the concept of shared governance, which fosters collaboration, transparency, and accountability through honest communication and respect. Faculty, staff, and student representatives participate on the Board of Governors. Additionally, student representatives may serve on several Faculty Senate Committees alongside elected or appointed faculty and administrators, who serve in an ex officio capacity. University policies and procedures are documented across various resources, including handbooks and official websites. This structure ensures the involvement of both internal and external University stakeholders in policy and procedure development.

West Virginia State University's Board of Governors is the principal policy-making and advisory body on all matters relating to and affecting the University's mission. In fulfillment of its fiduciary responsibility, its members work with the President to approve policies, strategic goals, and resources for programs and services. WVSU's Board follows the Bylaws established on July 1, 2001. These are reviewed and amended as needed, most recently on October 4, 2022. The bylaws establish membership, terms, powers, duties, committees, expenses, and records. Board members consist of nine lay members appointed by the Governor of West Virginia as well as representatives of the faculty, student body, and institutional staff, as elected by their peers.

Meeting notifications follow the West Virginia Open Government Proceedings Act as noted in the bylaws to ensure that proceedings of all public agencies are held in a public and open manner to foster public participation and transparency.. As such, notice of meetings and agendas must be posted three business days prior to a regular meeting and two business days prior to a special meeting and must include date, time, and place of the meeting. Minutes of the meeting must be approved and made available to the public immediately following the next regularly scheduled meeting. Additionally, the bylaws note in Article II, A. 7, that the Board shall provide an opportunity for administrators, faculty, staff, and students to discuss various issues no less than one time per year. Each fall, WVSU's Board of Governors posts regular meetings and constituent group meeting schedules for the

academic year to ensure compliance with both the Open Government Proceedings Act and the Board of Governors Bylaws.

In exercising their authority to adopt, amend, or appeal policies, procedures, and rules at West Virginia State University, the Board follows established BoG Policy 1: Guidelines for Generating Policies, Rules, and Administrative Procedures. Draft policies must first be approved by the cabinet, then presented to the Board, which will determine if there shall be a notice of proposed rulemaking for public comment. An example of this is the presentation of BOG Policy 70 DEADLY WEAPONS, DANGEROUS OBJECTS, & W. VA. CAMPUS SELF-DEFENSE ACT and Policy 45 Work Scheduling Innovations presented to the Governance Committee, then the full Board for approval. After approval from the Board, the proposed policy was provided to the Chancellor and posted for public comment. No comments were received on either policy, so they were adopted after the 30-day comment period.

All employees of West Virginia State University are expected to comply with University rules and policies at all times. Active University policies and Board of Governors policies are available online for transparency and easy accessibility. Additionally, as WVSU is also bound to West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission policies, those are also linked in an easily accessible area of the website. The University rules and policies include policies on travel, discrimination, harassment, Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action, Ethics, nepotism, and fraternization.

The Department of Human Resources (HR) is actively engaged in reviewing and revising personnel policies and procedures to ensure integrity in the treatment of all the University's personnel. HR carries out several employment functions such as recruitment, safety, employee relations, compensation and benefits, compliance, and training and development. HR maintains the WVSU Employee handbook, which details employment practices, policies, procedures, rules, pay, and benefits regarding classified employees. As noted, WVSU does not discriminate based on "race, national origin, gender, color, age, marital status, veteran status, or disability that does not prohibit the performance of essential job functions with or without reasonable accommodation." This anti-discrimination statement applies to all policies and practices concerning hiring, training, promotions, rates of pay, and other forms of compensation.

Human Resources staff oversee the annual evaluation of employees and provide managers and supervisors with tools, training, and support for employee development. All employees are given performance evaluations at specified times during their probationary periods, at the end of the probationary periods, and annually thereafter.

In October of 2023, WVSU created a new structure for goal setting and performance evaluation for staff members. Personnel and Supervisors work together to create annual goals for the employee, which are reviewed and finalized with the supervisor's approval. These goals are then assessed each year using both a self-assessment and a supervisor assessment.

Faculty are to be evaluated annually in accordance with HEPC Series 9. As noted in the WVSU Faculty Handbook, there are different types of faculty appointments, including tenure track, non-tenure track, library track, term, tenured, and research faculty. Each appointment has specified evaluation guidelines detailed in the handbook. Faculty are evaluated on

teaching, scholarly activity, and service using the instrument in Appendix J.

WVSU employees hired for permanent employment for a full- or part-time position, including probationary employees, can file a grievance to seek a resolution to a workplace dispute. All grievances are processed under rules outlined in WV Code §6C-2. Procedures related to filing a grievance can be found in the Employee Handbook and are also easily accessible on the website.

The student complaint process is detailed on page 58 of the WVSU Student Handbook and on page 65 of the Academic Catalog. Additionally, the catalog details the procedure for appeal of final grades on page 54 and appeal of academic suspension and dismissal on page 59. The catalog also defines procedures for student employment, suspension, and appeal on pages 37-40. In order to better assist students with navigating complaint policies and procedures, the Office of Student Advocacy (OSA) was created in 2023. This office supports students in resolving conflicts and understanding the processes involved in various types of student complaints. The OSA also connects students with on and off-campus resources.

Ombudspersons are available to advise students, faculty, and staff who have exhausted normal University procedures for resolving conflicts. Maintaining confidentiality, they work outside of administration to see that policies have been fairly followed and facilitate dialogue, apart from formal grievance procedures. The Office of Counseling and Wellness Services oversees the process.

WVSU uses a learning management system to track required training. This system, named Safety Skills, requires a user id and password to log into a dashboard showing employees what trainings are currently due, what trainings are upcoming within the next year, and what trainings have been completed. Each month, Administrators and Supervisors are sent a report listing which employees have completed or need to complete various trainings.

Included in Safety Skills is Title IX training. The University, through its Civil Rights and Title IX Coordinator, follows established policies in handling discrimination and harassment and publishes the process for filing reports for students, faculty, and staff. Students, employees, and contractors are provided annual training on Title IX either through Safety Skills or in-person training. New employees receive Title IX training as part of their New Hire Onboarding process.

WVSU is committed to encouraging and achieving an environment that is underpinned by fairness to all individuals, where equality and diversity are recognized, encouraged, and valued, and the concept of individual responsibility is accepted by all. Integrity is one of the core values of West Virginia State University that grounds our mission to advance knowledge. In order to best equip our learners, WVSU establishes and follows policies and processes that ensure fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing board, administration, faculty, and staff. The institution operates responsibly, ethically, and with integrity in its functions.

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2.B. Transparency

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

Argument

The University effectively communicates its information through various channels. The University website and the Academic Catalog serve as comprehensive sources of information. Additionally, alumni relations newsletters, magazines, and the University's social media platforms provide additional means of clear communication to students and the public. Efforts are ongoing to further improve communication among all levels of the University and its stakeholders. These efforts aim to enhance employee satisfaction, academic performance, and student service and retention. The University's commitment to clarity and transparency to the campus community is evident through its website and various media channels, ensuring comprehensive access to students and the public.

The University's Academic Catalog comprehensively covers academic procedures and admissions and outlines all course offerings across its four colleges. It also details the General Education curriculum and includes accreditation information for both the institution and specialized programs. Oversight of the University Academic Catalog falls under the purview of the Office for Academic Affairs, with annual reviews and revisions conducted by Department Chairs, Deans, and Provost. Integrity in catalog operations is ensured through rigorous reviews by Academic Affairs and feedback from the Faculty Senate, faculty, students, and staff. Additionally, the University offers a wealth of information through its website, including electronic copies of the University Catalog and the Student Handbook.

Recently, the University underwent a significant website overhaul, resulting in a fresh appearance and enhanced functionality. Collaborating with WVNET consultants, the University revamped its website to improve content, imagery, and overall appeal, aiming for a more welcoming and positive impression. Recognizing the website as a vital marketing tool and a primary source of information for the campus community, particular emphasis was placed on accessibility. The updated website now features streamlined navigation and highlights essential information such as admissions, programs, and services. Spearheaded by the Communications and Marketing Office, responsible for central communications for the institution, efforts also extend to maintaining relationships via press releases, online news, social media, and printed materials. To ensure ongoing accuracy and relevance, departments conduct biannual website audits, and webmasters receive regular training updates.

The University offers various important services and information to both future and current students through its website. Future students can find links to landing pages for admissions, applications, and new student orientations. Additionally, the "Get to Know Us" page offers information about our location, size, campus, history, and notable alumni. The landing page for current students includes information about Career Services, Counseling and Wellness Services, FamilyCare Health Centers, Fitness Center, Library, Student Advocacy and Complaints, Tutoring, and more. The Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships website provides important information such as due dates and deadlines for the academic year, as well as details on the cost of attendance, satisfactory academic progress (SAP) policies, and relevant forms. Meanwhile, the Office of Student Accounts website

offers tuition and fee details along with billing schedules, parking and dining service options, and policies related to refunds and delinquent accounts. The Office of the Registrar website highlights FERPA information prominently and also contains links for commonly used student and faculty forms, transcript requests and verification, and graduation information.

In addition to pages regarding student policies and processes, there are also dedicated pages to student groups. The Student Government Association (SGA) page contains contact information, links to the SGA constitution and bylaws, and applications for positions within SGA. Student Organizations at WVSU have a dedicated webpage that provides a comprehensive list of current groups, categorized by type and interest. It also includes information on how to form new student organizations. The student groups span a wide range of interests, from faith-based organizations like Jackets for Jesus to departmental groups such as the American Chemical Society, and political organizations like College Republicans and State Democrats. WVSU is also a host institution for the National Pan-Hellenic Council, with chapters from five of the divine nine historically Black fraternities and sororities. These webpages are designed to be easily accessible, offering current and prospective students a clear understanding of campus life and the admissions process.

Departmental web pages offer comprehensive details about each program, including curriculum, course descriptions, faculty and staff profiles, and accreditation status where relevant. Recently, the University has launched new programs, including the doctoral program and the Certified Public Manager program, both highlighted on the University website. Dedicated web pages have been created for these programs as well as for all graduate programs and admission requirements, offering valuable information to prospective students and the general public.

The General Education webpage lists the curriculum and Essential Graduation Competencies, further echoed in the Academic Program Assessment. The website also includes information about university accreditation and professional licensure and certification/requirements, and transferability between states. The WVSU University Police Department site contains information for use by students, faculty/staff, and the campus community. This page includes information on new laws, such as the Campus Self-Defense Act and related policies that impact individuals attending large-scale events like sporting events and commencements. Additionally, it provides a link to the annual campus crime, fire, and safety report.

In addition to the website, the University promotes accountability by using social media platforms to share information with students. The Communications and Marketing unit is responsible for managing the University's official social media accounts, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram. Moreover, every student is provided with an email account, which, along with the University website, serves as a means to communicate and inform students about the various services and activities available to support them. In order to ensure integrity in terms of its social media practices and information dissemination, the University has developed Social Media Guidelines to guide users as to the purpose, approval, naming, updating and monitoring, and best practices in the creation and use of social media accounts.

WVSU is regionally accredited by the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (WVHEPC). This commission develops and oversees a public policy agenda for West Virginia's four-year colleges and universities. Additionally, this Commission, composed of a 12-member board, requires yearly reporting to ensure institutions carry out their mission and follow state procedures in terms of curriculum and programs, financial health, and policy and planning. Each year, WVHEPC publishes an almanac (pp. 19-20), which gives a snapshot of annual headcount, degree completion, fall freshmen profile, cost of attendance, workforce outcomes and student success. Additionally, the HEPC provides tuition and fee data comparing all four-year institutions in the state across

categories such as average tuition and fees, room and board charges, and supplemental fees. The WVHEPC also collects and publishes financial reports from each institution on its Data and Publications Center webpage. This external data source ensures that the information the University publicly shares remains accurate and transparent.

In conclusion, the University has demonstrated a strong commitment to clear and effective communication through multiple platforms, ensuring that students, faculty, staff, and the public have comprehensive access to vital information. The website and academic catalog serve as primary resources, while additional communication channels such as social media, newsletters, and magazines further enhance the University's outreach. Ongoing efforts to improve communication, including website updates and biannual audits, highlight the University's focus on accessibility and user experience. Moreover, by providing detailed information about academic programs, student services, and institutional policies, the University supports both current and prospective students in making informed decisions. The University's dedication to transparency and accountability is also reflected in its adherence to accreditation standards and collaboration with external bodies, ensuring the accuracy and integrity of the information shared. As the University continues to evolve, its communication strategies will remain a cornerstone in fostering a connected and informed campus community.

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2.C. Board Governance

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

Argument

WVSU operates under the framework of West Virginia Code Chapter 18B, which provides a comprehensive legislative structure for higher education institutions in the state. This code underscores the autonomy of institutions by outlining the authority and responsibilities of their governing boards. WVSU's Board of Governors (BOG) ensures transparency by maintaining an open and visible presence on the WVSU webpage, where scheduled meetings, agendas, and minutes are all available to the public.

In Accordance with W. Va. Code 18B-2A, the WVSU BOG is composed of members who are well-trained and knowledgeable in their roles. These members' names, images, and bios are maintained for the public on the WVSU website. The West Virginia Code requires Board members to undergo mandatory orientation to be informed about the institution's operations and their roles as Board members. Members of the BOG remain compliant with this code in several ways. New members of the Board attend an orientation to introduce them to their ethical and fiduciary responsibilities as well as the structure of the Board itself. Once a year, the Board engages in a day-long retreat to reinforce these responsibilities through presentations by experts. Additionally, Board members attend professional development "Lunch and Learn" seminars regularly scheduled by the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (HEPC), with viewing possible on the HEPC website. Topics covered during these events include best practices in governing boards in general as well as special topics dealing with specific roles of boards in higher education, such as maintaining good working relationships with the institution president, assessment, and responsibilities of the board. This professional development ensures that the board meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities effectively.

In addition to the orientation and regular professional development opportunities, the BOG engages in regular self-assessment to evaluate its effectiveness and the governance processes. The assessment is reviewed and discussed during meetings with the goal of maintaining an effective board. This practice is crucial for maintaining high standards of governance and accountability. By periodically reviewing its performance, the Board ensures that it remains effective in its oversight role and responsive to any areas requiring improvement.

Following the BOG Bylaws Article 2A.1, the BOG meets a minimum of six times annually. Relevant contemporary issues affecting the operations of the University are brought before the BOG at the regularly scheduled meetings. The Chair of the BOG may also call for a special meeting if needed. All BOG meetings are subject to WV "sunshine" laws and must be scheduled and announced accordingly. These meetings are open to both the entire University community and to the public to discuss issues that are designed to further the

University's mission of meeting the higher education and economic development needs of the state and region through innovative teaching and applied research.

The meetings facilitate informed decision-making and strategic oversight, enabling the Board to address both immediate concerns and long-term goals. To that effect, common agenda items include reports from board committees and a report from the President. Reviews and discussions of significant issues are addressed by the BOG's standing committees, including the creation and dissolution of academic programs. Longer, more strategic plans are discussed and approved in open forums as well. Two recent salient examples of this practice include the Presidential search and the approval of the University's strategic plan, Future State.

The BOG exercises its authority by developing and passing its own policies. Through this, the BOG governs through a system of legislative procedures and administrative structures designed for participation and consultation within the University in the development of institutional policies and procedures for shared governance. Following this policy, all new policies are presented to the board for approval of a 30-day open comment period before being brought back to the Board for final consideration and adoption. Through this decision-making process the BOG carefully considers the interests of both internal and external constituencies. The Board succeeds in soliciting input from various stakeholders, including faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community members to create a transparent, inclusive approach ensuring that the Board's decisions are well-rounded. Policy numbers 69 and 70 were added to the most recent policy list. Governance of the University is indispensable and interdependent and shared among the Board of Governors, the administration, faculty, staff, and students, a principle made visible by the University's published beliefs.

The BOG upholds its independence from undue influence by donors, elected officials, and other external parties. The Board operates under the guidelines set forth by West Virginia Code Chapter 18B-2A-4, which ensures that its decisions are made based solely on the best interests of the institution. This independence is crucial for maintaining the integrity of the Board's governance and ensuring that institutional decisions are free from external pressures or conflicts of interest.

Although the BOG appropriately delegates the day-to-day management of the University to the administration, allowing the institution's executive leadership to handle operational matters effectively, it maintains strategic oversight responsibility and autonomy in appointing, reviewing, and evaluating the University President's contract and performance .

West Virginia State University's Board of Governors exemplifies a commitment to autonomous governance as outlined in Core Component 2.C. WVSU's adherence to West Virginia Code Chapter 18B, along with the Board's independent policy-making, the Board's training and self-assessment practices, prioritization of institutional enhancement, consideration of diverse constituencies, independence from undue external influence, appropriate delegation of management responsibilities, and its commitment to shared governance collectively underscore the University's strong commitment to autonomous governance. These practices not only align with the requirements of Criteria 2C but also reflect a governance structure that is both effective and responsive to the needs of the University community. This robust framework supports the ongoing success and strategic direction of West Virginia State University, reinforcing its dedication to maintaining high standards of governance and institutional excellence. These practices ensure that the board

makes informed, strategic decisions in the best interest of WVSU, maintaining the institution's integrity and advancing its mission.

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2.D. Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression

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

Argument

WVSU is committed to academic freedom, freedom of expression, and the pursuit of knowledge in teaching, learning, and research. Institutions committed to academic freedom and freedom of expression in the pursuit of truth uphold the fundamental principles that form the bedrock of education and intellectual inquiry. Academic freedom allows educators and students alike to explore ideas, theories, and perspectives without fear of censorship or reprisal. This freedom fosters intellectual growth by encouraging critical thinking, challenging existing paradigms, and promoting innovation. The University's commitment to this is illustrated in a wide variety of speakers and programs offered through student and University organizations, like the Cultural Activities Committee, and daily through robust discussions inside and outside of the classroom.

WVSU embraces academic freedom in teaching a wide spectrum of diverse course offerings, for example; LGBTQ Literature, Women Writers, and Cultural Aspects. Students are encouraged to explore a variety of perspectives and their own ideologies through critical inquiry as noted in the General Education Curriculum and General Education course offerings. Additionally, the institution is guaranteed academic freedom under the jurisdiction of the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission to ensure all members of the academic community have the right to study, discuss, investigate, teach, conduct research, and publish freely.

