

Assurance Argument

Western Technical College

Review date: 10/7/2024

1 - Mission

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

1.A - Core Component 1.A

The institution's mission is articulated publicly and operationalized throughout the institution.

1. The mission was developed through a process suited to the context of the institution.
2. The mission and related statements are current and reference the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development and religious or cultural purpose.
3. The mission and related statements identify the nature, scope and intended constituents of the higher education offerings and services the institution provides.
4. The institution's academic offerings, student support services and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.
5. The institution clearly articulates its mission through public information, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans or institutional priorities.

Argument

1.A.1 Mission Development

Founded in 1912, Western Technical College's mission stems from Chapter 38 of Wisconsin State Statute that defines the mission and purpose of the 16 technical colleges in the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS):

“The legislature finds it in the public interest to provide a system of technical colleges which enables eligible persons to acquire the occupational skills training necessary for full participation in the workforce; which stresses job training and retraining; which recognizes the rapidly changing educational needs of residents to keep current with the demands of the work place and through its course offerings and programs facilitates educational options for residents; which fosters economic development; which provides education through associate degree programs and other programs below the baccalaureate level; which functions cooperatively with other educational institutions and other governmental bodies; and which provides services to all members of the public.”

Western's mission states: “Western Technical College provides relevant, high-quality education, in a collaborative and sustainable environment that changes the lives of students and grows our communities.” This mission is fulfilled through Western's vision, [values, culture statement](#), [personal and organizational commitments](#), [strategic plan](#), formal governance structure, and collaborative decision-making approaches that intentionally engage internal and external stakeholders through a variety of mechanisms.

1.A.2 Currency of Mission and Related Statements

Western Technical College's mission statement is contained within board policy [A0100](#) and was developed and approved by the Western Technical College District Board in 1980. It has been revised over time with the latest revision completed in 2011 through engagement of multiple stakeholders (coworkers, administration, external stakeholders, including regional communities and business partners) and research and development with a marketing and research firm.

Western's current strategic plan, [Experience 2025](#) connects the mission to the current priorities. In this plan, Western prioritizes student success and delivers on its mission through:

- [Four Strategic Directions](#):
 - First Choice Service
 - Workforce and Community Engagement
 - Equity, Inclusion, and Support
 - Employee Engagement
- [Key Areas of Focus](#): Attract and Retain Students and Coworkers through:
 - Diversity, Equity, Inclusion
 - Coworker Wellbeing
 - 7-week Sessions
- [Achievement of its Key Results \(Student Success Measures\) and Strategic Goals](#)
- [Four Personal and Organizational Commitments](#)
 - Act with clarity and consistency
 - Demonstrate resiliency.
 - Drive action through data intelligence
 - Practice sound fiscal stewardship

The mission statement, along with the College's vision and values, are prominently displayed throughout the public web site and CavNet, Western's intranet site, and through printed materials distributed at New Employee Orientation (NEO), College Day events, and board meetings. Visuals posted in Western's boardroom and material included in board meeting materials remind Western's Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and District Board members of the commitment to the mission, vision, values, and culture statement.

Discussed further in 5.1.C, Western has a systematic process to review the current strategic plan, check for possible changes, and adjust accordingly. Periodically, a deeper dive is conducted to refresh the plan (2021-2022). This deeper dive typically includes an [environmental scan](#), research across higher education, analysis of Western's Student Success Measures, input from internal and external stakeholders, and other data. For example, feedback collected through a pulse check during the pandemic in 2020 revealed coworkers were overwhelmed by the comprehensiveness of the strategic

plan and associated changes. In response, Western’s leadership conducted a survey to gather input to identify the most important focus areas within the strategic plan for the current year. This process resulted in “Areas of Focus” for [2020-2021](#) and [2022-2024](#).

Part of Western’s mission is to provide relevant, high-quality education and Experience 2025 is the primary driving force in all planning, resource, and budget allocations. The alignment of the mission and strategic plan ensures all operations are driven by Western’s overall mission, vision, values, and stated goals. Allocating resources appropriately while maximizing financial stability is key to reaching this goal. Western has taken several steps to align the [Annual Planning Process and the Budget Formation Process](#) (5.C) to ensure that resources are provided for the actions that advance the mission and vision, along with Experience 2025. The College’s Title III grant (3.D.C) awards dollars for implementation of a new integrated evaluation, planning, and budgeting system.

The College involves Western’s Foundation, Grants Office, and Business and Industry Services (BIS) Department in resource allocation and revenue generation for new initiatives that have the potential to advance the mission, such as innovative educational offerings, cutting-edge building projects, equipment, and new initiatives not possible under current budget constraints. Western’s SLT incorporates these values into all aspects of the organization and actively demonstrates their commitment to the mission through their actions and the framing of conversations and action plans.

Measurement of Mission Alignment

Since Western’s last assurance argument, the College transitioned from the Personal Assessment of the College Environment (PACE) to [Gallup’s Q12 Employee Engagement Survey](#). Conducted annually with Western coworkers, this survey measures engagement – or how committed an employee is to the organization, role, manager, and coworkers. Participants are asked to rate several statements on a scale of 1 to 5 with five indicating the highest level of agreement. Item 8 of the Q12 states: “The mission or purpose of my institution makes me feel my job is important.” Over the past five years, this statement has had a mean score above 4.0. In 2023, it scored at 4.13 (n=326) placing [Western in the 51st percentile for Education – Postsecondary/Higher Education](#).

In addition to measuring alignment through the Gallup Q12, Western uses Achieving the Dream’s (ATD) – a national movement aimed at helping community college students, particularly low-income students and students of color, stay in school and earn a college degree – Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool (ICAT), a self-assessment designed to assess areas of strength and improvement. Typically conducted every other year, this assessment addresses up to 7 different capacities. In [2023](#), 3 of the 7 capacities were assessed including: Leadership and Vision, Data and Technology, and Teaching and Learning. The Leadership and Vision section measures the commitment and collaboration of the institution’s leadership with respect to student success and clarity of the vision for desired change. Western scores at a level 3 (out of 4) for Leadership and Vision – indicative of a “strong level of capacity in place.” Specifically, 39% scored Western as a level 3, and 41% a level 4 (exemplary level of capacity in place) in response to the question: Does the institution have a clear and compelling vision for student success? These high marks are indicative of Western’s commitment to its mission and one of the College’s stated values: Student Success.

1.A.3 Nature, Scope, and Intended Constituents of the Education Offerings and Services

As mentioned in the Introduction, Western serves a wide range of stakeholders in a district that is almost 5,000 square miles, encompassing all or parts of 11 counties. Bordering Minnesota and Iowa, Western also serves beyond district boundaries bolstering economic vitality of the greater 7 Rivers Region. With its main campus in La Crosse and distributed [regional locations](#) in Black River Falls,

Tomah, Mauston, Independence, and Viroqua, and an additional facility in Sparta, Western's reach is expansive.

In tune with its mission to change lives and grow communities, small cities, rural communities, 28 public school districts, 4 county jails, and several major industries including manufacturing, healthcare, education/government, and retail benefit from Western. Annually, Western serves over 14,000 learners. Through the adoption of advancements in technology in teaching and learning, community engagement, and strong advisory committees, Western provides opportunities for learners in some of the most impoverished communities in the district. The result is a systems approach that fosters collaboration, flexibility, and increased responsiveness to stakeholders.

1.A.4 Academic Offerings, Student Support Services, and Enrollment Profile

Academic Offerings

As an open-access higher education institution the college offers associate degrees, technical diplomas, certificates, [customized training \(1.B.3\)](#), - alternative high school, university transfer, and dual credit. Western also offers [GED/High School Equivalency Diplomas \(HSED\)](#), English language learner (ELL) classes, and no-cost developmental course programming to thousands throughout the region, including justice-involved, first-generation, foster youth, and other historically underserved students. Western's [academic program](#) offerings and support services are specific to the individual needs of learners and regional employers.

As part of the WTCS, Western is required to align programs and offerings to regional workforce demand. The [process for approval of new programs](#) is rigorous, requiring an analysis to show the regional need for the proposed program including projected enrollments, job openings, and wages for graduates along with approval from both the district board and the Wisconsin Technical College System Board (WTCSB). The needs analysis includes [labor market data](#) from Lightcast, which combines data from the Bureau of Labor and Statistics and the Census Bureau, with job posting and company profile data found across the internet. This data is supplemented by surveys and focus groups conducted with in-district or regional employers. Labor market data is also used by faculty and academic leadership as part of annual planning and comprehensive program evaluation processes (**see Criteria 4**).

Student Support

The hallmark of Experience 2025 is student success, which extends beyond the classroom to learner-centered spaces for support. Remodeled in 2019, Western's [Students Success Center \(SSC\) \(3.D.1\)](#) is the central hub for academic and student support systems. The Learning Commons (3.D.1) serves as an academic support center for students of all abilities and includes the College's library collection and tutors from various academic disciplines as well as Western's on campus food pantry, the [Cavalier Cupboard \(3.D.1\)](#). Launched in 2014, the [pantry](#) has seen a steady rise in use since its inception, with 83 individual households impacted by the space, serving students a total of 2,299 times in 2023.

The SSC also hosts the Student Place of Action, Culture, and Empowerment ([The SPACE](#)) (3.D.1), which offers individual support and advocacy to historically underserved populations, as well as programming targeted towards specific affinity groups on campus. [Career Services](#), (3.D.1) equipped with dedicated staff to help students discover programs that align with a student's particular strengths, work-based learning support, as well as help in drafting resumes and cover letters, is also

located in the SSC. The SSC is home to both [Access Services](#), (3.D.1) which assists students with appropriate accommodations to reduce barriers to learning, and the [Veteran Military Center](#) (3.D.1).

Enrollment Profile FY 2023

As the only open access institution in the western Wisconsin region, Western's student population ranges from those who have the support systems and finances to navigate higher education with little to no support needed, to those who have limited to no funding and/or support systems to guide them through the systems of attaining higher education credentials, systems that can be challenging even for those who work within them. Western is in an area of Wisconsin that is predominantly white (90%); however, the racial demographics of Western's learners reflect greater diversity with [20% of learners identifying as people of color](#).

Throughout the pandemic and across all academic offerings, Western's learner headcount has fluctuated; however, in 2023 (14,438), Western exceeded the number of learners served in 2019 (14,106). Credit program learner headcounts have declined slightly from 5,536 in 2019 to 4944 in 2023. Credit FTE (full-time equivalent) generation has fluctuated between 3,065 in 2014 and a high of 3,376 in 2023).

[Program-enrolled Learner Characteristics](#) (3.A.1)

- 20% are people of color (pg. 9)
- 56% are between the ages of 18-24 (pg. 9)
- 56% are female (pg. 10)
- 68% are part-time (less than 24 credits in an academic year) (pg. 9)
- 35% have earned up to a high school diploma upon enrollment, whereas 45% have some college at the time of enrollment (pg. 8)

[Adult Basic Education \(ABE\) Learners](#) (1.B.3, 3.D.2)

- Total served = 2,266
- Over half of learners enrolled in ABE programming are 24 years old or younger
- 68% identify as White learners and 17% Hispanic
- 50% are female
- 48% reside within La Crosse County, the home of Western's main campus

[Developmental Education Learners](#) (1.B.3, 3.D.2)

- Total served = 2,866
- 55% between the ages of 18-24

- 62% are female
- 78% identify as White
- 45% reside within La Crosse County, 13% in Monroe County, and 10% out-of-state

English Language Learners (ELL) (1.B.3, 3.D.2) Total served = 327

- 74% identify as Hispanic and 13% as Asian
- Most learners are between the ages of 18-24 (20%) or 35-44 (27%)
- The majority reside in neighboring rural counties (67%) in addition to the La Crosse campus (33%)

High School Completion Learners GED/HSED (1.B.3, 3.D.2)

- Total served = 2,317
- 60% are 24 years old or younger with 17% less than 18 years old
- 68% identify as White, 9% as Hispanic, and 7% as Black
- 44% reside within La Crosse County and 15% in Monroe County

K12 Transcribed Credit Learners (1.B.3)

- Total served = 5,566
- 54% are male
- 82% identify as White, 8% as Hispanic, 4% Asian
- 53% reside outside La Crosse County

K12 Start College Now Learners (1.B.3)

- Total served = 314
- 77% identify as female
- 77% identify as White
- 77% reside outside La Crosse County

Business and Industry Services FY22 (1.B.3)

- Duplicated headcount = 3428

- Unduplicated headcount = 1344
- Unique employers = 71

1.A.5 Articulation of Mission, Vision, Values, Goals, Plans, and Institutional Priorities through Public Information

As stated earlier in **1.A.2**, Western’s mission statement is displayed prominently throughout external communications with the public, including the website, external handouts, and [viewbooks](#). New employees are provided an [Employee Handbook](#) showcasing the mission, vision, and values of the institution. Program advisory committees are also provided with this information through an [advisory handbook](#).

Numerous external communication pieces document the institution’s mission – including the latest strategic plan (**5.C.1**) formally unveiled in [September of 2018](#) at College Day and announced through a news release on the website and on social media. Western leverages social media to convey key accomplishments in its strategic plan, such as when Western achieved 100 percent infusion of Work-Based Learning (WBL) (**1.B.1, 1.B.3, 1.C.1, 2.B.2**) and Community-Based Learning (CBL) into its curriculum (**1.B.1, 1.B.3, 1.C.1, 2.B.2**). Western measures the effectiveness of articulation of its mission and vision through ICAT, Achieving the Dream’s Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool (ICAT). On a scale of 1-4 with 4 as exemplary capacity in place, Western scored a 3.1 (strong capacity) (ICAT, 2023).

Sources

- 1. 2023_2024_Viewbook
- 1. Employee Handbook 2023-2024 (1)
- 1. Experience 2025 Strategic Plan.pdf
- 1. Strategic Plan Focus Areas 2022 2023
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- 1.A. 2020-2021 Focus Areas
- 1.A. 2022_2023 FocusAreas
- 1.A. 2023 Achieving the Dream ICAT Report
- 1.A. Academic Programs _ Western Technical College
- 1.A. Access Services Home Page
- 1.A. Advisory_Committee_Handbook
- 1.A. Annual Planning Process and the Budget Formation Process
- 1.A. BIS Business Slide
- 1.A. Career Services Home Page
- 1.A. Cavalier Cupboard
- 1.A. Cavalier Cupboard News Report
- 1.A. Customized Training and Services _ Western Technical College
- 1.A. Experience 2025 Strategic Goal Measures and Key Results
- 1.A. Gallup Q12 2023 Page 3
- 1.A. Gallup Q12 Results Overall Engagement and My Opinion Counts

- 1.A. GED-HSED Home Page
- 1.A. General Studies Labor Market Data_2023
- 1.A. HLC_ABE_Infographics
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- 1.A. HLC_Developmental
- 1.A. HLC_English Language Learners
- 1.A. HLC_High_School_Completion
- 1.A. HLC_K12_StartCollegeNow
- 1.A. HLC_K12_TranscriptCredit
- 1.A. Personal and Organizational Commitments
- 1.A. Program Development Process Map
- 1.A. Regional Learning Center Map
- 1.A. SPACE
- 1.A. Strategic Direction Foundation Statements
- 1.A. Strategic Plan Creation Overview Slides (1)
- 1.A. Student Success Center
- 1.A. Veteran Military Center
- 1.A. Western 2021 Environmental Scan
- 1.A. Western Engaged 2023 Experiential Learning Report
- A0100 District Board Policy
- Westerns Culture Statement
- Westerns Vision Values

1.B - Core Component 1.B

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

1. The institution's actions and decisions demonstrate that its educational role is to serve the public, not solely the institution or any superordinate entity.
2. The institution's educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes, such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization, or supporting external interests.
3. The institution engages with its external constituencies and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

Argument

1.B.1 Institution Actions and Decisions to Serve the Public

As mentioned earlier, Western is uniquely connected to the region through regional locations and facilities, community partnerships, program advisory committees (**1.B.3**), contract training with local employers (**1.B.3**), and various other partnerships. Its [values statement](#) stresses the importance of holding the college's coworkers accountable for student learning based on the diverse needs of everyone. Western's enrollment profile in **1.A.4** illustrates how the college serves the public.

Western's actions and decisions are grounded in the College's [Four Pillars of Equity](#)– Access, Inclusion, Removal of Barriers, and Fairness (**1.C.2**). Western provides students with the resources, services, and equipment needed for success in concert with the ability, convenience, and knowledge to use them. Through its commitment to access, Western provides high-quality teaching and learning experiences at all Western locations, pathways for successful navigation through Western for even the most vulnerable students, and robust support services designed to reach students where they are. The Ruffalo Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory outcomes illustrate the effectiveness of instruction and student supports. On a scale of 1-7 with 7 being the highest level of satisfaction, Western scored a 6 or above for all [Instructional Effectiveness indicators with a standard deviation of 1.29 or less](#).

Throughout its history, Western has been committed to community vibrancy and connecting the college to the needs of the community. These community partnerships are essential to the Western experience and provide students an opportunity to connect curriculum in the classroom to community needs. As stated in **1.A.5**, one of Western's strategic goals in Experience 2025 is to implement CBL and WBL across 100 percent of programs by 2025. It achieved this [goal](#) two years early with commitment from district employers.

Community-Based Learning (CBL)

CBL is a fluid and purposeful approach to engagement designed to immerse Western students and faculty in an experience that develops skills, enhances learning, and strengthens the communities they serve. Examples of curriculum-driven application of CBL include:

- [Suits for Success](#), where second-year Business Management students collect and distribute gently used professional clothing to Western students and the general public. Students utilize event planning and coordination skills to organize and manage a large-scale event with multiple stakeholders.
- A [technology support help desk](#) for the community led by Western's IT-Computer Support Specialist program students every spring. Students in the program assist users with computer software training, hardware support, and general troubleshooting.
- Income Tax Support from Accounting program students at the [Tomah Regional Learning Center](#) and [Western Technical College locations](#).
- [Reimagination of The Nature Place](#) by Interior Design and Architectural Technology students.

Work-Based Learning (WBL)

WBL allows Western students to apply the technical and employability skills learned in the classroom to the industry that corresponds with their program. For example, Western's [Interior Design program's](#) WBL component is strategically spaced throughout the program's two years. WBL consists of trips to local design studios and architecture firms, design companies, architecture tours, and big industry-specific conferences in Chicago and Las Vegas. These events provide learning opportunities that highlight professional excellence with opportunities to network and interact with folks currently thriving in the field. All WBL trips and activities are specific to each term's design sector focus. Design professionals from local firms visit the classroom twice per month, depending on the material covered.

1.B.2 Primacy of Educational Responsibilities

Measurement

Western's measurement strategy places primacy on its educational responsibilities. The college's Key Results track student success in formal learning environments and beyond, to the workplace or a transfer institution. Also known as [Student Success Metrics \(4.B.3\)](#), the Key Results include course completion (C or Better), term-to-term retention, second-year retention, and third-year graduation – all measured with the Guided Pathways ([3.A.1](#)) framework in mind (get on the path, stay on the path) – tracking students from their first enrolled program at Western. In addition, the Key Results track job placement and transfer. All Key Results can be disaggregated by a variety of demographic variables, at the program, course, and delivery method level, and compared to the other 15 technical colleges in the WTCS.

Educational primacy is also reinforced through the [Outcomes-based Funding model](#) administered by the WTCS. Established in 2014-2015, 30% of state aid is allocated based on performance across ten statutory criteria that include the number of degrees and certificates awarded in high-demand fields, the number of programs or courses with industry-validated curriculum, the transition of ABE students to skills training, and participation in dual enrollment programs.

Operating Budget and Governance

Western's organizational structure and budgeting processes ensure that the institution's primary purpose is its educational responsibilities. As described further in [5.C](#), Western is a public technical

college that receives revenue from several sources, including state aid, local property taxes, and tuition. The college's [external financial statement](#) illustrates that most of Western's fiscal year 2023 operating budget (**5.B.2**) is allocated to instruction, instructional resources, and student services. The remaining budget is allocated to general institutional costs, physical plant, auxiliary services, depreciation, and student aid.

In accordance with Wisconsin Statute and further described in **5.A.1**, Western operates under the direction of the [Western District Board](#), comprised of nine members who serve three-year staggered terms. The district board members are appointed by a board appointment committee composed of the county board chairpersons of the 11 counties in the Western district. Wisconsin statute mandates that all nine members of the district board be residents of the district and that the board consists of two employers, two employees, three additional members, an elected official, a school district administrator, and gender balance (**2.A.1**).

Western's District Board holds the college accountable for its educational responsibilities, mission (**1.A.1**), strategic plan (**1.A.5**), and fiscal stewardship (**2.A.2**). The [annual calendar](#) for the district board features topics and presentations related to [student success](#), [employee engagement](#), [program spotlights](#), and [implementation of the strategic plan](#).

In addition, [district board strategic priorities made visible at all board meetings](#) (p. 62) emphasizes decision-making focused on Western's mission and its primary responsibility to serve the public through educational offerings and services. Current district board strategies include:

- Adapt district board agendas to incorporate benchmarks, progress, and completion data related to Experience 2025 (the strategic plan) and the seven strategic goals.
- Consider the four Strategic Directions in all decision-making.
- Communicate college events and level of priority to district board members.
- Foster greater levels of employee engagement and recognition through resolutions of commendation, targeted visits, and visual management tours.
- Check, adjust, and revise the district board monthly calendar to allow for agility.
- Adjust monthly agenda to allow for adequate time to fully cover agenda items.

Facility Planning and Budgeting

Western's commitment to educational priorities is evidenced across its facilities. In 2012, Western successfully secured a facilities referendum that allowed for significant renovation and construction of its facilities to better meet the educational needs of the community and the employers served by the institution. [Vision 2020](#) was created to prioritize the work involved in aligning learning and student support with the investment in facilities.

Western continues to prioritize its learning mission through the development of learner-centric spaces guided by a multi-stage, committee-based planning process that culminates in a [3-year facilities plan](#). The process and any facility projects are driven by [Western's Strategic Directions and Personal and Organizational Commitments](#) (**1.A.2**), key components of Western's strategic plan, and desired educational outcomes. Projects may be proposed by any staff member, student, or administrator. Project proposals that deal with instructional requirements are chiefly studied and guided through the process by instructors, department heads, deans, and the vice president of

learning.

All proposals are evaluated by the physical plant leadership first to establish a cost estimate and technical feasibility. Next, the *Facilities Planning Group* proceeds through the first round of discussion. If approved, a project moves forward to the district board [Budget and Facilities Subcommittee](#) for review. Once reviewed, and if recommended, the subcommittee brings forth to the full district board. Finally, the district board votes on projects as part of the three-year facilities plan.

In addition to facilities planning, Western practices annual capital and operational budgeting to ensure that Western's spaces have the equipment, tools, and technology needed to place priority on in-demand career pathways and student support. Before submitting a capital or operating budget request, the department manager or program chair completes a [continuous improvement plan \(4.A.1, 5.C.1\)](#). Action plans that require funding for the next fiscal year must provide a clear rationale as to how the action will impact the college's strategic plan, personal or organizational commitments, or one or more of the Key Results.

1.B.3 Engagement with and Response to Constituencies

The institutional structure of the WTCS allows Western to be uniquely capable of responding to external constituencies. Since its inception in 1911, the WTCS has provided residents of Wisconsin with educational opportunities designed to help them obtain, retain, and advance in employment. Vocational, technical, and adult education, perhaps more than any other type of education, must relate to the immediate needs of the individual, of the community, and of business and industry.

Western partners with employers to overcome district and institutional challenges including worker shortages, higher-than-average district workforce retirement risk, inflexible funding models that hamper innovation, access to education for historically underserved populations, and competition for learners who may choose full-time work over college. Key partnership strategies include collaborative grant development, scholarship development, apprenticeships, workforce training (credit and non-credit), program advisory meetings (**1.B.1, 1.B.2**), alumni outreach, work-based learning, shared physical spaces, and employer spotlights. Partnerships are prioritized based on labor market demand for new programs; employer needs for incumbent and future workers; student learning and support needs; emerging technology, equipment, and facility needs; alumni relationships; and availability of grant funding for partnerships. In addition, Western leverages a platform called [Handshake](#) to prioritize (tag) partnerships with local employers that are known to invest in diversity, offer competitive wages, hire Western graduates, and provide internships.

Fully-scaled aspects include development of WBL and CBL (**1.B.1, 1.C.1, 2.B.2, 4.B.1**) components in 100% of Western's credit programs (175 different courses reaching over 2,000 [unduplicated] students each year for internships and roughly 1300 per year [duplicated] for clinicals/practicums); required program advisory committees with over 1800 employer representatives from roughly 640 employers (unduplicated) who guide the development of new programs and content for existing programs; customized training that served over 90 employers and 1700 individuals (unduplicated) in need of upskilling for over 5600 enrollments in FY23, doubling pre-pandemic revenue generation to over \$1 million, increasing the number of employers served by 24%, the number of individuals (unduplicated) by 48%, and enrollments (duplicated) by 23%; a grant development model that currently has 25/29 active grants with at least one community partner; and employer and alumni outreach efforts that secured \$165,000 in scholarship funds over the past two years for students with disabilities, women, and justice-involved individuals, and \$600,000 for programs that serve high-demand occupations.

As stated in **1.A.5**, advisory committees have been used widely to provide advice and counsel, as well as to establish firm links between the community and each WTCS district. This industry-wide connection enables the colleges to draw upon the experiences of occupational representatives for the development and maintenance of sound vocational, technical, and adult education offerings.

