



*Comprehensive Quality Review*

# QUALITY HIGHLIGHTS REPORT

**MISSION:** Provide dynamic learning for living, working and serving. **VISION:** A success story for every student and stakeholder.



Presented to the Higher Learning Commission April, 2018

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## MINNESOTA STATE

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# Quality Highlights Report

COMPREHENSIVE QUALITY REVIEW

April 2018

**MISSION:** Provide dynamic learning for living, working and serving.

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## INTRODUCTION

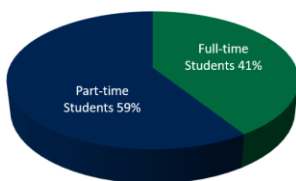
Minnesota State Community and Technical College (M State) is a comprehensive public two-year college with campuses in Detroit Lakes, Fergus Falls, Moorhead and Wadena. M State was formed by the Minnesota State system Board of Trustees in 2003 through the merger of Fergus Falls Community College and the Detroit Lakes, Moorhead and Wadena campuses of Northwest Technical College. The merger brought additional educational options to northwest and west central Minnesota by combining strong career and technical programs, general education programs and workforce development programs and services. In 2013, M State formally celebrated its 10th anniversary at public open house celebrations on all four campuses. M State employs 292 full- and part-time faculty, 205 staff and 17 administrators to fulfill its mission, vision and values. Collective bargaining agreements govern the terms and conditions of employment for faculty and staff. M State was first accredited by the Higher Learning Commission in 2003 and has been a member of the AQIP Pathway since 2009. M State is a member of the Minnesota State system, which is comprised of 30 colleges, seven universities and 54 campuses and is governed by a chancellor and 15-member, governor-appointed Board of Trustees. The system sets strategic directions and policies for its member institutions and has appointing authority for system presidents.

M State educates and serves more than 8,000 students through credit offerings on its four campuses and online, in addition to operating a site in the northern Minnesota community of Baudette. Thirty-two percent of M State students are enrolled in AAS programs, 31 percent in the AA program, 19 percent in AS programs, 16 percent in diploma programs and 2 percent in AFA and certificate programs. Comprehensive co-curricular programs and activities engage students outside of the classroom by providing opportunities for intercollegiate athletics, leadership, performance, social development and service. M State's Workforce Development Solutions department trains 6,600 individuals and serves over 500 employers to meet the region's workforce needs through quality training. Workforce Development Solutions offers a variety of learning modalities including on site, on campus, mobile units and online to deliver over 90,000 hours of customized training per year. M State works collaboratively with 38 high schools to serve 1,700 students through its Concurrent Enrollment Program, which is accredited by the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships.

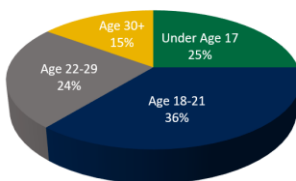
Feedback from the 2017 systems appraisal has helped M State to more clearly articulate evidence for meeting the criteria for accreditation. Furthermore, M State has taken specific actions to respond to the 2017 systems appraisal feedback. For instance, the creation of a new Institutional Effectiveness Council will ensure an improved and integrated approach to institutional planning and effectiveness. Second, additional resources have been devoted to strengthening the strategic planning process. Furthermore, M State will improve its assessment of student satisfaction by implementing the Ruffalo Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory, Institutional Priorities Survey and Priorities Survey for Online Learners. M State values the opportunity to use the highlights report and Comprehensive Quality Review visit to demonstrate its strengths and to use the feedback from the visit team for continuous improvement. Additional resources and supporting evidence for this report are presented in the online [Evidence Library](#).

## M State Students

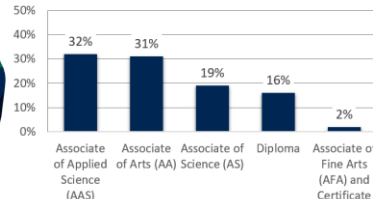
Part-time/Full-time Student Ratio



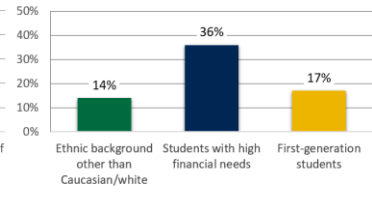
Student Age Ratio



Enrollment by Program Type



Other Student Demographics



## COMMITMENT TO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

M State has been a member of the AQIP Pathway since 2009 and has used feedback from its 2013 systems appraisal, strategy forum participation and AQIP Action Projects to improve processes and results and to support the development of additional quality initiatives. M State used the 2013 systems portfolio feedback to make improvements in several key areas. Specific examples include:

*1. There is a lack of data showing effectiveness and goal achievement for Valuing People. Years of service is not necessarily a measure of productivity or effectiveness (2013 systems appraisal feedback, 4R3,000).*

In 2014, M State improved its employee recognition program with the creation of a Distinguished Achievement Award. This formal award program allows employees to nominate a colleague or employee team for formal recognition for significant goal achievement during the calendar year. The nominations must demonstrate the employee/s significant goal attainment in a minimum of one of eight categories. Employees receive email updates and formal communications from M State's chief human resources officer regarding the award nomination process. Since the inception of the Distinguished Achievement Award program, 57 nominations have been submitted and 16 Distinguished Achievement Awards have been formally announced and celebrated at M State's annual all-employee spring in-service.

*2. An opportunity exists to strategically align funding requests with M State's mission and goals. Thus, the process will be more formalized and systematic (2013 systems appraisal feedback, 211b,O).*

M State strategically aligns funding requests with its mission and goals through its comprehensive budget development process. This detailed process provides employees with a month-by-month list of all the actions needed to complete the budget request process, along with over 100 corresponding forms that guarantee the collection of necessary data to ensure sound resource management. The process requires funding requests to clearly identify how the funds will advance the mission and goals of the institution. Requests undergo review by supervisors and by the President's Cabinet, per the process.

*3. The institution has not developed an instrument for measuring the results for building relationships with partnership high schools or community leaders. The College may wish to collect and assess these results formally in order to better understand its constituencies (2013 systems appraisal feedback, 3R5b,O).*

M State's Concurrent Enrollment Program (CEP) began administering surveys to all concurrent enrollment partner high schools during the 2014-2015 academic year. Results from the first survey showed positive responses in student satisfaction and course transferability and areas of needed improvement in strengthening relationships with the high school principals. Strategies to improve relationships with high school partners were created to include a bi-annual newsletter, success reports for partner high schools, an outreach schedule and increased presence of M State staff in the high schools. In 2014, 40 percent of the principals strongly agreed, 50 percent agreed and 10 percent were neutral when asked if they had a collegial partnership with the CEP. In 2017, 63 percent strongly agreed and 37 percent agreed, with no neutral responses. The CEP continues to use stakeholder survey data and its programmatic accreditation process to drive continuous improvement initiatives.

### AQIP Action Projects

M State has three active AQIP Action Projects in the project directory. One project related to nursing accreditation has been submitted for review. Feedback from the visit team will be used to inform proposals for future Action Projects. M State will use its newly created Institutional Effectiveness Council to review and recommend adoption of new AQIP Action Projects.

#### Assessment of Student Learning: Analyzing and Refining

##### *Project Status: Active*

This project continued work to address feedback from the 2013 systems portfolio, with a focus on strengthening a new core ability assessment model, identifying an information assessment system and improving the comprehensive program review process. The project's structure supported the decision to use TK20, a comprehensive assessment information system. M State has successfully sustained a new core ability assessment process, resulting in the collection and analysis of two full years of core ability assessment data and over 3,000 student artifacts. The comprehensive program review process was improved by providing all programs with a formal institutional research data report inclusive of key data elements including demographics, enrollment, fall-to-spring retention, fall-to-fall retention, two-, three- and four-year completion rates, course success measures, student first-term-in-good-standing and data efficiencies information. Previous to implementing this improvement, program faculty were responsible for compiling their data for comprehensive program review.



**New-Student Orientation: From One-Time Event to Ongoing Support Experience***Project Status: Active*

This project led to the redesign of a static online orientation into a comprehensive online resource that students are now able to access at any point during their experience at M State. The redesigned orientation experience, called the Source, provides students with answers and resources best suited to meet their needs. Oracle Service Cloud (OSC), a customer relationship management system, was selected as the software platform for the Source, as it allows staff to quickly develop and update answers and resources to ensure accurate and relevant assistance for students. Students may provide instant feedback on the helpfulness of any answer or resource and request additional assistance. Additional inquiries receive personal attention from a staff member and are documented in OSC to ensure M State has successfully addressed every student request. OSC has statistical analysis capabilities that display the current top 10 answers based on the most widely searched topics. M State has used the OSC analytics reports to improve processes in financial aid and registration and to launch proactive communications to students at various points during the year.

**Preparation for Accreditation Candidacy with the Commission for Nursing Education (NLN CNEA)***Project Status: Pending Project Review*

This project supported the nursing program's completion of various stages of a rigorous programmatic accreditation process, with a focus on the pre-accreditation candidacy stage. The project's structure supported the identification and achievement of specific goals related to pre-accreditation status, including increasing professional development for nursing faculty, improving nursing advisory committee processes and supporting faculty and administrator involvement in serving as on-site evaluators for NLN CNEA. In December 2017, the Initial Program Application Subcommittee recommended to the NLN CNEA Board of Commissioners that pre-accreditation candidacy status be granted to M State's associate degree and practical nursing programs. The Board of Commissioners will make its final decision on February 27, 2018. Additionally, a nursing faculty member and the director of nursing have been selected as on-site evaluators for NLN CNEA, and the nursing dean has been selected both as an on-site evaluator and initial program application subcommittee member.

In addition to active AQIP projects, past projects and participation in an HLC Strategy Forum have led to significant improvements. For instance, the Revising M State's Annual Budget Framework AQIP project resulted in the creation of a comprehensive budget development process. Formal written procedures were developed, along with a detailed calendar that documents each step of the process. Another AQIP project, Developing Credit-Based Programming for the Business and Entrepreneurial Services Center, resulted in creating improved collaboration between the Workforce Development Solutions department and Academics to identify new training and program pathways to better serve the region's workforce. Participation in the HLC Strategy Forum helped M State to improve administrative and faculty relationships through the clarification and improvement of key processes, including course schedule development and hiring committee processes. M State remains committed to continuous quality improvement, and we have learned valuable lessons about how to better structure and document work and processes going forward.