Embracing freedom of expression ensures that diverse voices are heard within the academic community regarding learning. This includes perspectives that may be unconventional or controversial but contribute to a richer understanding of complex issues. By creating a marketplace of ideas, institutions create an environment where intellectual diversity thrives. WVSU recognizes that "America is at its best when individuals demonstrate integrity, scholarship, and freedom of expression." The University clearly outlines policies on academic freedom and freedom of expression for students (pp. 33-35) in the WVSU Student Handbook. These policies encourage the free exchange of ideas and expression for students and faculty. This also includes the Cultural and Educational Assemblies Committee (CAEA), which is a collaboration between students, faculty, and staff to bring speakers and activities from a wide variety of voices and positions. In the last academic year, the CAEA brought in WV House of Delegates Minority Leader Sean Hornbuckle as a speaker for the Black History Month Convocation and sponsored a panel discussion for Women's History Month – "The Evolving Roles of Females in Appalachia." WVSU's   Honors Program encourages students to focus and explore in-depth research of their chosen topic.

WVSU also supports academic freedom and freedom of expression through frequent interactions between faculty and students in several venues outside of the classroom, including a wide variety of student groups and cultural, social, and recreational events for

the student body. The Office of Student Life and Engagement sponsors many of these events with the express goal of encouraging student expression and thought as well as encouraging exploration into diverse voices and ideas. The Division of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs recognizes <u>69 student groups</u>, supported by over 40 faculty.

In the pursuit of truth, it is essential to engage in rigorous inquiry and debate. Academic freedom allows scholars to question assumptions, test hypotheses, and subject findings to peer review through research. This process not only advances knowledge but also strengthens the integrity of academic research and teaching. WVSU recognizes the importance of academic freedom for faculty, outlining its policies in the Faculty Handbook, supported by the WVHEPC Title 133- Series 9. Scholarly examples of academic inquiry for students are found throughout the curriculum, including in <u>scientific reasoning courses</u> required by all students as part of their General Education.

Academic freedom acts as a safeguard against external pressures that may seek to influence or control the direction of research and teaching. By protecting the autonomy of scholars and educators, institutions uphold their integrity and reputation as bastions of intellectual independence. WVSU faculty are free to pursue, study, discuss, investigate, and publish research tempered only by their own experience and expertise. In this vein, WVSU offers <u>PEER Grants for faculty</u>, providing financial means for academic research and investigation. The Faculty Senate also provides and encourages the free exchange of that research through the <u>Cultural and Educational Assemblies Committee</u> and the <u>Faculty Lecture Series</u>. In the 2024/2025 academic year, the <u>Faculty Lecture Series included presentations</u> on the writing of Carter Woodson, Organic Synthesis and Drug Discovery, and Cybersecurity Hygiene. This freedom also extends to the classroom, where faculty are free to deliver subject content and modalities that best fit their disciplines.

In conclusion, a commitment to academic freedom and freedom of expression is not just a lofty ideal but a practical necessity for institutions dedicated to the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning. It's the foundation upon which intellectual inquiry thrives, ensuring that education remains vibrant, relevant, and responsive to the ever-evolving quest for knowledge. WVSU's commitment to academic freedom ensures that we stay true to Academic Excellence, Research, and Innovation (Pillar II of Future State).

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2.E. Knowledge Acquisition, Discovery and Application

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

Argument

West Virginia State University has a developed infrastructure that ensures that research and scholarly activities are conducted with a high confidence of integrity. This infrastructure includes policies and procedures that cover both University and Research and Development personnel. All research integrity committees have full support from the administration to complete the work of evaluating programs and are appointed at a presidential level with recommendations from University administrators and research staff.

West Virginia State University conducts the research process through the lens of integrity and openness. All research endeavors on our campus primarily focus on the work led by the WVSU Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP). The OSP provides oversight for research ethics training. The Environmental and Safety Office provides regulatory compliance support for research laboratories and safety compliance for all offices on campus. The Associate Provost works with the Vice President for Agricultural Research to provide administrative oversight and compliance in research operations campus-wide.

Integrity and accountability are focal points in research as described in the Core Values and Mission Statement of WVSU. To ensure the integrity of University research, several committees have been established to provide necessary oversight and support. For example, there are University committees dedicated to protecting both human and animal subjects. The Office of Sponsored Programs, operating under the WVSU Research and Development (R&D) Corporation, works to uphold the integrity of grants, contracts, and fiscal management. It also supports faculty, staff, and administration in pursuing externally sponsored projects that advance WVSU's mission of research, teaching, and public service. The OSP team coordinates the solicitation and administration of grants, contracts, cooperative agreements, and other externally sponsored awards on behalf of the University. Faculty, Staff, and Administration initiate grant proposals with the office to complete the Internal Approval process in which documents are reviewed and approved by all relevant internal signing authorities prior to submission. After grant proposals are submitted, OSP advises principal investigators that they may need to submit their proposals to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) in compliance with federal, state, and University requirements.

The IRB is registered with the US Department of Health and Human Services and its membership is maintained with faculty and community members to ensure compliance. The University has invested in an all-electronic submission system that allows for a two-level administrative review before it is submitted to IRB for final review. Policies and procedures for the IRB are maintained and shared both through the Faculty Handbook as well as a separate Research file in Academic Affairs. The handbook and all relevant policies are updated annually and shared with the Faculty Senate.

Faculty members serving on one of the research integrity committees must complete additional trainings. These trainings are focused on the proposals that the committee receives, and each committee has the ability to bring in consultants and experts for additional requirements.

Ethical training in research can be seen in the requirements students must complete to begin their research. Principal Investigators, co-investigators, technicians, research staff, undergraduate and graduate students, postdoctoral fellows and any others who work on any approved research projects at WVSU must complete Responsible Conduct of Research training. This includes classroom assigned research projects, grant funded projects, or research work through the Extension services. The CITI training must be completed every three years. All individuals completing an IRB proposal must submit a certificate of completion of the Responsible Conduct in Research training to be approved as well.

Faculty members completing work that involve Biosafety components must go through the Institutional Biosafety Committee. This committee is comprised of Research and University staff that have expertise in handling materials that have biosafety concerns ranging from transgenic products to cell cultures. Each lab that submits a protocol must undergo an inspection by the Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S) Office and designated committee members to ensure proper use of containment infrastructure and processes. Inspection reports are kept on file with EH&S, and labs are periodically re-inspected to confirm that policies are being followed and all equipment is functioning correctly.

Faculty have the opportunity to integrate their research into the classroom, exercising their academic freedom to share insights with students. They engage students directly through research laboratories, professional conferences, and field experiences, with many programs requiring hands-on laboratory experience to fulfill degree or scholarship requirements. Faculty also support students through experiential learning during the summer months. Additionally, faculty are encouraged to present their research on campus through the Faculty Lecture Series, fostering interdepartmental collaboration and enhancing their work.

To illustrate knowledge acquisition, students within many programs have an experiential learning component that is required to graduate. One example of this is social work. The Social Work program is structured around the nine core competencies established by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). Classroom learning in theories and concepts is closely linked to field experiences, ensuring that coursework and practical application are fully integrated to help students demonstrate a comprehensive range of practice behaviors and achieve all nine competencies. Students participate in field instruction courses concurrently with practice courses, creating a direct link between theoretical and practical learning. Practice course assignments are intentionally designed to relate to field experiences. Additionally, the weekly field seminar offers students further opportunities to bridge course content and fieldwork through group discussions, small-group activities, presentations, and reflective journaling.

WVSU is dedicated to supporting its faculty, staff, and students in the pursuit and application of new knowledge for societal benefit. This commitment is upheld through all levels of administration, policies, and faculty committees. Support includes providing a robust campus infrastructure, implementing policies that uphold ethical research both inside and outside the classroom, and ensuring administrative and financial resources are in place to facilitate

scholarly activities. Faculty have the academic freedom to share their scholarly activities in the classroom when appropriate, apply for copyrights or patents, and share their work at professional meetings.

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Criterion 2 - Summary

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

Argument

West Virginia State University (WVSU) operates under a strong framework of shared governance, emphasizing collaboration, transparency, and accountability among its governing bodies, faculty, staff, and students. The Board of Governors (BOG), administration, and University committees ensure active participation from all campus constituencies in shaping institutional policies and procedures. This system encourages communication and respect through structured representation on committees and boards, with documented policies accessible via handbooks and official University websites. By involving internal and external stakeholders in decision-making, WVSU maintains an inclusive governance model that supports integrity and broad community engagement.

The WVSU Board of Governors serves as the University's principal policy-making authority, responsible for guiding institutional mission, approving strategic goals, and ensuring fiscal responsibility. The Board operates under bylaws, originally established in 2001 and amended as recently as 2022, that define its composition, duties, and procedures. It abides by the West Virginia Open Government Proceedings Act, guaranteeing transparency through public meeting notices, accessible minutes, and open forums for dialogue with students, faculty, and staff. The Board follows established procedures when adopting or revising policies, such as BOG Policy 70 on campus safety and Policy 45 on work scheduling, ensuring opportunities for public comment before final approval. These practices exemplify WVSU's commitment to openness and compliance with state regulations.

Institutional policies governing faculty, staff, and students are publicly available online for transparency and accountability. The Department of Human Resources (HR) manages personnel policies, ensuring compliance with Equal Opportunity and anti-discrimination standards, while overseeing employee evaluations, training, and development. HR also facilitates performance assessments and grievance procedures consistent with West Virginia Code §6C-2, ensuring fairness in employment practices. For students, formal complaint and appeal processes are clearly outlined in the Student Handbook and Academic Catalog, supported by the Office of Student Advocacy and Ombudsperson services, which provide guidance, confidentiality, and impartial resolution for disputes. These structures collectively reinforce WVSU's ethical commitment to equity and due process across its community.

WVSU demonstrates its dedication to integrity and effective communication through several platforms, including its Academic Catalog, official website, newsletters, and social media. The University recently completed a major website redesign in partnership with WVNET to enhance accessibility, functionality, and visual appeal. These digital resources provide comprehensive information about academic programs, admissions, student life, financial aid, and University policies. They also highlight student organizations, campus services, and academic resources, promoting transparency and user engagement. Oversight by the

Communications and Marketing Office ensures the site remains accurate and relevant, with regular departmental audits and updates. These efforts reflect WVSU's ongoing commitment to clarity, accessibility, and community engagement through technology.

WVSU's governance and operations are grounded in ethical principles and academic freedom, supported by state oversight and accreditation through the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (WVHEPC). The BOG upholds institutional independence by adhering to West Virginia Code Chapter 18B, engaging in continuous self-assessment, and ensuring freedom from external influence. Academic freedom and freedom of expression are central to the University's mission, enabling faculty and students to pursue scholarship and dialogue without constraint. Research integrity is ensured through structures such as the Office of Sponsored Programs, Institutional Review Board, and Biosafety Committee, which uphold ethical and compliance standards. Through these systems, WVSU fosters a culture of accountability, intellectual inquiry, and shared responsibility, thus strengthening its mission to advance knowledge, serve the public good, and uphold institutional excellence.

Sources

There are no sources.

3 - Teaching and Learning for Student Success

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

3.A. Educational Programs

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

Argument

Introduction

West Virginia State University maintains the quality of its academic programs and rigor of learning goals and course outcomes through a structured process involving collaborative curriculum design, program assessment, program review, input from advisory boards, and continuous improvement. The quality and rigor are maintained across different modes of delivery. These processes involve administration, faculty, students, WVSU Board of Governors (BOG), and advisory boards and are aligned with the University's strategic plan, *Future State*.

Educational Policies Committee

The Educational Policies Committee (EPC), a Faculty Senate standing committee, oversees undergraduate curricular changes, including course revisions, additions, and deletions. The EPC's Curriculum Revision and Course Revision forms ensure the committee has all necessary information, including departmental minutes and the course syllabus, to make informed decisions.

Development of new courses and programs and changes in them typically begin in academic departments but may also arise from accrediting standards, administration, or the BOG. Proposed changes are discussed in department meetings, documented in minutes, and submitted via EPC forms, signed by relevant department chairs and deans. The EPC meets monthly during the fall and spring semesters to review proposals and to vote for approval, conditional approval, or non-approval. Conditional approvals require revisions, while non-approvals allow resubmission without bias. Approved proposals proceed to the Faculty Senate and, if endorsed, are signed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Changes typically take effect in the following academic catalog.

For graduate programs, similar policies and procedures are enacted by the Graduate

Studies Council (GSC). Members of this Council include representation from each of the graduate programs. This council meets four times per academic year to review, discuss, and vote on changes to graduate-level programs. Acting as a committee of the whole, the entire Graduate Council mirrors the undergraduate EPC actions as a standing agenda item.

The University Catalog contains details about academic programs and a complete list of courses with descriptions. After proposals are reviewed and endorsed by Academic Affairs, the Registrar's Office updates DegreeWorks, the software program linked with Ellucian Banner that provides a visual checklist of requirements and courses. Named MyDegree@State in the WVSU system, each student has an individual page mirroring the catalog that allows students to track progress while streamlining the advising and graduation process.

Program Review

In June of 2022, the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (WVHEPC) approved a new rule for state higher education institutions to streamline academic program review and approval. Those changes to Series 10 rules=page170 were made to eliminate unnecessary or outdated reporting and establish a more collaborative academic program review process. Changes noted include building program review into strategic planning and budgeting processes and new priority core components as external demand, quality of outcomes, and delivery cost. The new procedure empowers the institution to develop a self-study template based on the above changes that will be reported by the governing board to the Commission each May. Additionally, the new rule establishes that while programs continue to be a five-year review cycle, institutions shall provide an annual update to report progress on recommendations and addressing underperforming programs. This new procedural rule ensures that faculty and administration review programs each year and can make early determinations about what programs and areas may have opportunities for improvements or advancements.

Academic programs are reviewed every five years according to the program review schedule in accordance with the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (WVHEPC) Policy and WVSU Board of Governors Bylaws Article III 7 and 8. Program reviews serve to maintain and increase program quality, respond to existing and developing needs of the community, and provide high-quality education for students. The reviews help the institution and the Board of Governors (BOG) evaluate each program's effectiveness and productivity. The process begins with a departmental review and is followed by a review encompassing faculty, administration, and the BOG . An internal review of undergraduate programs is conducted by the Program Review Committee (PRC), which is a Faculty Senate standing committee. PRC establishes review criteria, facilitates the initial reporting process, evaluates programs, and makes recommendations regarding programs to the Office of Academic Affairs. At the graduate level, the members of the Graduate Studies Council function as the PRC to review proposals and make recommendations to Academic Affairs. Academic Affairs objectively assesses the submissions and proposes an executive summary containing the program's strengths and weaknesses and actionable recommendations to the BOG. The BOG makes the final recommendations and sends those to WV HEPC. For example, in February 2024, the BOG recommended the continuation of the Regents Bachelor of Arts and the Bachelor of Science in Social Work and the discontinuation of the Bachelor of Science in International Studies.

Program Learning Outcomes

All academic programs articulated program learning outcomes (PLOs) as part of the University assessment program. Each undergraduate program creates and votes within the department on PLOs, which are then reflected on through a yearly assessment report. Any change or revision of the PLOs should be approved by the appropriate academic department via documented voting. At the program level, PLOs align with middle to upper-range accomplishments according to Bloom's taxonomy. The General Education curriculum also aligns with this ideology, offering beginning to middle outcomes for all classes.

WVSU's General Education curriculum is also evaluated from a program level. The General Education curriculum is guided by the Essential Graduation Competencies, a modified version of the Association of American Colleges and Universities' Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) . These Essential Graduation Competencies reflect a key area in the University's strategic plan, Future State . Pillar 2.1 of *Future State* states that the University will offer strong academic degree programs responsive to the emerging needs of our students, industry, state, and nation. The General Education curriculum, as a common program amongst all undergraduate majors, ensures a widespread level of quality and rigor across programs.

Underneath programmatic learning outcomes, course learning outcomes indicate appropriate level of content and assignments. Undergraduate courses at WVSU focus on foundational knowledge and skills, aligning with the lower tiers of Bloom's Taxonomy, such as **Remember**, **Understand**, and **Apply**. Introductory courses emphasize recalling key concepts, explaining theories, and applying basic principles. As students advance, outcomes incorporate **Analyze**, **Evaluate**, and **Create**, fostering critical thinking and practical problem-solving through assignments like case studies and capstone projects. For example, these four courses from different programs and at different levels exhibit varying levels of sophistication in learning objectives. Graduate courses , by contrast, generally are structured around the higher tiers of Bloom's Taxonomy, such as **Evaluate** and **Create**. Learning outcomes emphasize advanced analysis, independent research, and the production of original work. For example, graduate students may critically assess scholarly literature or design and execute research projects that contribute to their fields. In Educ 300 Educational Technology, undergraduate students' final project to create a student sample of work containing multimedia content and reflect on how these support learning objectives. In the LS 625 Technology for Educational Leadership, graduate students develop a technology plan in four parts for their culminating project and evaluate this plan to reflect NELP (National Educational Leadership Preparation) and ISTE (International Society for Technology in Education) standards. These examples demonstrate student progress through advanced outcomes and assignments.

Specialized Accreditation

Externally, accredited academic programs are a hallmark of quality and excellence, serving as a testament to WVSU's commitment to meeting rigorous national and professional standards. Several WVSU programs hold specialized accreditations from industry-recognized bodies. For example, the undergraduate and graduate education programs are accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), the business and economics programs by the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and

Programs (ACBSP) (BusinessYearlyReport), and the nursing program by the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN) demonstrating a commitment to quality professional training. The social work program has been continually accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) since 1975 and is under current review of reaffirmation after a deferral to allow time to hire an additional faculty member.

The Bachelor of Science in Engineering/Civil has achieved accreditation from the Engineering Accreditation Commission (EAC) of ABET in August 2025. This accreditation is retroactive from October 1, 2023, ensuring all graduates from this date onwards are recognized as graduates from an ABET-accredited program. The rigorous accreditation evaluation, which included a successful on-campus visit from October 13 to 15, 2024, confirmed the program's adherence to high standards. The visiting team reported "No Shortcomings" in the Civil Engineering program, demonstrating a sound and quality program. This achievement is a testament to WVSU's commitment to academic excellence and significantly enhances the program's reputation, reaffirming WVSU's mission to advance knowledge and prepare graduates who are ready to meet the economic and social needs of the state and are equipped to contribute solutions to global challenges. With this achievement, WVSU has become the 18th HBCU in the nation with an ABET-accredited engineering program, marking a truly remarkable accomplishment for our institution and underscoring our dedication to providing quality professional education.