K12 Relations

Western's K12 Partnerships Department serves the greater community as the liaison with area school districts (**3.D.1**). While the K12 Partnerships Department leads and coordinates the work with Western's K12 partners, no single person or department is solely responsible for achieving these goals. Rather collaboration, coordination, communication, and a common philosophy aligned with the strategic plan and the Personal and Organizational Commitments (**1.A.2**) supported at all levels of the institution are critical for successful execution and goal attainment. [High school students served by Western over time.](#)

Career Prep is the foundation of the work with the K12 Partnerships Department (**1.A.4**). The purpose of Career Prep is to develop and implement activities to strengthen the relationships with Western's K12 partners to promote and support Career and Technical Education (CTE) for [K12 students and their transition to post-secondary education at Western](#). Goals that include entering the workforce or transferring to a four-year university partner are emphasized and realized through these relationships with around [20% of district high school students](#) directly enrolling at Western within a year of graduation, [a job placement rate](#) of 96% for Western's 2022 graduating class, and 11% of Western students transferring to a higher education partner.

As a technical college, Western is committed and poised to anticipate and adjust to meet the needs of district communities and local businesses. The college works closely with K12 and business partners to develop activities, events, and dual credit opportunities for K12 students that provide experiential opportunities that support students in their transition to Western programs or the workforce upon graduation. In doing so, some of these activities generate direct FTEs while others will generate prospects for admissions outreach with the goal of enrollment at Western. Some examples include Public Safety Experience Day, High School Manufacturing Day, and Women in Trades (collectively serving over 70 students). Each of these events include hands-on demonstrations that spark interest in various CTE fields.

Adult Education (AE)

Western has met the needs of adults (**1.A.4**) in the district in developmental education in subjects like mathematics, science, communications, computer skills, study skills, and career development. The college has, and continues to serve, these community members by offering free structured classes, independent study labs, and tailored individualized programming (**3.D.2**). Historically, however, many of these students were placed into sequences of developmental coursework based on a standardized assessment and placement test. As internal and national research has shown, this assessment-and-placement model does little to help students – even successful students – transition into college-level coursework, and removal of these developmental coursework requirements does little to impact student outcomes.

In keeping with Western's open access mission and developing national best practices, the College has discontinued placement testing and sequences of required developmental coursework (**3.D.2**). In their place, the College has reoriented existing pre-college programming around preparing high-

barriered populations in the district to transition directly to college. Further, the AE curriculum has been leveraged to provide a robust offering of just-in-time developmental education opportunities for every student at Western. These offerings have recently been brought to scale in an Academic Intervention Model, which provides equitable access to the right type and quantity of developmental education that students need to fill relevant learning gaps or resolve system-level problems. Learners are allowed to enroll directly into college coursework, versus being barred through placement practices that have not proven to be successful. This model for delivering developmental education is explored in depth in **3.D.2**.

English Language Learning (ELL)

Throughout Western's communities, there are populations of learners who desire improvement in English skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Western is intentional in its outreach to non-English speaking individuals and groups. The College provides ELL classes at a variety of levels, from non-English speaking to advanced (**1.A.4, 3.D.2**). Currently, these courses are offered free to Wisconsin residents at the La Crosse and Independence campuses, as well as off-campus evening classes located in Sparta and Arcadia high schools. ELL instructors have partnered with BIS to provide language instruction at regional businesses. Through a major grant, Western's ELL program provided intensive language support at Fort McCoy, a regional military base that facilitated an influx of Afghan refugees.

High School Completion

Western provides pathways for the diverse members of the community who seek to earn a high school credential (**1.A.4, 3.D.2**). A nationally-recognized General Equivalency Diploma (GED) through Pearson Vue, as well as all High School Equivalency Diploma (HSED) options structured by [Wisconsin state statute](#) are offered. These HSED options include a foreign diploma equivalency and an innovative new 5.09 HSED option. Western also offers high school credit recovery classes for students who are two credits or less away from graduation, allowing them to receive a diploma from their original high school. Western helps returning adults identify the most appropriate pathway for them to earn their high school credential. Additionally, school districts in the region contract with Western to enroll high-school-aged youth who are at risk of not graduating into Western's Alternative High School program, where they can earn an HSED through Western's 5.05. and 5.09 options.

Project Proven and Re-Entry Services

The LST Division works closely with four county jails and over 35 human services agencies to provide instruction and services to members of the community whose lives are heavily impacted by the justice system (**1.A.4, 3.D.2**). Western offers classes in the jails themselves, as well as re-entry programming at the La Crosse Campus. Western intends to reduce recidivism by helping the justice-impacted students transition successfully to employment and college in the following ways:

- Complete the GED/HSED and/or enroll in college or certification programming
- Gain or improve upon skills to assist in obtaining employment
- Gain or improve upon skills to help maintain a job such as interpersonal relations, conflict resolution, and customer service
- Identify useful community resources
- Budgeting and financial management

- Basic computer skills training

Business and Industry Services (BIS)

The BIS Division engages with district stakeholders by providing solutions to meet the needs of employers as they strive to improve employee productivity, quality, and satisfaction. Training seminars are offered at Western locations, online, or at an employer's place of business. Offerings can occur through customized training for specific employee training needs and goals and can be delivered where and when they are needed; seminars or professional development sessions offered through courses on Western's campus or online; and through skills institutes that consist of multiple certificates that are short-term, intensive, and help develop a specific set of skills that provide pathways needed to ladder into additional higher education opportunities.

Graduate and Employer Follow Up

In addition to the outreach to specific populations, Western conducts a [Graduate Follow Up survey \(4.A.6\)](#) each year as well as an [Employer Follow Up \(4.A.6\)](#) survey every 4 years to measure the impact of the mission, vision, and values by quantifying job placement, earnings, and satisfaction. Results for the Graduate Follow Up and Employer Follow Up processes show that both graduates and employers are satisfied. They also show strong graduate earnings which in turn impact Western's ability to change the lives of students and grow its communities.

Sources

- 1.B. 2022 Graduate Outcomes Highlights
- 1.B. 2024 Planning Cycle _ Template
- 1.B. BoardPacket_10-17-23
- 1.B. BoardPacket_11-21-23
- 1.B. Budget_Facilities_Subcommittee_Agenda_12_19_23
- 1.B. Coulee Region Tax Assistance _ Western Technical College
- 1.B. Dept of Public Instruction State Statue 35.93 PI5
- 1.B. District Board Calendar _ Western Technical College
- 1.B. District Board of Directors _ Western Technical College
- 1.B. DistrictBoardPacket_07-11-22
- 1.B. DistrictBoardPacket_082019
- 1.B. DistrictBoardPacket-07-10-23
- 1.B. Enrollment within 2 years post HS Graduation Data
- 1.B. Free Tax Assistance - Tomah _ Western Technical College
- 1.B. Handshake _ Western Technical College
- 1.B. Interior Design Program Curriculum
- 1.B. Personal and Organizational Commitments
- 1.B. RNL SSI Instructional Effectiveness Results
- 1.B. Strategic Plan Overview 2022 2023
- 1.B. Strategic Plan Overview 2023-2024
- 1.B. Student-Run Technology Help Desk
- 1.B. Students Served Overtime
- 1.B. Suits For Success _ Western Technical College
- 1.B. The-Four-Pillars-of-Equity-Printable
- 1.B. Three-Year_Facilities_Plan_2022-25
- 1.B. Transitioning Students

- 1.B. Vision 2020 - One Page Summary Graphic
- 1.B. Web-Outcomes-Funding-Report-22-23-Final-v2
- 1.B. Western Employer Satisfaction Survey_2021
- 1.B. Western Engaged 2023 Experiential Learning Report
- 1.B. WesternEngaged2023_Page3
- 1.B. Westerns Values Statement
- 1.B. WTC Financial_Statement_06-23

1.C - Core Component 1.C

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

1. The institution encourages curricular or cocurricular activities that prepare students for informed citizenship and workplace success.
2. The institution's processes and activities demonstrate inclusive and equitable treatment of diverse populations.
3. The institution fosters a climate of respect among all students, faculty, staff and administrators from a range of diverse backgrounds, ideas and perspectives.

Argument

1.C.1 Preparing Students through Curricular and Cocurricular Activities Including Civic Engagement

As detailed in Criterion 3, one of Western's strengths is the strength of its learning design practices. Informed directly through input from district employers and program advisory committee members (**1.B.1, 1.B.2**), licensing/accrediting bodies, and the WTCs, Western's programs incorporate technical skills, academic – or general education competencies, SuccessAbilities – or employability components, and co-curricular activities. These components are documented within formal curriculum documents such as program design summaries (**2.A.2**), course outcome summaries (COS) (**2.A.2, 3.A.3, 3.B.1**), and syllabi (**2.A.2, 4.A.4**) in the Worldwide Instructional Design System (WIDS), or in [Western's ENGAGE platform](#) when not embedded in credit courses.

Western defines co-curricular as (**2.B.2, 4.B.1**) teaching and learning experiences that complement the classroom learning experience and build student agency to inclusively influence communities, grow as leaders, and cultivate passions. Co-curricular activities are tied to one or more of co-curricular specifications:

1. Activities intentionally designed to meet one or more of [Western's SuccessAbilities](#) and/or the academic program's learning outcomes
2. Activities embedded in a course or otherwise connected through academic and student service partnerships

Examples of co-curricular activities include: CBL (**1.B.1, 1.B.3, 2.B.2, 4.B.1**), WBL (**1.B.1, 1.B.3, 2.B.2, 4.B.1**), clubs and student organizations, Student Leadership Night, peer mentorship, study abroad, work study, and student employment. [Western's Civic Engagement Plan](#) outlines the importance of community engagement to Western's mission (**1.A.1**) and the communities served and recognizes that there are multiple pathways for community engagement including civic engagement. Specifically, Western views voting as critically important in shaping democracy and developing students as engaged members of the workforce. Western seeks to increase student voter rates during all upcoming mid-term and presidential elections. Western is drafting a formal [Co-Curricular Handbook](#) (**2.B.2, 4.B.1**) to support its many co-curricular offerings and the assessment of learning that occurs across these experiences.

1.C.2 Equitable Treatment of Diverse Populations

With the launch of Experience 2025, Western declared a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and elimination of equity gaps. The Foundation Statements and Fundamental Beliefs (1.A.2) in [Experience 2025](#) guided the creation of Western's formal definition of equity in 2020:

“Western is committed to the advancement of equity-focused practices, policies, and instruction that create an environment of excellence where student success and empowerment is a cultural norm.

We commit to access, inclusion, fairness, and the removal of barriers as pillars of equity in education: Access to high quality instruction, services, activities, and spaces; inclusion of every student to feel essential and valued by intentionally utilizing student's strengths and abilities to co-create successful academic outcomes; fairness by ensuring every student receives the individualized support they need to be successful; and systematic removal of barriers in policy and practice at every level to ensure inclusivity for every student, especially underserved students.”

The definition is communicated online and explored in [Western's Equity Discussion Guide](#) and in the recorded [Data and Equity Learning Series](#). It's shared in new employee orientation and integrated across the institution in presentations by the president, annual data summits, planning sessions, and professional development series. Western's [Equity Integration Plan](#) cascades the DEI focus in Experience 2025 to all levels of the institution and aligns resources to achieve the goals. The plan is updated annually and distributed by the Student Life, Equity, and Engagement Division. In 2023, an [Equity Scorecard](#) was published, illustrating the alignment of DEI actions to Experience 2025 Student Success Metrics.

With a focus on the institution being student ready, creating a sense of belonging, and achieving student success for all, Western has made progress with its DEI goals to eliminate equity gaps in course completion, retention, and graduation and increase enrollment of program-declared students of color by 2025. In 2021, Western's equity committee proposed the development of a model that incorporates “Equity Leaders” to help reach further into the organization and train coworkers more informally on the [Western's commitment to DEI](#). These Equity Leaders are paid an annual stipend for their time, meet regularly to build their equity acuity, informally mentor coworkers in their departments, and advocate for equitable changes in operations and treatment of others. Since its inception, Western has recruited and retained an Equity Leader group of more than 20 employees. Equity Leaders also break out to form smaller working groups. One is focused on providing equity-minded feedback to policy owners as part of the [Equitable Policy Review](#) process. This group has also written and proposed policies in partnership with other campus areas like Human Resources and the Registrar.

The Equity Integration Plan and Equity Scorecard also highlight initiatives related to collecting and leveraging student voice in cultivating the feeling of belonging. Student voice has been prioritized in data collection efforts (5.A.2), ensuring all program and service areas are listening to students in the continuous improvement process (4.A.1, 5.C.2). Western conducted its first student campus climate survey in spring 2024. Student voice efforts are also reflected in Student Government activities. Monthly, the executives of Student Government lunch with the SLT. These meetings are a time for shared decision making, information sharing, and connection making. Centering the voices of students in Western's work has become an important initiative.

From this collection of strategies, Western has recognized success. Gaps in course completion for students of color (SOC) dropped from 15.8% (2018) to 10.7% (2023). Gaps in 3rd year graduation dropped from 22.8% (2018) to 9.5% (2023). With the tremendous change at the College, it is difficult to isolate strategies; however, Western's Equity Integration Plan and Equity Scorecard track

specific interventions that intentionally target groups of students who are historically ignored, or who historically do not succeed in higher education. In 2018, 12.8% of Western's program-declared students were SOC. That has grown to 18.3% (2023).

1.C.3 Climate of Respect

Western's climate of respect is fostered in a variety of ways at multiple levels in the organization. It is measured through the Gallup Q12 Employee Engagement Survey (1.A.2).

As described in 1.A.2, key drivers of a climate of respect include:

- [Western's Senior Leadership Commitments](#)
 - Treat everyone with unconditional positive regard
 - Talk to one another, not about one another
 - Keep private conversations private
- [Accountable Leader Guidelines](#) and [Western's Practices brochure](#):
 - Care of Others: We serve others with courtesy, kindness, respect, and compassion.
 - Professionalism: We represent Western and respect who we serve by modeling professional behavior.
- [Western Value: Respect](#)
- [Job Description Essential Functions: College-Wide Expectations](#)
- [Western's Employee Handbook](#)
- [Western's anti-discrimination, harassment, retaliation, and sexual harassment statement in Employee Handbook](#)
- [Policy C0206 Code of Ethics for Employees](#)
- [Guidelines for Appropriate Conduct – Employee Handbook](#)

In 2021, in alignment with its strategic plan and mission, Western created a culture statement:

“Western strives to create a culture where people feel empowered to make a difference; where we are passionate about collaboration and student success; where we take equitable actions that respect our differences; and where we serve students, partners, communities, and each other from a place of unconditional positive regard.”

To further instill a culture of caring and student success, employee awards were established in 2021 to celebrate excellence in instruction, first choice service, and living the culture of Western. More specifically, The Living Our Culture award is intended for those coworkers whose daily interactions exemplify Western's culture. The award recognizes those who consistently strive to make a difference through collaboration, promoting equity, and providing high quality service to students, partners, communities, and each other. The nominees are those who embody the best of Western and who are

relied upon by others to lead the college to achievement of aspirations as a college. The award is presented to one coworker each year. This coworker may be nominated by their supervisor or another coworker (5.B.1).

Sources

- 1. Experience 2025 Strategic Plan.pdf
- 1.C. Accountable_Leader
- 1.C. Assoc VP Job Description
- 1.C. C0206 Code of Ethics for Employees
- 1.C. Civic Engagement Action Plan (Updated Dec2023)
- 1.C. Co-Curricular Handbook
- 1.C. Data-and-Equity-Learning-Series--Fairness--March-2021
- 1.C. Employee Handbook Mission Statement
- 1.C. Employee Handbook pgs 53-54
- 1.C. Employee Handbook pgs 9-11
- 1.C. Equity Integration Plan
- 1.C. Equity Mindedness Policy Review Guide
- 1.C. Equity Scorecard 4_28_23
- 1.C. Mission Values Vision Experience 2025 brochure Jan 2021
- 1.C. Senior Leadership Commitments
- 1.C. SuccessAbilities
- 1.C. Western Equity Discussion Guide
- 1.C. Western Technical College Engage Website
- 1.C. Westerns Values Statement

1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary

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

Summary

The mission statement, along with the College's vision and values are prominently displayed throughout the public web site and CavNet, Western's intranet site, and through printed materials distributed at New Employee Orientation, and College Day events. Visuals posted in Western's boardroom and included in board meeting packets remind Western's senior leadership team and the district board members of the commitment to the mission, vision, values, and culture statement.

Western's mission statement is anchored in changing lives and growing communities. As the only open access institution in the western Wisconsin region, Western's student population ranges from those who have the support systems and finances to navigate higher education with little to no support needed, to those who have limited to no funding and/or support systems to guide them through the systems of attaining higher education credentials.

Sources

There are no sources.

2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

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

2.A - Core Component 2.A

The institution establishes and follows policies and processes to ensure fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing board, administration, faculty and staff.

1. The institution develops and the governing board adopts the mission.
2. The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, human resources and auxiliary functions.

Argument

2.A.1 Mission Statement Development and Governing Board Adoption

The College's mission and purposes are articulated by the statutory requirements of the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS), governed by Chapter 38 of the Wisconsin State Statutes as spelled out in **1.A.1**. The local Western District Board adopts Western's mission statement as stated in **1.A.1**. As described in **1.A.2**, Western's mission statement was adopted in 1980 and most recently revised in 2011 through approval of board policy [A0100](#). Several processes and policies ensure fair and ethical behavior for the governing board, administration, and all other coworkers.

2.A.2 Integrity and Ethical Conduct

Integrity stands as one of Western's values (**1.C.3**). It is practiced across the institution and evaluated through annual performance reviews. In addition, Western's Guidelines for [Accountable Leaders](#) include statements that speak to integrity: "I am willing to make difficult decisions with integrity and purpose in a fair and consistent manner" and "I say what I am going to do, and I follow through." [Western's Senior Leadership Commitments](#) also include guidelines that speak to integrity, "Treat everyone with respect," "Talk to one another, not about one another," and "Keep private conversations private."

As described in **1.C.3**, Western's culture statement reinforces the commitment to integrity with statements that speak to expected behaviors. It ensures a climate of respect that includes guiderails for fair and ethical behavior for its governing board, administration, and all other coworkers. Key tools for conveying appropriate conduct and code of ethics include [Western's Employee Handbook](#), formal policy [C0206 Code of Ethics for Employees](#), and [Procedure A0106P](#) posted to the public website.

Western's policy in part states *"Western's policy and commitment is that our actions will be conducted in accordance with the highest moral, legal, and ethical standards. Our value and reputation for integrity is one of our most important qualities, and each employee plays an essential role in maintaining this high standard. A single individual's misconduct can do great damage to a long-standing reputation in the community. No code of ethics policy can effectively substitute for the thoughtful behavior of our employees. This policy is to assist in guiding conduct such that the*

reputation of Western continues to be enhanced.”

In addition to policy for coworkers, the Western District Board has a specific policy and code of ethics for its members. [Policy A0106](#) Oath of Office and Code of Ethics for District Board states: *“The Oath of Office procedure will be signed by a new board member before a notary public at the first regular meeting attended. Each board member shall carry out their duties with the highest ethical conduct and in compliance with Wisconsin Statutes 19.41-19.46 and 946.13.”*

The WTCS District Boards Association (DBA) offers ethics training for district board members (2.C.1), providing a forum for board member education and development at quarterly meetings. Biennially, the DBA holds a legal issues seminar in conjunction with the WTCS for board members and college personnel related to ethics, legal issues, and compliance standards for federally mandated programs such as Title IX, Affirmative Action, and others.

The College’s public web site includes a [link that facilitates feedback](#) sharing, informal concerns, and formal grievances regarding Western’s personnel, services, processes, facilities, academic issues, or any allegation of discrimination. Western uses the [Gallup Q12 Employee Engagement survey](#) (1.A.2, 1.C.3) which includes a customized question about ethical conduct: “If I raised a concern about ethics and integrity, I am confident my employer would do what is right.”

In addition, Western’s [Ruffalo Noel Levitz Survey of Student Satisfaction](#) (SSI) data illustrate Western’s commitment to ethics and integrity (Scale of 1-7 with 7 as highest level of satisfaction): Admissions Portray Program Information Accurately – Increased from 5.5 in 2017 to 6.02 in 2023; Advisor Knowledge – Increased from 5.52 to 6.03; Administrator Availability to Hear Concerns – Increased from 5.6 to 6.0; Faculty are Fair and Unbiased – Increased from 5.79 to 6.15; Seldom Get the Runaround – Increased from 5.38 to 5.78.

Financial Integrity

Western’s finance function is led by the vice president of Finance and Operations and the director of Finance who holds a Certified Public Accountant license. Western has robust policy and procedure regarding ethical and appropriate financial operations. This commitment is emphasized through the Personal and Organizational Commitment in [Western’s strategic plan](#) to “practice sound fiscal stewardship,” and through the College’s values of ethics, integrity, and honesty (1.A.5, 5.B.2).

Western’s fiscal accountability (1.B.2, 2.A.2, 5.B.2, 5.B.4) expectations and policies are reinforced through strong business practices that adhere to generally accepted accounting principles in the United States (GAAP), the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB), and the WTCS’s Financial and Administrative Manual, and specific financial statutes established in the WI statute 38.14 through 38.20.

These standards guide the actions of Western’s coworkers and represent best practices related to the integrity of fiscal processes. Western incorporates checks and balances by having segregated duties ([Policy B0101](#)) with all fiscal processes and transactions.

[Policy B0104](#) states: “The board will maintain a Budget and Facilities Committee, which will review all the financial resources of the district. The committee will also review facility activities including property purchase and the [three-year master facility plan](#) (2.A.2). In addition, the full district board shall receive financial reports and records as determined by the board. The full district board approves all vendor payments exceeding \$2,500 on a monthly basis.”

Annual audits are conducted by independent third-party auditors to verify that financial statements are presented in accordance with GAAP and that Western remains in compliance with federal, state, and local standards and policies. Western's most recent [financial audit](#) included an unmodified opinion on the financial statements and also indicated compliance with each major federal and state program (page.5). The results were presented and approved at the [January 16, 2024 district board meeting](#). Western was recently [recertified](#) by the Department of Education to offer federal financial aid through December of 2029.

In addition to federal and state standards, Western has a set of [11 polices](#) that guide business and finance functions.

Academic and Student Support Integrity

Western ensures academic and student support integrity through the deployment of policy, procedures, process maps, and handbooks. Policy and procedures are published on Western's public website and referenced and explained more thoroughly in the [Faculty Handbook \(2.A.2\)](#) and the [Student Handbook \(2.D.1, 2.E.4, 4.B.1, 4.B.2\)](#) – both updated on an annual basis. Integrity in academic and student support functions is ensured through robust policy and procedure. Western has [16 academic policies](#) that are endorsed by the College's academic leadership team and approved by the College's Senior Leadership Team (SLT). In addition, Western has [25 college policies](#) approved by Western's district board to address academic and student support integrity. Together these policies span topics such as academic integrity, academic standards, grading, guaranteed retraining (contracts), credit hour, accreditation, test proctoring, and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and accommodations and ensure academic integrity. Finally, Western uses an adapted version of the Guided Pathways [\(1.B.2, 3.A.1, 4.C.3\)](#) Scale of Adoption assessment to [comprehensively review programs](#) and services every 3-5 years [\(4.B.1, 5.A.1, 5.A.2\)](#)

- [Academic Policies](#) (approved by SLT)
- [Instruction Policies](#) (approved by district board)
- [Student Support Services Policies](#)

As stated earlier, [Western's Student Handbook](#) conveys key information across several sections that include (1) Academic Information, (2) Enrollment Services, (3) Student Services and Activities, (4) and Student Rights and Responsibilities. Specifically, the Student Handbook speaks to important aspects of integrity that include academic standing, grading system, credit for prior learning, transfer of credits, incident reporting, satisfactory academic progress, academic integrity policy and procedure, and the [Student Code of Conduct \(E0700\)](#). Concerns about academic integrity such as cheating, plagiarism, and fabrication can be reported through the [Academic Integrity Report](#). Hate and bias incidents can be reported through the [Hate/Bias Incident Reporting Form](#). General feedback can be submitted through the [Stakeholder Feedback Form](#). In addition, students, coworkers, and members of the public may [submit a concern](#) to the HLC. [Data and feedback collected](#) from these mechanisms are shared at the annual joint Academic Affairs and Student Service and Engagement unit leadership retreats.

Western employs several other mechanisms to ensure the integrity of its key academic and student support functions. Several technical programs (16) are accredited by state or industry [accrediting bodies \(3.A.2\)](#). Program advisory committees that meet at least two times per year recommend relevant knowledge, skills, and abilities needed in Western's graduates. This bolsters the integrity of Western's curriculum, and the relevancy of the learning students encounter. As described in [3.A.1](#) each program has a documented curriculum in the Worldwide Instructional Design System (WIDS)

including a program design map, curriculum configuration, course outcome summary, learning activities, performance assessment tasks, and syllabus for each course. Program design maps (1.C.1, 3.B.1) convey program outcomes (3.A.2); [course outcome summaries](#) convey course competencies (1.C.1, 3.A.3, 3. B.1), learning objectives, and performance criteria; and syllabi (1.C.1., 4.A.4) convey expectations for student learning. While faculty have autonomy in the design and delivery of their courses, they are expected to teach to official curriculum.

The Curriculum and Scheduling Office within the Institutional Effectiveness (IE) Unit and the Academic Excellence and Development (AED) Department ensure curriculum meets standards established by the WTCS. Western's student learning outcomes assessment (4.B.1, 4.B.2), course evaluation (3.C.4, 5.A.2), and comprehensive program and service evaluation models (4.A.1, 4.B.1, 4.B.2, 5.A.1, 5.A.2, 5.C.1) also contribute to the integrity of Western's academic programming and student support services.

Human Resources Integrity

Appropriate conduct for all coworkers is described throughout Western's Employee Handbook. [Western's policy C0202](#) and the district board empower the Human Resources (HR) Department to administer, interpret, and apply its policies and the provisions of the College's handbook. The handbook serves as the formal rules for the implementation of HR functions and decisions. Behaviors described in the handbook align with [Western's strategic plan](#) and its mission, vision, and values; culture statement; practices; and personal and organizational commitments. The College president and individuals reporting to the president must complete an annual statement of economic interests for the Wisconsin Ethics Commission.