**RESPONSE TO SYSTEM APPRAISAL FEEDBACK ADDRESSING STRATEGIC CHALLENGES**

The 2017 Systems Appraisal Feedback Report identified three strategic challenges that could impact the institution's ability to succeed in reaching its mission, planning and overall quality improvement goals:

**Strategic Challenge 1:** Describing processes and results, *"The absence of reported data, analysis of results, and irregular descriptions of processes do not support the College's self-evaluation of its maturity levels."*

**Strategic Challenge 2:** Focus on continual improvement, *"The lack of reported data related to processes and student outcomes is not only an issue for this portfolio but was initially identified in the 2013 portfolio review."*

**Strategic Challenge 3:** Reporting of results, *"M State consistently falls short of presenting meaningful data in the results section of the categories."*

Following submission of the 2013 systems portfolio, M State completed several actions that demonstrate its commitment to addressing the strategic challenges. There are processes and data that were not well-described or included in the 2017 portfolio that have been included in the Highlights Report to better illustrate M State's ability to achieve its mission, planning and overall quality improvement goals. These include, but are not limited to:

1. Core Ability Assessment: Creation of a college-wide core ability assessment model, informed by best practices from the American Association of Colleges and Universities
2. Developmental Education Redesign: Establishment of a substantial redesign of developmental education, informed by data from the National Community College Benchmark Project and a comprehensive commissioned study
3. Institutional Effectiveness Council: Created to provide a comprehensive structural model to inform future continuous improvement strategies, accreditation initiatives and planning processes
4. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): Establishment of institutional KPIs through the successful implementation of a Department of Education Title III Strengthening Institutions grant
5. SMART Goals: The incorporation of Specific Measurable Attainable Relevant Timely (SMART) goals into M State's planning processes
6. Student Data, Learning Outcomes: Aggregated student course survey feedback data and aligned the Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology outcomes to support improvements in student learning
7. Student Data, Persistence and Completion: Weekly, monthly and annual reports on student success metrics are distributed to faculty, staff and administration for all students and for six specific student subgroups to inform planning and decision-making toward continuous improvement.
8. Student Support Initiative: Redesigned the college-wide academic support model to strengthen tutoring, bridge programming, peer support and supplemental instruction for students

Two additional examples are illustrated below in more detail to further show direct evidence of M State's commitment to addressing the strategic challenges feedback from the 2013 and 2017 systems portfolio appraisal. These initiatives involved the development of new processes, gathering meaningful data relevant to student outcomes and evaluating student success.

### **Strategic Communications Process**

In 2013, M State assembled a cross-divisional team to develop a process to identify all mass communications sent to students from all departments. The resulting list of communications was used to map out a comprehensive strategic communications process. The strategic communications process provided a better overview of the number of communications received by students and also identified many redundancies.

Once the initial strategic communications process was in place, M State needed to develop a strong customer relationship management (CRM) system to help build, classify, organize and track all incoming and outgoing communications. Many reporting mechanisms were also employed to decipher the overall effectiveness and timeliness of the communications being sent. Communications created since the development of the new CRM have been scrutinized using delivery, open and click-through rates, as well as web analytics extrapolated from embedded calls to action within the communications. The use of analytics from the CRM allows M State to continually improve the messaging sent to students and also helps to better identify positive and negative trends. The strategic communication process ensures that students receive pertinent messaging and resources at key points during their academic journey.

The overall effectiveness of the strategic communications process is evaluated every month by the communications and marketing team through the analysis of campaign wrap-up reports. The team constructs an annual strategic communications process every February using the lessons learned from the previous year's outcomes.

The use of the strategic communications process and CRM system has resulted in several improvements for students, including proactive notices to engage with student development services staff at key points throughout each semester. Initiatives such as the first-term check-in initiative and registration campaigns helped increase semester-to-semester persistence rates each year. Student readership of college-wide emails has climbed from a low 10 percent to rates that often exceed 50 percent. Students are responding positively to more directly targeted communication campaigns designed around their needs.

Based on the early successes of the strategic communications process, M State focused personnel resources to the process through a marketing technologist position. M State also made improvements to the Support Center (the communications hub that receives all incoming calls, emails and chats) to help strengthen the outreach efforts identified in the strategic communications process. M State has shared its strategic communications process and intensive CRM development with

other Minnesota State system colleges and universities, and it has become a recognized model for a one-system, college-wide approach to student communications.

### **Higher Learning Commission Assessment Academy – Persistence and Completion**

In 2016, M State applied to the HLC Assessment Academy to strengthen its approach to improving student persistence and completion rates, bolstered through the systematic use of data to inform future persistence and completing initiatives. Successful persistence and retention initiatives that started in 2014 with redesigning developmental education and in 2015 with implementing a first-term check-in initiative program helped build institutional capacity for participating in the academy. The academy work focused on institutional planning goals of increasing fall-to-spring persistence, fall-to-fall retention and first term completion in good academic standing, and demonstrating year-over-year improvement with the opportunity gap.

The seven-member persistence assessment academy team is comprised of faculty, staff and administrators. Its focus is on at-risk student populations on the Moorhead campus, defined as students who are low-income, first-generation or students of color. The team's three work priorities, identified at a 2017 roundtable event, are: 1) identifying and incorporating additional student success data into the project's framework; 2) increasing employee awareness of the commitment to meet the needs of students through data-informed persistence and completion initiatives; and 3) spending the time necessary to fully understand the problems before prematurely proposing solutions.

The team's work continues with identifying, collecting, analyzing and distributing data sets to the college on a regular basis and researching best practices. These actions will inform concrete, continuous improvement recommendations for systems, policies, processes, programming and services designed to support student success.

This four-year assessment academy experience will continue through 2021. The persistence team has designated annual milestones; currently in year one the team is "living with the data" and beginning to engage the Moorhead campus community in small-team subcommittees focused on specific areas including the impact of first-semester online students and the profile of a successful student. As these small teams identify additional outcomes and opportunities for broad engagement, more robust communication strategies will be used to increase awareness on campus. Years two, three and four will include roundtables, consultations with students and employees and results reporting.

## **CRITERION 1: MISSION**

### **1.A. The institution's mission is broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations.**

*Reviewer feedback: Adequate, but could be improved. "The lack of specific data related to planning outcomes and measures of the planning process make it difficult to evaluate the full effectiveness of the planning efforts."*

M State follows its strategic planning process and reviews specific data related to outcomes on a regular basis by monitoring achievement of the institutional Key Performance Indicators, Minnesota State system accountability dashboard metrics and other assessments such as the Personalized Assessment of the College Environment survey. The Minnesota State system accountability dashboard metrics are those used by the system's Board of Trustees to evaluate M State; our plans align with those metrics. To support the completion of the broad goals from the 2012-2017 strategic plan, annual plans were implemented that included SMART goals in order to better assess institutional effectiveness. For example, a goal from the 2012-2017 strategic plan is to *ensure access to an extraordinary education for all Minnesotans*. One of M State's corresponding SMART goals from the 2017 annual plan is to *increase the fall 2016 to fall 2017 student retention rate by 2 percentage points from the fall 2015 to fall 2016 rate*.

M State's planning process has resulted in the following accomplishments:

1. Two percent increase in student retention from fall 2016 to fall 2017
2. Improvement in employee diversity from 3.7 percent in fiscal year 2014 to 4.8 percent in fiscal year 2017
3. Improvement in the composite financial index from .077 in fiscal year 2014 to 3.00 in fiscal year 2017
4. Increase in dollars raised through foundation initiatives from \$612,000 in fiscal year 2014 to \$1.2 million in fiscal year 2016
5. Improvements in student success due to curriculum redesign in developmental education, including:

- Reduced student withdrawal rates from 26 percent in fall 2014 to 13 percent in fall 2016 due to the creation of a new compressed developmental math option
- Fall-to-fall persistence of students in developmental math increased from 46 percent in fall 2014 to 51 percent in fall 2016

### Strategic Planning Process

M State is currently in the process of completing a new strategic plan which will guide the institution for the next three years. Based on feedback from the 2017 systems portfolio, M State devoted additional resources to the strategic planning process. Furthermore, M State strengthened the strategic planning process by increasing input opportunities for students, employees and external stakeholders which will provide a comprehensive evaluation of the M State mission, vision and values. M State remains on target with the improved strategic planning process and timeline. M State's strategic plan, annual priorities documents, strategic planning process, accountability dashboard measures and other related evidence are presented in the [Evidence Library](#).

#### 1.B. The mission is articulated publicly.

*Reviewer feedback: Strong, clear and well presented.*

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

*Reviewer feedback: Adequate, but could be improved. "As an open access institution, M State's diverse student groups reflect the community it serves. M State does not clearly describe processes by which new and emerging stakeholder groups are identified. While it is clear that the College carefully, evaluates proposals and program concepts that are suggested, it remains unclear as to how the College proactively identifies potential stakeholders and their needs."*

M State serves a diverse population and is committed to increasing the diversity of its students and employees. M State values *excellence, integrity, respect and innovation*, achieved through supporting a *culture of diversity and inclusiveness* and *responsiveness to communities served*. These values are shared publicly in M State's student handbook, the academic catalog, on campus TV monitors and on our website in the Mission and Vision and M State at a Glance web pages.

M State uses its 16-member diversity committee and the 2016-2019 strategic diversity and inclusion plan to identify new and emerging stakeholder groups to ensure M State is addressing its role in a diverse society. The cross-representational committee of administrators, faculty, staff and students provides leadership and support for several diversity initiatives that underscore M State's attention to human diversity as appropriate for our mission and stakeholders. The diversity committee's strategic diversity and inclusion plan includes three overarching goals: 1) reducing and eliminating the achievement and opportunity gap; 2) increasing and retaining diversity in faculty and staff; and 3) ensuring a welcoming campus environment. Each goal aligns with diversity performance metrics from the Minnesota State system accountability dashboard and includes specific action steps, responsible parties and partners, completion targets, key activities and timelines, performance measures and issues to note for future continuous improvement.

M State employees routinely interact with prospective and current students and other external stakeholders to support the proactive identification of new and emerging stakeholder groups. Subsequently, any employee, department or work group may propose an emerging student or stakeholder group to the diversity committee or to the President's Cabinet. The appropriate group reviews the proposal and analyzes relevant information including alignment with mission, planning priorities, evidence of need, resource capacity and potential risk. Proposals for identifying new and emerging stakeholder groups may be approved, declined or approved for additional review.

The diversity committee and employee input have led to significant improvements in M State service to diverse student and stakeholder needs. These include:

1. Continued improvement of retention of students of color and low-income students
2. New partnerships that attend to human diversity, such as:
  - Ruby's Pantry, a nonprofit that distributes corporate surplus food in rural areas to address documented issues of student food insecurity
  - The Women's Foundation of Minnesota grant, which focuses on recruiting and retaining women in science, technology, engineering and math programs

### 3. New diversity initiatives related to employee professional development, including:

- The three-part *Voices, Values, Vision* series launched in February 2017. This professional development series focuses on understanding self and cultural context; diversity and inclusion from the perspective of our students; and actions supporting our vision and values. The spring 2018 *Voices, Values, Vision* professional development experiences will engage employees in further learning on mental illness and understanding privilege, two topics identified through employee survey input.
- *The World within Reach: A Better ELL Experience in the Classroom* is an ongoing professional development opportunity that advances employee understanding of the experience of a non-native speaker of English in American education and helps employees to create a better experience for non-native speaking students.