Many other programs at WVSU use high standards set by the appropriate bodies. For example, the B.S. in Chemistry program has American Chemical Society (ACS) approval, meaning that the program meets comprehensive guidelines set by the ACS , including a rigorous curriculum, a substantial amount of dedicated laboratory experience, and demonstration of a strong safety culture, ensuring students are trained in modern chemical safety practices. Additionally, the university holds institutional membership to several national associations=page14

Advisory Groups

Select colleges and programs have external advisory committees. Advisory boards serve in a variety of roles. On the college level, advisory boards meet with academic leadership within the college unit (Dean and Chairs) to help further develop opportunities for academic improvement internally and externally. Many of the college advisory board members serve on program-level advisory committees as well, such as in Social Work and College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics.

At the undergraduate level, suggestions from advisory committees may lead to changes in the curriculum that allow for adjustment of current needs in the industry.

- After meeting with their advisory committee, there was a recognition that "conflict management" writing was an important addition to a Writing for Business course. The English and Business departments collaborated, and a new module was added to ENGL 204. Writing for Business and Other Professions after a departmental vote
- With the BS in Engineering degree, an advisory board played a critical role in the development of the Chemical Engineering curriculum and continues to meet regularly to ensure internship placement for students in the program.
- The Civil Engineering Advisory Committee reviewed and approved the program's Educational Objectives (PEOs) and graduates' exit survey instrument.

- The Chemistry program's external advisory committee conducted a detailed review of the program and submitted its recommendations.
- The Educational Personnel Preparation Advisory Council (EEPAC) is mandated by the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE) Policy 5100. EPPAC provides a lens for program analysis, reflection, and improvement. The committee meets twice yearly to approve field placements and teacher candidates, among other duties.
- The WVSU Nursing Advisory Board was established in 2021 to encourage stakeholder input into WVSU's program. Representatives from the University, program alumni, clinical affiliation sites, and directors of other nursing programs are invited to the meetings.

Graduate programs also make extensive use of outside advising committees. The Masters in Education Instructional Leadership (MEIL) program has developed two active and functioning advisory groups to participate in data-driven decision-making and provide input on continuous improvement. Members of the advisory council represent the program, schools, and districts across the state, with representatives from schools, administrator organizations, the state department of education, and graduates of the program. With the addition of a Doctoral program in Leadership Studies, the MEIL Advisory Council will take on a more robust role and pivot to the Leadership Studies Advisory Council. The membership expanded to include outside the field of education and held their inaugural meeting in July of 2025. This new group serves as the external advisory group for the Department of Leadership Studies.

Several internal advisory committees at WVSU play a critical role in ensuring rigor in the curriculum and quality in its delivery, including

- Honors Program Committee, which evaluates any proposed WVSU Honors Program courses
- General Education Committee, which revises and evaluates proposed courses for WVSU's General Education program)
- Teacher Education Committee, which evaluates and modifies current teaching programs and recommends new programs
- Center for Online Learning Advisory Committee, which aids with policies, procedures, and delivery of online courses

Course Delivery

WVSU offers courses and programs through multiple delivery methods, including face-to-face instruction on campus, online instruction, and blended instruction. Dual enrollment classes allow students to take concurrent enrollment courses at a partnering high school, where students will earn college credit and high school credit. The University ensures rigor in its academic programs across different modalities through a commitment to consistent quality, structured evaluation, and continuous improvement.

To ensure quality and consistency, responsibility for all programs and course offerings lies with the academic departments, regardless of mode of delivery. All sections of a course contain the same learning goals and student outcomes regardless of modality. [202501_Anderson_pdf_F2F_ENGLISH-102-Syllabus +202501_Taylor-Johnson_pdf_Web100-ENGLISH-102-Syllabus +202501_FORTUNE_doc_EE-ENGLISH_102_Syllabus}. Approval of new courses or course revisions also follows the

same institutional forms and procedures as noted under Educational Policy Committee in subcomponent 3.A., regardless of modality or inclusion in dual credit. Faculty for dual credit courses must be approved by the appropriate academic department and/or college .

Online Programs/Courses:

WVSU currently has six undergraduate and four graduate online programs. Undergraduate B.S in Business Administration, Accounting; B.S in Business Administration, Management; B.S. in Criminal Justice; B.S. in Health Sciences; B.A. in English, Technical Writing; and Regents Bachelor of Arts; Graduate M.Ed. in Instructional Leadership; M.A. in Criminal Justice Administration, M.S. in Sport Studies, and Ed.D. in Leadership Studies (achieving Objective 2.2 in Future State).

The Center for Online Learning (COL), an internal WVSU department, has oversight for managing online courses and programs. Under the advice of the Online Learning Advisory Committee (OLAC), an internal advisory committee, the COL is responsible for maintaining and reviewing all online policies and procedures. To ensure the quality and standardization of a course, the COL does a quality check on all hybrid and fully-online courses. The quality check includes 25 core standards, such as a standardized syllabus template, links to student resources, and requirements for course and weekly objectives, and 9 optional standards designed to improve the overall quality of a course. All courses delivered at 50 to 100% online must pass the core standard check at 100% before becoming a live course shell.

In addition to the day-to-day administrative responsibilities of running online classes, the COL also helps guide course development. The COL offers online training in the basics of Moodle and advanced topics in Moodle, WVSU's learning management system, to faculty teaching online. Following a revision to the Online and Distance Education Policy, faculty also are encouraged to participate in online professional development regarding online course delivery currently provided during the start of the semester "Welcome Back Days." Topics in the past have included "Using Turnitin with Moodle," "Setting up the Moodle Gradebook," "Creating and Using Rubrics," and " COL Information Session." In 2022, several faculty members who regularly teach online courses were offered additional professional development and became certified by completing the Association of College and University Educators (ACUE) Effective Online Teaching Practices.

Dual Enrollment Courses

In 2023, the West Virginia Legislature created the state's first publicly funded dual enrollment program for high school students. In response, the Higher Education Policy Commission launched the LevelUpWV pilot program, which covers the cost of dual enrollment courses offered by West Virginia colleges and universities in fields aligned with the state's most in-demand careers. The goal of LevelUpWV is to guide high school students toward long-term, successful career paths within West Virginia. West Virginia State University's Dual Enrollment Program offers dual enrollment courses in 34 high schools in 10 counties of West Virginia, both on-site and online, and utilizes around 100 instructors, the majority being high school teachers. The WVHEPC rules detail the responsibilities of public universities regarding dual enrollment curriculum, faculty selection, quality control, cost, and reporting requirements. Following this rule, academic rigor and compliance are maintained through the same policies and procedures for a comparable on-campus class. This includes the use of a standardized syllabus, textbooks, and course objectives for multi-section

classes. Each instructor is given a department liaison (usually the Department Chair), who recommends instructors to the Dean, reviews syllabi, conducts classroom observations, and serves as a mentor. Through the LevelUp program, WVSU ensures both that dual credit courses are commensurate with campus courses and that the dual credit course offerings lead to a designated career path transferable to all participating education institutions in the state (2025_Conrad_DualCreditPathway_Business, 2025_Conrad_DualCreditPathway_SocialScience, 2025_Conrad_DualCreditPathway_Nursing, 20240729_WVHEPC_MOU_LevelUpDualCreditKanawha). One example of a dual enrollment pathway specified in Series 19 is Grow Your Own (GYO). This program is designed to address West Virginia's critical need for teachers as fast-track into the education field through a combination of dual enrollment/Advanced Placement courses and an accelerated pathway. The GYO agreement specifies the minimal amount of semester hours offered counties over a two-year academic period and is reviewed annually.

Future State

Future State, WVSU's 2023-28 strategic plan (Pillar 2) , developed collaboratively by internal and external stakeholders, outlines the University's vision and guidelines for academic excellence. WVSU has planned for the future by expanding programs in high-growth areas and eliminating programs in low-growth areas. Since the last full-accreditation visit, WVSU has added undergraduate programs in high-demand areas such as engineering and nursing in 2018, plant and soil science, agribusiness, and agricultural economics in 2019, cybersecurity and data science minors in 2022, and interdisciplinary studies in 2023. Additionally, WVSU has added master's programs in instructional leadership (2016), sports studies (2017), computer science (2018), and a doctoral program in leadership studies (2023). The Civil Engineering program received ABET accreditation in 2025.

Each of these new programs are also strategically aligned with the University's mission. For example, the new Bachelor of Science in Cybersecurity program (approved in August 2025) at WVSU demonstrates high quality and directly contributes to WVSU's mission of "contribute solutions to complex global challenges". Its job-oriented curriculum, aligned with the National Initiative for Cybersecurity Education (NICE) Framework, ensures graduates possess industry-recognized skills in incident response and threat assessment. The unique focus on securing critical infrastructure, including in agricultural sectors and SCADA systems, aligns the program with WVSU's land-grant mission and differentiates it from other state programs. Students gain invaluable hands-on experience via the CyberHive lab and Google-funded Cybersecurity Clinics. Moreover, strategic partnerships with IBM and Google provide certifications and resources, and actively ensure the curriculum remains continuously updated and relevant through embedded industry content and feedback, significantly enhancing employability and social mobility.

Of equal importance to adding new programs is the closure of programs that are no longer financially viable. WVSU closed two programs in 2024 and one program in 2025 due to lack of demand: B.S. in International Studies and B.A. in Sociology and M.A. in Media Studies. These programs went through the required teach-out plan as they were phased out.

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3.B. Exercise of Intellectual Inquiry

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

Argument

General Education
The General Education curriculum at WVSU is the backbone of the teaching and learning enterprise. The curriculum follows the tradition of liberal arts nationwide and ensures both academic competencies and broad educational exposure by helping gain four essential graduation competencies: 1. Knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world. 2. Intellectual and practical skills needed to engage in the 21st-century challenges. 3. Personal and social responsibility. 4. Integrative and applied learning.

The GE curriculum is divided into two tiers. The Tier I parts of the curriculum function as foundational skills in written and oral communication, mathematical reasoning, and scientific reasoning. In the courses for written and oral communication, students are asked to investigate one or more topics and report their findings in a paper or speech. Organizing the information for a paper or speech requires analysis. Mathematics courses provide skills in quantitative reasoning and analysis of data. Courses in scientific reasoning introduce the scientific method as a way of understanding the world and includes courses in both natural sciences and social sciences.

Tier I also includes the First Year Experience course, which is designed to help students develop the skills needed to be successful at WVSU and beyond. Prior to the start of the course, students take a pre-test and then take the same test at the end of the course to assess their progress. Course content includes developing college-level reading and study skills, career and major exploration, managing time and money wisely, building connections with faculty and students, awareness of campus and community resources, and increasing sensitivity to other cultures so students can effectively interact in a rapidly changing, diverse and global community.

Tier II includes more advanced areas of study. The courses in Tier II build on the foundational skills acquired in Tier I to understand concepts from various disciplines, gather information (through research papers, lab experiments, and/or projects) relevant to those disciplines, and analyze the information in support of a thesis or conclusion. Tier II includes arts, humanities, international perspectives, history, social sciences, wellness, and natural science. This tier allows for knowledge from tier I courses and foundational discipline-specific courses to be further applied and synthesized to meet the essential graduation competencies around which the General Education Curriculum is built.

The WVSU General Education Curriculum was substantially updated in 2016. Since the last major revision, individual faculty members have made changes in course materials and/or instructional materials to help students achieve course outcomes more fully, for example by

selecting more relatable readings and new supplementary materials. Since 2016, a few courses have been added in Tier II including Biol 108H, Honors Environmental Biology (Scientific Reasoning and Natural Science), Comm 270, Practice and Theories of Acting (Arts), CJ 331, Comparative Criminal Justice Systems (International Perspectives), Engl 104, Memoir : Turning Your Life into Literature (Arts), Engl 154, Mythology and Folklore (Humanities), SWK 131, Introduction to Social Work {Social Sciences), and SWK 310, Professional Practice in a Global Society (International Perspectives). Additionally, a social science reasoning course has been added to Tier I as a scientific reasoning . These additions make it easier for students to connect the General Education outcomes to program learning outcomes in their majors.

General Education and WVSU's New Mission

Much of the Tier II General Education curriculum is designed to equip the University's students "to meet the economic and social needs of the state, region, and nation, and contribute solutions to complex global challenges ." Course work in arts and in humanities promote sensitivity to context and creative problem-solving. Courses in the international perspectives category assure that students have a perspective that transcends local concerns, which is especially important in a state where many students do not have financial resources to support international travel. World and American history courses require that students situate issues in the events and movements of the past, which can help them make better judgments about future decisions. Natural and social sciences course work promotes clear analysis of factors that shape the world. Wellness courses support balanced life choices within a successful life. All these courses expose students to topics that will serve as a foundation for lifelong learning, adaptability, and resilience.

Students who have successfully completed the General Education curriculum have pursued study in many different disciplines, representing several different modes of inquiry. The courses approved for these categories have outcomes that require students to practice the specific modes of inquiry appropriate to that discipline. For example, students in arts courses engage in producing a creative work; students in scientific reasoning/natural sciences courses perform laboratory procedures/experiments and/or direct observation of nature; students in history courses investigate primary and secondary documents. WVSU continues to follow a modified version of the American Association of Colleges and Universities' (AACU) outcomes, which form the Essential Graduation Competencies used as university-wide objectives. The list includes knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world; intellectual and practical skills needed to engage in 21st century challenges; personal and social responsibility; and integrative and applied learning.

WVSU's Exercising of Intellectual Inquiry Integral to Specific Programs

In addition to exercising intellectual inquiry in its General Education curriculum, WVSU also requires intellectual inquiry in its academic majors. A good place to look for evidence is in the senior capstone course required in every undergraduate program. For example, English 477 is the capstone course for all English and English Education majors. The course's critical analysis project encourages students to explore and expand upon their intellectual interests in literature and cultural studies. Intellectual inquiry is emphasized through rigorous analysis of one or two primary texts. Students must craft a unique thesis supported by academic research, ensuring their work contributes something new to the field.

This process demands critical thinking, synthesis of secondary sources, and creative problem-solving as they interpret texts through chosen lenses like feminism, Marxism, or postcolonial theory. Students must submit proposals, updates, and a rubric, requiring them to articulate their goals, track progress, and evaluate their outcomes critically. In the final step, the presentation component bridges intellectual inquiry and creative expression. It challenges students to communicate their insights effectively, using visual aids to engage an audience and present their ideas cohesively.

Intellectual inquiry, of course, is not just limited to undergraduate courses. In the Master of Education in Instructional Leadership (MEIL) program, two sequential courses, EDUC 645 and EDUC 655 (now LS 645 and LS 655), students work in groups to complete an action research project related to leadership in education systems. These courses had historically been offered in the summer session only. Students had indicated that working with the public schools was difficult in the summer with vacations and many principals having short contracts, so they were not available in the summer. As a result of this feedback, the MEIL faculty moved the first class in the series to the spring semester and the final class to the summer. This means public schools are still in session when a good portion of the data collection is happening.

Intellectual inquiry via research in the natural sciences often also results in symposia and other co-curricular activities. Since 2015, WVSU students have participated annually in NASA's RockSat-C and RockSat-X programs at the NASA Wallops Flight Facility. Each year, usually three to seven students work over a year to design, build, and test individual experiments for sounding rocket flights. They start by conceptualizing experiments, typically using rockets like the Terrier-Improved Orion or Terrier-Improved Malemute. Students independently design, prototype, and test their devices, refining them through multiple iterations to meet NASA's stringent standards. The final integrated experiments undergo testing at Wallops, where only successful experiments are approved for launch. After launch, students analyze the collected data and present findings at events like the Appalachian Section AAPT meeting. Past projects have included measuring flight dynamics, radiation levels, mycelium material behavior, microbial soil content, and reentry heat effects.

WVSU also participates annually in the state's Undergraduate Research Day (URDC), which spans across multiple disciplines. One study, undertaken by an undergraduate biology student, looked at how capsaicin, the spicy component in chili peppers, affects fruit flies. Another research project, conducted by an undergraduate business major and also presented at URDC, evaluated the economic impact of tourism, with a focus on agritourism, and explored young West Virginians's perspectives on these industries. In 2025, the Computer Science department had six undergraduate proposals accepted with topics ranging from phishing to machine learning to data storage. These presentations will help members of the West Virginia State Legislature and Executive Branch understand the importance of undergraduate scholarly activities by providing members with an opportunity to speak directly with the students whom these programs impact.

Finally, intellectual inquiry at WVSU is not exclusive to academic endeavors. The University offers cultural activities that align with its mission to help students engage in intellectual inquiry and creative work. Examples include Black History Month Speaker, Dr. Mustafa Santiago Ali, whose talk provided an opportunity for students to engage in discussions about

social justice, environmental advocacy, and systemic challenges, helping them develop a deeper understanding of civic engagement and interdisciplinary approaches to problem-solving; Black History Month Convocation Speaker, Dr. William H. Turner, whose convocation highlighted issues related to African American history, culture, and resilience and whose insights encouraged students to explore historical and contemporary cultural dynamics, contributing to their capacity for critical analysis and intellectual curiosity; and a theatrical production, "Failure Is Impossible: West Virginia's Struggle for Women's Suffrage ," directed by Susan Marrash-Minnerly, which depicts West Virginia's role in the women's suffrage movement, providing students with a historical perspective on women's rights. These co-curricular activities not only foster critical thinking but also align with WVSU's commitment to nurture diverse perspectives and intellectual engagement across disciplines.

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3.C. Sufficiency of Faculty and Staff

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

Argument

WVSU maintains a strong academic foundation through a dedicated faculty and staff, ensuring quality education and student support. With a stable faculty body, low student-to-faculty ratio, and rigorous hiring and evaluation processes, WVSU upholds academic excellence. Additionally, professional development opportunities and accreditation standards reinforce institutional effectiveness.

Faculty

Number & Details of Faculty Members

In the 2023-24 academic year, WVSU had <u>101 full-time and 55 part-time faculty members</u>, totaling 156. In the past 6 years, the number of faculty peaked in AY 2019-20 with 118 full-time faculty members. While the number has decreased since then—partially tied to COVID-related impacts on enrollment—it is slightly higher than 2018-19, the first year included in the <u>table that documents faculty numbers during the reporting period.</u> The University's maintenance of roughly 100 full-time faculty ensures the availability of instructional resources to deliver a quality education.

Of the 101 full-time faculty employed in 2023-24, 78 were tenured or tenure-track, enhancing academic quality by fostering research, ensuring curriculum rigor, providing institutional stability, and driving innovation, mentorship, and long-term program development. Overall, from AY 2019-20 to AY 2023-24, the <u>composition of the full-time faculty</u> in different ranks has been well-balanced.