[Western's Employee Handbook](#) covers 13 related topics that help ensure integrity and ethical conduct:

1. absenteeism and tardiness (p. 50)
2. conflict of interest and acceptance of gifts (p. 50)
3. solicitation and commercial advertising and displaying of signs and posters (p. 51)
4. computer and telecommunications (p. 51)
5. confidentiality of information (p. 52)
6. energy management (p. 52)
7. ethics and conduct (p. 53)
8. guidelines for appropriate conduct (p. 53)
9. outside employment (p. 53)
10. dress for your day guidance (p. 54)
11. personal use and misuse of college property (p. 55)
12. political activity (p. 56)
13. sustainable culture (p. 56)

Hiring Process

As stated in [Western's Employee Handbook](#) (p. 14), the College believes in promoting employees from within and has established a job-posting process to give all employees, full-time and part-time, an opportunity to apply for positions in which they have an interest and for which they are qualified. Posting (versus appointing) positions is considered first by hiring managers; however, the College can transfer, appoint, or promote staff to meet the needs of the College. Any appointments must be approved by the president and vice presidents. Vacancies are posted on the employment website, e-mailed to all employees, and are simultaneously posted internally and externally. Postings are tied to

[official job descriptions](#) and generally include the title of the position, the minimum hiring specifications, the essential functions of the job, and the closing date for filing applications. Positions are typically posted for a minimum of two weeks.

To be eligible to apply for a posted position, internal candidates must meet the minimum hiring specifications for the position; be capable of performing the essential functions of the job, with or without a reasonable accommodation; be an employee in good standing in terms of overall work record; and have been in their current position for a minimum of six (6) months. The most qualified candidate as determined by the College will be offered the position. If internal and external applicants are equally qualified as determined by the College, preference is given to the internal candidate.

The [handbook for hiring managers](#) provides specific steps to ensure integrity in the hiring process.

Faculty Credentialing

[Policy D0102 and p.14 of Employee Handbook](#) states “All faculty must meet minimum standards set by the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS), the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), and the College. Faculty must meet the requirements established through the Administrative Code, Chapter TCS 3 (Technical College System - Certification of Personnel). The [Faculty Quality Assurance System](#) (FQAS) (2.A.2, 3.C.3) identifies minimum education and occupational experience, as well as ongoing professional development required of each faculty member teaching in the WTCS. Faculty are responsible for meeting the requirements of FQAS, and supervisors have the responsibility of working with faculty to ensure plans are developed and reviewed.”

All [faculty job postings](#) reference the need for faculty to meet the WTCS FQAS. Since many faculty in occupational programs come directly from industry careers, FQAS is designed to complement their occupational knowledge with best practices in teaching and learning. HR screens all applicants for minimum requirements. In hard to fill disciplines, lower education requirements and tested experience are considered. This information is included in the posting along with any requirements to complete additional education in a defined timeline. For those who are required to complete additional education, the one-year waiting period for education reimbursement is waived.

Those who do not meet minimum requirements are not moved forward in the hiring process. Hiring teams consisting of supervisors and faculty subject matter experts review applications and interview candidates, with the aid of HR. Within this process they consider the specific education and occupational focus needed for the position and ensure the selected candidate meets the needed experience. Once hired, HR requests official transcripts and AED reviews the transcript to determine where to place the individual in the FQAS process. Western has a three-year [New Faculty Experience](#) (p.2) program (3.B.4, 3.C.5, 5.B.1) designed to onboard new faculty and facilitate the process of meeting the FQAS requirements.

- [Faculty Quality Assurance System \(FQAS\) Process](#) – Including New Faculty Experience
- [D0102 Faculty Credentials and Faculty Quality Assurance System \(FQAS\) and D0102p Faculty Credentials and Faculty Quality Assurance System \(FQAS\) Procedure](#)

Professional Development

Western’s HR Department and College Professional Development (CPD) Department lead a robust professional development (PD) model developed jointly with AED. 5.B.1 further explores the depth of professional development to ensure qualified and trained coworkers. PD begins within the first [30 days](#) as part of [New Employee Orientation](#) and New Faculty Experience (NFE) (3.B.4, 3.C.5, 5.B.1)

and is ongoing. Three times per year, Western facilitates PD weeks combining required and optional events. Throughout the year, PD related to the priorities within Western's strategic plan is offered through CPD. Examples of professional week topics include:

- [Faculty Professional Development for 7-week Redesign 2022-2024](#)
- Mental Health First Aid
- All Faculty: Blackboard Design for 7-Week Transition
- Professional Learning Series: Applying Course Design through Quality Matters
- College Day: Focus on Wellness

In response to recent federal policy, Western had developed training for recruitment staff:

- [Recruitment and Admissions Training Materials](#)
- [Training Completion Roster](#)
- [Ethical recruitment and admissions training policy and procedure](#)

Prevention of Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual Assault

Western prohibits all forms of discrimination, harassment, intimidation, and coercion on campus and at college-related activities and events. The College does not discriminate based on age, race, color, creed, religion, disability, gender, gender identity, marital status, sexual orientation, national origin, ancestry, pregnancy or parental status, genetic information and testing, family and medical leave, arrest or conviction record, membership in any branch of the United States military forces, or other applicable legislated categories. Western seeks to create and maintain a culture of integrity through annual training for coworkers and through clear [personnel policies and procedures](#).

Professional Reviews

All employees at Western participate in a continuous improvement cycle that feeds into a formal professional review process. This cycle provides a systematic process for supervisors and employees to document and share goals, progress, successes, and opportunities for improvement. The professional review (3.C.4) is led and approved by the supervisor and includes ongoing feedback and discussion based on the professional learning plan created by the employee. Supervisors may be asked to complete a Leadership 360-degree review where peers are asked to provide feedback.

- [Faculty Professional Review](#)
- [Probationary Staff Review](#)
- [Staff Professional Review](#)
- [Manager Professional Review](#)

The College believes in the ability of coworkers to meet and exceed performance expectations and to consistently conduct their work in a way that showcases the College's values and practices. When an employee's behavior or performance does not meet that standard, the College is committed to working with the employee to reach and sustain the needed improvements. The College, in its discretion, reserves the right under the circumstances to move immediately to termination. Western's District Board has vested the president with the authority for termination of employment ([Employee Handbook p. 16](#)). In addition, Western has [15 policies](#) designed to ensure ethical behavior and integrity across its workforce and HR Department.

Integrity in Auxiliary Functions

Western's president, vice president of Finance and Operations, and vice president of Student Service

and Engagement oversee Western's auxiliary functions including:

- Campus Shop
- Foundation (memorandum of understanding defines this relationship)
- Lunda Center (conference center and catering)
- PC Resale
- Residence Hall
- Union Market (cafeteria)
- Vending
- Wellness Center

These functions are guided by several [Business and Finance policies](#) and leaders participate in annual retreats to create continuous improvement plans.

Evaluation of Integrity

Both Western's students and coworkers can evaluate the College's integrity. Western administers the Ruffalo Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) every other year to gauge student satisfaction with college efforts to ensure integrity. The SSI uses a 7-point Likert scale to measure both importance and satisfaction across 57 items. Western can compare to all other institutions that administer the survey. The SSI has several questions that pertain to integrity. Measured on a scale from 1-7 (with 7 being most favorable or important), the College demonstrates to its students its commitment to integrity:

- Item 12: Faculty are fair and unbiased in their treatment of students. (6.21 out of 7 for satisfaction, higher than comparison group of 6.15)
- Item 17: Admissions counselors accurately portray program offerings in their recruiting practices. (6.19 out of 7 for satisfaction, higher than comparison group of 5.95)
- Item 22: My academic advisor is knowledgeable about transfer requirements of other schools. (6.11 out of 7 for satisfaction, higher than comparison group of 6.03)
- Item 33: Administrators are available to hear students' concerns. (6.11 out of 7 for satisfaction – higher than comparison group of 5.97)
- Item 37: I seldom get the "run-around" when seeking information on this campus. (6.03 compared to 5.78)

In support of Western's commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Western conducted a student climate survey from the Higher Education Data Sharing (HEDS) consortium in Spring 2024 and will distribute a survey to coworkers in the future. This survey gives the college a means to measure integrity as Western commits to creating a sense of belonging, fostering an environment that is conducive to true self-expression, and cultivating community for students of all identities.

Coworkers evaluate the integrity of Western through the Gallup Q12 Employee Engagement survey and periodic communications surveys. Results of these measurement efforts are shared in town hall presentations, leadership forums, SLT meetings, district board meetings, and at annual data summits. Where possible, [Gallup Q12](#) results are disaggregated by department, program, or stakeholder group.

[Western's 2023 communications survey](#) results include the following measures tied to integrity:

- I trust that the communication from my department/division colleagues is open and honest (79% strongly or somewhat agree)

- I trust that the communication from my supervisor is open and honest (78%)
- I trust that communication from the college president and vice president is open and honest (62%)

Sources

- 2. Academic Policies
- 2. Business and Finance Policies.pdf
- 2. Employee Handbook 2023-2024
- 2. Instruction Policies and Procedures with Index
- 2. Personnel Policies and Procedures
- 2. Student Support Services Policies and Procedures.pdf
- 2. StudentHandbook
- 2.A. A0100 District Board Policy
- 2.A. A0106 Oath of Office and Code of Ethics for District Board
- 2.A. A0106P Oath of Office
- 2.A. Academic Integrity Report
- 2.A. Academic Policies Webpage
- 2.A. Accountable Leader
- 2.A. C0202 College Handbook and College Policies
- 2.A. C0206 Code of Ethics for Employees
- 2.A. Communication Survey Results Summary 2023
- 2.A. COS Technical Reporting
- 2.A. D0102 and Employee Handbook Excerpt
- 2.A. D0102_D0102p Faculty Quality Assurance System (FQAS) policy and procedures
- 2.A. E0700 and E0700p Student Code of Conduct policy and procedure
- 2.A. E0700 Student Code of Conduct
- 2.A. E0715_E0715p Student and Service Member Recruitment Policy and Procedures
- 2.A. Ethical Recruitment Training June 2024
- 2.A. Ethical Recruitment Training Roster
- 2.A. Faculty Professional Review
- 2.A. Faculty Quality Assurance System Process Map
- 2.A. Fall 2022 Communications Survey Analysis
- 2.A. Feedback Form
- 2.A. Financial Aid Program Participation Agreement 2024
- 2.A. FQAS Brochure May 26 2022
- 2.A. Gallup 2023 3 department results
- 2.A. Gallup Q12 Results Overall Engagement_Ethics
- 2.A. Hate_Bias Incident Reporting Form
- 2.A. HLC Complaint Form
- 2.A. Job Description Instructor - Program Chair 112023
- 2.A. Job Description Project Manager - Title III LTE 09302028
- 2.A. Manager Hiring Guide
- 2.A. New Employee Orientation Agenda February 2024
- 2.A. Noel Levitz Survey of Student Satisfaction
- 2.A. Probation 10 month staff review
- 2.A. Professional Development Faculty 7 Week Redesign 2022 2024
- 2.A. Professional Review Manager

- 2.A. Professional Review Staff
- 2.A. Required Training Flowchart
- 2.A. Senior Leadership Commitments
- 2.A. Strategic Plan Overview 2023-2024
- 2.A. Student Complaint Policy Procedure Presentation 2024
- 2.A. Three Year Facilities Plan 2023-2026 Approved by Board on June 20 2023
- 2.A. Western Comprehensive Program Evaluation Model Visual_6.13.24
- 2.A. Western Technical College Feedback Website
- 2.A. Western Technical College Program Accreditation
- 2.A. WTC District Board Minutes_01-16-24
- 2.A. WTC Single Audit June 2023

2.B - Core Component 2.B

The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public.

1. The institution ensures the accuracy of any representations it makes regarding academic offerings, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, governance structure and accreditation relationships.
2. The institution ensures evidence is available to support any claims it makes regarding its contributions to the educational experience through research, community engagement, experiential learning, religious or spiritual purpose and economic development.

Argument

2.B.1 Accuracy of Representations Regarding Academic Offerings, Requirements, Faculty/Staff, Cost to Students, Governance Structure, and Accreditation Relationships

Western's public website serves as the primary mechanism for presenting the institution to students, other stakeholders, and the general public. Prominent features of the public website include direct-from-the-homepage links to programs, admissions, paying for college, student life, and how to apply. There is easy access to all [programs](#) and [university transfer options](#). [Program previews](#) are organized by "areas of interest" and provide more in-depth information to students who may be interested in a specific program. Students can register directly from the website.

Academic Offerings and Requirements

Western's academic offerings are also presented on the [Viewbook](#) that is printed and posted on the website. This information is updated daily through direct integration with Colleague, Western's student information system. Western's Scheduling and Curriculum Information Office ensures the accuracy of information for each scheduling cycle.

Each academic program has a dropdown menu with a link to [Admissions Requirements](#). In addition, the public website has a link to [general admissions information](#). The [course catalog](#) is searchable without a password or contact information and provides a schedule of courses.

Faculty and Staff Information

Western's [staff directory](#) provides information as to how to reach faculty and staff. This information is searchable by name or department and includes office location, phone number, and email address.

Cost to Students

Student costs are conveyed through the public web site on the Estimated Program Costs button on each program page. Examples of costs include [tuition](#) (set by state board), books, materials, testing fee, online course fees, and tools. Annually these fees and rates are reviewed by the SLT and approved by the district board.

Governance Structure

Western maintains a webpage for its governing body, the [district board](#). It includes [board member contact information](#), [meeting agendas and meeting minutes](#), and a description of the [district board](#)

[appointment process \(1.B.2, 5.A.1\)](#). [Bylaws](#) posted within the policy section of the public website explain the roles and responsibilities of the district board.

Accreditation Relationships

Western explains what it means to be an accredited institution on its public [Performance Excellence and Accreditation](#) web site. This includes information about [college-level accreditation and program-level accreditation](#).

Communication Methods

Additional methods used to communicate with students and the public when needed include Facebook, Instagram, and X, as well as through tools built into the College's customer relationship management (CRM) system. Blackboard, Western's learning management system (LMS), is used to communicate specific course and program information to enrolled students. The [Rave Mobility System](#) is used for important alerts. [Western's News Center](#) is a one-stop website for a variety of Western's publications and important news releases.

2.B.2 Evidence Supporting Claims to the Educational Experience through Research, Community Engagement, Experiential Learning, and Economic Development

Community Engagement and Experiential Learning

Western's strategic plan elevates the importance of both work- and community-based experience with a Strategic Direction for Workforce and Community Engagement. Students experience "[Life at Western](#)" through curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular options. Students can get involved through clubs or student government, athletics, and through [Western ENGAGE](#) – a software system designed to connect students with specific organizations and events, and to track involvement. Western prides itself on its expertise and success with experiential learning. 100% of Western's programs embed formal work-based and community-based learning experiences. These experiences are identified on [program pages](#) within the course information area.

Economic Development

Western's mission is to change lives and grow communities – and evidence of Western's impact on the community economic development efforts is strong. In 2019, Western conducted an economic impact study with the assistance of Emsi (now known as Lightcast). Findings of this study show that Western's annual operations spending is \$45.1 million, student spending is \$3.6 million, and alumni impact is \$281.6 million, resulting in a total community and economic impact of \$330.3 million or 4,699 jobs supported.

[Infographic](#)
[Fact Sheet](#)
[Executive Summary](#)

On an annual basis, Western conducts the [Graduate Follow Up Survey](#) to determine job placement and earnings for recent graduates. In the most recent assessment, 96% of Western's graduates found employment within 6 months of graduation.

Research

As explored in **2.D.2**, ethical research practices for internal and external stakeholders are grounded in policy. Western's Institutional Research Department manages the College's Institutional Review

Board (IRB) and related [policies and procedures](#).

Sources

- 2. Administrative Support Policies and Procedures.pdf
- 2.B. Western Technical College Emergency Information Webpage
- 2.B. 2019 Economic Impact Study Executive Summary
- 2.B. 2019 Economic Impact Study Fact Sheet
- 2.B. 2019 Economic Impact Study Infographic
- 2.B. 2022 Graduate Outcomes Highlights
- 2.B. 2023 2024 Viewbook
- 2.B. Academic Programs Western Technical College
- 2.B. Course Catalog Website Screenshot
- 2.B. District Board Appointment Process Western Technical College
- 2.B. District Board Bylaws and Policy Web Page
- 2.B. District Board Meeting Minutes and Agendas Webpage Screen Shot
- 2.B. District Board of Directors Western Technical College
- 2.B. Program Preview Western Technical College
- 2.B. Program Specific Admission Requirements
- 2.B. Refrigeration Air Conditioning Heating Service Technician Program Information
- 2.B. Transfer Options Western Technical College
- 2.B. Tuition and Fees Western Technical College
- 2.B. Western Technical College Admissions Website Screenshot
- 2.B. Western Technical College District Board Members Contact Information
- 2.B. Western Technical College Emergency Information Webpage
- 2.B. Western Technical College ENGAGE Webpage
- 2.B. Western Technical College News Webpage
- 2.B. Western Technical College Performance Excellence and Accreditation Webpage
- 2.B. Western Technical College Program Accreditation
- 2.B. Western Technical College Staff Directory
- 2.B. Western Technical College Student Life Webpage

2.C - Core Component 2.C

The governing board of the institution is autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution in compliance with board policies and to ensure the institution's integrity.

1. The governing board is trained and knowledgeable so that it makes informed decisions with respect to the institution's financial and academic policies and practices; the board meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.
2. The governing board's deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.
3. The governing board reviews the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations.
4. The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests or other external parties.
5. The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the institution's administration and expects the institution's faculty to oversee academic matters.

Argument

In accordance with Wisconsin Statute, Western is operated under the direction of the Western District Board, comprised of nine members who serve three-year staggered terms. The members of the board are appointed by a board appointment committee (**1.B.2, 2.B.1, 5.A.1**) composed of the county board chairpersons of the eleven counties in the Western District. As stated in **5.A.1**, "the Western Technical College District Board's primary functions are review and adoption of policies, review of College programs and services, and the employment and evaluation of the president." This stipulation set forth in the Bylaws ensures the board is autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution.

2.C.1 District Board Training

To ensure a governing board that is trained and knowledgeable, each new board member goes through an [orientation process](#) with the president and vice presidents as required in policies [A0109 and procedure A0109p](#). [Policy A0110 and procedure A0110p](#) explain board member professional development (**2.A.2**) and the areas of recommended development. As mentioned in **2.A.2** the WTCS DBA provides a forum for board member education and development at quarterly meetings and a biennial legal issues seminar. Multiple times per year, an external facilitator conducts additional training through periodic board "advances." In addition, board members are invited to travel with a team of Western coworkers to legislative summits in Washington, D.C. to learn more about the issues and opportunities faced by higher education. Combined, these efforts aid in decision-making that is informed and aligned with legal and fiduciary responsibilities.

2.C.2. District Board Deliberations Reflect Priorities to Preserve and Enhance the Institution

[Policy A0102](#) describes Western's District Board's authority and legal status: "the Board, as a whole, has the discretionary powers to carry out the will of the people of the District in manners of vocational, technical, and adult education." Board powers and duties are spelled out in policy [A0103](#) and include (1) formulate and adopt written policy, (2) employ, evaluate, and set compensation for president, (3) approve employment status and compensation of all employees, (4) levy a tax upon all taxable property in the district, and (5) use statutory power to borrow funds. Monthly board meetings

are structured to allow for board deliberations to reflect board powers and duties. Monthly, from March through July each year, the district board engages in the review process for the president. Board members must also submit an annual statement of economic interests for the Wisconsin Ethics Commission.

[March 2023 Board Agenda and Minutes](#)

[July 2023 Board Agenda and Minutes](#)

2.C.3. Board Review of Reasonable and Relevant Interests of Institution's Internal and External Constituencies

To carry out its legal and fiduciary responsibilities and review the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies, the district board meets monthly to cover its [calendar of items](#) that include college reports on topics aligned with the strategic plan, stakeholder feedback (such as survey results) sub-committee updates, policy and procedure, financial reports, personnel decisions, president's report, and the district board chairperson's report. Issue papers are used to bring forth topics like grant proposals, external partnerships, bids/requests for proposals, and new program proposals. Quarterly, presentations related to progress on the strategic plan are given.

Examples of issue papers

1. [Budget-related - Audit](#)
2. [Facilities-related](#)
3. [Grant-related](#)

Examples of presentations

1. [Title III Grant Award \(March 2024\)](#)
2. [Key Results \(Student Success Metrics\)](#)

2.C.4. Independence from Undue Influence

Western ensures its district board remains independent from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests, and other parties through its [Board Conduct Policy A0128](#), [Oath of Office Procedure](#), and adherence to Sec. 19.45, Wis. Stat. entitled Standards of Conduct for Wisconsin State Public Officials, and the Wisconsin Code of Ethics for Public Officials and Employees, Secs. 19.41-19.59, Wis. Stats.

2.C.5. Delegation of Day-to-Day Management of Institution to Administration and Academic Matters to Academic Affairs

Western's Code of Ethics for district board members insists that board members: "Avoid any exercise of individual authority over the College except as explicitly set forth in board policies or with specific board authorization. A board member's interaction with the president, staff, public, press, and other entities must recognize the lack of authority in any individual board member or group of board members except as noted in board policies or by specific board authorization.

No board member or board members may speak for the whole district board unless so designated by the district board." Procedure A0106p Oath of Office further states "each member of the board shall never act in excess of his/her lawful authority." The district board delegates academic matters and academic policy development to the Academic Affairs Unit's leadership team and faculty. The College's SLT approves academic policy. [Western's Faculty Handbook](#) and the [faculty job description](#) define the role of regular and adjunct faculty.

Sources

- 2. Faculty Handbook 05.01.2024)
- 2.C. A0102 Board Authority and Legal Status
- 2.C. A0103 Board Powers and Duties
- 2.C. A0106P Oath of Office
- 2.C. A0128 Board Conduct Policy
- 2.C. Board Presentation Key Results Update_10.24.23
- 2.C. Budget Facilities Subcommittee Agenda 12-19-23
- 2.C. District Board Agenda and Meeting Minutes 03-21-23
- 2.C. District Board Meeting Agenda and Minutes_07-10-23
- 2.C. District Board Monthly Board Calendar
- 2.C. District Board Orientation2023w_handouts
- 2.C. District Board Policy A0109 and Procedure A0109p
- 2.C. District Board Policy A0110 and Procedure A0110p
- 2.C. Faculty Handbook-FINAL (05.01.2024)
- 2.C. Instructor-Adjunct
- 2.C. Issue Paper Audit
- 2.C. Issue Paper Coleman Center Remodel
- 2.C. Issue Paper Perkins 24-25
- 2.C. Title III District Board Meeting 03192024

2.D - Core Component 2.D

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

Argument

2.D.1. Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression

Western creates and maintains a climate that celebrates intellectual freedom, inquiry, reflection, respect for intellectual property, and respect for differing and diverse opinions by recognizing and supporting faculty at all levels of teaching. This is demonstrated in three specific College values: diversity, respect, and integrity.

Western's involvement in Achieving the Dream (ATD) has elevated the focus on equity and inclusivity. In 2017, Western created a new position (Director of Achieving the Dream, and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion) and shortly thereafter, established the [Student Life, Equity, and Engagement Division](#) that includes student equity initiatives, student life and integrity, residence hall, and athletics. This office is structured to help the organization navigate toward an environment where freedom of expression, diversity, and acceptance are appreciated, celebrated, and linked to student success.

[Western's Employee Handbook](#) (p. 62-63) includes specific language that speaks to inventions, patents, publications, and intellectual property rights. This portion of the handbook clearly communicates to staff and faculty the college rights, shared rights, instructor/employee rights, and the college review rights.

Finally, Western's curriculum is well-documented with Course Outcome Summaries (COS) (1.C.1, 2.A.2, 3.A.3, 3.B.1) for each course. These specify course-level competencies and learning objectives; however, faculty have the opportunity to teach the competencies in the manner they deem appropriate for student success while honoring Western's commitment to Universal Design for Learning (UDL) – a framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all learners (3.A.1, 4.B.3), and the College's Educational Justice Framework (3.B.3, 3.D.1, 4.B.3, 4.C.3). This allows freedom for each faculty to design learning experiences that contribute to positive student learning outcomes and student success.

Ethical Learning and Research

Western's values and practices support ethical learning and research practices. The [Employee Handbook](#) (p. 47) addresses ethics and conduct and is supported by a [Code of Ethics Policy](#) (C0206), an ethics hotline, and Guidelines for Appropriate Conduct. Adherence to FERPA guidelines is emphasized in new employee orientation sessions. In addition, the [Employee Handbook](#) (p. 2) emphasizes five practices for all staff and faculty regarding ethical learning and research:

- Care of Others: We serve others with courtesy, kindness, respect, and compassion.
- Attitude: We are all responsible for creating a positive, essential experience at Western.
- Professional Appearance: We represent Western and respect those we serve by modeling proper grooming and appropriate dress, and in taking care of our facilities.
- Communication: We talk, listen, and interact with others in a way that is consistent with our

values.

- Commitment: We rely on one another to consistently and collaboratively achieve our mission every day.

Expectations for ethical learning and research practices are communicated to the student through the [Student Handbook](#) (pp. 153-172) and the [Student Code of Conduct -E0700](#). Several policies provide guiderails for ethical learning and research and support non-discrimination and accommodations of students' religious beliefs. Policy E0704 and procedure E0704p emphasize that Western recognizes its obligation to reasonably accommodate a student's religious beliefs, maintain confidentiality, and assist students in fulfilling academic requirements without any prejudicial effect.