#### **1.D. The institution's mission demonstrates commitment to the public good.**

*Reviewer feedback: Adequate, but could be improved. "The College's description of processes related to this Criterion are general in nature and could be strengthened by providing specific examples of instances when engagement with an external group caused a change in institutional activity or planning."*

M State values its responsiveness to external stakeholder needs and can cite several specific examples of how its mission advances the public good. The three examples below involved engagement with multiple stakeholder groups and the analysis and use of relevant data to inform the adjustments in institutional planning necessary to support these highly successful initiatives.

#### **Foundation Merger**

M State completed the merger of three separate campus foundations from the Detroit Lakes, Moorhead and Wadena campuses into a single foundation, the M State Foundation & Alumni, to enhance foundation activity and alumni engagement. The newly formed M State Foundation and Alumni was formally recognized in July 2017 and creates a unified approach that will increase support for students and programs and result in strategic implementation of best practices in fund development methodologies. In addition, the Fergus Falls campus has a separate foundation that has existed since shortly after the campus was established in 1960. The Fergus Area College Foundation has representation on the M State Foundation. As a result of this recent action, the number of meetings and events has decreased by half, and the amount of funds raised has increased substantially. The merging of multiple foundations is a national trend of which M State is a prime example.

#### **High School Partners Program**

Demonstrating its responsiveness to K12 partners, M State launched the High School Partners program in 2017. The program involved adjusting institutional planning in student development services, K12 collaboration and alumni and development to incorporate new and targeted outreach strategies and services to 16 regional high schools. The goals of the High School Partners program include increasing the postsecondary participation rates of high school graduates, increasing the understanding of school-specific student matriculation and performance data through the use of the Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System and Minnesota State system data, and providing additional scholarship support to students through the creation of a workforce development scholarship program. In June 2018, M State will engage with all High School Partners program members for a planning retreat that will shape continuous improvement goals for this well-received program.

#### **Workforce Center**

As a result of engaging with the Fargo Moorhead Economic Development Corporation (FMEDC) and the Fargo Moorhead West Fargo (FMWF) Chamber of Commerce relative to the workforce needs in the region, M State made adjustments to its institutional planning processes to complete the construction of a Workforce Center on the Moorhead campus. Eleven different organizations provided support for the project, including: FMWF Chamber, FMEDC, City of Moorhead, Moorhead Economic Development Authority, West Fargo Economic Development, Moorhead Business Association, MinnDak Manufacturers Association, American Crystal Sugar, Rapat Corporation, Marvin Windows and Doosan Bobcat. In October 2017, M State hosted a grand opening to launch the Workforce Center and to celebrate the support of numerous external stakeholders in the Center's completion. Over 150 people attended the grand opening, representing 50 organizations including businesses, community organizations and education partners.



## CRITERION 2. INTEGRITY: ETHICAL AND RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT

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

*Reviewer feedback: Strong, clear and well presented.*

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

*Reviewer feedback: Strong, clear and well presented.*

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

*Reviewer feedback: Strong, clear and well presented.*

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

*Reviewer feedback: Strong, clear and well presented.*

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

*Reviewer feedback: Strong, clear and well presented.*

## CRITERION 3: TEACHING AND LEARNING: QUALITY, RESOURCES, AND SUPPORT

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

*Reviewer feedback: Strong, clear and well presented.*

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

*Reviewer feedback: Adequate, but could be improved. "While the College has developed clear expectations for student learning and these expectations have engaged faculty and key academic leaders, it is less clear how the College identifies specific tools and measures to evaluate student learning outcomes. This is another area where the College describes various processes and the individuals involved yet falls short of providing the kind of evidence and specific descriptions that can adequately describe the processes in question."*

M State ensures that all of its degree programs are constructed appropriately and effectively engage students in developing the knowledge and skills needed for *living, working and serving* through the general education policy in addition to the Minnesota State system academic programs and Minnesota Transfer Curriculum policies. M State's general education curriculum helps students gain competence in the exercise of independent intellectual inquiry and stimulates their examination and understanding of personal, social and civic values.

M State's Academic Affairs and Standards Council (AASC) reviews and certifies all curriculum proposals for relevant learning outcomes that align with the aforementioned policies. AASC uses its curriculum review processes and a multifaceted, curriculum information system, the Curriculum Design and Management (CDM) system, which allows for a rigorous and transparent review of all learning outcomes. The use of the CDM system supports a continuous improvement approach to the development and updating of learning outcomes through a comment feature that allows all employees to provide suggestions for strengthening the curriculum proposals in the system. Further, the Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology provides expert-level guidance and advice for faculty who are developing or updating learning outcomes to ensure the development of robust, measureable and well-constructed learning outcomes.

M State's involvement in two specific continuous improvement initiatives related to general education demonstrate its commitment to providing students with the knowledge, skills, concepts and attitudes that serve as the foundation to success within all programs of study.

1. The Minnesota State system transfer pathway project was launched in 2016 as a system-wide effort of two- and four-year college faculty, administrators and staff to ensure improved student transfer through the creation of designated transfer pathway degrees. The transfer pathway degree common learning outcomes are developed by

system-wide committees of faculty, staff and administrators. M State has successfully completed transfer pathway degree programs in psychology, biology, business and theater and will continue its completion of the established goals of this system-wide initiative.

2. The second initiative builds upon the success of the career and technical advisory committee model, which enables programs to utilize feedback from industry experts to ensure that students will engage in intellectual inquiry and develop the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in their chosen field. Specifically, general education faculty and the general education dean have established a liberal arts and sciences advisory committee to strengthen external stakeholder feedback related to curriculum relevance and student achievement of the broad-based learning goals that support the complex skills for living, learning, working and serving throughout life.

M State continues extensive work to improve its assessment of learning processes. The assessment work group, AASC Shared Governance Council, faculty, and academic and student development services administrators have provided significant input to inform improvements to processes in the last three years. The active Assessment of Student Learning: Analyzing and Refining AQIP Action Project focuses on core ability assessment and comprehensive program review. Comprehensive program review receives attention in 4.A., page 16.

During the 2013-2014 academic year, M State's assessment work group began to design the core ability assessment model. Broad-based input was provided by AASC, Shared Governance Council, faculty and the academic administrative team. M State's participation in the Multi-State Collaborative Assessment Project helped to inform the decision to use the Association of American Colleges and Universities Value (AAC&U) rubrics for the core ability assessment model. The core ability assessment model was finalized in 2015-2016, and the first college-wide assessment of the core abilities was conducted and continues to date. Prior to implementing the improved core ability assessment process, M State had limited assessment of student learning data, which was noted in the 2013 systems appraisal feedback.

Faculty members utilize a capstone or end-of-term assignment as an artifact that aligns with the core ability they have identified to assess. Faculty members identify the appropriate AAC&U rubric and position the level of student performance along the performance levels of the rubric – benchmark 1, milestones 2 or 3, or capstone 4. For the 2017-2018 core ability process cycle, 100 percent of tenured faculty have completed the first step of the process, which is to select the course, student artifact and rubric they will be using to complete core ability assessment.

### Summary of Results

The core ability data from 2015-2016 show the Effective Communication core ability as a strong area of student learning/performance for M State students, particularly with respect to Indicator 2 – the learner speaks clearly, concisely and accurately in a variety of contexts and formats. The percentage of student artifacts that were scored at the milestone 2 or above learning levels was at least 94 percent across all the Oral Communication Rubric reported categories. In addition, the data indicates that the Personal and Social Responsibility core ability is a strong area of student learning/performance, particularly for Indicator 5 - the learner demonstrates the ability to work in a team. The percentage of student artifacts that were scored at the milestone 2 or above learning levels was at least 93 percent in the Teamwork Rubric reported categories. The Critical Thinking core ability data indicates that Indicator 2 - learner distinguishes between facts, fallacies, inferences and judgments is a strong area of learning. The percentage of student artifacts scored at the milestone 2 or above learning levels was at least 91 percent across the rubric categories. Indicator 3 - learner considers multiple perspectives in problem solving showed similar results; ratings of student artifacts at the milestone 2 or above levels ranged from 91 percent to 99 percent. Indicator 1 - learner draws conclusions based on evidence suggests an area for learning improvement, as student artifacts scoring at the milestone 2 or above level were lower at 85 percent. The quantitative and logical reasoning core ability data indicates that Indicator 1 - learner performs computations using appropriate methods continues as a stronger area of learning than Indicator 2 - learner demonstrates numerical and logical reasoning. The percentage of student artifacts scored at the milestone 2 or above learning levels was at least 84 percent along the rubric categories for Indicator 1. The percentage of student artifacts scored at the milestone 2 or above for Indicator 2 ranged from 70 percent to 93 percent.

During the 2016-2017 cycle, data again point to the Effective Communication core ability as a strong area of student learning/performance for M State students, particularly with respect to Indicator 2 - the learner speaks clearly, concisely and accurately in a variety of contexts and formats. The percentage of student artifacts that were scored at the milestone 2 or above learning levels was 95 percent in two of the rubric categories. In addition, the data indicates that the Personal and Social Responsibility core ability is a strong area of student learning/performance, particularly for Indicator 5 - the learner demonstrates the ability to work in a team. The percentage of student artifacts that were scored at the milestone 2 or above learning levels was at least 94 percent across the reported rubric categories. The Critical Thinking core ability

data indicates that Indicator 2 - learner distinguishes between facts, fallacies, inferences and judgments is a stronger area of learning than Indicator 3 - learner considers multiple perspectives in problem solving. The percentage of student artifacts scored at the milestone 2 or above learning levels was at least 90 percent across the rubric categories, whereas the percentage of student artifacts that scored at the milestone 2 or above level for problem solving ranged from 71 percent to 92 percent. The quantitative and logical reasoning core ability data indicates that Indicator 1 - learner performs computations using appropriate methods is a stronger area of learning than Indicator 2 - learner demonstrates numerical and logical reason. The percentage of student artifacts scored at the milestone 2 or above learning levels was at least 91 percent along the rubric categories for Indicator 1, whereas the percentage of student artifacts that scored at the milestone 2 or above for problem solving ranged from 77 to 95 percent.

In both cycles of core ability assessment, the assessment work group reviewed the data for the multicultural and global awareness indicator of the Demonstrating Personal and Social responsibility core ability and the Effective Use of Information Technology core ability and determined additional data is needed for both core abilities. The analysis of the core ability assessment data led to a formal discussion at a fall 2017 faculty in-service. During this discussion, faculty and academic administrators identified questions about potential curriculum gaps related to the Demonstrate Personal and Social Responsibility core ability, multiculturalism and global awareness indicator and the Effective Use of Information Technology core ability. There was consensus that additional faculty input and curriculum review are needed in these areas to do meaningful analysis.