WVSU traditionally has a low student-to-faculty ratio. The latest reported ratio (in 2023) is 12:1, which is below most of WVSU's peer institutions, as seen in the <u>student-to-faculty ratio of WVSU's peer institutions table</u>. This low student-to-faculty ratio enhances student learning and experience and is a strong indication that WVSU has sufficient instructional resources to deliver its academic programs.

Faculty Qualification

Tenured, tenure-track, and term faculty must meet degree qualifications when they are hired. The <u>table on faculty degrees</u> demonstrates the qualifications of full-time and part-time faculty. The assessment of retention, promotion, and tenure portfolios includes a review of an individual faculty member's qualifications. To be eligible for promotion and tenure, <u>faculty members must have a Ph.D. or terminal degree</u> in a field appropriate to their appointment**.** All people appointed to the faculty of the University, including part-time faculty, are expected to hold, at a minimum, a master's degree from a regionally accredited institution. However, in <u>emergency situations and in the instance of a highly talented and experienced person</u> in

certain professional and technical areas, someone without a master's degree may be considered with appropriate written justification. Honorary degrees and those awarded from non-accredited institutions are not generally recognized for employment purposes.

Hiring of adjunct instructors is performed by department chairs, who assess applicants' qualifications before they are hired. Adjunct instructors' qualifications are assessed on a case-by-case basis, depending on the courses that need to be covered and the needs of the department in each semester. Chairpersons recruit and vet adjuncts, collect CVs, transcripts, and other necessary documentation, seek Dean approval for adjunct contracts, and send all the above information to Human Resources for personnel hiring. Instructors of dual-credit courses are not recruited by department chairs; however, they are vetted through department chairs and college deans. The approval process for instructors for dual-credit courses is initiated by WVSU's Academic and Educational Outreach Office. A complete packet consisting of the instructor's transcripts, CV, and requested courses to be taught is sent to the chair of the department of the courses and the college dean. Both the chair and the dean evaluate the instructor's credentials and approve or reject the request. A dual-credit instructor can only teach the course(s) for which he/she is approved. Here are examples of the approval paperwork for dual-credit instructors for Chemistry and Math. All hiring decisions for adjunct instructors, including dual enrollment, must follow the faculty credential and equivalent experience guidelines.

Although new hires have to be justified, and not every retiring position is filled, the University continues to hire faculty into essential positions. In the last three years, several new faculty members have been hired into tenure-track positions, including nursing, computer science, and biology. In 2023-24, successful searches were conducted for several faculty positions, including an Assistant Professor in Political Science, two Assistant Professor positions in Biology, an instructor of Chemistry, a Director of Cybersecurity, and an Instructor and an Assistant Professor in Computer Science. WVSU's Human Resources department maintains guidelines and resources related to search and hiring information to ensure fair and appropriate recruiting, interviewing, and hiring of faculty.

Faculty Evaluation

Tenure-track faculty and faculty seeking promotion submit an annual self-report using an instrument developed in 2018 for the assessment of faculty performance in three main areas: teaching, research/scholarly activities, and service. The self-report requires faculty to document their achievement in these areas, providing, for example, student evaluation scores, course observation reports, academic conference proceedings, a title page for any peer-reviewed articles published in the reporting period, and evidence of participation in service activities. The Faculty Senate has recently composed a new committee to review the self-report tool based on data collected since its implementation. The committee met throughout the spring of 2025 and developed a new tool to pilot in AY 2025-26. The form will be piloted with 3-4 faculty in each college who will complete both self-reports for further evaluation. Results will be discussed with Academic Affairs and the Faculty Senate to determine next steps.

Faculty members seeking retention, promotion, and/or tenure submit a portfolio to their chairperson, who evaluates it and writes a letter of recommendation with regard to the action requested. The portfolio is then sent to the dean of the faculty member's college, who evaluates it and contributes a letter of recommendation assessing the portfolio. The dean

forwards the portfolio to the appropriate Faculty Senate committee—Retention or Promotion and Tenure—for that group to complete an assessment and write a recommendation. That recommendation is sent with the portfolio to the Provost, <u>who makes a final recommendation to the President</u>.

<u>Term faculty also submit an annual self-report</u>, though they exclusively report on matters related to instruction. Student evaluation scores and course observation reports, along with syllabi and selected materials from all the courses taught, demonstrate the instructor's commitment to high-quality educational practices.

Self-reports include information from class observations, which are conducted by a faculty member's department chair or by a faculty member designated by the chair. <u>Evaluators use a form provided in the 2023-24 West Virginia State University Faculty Handbook</u> to complete the class observation. While in the past, class observations exclusively took place in person, they now also take place in online settings. The Chairperson or evaluating faculty member can send a request to the Center for Online Learning to gain access to an online course for the purposes of observation. In online course observations, evaluators typically review a week of the course, reviewing learning resources and instructional activities during that week. Self-reports also include summaries of student evaluations of instructors. A <u>new student evaluation instrument</u> was adopted in 2018 after a university task course determined necessary updates. All in-person courses still use paper evaluations, while classes meeting 80-100% online complete the same evaluation tool online.

Staff

Number & Details of Staff

The University <u>currently employs</u> <u>over 250 full-time staff</u> between the University and the Research & Development Corporation, including WVSU Extension Services. Of these, there are currently 30 full-time staff members who comprise the Division of Strategic Enrollment Management and Student Affairs, which comprises the most student facing offices, including Admissions & Enrollment Management, Financial Aid & Scholarships, Office of Retention and Student Success, Career Services, Internal and Military Affairs, Student Life & Engagement, Counseling and Wellness Services, and Housing and Residence Life.

Staff Qualification

WVSU sets minimum qualifications for its employee positions depending on the role. While staff were previously classified or non-classified, changes enacted by the Legislature in spring 2017 via <u>HB2542</u> established that all non-faculty positions will be in non-classified status and <u>referred to as Staff</u>. The hiring supervisor or director at WVSU sets the minimum qualifications for these roles. Human Resources and the applicable vice president then review the qualifications to ensure they are <u>appropriate and align with similar positions at peer institutions</u> and current market standards.

WVSU and the WVSU R&D Corporation use a comprehensive vetting process that varies depending on the position. All employees must have their credentials verified by providing official transcripts from the institutions where they earned their degrees. Human Resources also conducts <u>background checks on all faculty and staff</u>, typically reviewing criminal and motor vehicle records from the past seven years. Some positions, however, may require a more detailed check. Depending upon the responsibilities of the position, a dedicated

selection committee may be chosen. For other staff positions with non-supervisory roles, the hiring supervisor is responsible for the entire vetting process. Once hired, all new university staff members serve a probationary period of up to six months. During this time, supervisors evaluate job performance at both the three- and six-month marks.

Additional training and professional development is offered to staff in many of the student support services. For example, staff members in the Academic Advising Center are trained to meet the standards of the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA). This ensures high-quality advising to incoming students. When the students advance in their studies, they are assigned a faculty advisor by the chair of their academic program. At this point, students are advised by departmental faculty members. Another example is the University's Learning Enrichment Center and Writing Support Center which provide academic tutors and Supplemental Instruction (SI) Leaders to support student learning. Tutors and SI Leaders must meet GPA requirements and complete training in academic tutoring. SI Leaders, in particular, must attend courses for which they provide supplemental instruction. All tutors receive support and guidance from the Academic Support Specialist.

Staff Evaluation

In 2023, WVSU developed a detailed process for staff's annual evaluation . It was introduced at the Spring 2024 Opening meetings. This new Performance evaluation process aligns employee performance with WVSU's mission, fostering growth and institutional success. It ensures clear expectations, continuous development through feedback, and structured evaluations. Linking individual contributions to organizational goals enhances engagement, accountability, and productivity while promoting fairness, skill improvement, and overall effectiveness in achieving university objectives.

The process consists of three steps/forms: Goal Setting, Self-Assessment, and Annual Performance, which ensure structured employee performance management. It begins with Goal Setting**,** where supervisors and employees establish SMART goals aligned with the University's mission. Throughout the year, Performance Development involves continuous coaching, feedback, and support to foster skill growth and goal achievement. Finally, the Annual Performance Appraisal includes a self-assessment and a formal review meeting to evaluate progress, recognize strengths, and address areas for improvement. This process enhances communication, engagement, and professional growth, ensuring employees contribute effectively to institutional success while receiving the necessary guidance to reach their full potential.

Professional Development

WVSU actively encourages and promotes the professional development of its faculty and staff and has established professional development programs for its faculty and staff. The University's Faculty Development Handbook outlines various grant programs supporting activities such as professional development, scholarly research, instructional development, faculty exchange, advanced degree study, international study, instructional technology, administrative development, guest consultants, and curriculum development. These programs aim to enhance faculty performance in teaching, research, and service. The WVSU Employee Handbook also emphasizes the importance of personal and professional development for faculty and staff, aligning with the University's mission and values. Below are some examples of professional development opportunities and activities.

- At every semester's opening meetings, there are many professional development seminars and activities for both faculty and staff. These opportunities include topics that are relevant and important for compliance. For example, 2024 (Spring and Fall) topics included Active Shooter and Campus Carry Law, Cybersecurity, Title IX, and Performance Evaluation
- Faculty Travel Grants: The allocation of funding for faculty travel to professional conferences has significantly increased in the last decade. Funding may be partial to full as travel monies are awarded based on available funds. The increase in the travel grant budget through Title III monies has ensured that faculty scholars have the ability to share their work at professional conferences with full funding. This contributes to the university's rising status as a research institution.
- Promoting Excellence in Education through Research (PEER) grant program, supported by Title III funds, has contributed to the faculty's development as researchers. Awards have been given for all types of research as well as creative works, including improving teacher education and exploring neurodegenerative diseases through transient receptor potential cation channel subfamily V member 1 protein. Faculty members are encouraged to apply for PEER Grants (up to $5,000) on an annual basis, providing a narrative, budget, and other materials to be evaluated by a review board. These proposals are peer-reviewed by a group of qualified faculty.
- The West Virginia Great Teachers Seminar is an annual professional development retreat for educators, fostering collaboration, innovation, and growth. It emphasizes experiential learning, idea-sharing, and problem-solving in a relaxed setting, enhancing teaching effectiveness and strengthening the academic community across the state. Every year, one or more faculty from WVSU participate in this 3-day seminar.
- In 2023 and 2024, the chairs of the English and Criminal Justice departments participated in the American Association of State Colleges and Universities' Department Chair Leadership Institute. The Institute aims to develop critical leadership skills, equip department chairs to overcome common challenges, and prepare them for future leadership roles.
- In the opening semester meetings, there are new faculty orientation events both for full-time and adjunct faculty. Additional workshops for faculty are arranged regularly on an as-needed basis.
- The Office of Business and Finance has launched "Third Thursday with Fiscal Affairs" to train and educate employees about financial and administrative procedures.
- WVSU has a robust partnership with IBM. Through this partnership, IBM provides professional development opportunities to WVSU employees to take courses and earn digital badges in the areas of Data Science, Cybersecurity, and Artificial Intelligence.
- WVSU's Employee Tuition Waiver program enables WVSU employees to take classes free of cost. An average of 14 WVSU faculty and staff take advantage of this opportunity each year.
- The University hosts professional workshops during the school year. Here are a couple of examples: NASA, CHATGPT.
- Training and professional development occur continually in the Office of Counseling and Wellness Services in the areas of mental health and counseling services. These services are delivered by the Director, the Mental Health Specialist, and the Peer Recovery Support Specialist. Examples of professional development are the Association for Recovery in Higher Education Conference, Stalking and Sexual Assault Symposium, Smart Recovery Training, Naloxone and Ally Training, Step UP! Facilitator Training, NASPA Train the Trainer CPE Certification, and QPR Training. All three

members of Counseling and Wellness Services are members of professional associations.

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

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

Argument

WVSU strives to deliver exemplary student services and engaging programming from enrollment through graduation. The University has intensified its commitment to student retention, persistence, and completion since its last comprehensive HLC evaluation. The University, with broad campus stakeholder participation, has enacted multiple initiatives to improve student retention and success.

Office of Retention and Student Success

The Office of Retention and Student Success (ORSS), established in 2018, seeks to address student retention and graduation rates intentionally. The ORSS is responsible for the coordination of academic, financial, health, and social services to assist students in overcoming unforeseen obstacles, getting back on track, and continuing on their path to graduation. ORSS leads efforts to pinpoint institutional and departmental policies and procedures that pose barriers for student matriculation, identify at-risk student populations most likely to experience early withdrawal from the institution, and establish sustainable programs that garner collaboration among campus stakeholders to promote student retention and success. Programs through the Office of Retention and Student Success include

- The delivery of academic support services through two Learning Enrichment Centers that provide personalized tutoring services and supplemental instruction. Since January 2019, a three-pronged promotional campaign has been utilized that includes email blitzes, flyers, and social media forums to encourage students to utilize tutoring services offered in the Learning Enrichment Centers.
- *Starfish Early Alert and Retention Management Software (Starfish),* also known as ACHIEVE, which provides case management tools, predictive analytics, and student support integration in a unified fashion. *ACHIEVE* is used by the ORSS to track SAP Appeal students needing academic coaching, tracking conditionally admitted students, scheduling tutoring appointments, tracking early alert flags and referrals, and allowing faculty and instructors to leave kudos for students.
- First-Year-Experience (FYE) curriculum. ORSS staff teach all sections of FYE to ensure students receive a consistent and relevant curriculum and experience. The FYE course is a 3-credit-hour course designed to help students develop the skills needed to be successful at WVSU and beyond and now includes a pre-test and post-test to assess the effectiveness of the course. The course content now includes developing college-level reading and study skills, career and major exploration, managing time and money wisely, building connections with faculty and students,

building awareness of campus and community resources, and increasing sensitivity to other cultures so students can effectively interact in an increasingly diverse and global community.

- <u>Yellow Jacket Emergency Aid Program</u>, established in 2021, aids students who are experiencing unforeseen and unexpected financial emergencies. The goal is to ensure our students stay in school despite these financial hardships, meet their educational goals, and are positioned for long-term success. A webpage was created to inform students about the program and their eligibility, and to apply for aid.
- The First-Year Academic Advising Center (AAC), responsible for advising freshmen and students within the Interdisciplinary Studies major (also known as Undecided or General Education), has recently replaced Retention Specialist positions with professional Academic Advisors. The personnel change supports WVSU's mission to advance knowledge through access, opportunity, and impactful service. Academic advisors equip students to meet the economic and social needs of the state, region, and nation by preparing them with the skills, strategies, and resources to succeed in higher education and beyond. The AAC staff establishes strong advising relationships and empowers students to take ownership of their educational success through the provision of academic resources and individualized services that promote agency, self-efficacy, and personal growth. AAC's academic advisors have been trained to meet the standards of the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA), which promotes quality and consistent academic advising experiences at WVSU. Advisors follow <u>Academic Advising Curriculum</u> and assess accordingly. During early/initial advising meetings, academic advisors educate students on basic strategies to succeed. Once students complete their first-year or reach over 30 credit hours, there is a seamless transition that passes students over to their respective academic department to be advised for their remaining time at the University.

Career Services

Another frequently used student service is the <u>Office of Career Services</u>. Its mission is to enhance student success by providing comprehensive career and employment services. The office is committed to fostering individual growth and development by assisting students with their academic, career, and employment needs. The Office offers information and advice in the areas of career planning, job search assistance, and employment referrals. It also assists via workshops with developing resumes and cover letters, job-searching techniques, interviewing skills, and mock interviews. The workshops assist students in developing competencies related to job search methods, resume building, interview preparation, and workplace professionalism through individual career counseling, presentations, and activities. Programs through the Career Services Office include

- Both the <u>Federal College Work Study</u> and Project Success Paid Internship Programs are on campus. The Office hosts <u>career fairs and career readiness workshops</u> each semester on campus for students. Through the services provided, students improve their professional and communication skills and increase their exposure and access to employers and job opportunities. Through the Federal College Work Study and Project Success Paid Internship Programs, students gain work experience and exposure to their chosen field and establish valuable networking connections that aid in the students' attainment of full-time employment.
- <u>Cooperative Education (COOP) program</u> and overseeing the <u>Handshake and Focus 2</u> platforms. Focus 2 is WVSU's career assessment platform, which helps guide users

through making informed career decisions and taking action in their career development. It assists students with selecting a major and exploring occupations. The Office administers and interprets <u>investment inventories and provides individual and group career counseling and planning</u>. It also acts as the primary contact for the <u>distribution of part-time, full-time, and seasonal job opportunities</u> to students.

- <u>Yellow Jacket Career Closet</u> on campus in March 2024, which provides students with free business and professional clothing.
- Presentations to 40 classes on topics related to career services, including <u>resume development</u>, <u>networking</u>, <u>job searching</u>, interviewing, and working with different personalities.
- Additional responsibilities include coordinating with Academic Affairs on an alumni survey to collect workforce data for academic programs, publishing the <u>Career Services Newsletter</u>, and developing and maintaining partnerships and relationships with businesses, industry, and non-profits for the purpose of keeping college programs current and vital, as well as networking to ensure maximum opportunities for students and alumni.

The Office assesses the effectiveness of its services by student participation in events as well as post-activity surveys administered to both <u>students</u> and <u>vendors</u>.

Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships

The Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships supports students who, without such aid, would be unable to begin or continue their education. Promoting and assuring access and opportunity to higher education are the basic tenets of student financial assistance administration at the University. Recognizing that a student's academic career may be adversely affected by personal and social difficulties that affect finances, the Office provides <u>individualized advice and information about financial resources using a variety of communication methods</u>, including emails to students' university accounts, telephone calls, virtual platforms, and postal mail**.** The Office maximizes student participation in federal, state, and institutional student financial aid programs and promotes fiscal responsibility by <u>developing programs and communication standards</u> that meet the needs of its students**.**

The Office of Financial Aid is used for both recruitment and retention strategies, as many students otherwise could not afford to attend or remain in school without financial assistance. Responsibilities of the Office include

- Providing both prospective and enrolled students and their families with adequate counseling regarding the cost of attendance, types of aid, the net price, and instructions on financial aid packages.
- Assisting students and families with completing and submitting the FAFSA applications
- Receiving and processing the FAFSA applications
- Facilitating substantial sums of federal, state, and institutional funds to help students meet direct and indirect educational costs every academic year
- Following the disbursement schedule to ensure consistency and efficiency between the Financial Aid, the Office of Student Accounts, and the students.
- Maintaining federal and state compliance by knowing all federal, state, and institutional policies, procedures, and regulations and lead campus wide reporting efforts.
- Providing entrance and exit loan counseling for all federal student loan borrowers.
- Maintaining controls in the University software, Ellucian Banner 9, that prevent cross-

functions between offices that award and package financial aid funds from offices that disburse and pay financial aid funds.