Related policies include:

[E0102 Protection of Student Information](#)

[C0102-E0105 Harassment and Nondiscrimination Policy](#)

[E0700 Student Code of Conduct Policy and Procedure](#)

[E0703 Student Complaint Policy and Procedure](#)

[E0704 Accommodation of Students' Religion Beliefs Policy and Procedure](#)

[E0709p Student Grievance Procedure](#)

[D0106 Academic Standards](#)

[D0106p2 Universal Design for Learning and Accommodations](#)

[D0601 Copyright Compliance](#)

Sources

- 2. StudentHandbook
- 2.A. E0700 and E0700p Student Code of Conduct policy and procedure
- 2.A. E0700 Student Code of Conduct
- 2.D. C0102-E0105 – Harassment and Nondiscrimination Policy
- 2.D. C0206 Code of Ethics for Employees
- 2.D. D0106 Academic Standards
- 2.D. D0106p2 Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Accommodations Procedure
- 2.D. D0601 Copyright Compliance
- 2.D. E0102 Protection of Student Information.pdf
- 2.D. E0703_E0703p Student Complaint Policy and Procedures
- 2.D. E0704_E0704p Accommodation of Students_ Religious Beliefs
- 2.D. E0709p Student Grievance Procedure
- 2.D. Student Life Equity and Engagement Org Chart

2.E - Core Component 2.E

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

1. Institutions supporting basic and applied research maintain professional standards and provide oversight ensuring regulatory compliance, ethical behavior and fiscal accountability.
2. The institution provides effective support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff and students.
3. The institution provides students guidance in the ethics of research and use of information resources.
4. The institution enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.

Argument

2.E.1. Professional Standards for Research

Western has developed clear policy and procedure for both faculty and students in regards to conducting research. Policies [G0100](#) (Use of Data/Research and Information Technology) and [G0101](#) (Research Projects and Surveys) as well as procedures [G0100p](#) (Procedure for Research and Information Technology) and [G0101p](#) (Research Projects and Survey Procedure) convey expectations.

2.E.2. Support Services for Integrity of Research

Western coworkers and students infrequently conduct or engage in formal research studies. Requests for research are directed to the Institutional Research (IR) Department. The IR director leads the College's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Studies involve minimal risk to participants and consist of surveys and interviews. Requests for research with Western students or coworkers by external parties require IRB approval from the researcher's institution. Studies must adhere to policy G0101 (LINK needs cover sheet – and new policy) and the associated procedure (LINK).

2.E.3. Student Guidance in Ethics of Research and Use of Information Resources

Librarians in Western's Learning Commons (3.D.4) provide library instruction sessions where a foundation topic covers ethical use of information. Library instruction sessions are also customized by request, such as how to incorporate research and cite outside sources in academic work, a relevant topic with several courses at the College. The Writing Center, also in the Learning Commons, offers regular support through instruction, individual tutoring interactions, and writing submission feedback.

2.E.4. Academic Dishonesty and Integrity

Core to Western's expectations for ethical learning and research practices is its position on academic dishonesty. All course syllabi (1.C.1, 2.A.2, 4.A.4) and [Western's Student Handbook](#) (p. 152) includes the definition of academic dishonesty and conveys student expectations. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, fabrication, multiple submissions of the same work, and academic misconduct.

Sources

- 2. Administrative Support Policies and Procedures.pdf
- 2. StudentHandbook
- 2.E. G0100 Use of Data_ Research and Information Technology.pdf
- 2.E. G0100p Procedure for Research and Information Technology.pdf
- 2.E. G0101 Research Projects and Surveys.pdf
- 2.E. G0101p Research Projects and Surveys Procedure.pdf

2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary

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

Summary

Western's culture statement reinforces the College's commitment to integrity. It ensures a climate of respect that includes guiderails for fair and ethical behavior for its governing board, administration, and all coworkers. Key components of efforts aimed at integrity include:

- Regular measurement using instruments such as the Ruffalo Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory and the Gallup Q12 Employee Engagement survey
- Use of the public website as the primary mechanism to present the institution to students and the public
- A set of policies outlining the roles and responsibilities of Western's District Board
- A commitment to academic freedom and freedom of expression backed by a set of values that include diversity, respect, and integrity.

Sources

There are no sources.

3 - Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources and Support

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

3.A - Core Component 3.A

The rigor of the institution's academic offerings is appropriate to higher education.

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

Argument

3.A.1. Courses and programs are current and require levels of student performance appropriate to the credential awarded.

Western delivers courses and programs that are current and aligned with statewide [Wisconsin Technical College System \(WTCS\) standards](#), and with university transfer requirements and accreditors where applicable. External and internal stakeholders are regularly consulted. Western's Academic Excellence, Education, and Human Services (AEH) Division employs a dean, teaching and learning manager, instructional designer, faculty developers, and an instructional technologist to coordinate the curriculum review and instructional design process through the [Academic Excellence Department](#) (AED). Faculty can initiate curriculum changes that are aligned with WTCS standards, informed through program advisory committees or accrediting bodies, crafted with [Universal Design for Learning](#) (UDL) (2.D.1, 3.A.4, 4.B.3) in mind, and documented in the College's official curriculum design system – WIDS (Worldwide Instructional Design System) (2.A.2, 3.A.3, 3.B.2, 4.A.4, 4.B.3). As part of its commitment to continuous improvement and collaborative decision making, recurring curriculum review meetings have been initiated. Each program meets with the AEH dean to discuss curriculum needs. Program or department chairs, faculty, college schedulers, college advisors, and deans or supervisors of the programs are invited to attend respective program meetings. These meetings will continue to be held each fall and spring term close to important due dates for curricular reviews. This will integrate greater numbers of faculty into a collaborative structure that ensures course rigor and skill development appropriate to the credential.

In 2021, as part of its [Guided Pathways](#) (1.B.2, 3.D.1, 4.A.1, 4.C.3, 5.A.1) work, Western committed to a curriculum sequence of 7-week sessions (3.B.3, 5.A.1, 5.C.1, 5.C.2) within a trimester framework. The redesign required all program faculty with the support of their dean, AED, college advisors, and other staff to review and create a new scope and sequence for each program. To ensure the rigor of course/program delivery models and a positive student experience and success, program faculty reviewed program outcomes, course competencies, and the alignment of common learning

outcomes (SuccessAbilities) (1.C.1, 3.B.2, 3.B.3, 4.B.1, 4.B.2, 4.B.3) and other summative outcomes.

As part of this transition to 7-week sessions, all courses were redesigned. Faculty are creating and adjusting program assessment plans that align program outcomes to signature assessments and the courses that contain them. Through this comprehensive work, faculty (1) create [SuccessAbility assessment plans](#), (2) [develop course maps](#) that identify topic coverage, scaffolded key course assessments and signature assessments (4.B.1) placement, and (3) map assessment strategies to course competencies.

All key assessments designed to be performance-based (vs. traditional exams) are housed in the Worldwide Instructional Design System (WIDS) (2.A.2, 3.A.3, 3.B.2, 4.A.4, 4.B.3) and accessible to all instructors connected to the course. The assessment plans and course maps ensure the intentional assessment of both course and program-level competencies/outcomes (3.A.2). All outcomes are uniformly assessed across sections and ensure that an appropriate level of proficiency is met by all students. Faculty have the flexibility to deliver the content in the way that best fits their students and their teaching style while ensuring the consistency of the content and the assessment. All program assessment plans and course maps are available internally for faculty and administrators on the Institutional Effectiveness unit's SharePoint site.

[Western's catalog for 2023-2024](#) includes 43 associate degrees, 35 technical diplomas, 17 WTCS-recognized certificates, and 27 Western-recognized internal certificates. Western is approved to deliver [associate of science \(AS\)](#) and [associate of arts \(AA\)](#) university transfer degrees. Transfer degree programs provide important value for students and the community as there exists no other two-year institutions offering the [transfer option within Western's district](#) (3.A.2).

The number of courses and credits for associate degrees (60-65 credits), technical diplomas, and certificate programs align with requirements set by state and third-party accreditors (where applicable). A standardized definition of a credit hour is applied across degree programs and aligns with HLC guidelines. Further, all of Western's programs and courses are approved by the WTCS through processes to ensure compliance with standards:

- [WTCS Education Services Manual \(ESM\)](#)
- [WTCS Course Approval Manual](#)
- [WTCS Curriculum Approval Manual](#)

3.A.2. The institution articulates and differentiates learning goals for its undergraduate, graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate, and certificate programs.

In service to its mission (1.A.1), Western's academic programs are structured as 2 years or less in length and reflect the dual nature of the College's mission. As described in 3.A.1, Western offers the AS and AA for transfer to four-year institutions, as well as career and technical degrees (associate of applied science [AAS], technical diplomas, and certificates) designed to develop professional skills for employment in local business and industry. Western provides technical and professional credentials for employment and the transfer function by preparing students to attend institutions through undergraduate transfer within the district. Western follows the [WTCS new program development requirements](#) that include established [local labor market demand for graduates](#), advisory committee input, and approval from both Western's district board and the WTCS board. The Data and Analytics Specialist program is a recent example of the process: [Western Data and Analytics Specialist Program Proposal](#).

Each credential has a set of learning outcomes with both program-specific technical skill attainment (TSA) outcomes (**4.B.1**) and common learning outcomes – essential soft-skills, employability skills, and college and career readiness skills. These “[SuccessAbilities](#)” (**1.C.1, 3.B.2, 3.B.3, 4.B.1, 4.B.2, 4.B.3**) are integrated throughout the program curriculum at the course level with student assessment occurring as appropriate across occupational and general education courses. Just prior to graduation, students are assessed for both TSA and SuccessAbilities along with any other summative program-specific learning outcomes. The [student learning outcomes assessment](#) process is illustrated here.

The WTCS provides program standards for its 16 colleges and negotiates with the University of Wisconsin (UW) Board of Regents specifically for universal transfer with its AA and AS transfer degrees. The WTCS establishes program requirements, documents compliance, and provides resources to ensure that member college programs and courses meet industry standards, employer expectations, and student needs to enter the workplace with skills to excel in their chosen field of employment. Advisory committees (**1.B.1, 1.B.2**) comprised of local employers and industry experts regularly review and advise on program needs, quality, and content. Sixteen (16) programs adhere to external accreditation requirements: [Western Technical College Program Accreditation](#).

In Wisconsin, technical colleges differentiate course numbers to indicate the type of degree the course has been designed to support. All WTCS schools use aid code designations to convey this information. The following is a list of current [Aid Codes](#) for all courses currently delivered by Western.

Additional individual transfer agreements with institutions in Wisconsin and outside of the state also exist and are constructed through regular processes of course and program review and approval. These agreements are reviewed on a three-year cycle.

- [University Transfer Program Webpage](#)
- [Transfer Agreements By Program](#)

3.A.3. The institution’s program quality and learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery and all locations (on the main campus, at additional locations, by distance delivery, as dual credit, through contractual or consortia arrangements, or any other modality).

Western offers multiple options for learning to provide access to “relevant, high-quality education” to all residents within the district and beyond. Western’s extensive use of WIDS (**2.A.2, 3.B.2, 4.A.4, 4.B.3**) for instructional design and curriculum documentation fortifies the College’s ability to deliver consistent program quality and learning outcomes across all modes of delivery – whether it be in high schools as dual/transcripted credit or academies, degree programs, contract training, online, face-to-face, or hybrid. This sophisticated instructional design system allows for the configuration of [curriculum at the program](#), [course](#), [learning activity](#), and assessment strategy level. A syllabus or in the case of contractual training, a contract that reflects the official curriculum, is generated and shared with students. Examples include:

- [High school dual/transcripted credit](#)
- [Contractual training](#)
- [100% online](#)
- [Hybrid](#)
- [Face-to-face](#)

Western’s standalone credential programs have a dedicated program advisory committee as described

in **3.A.2**. Specific strategies to ensure quality and consistency across all modes of credit course and program delivery and locations are [illustrated here](#).

Finally, the vice president of learning and the academic deans are ultimately responsible for oversight and evaluation of programs and courses. As described in **4.1.A**, all programs are comprehensively reviewed on a [3-5 year cycle](#). Annually, all programs and courses are evaluated using [Western's Key Results](#) (student success measures such as course completion, retention, graduation, transfer, and job placement) disaggregated by program and a variety of other demographic variables (**1.B.2, 4.B.3**). Issues of quality and consistency are discussed by faculty at annual data summits (5.C.3) and program planning meetings and are incorporated into [Continuous Improvement Plans](#).

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- 3.A. SuccessAbilities-definitions
- 3.A. Syllabus Infant and Toddler Development_High School
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- 3.A. University Transfer Program _ Western Technical College
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- 3.A. Western Technical College Program Accreditation
- 3.A. WIDS Resources for Curriculum Design
- 3.A. WTCS ESM_ Excerpt

3.B - Core Component 3.B

The institution offers programs that engage students in collecting, analyzing and communicating information; in mastering modes of intellectual inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.

1. The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings and degree levels of the institution. The institution articulates the purposes, content and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements.
2. The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.
3. The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity and provides students with growth opportunities and lifelong skills to live and work in a multicultural world.
4. The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their offerings and the institution's mission.

Argument

3.B.1. The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings and degree levels of the institution. The institution articulates the purposes, content and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements.

As the only 2-year institution in its district, Western fills the role of a community college and a technical college. Western commits to preparing students for the workforce across industries and professions and for transfer to other institutions. The General Studies Division offers [64 courses](#) to support the general education requirement for associate degrees and certain technical diplomas and certificates as well as the AA and AS transfer degrees.

In each case, the College has worked diligently to align itself with input from local employers and its partner institutions to develop curriculum appropriate to the task of developing knowledgeable, confident, and skilled graduates who can seamlessly enter the local economy as a member of a community with a commitment to lifelong learning. General education requirements can vary from one program to another:

- [Dental Assistant](#)
- [Nursing](#)
- [Digital Media Production](#)
- [Architectural Technology](#)

The purpose, content, and learning outcomes of general education requirements are conveyed through Course Outcome Summaries (COS) that are posted to the public website and incorporated into Blackboard learning management system (LMS) shells and syllabi. In addition, an extensive [View Book](#) illustrates the configuration of each program. Examples of COS:

- [Oral and Interpersonal Communication](#)
- [Technical Reporting](#)
- [English 1](#)
- [College Chemistry](#)

3.B.2. The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.

Western grounds its general education program in a solid foundation aligned with state system-level stakeholders, as well as its educational partners and the employers within the district. The WTCS provides a framework of [state-wide curriculum options](#), courses, and competencies for general education. This framework is maintained through joint ownership fostered across the colleges within the WTCS. Content, rigor, trends, and sequencing are carefully considered and addressed during collaborative curriculum and program development processes. This approach to general education curriculum development offers faculty throughout the state opportunities to draw from best practices, facilitate student transfer of credits, and increase employer confidence that all graduates demonstrate comparable competencies.

General education in the WTCS fosters the common skills, intellectual concepts, and attitudes that every educated person should possess, and are offered to support occupational programming. They are selected from Communication (oral and written), Mathematics, Natural Sciences, and Social/Behavioral Sciences. At a district level, appropriate general education courses are selected by occupational program faculty based on the needs identified by employers who hire Western graduates. Each course has a set of course competencies and learning objectives documented in WIDS that are assessed formatively and summatively.

In 1995, Western established a set of Core Abilities that reflected its philosophy of general education. In 2018 Western revised its Core Abilities and developed what is now known as [SuccessAbilities](#) (1.C.1, 3.B.2, 3.B.3, 4.B.1, 4.B.2, 4.B.3). The college's integration of SuccessAbilities across general education and occupation-specific (career and technical education [CTE]) courses ensures students obtain broad knowledge and skills to promote academic, professional, and personal success (4.B.1). These are communicated in the [Student Handbook](#) (p. 119) as well on the [public web site](#).

In addition to the integration of general education into occupational programs, Western aligns itself with the needs of transfer partners by designing and delivering academic coursework packaged as [AS](#) and [AA](#) transfer degrees (3.A.1, 3.A.2, 3.B.1). This component of Western's general education philosophy enhances a student's ability to enter four-year institutions with junior status. Western's public web site and view book present these opportunities to students and other stakeholders.

3.B.3. The education offered by the institution recognizes human and cultural diversity and provides students with growth opportunities and lifelong skills to live and work in a multicultural world.

Western is an open-access, public two-year institution and is proud to serve a greater percentage of diverse students than is reflected in the district as a whole (1.C.2). The College views human and cultural diversity as essential to learning and educational offerings, a critical component for an

effective institution as a workplace, and a recognition of all members of the district Western serves. Several key documents and frameworks guide this work, ensuring recognition of and respect for diversity in practice across the institution. They are described and linked in **1.B.1** and **1.C.2**.

The College is systematizing an [Educational Justice framework](#) (**3.D.1, 4.B.3, 4.C.3**) that integrates culturally responsive teaching, trauma-informed pedagogy, and poverty-informed practices into evidence-based principles of teaching and learning that increase student success and belonging. At the beginning of the redesign for 7-Week Sessions work, all faculty engaged in professional development with these key foundational practices. Excellence in teaching and learning is measured through [Western's Student Success Metrics](#) (also known as Key Results) and [Strategic Goals](#) to eliminate equity gaps. Western's commitment is evidenced in four ways: an emphasis on diversity in the curriculum and instructional materials; programs to recognize and support diversity in Western as a workplace; improved access to higher education to all people within the district; and, finally, collection of data and the practice of ongoing reflection on Western's performance around diversity.

Western offers courses focused on the cultivation of global perspectives, cultural and identity differences, and emphasizes diversity by teaching content focused on different identity groups within the district, Wisconsin, and the United States. Faculty continue to be trained and encouraged to employ culturally relevant materials in their courses. Finally, [5 of the 9 SuccessAbilities](#) taught and assessed in every program of study at Western address issues of diversity and cultural sensitivity.

The College speaks to its values and commitments to diversity in all position postings, requires an Equity Leader to participate in every search committee, and uses several [diversity questions](#) as standard interview questions for all candidates. Recognizing that Western serves a large rural district, the College provides access to higher education through five regional locations and an additional training facility. Rural high schools can participate in learning opportunities in one of the locations nearest to them. Western is working to extend these services on a long-term basis to ensure that all students of all backgrounds are equally served with access to higher education. As spelled out in **1.C.3**, Western's culture statement further emphasizes the importance of human and cultural diversity.

3.B.4. The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their offerings and the institution's mission.

As a technical college, Western is not considered a research institution. Faculty focus primarily on excellence in teaching and learning and student support, with less emphasis on research and publication. Western's faculty and administration are regularly engaged in the work of data collection and analysis – using it for action research and to drive innovation. Western's personal and organizational commitment to [“drive action through data intelligence”](#) has built a data culture and embedded data-driven decision-making into its processes. Examples include the comprehensive [program evaluation process](#) (**4.A.1, 4.A.2, 5.A.1**) and the [annual and strategic planning process](#). This effort engages all stakeholders to study, understand, and improve their craft, for the betterment of themselves, their colleagues, and students.

Western's New Faculty Experience (NFE) (**3.C.5, 5.B.1**) onboarding promotes research and self-study activity for all newly hired faculty. Many faculty also regularly participate in accreditation work where programs report to external accreditors. Western has an [Institutional Review Board \(IRB\)](#) policy to support both faculty and student research. The IRB process extends to external

research projects that engage Western students or coworkers or use Western data (2.D.1).

College faculty must attend regular professional development (3.C.2, 3.C.4, 3.C.5) and are encouraged to attend national conferences. Participation in professional learning is a requirement for all faculty. According to the WTCS Administrative code, each faculty member must participate in professional development that enhances their teaching/learning abilities as well as keeps them current in their content/industry. Western assesses teaching and learning capacity at the College through the [ATD Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool \(ICAT\)](#). The capacity for teaching and learning has grown to a level 3 (out of 4 levels) indicating a strong level of capacity in place. The college regularly administers the ICAT survey to gauge organizational capacity and most recently assessed 3 of the 7 of the capacities in 2023.

Students are encouraged to discover and apply new knowledge throughout their course work, clubs, and experiential learning activities such as [work-based learning and community-based learning](#). Western measures students' engagement in their learning using the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), assessed in alternating years. When asked about college emphasis on mental activities, students have shown [increased engagement since 2019](#).

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3.C - Core Component 3.C

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

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

Argument

3.C.1. The institution strives to ensure that the overall composition of its faculty and staff reflects human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

Western strives to ensure the composition of its workforce reflects the demographics of the constituencies it serves and as part of Experience 2025, aims to increase the diversity of Western coworkers. Currently, Western's district is composed of 11% people of color (Lightcast). Western's student population is composed of over 18% individuals of color (WTCS cubes), and its workforce 6% (IPEDS HR Survey). Western has increased the percentage of students of color it serves from 16% in 2021 to 18% in 2023 and continues to work on efforts to match workforce diversity with student and district diversity.

Coworkers are recruited nationally using various academic job boards and local advertising to post available positions. All hiring committee members receive training in compliance with EEOC laws and a hiring guide has been developed to guide managers ([Manager Hiring Guide](#)). All full-time instructional hiring committees include an HR representative. Western complies with [Equal Employment Opportunity](#) (EEO) policies and makes every effort to recruit and retain a diverse and highly qualified workforce.

Western has developed an [Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Five Year Plan](#) through the WTCS to directly support diversity in hiring across the College. The College actively tracks and measures gender, persons with disabilities, and members of racial/ethnic groups hired and employed by the College. Western includes an Equal Opportunity Employer/Educator Statement in all materials, brochures, applications, and admission forms.

3.C.2. The institution has sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty members to carry out both the classroom and the non-classroom roles of faculty, including oversight of the curriculum and expectations for student performance, assessment of student learning, and establishment of academic credentials for instructional staff.

Western offers programs, certificates, and other educational services in five divisions in [Academic Affairs](#) and through its Learner Support and Transition (LST) division (residing within the Student Service and Engagement [SSE] Unit). The College is served by 183 full-time and 214 part-time faculty as of this writing. Western maintains an excellent student/faculty ratio of 10 to 1, serving 3906 students in FY 23-24. [Faculty are readily available](#) for support and student have reported above average engagement in [student-faculty interactions](#).

The [Faculty Handbook](#) and [instructor job descriptions](#) spell out the specific work assignments for full-time faculty. These include a blend of teaching courses (18-22 units) and performing other professional expectations that may span academic advising, advisory committee meetings, course preparation, student assessment, college-wide meetings and events, curriculum development, program evaluation, etc. Faculty design, deliver, evaluate, and revise the courses they teach. They participate in professional development and engage in data and evidence analysis to improve their practices and enhance student success. Instructional design and technology support is available to the faculty in the form of course-embedded academic intervention instructors from the LST division, as well as scheduled and on-demand instructional design, delivery, and technology staff from AED (4.A.4).

Faculty participate in collaborative decision-making (3.A.1, 5.A.1, 5.A.2) through [faculty listening sessions](#), [focused forums](#), and division planning meetings. In addition, faculty engage in state-called curriculum development and review meetings to update program outcomes, state-aligned courses, and general education courses. Example: [AGBS state meeting agenda](#). Faculty have opportunities to serve as club advisors, program chairs, and on various college committees (such as the 7-week session research team, college communications team, etc.).

3.C.3. All instructors are appropriately qualified, including those in dual credit, contractual and consortial offerings.

All instructional positions are posted with credential requirements. These requirements align with published HLC requirements. Regardless of the type of appointment (full-time, adjunct, dual credit instruction), faculty are subject to the same credentialing review and documentation process with records centralized in HR and accessible by academic leaders (2.A.2). Western's faculty credentialing policy aligns with HLC and WTCS requirements as stated in [D0102 policy and procedure](#).

In addition to HLC requirements, Western meets all State of Wisconsin and WTCS requirements. All full-time and adjunct faculty are required to meet requirements set forth in the [WTCS Faculty Quality Assurance System](#) (FQAS) (3.C.5) within the first 3-5 years of employment. The FQAS requirement is published in all instructional job postings.

- [Instructor and Program Chair](#)
- [Academic Interventionist Instructor](#)
- [Adjunct Instructor](#)

3.C.4. Instructors are evaluated regularly in accordance with established institutional policies and procedures.

Western recently redesigned the evaluation approach for all full-time and adjunct faculty. A three-year cycle, enhanced with annual observations and supported by continuous documentation of their work and professional development round out the evaluation process. Across a three-year cycle, instruction-related feedback is given each year in turn by a peer, a member of AED, and then finally the dean of the division or direct supervisor. Each session of feedback is documented and reviewed at the end of the three-year cycle by the faculty member and their dean/supervisor.

Documents supporting professional review generally include the following: yearly [student course evaluations](#) from each class taught, the [Professional Learning Plan \(PLP\)](#), [instructional observation form](#), the [Quality Matters \(QM\) course rubric](#), and the [Professional Review Form](#).

Feedback on strengths and improvement is provided by the dean at the end of each three-year cycle. Newly hired faculty are supported and observed through the New Faculty Experience program. Any faculty member who has entered an improvement plan due to poor performance is observed each teaching term throughout the improvement plan. Dual credit instructors meet annually to receive [professional development \(PD\) training](#) at the college and meet the dean of the division and a full-time instructor who serves as their teaching mentor to review their syllabi and other materials.

3.C.5. The institution has processes and resources for assuring that instructors are current in their disciplines and adept in their teaching roles; it supports their professional development.

As per the instructor's job description, faculty are responsible for engaging in PD and are required to participate in regular college-wide and instructional [professional learning activities](#). Faculty are expected to review and update their individual PLP each year. In the PLP, faculty set professional goals and provide evidence of participation. Starting in the summer of 2025, all faculty must track their participation in college-wide PD (a minimum of 20 to 26 total hours) and individualized professional learning (20 total hours each year).