### **Continuous Improvement Plans**

Through analysis of the core ability assessment data, M State has identified specific continuous improvement actions. First, faculty input will be sought by conducting a survey in May 2018 to evaluate the core ability assessment process and to request specific input on possible curricular gaps relative to the Personal and Social Responsibility and Information Technology core abilities. Next, the Institutional Effectiveness Council will review core ability assessment data and propose specific goals for improving student learning. It is important to note that AAC&U On Solid Ground report, which is presented in the [Evidence Library](#), "makes no attempt to set specific threshold or target scores for achievement at 2 and 4 year institutions. That said, the rubrics reflect the collective best thinking and ambitions for learning within higher education in the United States, so it is not unreasonable to say that scores at the two Milestone levels are appropriate for students who have completed the majority of their coursework for an associate's degree."

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

*Reviewer feedback: Strong, clear and well presented.*

### **3.D. The institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching.**

*Reviewer feedback: Adequate, but could be improved. "This is another area where the College response fell short of providing meaningful information that serves as evidence of performance and outcomes."*

Every student brings a unique identity and story to enrich M State. In turn, M State provides students with a full complement of services to support their academic and personal development and success during every step of their academic journey. M State's support services include:

#### **Academic Bridge**

The Academic Bridge program supports students who have tested into developmental education for math, reading or writing. For fiscal year 2018, 82 students have participated in the program, with 63 percent of completers increasing their Accuplacer assessment scores. Accuplacer is the Minnesota State system's approved assessment tool. In addition, 37 percent of bridge program completers tested into college-level course work. The bridge program has shown success, and M State believes that increasing student participation is paramount. The Academic Bridge coordinator is currently exploring opportunities to expand Academic Bridge from an online experience to an on-campus program. The goal of the expansion is to serve more students and increase success rates of students in need of pre-college-level learning. Students are encouraged to use the Academic Bridge program through advising, enrollment events, faculty and staff referrals and the early alert process.

#### **Advising**

To date in fiscal year 2018, 72 advising and registration events have been held across the college. These events provided students with the information necessary for starting coursework at M State. Students are placed into academic courses and

programs based on their ACT and/or Accuplacer scores/results. Advisors meet with students and, based on the ACT or Accuplacer results, are advised on what courses will best fit their academic plan relative to their declared major/program. These can be developmental education, English Language Learning or college-level courses.

All students have an assigned program faculty or professional staff academic advisor who meets with them regularly to review their degree progression. Advisors and students utilize the Degree Auditing Report System (DARS) audit, which tracks all M State and transfer course work. The DARS audit helps students and advisors monitor student degree completion and adjusts the individual student's academic plan as needed. Students must meet with their respective advisor to receive an access code for registration.

M State has focused on two specific continuous improvement initiatives related to improving student advising:

1. Students enrolled in the AA degree program participate in a first-term check-in with their assigned academic advisor; the check-in occurs prior to week six of first term. The first-term check-in helps to refine the student's academic plan by incorporating an intentional, focused discussion of a student's transfer and career goals. To date in fiscal year 2018, 237 first-term check-ins have been completed.
2. In fall 2017, National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) consultants provided recommendations to improve the role of staff advisors at M State. In addition, a staff advisor and a faculty advisor collected research and provided recommendations and best practice suggestions for career and technical program faculty advisors.

### **Campus Bookstores**

Each M State campus offers a full-service bookstore where students obtain their textbooks, computer software, tools, supplies and M State apparel and accessories. Each bookstore offers extended operating hours during the first week of each semester for student convenience. M State also operates an e-bookstore and delivers fast and convenient ordering and shipping options for online students.

### **Career Services**

Career Services helps students to develop a personalized career track, connect with employers and job openings, and obtain job search support to build a strong foundation for securing employment or continuing education opportunities. Career Services utilizes career management software (College Central Network) called CAREERnet, which is available to students on the M State website. As of January 2018, 1,000 employers have created accounts with 887 jobs and internship opportunities posted.

Working collaboratively with M State faculty, Career Services has provided in-person resume development and interview skills workshops for 778 students across 19 majors and programs. Volunteers from the local business community also provided support for 174 mock interviews and reviewed 304 student resumes. Career Services conducts over 20 networking events annually to give students opportunities to engage with potential employers in specific fields. Career Services also conducts two part-time job fairs and one spring internship fair for students annually.

### **Counseling**

M State counselors specialize in providing holistic career, personal and academic counseling services to support student development and success. Career counseling services include career and personality assessments, skills and values clarification, identifying and overcoming barriers to career success, and resume writing and interview skill development. Personal counseling services help students in making a smooth transition to college and also provide support for students experiencing relationship issues, stress, anxiety, depression, substance use concerns and eating disorders, among others. M State counselors also provide assistance and support in referring students to additional counseling services in each M State community.

### **Disability and Accommodation Services**

Each campus has a Disability Services coordinator who is available to meet with students, collect documentation and collaborate with students, staff and faculty in identifying reasonable accommodations to support student learning and success. Disability Services strives to cultivate a college-wide culture and climate that supports a commitment to supporting students with disabilities. This includes providing outstanding facilities and assistive technology services designed to meet the educational needs of students who may have physical, visual, hearing, learning or other disabilities.



**Financial Aid**

M State's financial aid staff is available to work with each student to develop a financial plan for attending college. Students receive help with completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and have one-on-one meetings to discuss their costs and financial aid available to them and identifying alternate forms of funding to meet their needs. Financial aid staff also assist students in using web resources such as loan entrance counseling, federal and state financial aid websites and scholarship resources that aid in their financial planning.

**Housing**

The Fergus Falls campus offers two housing options, College Manor and Williams Hillside Village, with a total of 38 apartment-style units that house up to four students. All apartments are furnished with a living room, dining room and bedroom furniture. The office of housing and residential life coordinates programming for students to foster relationships and to create a supportive environment.

**Information Technology Services (ITS)/Computer Help Centers**

Each M State campus offers a fully staffed Computer Help Center. The centers provide students with a first point of contact for all technology-related issues and offer help and answers to a wide array of student needs including support and troubleshooting for hardware and software, secure configuration of laptops, student ID security, printing, audio-visual and telepresence equipment use, software licensing and information technology security. Students may visit any center in person or submit a question or request electronically as a "ticket." Staff members route tickets to the team member best equipped to answer the student's question. Every ticket is tracked to ensure completion of every question or request. The average time from the submission of a ticket to the resolution of the ticket for the end user is four hours and 20 minutes. ITS manages SpartanNet, a personal online portal where students can access important resources including email, print balances, technology support and their eServices registration and financial aid information. Students also use SpartanNet to access D2L, M State's learning management system and the Source, the comprehensive online orientation resource.

Students have reliable access to computers. Each campus is equipped with computers in labs, classrooms and the library (Detroit Lakes 64 computers; Fergus Falls 114 computers; Moorhead 186 computers; Wadena 100 computers; Baudette site 10 computers). M State supports 35 software licenses to enhance instruction and learning. Software licenses are examined by ITS and the Minnesota State system legal department to ensure quality and security for instructors and students. ITS completed seven major classroom technology upgrades during the 2016-2017 academic year. In addition, 37 classrooms were upgraded to be High-Definition Multimedia Interface (HDMI) compatible. These 37 classrooms were equipped with a new projector and the necessary cabling to give users the ability to connect to the projector via HDMI. In addition, the Fergus Falls and Moorhead campuses each had one state-of-the-art telepresence/immersive technology classroom created through a Title III Strengthening Institutions grant. Telepresence technology enables faculty, staff and students to connect across campuses and with other colleges in spaces equipped with high quality audio and video technology to approximate an in-person meeting or classroom environment. Based on the success of the telepresence classrooms, funding has been identified for telepresence upgrades in Detroit Lakes and Wadena.

**Labs and Clinical Sites**

M State has 56 fully equipped lab spaces to engage students in hands-on learning and training in their respective fields of study. Labs include: automotive service technology, biology, ceramics, chemistry, cosmetology, culinary arts, diesel technology, electrical line worker, electrical technology, heating, ventilation and air conditioning, information technology, marine engine technology, massage therapy, math, nursing, pharmacy technology, physics and power sports technology. Dental hygiene and dental assisting programs have clinics on the Moorhead campus. The cosmetology and massage therapy programs have spa space on the Wadena campus. These clinics provide students with invaluable professional training and offer other students and community members access to low-cost services. The Fergus Falls campus has a fully equipped theater to support its two annual theater productions and multiple spaces for band, choir and music lessons. M State has 340 affiliation agreements in place for off-campus clinical sites. All off-site affiliation agreements undergo regular review by faculty and administration according to the terms of the agreements.

M State uses an equipment request process to continuously enhance its lab and classroom spaces and to ensure programs have the equipment to stay abreast of advances in industry. Funding is prioritized based on immediate need (for example, safety), accreditation requirements, industry specifications and replacement of outdated equipment. Numerous programs received funding for new equipment, including: cardiovascular technology, dental, surgical technology, diesel equipment technology and automotive service technology. Programs also benefit from in-kind and equipment donations from industry partners, which totaled more than \$300,000 in 2017. These donations are then bolstered with an allocation of more than

\$270,000 in state funding through a unique leveraged equipment program. Programs benefiting from equipment donations include automotive service technology, cardiovascular technology, dental programs, diesel technology, electrical technology, heating, ventilation and air conditioning-refrigeration and electrical line worker. M State recently completed the renovation of a transportation center on the Moorhead campus. The project significantly enhanced the labs of the automotive service and diesel technology programs by providing additional learning space that incorporates state-of-the-art technology used in industry.

### **Library Infrastructure and Resources**

Each M State campus has a fully equipped and staffed library. The college librarian is on the Moorhead campus. The college libraries are well-utilized and provide welcoming study spaces. Circulation grew from 7,617 items in fiscal year 2015 to 8,554 items in fiscal year 2016 and 9,297 items in fiscal year 2017.

In fiscal year 2017, the physical collection of the libraries included 55,232 items; the digital/electronic collection included 239,887 items. Total circulation was 4,505 for the physical collection and 84,353 for the electronic collection. In that same time period, the libraries had 133,000 visits. The Moorhead campus had 92,007 visits; Detroit Lakes 12,709; Fergus Falls 16,330; Wadena 11,859.

In 2017, M State received state approval and funding support to begin two significant capital projects to substantially update and improve spaces to support student learning on the Wadena and Fergus Falls campuses. The Wadena library will be relocated and renovated with improved technology and spaces for students to study in small groups. In addition, this renovation will redesign Student Development Services, making it easier for students to access support services and staff. The Fergus Falls project will bring regional workforce partners onto the campus to allow students easy access to their services. In addition, the Fergus Falls library renovation will provide updated technology, an improved layout and more group-study spaces, and it will allow for better campus space utilization.