A recent initiative of the Office of Financial Aid is <u>FAFSA Workshops</u> and FAFSA assistance through virtual and in-person appointments. The Office advertises these services through flyers distributed throughout campus, through social media outlets, and through campus email. WVSU has found that the repetition of offering these services has <u>increased visibility and awareness of the FAFSA</u> throughout the campus, which has ultimately increased student participation**.** The Office has seen gradual increases every aid year since beginning to offer FAFSA assistance to students and families based on the number of ISIRs downloaded from the US Department of Education. This has been extremely helpful in navigating changes to the FAFSA application due to the FAFSA Simplification Act beginning in AY 2024-25.

<u>All personnel in the Office must know what forms of financial aid sources are available</u>, the qualification standards, renewal standards, disbursement requirements, and fund amounts available in order to build appropriate financial aid packages within Cost of Attendance Budgets for all eligible students. In addition to offering assistance on campus to students, financial aid administrators <u>actively participate in local high schools by offering FAFSA Workshops</u> and Financial Aid Presentations to seniors and parents. Furthermore, the <u>Office has partnered with the West Virginia Association of Financial Aid Administrators annually</u> since 2022 to host a FAFSA Training with West Virginia counselors on WVSU's campus. Personnel are also evaluated through an <u>internal "secret shopper"</u> who are provided student scenarios to work with the staff through the scenarios regarding student notifications, communications, estimated financial aid packages, outstanding documentation, and customer service skills. This process allows the Office to receive feedback on a professional level from a student-level perspective, so any adjustments or corrective actions can be made.

Student Complaint Process

To maintain its commitment as a student-centered university, West Virginia State University has an efficient process for listening to and addressing student complaints, concerns, and issues about their university experience. In accordance with <u>WV HEPC's Student Complaint process</u>,

The WVSU student complaint process begins with students first trying to resolve their issue directly with the individuals or offices involved. If that doesn't work, they can submit a formal, written complaint using a digital form. The <u>University distinguishes between Level I (verbal, untracked) and Level II (written, tracked) complaints</u>. Certain issues, such as grade appeals and sexual harassment, are not handled through this process and are instead governed by the Student Handbook. Once a written complaint is submitted, the Office of Student Success and Retention reviews it and forwards it to the appropriate Vice President. The students are then notified of the resolution or a status update via their WVSU email within ten business days. Students who are dissatisfied with the outcome <u>can appeal to the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission </u>(WVHEPC).

International Affairs Office

The purpose of the International Affairs Office is to respond to inquiries from international

applicants and request, collect, and submit proper documents for issuance of an I-20 visa under United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) regulations. After applicants receive F1 student visas, the Office assists with onboarding, orientation, and inputting proper registration within the Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). The Office provides support and guidance for any issues to help students with acclimation to the country and the University. It also assists with travel endorsements, recertification, and renewal of registration within SEVIS. New initiatives through the International Affairs Office include

- An updated orientation program to coincide with the New Student Orientations (NSO) to maximize information sharing for newly admitted international students. The change was implemented to ensure international students are being acclimated to both WVSU and SEVIS policies and regulations.
- Initiating organized messaging to students at specific times to ensure documents are received and processed in time for a smooth transition for enrollment, US Embassy appointments, OPT, and other administrative tasks.
- Initiating an International Affairs Office student handbook to assist students with understanding the appropriate lead time for completing necessary certifications and registration.
- Establishment of an International Student Affairs club for networking, collaboration, and fellowship. It was created after discussion with international students who felt a need for community building.

The International Affairs Office creates support and decreases barriers for WVSU's international students.

Veterans Affairs Office

The purpose of the Veterans Affairs Office is to direct and provide guidance for potential students to apply for veterans' benefits through the va.gov website; to certify and verify enrollment through the Veterans Administration (VA) Enrollment Management platform; to report any adjustments in scheduling or enrollment to the VA; and to coordinate with the Office of Student Accounts and the Office of Financial Aid to ensure charges and funds are applied appropriately. The Office also refers veteran students to necessary campus and community resources and provides advice, guidance, and support to veteran students to maximize benefits and to ensure students' seamless adjustment to university life. New initiatives through the Veterans Affairs Office include

- creating a new veteran lounge;
- creating partnerships for referrals for issues;
- initiating a VA Compliance Audit, which has demonstrated no monetary issues;
- revamping webpages to provide up-to-date resources;
- providing educational outreach to local agencies (Charleston Veterans Shelter, Rourke Sullivan Resource Center, Ben Franklin Career Center, National Guard Armory, and Veterans Support Center);
- revamping processes to ensure maximum utilization of benefits; and
- adding holds to ensure veterans remain in compliance and have proper guidance before adjusting their academic schedules.

Given the large number of non-traditional students at the University who have previously

<u>served in the military</u> , the Veterans Affairs Office provides valuable support services to its students.

Accessibility Services

The <u>Disability and Accessibility Resources (DAR) administrative unit</u> works to create meaningful inclusion of all individuals by working in a collaborative manner with the campus community to ensure existing and future programs, services, and facilities are accessible for those with disabilities. The unit leads the campus community in creating access and opportunities for individuals with disabilities. The primary purposes of Disability and Accessibility Resources are raising awareness of disability and accessibility, disseminating information, providing counseling and advocacy, fostering collaboration across campus, providing academic adjustments and instructional interventions, provisioning of employment accommodations, developing and evaluating programs, and offering training and professional development opportunities.

DAR strives to proactively create an accessible campus environment by collaboratively identifying and remediating barriers to access. It assists students by

- making every effort to help students with disabilities attain quality educational objectives,
- promoting self-awareness and self-advocacy as well as maximizing student potential in a diverse and accessible educational environment,
- helping students determine access concerns and utilizing reasonable accommodations when barriers persist,
- equipping students with the resources that help them reach their educational goals; and
- empowering students to understand their abilities and needs, as well as the resources available to them.

It assists employees by

- enabling employees with disabilities to meet the essential requirements of their position,
- promoting self-awareness and self-advocacy as well as maximizing employee potential in a diverse and accessible workplace environment,
- helping employees determine access concerns and utilize reasonable accommodations when barriers persist; and
- empowering employees to understand their abilities and needs, as well as the resources available to them.

The unit fosters an environment encouraging personal and academic growth and facilitating independence and serves as a resource on disability matters and concerns for our campus community for all students, faculty, staff, and visitors. The unit is currently staffed with a single employee who is responsible for all disability related matters of the university, including access for students, employees, and the general public. The employee serves as both the Director of Disability and Accessibility Resources as well as the ADA Coordinator/504 Compliance Officer of the institution.

The DAR unit was created to ensure the institution was <u>meeting its obligations under both the ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act</u>. Evidence the resources are being utilized

includes the list of students and employees who have sought out the resources. Approximately 5% of our student population is currently registered with <u>SAR</u>. The University has several employees who currently utilize accommodations. The faculty and HR managers are aware of the process for referring <u>students</u> or <u>employees</u> for accessibility resources.

Over the past few years, the unit has successfully developed, revised, and updated its policies and processes to reflect current trends and best practices and is now addressing those of the overall institution to bring the institution into better compliance with the federal mandates with regard to serving the needs of individuals with disabilities. Some of the major changes and recommendations have included

- a total <u>revision of the registration, access consultation, and accommodation coordination processes</u>,
- new policies and procedures, including a consideration <u>process for emotional support animals</u>,
- the <u>voluntary medical leave of absence process</u> and how to consider complex requests such as attendance flexibility and assignment deadline modification,
- development of new resources; and
- improved utilization of technology and online resources to facilitate the operation of the office.

The unit has also provided professional support for physical facilities and the EEO office with regard to assessing physical accessibility as well as the development of Title IX policies and procedures. The unit recently completed institutional policies regarding ADA/Section 504 disability accessibility compliance and animals on campus, as noted above. The unit has initiated a large-scale, multi-year project to assess the totality of institutional compliance and accessibility, which will include a review of the University's programs, services, activities, policies, and practices, as well as the evaluation of the physical features and infrastructure. A <u>Compliance Plan</u> has been developed as the interim phase that helps determine what actually needs to be evaluated. It creates the blueprint that the University can use to complete the Self-evaluation and Transition Plan process, as well as document the efforts that have already been made toward compliance. It also allows major decisions to be made in the methodology for data collection. Through the Compliance Plan process, the University documents which facilities and elements need to be evaluated and sets forth the plan and time frame to complete the process. This document can be presented to federal agencies, if requested, as a demonstration of the University's interim plan toward full compliance.

Future areas the unit staff is exploring for developing or expanding resources include expanding the <u>Steps-2-Success program</u> and development of an inclusive college-based transition program, tentatively named the Yellow Jacket SWARM (Scholastic, Work and Activity Opportunities through Resources and Mentorship) Program. For Steps-2-Success, the goal is to improve the transition process for new students who have a disability and subsequently increase the retention rate of this population. Possible expansion includes a summer transition program, a <u>specialized section of the First Year Experience course</u>, intensive coaching/mentoring support services and strategic content tutoring, as well as other intensive and structured academic support services.

Counseling and Wellness Services

The Office of Counseling and Wellness Services helps to improve student mental health and

well-being. Services include mental health counseling; assistance for students in crisis; prevention and outreach programming, including workshops, presentations, and awareness tabling events; consultation services with students, staff, faculty, and parents; and referrals for students to community resources, such as substance abuse treatment programs and psychiatric services. Additionally, the office partners with the WV Collegiate Recovery Network to have a part-time Peer Recovery Support Specialist who provides peer support for students in recovery from substance use disorder. Programs and initiatives through the Counseling and Wellness Services for the campus community include

- Partnerships and memoranda of understanding with several off-campus agencies to provide additional programming. Agencies include the WV American Foundation for Suicide Prevention to host the "Out of the Darkness Suicide" Prevention Walk; Community Bridge – provides clothes, furniture, and other resources to students in need; and the WV Collegiate Recovery Network, which provides funding for the Peer Recovery Support Specialist located on our campus
- A campus Relaxation Room, opened in 2024, which is a private, quiet space to develop and practice relaxation skills to enhance overall well-being
- **QPR-Suicide Gatekeeper Training** is a one-hour training course to become a certified Gatekeeper for suicide prevention. Participants will recognize someone at risk for suicide, apply learned intervention skills, and utilize knowledge of referral resources when successfully referring someone for help. Over 600 staff, faculty, and students have been trained. The Office assesses the effectiveness of this training by comparing Pre- and Post-test questionnaires.
- **Suicide Prevention Walk "Out of the Darkness"--** Counseling and Wellness Services partners with the WV Chapter of the American Foundation of Suicide Prevention to host the Suicide Prevention Walk "Out of the Darkness."   This event is held in conjunction with the Annual Health Expo. Members of the campus community register to walk in the event, which raises awareness about suicide prevention.
- **Annual Health Expo** – Counseling and Wellness Services hosts the Annual Health Expo. It partners with the Health and Human Performance (HHP) Department and offers fitness testing, healthy food demonstrations, screenings for depression and anxiety, and speakers on various health topics. The Office invites a wide range of local agencies to set up information tables. The event focuses on physical and mental health awareness and information.
- **Collegiate Recovery** – Counseling and Wellness Services houses the Collegiate Recovery, Education and Wellness (CREW) program. CREW offers weekly support meetings for students in recovery from substance use disorders. Other programs offered regularly include scheduled Naloxone Training, Ally Training, and social events for participating students.
- **Resilient STATE of Mind** is a grant-funded program first offered in fall 2024 and is designed to promote resilience in young adults aged 18-24 to advance mental health and well-being and to reduce the risk for negative mental health outcomes. Participants attended bi-weekly educational support meetings and were provided with exercises designed to increase self-esteem, socialization skills, resiliency, mindfulness, meditation, and coping skills. Two of the three participants reported lower symptoms of anxiety and depression and achieved higher scores on the Resilience Scale evaluation.
- **STEP UP Bystander Intervention Program** teaches students how to intervene safely as a bystander in a possible risky situation. The program focuses on learning helping

behaviors, increasing motivation to help, learning strategies and skills to respond to problems, and ensuring the safety of self and others. This training has been delivered in First Year Experience Courses, for residential students, and at other campus venues, and includes <u>pre-test</u> and a <u>post-test</u>,

- The WVSU Food Pantry is a free, confidential service for all registered WVSU students
- "**CHOICES" Peer Education** prepares students for campus advocacy, activism, and leadership in health promotion, risk reduction, resiliency, and safety decision making. <u>Peer Educators are trained under the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) & Certified Peer Educators (CPE)</u>. Peer Educators are expected to serve as role models as an extension of the professional staff of WVSU's Counseling Services, from which the courses, <u>materials, workshops, and opportunities derive</u>. A <u>Peer Mentoring certificate</u> is offered upon completion of 4 three-credit-hour courses (University 100: Peer Education 1, University 202: Peer Education II, University 303: Peer Education III, and University 404: Peer Education IV.
- Additional outreach and programming on topics such as Naloxone Training, Ally Training, weekly collegiate recovery support meetings, stalking, domestic violence and sexual assault awareness, stress management, substance use disorders, yoga classes, mindfulness, etc. Since Fall 2022, the <u>Office has provided 283 presentations, support groups, trainings, and tabling events</u>.

- "<u>Addiction and Change: Understanding the Journey of Initiation and Recovery</u>." This speaking engagement was held in the Wilson Student Union. Marshall University Center for Excellence and Recovery hosted the event, and Counseling & Wellness Services served as the co-host and provided the location for the event.

Teaching and Learning Resources: Drain-Jordan Library

At the request of teaching faculty, the Drain-Jordan Library provides information literacy instruction. The library began tracking information literacy instruction in August 2023. To date, the library has provided 40 information literacy instruction workshops for a total of 518 students (approximately 14% of total enrollment).

Information literacy workshops are designed to provide the following:

- an introduction to the library,
- beginning to develop critical thinking skills with an information retrieval exercise that familiarizes students with academic resources in the library using assigned coursework as a basis,
- improving research skills – how to find, assess, and cite sources, and
- adding value to the student's current knowledge of academic integrity in relation to WVSU policy, which leads to greater academic success.

Departments from all four colleges requested library workshops as follows:

- <u>College of Business and Social Sciences</u> – Economics, History & Political Science, Psychology & Sociology
- <u>College of Arts and Humanities</u> – English, Regents Bachelor of Arts
- <u>College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics</u> – Biology, Biotechnology, Engineering
- <u>College of Professional Studies</u> – Criminal Justice, Health & Human Performance, Nursing

Trends in instruction workshops are indicated in the following graphs: <u>Sum of Attendance by Month</u> and <u>Transactions by Hour of Day</u>.

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3.E. Assessment of Student Learning

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

Argument

Introduction

WVSU remains dedicated to the assessment of student learning outcomes. The Academic Affairs Office, the Coordinator of Academic Program Assessment, and the Coordinator of General Education lead the assessment strategies of the University, which call for continual improvement and evolution of university-wide assessment of student learning outcomes. Guiding the assessment activities are the university-wide Essential Graduation Competencies and individual program learning outcomes. WVSU remains committed to the assessment of student learning outcomes by maintaining two major assessment mechanisms, which are in place to define and assess student learning outcomes. These are the General Education Program and Assessment Plan, and the Discipline Specific Academic Program and Assessment Plans.

The University Assessment Committee continues to lead faculty to more meaningful assessment by continuing the well-established assessment cycle. This assessment cycle requires all academic programs, as well as the General Education program, to have established and published Learning Outcomes that clearly describe what graduates are expected to know and be able to do when they exit their program of study and the University. Furthermore, each academic program has created action grids or curriculum maps that demonstrate where each Program Learning Outcome (PLO) for each program is being formally assessed and at what standard level of learning. Examples include Sports Studies and Chemistry.

General Education Assessment

WVSU's General Education Learning Outcomes, known as the Essential Graduation Competencies, have informed curricular decisions in General Education and the majors for a decade. The development of these competencies took place in recognition that General Education should align with learning outcomes that all graduates should achieve. The creation of the Essential Graduation Competencies has streamlined General Education learning and the assessment of student learning at the University. Each course in General Education, as well as any new courses introduced into the curriculum, must meet criteria for the part of the requirements the course will fulfill and identify the tools that will be used to assess it. In general, these assess some aspect of the Essential Graduation Competencies using rubrics [adapted from Value Rubrics developed by the Association of American Colleges and Universities. Assessment data and instructor analysis for each course is collected, analyzed, and reported to the chair or assessment coordinator of each department that offers courses in the curriculum and to the Coordinator of General Education. Expanding from pilot uses of the assessment tools to reporting on sections from all

components in the curriculum, the data so far have primarily informed efforts to improve instruction practices in individual sections or to refine the courses. No significant changes in the curriculum's structure have been indicated by the data at this time. The cycle for assessing sections has been refined to ensure that all courses are assessed more systematically at some point in the cycle.

In response to a university-wide assessment objective from the University Assessment Committee, program assessment coordinators have succeeded in embedding the Essential Graduation Competencies that are most relevant to their programs into assessed discipline-specific programmatic learning outcomes. This has expanded assessment and improvement in instruction of the University's designated essential outcomes for its graduates. Furthermore, it emphasizes to the students how these essential "general" outcomes are indeed a critical piece of their desired degree. For example, the Biology Department PLOs include PLO 1 Demonstrate Field Knowledge of Biology and PLO 2 Apply the scientific method to answer a biologically relevant question. Both of these PLOs directly reflect the General Education Competencies of demonstrating knowledge of the Physical and Natural World, as well as Integrative and Applied Learning

Program Assessment

The program to assess student learning is an integral part of the University's commitment to excellent teaching, effective learning, and a quality student experience. Information is systematically collected and examined both to document and demonstrate cycles of improvement. The assessment program itself is routinely updated, and the information gained from the assessment process becomes part of an ongoing model for effectiveness.