[Funds](#) are allocated to support faculty in conference travel, workshops, webinars, books, and requests for other training materials. Program instructors who must hold certifications in their technical fields are funded by the College to maintain the currency of their credentials. A centralized College Professional Development (CPD) fund and a professional growth grant (through the WTCS) are also available for ad-hoc professional development. All adjunct faculty are invited to attend most PD events.

Newly hired full-time instructors are onboarded through Western's NFE (**2.A.2, 3.B.4, 5.B.1**) which is grounded in the [EQAS competencies](#) (**2.A.C, 3.C3**). NFE offers up to three years of coursework where new faculty learn, apply, and process how to teach and assess student learning. All college faculty are made aware that excellence in teaching and learning requires continuous self-study by qualified instructors. Graduates of the NFE conduct a self-study on a "problem of practice" in their classes and deliver a presentation as a culmination of the program.

NFE also aligns with the College's three-year professional review cycle as continuing work in self-study/action research processes. Faculty evaluation and self-study are sustained by the work of the College's Institutional Research (IR) department with regular reports of student success data, climate surveys, and external data sets to inform and enrich the understanding of the instructors, staff, and administration of the College. All adjunct faculty members must demonstrate a foundational

proficiency in the FQAS competencies through stand-alone asynchronous courses focusing on these same competencies. These courses are provided by Western, and each course is offered twice a year. Courses offered in this modality have effectively met adjunct faculty needs and their diverse schedules, while also improving timely certification.

3.C.6. Instructors are accessible for student inquiry.

All of Western's full-time instructors are required to provide instructional support to all students enrolled in their courses. Full-time and adjunct instructors must communicate how and when they are available to students. Regardless of modality, faculty contact information and means of connecting with students are communicated to students through the [course syllabus](#) and posted in the [Blackboard course shell](#). Some faculty continue to use traditional office hours for connecting with students, some use coaching hours, and still others meet with students before and after courses. Faculty office hours may be in-person on campus or may be held virtually, online. Regardless of the preferred means, faculty are expected to communicate with students how and when they are available for student support. Requirements for faculty availability are listed in the [Faculty Handbook](#) (p. 4).

In addition, faculty engage with students through the faculty coaching model. Currently, all full-time, non-probationary faculty have completed related training and have been assigned a cohort of students. Newly hired full-time faculty complete the training in the summer after their first year of teaching. Results from the Ruffalo Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) and Community College Survey of Student Engagement serve as measures of student satisfaction and engagement with faculty. [Student-faculty interaction](#) (as measured in [CCSSE](#)) has consistently scored above Achieving the Dream (ATD) college averages. Students have indicated a high level of satisfaction with [faculty availability outside of the classroom](#), satisfaction levels that are above the national average for 2-year colleges according to [Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Survey](#).

3.C.7. Staff members providing student support services, such as tutoring, financial aid advising, academic advising and cocurricular activities, are appropriately qualified, trained and supported in their professional development.

Qualifications

HR approves all position descriptions, and processes are in place to ensure that academic support services staff are appropriately qualified and trained to provide meaningful student support. New employees are thoroughly trained by their supervisor and Western offers a mentor/mentee program through HR. All job descriptions reflect the required education, experience, and essential functions for a specific position. Examples of job descriptions for positions providing student support services include:

- [Academic Interventionist Instructor](#)
- [Admissions Coach](#)
- [College Advisor](#)
- [Career Services Advisor](#)
- [Career Services Specialist](#)
- [Counselor](#)
- [Financial Aid Advisor](#)
- [K-12 Partnership Specialist](#)
- [Student Support Librarians](#)
- [Peer Tutor](#)

Staff members providing student support services are expected to complete [mandatory training](#) in FERPA, Right to Know, Title IX. Those serving in advising roles are also required to complete mandatory recruiting training (2.A.2) as per [College policy](#). Evidence of this commitment includes [a roster](#) of those trained in ethical recruitment and [materials](#) used to train them. Student satisfaction with support services is evident in feedback from the [satisfaction](#) and [engagement](#) surveys and are included as [strategic goal measures](#).

Support

Western has committed resources to ensure that high-quality academic support is available to meet the needs of students. For example, the College's LST division is staffed with 18 academic intervention faculty who help students and faculty enhance student learning and success. Western's Peer Tutor Program has established a [process for tutor onboarding](#). This process is guided by the director of the Learning Commons and includes an HR background check and evidence of positive academic performance. Tutors receive a [desk manual](#), an [Employee Handbook for Tutors](#), as well as [robust training](#). [Tutors are readily available](#) for students and are guided by academic intervention faculty.

Student support services are regularly rated above benchmark comparisons and trendline (2019-2023) including the following:

[Advisor knowledge of programs](#)

[Advisor knowledge of transfer opportunities](#)

[Admissions counselor recruiting practices](#)

[Quality of instruction](#)

[Supporting academic, non-academic, and financial needs](#)

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3.D - Core Component 3.D

The institution provides support for student learning and resources for effective teaching.

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

Argument

3.D.1. The institution provides student support services suited to the needs of its student populations.

It is [Western's policy](#) to “provide equitable and inclusive support services to address the diverse needs of all students.” As these needs are complex and numerous, the College has developed and maintained several service areas to support students. Western's [Student Support and Engagement \(SSE\) unit](#) is structured with Veteran's Services; Marketing Communications and Legislative Affairs; Campus Community Safety; Counseling and Case Management; College Advising; Enrollment Services (including K-12 Partnerships, Admissions, and Financial Aid); LST; Career Services; and Student Life, Equity, and Community Engagement. The Welcome Center is on the first floor of the Student Success Center and co-locates many resources for students, including registration, enrollment services, advising, admissions, cashier, financial aid, tours, and program shadows. The central location of services for students has resulted in higher-than-average satisfaction rates for [“I seldom get the runaround when seeking information on campus:”](#) 74% versus 68% for the benchmark (SSI) and a notable increase (65% in 2019 and 74% in 2023). Western recently measured the effectiveness of its registration process (September 2023) and learned that [80% of survey respondents](#) (n=572) felt that the experience was positive.

The [Veteran Military Center](#) provides comprehensive support for all who qualify. These services include oversight and management of educational benefits, including the GI Bill and Wisconsin veteran education benefits. The center supports referrals and applies military credit for prior learning (CPL) where appropriate, manages the General Education Mobile Program, provides a lounge for student veterans, and plans extracurricular activities to provide social support.

Marketing Communication and Legislative Affairs supports the development, direction, and management Western's brand and identity through the development and implementation of an integrated marketing and communications strategy, based on the mission, vision, and values of the College and in support of the strategic plan. The department coordinates Western's public relations and legislative advocacy plans, monitors updates and changes in the political landscape, collaborates with leadership to inform legislative policy and connect with elected officials to advance issues in support of technical higher education.

[Campus Community Safety](#) promotes a safe and welcoming environment to improve the quality of campus life for everyone learning and working at Western. The department works in partnership with the campus community to provide professional and effective safety services. Dedicated staff work 24/7, actively patrolling the La Crosse Campus. The department oversees compliance of the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus [Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act](#). Students have expressed their satisfaction with [Campus Community Safety through the SSI](#) (1) The campus is safe and [secure for all students](#): 88% versus the benchmark of 85%; and (2) The [security staff respond quickly to calls for assistance](#): 83% versus the benchmark of 76% (SSI).

[Counseling and Case Management](#) employs 3 full-time non-clinical case managers, 1 counselor, 1 basic needs resource navigator, oversees Access Services, and manages the Western Care Team. The non-clinical case managers do not provide counseling services but provide referrals to services and to support students receiving services from external entities. Students express above average satisfaction with the [availability of counseling services](#): 86% satisfaction versus 78% for the benchmark (SSI).

[Access Services](#) supports accommodations and helps students with disabilities. Access Services uses AIM software to communicate with college instructors regarding student accommodations and supports faculty to meet student needs. In academic year (AY) 2022 – 2023, 384 students were registered with Access Services. This grew to 405 in [\(AY\) 2023-2024](#). This area is a main point of contact for many students, providing information and support as well as technology including screen readers, listening devices, and smart pens.

[College Advising](#) supports the student journey and provides developmental advising, guidance, and support for enrolled students with the goal of retention and graduation from their respective programs. The department works within a comprehensive retention system designed around a student-centered relationship owner model. Every student is assigned an advisor who assesses individual students' plans (academic and non-academic) and determines appropriate referrals to address barriers to their educational success. The SSI measures several indicators related to advising and is used to drive efforts to improve student satisfaction with advising efforts. For all related measures, [Western scores above the benchmark institutions](#) (all 2-year schools that administered the survey).

[Enrollment Services](#) includes admissions, the Registrar's Office, Financial Aid Office, and K12 Partnerships Department. This area oversees all recruitment, admissions, and enrollment initiatives including campus tours, college orientation, FAFSA sign up, and more. K12 Partnerships works closely with K12 school districts to coordinate dual credit options through transcribed credit and high school academies. The Financial Aid Office supports student access to state and federal financial aid funding, as well as other forms of funding including loans. Sixty-five (65) percent of Western's students qualified for [Federal Financial Aid in FY 2022 – 2023](#). The Financial Aid Office served 2575 students over the 2022 –2023 academic year. The SSI measures student satisfaction with Admissions and results reveal that Western's student satisfaction averages are above benchmark averages for all 2-year schools participating in the SSI.

The [SSI](#) also measures student satisfaction with many of the offerings in [Enrollment Services](#); (1) Registration processes and procedures are convenient: 84% satisfaction versus 79% for the benchmark; (2) This institution helps me identify resources to finance my education: 76% satisfaction versus the benchmark of 72%; (3) Admissions counselors accurately portray program offerings in their recruiting practices: 77% versus the benchmark of 74%; and (4) Admissions staff provide personalized attention prior to enrollment: 77% versus the 72% benchmark.

[Western's LST division](#) offers the bulk of Western's academic support, aligning multiple pre-college and just-in-time developmental education offerings, library services, and peer tutoring around a [long-term support pathway](#). As an initial stage of redesigning and aligning these support offerings, LST held weekly division-wide trainings around three equity areas: culturally responsive pedagogy, trauma-informed principles, and poverty-informed practices. The staff of the entire division co-constructed an [Educational Justice framework \(3.B.3\)](#) that translated these values to daily practice. These values then went on to inform [Western's Guided Pathways](#) launch, resulting in additional training in the three equity areas across the college.

[Career Services](#) supports the implementation of Western's three levels of experiential work-based learning (**1.C.1, 2.B.2, 4.B.1**). The team provides the following services to students: resume, cover letter, and interviewing assistance, job search support for workforce entry, and career exploration for academic entry ([Career Services 2022-2023 Annual Report](#)). The Career Services department partners with academic divisions in creating and maintaining credit internships. Students seeking support in finding non-credit internships or part-time work in their field also receive guidance in using career services resources and networking support. The SSI measures student satisfaction with "[services to help me decide upon a career:](#)" 80% versus 74% for the benchmark.

Student Life, Equity, and Engagement includes the Department of Student Life, The Department of Health, Recreation, and Well-Being, and The SPACE. Student Life provides support for both on campus students living in Western's 193 bed Residence Hall and commuting students through extracurricular activities, including student clubs and student government. The 4 full-time employee team ensures the rights and responsibilities of students are upheld which includes coordination of Title IX, Title XI, and other feedback/grievance processes.

The Department of Health, Recreation, and Well-Being provides recreation activities such as: varsity athletics, club sports, intramural and extramural sports, and fitness. The department oversees Western's relationship with the Student Health Center and provides other health education and resources for students to improve their well-being.

The SPACE (1.A.4) houses Western's equity, inclusion, and community engagement hub. It has 5 full-time staff and offers individualized support and coaching, cultural, educational, identity-based, and civic programming, while convening Western's focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. The SPACE is a safe place for students to find a deeper sense of belonging. There are board games, gathering spaces, free printing, snacks, and coffee available. These services are also measured through the SSI (1) [Students are made to feel welcome here](#): 89% versus 83% for the benchmark institutions; (2) I feel like my identities and lived experiences are valued in the classroom: 79% (no benchmark available); and (3) I belong at Western: 81% (no benchmark available).

The Basic Needs Center is a collective effort managed by a variety of leaders in SSE. Western believes that every student deserves to have their basic needs met and it is integral to accessing learning. The Basic needs Center offers access to the campus food pantry and clothes closet, walk-in support and navigation of campus and community resources, contact to Lawyers for Learners, and application to emergent funding resources and financial planning.

On the second floor of the Student Success Center, more services are co-located for current students; Access Services, Learning Commons, Basic Needs Center (newly established), Counseling and Case Management, Career Services, and The Student Place of Action, Culture, and Empowerment (The SPACE).

Computers are available for student use in many classrooms, as well as in the Learning Commons. Western's regional locations are equipped with classroom computers. Teaching stations have been installed in every classroom featuring a computer, a document camera, and an overhead projector. Some classrooms have had additional features installed to support online, synchronous teaching. These classrooms feature mounted sound and camera technology permitting the classroom experience to be shared with student learners at a distance. Student satisfaction with labs and computers are expressed through the [SSI](#): (1) Computers and/or Wi-Fi are adequate and accessible: 73% versus 80% for the benchmark and, (2) The equipment in the lab facilities is kept up to date: 76% versus the benchmark of 76%. Recently, Western updated its Wi-Fi networks to respond to student feedback.

All courses are supported by a Blackboard course shell with a rubric informed by Quality Matters used by academic leaders to review courses and ensure a consistent student experience. This electronic version of the course enables faculty to communicate with students electronically, post updates, and provides a platform for alternative instruction when courses are designed for online or hybrid delivery and when in-person meetings are interrupted by weather, illness, etc.

In 2014, Western partnered with Achieving the Dream (ATD) to assess institutional performance and set initial goals to address equity gaps in services and student learning. Through this process, a set of [Student Success Measures](#) (referred to as Key Results) were established and analyzed. Retention and completion challenges were uncovered, including equity gaps among BIPOC students and Western's student success measures. The [Experience 2025](#) strategic plan was developed in part to elevate equity as an institutional priority, framing student support as a direct answer to the equity gaps between different populations.

To assess the effectiveness of student support services mentioned throughout 3.D.1, Western uses several methods including the [Community College Survey of Student Engagement \(CCSSE\)](#), [Ruffalo Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory \(SSI\)](#), and frequent [mini-surveys](#) (Your Cavalier View) (5.A.1) related to target student topics.

3.D.2. The institution provides for learning support and preparatory instruction to address the academic needs of its students. It has a process for directing entering students to courses and programs for which the students are adequately prepared.

Western has successfully transitioned from a testing and placement model to a restructured program of academic support for student preparation for coursework and programming. Guided by the College's self-study with support from ATD, it was determined that Western's testing and placement model was inadequate. [Research](#) showed that only 21-27% of students placed into developmental coursework were able to complete within 2 years. This is consistent with the national literature, which increasingly recommends accelerating this education by making it concurrent with college level courses [Accelerated Developmental Education Research](#).

In response to this research, Western developed [position papers](#) which loosened placement benchmarks on the Accuplacer assessment and embedded developmental courses in college-level courses from 2016-2020. This structured support waived the assessment-and-placement process on a trial basis during the pandemic, to alleviate barriers and maintain student enrollment. A [systematic review](#) of these changes showed no significant declines in outcomes across consistent course types and led to the elimination of assessment and placement in AY 2021. The result of assessment and placement redesign has been the development of a [menu](#) of offerings that is increasingly aligned around a [long-term support pathway](#).

In place of developmental education sequences, LST has expanded its role to create pathways into college for high-barriered learners and real-time developmental education for all learners. The College has embedded academic interventionist faculty in programs and courses and [incorporated UDL practices](#) including scaled just-in-time developmental education.

LST has been responsible for pre-college work, including General Education Diploma (GED) testing through Pearson Vue; High School Equivalency Diploma (HSED) programming overseen by the [Wisconsin Department of Education](#) English Language learning (ELL) and Adult Education (AE) curriculum overseen through a comprehensive [Adult Education and Family Literacy Act \(AEFLA\) grant](#); and developmental education pre-requisite courses. With the elimination of assessment and placement, LST has adapted to provide a program of aligned offerings and this work is evident in their [continuous improvement planning](#). This pathway aims to help high-barriered students prepare for college and creates a college-level learning environment rich in educational support for an increasingly diverse student body.

Western's current pre-college programming focuses on secondary credential attainment and persistence into credit coursework, rather than the pre/post assessments used in a traditional developmental education model. This change in focus is reflected in the outcomes published in the institution's WTCS-issued [AEFLA report cards](#). The college has also revised its approach to traditional pre-college programs to meet the needs of specific high-barriered communities and help them transition successfully into college programming:

- **GED/HSED:** Western's [5.09 HSED program](#) eliminates redundant coursework and testing for adults and leverages the employability curriculum to provide college preparation and [CPL](#) opportunities. This program also offers college-level credit for prior learning (CPL) for high [GED scores](#).
- **Alternative High School:** Western offers [compulsory attendance contracts](#) with several school districts to make 5.05 and 5.09 HSED options available to at-risk youth. The College also contracts with the [Challenge Academy](#) at Ft. McCoy to make this program available to their cadets.
- **ELL Classes:** Western offers classes at the La Crosse Campus and has [partnerships](#) with two regional school districts to provide ELL classes to communities with large Spanish-speaking populations. These classes are increasingly contextualized around college preparatory skills.
- **Project Proven:** Western's [704 AEFLA grant](#) allows the college to provide AE and GED/HSED courses to learners involved in the justice system. The College now offers courses taught by LST faculty in four county jails in the region, including a [CPL portfolio](#) for the Customer Service Representative certificate. [Project Proven](#) also offers AE programs designed to meet these students' unique social, employment, and academic needs upon re-entry, as well as one-on-one [AE instruction](#). The College has a well-defined [process](#) for routing this complex population of students to the appropriate programming.
- **Pre-PALS:** While developmental courses are typically not required at Western, faculty in the Learning Commons (3.D.4) offer these [courses](#) on an individualized, contextualized, [open-access](#) through the Personalized Applied Learning Strategies (PALS) program.

In addition to these refinements of traditional pre-college programming, the College has leveraged the state's AE curriculum outside of the AEFLA grant to integrate developmental education into

college level programming. This just-in-time support model is called Academic Intervention. Western reported on the development and outcomes of this initiative at [Achieving the Dream 2024](#). This model includes:

- **The Bundle:** LST faculty work with Project Proven and admissions coaches to direct students needing significant academic preparation to enroll in a cohort of courses, [The Bundle](#) – a full-time load of 2 developmental and 2 general education courses. These co-enrolled courses are fully aligned to provide a holistic first-term experience for the highest-barriered students (see 4.C.3 for future developments)
- **Co-Requisite AE Courses:** Using disaggregated Student Success Measures (Key Results) and data from student learning outcomes assessment (4.B.2), the College identified 5 key low-completion-rate general education courses and co-enrolled an [AE course](#) to each section. This model is changing to a more [targeted model supporting course redesign](#) and other needs, based on outcomes of the initial effort and the development of the [Strengths Seminar](#) (4.C.3).
- **Class Visits and Study Groups:** LST provides supplemental AE through strategic class visits, embedded [supplemental instructional materials](#), and coordinated [study groups](#). These efforts grew out of program-specific support projects and are now expanding to support general studies.
- **PALS:** LST offers a multi-tiered program of individualized adult education called [PALS](#). In addition to Pre-PALS, this includes self-elected support for college classes (PALS 1), time-sensitive catch-up plans (PALS 2), and remediation for suspension and program dismissal (PALS 3). PALS Program levels 2 and 3 are being adjusted and expanded to support [policy changes](#) around incompletes and academic standing as well as bring them to scale.

Finally, in academic year (AY) 2024, Western launched a one-credit first-term common course required for all programs --the [Strengths Seminar](#) (4.C.3). Practices aligned to Western's [Guided Pathways](#) work to provide pathways into multiple program clusters, and competencies are designed to be consistent with the learning outcomes of the Revised Enrollment Journey (3.D.3). This course uses reflection-based course design to help students develop a positive identity as a learner, set career goals, identify skills gaps they want to work on, and get connected with support. In short, the course will guide students through a holistic, contextualized self-assessment of their support needs, and teach them how to direct themselves to the appropriate student supports.

While the restructure of Western's academic supports has been designed to remedy system deficits and foster organic teacher-student connections on a just-in-time basis, it is reinforced by the assess-and-refer processes structured by the Revised Enrollment Journey (REJ). In this model, students work with their relationship owner, who uses a coaching framework to help students self-assess their learning needs and choose the appropriate support. Additionally, any college stakeholder can use the referral system in the College's [customer relationship management \(CRM\)](#) (2.B.1) software to refer students for outreach by the appropriate faculty team.

3.D.3. The institution provides academic advising suited to its offerings and the needs of its students.

Academic advising from admissions to graduation is organized through the [REJ](#), first implemented

in 2017. This framework was the result of a long-term strategic consulting and redesign process. In 2014, Western contracted with a consultant to identify strengths and opportunities for Western's strategic enrollment management. Their report included suggestions to impact Fall 2014 enrollment, but also laid the groundwork for future policies, processes, and procedures. In 2016, Western contracted with an additional consultant to provide a needs assessment around expanding to online classes, which revealed a need for more general improvements to admissions processes. The decision was made to partner to process map Western's current state, determine the future state, and then uncover the gaps and the actions needed to fill those gaps. This resulted in the REJ.

The REJ provides the guidelines to coordinate all academic advising at Western: (1) structured stages to organize all offerings around the student experience; (2) student learning outcomes to define what the College is responsible for teaching students by the end of each stage; (3) role clarity for all aspects of this work, naming admissions coaches and advisors as the primary relationship-owner at specific stages of the enrollment journey; and (4) an implementation plan for the CRM, which is designed to track advising and other support, coordinate referrals, and manage communications.

Since 2017, the REJ has structured the implementation of the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, and is informing next steps in building data intelligence through a [5-year Title III grant](#). This framework also informed the decision to clarify and establish admissions coaches and college advisors as relationship owners before and after first-term registration (respectively). Further, admissions coaches, advisors, and even faculty are now all trained and using the coaching model, ensuring a systematically aligned approach to student advising. Finally, the REJ also motivated a complete redesign of the Welcome Center (**3.D.1**), so that the physical space centers the student rather than the service department.

3.D.4. The institution provides to students and instructors the infrastructure and resources necessary to support effective teaching and learning (technological infrastructure, scientific laboratories, libraries, performance spaces, clinical practice sites and museum collections, as appropriate to the institution's offerings).

Effective teaching and learning are bolstered by extensive access to 212 clinical practice sites/opportunities for students; two simulation labs; five science labs, 38 computer labs; and an annual investment of \$1,185,000 annually in network infrastructure and equipment. In addition, [Western's Learning Commons](#) provides infrastructure and resources for academic support, including AE (**3.D.2**), drop-in tutoring, and library services. The space is fully staffed at regular [published times](#). The [physical space](#) contains a classroom, 3 printers, 30 computer workstations, and 12 private study rooms. The space also houses three subject-specific learning centers – the Math Center, Writing Center, and Science Center – where students can find drop-in support from AE faculty and 35 peer tutors (funded partly through an annual Carl D. Perkins grant). These learning centers also provide [online options](#) and are beginning to extend their in-person services to other [on- and off-campus buildings](#).

The Learning Commons houses library services, in partnership with the Winding Rivers Library system and WisPALS State Consortium. The library is funded by district dollars and staffed by two full-time [student learning librarians](#), as well as one full-time and one part-time administrative staff. The [scope of the library's collections](#) (physical and online), expenses, and circulation is tracked on LibInsight and reported to IPEDS, ACRL, and WisPALS Library Consortium. The library also provides over [95 LibGuides](#) (digital resource guides) to address classroom information needs and is supporting the development of Open Educational Resources (OER) across the college. Western has

increased the capacity to provide access to relevant technology, lab spaces, and library services and is met with high satisfaction of students as assessed in the [Noel Levitz SSI](#).

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3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary

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

Summary

Western's academic offerings are structured for placement in career and technical occupations, transfer, skill building, and high school completion. These credentials are appropriate to higher education and aligned with standards set forth by the Wisconsin Technical College System, the Higher Learning Commission, and other regulating bodies. General education courses are embedded within program configurations to engage students in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information; in mastering modes of intellectual inquiry or creative work; in recognizing human and cultural diversity; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.

Western strives to align the demographics of its workforce with its constituencies and has prioritized the increase in diversity of coworkers in its strategic plan. Western maintains a low student-to-faculty ratio of 10:1. Robust academic supports are provided through the Learner Support and Transition division and through several departments within the Student Service and Engagement Unit such as the Learning Commons, The SPACE, Access Services, Counseling and Case Management, and College Advising. Resources for effective teaching are offered through the Academic Excellence and Development Division.

Sources

There are no sources.

4 - Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

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

4.A - Core Component 4.A

The institution ensures the quality of its educational offerings.

1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews and acts upon the findings.
2. The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning, or relies on the evaluation of responsible third parties.
3. The institution has policies that ensure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.
4. The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It ensures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.
5. The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.
6. The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution ensures that the credentials it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission.

Argument

4.A.1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews and acts upon the findings.

The College maintains a regular practice of comprehensive program evaluation conducted every 3-5 years for each program and service area guided by the Institutional Effectiveness (IE) Unit and Academic Excellence and Development (AED) Department (**5.A.1, 5.A.2, 5.C.2, 5.C.6**).

Comprehensive program and service evaluation provides the opportunity for deeper dives into various data sets.