### **Social Workers**

In 2016, M State hired two licensed social workers to increase support for students working to overcome barriers in their personal lives by connecting students to community resources. Barriers may relate to issues including housing, child care, finances, nutrition and/or health. In addition, social workers maintain food shelves on three of the four campuses.

### **Specialized Services**

#### Community Primary Prevention Partnership Grant

In July 2016, M State partnered with two other area colleges and Someplace Safe, (a local crime victim advocacy agency) for a Community Primary Prevention Partnerships Grant. The grant's purpose is to increase prevention efforts with the development and implementation of sexual violence prevention programming. This programming included providing staff the opportunity to attend Green Dot training as a way to reduce and prevent power-based violence on campuses through bystander action. The grant is specific to the M State Fergus Falls campus, and the campus has implemented a Sexual Violence Prevention Advisory Council with college-wide leadership representation. The 15-member council meets monthly. Eight of the members attended the Green Dot Strategic planning overview, and four members were trained as facilitators. The trained facilitators provided Green Dot overview sessions to over 100 staff, faculty and administrators college-wide. The campus will conduct a student climate survey mid-March of 2018. Student leaders will be identified and trained as bystanders in the early fall of 2018.

#### Strategic Prevention Framework Partnerships for Success Project

In 2015, M State was selected to partner in a grant program funded through the federal Strategic Prevention Framework Partnerships for Success (SPF PFS) Project, with the primary goals of reducing alcohol use in students ages 18-20 and marijuana use in students ages 18-25 on the Fergus Falls and Moorhead campuses. The five-year grant funded the hiring of a staff member on both of the campuses, and the campus coalitions that have been created include employees, students and community members. Guided in part by student health survey data collected by the University of Minnesota, the coalitions have focused on drug and alcohol education, addressed social norms and social marketing campaigns, and assisted with the adoption of two substance abuse-related campus policies.

#### TRIO Program

The Moorhead campus offers the federally funded TRIO program to provide additional support services for low-income and first-generation students and for students with disabilities. The TRIO program is coordinated with the University of North Dakota. Targeted services include support for college admissions and college readiness, financial aid applications and searches, career exploration and facilitation of successful transfer. In fiscal year 2017 the TRIO coordinator served 190 M

State students. In addition, the TRIO coordinator accompanied a financial aid specialist in serving 77 students through 15 FAFSA information sessions.

#### Women's Foundation of Minnesota Grant

This grant supports women in non-traditional careers in the technology, engineering and trades fields. In 2017, a half-time coordinator was hired to support students who qualified for this holistic experience, called Steps to Success. Twenty students are being served in the Steps to Success program at M State. Eleven students started with the fall 2017 cohort and another nine students started with the spring 2018 cohort. One hundred percent of fall 2017 cohort participants persisted from fall to spring semester. All students in the fall cohort received wrap-around services including intensive academic advising, faculty mentoring, social worker and career services. Students are encouraged to participate in the program by direct student outreach from the staff coordinator.

#### **Support Center**

M State's Support Center proactively addresses student questions in a timely and effective manner, so students can obtain prompt and effective service. The Support Center is a fully staffed, all-encompassing student support service. Five staff members answer incoming calls, emails and chats from 8am to 7pm Monday through Thursday and 8am to 5pm on Friday. Support Center employees aptly handle questions, inquiries and concerns regarding M State programs or services. The most common inquiries are related to financial aid, admission, advising, counseling, housing and information technology. The Support Center uses Oracle Service Cloud to document all incoming inquiries, which allows M State to use analytics for continuous improvement purposes.

#### **Tutoring**

M State Spartan Centers offer a full array of tutoring, study skills and related academic support services. Students are informed of tutoring opportunities through emails sent each semester, pop-up tutoring sessions in commons areas, faculty referrals, staff referrals, the early alert process, M State website and campus TV monitors. The Spartan Center on each campus has at least one three-quarter time professional tutor. The Spartan Centers provide students with access to the online tutoring service Smarthinking, which has recorded usage by M State students of 188 hours in fiscal year 2016; 212 hours in fiscal year 2017; and, to date in 2018, 170 hours. To date in fiscal year 2018, 1,700 students have utilized one of the four campus Spartan Centers for academic assistance and support. Students indicate they most often use the centers for homework completion, working with a tutor, studying and computer use.

There are currently 160 hours of professional tutoring offered per week across M State. The Spartan Centers also offer peer tutoring options. A total of 61 hours of peer tutoring per week was offered on the Fergus Falls campus; 82 hours in Moorhead; 10 hours in Wadena; and 13 hours in Detroit Lakes. Additionally, an online writing tutor was hired during the spring of 2018 to implement a pilot program to offer specialized writing support exclusively to online students.

In 2017, M State redesigned the Spartan Center model to best support student needs. The objectives of the redesign were four-fold and included: 1) adjust staffing to address diverse student needs; 2) increase data tracking; 3) improve and increase student tutor training; and 4) increase communication between professional tutors and faculty. A nine-person team that included faculty, staff and an administrator completed the semester-long redesign initiative to develop a proposed staffing and service delivery model for the M State Spartan Centers. The results of the new model will be reviewed annually by the dean of academic quality and support and the Spartan Center staff to assess progress toward improvement. In addition, the results will be shared with leadership to support efforts to increase awareness of the Spartan Centers and their work.

#### **Veterans Centers**

Veterans Centers are available on each campus; staffing is provided by assigned individuals from the Veterans Administration. The goal of M State Veterans Services is to make sure service members, veterans, spouses and other family members have the information they need to make informed decisions concerning their federal military and veteran educational benefits. M State is recognized as a Military Friendly School.

### **3.E. The institution fulfills the claims it makes for an enriched educational environment.**

*Reviewer feedback: Unclear or incomplete. "While M State identifies a number of co-curricular activities such as athletics, fine arts, student life programs and student organizations, little explanation is offered to describe the nature of these groups, their impact on student life and how well these activities are functioning. The bulk of the description in this area focuses on experiential learning opportunities.*

*The College does state that students frequently compete in activities related to disciplines such as accounting or automotive technology. No further description is offered and no information as to the results of these competitions is offered."*

M State maximizes opportunities for students to learn in a rich educational environment by providing an array of programs and activities. Student learning outcomes for co-curricular programs and activities align with M State's mission and core abilities and support the vision of a *success story for every stakeholder* by encouraging students to explore and develop their unique interests and talents. Student involvement in co-curricular opportunities is encouraged through advising, campus open houses, campus visits, email and social media campaigns, program showcase events, registration and orientation experiences and the website.

Students may get involved in 31 active campus clubs and organizations, including leadership opportunities in the dynamic Student Government Association on each campus. Students interested in starting a new club or organization must complete a formal application. All clubs or organizations are approved by their campus Student Government Association and maintain recognition through an annual affirmation process. This formal process ensures that every club or organization has a faculty or staff advisor, has adopted a constitution or bylaws and supports M State's mission, vision and values. Furthermore, the formal process encourages every club or organization to implement continuous improvement and evaluation around its mission and goals and achievement of those through their activities.

Student life advisors on each campus provide assistance and support for student government associations to offer educational events to promote a vibrant and fun learning environment. Events include diversity and inclusion programs, comedians, musicians, performance artists, speakers and off-campus recreational opportunities such as bowling, tubing and skiing.

### **Co-Curricular Programs and Activities Results**

M State is proud of the many examples of students achieving noteworthy results through involvement with co-curricular programs and activities. Several clubs and organizations compete regionally or nationally and consistently earn awards as described in the co-curricular organizations and results document presented in the [Evidence Library](#). Highlighted examples showing the results from co-curricular programs and activities are featured below.

1. Men's Golf: M State men's golf team has advanced to the NJCAA Division III National Championship and won the Region XIII Team Championship for seven consecutive years. The continued success of the team has captured the attention of Division I and II recruiters.

2. Student Government Association: Student Government Association leaders from M State have extended their leadership beyond the college community to state and national levels. Students from all four campuses participate in LeadMN leadership roles and general assemblies throughout the year. LeadMN is an association representing Minnesota's 180,000 two-year college students. LeadMN connects students and student leaders to develop their leadership potential and advocacy skills. Four students were elected to represent the Northwest Region in the following roles with LeadMN:

- Northwest governing council representative
- Northwest governing council alternate
- Northwest regional platform representative
- Platform committee student-at-large

In March 2018, three student government leaders will represent M State at the DC Summit. The students will have the opportunity to meet with elected officials, network and grow their personal and professional skills.

3. Electrical Line Workers Organization: The 2017 National College Powerline Rodeo featured 35 college teams competing in three physical events and a written exam that tested students' skills in the electrical line worker field. M State's Electrical Line Worker Technology program sent four teams with a total of 14 students in 2017. Students earned 1<sup>st</sup> place in the hurt man competition, 2<sup>nd</sup> place overall, 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the hurt man rescue competition and 2<sup>nd</sup> place in team written exam.

4. Student Human Resource Organization: In 2017, students earned a Superior Merit Award from the Society for Human Resource Management for chapter operations and raising scholarship dollars for human resource students.

5. Business Professionals of America (BPA): In 2017, six BPA club members advanced to the national BPA completion in Orlando, Fla., as a result of their performance at the state BPA competition. Results from nationals included several national



placements: 3<sup>rd</sup> place in business law, 5<sup>th</sup> place in small business management team, 7<sup>th</sup> place in fundamentals of spreadsheets, 7<sup>th</sup> place in contemporary issues, 8<sup>th</sup> place in income tax and 9<sup>th</sup> place in database.

## CRITERION 4. TEACHING AND LEARNING: EVALUATION AND IMPROVEMENT

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

*Reviewer feedback: Adequate, but could be improved. "Although the College presents data related to licensure and pass rates for external exams, little data is present to document student transfer rates or success, outcomes from dual credit programs, or resulting employment after graduation/completion."*

#### Comprehensive Program Review Improvements

The program review process is evaluated annually based on results from program reviews and feedback from faculty administrators, Shared Governance Council and the Assessment Workgroup. In 2014, the cycle shifted from conducting program reviews every five years to every three years. In 2015, the process was strengthened through the incorporation of an improved, consistent data set generated by institutional research. Further, in 2015 a meta-review of the program review process led to additional improvements, including a stronger focus on establishing future directions and goals. All academic programs will have completed the improved process and established annual measurable goals by the end of 2018. Future continuous improvements for comprehensive program review include strengthening the alignment between program review, course and core ability assessment. In addition, M State is exploring the use of a systematic evaluation plan model to strengthen program review. This model has been used successfully by programs with rigorous programmatic accreditation standards.