Each academic department operates under a mission or guiding purpose statement that aligns with the broader College mission, which in turn reflects the overarching University mission. Academic departments also establish shared PLOs, which are outlined in departmental syllabi and serve as benchmarks for student achievement. Individual courses are designed with specific objectives that align with and measure progress toward these PLOs. Departments regularly review and revise their PLOs and corresponding course objectives as necessary to ensure alignment with evolving educational goals. To evaluate the effectiveness of their programs, departments select specific assignments and courses for assessment each academic year. While some departments—particularly those with external accreditation requirements—may assess all PLOs annually others employ a rotating assessment schedule. Programs engage in continual improvement based on the analysis of assessment data. Departments may implement changes to their courses, PLOs, or expected student outcomes to enhance educational quality and student success. Additional changes to PLOs may occur based on the standards of outside accrediting bodies.

Each department has an assessment coordinator, generally the chairperson, who collects data from each assessment that is being utilized to assess programmatic learning outcomes, analyzes the data, and then forms discussion groups with departmental faculty to look critically at the information gathered from the assessment data. Additionally, the assessment coordinator reports to the Coordinator of Academic Program Assessment annually on PLO assessment procedures, assessment data, and any plans for programmatic changes that address problems identified in the data. The Coordinator of Academic Program Assessment then provides feedback utilizing the established Academic

Program Assessment Report Rubric to ensure each academic program is making meaningful progress towards the established University-wide goals of academic assessment. Program assessment is also reviewed as part of the University's Program Review process.

WVSU, through previous feedback, recognizes the need to continue conversations about measurement and findings within programs and the data collected. The change in the assessment cycle and improved communication between program assessment coordinators and the University Coordinator of Academic Program Assessment continue to help improve this situation. This is occurring at WVSU as the Coordinator of Academic Program Assessment meets annually with each program assessment coordinator in a formal one-on-one meeting to achieve the University's assessment goals. Individual programs have been working on embedding particular Essential Graduating Competencies within core program courses, formally assessing them, analyzing the data, and measuring the achievement of these competencies as students matriculate through their program-specific courses.

"Professional" Assessment

WVSU offers three academic programs that require professional licensure upon graduation. These programs include Education, Nursing, and Social Work. WVSU publishes on its website professional licensure disclosures to allow both prospective and current students to learn about the licensure and certification requirements for each of these programs. Assessment at the program level based on professional licensure allows programs to further measure student quality of student learning. For example, WVSU's Nursing Program had a 100% pass rate for Nursing graduates in 2023, followed by a 94% pass rate in 2024 (and a 100% pass rate on the second attempt). Based on the slight decrease in first-time pass rates, the Nursing Program instituted processes for remediation of areas (pp. 106-108) where students are struggling

Assessment of student learning is a multifaceted approach that includes formal assessment instruments, departmental discussion, and the use of advisory groups. For example, students in social work continuously scored below the benchmark on two particular program learning outcomes: engaging in policy practice and engaging in practice-informed research. After reviewing the results with the Social Work Field and Community Advisory Committee, the group recommended further education in social work policy. The Social Work department discussed this and agreed to add SWK 242 Intro to Policy to the curriculum.

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3.F. Program Review

The institution improves its curriculum based on periodic program review.

Argument

As noted in Criterion 3.A., the institution provides an annual progress report, and academic programs are reviewed every five years in accordance with the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (WVHEPC) Policy and WVSU Board of Governors Bylaws Article III 7 and 8. The five-year report process begins with a departmental review and is followed by a review encompassing faculty through the Faculty Senate Program Review Committee, administration, and the BOG.

The institution continuously analyzes its curriculum based on program reviews. During the 2020 - 2025 review period, the BOG approved the continuation of 21 academic programs at their current level. In addition to recommendations for continuation, several plans for discontinuing programs occurred over the review period due to low enrollment, viability, and a cost analysis that showed a poor return on investment. Programs recommended for discontinuation include the Bachelor of Science in Recreation in 2017, the Foreign Language track of Education in 2018, and the Bachelor of Science in Sociology in 2023.

Also, during the 2020-2025 review period, the BOG approved several new programs of study: the Master of Education in Instructional Leadership, the Bachelor of Science in Engineering with a major in Chemical Engineering, the Master of Science in Sport Studies, the Master of Science in Computer Science, the Bachelor of Science in Nursing, Doctorate of Education in Leadership Studies and the Bachelor of Science in Cybersecurity. Additionally, the Nursing Program created an LPN to BSN program within their department.

Several of the above programs originated from the viability, impact, and need found in already existing programs at WVSU. For example, the Master of Science in Computer Science program was developed from the viability of the Bachelor's in Computer Science program, as well as the employment projects for computer science, both statewide and nationally. The establishment of a doctoral program at WVSU has been a goal of the administration for several years and is reflected in the current University mission and strategic plan. The determination to establish the doctoral degree in Leadership Studies originated from the lack of other similar programs within the area, the success of WVSU's undergraduate and graduate degrees in Education, and the support of the community. Potential new programs are first proposed at the departmental level and then discussed with Faculty Senate at the undergraduate level, and Graduate Council at the graduate program level, and through WVSU's BOG . Programs are proposed with the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission for discussion and approval. The final step is approval through the Higher Learning Commission, which may require a substantive change application.

In addition to analyzing programs of study during the program review process, departments also use program review to evaluate whether their program aligns with the University's core

mission. Additionally, <u>internal and external demand changes for the program are examined as well as enrollment information</u>. The final section reviews faculty qualifications, program outcomes, and curriculum strengths and needs.(2025_Collins_ProgramReview_Biology). All of these areas are summarized on <u>a final executive summary</u> listing program strengths, weaknesses, summary conclusions, and future needs that are then examined by the Program Review Committee, Academic Affairs Office, and the Board of Governors for recommendations and a final vote on continuation or discontinuation.

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3.G. Student Success Outcomes

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

Argument

The University acknowledges the increasing importance of meeting the diverse needs of its student body and remains dedicated to providing competitive and relevant academic programs, a dynamic social environment, and well-rounded academic and personal support services. In accordance with WVHEPC requirements, the University maintains attainable goals for student retention, persistence, and completion to be above the median of statewide and nationwide peers while still reflecting our mission to provide access and opportunity.

Enrollment Management and Student Affairs (EMSA)

At WVSU, enrollment management is an intentional and shared campus-wide initiative that encompasses stakeholders from all sectors of the University. It provides the framework to plan, implement, and assess an array of strategies that will be used to build the University's enrollment infrastructure to achieve targeted retention, persistence, and graduation goals and priorities.

Numbers and Trends in Enrollment

Relating to enrollment, retention, and graduation numbers, the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) data feedback reports provide information about the relevant trends as well as comparisons to peer institutions. IPEDS is a system of survey components that collects data from all postsecondary institutions across the United States and in other U.S. jurisdictions that are eligible to receive Title IV funding. These data are used at the federal and state level for policy analysis and development; at the institutional level for benchmarking and peer analysis; and by students and parents, through the College Navigator, an online tool used to aid in the college search process. Additional information about IPEDS can be found on the website.

Additionally, the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission publishes yearly reports on quality and performance indicators for higher education institutions as mandated by West Virginia Code §18B-1D-8 Publication of institution and system data. Originally, these reports were known as report cards and compared institutions on several metrics. Beginning in 2019, these reports became known as Almanacs to better streamline reporting measures and allow institutions to highlight progress and identify areas of improvement. WVHEPC also maintains a data and publication center, allowing public access to higher education data ranging from the postsecondary aspirations of graduating high school seniors to success in college and workforce outcomes.

Each year, the Office of the Registrar creates an annual report based on data from IPEDS, WVHEPC, and other institutional records. This annual report synthesizes data into a single

university profile showing withdrawals, major changes, transcript articulations, drop data, and graduation data in great detail. The EMSA Division utilizes student enrollment data and trend analysis to assist in making data-driven decisions regarding the implementation and assessment of territorial marketing and recruitment strategies and tactics for new freshman, transfer, and graduate students (in-state, out-of-state, and international). These data points also contribute to the EMSA Division's ability to develop, implement, and assess policies, procedures, and practices that impact student retention, persistence, engagement, success, graduation, and career placement/post-graduate opportunities. These data are critical to the University's ability to produce consistent and accurate budget projections and to optimize the benefit of the WVHEPC Formula Funding format, as noted in Criterion 4B.

WVHEPC tracks three main student success indicators and compares these across public four-year and two-year institutions in the state. The first is Statewide Fall-to-Fall Retention at the Starting Institution and at Any Institution for First-Time Full-Time Students. While WVHEPC shows institution numbers across years, the graph charts the median of comparison institutions within the state, and the most recent available data is from 2011 to 2019. The same can be seen in the IPEDs data feedback reports, which include national comparisons between peer institutions with the most recent report available, analyzing academic year 2023_23. In the aforementioned reports, WVSU has fallen below the median rate in both our statewide and national peer comparisons.

The second major indicator tracked by WVHEPC is graduation rates within 150% of program time. IPEDS also collects and compares this information with a national group of peer institutions. While the most recent numbers show WVSU below both the state four-year institution median and the IPEDS comparison group median, WVSU exceeded the comparison group median in a few race/ethnicity categories, such as American Indian/Alaskan Native in 2023 and 2022, and two or more races in 2021 .

The third major indicator WVHEPC tracks is the Proportion of WV Public Four-Year Institutions (WVHEPC) Statewide First-Time Full-Time Freshmen Earning 30 Credit Hours or More by the End of Their First Year. IPEDS does not report on any similar indicator. Again, WVSU is below the statewide median on this indicator.

Based on the low performance on several student success indicators as well as the most recent figures on annual enrollment, degrees awarded, and student success metrics, the decline in full-time degree-seeking students led to a leadership transition within the Enrollment Management and Student Affairs division. Concurrently, a new interim Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management was appointed. Both individuals bring decades of experience in all facets of enrollment management and maintain strong relationships with high schools, as well as community and technical colleges, through various initiatives such as hosting FAFSA nights for families. Several actions were taken in the short period between the personnel changes and the start of the fall recruitment season, including late admission processing and outreach, comprehensive training for the admission counselors, college fair tour preparation, and participation in events like a local middle school soccer tournament. 2025's Strategic Enrollment Plan shows a data-informed, comprehensive approach to integrate WVSU's academic, financial, and administrative resources to support targeted goals. Acknowledging the difficulties in retaining, advancing, and graduating the student body it serves, WVSU is actively engaged in identifying and understanding the obstacles that hinder students from remaining enrolled and ultimately earning their desired degrees. The University is dedicated to developing and implementing strategic initiatives to

address these challenges effectively.

In efforts to further our mission of innovative learning and impactful service, the Office of Student Life and Engagement surveys students each spring about programs and activities. The results are used to inform a variety of areas within EMSA. For example, as a result of the Spring 2022 student survey, the campus added outdoor space to create new ways to study and connect for students. As a result of the 2023 Spring survey, more activities in AY 2023-24 were offered on Fridays. Career services added internship fairs in the Fall of 2024 as a result of survey results from earlier that year. All of these examples show efforts to empower students to engage in their own levels and types of service and learning, and to retain students each year.

The Office of Retention and Student Success (ORSS) was founded in 2018 to help students stay on track and graduate. The ORSS coordinates a range of support services, including academic, financial, health, and social, to help students overcome unexpected challenges. The office also helps to further WVSU's mission of access and opportunity by working to identify and remove institutional policies that might create barriers for students, pinpoint student populations at risk of dropping out, and establish collaborative, campus-wide programs to promote student success.

In 2022, the Office of Retention and Student Success (ORSS) restructured to include the First-Year Academic Advising Center (AAC), which has ownership of freshmen advising and students within the Interdisciplinary Studies major (also known as Undecided or General Education). The Retention Specialist positions were phased out, and professional Academic Advisors were hired. The AAC staff establishes strong advising relationships and empowers students to take ownership of their educational success through the provision of academic resources and individualized services that promote agency, self-efficacy, and personal growth. AAC's academic advisors have been trained to meet the standards of the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA), which promotes quality and consistent academic advising experiences at WVSU. During early/initial advising meetings, academic advisors educate students on basic strategies to succeed. Once students complete their first year or reach 30 credit hours, there is a seamless transition that passes students over to their respective academic department to be advised for their remaining time at the University.

In addition to advising, ORSS assists with other academic supports. ORSS utilizes reports on D/F/W rates to identify courses and instructors that have higher fail and withdrawal rates. The office is then able to provide additional support, like tutoring or supplemental instructors for these courses. Students are also able to request support through the Achieve system directly. Data is collected on tutoring requests, the number of appointments scheduled and cancelled, to allow ORSS to anticipate the number of tutors and subjects that will be requested for the following semester, as well as the frequency that tutoring should be scheduled. Additionally, the ORSS analyzes student data on tutoring services to evaluate student satisfaction with the provided services. The Achieve system also allows ORSS to track students' progress when academic probation flags are raised. The ORSS emails students, sets the number of academic coaching sessions, tracks how many sessions are attended, and updates the enrollment status for the following semester (enrolled, not enrolled, or withdrawn).

In 2021, the Office of Retention and Student Success launched the Yellow Jacket Emergency Aid Program. This program aids students who are experiencing unforeseen and

unexpected financial emergencies. The goal is to ensure students stay in school despite these financial hardships, meet their educational goals, and are positioned for long-term success. A webpage was created to inform students about the program, their eligibility, and how to apply for aid. Since January of 2023, the program has received 127 applications from 96 unique applicants. <u>Over $23,000 has been awarded to students</u> for things like childcare, food, housing, textbooks, and transportation. Of the applicants, about 35% noted that they were unlikely to drop out if denied assistance. The other 65% were either likely to drop out or unsure if not given aid, meaning the program is directly tied to WVSU's retention rates and the students the institution serves.

In 2022, the ORSS restructured to include <u>the First-Year-Experience (FYE) curriculum</u>. ORSS staff taught all sections of FYE to ensure students receive a consistent and relevant curriculum and experience. The new FYE course is a 3-credit-hour course designed to help students develop the skills needed to be successful at WVSU and beyond. Course content now includes developing college-level reading and study skills, career and major exploration, managing time and money wisely, building connections with faculty and students, building awareness of campus and community resources, and increasing sensitivity to other cultures so students can effectively interact in an increasingly diverse and global community. Additionally, the course now uses <u>GradReady</u>, an interactive website that helps students financially, academically, and personally. Students are able to <u>use the website to navigate financial aid, track spending, create a budget and financing plan</u> , find resources on effective academic strategies, and plan for success after college. Over the past 3 semesters, ORSS <u>has assisted 269 students</u> with registering in GradReady. The combined efforts of the ORSS highlight WVSU's mission to advance knowledge by helping students with access and opportunity, and acknowledge the additional efforts needed for the institution to increase student success outcomes.

To examine patterns and trends for WVSU graduates, the Office of Career Services administers a First Destination Survey (FDS) to prospective graduates. The survey allows the University to collect information pertaining to the students' plans post-graduation. Questions on the survey include 1) types of employment—full or part-time, contract, freelance, and so forth; 2) additional education, e.g., accepted to graduate or professional school; 3) still seeking either employment or further education; and 4) starting salary for those employed full-time. The FDS questions comply with the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE). The FDS response rates <u>range between 28.4</u> percent for the 2021-2022 academic year <u>to 18.4 percent</u> for the 2023-2024 academic year. In an effort to enhance the University's ability to collect graduate data, the Office of Career Services began utilizing GradCast in addition to the FDS beginning with the summer 2024 graduating class. GradCast will allow for the automation of active tracking for college graduate placement.   The average response rate for GradCast is 60 percent. From the first cohort that completed the GradCast survey, the Office <u>received an 88 percent response rate</u>, which is an increase in response rates from previous surveys conducted with graduates using the FDS Survey. The <u>response rate for Fall 2024</u> was 70%. The Spring 2025 response push has not yet concluded. Tracking students' post-graduation outcomes ensures WVSU programs fulfill the mission of advancing knowledge and creating impactful service. This data, which includes metrics on employment rates and salary progression, allows WVSU to gauge how effectively programs prepare learners to meet the economic and social needs of the state, region, and nation. By analyzing these results, WVSU can make data-driven decisions to continually refine the institution's innovative teaching and learning methods and

interdisciplinary research, ultimately equipping our graduates with the skills and knowledge to contribute solutions to complex global challenges.

By maintaining ongoing collaboration and implementing strategies that promote a supportive environment for success and high client satisfaction, it is expected that WVSU's retention and graduation rates will improve over time. The University recognizes the growing need to address the diverse needs of its student body and remains committed to offering relevant and competitive academic programs, a vibrant social atmosphere, and comprehensive academic and personal support services.

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Criterion 3 - Summary

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

Argument

West Virginia State University (WVSU) ensures the quality and rigor of its academic programs through a structured system of curriculum development, program review, assessment, and continuous improvement, involving faculty, administration, students, advisory boards, and the Board of Governors (BOG). Oversight of undergraduate curriculum changes is handled by the Educational Policies Committee (EPC), a standing committee of the Faculty Senate. This body reviews all proposed course additions, deletions, and revisions to ensure alignment with institutional goals and academic standards. Graduate-level programs follow similar procedures under the Graduate Studies Council (GSC), which meets regularly to review and approve program modifications. Together, these committees ensure that all curricular developments align with the University's strategic plan, *Future State*, and uphold academic integrity across all delivery modes.

The program review process at WVSU follows guidelines set by the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (WVHEPC). In 2022, revisions to the State's program review policies introduced a more collaborative and streamlined approach. Each academic program undergoes a comprehensive review every five years, supplemented by annual updates to assess progress and identify underperforming areas. These reviews evaluate program quality, student outcomes, and cost-effectiveness, ensuring that offerings remain responsive to community needs and institutional goals. The process also informs strategic planning and budget decisions while maintaining accountability to the WVHEPC and the BOG.

Program learning outcomes (PLOs) serve as the foundation for assessing student achievement across all disciplines. Each academic program develops, reviews, and votes on its PLOs annually, ensuring they align with Bloom's taxonomy and the University's Essential Graduation Competencies. WVSU's General Education curriculum, built around these competencies, fosters broad intellectual skills, ethical reasoning, and applied learning. It reflects national models such as the AAC&U's LEAP framework and is directly tied to *Future State*'s emphasis on preparing graduates for emerging workforce and societal needs. Program-level and General Education assessments are continuously refined to improve teaching effectiveness and learning outcomes.

Specialized accreditation further validates WVSU's commitment to excellence. Programs like Civil Engineering, Chemistry, and others maintain recognition from national accrediting bodies such as ABET and the American Chemical Society (ACS), which ensures that graduates meet rigorous professional standards. External advisory boards at both college and program levels provide industry input, aligning academic curricula with labor market demands and fostering collaboration between academia and professional communities.