As depicted in the [comprehensive program evaluation model visual](#) and [model evaluation guide](#), the process is robust and structured with phases that include (1) data and evidence analysis ([self-study workbook](#)); (2) 360-degree program or service deep dive using the Guided Pathways Scale of Adoption instrument as a self-study and peer review tool ([example](#)); (3) pattern, trend, and root cause analysis conducted by peer evaluators ([example](#)) and program faculty ([example](#)); (4) best practices exploration and solution selection; (5) [continuous improvement plan creation](#); and (6) checking and adjusting. This model aligns with Western's framework for performance excellence (**5.A.2**) and

includes a Scan (data analysis), Plan, Do, Check, Adjust approach to continuous improvement.

The model includes quantitative, qualitative, historical, and comparison data and a [data analysis summary](#) created by a peer evaluator (faculty or other staff). Data is customized for each academic division in the College and distributed in an annual “data summit” (4.C.2, 5.A.2) that kicks off cycles of comprehensive program evaluation every 3-5 years. Each program receives [program-specific data](#) that includes disaggregated Key Results (Student Success Measures) such as course completion, retention, graduation, job placement, and transfer. Additional data comprises employer, student, and employee feedback structured around the Guided Pathways Scale of Adoption assessment tool; student learning outcomes (SLO) assessment data; Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction data; regional labor market data; Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) data; and as mentioned earlier, a data analysis summary provided by a peer evaluation team.

Data analysis is captured in a [continuous improvement plan](#) with 2-3 Wildly Important Goals (WIGs, *The Four Disciplines of Execution*®) for improving the program and achieving higher levels of student success. The process is aligned with the strategic plan's priorities and feeds the [annual planning and budgeting processes](#) (5.C). Annually, programs and service areas [receive new data at the data summit](#). Updated and new data is used to check and adjust original plans. Progress is captured and updated annually.

Hosted by IR, the data summit brings program chairs, department chairs, academic leadership, and student support managers and staff together to review data centered around a certain theme. The event incorporates cross-functional seating arrangements and [table guides](#) who are trained to facilitate constructive conversations about the data. During table discussions, these cross-functional teams discuss both college-level and program or service-level data. The analysis of the data is applied to each program’s annual continuous improvement plan.

The Foundations of Teacher Education program used the comprehensive program evaluation process in 2022 to establish its [Planning Cycle 2022 continuous improvement plan](#). With data and evidence analyzed by both a [peer review team](#) and [program faculty](#), the focus of the continuous improvement plan was to revamp the curriculum of the program and provide embedded supports for students to enhance the student experience, increase student satisfaction, and improve retention. As part of the annual data summit and continuous improvement planning process, the plan was updated in [2023](#) to reflect the most recent data and progress made toward the 2022 plan.

The Human Services Associate program used the comprehensive program evaluation process in 2022 to establish its [Planning Cycle 2023 continuous improvement plan](#). Driven by data analysis conducted by a [peer review team](#) and [program faculty](#), the continuous improvement plan focused on reducing waitlists and retention for students of color.

The Physical Therapy Assistant program participated in the 2022 comprehensive program evaluation process and used [peer evaluator](#) and their own [data and evidence analysis](#) to pinpoint the need to focus a [plan](#) on connections with waitlist students and improvement in student learning by replacing old, worn out, broken equipment with applicable equipment used in the clinical setting.

While the data summit (4.A.1, 4.C.2, 5.C.3) serves as the launch of both the comprehensive program evaluation cycle every 3-5 years and the continuous improvement planning and budgeting process every year, programs and service areas contribute to ongoing continuous improvement through a variety of other mechanisms and inputs. Each program at Western convenes an advisory committee (1.B.1, 1.B.2) to keep programs up-to-date and industry relevant. They meet twice per year. Advisory

committees review data on the student experience, student learning, and industry trends to make recommendations to guide each program's development. Program chairs bring forth and implement the recommendations with the approval of the academic dean. The results of program changes are later reviewed by advisory committees and during the annual planning process.

An example of an advisory committee-initiated revision was in the Automotive program. In reviewing the curriculum, the advisory committee determined that the program did not sufficiently prepare students for the industry transition to electric vehicles. Due to the recommendation, the program established an action plan in its [continuous improvement plan](#) (p. 2) to revise course competencies to incorporate content related to the maintenance of electric vehicles. Students have been performing well on these added course competencies and this has been reported back to the Automotive advisory committee.

Another example of an advisory-committee-initiated revision is the evolution of the Site Layout courses in the Building, Construction, and Cabinetmaking (BCCM) program. Together with faculty, advisory committee determined that student learning data did not show students had the experience they needed in site layout for residential construction and existing course materials needed revision. BCCM used this recommendation to guide its incorporation of a new, separate course for site layout into its curriculum. Data on student learning in this new course is currently being collected.

Western recognizes that its evaluation and planning documentation system is manual and cumbersome to use. Future enhancements to the comprehensive program evaluation process and continuous improvement planning model include projects within Western's Title III grant to create an integrated evaluation, planning, and budgeting process optimized with software to make individual pieces of the process more engaging, cohesive, and aligned with the College's strategic plan and program and department dashboards to put data at the fingertips of Western coworkers.

4.A.2. The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning, or relies on the evaluation of responsible third parties.

All credit for prior learning (CPL) transcribed by Western follows both [Wisconsin Technical College \(WTCS\) requirements](#) and [Western policy and procedure](#) that dictate the College set "academic standards for educational achievement to ensure the quality of instruction and student success." Western tracks and reviews all CPL using the student information system (SIS) and its [Degree Audit](#) feature.

CPL policies and procedures are communicated to students via the [College's website](#) and the [Student Handbook](#) (pp. 120-121). Adherence to these policies is coordinated by the [CPL and transfer specialist](#). Official scores on a standardized exam can be checked against a [rubric](#) of vetted equivalencies. Documentation of work experience in a specific trade might rely on an external assessment of an [employer](#) or another [qualified third party](#). In other cases, [skills demonstrations](#) have been developed by Western faculty members, who coordinate with the CPL and transfer specialist for [assessment](#).

Military CPL is awarded based on the American Council on Education [guidelines and review](#) of equivalencies by qualified faculty and/or skill demonstration. The process is required by federal and state law. The process for awarding Military CPL is monitored by the Federal Veteran's Administration (VA) through yearly [compliance reviews](#). Western also undergoes an annual catalog

[review](#) by the Wisconsin Department of State approving agency in order to maintain VA approval. Catalog approvals that are finalized (including [exemptions](#)) and approved by the Federal VA are posted in the [WEAMS directory](#). Western also has a current signed Department of Defense [MOU](#) and participates in the Principles of Excellence which includes evaluating military experience for credit. A [veterans specialist](#) coordinates the [process](#) for awarding of CPL for military service at the student level, including maintaining a directory of [general](#) and [detailed](#) equivalencies, and [coordinating](#) with the CPL and transfer specialist for processing. Approved CPL applications are documented and archived in Western's imaging system (Perceptive Content) and applied to a student's record as a course substitution in the SIS. These substitutions are subsequently cross-checked by the registrar through the Degree Audit.

4.A.3. The institution has policies that ensure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.

Western recognizes that students may acquire knowledge and competencies through activities and experiences outside of Western's educational offerings. Western endeavors, when possible, to provide appropriate academic credit for these activities and experiences as prescribed by the [WTCS Board Policy #323, Credit for Prior Learning](#).

Written requirements and procedures for students for seeking credit for prior learning along with information about associated costs for obtaining CPL are found in the [Student Handbook](#), on the [College website](#), and in [College procedure](#). Procedure states that Western will accept credit that is (1) directly applicable to a currently declared degree, (2) earned at a nationally accredited institution, and (3) is equivalent to a course that Western currently offers.

4.A.4. The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It ensures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.

Oversight for the quality and rigor of the Western's programs and courses is maintained through the vice president of learning, through academic and College policies and procedures, through guidance from the WTCS, program advisory committees, and transfer partners, and through the support and direction of AED. As described in **3.A.1**, Western's dean of Academic Excellence, Education, and Human Services (AEH)/curriculum coordinator leads AED, a team of faculty developers, instructional designer, and an instructional technologist that collaborates with faculty, stakeholders, and subject matter experts to study, evaluate, review, and modify programs and courses, ensure pre- and co-requisites are properly selected, and ensure courses meet expectations and requirements of rigor appropriate for the credential type and labor market demands.

The Worldwide Instructional Design System (WIDS) (**3.A.1**) feeds Western's public web site to display course and program information for students and other stakeholders. Faculty can also link syllabi generated in WIDS directly to their Blackboard shells. The curriculum review and development processes apply to all credit-bearing and HSED/GED courses and spur the selection and alignment of pre- or co-requisites for courses through the collaboration of faculty, academic leadership, and AED. These processes result in a [Course Outcome Summary \(COS\)](#) and a [Program Outcome Summary \(POS\)](#).

The COS is the foundation upon which instructors design the teaching and learning experiences for students for all forms of delivery (online, hybrid, compressed, dual credit option, BIS offering)

ensuring that students enrolled in any section of a course will be presented with the same curriculum. Full-time faculty engage in regular review of the COS so curriculum is updated to meet the needs of the program. Changes by faculty are reviewed and approved by the curriculum coordinator. Key components of the COS include course competencies, performance standards, learning objectives, common textbooks/supplies, alignment to program outcomes, pre/co-requisites for the course, and credit/hour type. Key components of the POS include description, career/job titles, entry requirements, Success Abilities, high impact practices, and program outcomes.

Western ensures the quality and appropriate credentialing of all faculty by following [WTCS and HLC policy](#) and [College policy and procedures \(3.C.3\)](#). Processes for course scheduling, direction setting, and professional development for dual credit programming are coordinated by the [K-12 partnership manager](#) and the [K-12 partnerships specialist](#). All potential dual credit instructors must first fill out an [application form](#), through which credentials are [reviewed by the appropriate dean](#) and processed through Human Resources (HR). At this stage, the K-12 specialist provides a list of available courses the instructor can offer. A contract with the [partnering high school](#) is then established through Western's Business and Industry Services (BIS) Division. The K-12 specialist maintains a [directory](#) of dual credit locations, instructors, and courses. Instructor paperwork is also collected and stored electronically by HR.

Western requires dual credit instructors to participate in a 3-year Summer Summit program (effective FY23). The [first year](#) introduces instructors to the dean overseeing their courses and to a Western [faculty mentor](#). An overview of the program is shared. The [second year](#) is a virtual offering, in which instructors work through training modules around course design, [syllabus creation in WIDS](#), and access to Western resources and supports. The [third year of the program](#) reconnects dual credit instructors with their Western faculty mentor for an extended period for collaboration, course design, and troubleshooting.

Western also provides mechanisms for communication and feedback with dual credit students and instructors including annual visits to each dual credit site by the K-12 manager and specialist to [explain the program](#) to students; a follow-up student survey; and teacher engagement through regular [K-12 Partnership Council meetings](#). This council consists of one representative from each school district, Western admissions staff, and guests such as academic deans. Council meetings are used to deliver program updates and [solicit member input](#) on program direction and support offerings. At the end of each year, the K-12 manager issues a [summary outcomes report](#) to participating school districts.

4.A.5. The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.

As described and linked in **2.B.1**, Western has specialized accreditations for [16 academic programs](#). These accreditations, listed on the respective program's web page, confirm that programs are relevant, current, and connected to needs within the current labor market. Faculty in programs that require external accreditation engage in self-studies, program planning, and assurance argument writing activities to maintain those accreditations. An example of the process can be seen in the recent summary and filing for Western's [Medical Lab Technician](#) whose program accreditor increased the term from a seven to ten-year approval.

4.A.6. The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution ensures that the credentials it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its

mission.

Because Western's mission supports serving students through education that results in attainment of living wage jobs, career advancement, and transfer to other institutions, the College evaluates both job placement and transfer measures (**1.B.3**). In support of WTCS requirements, Western's IR Department assesses the success of graduates by conducting an [outcomes survey](#) 6 months post-graduation or [apprenticeship completion](#) to understand employment outcomes, wages, and satisfaction with the training received. On a two-year alternating schedule, [employers are surveyed](#) to give feedback on graduate's preparedness for the position or longitudinal outcomes where graduates are surveyed [5 years post-graduation](#) to understand long term outcomes. The results of these surveys are integrated into the Key Results (Student Success Measures) of the College's strategic plan. Key Results and are shared with individual programs. Annually, Western analyzes transfer data to identify patterns and opportunities for articulation agreements using the [WTCS Program Performance Dashboard](#).

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4.B - Core Component 4.B

The institution engages in ongoing assessment of student learning as part of its commitment to the educational outcomes of its students.

1. The institution has effective processes for assessment of student learning and for achievement of learning goals in academic and cocurricular offerings.
2. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
3. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty, instructional and other relevant staff members.

Argument

4.B.1. The institution has effective processes for assessment of student learning and for achievement of learning goals in academic and cocurricular offerings.

Western's [learning assessment approach](#) focuses on continuous improvement and incorporates direct and indirect assessment and quantitative and qualitative data. Western views assessment as ongoing and as an important part of its student success work. It is guided by an assessment philosophy: "Intentional planning of differentiated equitable assessment strategies is integral to educational justice. Assessment of all levels of student outcomes is a continuous quality improvement process. Assessment planning and data analysis effectively verify and document where, when, and how well student learning occurs in the classroom, program, division, and through co-curriculars which informs the continuous improvement of college processes to further enhance learning across the College." Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) assessment is an integral component of the teaching and learning process. As a result, assessment has been the focus of numerous college-wide, divisional, and [departmental discussions](#), [workshops](#), and [professional learning opportunities](#).

The College assesses student learning and achievement of academic and cocurricular offerings at the course, program, college, and when appropriate, the service level (e.g. experiential learning opportunities offered through Career Services Department as work-based learning and Community Engagement Office as community-based learning). Western's assessment processes include direct assessment throughout a student's journey and indirect assessment of exit learning outcomes through a survey conducted with graduating students just prior to graduation.

Key components of Western's academic and co-curricular SLO assessment model include formative and signature assessments at the course and program level, and processes to assess technical skills or program outcomes (Technical Skill Attainment [TSA]), and SuccessAbilities. Faculty assess students based on the [program assessment plan](#) and [course assessment maps](#). A signature assessment is an assessment used to measure student performance of a program or college-wide outcome. Each program outcome is associated with a signature assessment used to collect evidence that students are meeting program outcomes as indicated on the TSA scoring guides.

Course-level Outcomes: Each course has a set of course competencies and performance criteria with specific assessment strategies and learning objectives – all documented in WIDS (through the COS). Common summative assessments are used in courses associated with more than one program.

Instructors collect performance data from courses and record results in the learning management system ([LMS](#)) -- [Blackboard](#). In each program's assessment plan, the program sets goals for achievement of program outcomes according to college-wide goals. The College has set a target of 70% proficiency across most programs and courses with a few Health and Public Safety Division programs and courses using a 78% proficiency score aligned to external accreditation standards.

Program-level Outcomes: All programs at Western have identified [program outcomes](#) that are assessed through the WTCS TSA process prescribed by the WTCS. All program outcomes are created and validated through a DACUM process and through state-aligned, system-office-led curriculum review meetings. DACUM is short for Developing a Curriculum and is a process where industry partners are assembled to create and validate outcomes for programs based on occupational analysis and employment needs ([ITDA DACUM](#)).

TSA Phase 1 ([WTCS TSA](#)) brings together college faculty from similar programs on system-wide teams to revise program outcomes, identify the type of [unique assessment](#), [WTCS Scoring Guide](#), or [Third Party assessment](#), and identify assessment criteria to measure student learning at the course level. Outcomes are reviewed and approved by additional stakeholders such as [local college advisory committees](#) and program deans.

TSA Phase 2 ([WTCS TSA](#)) takes place at Western and includes identifying course level assessment tool(s) that may include exams, portfolios, demonstrations, and other measures to assess student proficiency in the program outcomes. In this process, program faculty align program outcomes in WIDS through a map or [matrix](#). These matrices identify where program outcomes are introduced, reinforced, or assessed in courses across the program. Each program translates the matrix into a [program assessment plan](#). The plan provides further details about the "signature" assessments and additional assessments found in courses within the program.

In addition, [TSA Phase 2](#) or Phase 2 revision establishes (1) how individual student level assessment data will be collected within the college's LMS, (2) how assessment data will be analyzed, and (3) how assessment data will be used to improve student learning. TSA data is collected from faculty through the [TSA scoring spreadsheet](#) and reported annually to the WTCS. The collective results are used to determine possible changes to the program curriculum during annual planning or during comprehensive program evaluation including revisions to current courses or the need for new teaching strategies, new units of instruction, or new assessment measures.

In preparation for shortened terms, 61 of 67 programs (associate degree or technical diploma) have completed the redesign process and have the tools to update the information as needed. Four programs were exempt from the process.

College-wide Exit Outcomes (SuccessAbilities): In addition to course and program-specific (TSA) outcomes, Western has aligned course competencies to college-wide exit outcomes known as the [SuccessAbilities \(1.C.1, 3.A.2, 3.B.2, 3.B.3, 5.C.2\)](#) This alignment can be seen when viewing a COS. Since introducing the SuccessAbilities to faculty in August 2017 as the new college exit outcomes, faculty have participated in multiple workshops and facilitated sessions related to development, implementation, and evaluation of the [SuccessAbilities](#). Over the past two years, each program has strategically chosen their [top three SuccessAbilities](#) on which to focus. Western gathers direct evidence of student achievement of the SuccessAbilities through the aligned assessments as identified on [program maps](#), and indirect measurement of student achievement through the SLO assessment survey.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) Survey: As students prepare for graduation, they are [surveyed](#) to gauge their confidence in performing program outcomes and SuccessAbilities. For [programs](#) with high completion rates on the SLO survey, faculty use the quantitative and qualitative student input data along with direct course assessment data to make decisions about the assessment, the sequencing of the SuccessAbilities, and the scaffolding of instruction needed.

Co-curricular Outcomes: As described in (1.B.1, 1.C.1, 2.B.2, and 5.A.1) Western defines co-curricular as teaching and learning experiences that complement the classroom learning experience and build student agency to inclusively influence communities, grow as leaders, and cultivate passions. Co-curricular activities are intentionally designed to meet one or more of Western's SuccessAbilities and/or the academic program's learning outcomes and are embedded in a course or otherwise connected through academic and student service partnerships.

Two key co-curricular activities include community-based learning (CBL) and work-based learning (WBL) (1.B.1, 1.B.3, 1.C.2, 2.B.2). Western defines CBL as engaging students in a purposeful and immersive approach to their learning while working closely with their instructor to develop valuable skills and strengthen the communities that Western serves. CBL goes beyond students volunteering. CBL enables students to apply what they are learning in the classroom to improve the community, build self-awareness, and develop professional skills. Effective CBL includes assessment in the form of reflection before, during, and after to help students think critically about their experience or the social issue while incorporating individual civic and social responsibility connections throughout. WBL is defined as experiences that allow students to apply the technical and employability skills that they have learned in the classroom to the industry that corresponds with their program.

Western has embedded WBL and CBL in 100% of its programs. The College is maturing in the assessment of co-curricular learning as described in the latest draft of its [handbook](#) and planned [Cavalier Compass Model](#) -- a newly drafted co-curricular model that is designed to help students think holistically about their educational experiences at Western, both inside and outside the classroom (Alexander Astin, 1999). The Cavalier Compass will be accessed and tracked through ENGAGE, Western's student engagement software. Participants will complete a variety of pre-determined activities, both optional and required, to complete each of the four paths of Equity and Justice, Community and Connection, Responsibility and Ethics, and Passion.

4.B.2. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.

Western uses information gained from SLO assessment (5.C.2, 1.C.1) in its comprehensive program evaluation process and in its annual planning process to improve student learning in its programs and courses. As described in 4.A.1, the comprehensive program evaluation process was last facilitated in 2022 with 100% of Western programs conducting a deep dive. To further integrate SLO assessment and the use of results for improvement, Western is using its 7-Week Sessions redesign process to identify any courses and programs without key and signature assessments (an assessment used to measure student performance of a program or college-wide outcome) and ensure that data from these assessments are used to improve student learning. The next cycle of comprehensive program evaluation will launch in 2025.

Examples of how various components of SLO assessment have been used to improve programs include:

Example 1 [Accounting](#): Analysis of student feedback showed mixed feedback on the online-only

structure, with some proposing virtual meetings for better interaction and support. Students also suggested the workload could be challenging, especially when juggling multiple classes and jobs. Based on the student feedback, some observations, and exploration of potential strategies to improve student learning and success in the program, several actions were identified: recognize and reinforce positive feedback to continue motivating students, acknowledge the value students place on positive feedback and the ability to make multiple attempts on assignments, incorporate more interactive elements into the online learning experience, hold virtual meetings, discussion forums, or live Q&A, and address concerns about workload management, especially for students juggling multiple classes and a heavy work schedule.

Example 2 [Early Childhood Education](#): SLO assessment results from qualitative comments in 2020 show students like the hands-on and field work assignments that are useful in their careers. They are confident in their abilities for all program outcomes and SuccessAbilities. There is a strong theme of instructor support and students conveyed they enjoy the small class sizes. Long class days and practicum hours were expressed as concerns. Due to this data analysis, practicum hours were modified to better meet student learning needs.

Example 3 [Business Management](#): The program (BSMN) used assessment data results, TSA results, and student and employer feedback surveys to alter the focus of their program. In the past the BSMN program had courses related more to entrepreneurship; however, student assessment and feedback data indicated that many students who enroll in the BSMN program want to be front-end managers. The program made curricular changes to focus more course content and outcomes on management. With this change, numerous courses were tagged to be added, removed and redesigned.

Example 4 Nursing: Western maintains outside accreditation for several of its programs (see 2.A.2). As part of their accreditation processes, these programs collect data on learning outcomes and use them to improve student learning. For example, the Nursing program reviews its exams each year with its instructors. If it notices that students are performing poorly on a particular question on its exams it convenes a meeting to examine the question. If they find that they were not providing enough instruction time on the topic, the following term, they add additional instruction on the topic. The following year they observed students improved their scores on the question. Results of revisions due to this form of continuous improvement are reported in the program's accreditation reporting.

4.B.3. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty, instructional, and other relevant staff members.

Western's SLO process incorporates both faculty voice (program outcomes assessment, TSA assessment, SuccessAbilities assessment processes) and student voice (exit learning outcomes assessment and co-curricular reflection processes). The power of Western's instructional design system (WIDS), its commitment to performance-based teaching and learning, and the development of evidence-based assessment practices contribute to a well-rounded SLO assessment model. Currently, data collection and dissemination processes are manual and cumbersome. The College lacks a single system of record for assessment data – which is the desired approach. Despite these barriers, several advancements have been made to integrate the collection, analysis, dissemination, and use of SLO data. Western expertise in assessment and the use of results have grown over the past five years.

Spurred by comprehensive curriculum redesign and the 7-Week Session implementation – a tremendous amount of time was dedicated to (1) [faculty-led development](#) of program assessment maps and performance assessment tasks (PATs) (2.A.2) for key and signature assessments in courses

according to the Transparency in Learning and Teaching ([TiLT Framework](#)) and (2) specifying expected levels of achievement for all program and college outcomes. Throughout the 7-week session redesign process (**3.A.1, 3.B.3, 5.A.1, 5.C.1, 5.C.2**), faculty attended monthly workshops related to all aspects of program design and assessment. Guided by the AED team, which supplies the structure and resources to complete the work, and Western's Framework for [Educational Justice](#) (**2.D.1, 3.B.3, 3.D.1, 4.B.1, 4.C.3**) all faculty engaged in the development of evidence-based teaching strategies, culturally responsive practices and inclusive learning environments, and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) (**2.D.1, 3.A.4**).

Contributing to best practice in assessment is Western's commitment to curriculum development and the use of the Quality Matters (QM) framework for course development and improvement. Western has created custom [checklists](#) and [passports](#) based on the Quality Matters rubric. Members of the AED team are certified in applying the Quality Matters Rubric (APPQMR) (**3.C.4**) and reviewed the course maps and learning management system shells created during the workshops.

Western has set aside time at each faculty in-service to work together in reviewing results and planning for program improvement during and after the 7-week redesign. This dedicated time has helped academic teams develop and revise plans for improvement directly related to assessment results. The development of common performance assessment tasks (PATs) (**2.A.2**) for courses ensures that multiple faculty who teach the same course administer the agreed upon course assessment. After implementing the common assessments, faculty convene with their aggregated student data, so the group can discuss trends and disparities between demographic groups, compare student data across sections to better identify trends, and gaps, while also sharing effective instructional strategies.

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- 4.B. TSA Local College Advisory Team
- 4.B. TSA Phase I Third Party Nursing
- 4.B. TSA Phase II Occupational Therapy Assistant
- 4.B. Unique TSA Phase 1 IoTS
- 4.B. Western 2020 PDF handout Ethical Grading Practices
- 4.B. Western SuccessAbilities Webpage
- 4.B. WIDS Assessment Planning PD 2022
- 4.B. WTCS ESM TSA
- 4.B. WTCS TSA Scoring Guide_Paralegal 2022

4.C - Core Component 4.C

The institution pursues educational improvement through goals and strategies that improve retention, persistence and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.

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

Argument

4.C.1. The institution has defined goals for student retention, persistence and completion that are ambitious, attainable and appropriate to its mission, student populations and educational offerings.

As part of its work with Achieving the Dream (ATD) and the creation of the College's strategic plan (Experience 2025) in 2018, Western established a set of Student Success Measures ([Key Results](#)). It also established a [Personal and Organizational Commitment](#) in the strategic plan to "drive action through data intelligence."

Using the WTCS data system, an on-demand platform of [Program Performance Dashboards](#) that allows for robust comparison and data disaggregation across the 16 schools in the system at the program level, Western selected metrics for retention, persistence, and completion that allowed for comparison and ambitious goal setting. These include course completion, term-to-term retention, 2nd year retention, 3rd year graduation, non-graduate transfer, and job placement. It set aspirational goals to rank in the top 25% (top 4) of the WTCS colleges for each measure by 2025 (25x25). A stretch goal (moonshot) was established for 3rd Year Graduation (from the same program) rate of 53%.