Comprehensive program reviews have led to several specific programmatic improvements. M State's business, management, marketing and sales program review serves as a strong example. The program identified the need for both improved persistence and more direct measurement for assessing program outcomes. As a result, the program created a capstone course in fiscal year 2017 and began teaching the course and developing signature assignments in fiscal year 2018. Throughout fiscal years 2018 and 2019, the faculty are benchmarking students on the program outcomes and using multiple raters for evaluating student mastery of core abilities. Having identified student retention as an issue, the department also implemented tactics to help students understand business fields and connect new students to the program and past graduates. The immediate impact was an improvement in fall-to-spring persistence yet little change in fall-to-fall persistence. Two- and three-year graduation rates have been improving steadily.

The 2016 health information technology/coding (HIT) program review also led to programmatic improvements. A program review action item to redesign the curriculum to ensure alignment with new programmatic accreditation standards and to strengthen student preparation for new exam domains on the Registered Health Information Technician (RHIT exam) was completed. Furthermore, while the HIT program exam rates have exceeded the national average since 2013, the program has observed small dips in exam pass rates. Through program review, program faculty conducted a gap analysis of curriculum in relation to exam preparation to make improvements in curriculum, instructional strategies and materials. Exam pass rates will continue to be monitored annually to determine the efficacy of those strategies and to inform future improvements.

#### Licensure Exam Pass Rates

M State's career and technical programs consistently exceed the national and state pass rate averages, as detailed below. Additional information about licensure/exam pass rates is presented in the online [Evidence Library](#).

- **Automotive Service Technology**

In 2017, M State student performance in the nine Automotive Services Excellence (ASE) Certification Exam components exceeded the national average by 4 percent to 21 percent. From 2014 to 2017, M State student performance has consistently been above the national average. The program has established a 70 percent score as a performance benchmark for each exam component.

- **Cardiovascular Technology-Invasive**

The Cardiovascular Technology-Invasive program began in January 2017 and received successful notice of accreditation by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Education Programs Joint Committee on Education for Cardiovascular Technology in January 2018. Student exam data will be available in the next systems portfolio.

- **Cosmetology**

From 2014-2017, 100 percent of students passed the Minnesota Board of Cosmetology exam.

- **Dental Hygiene**

From 2013-2017, dental hygiene student pass rates on the Central Region Dental Testing, Inc. exam have exceeded the regional pass rate in three of five years, with regional 2017 data being unavailable. From 2013-2017, dental hygiene pass rates on the national board exam have exceeded the national pass rate for four of five years, with the fifth year of national pass rate data being unavailable. The M State pass rate for the national exam has been 100 percent each year.

- **Health Information Technology/Coding**

From 2013-2017, health information technology/coding student exam pass rates on the Registered Health Information Technician (RHIT) exam have exceeded the national average by a range of 3 percent to 22 percent. The program has an improvement plan in place to identify a performance benchmark and to improve pass rates.

- **Medical Laboratory Technician**

Pass rates have decreased since 2014. This has been attributed to transitions in staffing. The program has an aggressive improvement plan in place to identify a performance benchmark and to improve pass rates.

- **Nursing programs**

The National Council Licensure Exam pass rates for registered nursing and practical nursing have exceeded state and national pass rates from 2013 to present.

- **Pharmacy Technology**

Exam pass rates have exceeded the national average from 2014-2016. The program has an improvement plan in place to identify a performance benchmark and to improve pass rates.

- **Radiologic Technology**

From 2014-2017, pass rates on the American Registry of Radiologic Technology-Radiography Certification Exam exceeded the state pass rates in each year except for 2016, when the pass rate was 8.5 percent below the state pass rate. In 2017, the M State pass rate improved to 100 percent. National pass rate data for the program is available for 2014, where the program pass rate of 100 percent exceeded the national rate of 88.4 percent, while the 2016 rate dipped 10.9 percent below the national rate of 87.9 percent.

- **Surgical Technology**

The surgical technology program received accreditation by the Commission on Accreditation for Allied Health Programs in September 2016. Graduates of the new program could not test until the program earned accreditation. Data will be available in the next systems portfolio.

## **Student Employment and Transfer**

M State systematically uses student data to improve student employment and transfer outcomes. Through the Minnesota State accountability dashboard, related employment of graduates is tracked as well as transfer rates. Additionally, Minnesota has recently developed a Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System (SLEDS) that will improve access to employment outcomes.

Using a statewide methodology defined by the Minnesota State system, M State tracks both related employment rates and the percent of students who continue their education by award type and by major at both the college and campus levels. M State's academic leadership team, faculty and program advisory committees analyze this information to seek improvements in curriculum and outreach to the local communities served by the college.

M State's overall placement rate has been successful; 91 percent in 2014; 89.1 percent in 2015; 88.5 percent in 2016. Since the Minnesota State system established targets for related employment of graduates in fiscal year 2012, M State has exceeded the target through fiscal year 2015. In fiscal year 2016, the rate dipped from 89.1 percent to 88.5 percent. Disaggregating by major type, the most concerning change is a 1.7 percent drop in related employment for AAS graduates. Graduates with certificates, diplomas and AS degrees all improved in related employment. Like evaluation of other data points at M State, this information prompted action. Career services, student development services and institutional research are currently developing additional services and outreach to students who are not employed within several months of post-graduation. Evaluation of this program will be monitored through the college placement rate, participation in events and placement of participants. Additionally, program advisory committees will discuss the overall placement rate

during their spring meetings. While the institution has collected earnings data from the related employment report, little information is included and there is not a longitudinal component. New data available from SLEDS is now being collected by classification of instructional program (CIP) code at the end of the first, second and fourth years post-graduation and will be used to monitor results.

M State analyzes transfer outcomes using data from the National Student Clearinghouse, IPEDS and the Minnesota State system accountability dashboard. Jenkins and Fink (2016) advocated five metrics to track effectiveness of transfers from two- to four-year institutions including the following rates: transfer-out, transfer-with-award, transfer-out bachelor's completion, transfer-in bachelor's completion (four-year institution metric) and community college cohort bachelor's completion.<sup>1</sup> According to Jenkin and Fink's (2016) study, the 2007 community college cohort had national transfer-out rate and transfer-with award rate of 33 percent and 29 percent, while the Minnesota averages were 31 percent and 24 percent. Using these figures as benchmarks, M State lagged the national transfer-out rate for the 2011-2013 cohorts with an average at 19 percent. In 2014, M State's average increased to 33 percent, near the national average. Although M State's transfer-with-award rate is significantly higher than both the national and Minnesota averages at 35 percent, current data collection processes do not account for students transferring only to four-year institutions. M State is currently developing the necessary procedures to use SLEDS to better track the transfer-with-award rate and to begin tracking the transfer-out bachelor's completion rate as well as the community college cohort bachelor's completion rate. The results will be benchmarked against Jenkin and Fink's (2016) study.

### Concurrent Enrollment Program

M State's Concurrent Enrollment Program (CEP) earned National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP) accreditation in spring 2015. NACEP accreditation assures academic and programmatic quality, rigorous student learning and assessment and pedagogical, philosophical and theoretical alignment to M State's campus courses. Feedback from the 2017 systems appraisal noted that "the discussion of the concurrent program and associated processes was well done and could be used as a model to improve other areas." The direct involvement of M State faculty mentors strengthens the CEP program in several ways, including:

- Conducting the concurrent enrollment instructor orientation meeting
- Completing regular mentor/instructor meetings
- Providing syllabus development resources
- Planning and conducting an annual professional development workshop and other professional development opportunities

M State's CEP routinely conducts numerous surveys to assess the outcomes of the program. Students are surveyed after each course, every term. Student course surveys for the last three terms indicate that dual credit instructors are effective, with a 92 percent favorable response in fall 2016 and 2017 and 95 percent in fall 2017. Further, the CEP annually surveys former students who are one year out of high school. Over the past four academic years an average of 92 percent of students rated their experience with M State's CEP as positive. An average of 98 percent said they would recommend M State dual credit courses to current high school students. An average of 90 percent reported being better academically prepared for college, and an average of 92 percent of students reported successful transfer of all or some of their concurrent enrollment credits to their current college or university.

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

*Reviewer feedback: Unclear or incomplete. "M State describes extensive work on improving the processes associated with assessment of student learning. While this work is commendable and clearly well intended, the problem remains that assessment of student learning has been an open issue with the College since the prior portfolio review. The only data presented related to student learning outcomes was institutional in nature (Figure 1R1). No examples of data or evidence was presented related to learning outcomes at the program or course levels and no description is offered as to how such data is used to improve the teaching/learning experience. A formal assessment process does not appear to be in place for co-curricular activities."*

<sup>1</sup> Jenkins, D., & Fink, J. (2016). Tracking Transfer: New Measures of Institutional and State Effectiveness in Helping Community College Students Attain Bachelor's Degrees. *Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University*. Retrieved from <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/tracking-transfer-institutional-state-effectiveness.html>

M State's assessment of student learning processes include course, program and institutional assessment of the institutional core abilities. In response to the 2017 systems appraisal feedback, M State has developed a formal co-curricular programs and activities assessment model.

### **Program Learning Outcomes Assessment**

All program outcomes are reviewed and evaluated by the Academic Affairs and Standards Council (AASC). The council is comprised of eight cross-representational faculty and four administrators. AASC certifies curriculum alignment with mission, educational offerings and degree levels. Furthermore, the council reviews program outcomes to ensure they are sound and measurable. Fifteen percent of programs assess student learning of program outcomes through programmatic accreditation processes, 10 percent with licensure exams, 15 percent with certification exams, 22 percent with internships or clinicals, 19 percent with a capstone project and 19 percent with a comprehensive exam. The assessment of career and technical program outcomes is customized to each program and developed in collaboration with program advisory committees to ensure that curriculum is current with industry practices and standards.

Furthermore, M State uses program advisory committee evaluation and feedback to assess student learning of program outcomes. Survey results are reviewed annually by program advisory committees, program faculty and academic administrators to identify opportunities for continuous improvement. In the 2017 advisory committee survey, 95 percent (N=188) of advisory committee members agreed that programs prepare students for the workforce. Ninety-six percent (N=195) of program advisory committee members agreed that program curriculum is current with industry standards and provides students with necessary skills. Ninety-eight percent (N=198) would recommend hiring an M State graduate. M State recently improved its advisory committee processes by developing and implementing a more structured reporting tool which will allow for more in-depth analysis of advisory committee recommendations for continuous improvement of student learning. The advisory committee survey results and reporting tool are presented in the [Evidence Library](#).

### **Course Learning Outcomes Assessment**

Faculty members conduct assessment in their courses to measure student learning of the course outcomes. On an annual basis, faculty develop an assessment of student learning action plan to support improvements in student learning. Faculty meet annually with their deans to discuss their assessment plans. The course assessment of student learning action plan process has led to improvements in student learning including:

- A nursing faculty member incorporated additional formative feedback to improve writing skills for medical/surgical papers, resulting in improvements in paper performance from an average D to average B grade
- A philosophy faculty infused additional instructional videos into a course and observed an increase in positive student comments and a 14 percent increase in quiz performance
- A biology faculty member's assessment of student learning course action plan focused on providing students with additional examples of how to write quality disease papers and measured a 10 percent increase in the target score established for the action plan

Several additional examples of assessment of student learning course action plans are presented in the [Evidence Library](#).