These boards play a vital role in sustaining program relevance and academic rigor.

WVSU delivers instruction through multiple modalities, including on-campus, online, hybrid, and dual enrollment courses, while maintaining consistent learning objectives and assessment standards across all formats. The Center for Online Learning (COL) oversees online programs, ensuring compliance with University and State standards. The University's participation in the *LevelUpWV* dual enrollment initiative has expanded educational access for high school students, with consistent oversight of curriculum, faculty, and instructional quality. These offerings demonstrate WVSU's commitment to accessibility, flexibility, and academic excellence.

Faculty and staff quality form another cornerstone of WVSU's educational mission. The University employs over 100 full-time faculty members, most of whom are tenured or tenure-track, and maintains a low 12:1 student-to-faculty ratio that enhances learning engagement. Faculty are required to hold advanced degrees appropriate to their disciplines, while hiring and promotion processes ensure continued professional excellence. More than 250 full-time staff provide vital support across academic and student service divisions, including retention, financial aid, career services, and wellness programs—all designed to enhance student success and persistence.

Finally, WVSU's *Future State* strategic plan (2023–2028) underscores its commitment to academic innovation, student achievement, and institutional sustainability. The University continues to expand programs in high-demand fields such as engineering, nursing, cybersecurity, and leadership studies while phasing out low-enrollment programs. Through rigorous assessment, faculty engagement, and strategic alignment, WVSU remains focused on maintaining high academic standards, advancing student learning outcomes, and preparing graduates to contribute meaningfully to the state, region, and nation.

Sources

There are no sources.

4 - Sustainability: Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning

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

4.A Effective Administrative Structures

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

Argument

West Virginia State University has a strong history of having appropriate administrative structures in place that allow it to marshal its resources effectively using its core mission as a guiding value. Shared governance among internal stakeholders is an integral aspect of the institution. WVSU strives to use both quantitative and qualitative data in its decision-making across all its operations. WVSU's commitment to collaboration at all levels of the institution with external constituencies further enhances its ability to advance knowledge and impact through teaching, research, and service.

WVSU engages internal and external stakeholders to further the institution's mission of advancing knowledge by creating access and opportunity at the highest level through processes within our Board of Governors (BOG) and University administration. The BOG continues to fulfill its responsibilities in accordance with state law, West Virginia Code 18-B-2A-4, and its bylaws, which contain the details necessary for institutional compliance with state law. Composition of the BOG reflects WVSU's commitment to shared governance. Nine of twelve members are appointed by the Governor of West Virginia, with the remaining governors being elected representatives of students, faculty, and staff. Governors are appointed at staggered intervals to four-year terms. The faculty member and staff member are elected by their respective constituents to two-year terms and may serve up to a total of four (4) years. The student member is elected to a one-year term. New legislation in 2025 resulted in the voting rights of the student, faculty, and staff representatives being removed; §18B-2A-1. (c) (3) (A), (B), and (C); they otherwise retain the same rights as the voting board members.

The BOG also has standing committees comprised from members of the larger Board, including faculty, staff, and student representatives. The BOG standing committees meet as committees of the whole board prior to each full BOG meeting. The standing committees, as detailed in Article IV of the bylaws, include the Academic Affairs Committee, Business and Finance Committee, Enrollment Management and Student Affairs Committee, and

Advancement Committee. A Presidential Review Committee is established biennially to conduct an evaluation of the WVSU President. The WV Code contains provisions that allow the BOG to go into Executive Session, as needed.

As outlined in Article III of the WVSU BOG Bylaws, broadly designated responsibilities of the BOG are to "determine, control, supervise and manage the financial, business and education policies and affairs of the State institution." This is done in myriad ways by the BOG, including active engagement in the development of the WVSU strategic plan, known as "Future State," which was approved by the BOG at its April 2023 meeting. The BOG approves the annual budget for WVSU and receives financial updates at every board meeting. Additionally, the Audit Committee works directly with external auditors, and the audit results are approved by the full BOG on an annual basis.

University Governance also reflects the University's commitment to collaborative processes. WVSU Faculty Senate is the official platform for faculty involvement in University governance, leadership, policy making, and planning as outlined in Section B. Faculty Governance section. The WVSU Classified Staff Council provides the avenue for staff, and the WVSU Student Government Association (SGA) continues as the vehicle for student involvement in WVSU governance and policymaking.

An example of sustained, collaborative interaction that demonstrates shared governance relates to tuition waivers for WVSU employees. Administrators and the faculty senate leadership were in discussion about the possibility of tuition waivers for employees several years ago. This resulted in a limited waiver of three credit hours per semester for employees. Continued efforts were made to expand this benefit, ultimately culminating in the current Administrative Procedure, where employees may receive a full waiver for tuition, program, and mandatory fees, allowing them to earn up to one Bachelor's Degree and/or one Master's Degree.

Another demonstration of shared governance is reflected in a committee formed to implement WVSU's strategic plan as well as to identify areas where greater academic, financial, and operational efficiencies could be attained. The Future State Committee (FSC) included representatives from student, staff, and faculty constituencies along with WVSU administrators. The administrators represented Business and Finance, Academic Affairs, Enrollment Management, Research and Development Corporation, and General Council. This representative group, along with two consultants affiliated with the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO), evaluated the existing WVSU enterprise in light of the overall higher education environment. One of the goals was increased implementation of the strategic plan to position WVSU better along a path toward long-term growth and fiscal sustainability. Some changes have been adopted, but many of the recommendations are longer-term in nature. An immediate change included a reduction in the number of Vice Presidents from 7 to 4 and a reorganization of departments/units to gain operational efficiencies. An advisory group known as a University Council will be formed to advance WVSU's commitment to shared governance.   A full report was provided to the University community in the form of a Town Hall at the conclusion of the spring 2025 semester. At the beginning of the fall 2025 semester, the President announced a process forward that included the formation of small discovery teams, who will develop recommendations to translate the goals of the Strategic Plan into recommended actions. These teams are aligned with individual Pillars of the University's strategic plan and are key to institutional transformation and budget reduction.

In regard to creating and supporting an effective and mission-centric approach to decision making, the Faculty Senate, Staff Council, and student government have constant, continuous interaction with the WVSU administration. Information among the four groups is shared in ways that include one-on-one meetings, administrators providing reports in recurring meetings, and recommendations by individual groups to administrators. For example, spending decisions at the University may incorporate recommendations from the various constituent groups.

A recent recommendation by Faculty Senate was for WVSU to fully fund Turnitin software by acquiring the add-on feature used to identify student use of artificial intelligence (AI) without appropriate attribution. Another example was the recommendation to purchase a comprehensive, online curated collection of multi-disciplinary dissertations and theses from around the world to better support WVSU graduate programs. The Staff Council, which represents all staff at WVSU, worked with the administration and introduced the first campus-wide staff awards in 2025. These recognize and honor the contributions of all University, WVSU Research and Development, and WVSU Foundation staff. Funding for the awards was provided by the University.

Additionally, the WVSU Board of Governors conducts annual listening sessions with three constituent groups—students, faculty, and staff. During the 2025 session students expressed concerns about residence halls. WVSU administration developed a plan to address those concerns, including ascertaining the full scope of the issues raised by the students. Remediation in critical areas started immediately. Timelines were created to address other areas with an expectation of reporting progress periodically to the BOG. The first BOG meeting of the Academic year 2025-26 (slide 20) indicated significant progress in the remediation of the identified issues. These examples show the ongoing and consistent engagement at the highest levels to foster collaborative decision-making.

Effective cooperative processes are also demonstrated within financial procedures. With budgeting, leaders in Business and Finance meet periodically with departmental budget managers to prepare and review budgets. Budgets are developed using historical data, actual spending, and University priorities to promote accuracy and increase reliability. Following these departmental reviews, the budgets are evaluated by area Vice Presidents. A comprehensive university budget is then developed and presented to the President's Cabinet and Board of Governors for approval.

Questica Budget, a reporting tool, is being used to provide departments with on-demand access to their financial information. Questica Budget enables real-time viewing of budget-to-actual data, supporting departmental decision-making needs. Personnel have received training in group sessions on the use of this tool, with one-on-one training also available. Monthly budget-to-actual expenditure reports are scheduled to be sent via email to budget managers who have completed training, and all budget managers can access their budget-to-actual data in real time by logging into their Questica accounts.

Financial information, including Days Cash on Hand, cash-basis statements of revenues and expenditures, and quarterly accrual-basis financial statements, is prepared and presented at regular Cabinet and Board meetings. Business and Finance regularly monitors liquidity, along with Accounts Payable aging and Student Accounts Receivable analysis; these reports are also presented at Board of Governors meetings.

Purchase requisitions are prepared electronically at the departmental level using SignNow. Before approval by the division Vice Presidents, the Fiscal Affairs Budget Manager reviews requisitions to ensure expenditures remain within the approved budget. The Chief Financial Officer and Chief Procurement Officer also review and approve requisitions to confirm compliance with all legal and regulatory requirements. Once finalized, all signers receive a copy of the executed purchase requisition, which is then forwarded to the appropriate purchase card holder or Accounts Payable personnel for payment processing.

Fundraising presents another example of extensive collaboration among constituencies in regard to administrative tasks. The WVSU Foundation, an independently incorporated, component entity of WVSU, provides a vital role of support for the University. From an organizational perspective, the President of the Foundation serves on the President's cabinet as Vice-President of Advancement. This integration allows the Foundation to have a comprehensive look at the direction of WVSU, which then informs major priorities for the Foundation. The Capital Campaign is an ongoing example of the collaboration between the two entities. This is coupled with the responsibility the Foundation has to engage external constituencies to meet the financial goals of the campaign. The WVSU Foundation, with the assistance of a consulting firm, undertook an extensive study period regarding the feasibility of a capital campaign. Based on the data collected and analyzed during the feasibility study, various parties, including the WVSU Foundation Board of Directors along with the WVSU BOG, authorized the institution to enter into the quiet phase of a multi-year capital campaign with the purpose of elevating students and faculty   The case for support includes an increased emphasis on scholarships; establishment of a School of Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources; support for research and innovation; and an increase in the WVSU Endowment fund to ensure future financial stability. The capital campaign has been very successful to date. This success allowed the Foundation to enter the public phase in September 2025 (slides 74-76), well ahead of the original timeline. Another example that impacts the lives of current students is the role of the Foundation through their collaboration with WVSU faculty to match scholarship dollars with qualified students.

Effective collaborative administrative processes are also evident in addressing deferred maintenance across campus. During the 2023 Regular Session, the West Virginia Legislature and the Governor passed House Bill 2024 to enhance higher education infrastructure by directing funds to the Governor's Civil Contingent Fund for deferred maintenance at state higher education institutions. West Virginia State University was awarded $11.8 million for deferred maintenance through this fund for a variety of urgent maintenance projects on campus. The list of projects was created through extended discussions with stakeholders across campus. Projects campus-wide have been identified for this funding. The projects were identified using historical data involving regular maintenance records, the age of capital assets, and recommendations from the users of the capital assets. Project timelines will vary, including short-term completion to longer time periods based on the availability of equipment and resources.

The WVSU Office of Business and Finance created a website that has detailed information on the deferred maintenance projects and their progress. To date, WVSU has incurred $3.8 million of costs related to the deferred maintenance projects. WVSU has received $2.95 million in reimbursement, representing 25% of the awarded funds. Completing the projects will increase the useful life of the University's facilities and enhance its business enterprise opportunities as well as increase its highest level of support for students, employees, and the communities WVSU serves. Additionally, this allows the University to promote and

maintain operational excellence by offering a safe and secure campus infrastructure to support an inclusive learning, living, and work environment.

WVSU Research and Development Corporation, an independently incorporated, component entity, was established as a fiscal agent of the University to allow greater flexibility in managing federal and state grant funds, allowing WVSU to better meet its mission. Federal grants are typically handled by R&D unless the granting agency requires the University to handle the grant directly. This better facilitates the utilization of grant funds, including contracting for research support and public service activities. The Corporation is a legal entity, sanctioned by the United States Internal Revenue Service as a Section 501(c)(3) foundation and authorized under Senate Bill 520. The Board of the Corporation is composed of faculty, staff, and administrators of the University, as appointed by the President. The Corporation's goals are closely aligned with the University's goals.   Title III, for example, is administered by the Corporation and supports the University's goals in areas related to student support and retention, institutional research, and professional development for faculty and staff. Numerous federal grants provide support to researchers, extension activities, and students from select areas. For example, students in the biotechnology and computer science programs are supported by the HBCU Master's Program. The grants for the TRIO programs, Upward Bound and Student Support Services (SSS), are administered by the Corporation. The SSS grant supports student personal development, staff professional development, and student engagement for eligible students. Other federal and state grants provide support to researchers, extension activities, and students from select areas. Regular consultation occurs between employees of the Corporation and the University to ensure alignment.

Through WVSU's Research and Development Corporation and in recognition of the University's mission as an 1890 land-grant institution, WVSU has invested in new facilities to better serve its constituents. A new greenhouse was constructed on the WVSU campus, serving research faculty and students in innovative research opportunities. Similarly, a Farmer's Market was established to serve the public, and internal and external stakeholders noted that WVSU is located in a geographic area where fresh fruits and vegetables are not readily available. This Farmer's Market provides learning opportunities for our students and a fresh food supply to our local community. Additionally, in 2024, $50 million was allocated by the West Virginia Legislature to support the construction of state-of-the-art laboratory facilities for shared laboratory space with WVSU and the West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA). The funds are being managed by WVSU. A steering committee comprised of WVSU and WVDA was formed, with the chief executives of both entities serving on an executive oversight committee. Extensive collaboration occurs, which is documented and saved in a shared Google Drive folder. The project is still in a Pre-Design phase as both parties and the architectural and engineering services provider work together within the allocated resources and respective needs of WVSU and WVDA. Through West Virginia State University's administrative structures including the WVSU Foundation and WVSU Research and Development Corp, engagement with campus and community members allows the institution make collaborative and data-driven decisions that further the entire University mission.

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4.B Resource Base and Sustainability

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

Argument

West Virginia State University (WVSU) strives to utilize its resources in a manner that supports current operations while recognizing that both short-term and long-term opportunities will arise that require the strategic use of those resources. WVSU understands the importance of evaluating such opportunities against its primary mission of teaching, research, and service—particularly in light of its status as an 1890 Land-Grant University and a Historically Black College and University (HBCU).

As part of its strategic plan, WVSU established the goal of becoming a doctoral-granting institution. This goal was achieved in summer 2024 with the launch of the first cohort of the newly approved Doctorate of Educational Leadership program. Another established goal involved maintaining a strong Composite Financial Index (CFI) Score, which led to the Higher Learning Commission removing WVSU from financial monitoring in 2024. These and other examples demonstrate WVSU's effective management of resources to sustain ongoing operations while supporting initiatives that ensure long-term institutional sustainability.

WVSU's financial management integrates coordination among the University, the WVSU Foundation, and the Research and Development Corporation. The University developed the FY 2026 budget using historical enrollment data from FY 2025 (slides 22–24). Some of the "Future State" NACUBO recommendations were included in the FY 2026 budget. Because the Higher Education Policy Commission requires institutions to submit balanced budgets for approval, the FY 2026 budget included a line of credit from the WVSU Foundation (pp. 4–5), which was approved by the Foundation's Board of Directors (pp. 9–10) prior to approval of the FY 2026 budget by the WVSU Board of Governors. The Foundation serves as a supporting entity to the University in many ways, including this line of credit, an essential component in balancing short-term operational needs with long-term planning and sustainability.

Integrating operational activities with research and extension is critical to balancing immediate needs with future demands. The Research and Development Corporation enhances WVSU's research function by contracting a portion of faculty time, allowing selected faculty members to focus on research through course releases. This not only broadens the scope of research conducted but also enables partial redirection of salary funds for other institutional purposes. A similar model exists within extension activities, notably in the Social Work program and the Healthy Grandfamilies initiative. The Corporation's involvement is essential, as it administers most of WVSU's grant funding.

WVSU continues to employ high-quality faculty, staff, and administrators to advance its mission. The University emphasizes transparency, integrity, and professionalism, values

embedded in one of the pillars of its strategic plan. The Human Resources (HR) department, within the Division of Business and Finance, provides oversight for all hiring processes, including recruitment, immigration management for international applicants, and employee onboarding. HR also manages ongoing employee relations, including conflict resolution, performance management, and employee service award recognition.

In 2024, WVSU implemented a new annual review process for staff after several years of a less formal approach during and after the COVID period. The process begins each January with self-evaluation and goal setting, followed by an interactive dialogue between employees and supervisors, and concludes with a self-assessment incorporated into the final performance review (Professional/Managerial or Clerical/Technical).

Attracting and retaining high-quality personnel remains a challenge due to compensation constraints common across higher education—limited pay increases and the absence of merit-based raises. WVSU remains committed to providing pay increases as state appropriations allow. In recent years, appropriations have resulted in across-the-board fixed-dollar increases of $1,650 for Fiscal Year(FY) 2023, $1,133.51 for FY2024, and $520 for FY2025. The state did not fund any salary increases for FY 2026. Although modest, WVSU remains dedicated to passing through every dollar of state-appropriated salary increases to its employees.

Employee benefits play an equally vital role in attracting and retaining personnel. WVSU offers health and dental insurance, retirement contributions with a 6%match to each employee's retirement account , and a well-regarded Employee Assistant Program available to employees and their households. The program provides resources for work-life balance, mental health, substance abuse, legal forms, child and elder care referrals, and financial planning. A recently added benefit is the **employee tuition waiver benefit**, which grants eligible employees full tuition, program, and mandatory fee waivers for up to one undergraduate and one master's degree, with limited spaces in the Doctorate in Educational Leadership program.

The Division of Academic Affairs periodically reviews programs to ensure relevance and financial sustainability, reflecting WVSU's commitment to aligning academic offerings with emerging economic and societal needs. In Fall 2019, 1890 land-grant institutions were invited to participate in scholarship funding for agriculture-related degree programs. WVSU integrated agriculture options into three existing degrees—Business Administration, Economics, and Biology—and later added an option in Chemistry. Enrollment in these programs grew from six students in Fall 2020 to 70 students, in Fall 2025, many receiving a full scholarship. Funding is secured through 2028, with possible renewal.