In addition to the Student Success Measures, Experience 2025 provided the opportunity to publicly announce bold goals to eliminate equity gaps in course completion, retention, and credential attainment for historically underserved Native American, Black, and Hispanic students. Western chose to focus on this population in the strategic plan because for many of these students, Western is their only choice, serving their specific needs, and creating a sense of community and belonging. Western's commitment to student success is evident through results gleaned through Achieving the Dream's Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool ([ICAT results](#)) that illustrate coworkers rate the institution as having strong capacity in terms of: "Do leaders ensure the core work of the institution aligns with student success vision and goals?"

4.C.2. The institution collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence and completion of its programs.

Daily, student data is used to monitor progress and make decisions in classrooms, divisions, and within the SLT. Annually, the IR Office analyzes and shares the Key Results with all coworkers and the [District Board](#). In addition, all programs and services (1) review the Key Results disaggregated at the [program level](#) on an annual basis as part of the annual continuous improvement plan process and (2) conduct deeper analysis every 3-5 years as part of the data analysis and peer review process performed in the [comprehensive program evaluation](#) and [comprehensive service evaluation](#). It is not uncommon to receive additional data requests related to the Key Results or to see the focus of continuous improvement plans and grant proposals centered on these measures of student success (such as this Department of Education [Title III grant](#)). All Western program chairs and leadership have access to the [WTCS Program Performance dashboards](#). Disaggregation by demographics, delivery methods, college, and courses enhance comparison and benchmarking practices that are used to gauge Western's progress towards its goals and 25x25.

In addition to the Program Performance dashboards, Western uses other WTCS dashboards and internal reports to examine retention, persistence, and completion. The [College Student Success dashboard](#) is "a one-stop resource to assess student academic progress towards completion, and as a resource to identify college-wide student completion gaps." Recently, Western looked at retention and completion data in a study about student "stop outs." This qualitative study explored who had stopped out and examined reasons for a lack of retention and completion. Results were shared broadly through a [Town Hall presentation](#) and in greater depth at an annual data summit.

To supplement the data collected and disseminated by the IR Department, coworkers can also request additional data through a data request system managed by the IR Department. Data reports and presentations are archived centrally on [Western's Data Corner](#). As a result of this commitment to drive action through data intelligence, progress has been made in recovering from declines experienced during the pandemic and in closing equity gaps (examples [continuous improvement plan for Respiratory Therapy](#) and the [continuous improvement plan for – Math](#)) and [increasing the percent of non-white students served](#). The College has matured in its ability to use and understand data, which has led the College to further build capacity for data analysis through a recently awarded Title III grant, *Reducing Equity Gaps by Democratizing Data*. In addition, the College has been recognized as a Leader College since 2019 by ATD and as an Aspen Award for Community College Excellence semi-finalist in the most recent two cycles. In part, this recognition can be attributed to Western's commitment to the use of data for improvement.

IR supports the college by answering research questions and requests for data. Relevant examples include:

[Nursing Students](#)
[Emergency Funding](#)
[English Composition](#)
[Math Planning](#)

4.C.3. The institution uses information on student retention, persistence and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data.

As discussed earlier, guiding the actions of Western's coworkers, a comprehensive strategic plan was designed to increase student engagement; eliminate equity gaps and increase student success with

students of color (SOC); embed work- and community-based learning opportunities to increase workforce outcomes and community engagement; and increase coworker engagement. Created through extensive data analysis, the strategic plan and implementation of [Guided Pathways](#) (GP) remain at the forefront of decisions about improvements. Key Results evaluate student success from the point of program declaration and include course completion, retention, and graduation from the “same” program, transfer, and job placement. Strategic Goals measure student engagement and satisfaction, time-to-completion, and equity gaps. The College’s continuous improvement model – Scan (data analysis prior to planning), Plan, Do, Check, Adjust (SPDCA) (**5.A.2, 5.A.3**), guides decision-making about strategies deployed to improve results.

With data in the hands of individuals who make a difference in student success, Western identified the following challenges in completion: (1) unnecessarily stringent entrance requirements, complex enrollment funnel, and lengthy developmental course sequences inappropriately denied access to many qualified students, discouraged transition, and increased time to completion; (2) support for students was not consistently connected or individualized; (3) Western’s counseling efforts were not serving students effectively; (4) equitable learning experiences integrating poverty, trauma, and educational justice-informed approaches were not consistently created; and (5) only 12% of students placed into developmental courses in 2016 transitioned to college courses resulting in inequitable access to credential completion.

In response to extensive data analysis, Western adopted GP in 2018 with guidance from the National Center for Inquiry and Improvement (NCII). GP, a cultural and systemic change framework encompasses several principles: (1) clarifying program and transfer pathways to facilitate a smoother academic journey; (2) helping students identify needs and explore careers early on; (3) keeping students on track with intrusive advising and support; and (4) enriching and assessing student learning through high-quality learning experiences.

The adoption of GP and several specific strategies have resulted in a 3-year average 3rd year graduation rate of 72.% for first time-ever-in-college (FTEIC) students (Aspen) and a developmental education-to-college-course transition rate of 44%. Important strategies include the redesign/elimination of developmental education in favor of just-in-time supports (fully scaled) (**3.D.2**); creation of the Learning Commons (**3.D.4**) – a one-stop-shop for academic support (fully scaled); launch of a tiered, individualized intervention approach (fully scaled) (**1.B.3, 3.D.1, 3.D.2**); revised “relationship owner” enrollment journey (fully scaled); revamped “assess and refer” counseling and case management approach (fully scaled) (**3.D.3**); acceleration practices including credit for prior learning and dual credit (in-progress); and focused faculty development through the Western’s “Educational Justice Framework” integrating poverty- and trauma-informed, and culturally responsive teaching practices (fully scaled) (**3.B.3, 3.D.1**).

To further address retention and completion gaps and serve students equitably, Western redesigned courses for shortened sessions. Effective summer 2024, most courses have been scheduled as 7-week sessions versus 15-week sessions. Academic terms now consist of 2, 7-week sessions with a 1-week break between. Deconstructing the terms in this way offers reduced cognitive load for students, more flexibility, and continuous on-ramps. Part-time learners who currently take one course at a time may be able to complete two courses per term, shortening the time-to-completion and accelerating entry into the workforce earning life-sustaining wages. Students who get off track in courses or have life events that cause them to withdraw will have more opportunity to get back on track with increased on and off-ramps for programs.

As mentioned earlier, to prepare for this new model of teaching and learning, all faculty engaged in a curriculum redesign process integrating evidence-based teaching strategies, culturally responsive practices and inclusive learning environments, UDL, and Western's Framework for Educational Justice. Listening sessions were conducted and periods for coworker comment were facilitated for policy development, including the development of a unified grading scale. The timeline for the redesign established clear deadlines and milestones in the process:

- Summer 2022 workshops on program scope and sequences: Program faculty met to revise curriculum and create guided pathways for student progress in program courses. Common needs were identified, and common courses were created based on those needs. Initial sequences of courses across terms were created.
- August 2022 workshops on program assessment plans: Following scope and sequence documents, programs reviewed program outcomes, created maps aligning courses to program outcomes, and established expectations for student performance on outcomes.
- May 2023 course assessment plan workshops: Following program assessment plans, faculty created course maps for each course taught including topics of instruction and key/signature assessments mapped to course competencies. Course maps also include alignment to program outcomes and SuccessAbilities as specified by program assessment plans.
- August 2023 course performance assessment tasks (PATs) and Blackboard workshops: Following course maps, faculty created PATs including rubrics to assess course competencies and program outcomes. Faculty also began to create Blackboard shells based on these maps and assessments.
- January 2023 work time workshops: More time was provided for programs to complete work on Blackboard shells or other outstanding tasks from the previous workshops.

In addition to the 7-week session redesign (**3.A.1, 3.B.3, 5.A.1, 5.C.1, 5.C.2**), the Learner Support and Transition (LST) Division created multiple interventions as a result of its use of course completion, retention, and completion data. It used course completion data to target high volume and low completion courses for academic intervention. Courses such as General Anatomy and Physiology experienced improvements from 66% C or better [course completion](#) in 2019 to 79% in 2024. It has used data to make recommendations on course delivery methods and to coordinate allocation of resources to areas that experience challenges to retention and completion.

The LST division revolutionized how it provides academic support and is cutting edge in the use of real-time Customer Relationship Management (CRM) data to view student support interactions, connections with other services, and collaboration across the College to manage resources and prioritize support for the neediest of students at the right time. Working with admission coaches, LST delivers free academic support ahead of key gateway courses (known for high fail rates) and creates individualized support before a term begins to target help to those who indicate need for it during guided self-placement. Data examples include [summary reports](#), [division-specific reports](#), and [dashboards](#) to monitor individual faculty member instructional hours in real time.

From this collection of strategies, Western has recognized success. Gaps in course completion for SOC dropped from 15.8% (2018) to 10.7% (2023). Gaps in 3rd year graduation dropped from 22.8% (2018) to 9.5% (2023). With the tremendous change at the College, it is difficult to isolate strategies; however, Western's Equity Integration Plan and Equity Scorecard track specific interventions that

intentionally target groups of students who are historically ignored, or who historically don't succeed in higher education. In 2018, 12.8% of Western's program-declared students were SOC. That has grown to 18.3% (2023).

4.C.4. The institution's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence and completion of programs reflect good practice. (Institutions are not required to use IPEDS definitions in their determination of persistence or completion rates. Institutions are encouraged to choose measures that are suitable to their student populations, but institutions are accountable for the validity of their measures.)

Western uses various sources for its analysis of retention and completion, including measures from IPEDS, Aspen, and Western's student information system (SIS) and CRM. In most cases, the WTCS data dashboards serve as the primary or "level one" analysis indicators of student success. They are readily accessible, provide comparison and trend data, allow for easy-to-use disaggregation features, and require limited IR resources. However, IR encourages the use of other data sources for real-time analysis, triangulation, and deeper understanding of student retention and completion. This may include data extracted from the SIS, CRM, National Community College Benchmarking Project (NCCBP), the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), the Ruffalo Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Survey, Your Cavalier Voice mini-surveys, Aspen, and Achieving the Dream.

Using ATD's Institutional Capacity Framework and Assessment Tool (ICAT) (1.A.2, 5.C.3), Western tracks organizational progress in building a culture of excellence. Scores for organizational capacity for data and technology increased from 2.4 in 2017 to 3.1 in 2021 and a slight decline to 2.9 in 2023 (scale of 1-4 – with 4 representing exemplary). Western was recently awarded a Title III grant from the Department of Education: Reducing Equity Gaps through Democratizing Data, to foster higher levels of student success and eliminate equity gaps through a strong data governance framework and integrated student success-focused data analysis, evaluation, planning, and budgeting model.

Sources

- 4.A. Western Comprehensive Program Evaluation Model Visual June 2024
- 4.C. 2023 Planning Cycle Respiratory Therapist
- 4.C. 23-03_ICAT1.5 Summary
- 4.C. Board Presentation Key Results Update_10.24.23
- 4.C. Comprehensive Service Evaluation Model Guide_2019
- 4.C. Continuous Improvement and Annual Planning_Math
- 4.C. CRM Report_Deans Dashboard
- 4.C. CRM_Division Reports
- 4.C. CRM_Summary Report
- 4.C. Data Corner Web Page
- 4.C. Data Request Emergency Funding
- 4.C. Data Request English Composition
- 4.C. Data Request Math Planning
- 4.C. Data Request Nursing Students
- 4.C. Experience 2025 Strategic Goals Measures
- 4.C. Gen Anatomy and Physiology Course Completion Trends
- 4.C. Guided Pathways Brochure

- 4.C. Key Results Handout-FY22
- 4.C. Personal and Organizational Commitments
- 4.C. Stop Out Research Report Presentation
- 4.C. Strategic Plan Overview 2023-2024
- 4.C. Title III Western_REDD_Abstract
- 4.C. WTCS College Student Success Dashboard Sample
- 4.C. WTCS Program Performance Dashboard Samples

4.S - Criterion 4 - Summary

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

Summary

Western ensures the quality of its educational offerings, learning environments and support services through several strategies that include comprehensive program evaluation, annual data summits, continuous improvement planning and budgeting, instructional designer-facilitated curriculum and assessment development, and benchmarking with other institutions -- such as through the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) program performance dashboards. WTCS-recognized credentials (associate degrees, technical diplomas, and certificates) have a set of program-specific outcomes and SuccessAbilities -- common learning outcomes that include essential soft skills, employability skills, and college and career readiness skills. Learning outcomes are assessed at the course level, throughout the program, and just prior to graduation. Western has a set of strategic goals and strategies to improve course completion, retention, and graduation as outlined in its Experience 2025 strategic plan. High level strategies include implementation of Guided Pathways (including 7-week sessions), community- and work-based learning, poverty-informed practices, and the Equity Integration Plan, as well as increasing coworker diversity. The College monitors its Strategic Goal Measures, Key Results (student success metrics), and Equity Scorecard to check and adjust implementation plans and the strategic plan itself.

Sources

There are no sources.

5 - Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning

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

5.A - Core Component 5.A

Through its administrative structures and collaborative processes, the institution's leadership demonstrates that it is effective and enables the institution to fulfill its mission.

1. Shared governance at the institution engages its internal constituencies—including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff and students—through planning, policies and procedures.
2. The institution's administration uses data to reach informed decisions in the best interests of the institution and its constituents.
3. The institution's administration ensures that faculty and, when appropriate, staff and students are involved in setting academic requirements, policy and processes through effective collaborative structures.

Argument

5.A.1. Shared governance at the institution engages its internal constituencies—including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff, and students—through planning, policies, and procedures.

Western's mission is fulfilled through Western's vision, values, culture statement, personal and organizational commitments (1.A.1, 1.A.2, 5.C.1, 5.C.3), strategic plan, formal governance structure, and collaborative decision-making approaches that intentionally engage internal and external stakeholders through a variety of methods.

Relationship Between the Institution and Governing Board

Wisconsin State Statute Chapter 38.00 outlines the role of the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS). Western has a shared governance model with responsibility shared between Western's District Board and the Wisconsin Technical College System Board (WTCSB). A nine-member district board is [appointed by a committee](#) (1.B.2, 2.C.1, 5.A.1) composed of county board chairpersons. One of the board practices published in the [bylaws](#) covers direction and management of the institution: "The district board, in consultation with college staff and stakeholders in the community, is responsible for the policy development process and the long-range direction of the College. The management is delegated to the administrative staff and is to be carried out consistent with the established policies and strategic directions." Primary outputs for board members are outlined in the board member job description and explained throughout bylaws. Each new board member attends an [orientation session](#) and periodic "[board advance](#)" sessions where they learn more about Western and its stakeholders.

In Western policy [A0201](#) – Board-President Relations states “The Western Technical College District Board's primary functions are review and adoption of policies, review of College programs and services, and the employment and evaluation of the president.” District board values and principles are spelled out in policy [A0100A](#), and board power and duties are spelled out in [A0103](#). The district board agendas from [September 2021](#), [April 2022](#), [February 2023](#) demonstrate the board’s role in policy development and approval and Western’s systematic approach. In 2022-2023, [42 policies and procedures](#) were reviewed and/or approved by the senior leadership team (SLT) and/or the district board.

The president's primary function is to lead the college in living its mission through the strategic plan, supporting student success through policies established by the district board, and to inform the district board of college operations. Per [policy A0200](#): “The Western District Board employs a president who shall serve as the chief executive officer of the College. The board delegates to the president the administrative responsibilities of carrying out designated duties as specified in Wisconsin State Statute 38.12(3)(a)(b).” A sampling of district board meeting agendas illustrates where the college seeks approval from the district board in college operations. For example, the [June 2023 District Board Meeting Agenda](#) includes a public hearing on the district budget. Agendas for board meetings indicate if scheduled presentations or topics are meant to “inform,” “discuss,” “celebrate,” or “approve.” The [July 2023 District Board Meeting Agenda](#) shows that hiring and promoting of personnel rests with the College, and new hire details are provided to the district board for “information only.” It also illustrates that the district board approves designation of attorneys, finance advisors, and resolutions authorizing issuance and sale of general obligation promissory notes. Several additional [policies](#) describe the role of the district board in relation to the operation of the institution.

College Leadership

Western’s college [leadership structure](#) and [organizational structure](#) bring together diverse functions to participate in collaborative decision-making, solve shared problems, and ensure aligned action and collective responsibility for the College’s performance. These formal teams lead Western’s mission, vision, values, culture statement, strategic plan, strategic goals, personal organizational commitments, and achievement of the college’s Key Results. They ensure the College’s workplace is professional, respectful, and engaged in serving students, community members, employers, and each other through first-choice service that changes lives and grows communities (see [Experience 2025 Strategic Plan](#)).

Standing Collaborative Decision-making Committees and Workgroups

Western has a strong culture of collaboration and engagement as is evidenced by the College’s progress towards its [coworker engagement goal](#) to move from 35% engaged in 2018, to 45% in 2025. In addition, the Gallup Q12 Engagement Survey (**1.A.2**) results indicate an increase from [3.5 in 2021 to 3.69 in 2023](#) for “my opinion counts.” (item 7). Key to progress is Western’s steadfast commitment to ad-hoc steering teams; workgroups and project teams; and regular unit, division, department, and program team meetings. Standing committees can span several years such as the Parking Committee, [Equity Team](#), or the [Communications Team](#). They can also be shorter in duration as with teams like the cross-functional [COVID19 Response Team](#) empowered to make the daily decisions and recommendations for major issues surrounding Western’s response to the pandemic.

Communications Team Meeting Example [2022](#) and [2023](#)
[Equity Integration Plan](#)

[COVID19 Recommendation to President/Vice President \(PVP\) Group](#)

Across Western's work systems, many [processes and sub-processes](#) involve a collaborative approach and [collaborative decision-making across stakeholder groups](#). For example, as part of Western's work with Guided Pathways (**1.B.2, 2.A.2, 3.A.1, 4.C.3**) and Achieving the Dream (ATD) (**1.A.2, 2.D.1, 3.D.1**), the College's leadership team made the strategic decision to transition to 7-week sessions (two 7-week sessions scheduled in one 15-week term). Two major projects emerged – the need to move to a new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system (Colleague, by Ellucian) to handle this new scheduling approach, and the need to revamp all programs, courses, and assessment strategies to ensure the best learning experiences for students.

For the implementation of Colleague, several [ad-hoc teams](#) with end-user membership were formed to make decisions about how best to navigate the transition. These teams meet regularly and are fully engaged in the collaborative decision-making aspects of this implementation.

For the implementation of 7-week sessions (**3.A.1, 3.B.3, 5.C1, 5.C.2**), a [Faculty Experience Team](#) was created to shape the future of this work. The scope of this work spanned teaching assignments, professional expectations, contract modifications, and Employee Handbook updates. As part of the 7-week redesign process, faculty led the changes within their courses, programs, and assessment strategies. They worked collaboratively with the Academic Excellence and Development (AED) and members of program advisory committees (**1.B.1, 1.B.2**) to identify program and course outcomes that ensure graduates are employable and/or able to transfer seamlessly.

- [7-Week Session Cross-Functional Steering Team Roster Charter](#)
- [Meeting Minutes 2022 Sample](#)
- [Meeting Minutes 2023 Sample](#)
- [Slide Deck from Curriculum Revision Sessions](#)
- [Facilitation Guide for Faculty Curriculum Revision Sessions](#)

Processes and Structures

In addition to formal structures and processes for college leadership and standing committees and workgroups, Western fosters collaborative decision-making and engagement through critical processes that call for participation from a wide variety of stakeholders.

Position Papers

Transformational change is driven through a combination of leadership vision and recommendations from the ground-up for change. Position papers are developed through cross-functional teams that bring recommendations to the SLT. The result of this process is senior leader sponsorship of critical shifts that help the College deliver on its mission and Key Results. Examples of position papers brought forth to the SLT include:

- [Student Success](#)
- [Assessment and Placement Redesign](#)
- [Embedded Supports](#)
- [K-12 Partnerships](#)
- [Students with Children](#)
- [Leadership Development](#)

Focused Faculty Forums

Western's vice president of learning has implemented [focused faculty forums](#) to solicit input on key

learning-related decisions.

Strategic and Annual Planning and Budgeting Processes

Western has developed a well-rounded strategic and annual planning and budgeting approach (1.A.2, 1.B.2, 2.A.2, 2.C.3, 4.A.1, 5.C) that is enhanced through Western's recent award of almost \$2.2 million in grant funds from the Title III Strengthening Institutions Program (5.A.2). In 2017, Western revamped its strategic and annual planning processes to incorporate cross-functional and collaborative teamwork, broad stakeholder engagement, and perspectives from both inside and outside the institution.

[Overview of Western's Process to Create Experience 2025](#) (established 2018)

This work led to three major changes: (1) a strategic plan that is refreshed every year through data analysis and input of individuals across the organization, (2) an [annual planning and budgeting process](#) – that kicks off with a data summit [2021](#), [2022](#), [2023](#) and gives space to coworkers to provide input to priorities ([2023 All Unit Input Session](#)) and (3) an environmental scanning process [2018](#), [2021](#), [2023](#) that enlists coworkers to research and author summaries of trends that could impact the institution in the next five years.

Program, Course, and Cocurricular Design and Learning Assessment Processes

To deliver the most relevant and life-changing learning experiences for students, faculty collaborate with program advisory committee members, academic leadership, instructional designers, the WTCS, accrediting bodies, and student support and institutional effectiveness coworkers to make decisions about the content of their programs and courses. This is evident throughout the 7-week course redesign process (3.A.1, 3.B.3, 5.A.1, 5.C.1, 5.C.2). Faculty are empowered to identify when changes to program outcomes, course competencies, learning objectives, learning activities, performance assessment tasks, and cocurricular experiences are needed. They take pride in their instructional design and delivery efforts and are committed to Western's mission to change lives and grow communities. This is evidenced in Western's high scores for job placement with graduates. Western consistently scores in the top 25% of all WTCS schools for [job placement](#) within 6 months of graduation. Examples of faculty collaboration with program advisory committee members for curriculum changes include:

[IT Web and Software Development](#)
[Diesel and Heavy Equipment](#)
[Radiography](#)

Program and Service Evaluation Processes

Western's framework for evaluation of programs and services reinforces Western's commitment to continuous quality improvement and transformation. Through the [comprehensive program evaluation process](#) (2.A.2, 4.B.1, 4.B.2), and [service evaluation process](#), faculty and other coworkers analyze both qualitative and quantitative data -- measures of quality, effectiveness, and efficiency to identify priorities for intentional focus. Conducted every 3-5 years, these reviews facilitate conversation about opportunities for higher levels of student success and organizational performance excellence and give coworkers a chance to document [continuous improvement and annual plans](#) (4.A.1) and make requests for resources to support improvements and innovations. Examples of documented plans include:

[Academic Program](#) (Paralegal)

[Service Area](#) (Equity, Inclusion, and Engagement Department)

College and Academic Policy Development Processes

Western develops and maintains policy applied both across the entire college and specifically to academic areas (2.A.2, 5.A.1). Each college policy is designated an SLT sponsor who works with a team of cross-functional coworkers at multiple levels in the organization. For example, a typical college policy moves through the approval process in a variety of steps that include review by a cross-functional equity team and a non-administrative editor. These two steps happen before the SLT or district board review and approve and ensure that each policy is examined through an equity lens (5.B.1) and a college communications lens. Depending on the nature of the policy, a [Focused Forum](#) may be held to present the policy and facilitate feedback sharing.

Student Voice and Representation

Per Wisconsin State Statute 38.145, Western supports and encourages student participation in student governance and believes that students are an important voice. [Policy E0500](#) identifies Western's student government as the official voice for students in matters affecting student interests, including those related to student life and services, and to the disposition of student fees.

Western Student Government created a reserve fund application for students and the college community to submit one-time funding requests for projects that benefit Western students. The requests go before the Student Government's Appropriations Committee, who make a recommendation to the Student Government's General Assembly for a final decision. General Assembly is the official voice of Student Government and all students. Student Organizations and Clubs send representatives to these meetings. The meetings occur on the 1st and 3rd Mondays of the month during the fall and spring terms.

The SLT meets with the student government monthly to discuss important and time sensitive topics. In 2023, for example, students voiced concern about Western's wireless networks. As a result, a decision was made to upgrade as shown in the [Student Government and Senior Leadership Team meeting on September 25, 2023](#). In addition, the Student Government determines how it spends its reserve funds. In 2020-2021, they funded a faculty member for Western's Learning Commons and a time-sensitive request to fund the student-centered Resource Block Party. In 2021-2022, they agreed to support a proposal to bring on the [Esports team](#) (p. 3) as requested from the athletics department. Several other requests were approved for 2022-2023 and for 2023-2024.

- [Approved Reserve Fund Requests 2022-2023](#)
- [Approved Reserve Fund Requests 2023-2024](#)

Western's Institutional Research (IR) office in collaboration with the Student Life, Equity, and Engagement office leads efforts to collect student voice (1.C.2, 4.B.3, 5.A.1) and ensure student representation in discussions about major changes that impact students. One of Western's most recent developments in this area is the creation of a process to collect student voice through "[Your Cavalier View](#)" (3.D.1) surveys. Each quarter, IR administers a short "pulse check" type survey. These surveys give students a chance to give meaningful feedback to the College on important topics. By gathering students' firsthand accounts of their experiences, IR can share student desires with key stakeholders so that appropriate changes can be made to improve the student experience. This helps students feel like their voices matter on Western's campus. In the 2023 planning cycle, information from these student surveys and a [research project](#) on student "stop outs" informed the data analysis used to create program, department, and service plans. An additional example of Western seeking student input was the [Pandemic impact survey](#) conducted in the fall 2020.