Course surveys also provide M State with valuable course data. In 2017, systems portfolio feedback led to improvements in the course survey process. Course surveys are distributed to students annually. The number and frequency of surveys for adjunct and tenured faculty is subject to the faculty contract. Students rate courses based on five levels – two positive, one neutral and two negative. Student ratings of course surveys have been stable and strong, with demonstrated instructor knowledge. The course survey data has been distributed and discussed with the faculty Shared Governance Council, AASC, the Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology and all faculty at a recent in-service. M State plans to continue using course survey data to build upon current areas of strength, such as "instructor demonstrated knowledge of the subject matter," and to set targets for improvement in areas that did not receive a 90 percent favorable response.

### **Internship Learning Outcomes Assessment**

M State has identified continuous improvement actions related to assessment of student learning through internship experiences. A work group comprised of the career services director, academic deans and faculty gathered information and forms from programs that use an internship to assess student learning of program outcomes. Documents included training agreements, course syllabi, program curriculum and grading rubrics. The work group determined that internship experiences and learning documentation needed to be more uniform so that when business and industry partners provided feedback on student internship performance, standards were clearly identified, quantifiable and relevant for all industry partners, students and faculty.



The improved internship model includes assessment of course outcomes, program outcomes and processes, and rating of student employability and work skills. The model also requires students to participate in an internship preparation process the semester prior to their internship. Students will develop a resume, conduct a career search, identify their industry partner and engage in in-depth preparation for a successful internship experience. Industry partners will be involved in an orientation for students to help set expectations of a successful M State internship experience. Survey feedback from industry partners, students, faculty and advisory committees will be sought annually to incorporate continuous improvement suggestions into the process.

#### **Co-Curricular Programs and Activities Learning Outcomes Assessment**

M State offers students diverse student life opportunities to build relationships, gain leadership experience, get involved and have fun. M State encourages students to become active members of the campus community through the Student Government Associations on all four campuses and through a variety of student clubs and organizations such as Phi Theta Kappa, Business Professionals of America, Student Human Resource Organization, Nursing Club, Skills USA, Ignite and more. Fine arts programs including band, choir and theatre, and intercollegiate athletics are offered on the Fergus Falls campus and teach valuable lifelong lessons. Women's intercollegiate athletics includes basketball, softball and volleyball; men's intercollegiate athletics includes baseball, basketball, football and golf.

To address feedback from the 2017 systems portfolio, M State has developed a formal assessment process for co-curricular programs. Student learning outcomes for co-curricular participation have been identified and focus on building communication and leadership skills. These learning outcomes align with M State's core abilities. Students involved in co-curricular programming will be surveyed annually to rate their skill development resulting from co-curricular involvement. Co-curricular advisors and coaches will also be surveyed annually to identify suggestions for program improvement. The first administration of surveys will occur in April 2018. The results from these assessments and from the Ruffalo-Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory will undergo formal annual review by M State's director of student life, dean of student success, co-curricular program advisors and coaches and the Institutional Effectiveness Council to inform future continuous improvement strategies. The [Evidence Library](#) includes the co-curricular assessment model and a complete list of M State's co-curricular clubs and organizations and their accomplishments.

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

*Reviewer feedback: Unclear or incomplete. "M State reports Fall-to-Fall and Fall-to-Spring persistence rates for students yet fails to place these figures with context of other colleges in Minnesota or other peer institutions nationwide. Further, there is no discussion or analysis offered as to these results. In Table 3 (2R2), the College reports gains in persistence and completion but these figures have no clear context, are not shown as comparative numbers, and lack any comparison to external benchmarks. The College is recognized for responding to these questions but it must also be understood that the very limited information presented makes it difficult for an evaluation team to form a sound judgment of the effectiveness of the College efforts. No analysis is presented related to the data presented, and the College provides little or no insight as to actions considered or undertaken to improve outcomes."*

Institutional targets for persistence, retention and completion are set by the Minnesota State system during the annual performance review of the college by the system office chancellor. The Minnesota State system's accountability dashboard report tracks 21 key performance indicators across 10 years, documents the expected goals and allows for external benchmarking of M State against the system average of 30 two-year institutions.

Four of the 21 key performance indicators are related to persistence, retention and completion:

1. Student Persistence and Completion Rate: Percent persisting, transferring, or graduating by second fall
2. Student Persistence and Completion Ratio: Percent persisting, transferring, or graduating by second fall. Ratios for four groups: students of color and white, Pell eligible and non-Pell eligible, first generation and non-first generation, underrepresented and non-underrepresented)
3. Completion Rate (percent completing in three years)
4. Completion Ratio (percent completing in three years): Ratios for four groups - students of color and white, Pell eligible and non-Pell eligible, first generation and non-first generation, underrepresented and non-underrepresented

The Minnesota State system accountability dashboard report is reviewed by the President's Cabinet and institutional research, with opportunities identified to achieve the college-wide targets for persistence, retention and completion as part of the president's annual performance reviews with the chief academic officer and chief student development officer. The resulting targets and recommended initiatives are further reviewed, refined and approved during the annual strategic and operational planning processes by the academic leadership and the student development leadership teams. The college-wide goals are shared with the M State community and external partners annually through publication of the strategic plan and presentations at Shared Governance Council, College open forums, General Advisory Council meetings and employee in-service events.

M State's targets are further reinforced by the contributions of campus-level targets set for persistence-to-first-spring and retention-to-second-fall metrics. Using the college-level goals as a guide, the chief student development officer establishes campus-level targets and initiatives guided by realistic projections based on historical trends. Updated information on college- and campus-level persistence, retention and completion historical trends and targets is shared at the July all-staff retreat and the August faculty duty days. An example is presented in the [Evidence Library](#), "2016 College and Campus Persistence and Recommendations." College and campus-level progress toward these campus-level targets are communicated to all college employees through weekly "Tuesday Topics" emails from the chief student development officer, with monthly updates that chart progress on persistence targets in 10 student groups (all, developmental education, first generation, high-performing, low income, male, postsecondary enrollment option, post-traditional, students of color, transfer) across a four-year timeframe at both the college and campus levels. In addition, select enrollment management and leadership recipient groups receive weekly enrollment reports generated by queries from the institution's replicated database providing comparisons of persistence across a four-year timeframe at both the college and campus levels. Finally, as part of the academic program review, faculty have been strongly encouraged to set targets for persistence, retention and completion as part of their program improvement plans.

Persistence, retention and completion data are analyzed in a variety of ways at numerous levels. In addition to the president's review of the data with the system chancellor, college-level and campus-level data are reviewed annually by President's Cabinet, Shared Governance Council, the academic leadership team and student development leadership team, where discussion focuses on identification of meaningful opportunities for action. Campus-level persistence, retention and completion data are also reviewed annually by campus planning teams of faculty and staff in identifying actionable opportunities within the academic and strategic enrollment management planning process. Where possible, the prevailing philosophy is to analyze the data to address the most significant performance gap where the greatest number of students might be positively impacted. Exceptions to this practice may occur when external expectations of the Minnesota State system office, state Legislature or grant agency must be considered.

M State can point to numerous examples that it uses persistence, retention and completion data to make appropriate improvements. At a 2015 summer leadership retreat, presentation of persistence and retention data resulted in consensus identification of actionable opportunity in early-term intervention with first-term students pursuing their associate of arts degree. At the time, three-year historical fall-to-fall retention rates of AA students hovered around 45 percent. Given that 450-500 new entering AA students start each fall, this student cohort provided the greatest opportunity for improvement.

Over the remainder of the summer, plans were put into place to reach out to Fall 2015 AA students and encourage them to meet with their advisors during the first five weeks of the term to complete five tasks as part of the AA First-Term Check-In Initiative: 1) review completion intent survey response; 2) review GRIT assessment; 3) review College Student Inventory results; 4) complete a realistic term-by-term academic plan toward completion; and 5) explore and identify the M State student support services that would support the student's success.

First term in good standing completion rates and fall-to-spring persistence rates of initiative completers and non-completers were identified as the most appropriate intermediate metrics that would contribute to an overall fall-to-fall retention improvement target of +1 percent annually.

#### First-Term Check-In Initiative Results

	Fall 2015 Cohort (N=456)			Fall 2016 Cohort (N=421)		
	Participant Target	Participant Actual	Non-Participant	Participant Target	Participant Actual	Non-Participant
Completed Process with Advisor	35%	65%	35%	40%	55%	45%
Completed Fall in Good Standing	65%	72%	45%	70%	64%	45%
Persisted to Following Spring	70%	87%	60%	75%	81%	68%

Persistence to the following spring increased by 5 percent college-wide with the fall 2015 cohort, and the fall 2015 to fall 2016 retention rates for first time in college students increased by 2 percent over fall 2014 to fall 2015 rates, and held at the same increased rate for the fall 2016 to fall 2017 cohort. While targets were met each year, declines from fall 2015 rates were noted in initiative participation, completion in good standing and persistence rates. Results were reviewed and discussed within student development services leadership and the advising team, with a need for more effective promotion to students, training for advisors and removal of the GRIT assessment identified as opportunities for improvement that would most likely improve participation and performance metrics.

## **CRITERION 5. RESOURCES, PLANNING AND INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS**

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

*Reviewer feedback: Strong, clear and well presented.*

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

*Reviewer feedback: Strong, clear and well presented.*

### **5.C. The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.**

*Reviewer feedback: Unclear or incomplete. "No evidence is presented to allow evaluation about how the College links processes for assessment of student learning to the other parts of the planning process; evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting. The consistent lack of clear evidence (reporting of results, comparison to external benchmarks, internal targets, and other measures) again makes it very difficult to evaluate the strength and validity of the College responses in this Criterion."*

M State's planning process includes input from multiple stakeholder groups, including students, employees, advisory committees and the General Advisory Council. College plans align with M State's mission, vision and values and with the three priorities of the Minnesota State system's strategic framework: 1) Ensure access to an extraordinary education for all Minnesotans; 2) Be the partner of choice to meet Minnesota's workforce and community needs; and 3) Deliver to students, employers, communities and taxpayers the highest value/most affordable option.

In 2014, M State strengthened its planning processes by creating operational plans with measureable goals to achieve the broad-based goals identified in M State's 2012-2017 strategic plan. Broad-based employee, student and external stakeholder involvement was sought through a comprehensive, master academic planning process and strategic enrollment management process for each campus. M State allocated \$750,000 to support the plans, and results from the plan initiatives are reported monthly to the chief academic and chief student affairs officer.