Another high-demand program, the Bachelor of Science in Nursing, launched in Fall 2020. Due to generous grants and private gifts, including those from the Dickinson family, the program—now known as the Dickinson Family Nursing Program —will be formally named in Spring 2026. Enrollment has grown from 41 students in 2021 to 75 in 2025. WVSU's newest approved degree, the Bachelor of Science in Cybersecurity, received final approval in August 2025. Building on the success of the 2022 Cybersecurity minor, the new program has strong projected enrollment (pp. 21–22).

Through the five-year program review process, Academic Affairs assesses program viability and Return on Investment (ROI). Recent reviews have led to the discontinuation of

programs such as the BA in Sociology, BA in International Studies, and the MA in Media Studies. In AY 2024–25, five academic programs were reviewed, with one graduate program discontinued in part due to negative ROI. Course scheduling was also analyzed in AY 2024–25 to improve efficiency and reduce conflicts. Updated scheduling was implemented in AY 2025–26 and will continue to be monitored for effectiveness. An analysis of the course offerings, including modality, days of the week, and time of day, was undertaken in AY 2024-25 to determine where efficiencies could be gained that would reduce conflicts in developing student schedules and potentially reduce the number of low-enrollment courses offered. The updated course scheduling was implemented in AY 2025-26; monitoring will continue, and future changes will be made as needed.

In balancing the short-term and long-term needs to support current operations and sustainability, programmatic faculty needs are considered. As faculty needs arise, especially with respect to new and emerging programs, faculty lines are generally repurposed for these programs. This is typically accomplished with normal attrition, but it does mean a realignment of the number of faculty members within academic programs may occur. Care is taken to ensure the student learning experience continues at a high quality level in all programs. This may involve full-time faculty teaching overloads or the increased use of adjunct faculty, but at all times, faculty credentials and the student learning experience are critical in the educational process.

During preparation for the FY26 budget, open faculty lines, including an open dean's position, were analyzed for necessity. This analysis resulted in the reduction of six open faculty lines, along with the decision to reorganize the academic enterprise around three colleges rather than four. The analysis was not limited to reductions, however. The Social Work program added a faculty member based on the requirements of its accrediting agency, Council on Social Work Education. The faculty member is a shared appointment with the WVSU Healthy Grandfamilies program administered through Extension. This shared appointment is a reflection of the collaboration among the academic enterprise and other parts of the University and the emphasis on implementing financially sustainable practices.

Another area that demonstrates the institution's care to balance short-term needs with long-term commitments is evidence in Enrollment Management. Over the last several years, the enrollment at WVSU has experienced a decline in annual headcount enrollment, particularly in the undergraduate population. This has been mitigated in part by the dual credit student population, supported in recent years by the LevelUp! Program. It is expected that total enrollment in AY 2025-26 may generally remain level with the preceding year, but the student mix will shift away from full-time degree-seeking students, including first-time freshmen and returning students, to dual credit students (slide 3). This erosion of full-time degree-seeking students resulted in a leadership change in the Enrollment Management and Student Affairs division. A new interim Associate Vice-President for Enrollment Management was put into place at the same time. These two individuals have decades of experience in all aspects of enrollment management and have a strong network of high schools and community and technical colleges. They have worked with many of the local feeder institutions on various projects, such as hosting FAFSA nights for families. Numerous actions were undertaken (slides 6-7) in the brief time between the personnel changes and the start of the standard fall recruiting season, including extensive training of the admission counselors. To enhance recruitment, WVSU has consolidated existing and newly created student financial aid options as part of the Yellow Jacket Pledge (YJP). The YJP includes a dual credit scholarship, a WVSU completion scholarship for qualifying nontraditional

students, and a relaunch of a program known as "Free for Eight-Enroll at State Scholarship." <u>Tentative plans</u> (slides 9-10) include concentrated outreach in select counties and high schools in close proximity to WVSU, as well as building stronger relationships with specific community and technical colleges within driving distance of WVSU. On a positive note, WVSU had been on Heightened Cash Monitoring for the Federal Student Loan Program; the institution was notified in August 2025 that the <u>Program Participation Agreement was approved</u> (slide 7) until September 2029 without Probationary Status.

WVSU recognizes that an integral part of enrollment management is retention, which includes providing appropriate support in many forms to its students. WVSU has a <u>number of student support services</u> housed within the Office of Retention and Student Success (ORSS). This includes an <u>Academic Advising Center </u>(AAC) that has the responsibility for advising incoming first-year students and working with appropriate departments to advise new transfer students, especially in the summertime. An important aspect of student retention and student success is having well-qualified staff to assist students in their academic journey. The academic advisors have been trained to meet the standards of the National Academic Advising Center Association (NACADA). Students are advised by faculty advisors within their departments beginning in their sophomore year. This office also provides <u>oversight for the Tutoring Centers</u>, <u>Supplemental Instruction</u>, and the <u>Yellow Jacket Emergency Aid Program</u>.

WVSU's operations are supported by diversified revenue streams, including tuition and fees (net of discounts), auxiliary enterprises, grants and contracts, and educational sales and services. Nonoperating revenues include state appropriations, federal Pell Grants, and investment income, while capital grants and gifts comprise other revenue. State appropriations have been relatively flat over the last four years.

There are three specific items in the appropriations budget prepared by the state of West Virginia. The changes in the main appropriation line item (44100) for University operations have been for increases in compensation for employees and/or to cover increased premiums for employee health insurance. The next item in the state appropriations budget (62101) is for a statewide program known as Healthy Grandfamilies. The amount for this program has remained the same for the past four fiscal years. The third item in the state appropriations budget (95600) is for the state land grant match. This is the only area where there has been a noticeable increase in state appropriations. The State passed legislation for more equitable funding for WVSU, which resulted in a substantial increase in funding in Fiscal Year 2025. This funding is limited to allowable extension activities, allowing WVSU to better fulfill one element of its tripartite mission. An <u>effort to quantify underfunding</u> of historical black colleges and universities (HBCUs) in general, and WVSU in particular, resulted in a <u>letter being sent</u> to the Governor of West Virginia by the Secretaries of the Department of Education and the United Stated Department of Agriculture. Despite these challenges, WVSU continues to fulfill its <u>overarching mission</u> to provide access and opportunity, innovative teaching and learning, interdisciplinary research, and impactful service.

The state of West Virginia passed legislation that authorized the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (WVHEPC) to <u>create rules</u> that would link a portion of state appropriations for public higher education institutions to key metrics of student success, such as credit hour progress, degree completion, and post-graduate earnings, <u>beginning with the 2024 fiscal year budget cycle</u>. There is a hold-harmless provision in the formula that

is designed to provide consistency in the state appropriations amount by limiting the potential decrease to five percent from one academic year to the next. As noted by the WVHEPC, formula-generated recommendations have not been consistently followed in previous budget years.

Diversified revenue streams are necessary to ensure sustainability. The WVSU Foundation provides financial support for students relative to teaching and learning. Examples include a grant obtained that provided funding for students to engage in paid internships that relate to their academic areas, funding to support the rising field of cybersecurity, and a grant that provides faculty support to embed responsible and ethical use of Artificial Intelligence in the classroom. A significant source of support from the Foundation is student scholarships, which have steadily increased over the three previous years, with the largest amount ever available for student scholarships in fiscal year 2026 . The scholarships are administered in conjunction with the Financial Aid Office.

WVSU has focused on developing partnerships with various constituencies to provide access to a specialized academic content to targeted individuals or groups. A major foray into this arena was with a nationally recognized program known as the Certified Public Manager program. WVSU went through a rigorous peer reviewed process to become a recognized member of the Certified Public Manager Consortium, which grants the institution the right to be the sole authorized provider of the program within the state of West Virginia. The program covers a 12-month period of time; the first cohort started in April 2023. WVSU undertook this project as the direct result of a request from state government to provide professional development to select employees to better equip them to perform their jobs. WVSU continues to be engaged with other potential partners to provide the specialized academic programming necessary to develop a more educated workforce. The University also has a Memorandum of Understanding with the West Virginia State Police Academy. This agreement benefits both parties, as well as the individuals who are trained by the WV State Police Academy and want to pursue a baccalaureate degree in Criminal Justice.

WVSU has a long history of offering dual credit (early enrollment) courses to high school students at a reduced cost of $25 per credit hour. In 2023, the state launched the LevelUp! West Virginia pilot program, allowing eligible students to take courses free of charge. The WVHEPC oversees the program, compensating participating institutions $75 per credit hour. In AY 2025, WVSU offered more than 300 dual credit courses (p. 23) through partner organizations. The program ensures academic quality through Memorandum of Understanding, course equivalency reviews, faculty approval, and provision of syllabi and materials to partner schools. WVSU works with high schools to identify eligible students and get them registered for the WVSU courses, to provide support services as needed, and counseling to students for future semesters. Student feedback (p. 27) in AY 2025 reflected high satisfaction with instruction, averaging 8.26 out of 10. WVSU further engages dual credit students through opportunities for students to come to campus (pp. 13-16) for activities, including a special ceremony for graduating high school seniors (p. 33). Additionally, WVSU representatives visited each high school to recognize those students who participated in the early enrollment program. WVSU also has scholarship opportunities specifically for early enrollment students.

West Virginia State University continues to balance the demands of current operations with strategic investments in its future. Through sound financial stewardship, collaborative

partnerships, academic innovation, and commitment to student success, WVSU remains steadfast in its mission to deliver access, excellence, and opportunity as a proud 1890 Land-Grant HBCU.

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4.C Planning for Quality Improvement

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

Argument

WVSU's path forward is informed by a comprehensive strategic plan that embraces the realities of the post-pandemic world. West Virginia State University, under the direction of a newly appointed President, formally initiated the development of a multi-year strategic plan in August 2022. A steering committee was appointed that represented a wide cross-section of the University community. The committee was led by an Admin Team, consisting of two co-chairs and an administrative leader. The Admin Team met frequently throughout the strategic planning process and into the beginning stages of implementation after approval of the strategic plan. As the development of the strategic plan started approaching the end stages, the Senior Vice-President for Strategic Finance, Operations, and Chief Innovation Officer (SVP) was designated by the President as the member of senior leadership who would be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Strategic Plan university-wide. This role was added to the Strategic Plan Admin Team to facilitate a smooth transition from the development of a plan to the implementation of the plan.

A consultant who has an extensive background in higher education was hired on an as-needed basis to provide assistance throughout the process. The consultant helped guide and conduct stakeholder listening sessions and subsequently compile the collected data into several broad themes. These themes ultimately resulted in the five pillars of the strategic plan, along with corresponding objectives relative to the pillars. Communication and transparency were important to the process. A comprehensive schedule was prepared and shared with the WVSU community at the August 11, 2022, launch of the Strategic Planning Process. Regular updates were provided to the campus community during the academic year, including updates to the Board of Governors.

The timeline details the significant steps involved in the development of the plan that included the involvement of faculty, staff, administrators from WVSU, and related parties, such as the WVSU Research and Development Corporation, Extension services, and the WVSU Foundation. Between the numerous listening sessions held in person and via Zoom, along with a survey that was available worldwide, stakeholders from a multitude of venues had the opportunity to be part of Future State. Input from the governing board was sought prior to finalizing the plan.

The data that was gathered during this process eventually resulted in the five pillars that comprise Future State. Sub-committees for each of the pillars were created with the task of developing actions, metrics, and timelines for their respective pillars. The Admin Team and the Strategic Planning Steering Committee worked alongside these sub-committees, which helped maintain progress toward the deadline. A writing team began work in the fall semester to develop a recommendation for the strategic plan format; they pivoted to writing

and/or editing the final version of the strategic plan known as Future State. The plan was approved by the WVSU Board of Governors at the April 20, 2023, meeting. WVSU began implementing the strategic plan across the various divisions in fiscal year 2024 under the direction of the Senior Vice President for Strategic Finance, Operations, and Chief Innovation Officer. Part of the implementation included periodic reports to the WVSU Board of Governors using both qualitative and quantitative measures.

One of the benefits of the WVSU strategic plan was the inclusion of the Aspirations section. This section provides a University-wide vision that is a summation of the overarching desired direction during the period covered by the plan. One of the aspirations was to launch the first WVSU doctoral program, which has occurred. Reaffirmation of accreditation is another key aspiration point, which continues to be underway. Maintaining a Composite Financial Index Score that demonstrates a strong financial position and allows for continued transformation work was identified as an important aspiration point. Actions relating to all six of the items included have occurred since the adoption of the strategic plan.

Recognizing the dynamic nature of higher education in general, and West Virginia State University in particular, including the desire for continuous improvement, resulted in additional steps being taken in the second year of implementation of Future State. A confluence of factors, including an interest in strengthening the University from a fiscal, operational, academic, and research perspective, resulted in entering into an engagement with two consultants from the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO) in the fall of 2024. A cross-functional team was formed that was co-chaired by the Senior Vice President for Strategic Finance, Operations, and Chief Innovation Officer, and the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. The committee reflected shared governance with faculty, staff, and student representation. Meetings were held on a weekly basis; communications were shared through different venues; and a comprehensive report was compiled by the NACUBO consultants, which was first provided to the Future State Committee. The staff, faculty, and student members sought final input from their constituent groups, which resulted in a separate report from the Future State Committee. Both reports were provided to the President and his cabinet. A town hall meeting was held on April 30, 2025, where the results of the committee's work were shared by the President and the two co-chairs of the committee. A follow-up email was sent to the campus community, which included a written version of the report. Concurrently with this work, implementation of the strategic plan, Future State, continued across the University.

The Academic Affairs division, as part of Pillar 2, is focused on maintaining a strong portfolio of academic degree programs. This was demonstrated in multiple ways, including reaffirmation of accreditation for the Bachelor of Science in Social Work program. An additional faculty member was added as a result of the specialized reaffirmation process. This faculty member is a joint appointment between Academic Affairs and the University's Extension Office, which houses an outreach program called Healthy Grandfamilies.

The Academic Affairs division initiated a robust financial measure in the five-year academic program review process that uses the actual revenue (primarily tuition) generated and the actual cost (primarily salaries) incurred to calculate a Return on Investment (ROI). This program review process results in a recommendation by Academic Affairs to the Board of Governors in AY 2024-2025 regarding the status of the programs. Based on the totality of the five reviews, three undergraduate programs and one graduate program were recommended for continuation, and one graduate program was recommended for

discontinuation. The overall review document is comprehensive. In addition to the financial ROI, it includes enrollment data, graduation data, job placement data, employer feedback data, faculty credentials and accomplishments data, and assessment data. This type of review process links maintaining strong academic degree programs with financial sustainability, two of the five pillars of the strategic plan.

West Virginia State University entered the third year of the five-year strategic plan with a strong focus on financial sustainability. The FY2026 budget includes a $3 million line of credit with the WVSU Foundation. This line of credit provides a bridge to extensively review all financial aspects of the University from both an expense management and revenue generation perspective. In addition, an evaluation of operational activities will be undertaken that could result in recommendations to achieve greater operational efficiencies. This review will potentially result in cost savings, additional revenue opportunities, and reallocations of overall revenue.

The process is coordinated around the five pillars of the strategic plan and includes five distinct stages. Discovery teams were appointed and activated early in the fall 2025 semester; specific financial goals were proposed and agreed upon. The discovery teams will develop recommendations that will be forwarded to the Decision Team, which consists of the President's Cabinet. This team will formulate a strategic enterprise-wide reduction package, which will be conveyed to the broader WVSU campus community. The final plan will be presented to the governing board for their endorsement. Throughout this process, fiscally responsible decisions are being made as opportunities arise that do not impair the mission of the University. For example, an unexpected retirement at the beginning of the fall 2025 semester has resulted in the development of a more streamlined approach to offering required courses.

WVSU has continued to use Future State, the strategic plan adopted in April 2023, as a roadmap for its actions. The plan itself is broad enough to provide guidance for the best use of WVSU's resources, structures, policies, procedures and planning that supports fulfilling its mission that can be summarized as "Excellence, Innovation, Progress" while specific enough to guide us in promoting student engagement and success, academic excellence, research, and innovation, financial sustainability, operational excellence, and strong community engagement and partnerships.

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Criterion 4 - Summary

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

Argument

West Virginia State University (WVSU) maintains an effective administrative structure grounded in shared governance, data-informed decision-making, and collaboration among internal and external stakeholders. The University's Board of Governors (BOG) plays a central role in ensuring compliance with state law and advancing institutional priorities. Its composition, featuring representatives of faculty, staff, and students alongside gubernatorial appointees, reflects WVSU's commitment to inclusivity in governance. Although 2025 legislation altered voting rights for campus representatives, these groups still actively participate in governance discussions. The BOG's standing committees, including Academic Affairs, Finance, and Student Affairs, ensure robust oversight of the University's strategic plan, *Future State*, budgeting, and executive leadership evaluations.

Collaboration across WVSU's administrative and academic sectors extends to faculty, staff, and student organizations, which regularly engage with the administration through meetings, reports, and recommendations that influence decision-making and resource allocation. The BOG's annual listening sessions with these groups demonstrate a commitment to transparency and responsiveness, leading to measurable improvements such as residence hall renovations in response to student feedback. Financial management processes reflect similar collaboration, as departmental budget managers, vice presidents, and the Business and Finance division jointly develop and monitor budgets. Comprehensive financial reports are shared with the Cabinet and BOG to ensure fiscal accountability and data-driven oversight.

WVSU's affiliated entities, including the WVSU Foundation and the Research and Development (R&D) Corporation, extend administrative collaboration to fundraising, research, and land-grant initiatives. The Foundation's capital campaign, launched publicly in 2025 after exceeding early targets, supports scholarships, endowment growth, and major infrastructure projects. Meanwhile, the R&D Corporation manages federal and state grants, aligning research and outreach activities with university goals. Its initiatives, such as the construction of new research facilities and a community-serving Farmer's Market, illustrate how WVSU integrates research, service, and economic development to benefit both campus and regional stakeholders.

Strategic planning at WVSU is guided by *Future State*, the University's five-year plan adopted in 2023, which anchors decisions in data, assessment, and shared governance. Developed through campus-wide listening sessions and led by a cross-functional team, the plan outlines five pillars emphasizing academic excellence, financial sustainability, innovation, operational efficiency, and community engagement. Its implementation has already yielded significant progress, including the launch of the University's first doctoral

program, reaffirmation of accreditation, and strengthened financial stability. Through partnerships, diversified revenue streams, and continuous program review based on return-on-investment analysis, WVSU demonstrates a proactive, integrated approach to governance and resource management that supports its mission as an 1890 Land-Grant and Historically Black University dedicated to access, innovation, and excellence.

Sources

There are no sources.