M State integrates comprehensive program review with the evaluation of operations, planning and budgeting by prioritizing needs identified in comprehensive program review. M State's comprehensive, zero-based budgeting process also ensures that resource requests are linked to improving student learning and continuous improvement. Programs or departments requesting new funds must include specific rationale about alignment to college planning and an explanation of how funds will improve student learning or success.

M State's achievement of results from its planning processes undergo formal evaluation at the Minnesota State system level through an annual meeting between the system office chancellor and M State's president. M State has improved metrics in nearly every category on the Minnesota State system's accountability dashboard; the accountability dashboard encourages continuous improvement and tracks M State's progress in achieving system-approved targets for performance.

Several specific examples of the most recent results from M State's planning processes include:

- Improved fall-to-fall retention of 2 percent
- Improved M State student persistence, transfer and graduation metrics for the fall 2013-2015 student cohort, including first generation, students of color and Pell-eligible students and exceeded the system-wide metrics in each student subgroup
- Increased student diversity in students of color from 15.9 to 16.3 percent

- Successfully completed transfer pathways in biology, psychology, theatre and business as part of the Minnesota State system's transfer pathway initiative designed to ensure improved student transfer
- Increased student headcount in workforce development training programs by 2 percent and achieved a 99 percent student and client satisfaction rating
- Strengthened M State's financial position through improvements in the CFI (see page 5); cash position from \$19.1 million in fiscal year 2016 to \$21.3 million in fiscal year 2017; unrestricted net assets from \$11.7 million in fiscal year 2016 to \$14.5 million in fiscal year 17; net asset position improved from \$47.9 million in fiscal year 2016 to \$50.3 million in fiscal year 2017
- Improved performance in instructional costs per full year equivalent from 1.07 to .98
- Increased private giving support to complete state-of-the art transportation center in Moorhead for students in the automotive service technology and diesel technology programs
- Increased grant revenue from \$2.2 million to \$3 million, providing additional services to support student success
- Successfully implemented the Women's Foundation of Minnesota grant, focused on the recruitment and retention of women of color in science, technology, engineering and math

M State successfully concluded its 2012-2017 strategic plan and is currently engaging in the strategic planning process that will guide the institution's operations for the next three years. The new strategic plan will be in place in June 2018. M State incorporated feedback from the 2017 systems appraisal to strengthen the strategic planning process. Specifically, new resources have been devoted to the process through the hiring of a dedicated strategic planning facilitator. Furthermore, M State expanded opportunities for multiple stakeholder groups to contribute comprehensive input in the process through surveys, focus groups and formal meetings. Significantly expanding internal and external stakeholder input will result in a broad-based and extensive review of our mission, vision and values.

#### Strategic Planning Process Summary

- August 2017 - Faculty and staff provided threats, opportunities, weaknesses, strengths (TOWS) input
- September/October 2017 - Student Government Association leaders provided input through focus group sessions
- November 2017/December 2017 - Student and employee input summaries developed from TOWS analysis and focus groups
- January/February 2018 - Additional internal and external scanning continues through data analysis, surveys, focus groups and strategic planning exercises with numerous stakeholder groups
- Update stakeholders on progress and validate process
- March/April 2018 - Review internal and external scan data, identify high-level objectives and facilitate the development of SMART goals with President's Cabinet, academic, student services and faculty leaders
- Update stakeholders on progress and validate process
- May 2018 - Communicate to key stakeholders and incorporate additional feedback into communication pieces and plan documents
- June 2018/Ongoing - Begin implementation of strategic plan and evaluate strategic planning process
- Ongoing - Evaluate and disseminate results to stakeholders

A newly created Institutional Effectiveness Council will provide a formal and integrated structural model to support the implementation of M State's strategic plan. The Institutional Effectiveness Council's role is to foster and support a culture of continuous quality improvement and organizational effectiveness through regularly reviewing the mission and goals, analyzing the research that assesses how effectively M State is accomplishing its mission and goals, and broadly communicating results so that stakeholders have a shared understanding of its strengths and weaknesses so as to best set and achieve its strategic priorities. More detailed strategic planning documents, resources and a detailed description of the institutional Effectiveness Council are presented in the [Evidence Library](#).



**5.D. The institution works systematically to improve its performance.**

*Reviewer feedback: Unclear or incomplete. "Statements and data, or lack of, through the course of the portfolio serve to highlight the deficiencies in response to this Core Component. Throughout the portfolio, there are serious gaps in data or in evidence that might be offered in support of the processes described. As highlighted in the strategic issues, the team views this lack of data to be even more serious given that the 2013 portfolio was considered to be deficient in presentation of supporting data. Further, the team feels that there may, in fact, be evidence that the College is not learning from prior reviews in that some of the same strategic issues continue to exist after a prior review and into the current review."*

M State works systematically to improve performance, developing and documenting evidence of its performance and operations, and learning from operational experience to improve effectiveness and sustainability. Several examples of M State's systematic use of data in improving performance are described below:

**External Benchmarks**

Several data sources inform initiatives to improve performance, including national surveys such as Educause's Core Data Service and Student and Faculty Technology, the Community College Survey on Student Engagement (CCSSE) and the Personal Assessment of the College Environment (PACE). At a state level, the Minnesota State system's accountability dashboard is a primary source, supplemented by regular internal review of student-level data. M State's participation in the 2013 National Community College Benchmarking Project (NCCBP) and the 2015 and 2016 Multi-State Collaborative Assessment Project informed continuous improvement initiatives in developmental education and the assessment of student learning.

**Internal Benchmarks – Key Performance Indicators**

Aligned with M State's Title III grant, KPIs are reviewed and include student enrollment, student persistence, graduate placement and licensure, private giving, customized training headcount and the Composite Financial Index. Student-level data is disaggregated by ethnicity, Pell status, first generation students, developmental education status and type of major. Internal academic assessments include program review, core ability assessment and annual faculty assessment projects. In program review, faculty, staff and administrators review program-level data and develop goals for the subsequent three years; the outcomes of program review often include enrollment or retention goals, establishing assessment priorities and outlining any future curriculum changes.

**Title III Grant**

Supported by a U.S. Department of Education Title III grant, M State has worked to improve operational efficiencies, developmental education success rates and data-informed decision-making. As a multi-campus college, M State has operationalized a balance between centralization and campus autonomy while meeting regional needs. As an example, M State began offering interactive television courses to meet campus, college and regional needs. The Title III grant funded a significant upgrade in equipment and furnishings to enhance the student educational experience and improve operational efficiencies through telepresence/immersive technology meeting rooms. M State renovated one room on each campus and in fiscal year 2017 conservatively saved \$45,000 in mileage reimbursement and meals, as well as \$40,000 in lost productivity. Additionally, through an analysis of PACE survey data, M State identified a need to improve college-wide communications. The new immersive technology meeting rooms provide a platform for college-wide meetings that were previously cost prohibitive (approximately \$90,000 per year estimated).

Over the past three years, M State has improved data-driven decision-making and developed a set of KPIs. For the first year, M State was evaluating several data points and draft indicators before deciding on a final set of metrics. These metrics align with the Minnesota State system accountability dashboard. In early stages of the process, the data informed the development of the annual goals and strategies planning documents beginning in fiscal year 2015. These documents guide the goals and strategies for each division in the college. Results are reviewed bi-annually (at a minimum) and are updated for the next fiscal year. The annual goals and strategies planning documents created a preliminary framework for establishing annual, measurable goals for every College division.

**Developmental Education**

M State participated in the NCCBP to compare M State to other institutions throughout the country. Overall, M State demonstrated strength in persistence, completion and transfer; however, the student completion rates in developmental education were lagging behind other institutions. This, combined with a private commissioned study of developmental education and the Title III grant, led to the redesign of developmental education as a top priority for fiscal year 2015.

Utilizing current research on developmental education, the English program adopted both accelerated coursework and a co-requisite model. The math program distributed course content differently and accelerated courses by offering them in eight-week segments. The English changes resulted in similar completion rates but significant student savings, while the math curriculum resulted in significant changes. Completion rates of the developmental education coursework increased by more than 15 percent, withdrawal rates decreased by more than 10 percent and fall-to-fall persistence rates have increased by 5 percent.

With two years of data, M State has evaluated and is currently adjusting the developmental education plan. The English department is currently working with the data and the math department's successes to further improve its curriculum. Performance of developmental education students and performance within the curriculum is monitored on an annual basis and shared with the general education dean, academic and student development leadership team and appropriate faculty. Results have also been presented at system-wide conferences and to the Minnesota State system's Board of Trustees. M State is actively involved in the Minnesota State system's Developmental Education Road Map continuous improvement initiative, and the chief academic officer serves as an active member of the initiative's steering committee.

### **Information Technology Resources**

The results of the 2016 and 2017 faculty and student Educause technology surveys indicated changing student and faculty needs. The President's Cabinet noted two primary needs: 1) training for faculty on integrating technology in the classroom and 2) integration of cloud-first information technology strategies to enhance services. Results from the fiscal year 2017 Core Data Educause survey indicated that M State lacked the core infrastructure to meet the demands of future technology; consequently, the chief information officer presented the data and formal infrastructure improvement proposal to the President's Cabinet. The proposal was approved and information technology services is currently investing in technology improvements guided by a formal improvement and replacement plan. The improvement and replacement plan will be evaluated on an annual basis through cross-referencing equipment inventories, the replacement schedule and results of future surveys.

## **SUMMARY AND REFLECTIONS**

M State has achieved significant results since submitting the 2013 systems portfolio, particularly with respect to improving student retention, strengthening our financial indicators and information technology infrastructure and developing strong education, foundation, K12 and workforce development partnerships to meet the rapidly changing and unique needs of each of the communities we serve. While M State has many clear and replicable processes inclusive of multiple and varied constituents to support our achievement of results, we recognize that we have not always paused to thoroughly document our processes, related data and subsequent continuous improvement actions. Additionally, we recognize our opportunity to further advance our institutional maturity by more fully evaluating and reflecting upon our processes so as to engage our broader college community in connecting lessons learned to the development of new and continued improvements.

Feedback from the 2017 systems appraisal has helped M State to reflect upon our strengths and shortcomings, to take specific actions to address the continuous improvement feedback and to more deeply engage internal and external stakeholders in the preparations for the April 2018 CQR visit and other accreditation processes. We look forward to the CQR visit as an opportunity to share our strengths, highlight M State's dedicated and talented employees and students, and express our commitment to continuous improvement. We invite you to view the supporting resources presented in the online [Evidence Library](#) and to contact [Peggy.Kennedy@minnesota.edu](mailto:Peggy.Kennedy@minnesota.edu), President, or [Jill.Abbott@minnesota.edu](mailto:Jill.Abbott@minnesota.edu), Accreditation Liaison Officer, with any questions or requests that will assist you in preparation for the April 23-25 visit.