5.A.2. The institution's administration uses data to reach informed decisions in the best interests of the institution and its constituents.

Western's commitment to reach informed decisions that are in the best interests of the institution and its key stakeholders is grounded in the College's strategic plan and the Personal and Organizational Commitment to "Drive Action through Data Intelligence" (3.B.4, 4.C.1). The [College's webpage and framework for performance excellence](#) illustrates how data-informed organizational assessment occurs and the types of tools and data used to do this high-level assessment and analysis. Bolstered by Western's history with the Baldrige Excellence Framework (a nonprescriptive framework that empowers organizations to reach its goals, improve results, and become more competitive through a set of interrelated core values, concepts, beliefs, and behaviors embedded in high-performing organizations) and its commitment to ATD (1.A.2, 2.D.1, 3.D.1), this intentional focus on data-informed decision-making has allowed the College to mature in use of data at all levels. This is evidenced through the incremental increases in the Data and Technology category in ATD's [Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool](#) (ICAT) survey (1.A.2, 5.C.3) as well as in the large volume of [data requests](#) received since the creation of a data request form.

The College uses an adapted version of the Plan, Do, Check, Adjust (PDCA) (4.C.3, 5.C.3) model to first include in-depth data analysis or "Scan" (SPDCA) in its continuous improvement and planning work. To reinforce this practice across the college, Western requires leaders and program chairs to take part in a [data summit](#) (4.A.1, 5.C.3) that launches the next planning cycle. Trained [table guides](#) (4.A.1) facilitate data conversations. Conducted annually, this event is also open to all coworkers. Western's Key Results (Student Success Measures), Strategic Goals, and other relevant data are shared in an interactive format that generates "data analysis" to be used to (1) create an initial [continuous improvement and annual](#) plan (template), (2) update an [existing plan](#) (Human Services Associate program) (3) justify budget requests, (4) revisit the results of [360 peer review "deep dives"](#) (p.2) or comprehensive program and service evaluations, and (5) refresh the [strategic plan annually](#)

The K-12 Partnerships department leveraged the annual data summit and unit leader planning retreat to create a [continuous improvement plan](#) with an action plan to standardize procedures and processes across the K-12 team and to create a year-long communications and events plan to improve partnerships.

Western has prioritized centering the student voice (1.C.2, 4.B.3, 5.A.1) as part of its evaluation and planning (1.C.2). [Data](#) systems include a student information, customer relationship management, learning management, course evaluation, and financial management systems; labor market analysis software; and dashboards created by IR and the WTCS. In addition to formal presentations and facilitated discussions about data, Western leverages its SharePoint site, CavNet, to put data at the fingertips of internal stakeholders ([Data Corner](#)). As mentioned earlier, Western was awarded a Title III Strengthening Institutions grant in 2023: Reducing Equity Gaps through Democratizing Data (REDD). This 5-year, \$2.2 million grant is designed to bolster Western's data governance, data visualization, and integrated evaluation, planning, and budgeting frameworks to achieve higher levels of student success.

An [example](#) of how data is used to make decisions is the recent changes to athletic programs at Western. Trend data and focus groups with students contributed to the decisions proposed to Western's SLT.

5.A.3. The institution's administration ensures that faculty and, when appropriate, staff and students are involved in setting academic requirements, policy, and processes through effective collaborative structures.

Teamwork is one of Western's values and the College's commitment to this is evident through the processes and structures for setting academic requirements, policy, and procedures.

Faculty and Program/Department Chair Involvement

Per Western's [Faculty Handbook](#) (p. 4), program/department chairs are the primary spokesperson for program/department faculty. The chair functions in a leadership capacity by guiding the process of decision-making within the program and facilitating colleagues to act in concert with each other. Program/department chairs collaborate with the associate dean and dean in annual budgeting, major and minor equipment requests, and in annual planning documents that contribute to the fiscal responsibility and academic goals of the program/department. The chair is responsible for collaboration with external partners such as secondary schools, advisory committees, and businesses. The responsibilities of the chair allow for program/department uniqueness to include leadership activities, curriculum relevancy, assessment activities, and student recruitment and retention activities. Multiple times throughout the year, faculty, academic staff, and leadership participate in All-Instruction in-services and Focused Forums to receive information, discuss issues, and develop strategies to achieve Western's strategic goals.

College At-large Engagement

The vice president of learning provides a mechanism for faculty and the college at-large to weigh in on [academic policy changes \(2.C.5, 5.A.1\)](#). This [process](#) involves posting the proposed policy for a specified length of time to allow for feedback. The feedback is then synthesized and funneled to the academic policy team for consideration. Most recently, [several academic policies](#) related to the 7-week session implementation have been developed and revised. Feedback from Academic Deans Council, faculty, and the college at-large was incorporated. In addition, several faculty listening sessions ([3.C.2, 5.A.1](#)) were conducted over the past few years as the college created implementation plans for major changes.

[Program Chair Input Session](#) – Curriculum Redesign Process 2022

[Academic Deans Council 2019](#) – Grading Policy

[Academic Deans Council 2020](#) – Grading Scale

[Academic Deans Council 2021](#) – Grading Policy and Procedure Final Review

[Faculty Listening Sessions 2019-2024](#)

[Faculty Listening Sessions Report 2022-2023](#)

[January 24, 2024 – 7-Week Experience Faculty Focused Forum](#)

[October 11, 2023 – Student Life, Equity, and Engagement Team Focused Forum](#)

[August 23, 2023 – Budget Focused Forum](#)

[April 19, 2023 – 7-Week Transition Academic and Enrollment Policies Focused Forum](#)

[September 19, 2022 – Remote Work Benefit Feedback Focused Forum](#)

Student Involvement

Western involves its students in college decision-making through the relationship the SLT has with the Student Government Association, [periodic focus groups](#), and pulse checks. The [Academic Policy Committee](#) for the 7-week session implementation also included student representation.

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5.B - Core Component 5.B

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

1. The institution has qualified and trained operational staff and infrastructure sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered.
2. The goals incorporated into the mission and any related statements are realistic in light of the institution's organization, resources and opportunities.
3. The institution has a well-developed process in place for budgeting and for monitoring its finances.
4. The institution's fiscal allocations ensure that its educational purposes are achieved.

Argument

5.B.1. The institution has qualified and trained operational staff and infrastructure sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered.

People

Western is a learning organization with a commitment to strong infrastructure to support a qualified and trained workforce regardless of where and how programs are delivered. Western's Human Resources (HR) Department (reporting to the vice president of finance and operations) houses major work processes that include several sub-processes designed to attract and retain talent – and deliver on Western's mission.

Employment Process

Western's HR department coordinates all recruitment, hiring, and onboarding of Western's full- and part-time employees, collaborating with hiring managers to ensure qualified staff across the college. HR's CavNet website houses all necessary materials for hiring managers to request a new position and/or replace an existing one, post, recruit, hire, [onboard, orient,](#) and train new hires in keeping with legal requirements and best practices illustrated in the [Manager Hiring Guide](#) and [Full-Time Hiring Flowchart](#). HR owns all communication with applicants until a person accepts a position at which point the communication transitions to the hiring manager. A member of HR participates on all interview teams to maintain compliance and employment integrity, and all hiring teams use the same [Applicant Scoring Rubric](#). Knowing that not all managers hire very often, [New Hire Process Training Materials](#) and [New Hire Part-Time Process](#) are available source materials to ensure consistency in hiring practices across the College, regardless of department or role.

Employee Development

All Western employees must adhere to a required training schedule to maintain compliance with federal and state regulations. All hiring managers receive the [New Employee Annual Schedule of Required Training](#) and [Required Trainings – New Employee](#).

In 2019, Western bolstered its focus on talent development through the creation of the [Talent Manager position](#) and a College Professional Development (CPD) department within HR to support and facilitate required, optional, and recommended trainings and development opportunities throughout the year. CPD, led by the talent manager, collaborates with leaders from each department

to ensure required training is conducted and to determine the optional training that is also needed.

In 2022, Western became laser focused on the implementation of its strategic plan by [prioritizing attracting and retaining coworkers](#). Key components of Western's strategy include:

1. A strong faculty credentialing model aligned to both the expectations of the HLC and the WTCS
2. Professional development that spans the life cycle of a coworker such as:
 - [New Employee Orientation \(NEO\)](#)
 - [New Faculty Experience \(NFE\)](#)
 - [Leadership Forum](#)
 - [Fall, Winter, and Spring PD Weeks](#)
 - Clifton Strengths assessments and coaching resources for full-time employees
 - 17 individuals have attended the [Wisconsin Leadership Development Institute \(WLDI\)](#)
 - Participation in annual conference such as the HLC's annual meeting, Achieving the Dream's DREAM conference ([71 different individuals since 2020](#)), and AFIT's (Alliance for Innovation and Transformation - over 100 different individuals since 2001) Summer Institute
 - Funding for faculty for occupational-specific training to remain current in industry practices
3. A generous [tuition reimbursement policy](#) resulting in an average annual investment of [\\$84,000 per year over the past five years](#)
4. A recognition program that honors coworker anniversaries and annual awards for [First Choice Coworker, Instructional Excellence, and Living our Culture](#). In addition, all leaders have access to on-demand PD through Franklin Covey's All Access Pass

Western's Academic Excellence, Education, and Human Services (AEH) Division includes the Academic Excellence and Development (AED) Department ([2.A.2, 3.A.1, 3.C.2, 4.A.1, 4.A.4, 5.A.1](#)). Equipped with teaching and learning coaches, instructional designers, and an instructional technologist, this department provides professional development and ongoing support of instructional design, instructional delivery, faculty development, and learning assessment processes.

HR conducts online and in-person exit interviews for all employees as they leave the organization. This feedback is reviewed and shared within HR to make ongoing recommendations for improvements. Additionally, HR has begun conducting stay interviews, collecting onboarding feedback from new employees. These feedback processes will become more systematic as Western transitions to an online system to capture the data.

Compensation, Benefits, and Recognition Work Process

Western's pay program is designed to recognize and reward the valuable contributions of its employees by paying competitive salaries in a fiscally responsible manner. The pay program is also aligned with Western's compensation philosophy which emphasizes competitive market wages, internal equity, and attractive benefits that lead to a well-balanced, total compensation package to attract and retain high-quality employees.

At Western the pay structure is the basis of pay administration and is an organization of pay ranges. Each job is assigned to a pay range consisting of a minimum, midpoint, and maximum range. The pay ranges are established to be competitive at midpoint with pay for comparable jobs in other similarly situated colleges, organizations, and industries within the labor markets in which the college recruits. Annually, the pay structure is reviewed to determine whether a pay range adjustment

is needed. If warranted, adjustments are applied based on predominant market trends as determined by published pay increase surveys and the College's financial position. Typically, a pay structure adjustment will be made at the same time as annual pay increases are implemented. In addition to pay, Western offers a competitive benefits package for full-time employees as found in [Benefits Guide](#).

The positive working culture of Western is evident in many ways, including the long employment history of many coworkers. These coworkers were recently celebrated at an employee recognition luncheon for coworkers employed at the college for 25 years or more and were recognized by SLT with a certificate and gift. These luncheons have expanded to recognize coworkers who have served the college for 15-, 20-, or 25-year milestones, along with similar recognition for coworkers who have served 5 and 10 years. Additionally, employees meeting their one-year anniversary are recognized with a small gift and certificate, and all employees receive a certificate to acknowledge their current years of service.

Process, Procedure, and Policy

The success of Western's workforce depends on *clarity and consistency* – one of Western's Personal and Organizational Commitments (strategic plan) (1.A.1, 1.A.2, 5.C.1, 5.C.3). Western's commitment to systems thinking requires a focus on mapping key work processes and establishing measures of effectiveness, efficiency, and quality. This work is in its early stages. Recently, Western revised its process for developing and revising policy and procedure to incorporate an [Equity Mindedness Policy Review Guide](#) (1.C.2).

5.B.2. The goals incorporated into the mission and any related statements are realistic in light of the institution's organization, resources, and opportunities.

Western's commitment to its mission to change lives and grow communities is represented in the allocation of funds from state aid (distributed through the WTCS), property taxes, student fees (tuition set by the WTCS), donors, institutional revenue generation (contracts for customized instruction, interest or investment earnings, and enterprise earnings), and grants to the priorities of the institution (1.B.2). All budget decisions are driven by Western's strategic plan, Experience 2025, and the directions and goals therein. The budget emphasizes student success, which is the hallmark of Experience 2025.

As mentioned earlier, Western serves all or part of 11 counties (1.A.3) and the budget provides the necessary resources for maximum access through distance education technologies and techniques, as well as continued investments into the physical space of the 5 regional locations and the public safety facility in Sparta, WI. Budget resources also focus on underserved populations, justice-involved populations, dislocated workers, and students who need to complete a high school credential or GED certificate (1.A.4 enrollment profile). The budget emphasizes initiatives designed to enhance cooperative relationships with public and private K12 systems, other technical colleges, and universities. Resources have been allocated to help improve college transfer opportunities with other institutions of higher learning.

In a continued climate of significant revenue constraints, new programs and services, and operating cost increases are being funded mainly through the reallocation of district funds from low-priority areas to high-priority areas. The FY2023-24 budget reflects approximately \$711,000 in new programs and services (includes 3 new full-time positions). For FY2023-24, approximately \$1,327,000 was reallocated (including 4 full-time positions). In addition, approximately \$563,000 of current funding was frozen for FY2023-24 (including 5 FTE positions). Western's 2023-2024 annual

budget is allocated as follows (source: [2023-2024 Budget Book](#), p. 51):

- 59% to instruction
- 18% to general institutional
- 13% to student services
- 8% to physical plant
- 2% to instructional resources

5.B.3. The institution has a well-developed process in place for budgeting and for monitoring its finances.

As discussed earlier, Wisconsin Technical Colleges are funded by a mix of property taxes from the College's region, Wisconsin state aid, and tuition (1.B.2). As a result, 50% of Western's revenue is guaranteed before serving a single student. Although the complexities of Western's funding have grown in the last decade due to increased funding from state and federal grants and private foundation giving, the College has consistently received clean financial audit reports from its independent auditor (Wipfli, LLP) (2.A.2, 2.C.3). Sound fiscal practices have left the College with very healthy operating reserves. Total operating reserves equaled 41% as of June 30, 2023. Best practices issued by the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) indicate these reserves should, at a minimum, cover 2 months of operating expenses, or 16.7% (Fund Balance Guidelines for the General Fund [gfoa.org]). These [reserves](#) can be used to fund emergency situations, innovative ideas, and budget smoothing during difficult financial times.

Budget requests are approved by SLT after an annual planning process (1.A.2, 4.A.1, 5.A.1, 5.C) that generates a list of requests viewed by the college and measured against long-term or emergent priorities, allowing budget dollars to be allocated as appropriate based on a manager-driven process. Despite a wealth of equipment-heavy, expensive technical programs, Western continues to be one of the lowest cost-per-student colleges in the region and remains the lowest among the 16 Wisconsin technical colleges for [cost-per-student](#) in the state.

Several [policies](#) govern financial management. The accounting system for the College is organized and operated in accordance with Wisconsin Administrative Code, Chapter TCS 7 using a uniform financial fund accounting system established by the WTCSB. Segregation of duties is a critical component of Western's approach – reducing the risk of both erroneous and inappropriate actions. In addition, the board maintains a [Budget and Facilities Committee](#) (2.A.2) which reviews the financial resources of the College including property purchases and the [three-year facilities plan](#). The board receives regular financial reports as reflected in the [District Board calendar and agenda\(s\)](#).

5.B.4. The institution's fiscal allocations ensure that its educational purposes are achieved.

Western's approach to funding ensures educational purposes are achieved. As discussed in 5.B.2, nearly 70% of Western's operating budget is allocated to instructional and student services activities. Driven by the priorities within the strategic plan, the College actively pursues other sources of revenue including state and federal grants (32 in 2023) and funds secured through partnerships resulting in donations of equipment and operational dollars. Western has been in negotiations with a regional, international employer to secure an \$8 million donation to support expanded facilities, equipment, and services to support advanced manufacturing education in western Wisconsin.

Western has been at the forefront of sustainability, saving taxpayers critical dollars by developing innovative solutions to energy consumption. The college has received LEED certification for eight

buildings, including a platinum rating for the College's Integrated Technology Center. Western has deployed six solar arrays across its regional locations and invested in a local community solar garden, supplying the institution with close to 150 megawatts hours of clean electricity each year. Additionally, Western has retrofitted nearly 100% of its infrastructure to LED lighting. In total, Western's energy conservation work has saved taxpayers well over four million dollars in avoided utility costs since 2010.

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5.C - Core Component 5.C

The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning and improvement.

1. The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities, including, as applicable, its comprehensive research enterprise, associated institutes and affiliated centers.
2. The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning and budgeting.
3. The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.
4. The institution plans on the basis of a sound understanding of its current capacity, including fluctuations in the institution's sources of revenue and enrollment.
5. Institutional planning anticipates evolving external factors, such as technology advancements, demographic shifts, globalization, the economy and state support.
6. The institution implements its plans to systematically improve its operations and student outcomes.

Argument

5.C. The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning and improvement.

Western's approach to [systematic and integrated planning and improvement](#) includes cycles for annual planning, budgeting, program development and evaluation, a process to refresh the strategic plan annually, and a timeline for frequent updates to Western's District Board and other stakeholders. The annual planning cycle kicks off in the spring with the annual data summit (4.A.1, 5.C.3). It is followed by additional data collection, analysis, and synthesis through unit/department level master planning. Program and service area planning follows with budget requests submitted each fall. Western's budgeting process is structured to connect budget requests to both the strategic plan and any findings that warrant action from the data analysis process.

5.C.1. The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities, including, as applicable, its comprehensive research enterprise, associated institutes, and affiliated centers.

As stated on its public website and throughout its digital and printed materials, Western's mission is to change lives and grow its communities. The College's resource alignment approach is intentionally connected to this mission and the priorities spelled out in the College's strategic plan: [Experience 2025](#) In this plan, Western prioritizes student success and delivers on its mission through:

[Four Strategic Directions:](#)

- First Choice Service
- Workforce and Community Engagement
- Equity, Inclusion, and Support
- Employee Engagement

Key Areas of Focus:

- Attract and Retain Students and Co-workers through:
 - Diversity, Equity, Inclusion
 - Coworker Wellbeing
 - 7-week Sessions

Achievement of its Key Results and Strategic Goals

Four Personal and Organizational Commitments

- Act with clarity and consistency
- Demonstrate resiliency
- Drive action through data intelligence
- Practice sound fiscal stewardship

As mentioned earlier, Western follows a timeline which incorporates specific steps to use data to identify improvement opportunities tied to the mission and implementation of the strategic plan. Once units, divisions, departments, program, and service areas have (1) analyzed their specific data typically through a [data summit \(4.A.1, 5.C.3\)](#) or [comprehensive program](#) or [service evaluation \(4.B1., 5.A.1\)](#), (2) identified their opportunities for improvement and new funding needs, (3) reviewed the [Checklist for a Good “Aspirational” Plan](#), and (4) documented their plan ([Health Information Technology example](#)), they enter budget requests into the Annual Planning and Budgeting data system. Budget requests must specify alignment and include a priority ranking.

As a result of the aligned resource allocation approach, Western has been able to:

- Implement both work-based and community-based learning in 100% of its programs
- Fund faculty stipends for curriculum redesign efforts tied to implementation of 7-week sessions
- Hire consultants to assist with the transition to a new ERP system
- Bolster resources for student support in its Learner Support and Transition division and Learning Commons
- Provide more robust basic needs support for students
- Offer total compensation packages that help attract and retain co-workers

5.C.2. The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning and budgeting.

With student success at the heart of Western’s current strategic plan, linking learning outcomes assessment to Western’s organizational analysis efforts is important. In addition to analysis of Western’s Student Success Metrics (Key Results) which include enrollment, course completion, retention, graduation, job placement, and non-graduate transfer, Western engages in analysis of student success at the learning outcome level. Faculty use a technical skills assessment (TSA) (**3.A.2, 4.B.1, 5.C.2**) to document skill mastery for each outcome. TSAs focus on industry-validated outcomes aligned across the WTCS in colleges offering the same program. During program review and annual planning, faculty identify gaps in achieving outcomes, conduct root cause analysis, and identify solutions to address gaps. Examples of scoring guides used in the TSA process include:

- [Agribusiness and Science Technology](#)

- [Business Management](#)
- [Early Childhood Education](#)
- [Paramedic Technician](#)

Examples of annual plans that reference student learning outcomes assessments and opportunities for improvement include:

- [Early Childhood Education](#) (pp. 3-4)
- [Human Services Associate](#) (p. 4)
- [Physical Therapist Assistant](#) (p. 3)
- [Graphic Design](#) (p. 1)

As part of the annual planning process, leadership examines student success across courses and programs and identifies where achievement of learning outcomes may be challenging for students. Through examination of student success and learning outcomes, Western identifies gateway courses (courses that appear to be roadblocks for students) and funnels resources into efforts to support students and increase opportunities for mastery of course competencies and program outcomes. Using the newly developed tiered support model, Learner Support and Transition (LST) (**1.B.3, 3.D.1, 3.D.2, 4.C.3**) partners with other academic and student service leadership to design the most impactful interventions that can be used to bolster learning outcomes and overall student success. The decision to implement a required [Strengths Seminar](#) for all students is an example of how a high-level analysis of learning outcomes resulted in a significant organizational shift.

In addition to an annual review of student success measures and learning outcomes assessment, Western's annual grant planning involves a process to identify courses and programs to be targeted for improvement in student success measures and achievement of learning outcomes. Typically, this process involves looking at high volume, low success rate courses (gateway courses) or programs. Perkins funding is allocated to bolster efforts to improve. A [recent project](#) (pp. 3 & 7) includes the redesign of a gatekeeper course found in business programs: Software for Business Apps.

Western's commitment to implement 7-week sessions (**3.A.1, 3.B.3, 3.D.1, 4.B.3, 4.C.3**) is one of the results of ongoing analysis of program and course-level learning outcomes and student success. Designed to reduce student cognitive load, the work for 7-week sessions focuses not on compression or acceleration, but on in-depth curriculum redesign. The design of program curriculum spans program outcomes, employability skills, course sequences aka program configurations, the Technical Skills Attainment scoring guide, and course title/description/credits as seen the comprehensive [program design/ curriculum map attachment](#). Course level curriculum provided additional [summaries](#), performance assessment tasks, and course level maps. Over 1,000 courses across over 100 associate degrees, technical diplomas, and certificates have been redesigned to improve student learning and overall student success. These changes are tracked through the Curriculum and Scheduling Office ([spreadsheet of changes](#), [description of changes](#)).

5.C.3. The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.

As mentioned throughout, one of Western's Personal and Organizational Commitments in its strategic plan is to *drive action through data intelligence*. This commitment is evidenced in Western's model of planning which consists of annual and strategic planning grounded in Scan, Plan, Do, Check, Adjust (S-PDCA) and the Four Disciplines of Executions® (a Franklin Covey model for planning that emphasizes focusing on the wildly important). A presentation delivered at

the 2022 [Association for Institutional Research in the Upper Midwest](#) and a similar presentation at [Achieving the Dream's](#) national conference in 2020 detail Western's very intentional efforts in 2017 and 2018 to engage its stakeholders in the process of creating a strategic plan:

- Environmental Scan (24 Western authors) (5.C.5)
- Strategic Directions SWOT Analysis sessions (250+ coworkers)
- 2017 Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE – 617 respondents) (3.D.1)
- 2018 Ruffalo Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (1332 respondents) (3.D.1)
- The Achieving the Dream Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool (ICAT – 267 respondents) (1.A.2, 4.C.4)

Just under 200 coworkers were brought back together to “check and adjust” the strategic plan in 2021 through a “celebrations and lessons” learned facilitated format and survey.

As mentioned earlier, Western's planning cycle begins in the spring with a data summit that is designed to foster data literacy and overall data maturity. Coworkers from all areas of the College review a variety of data such as Student Success Metrics (Key Results) that include course completion, retention, and graduation data disaggregated by race or ethnicity, age, and enrollment status and labor market reports with wages, job openings, and in-demand skills. A recent data summit told a story of the student journey with data about entry, progress, and completion of a path. Data summits can include student satisfaction or engagement data, the voice of the student and their experiences with supports such as advising, counseling, and tutoring. An interesting observation from student voice data illustrated that while students would be willing to use support services, many don't because they do not have enough time to seek these services out. Historically, data summits attract over 100 leaders, faculty, and other coworkers.

5.C.4. The institution plans on the basis of a sound understanding of its current capacity, including fluctuations in the institution's sources of revenue and enrollment.

Western has a long record of sound fiscal stewardship and financial stability as is evidenced by its robust fund balance (reserve funds), balanced budgets, clean financial audit reports (2.A.2, 2.C.3), and a very strong AA+ credit rating from S&P Global Ratings.

The College proactively monitors potential fluctuations in revenue sources and plans accordingly. The IR Office provides Western's leadership team with detailed enrollment reports weekly. These reports are used to analyze year-over-year trends in FTE generation and headcount. These reports prompt regular discussion about enrollments each term while creating an enrollment management model. Monthly financial reports are presented to the district board which include budget to actual operating revenue and expenses, capital expenditures, and enterprise funds. Annually in April, a comprehensive review of the proposed budget for the upcoming fiscal year is discussed with the board – [District Board Agenda April 16, 2024](#).

5.C.5. Institutional planning anticipates evolving external factors, such as technology advancements, demographic shifts, globalization, the economy, and state support.

Western remains alert to evolving external factors through a variety of methods that include annual financial forecasting; annual labor market analysis through Lightcast, an economic development and labor market analysis software; synthesis of reports and research from management consulting firms such as Deloitte, McKinsey, Korn Ferry, and Cognizant; participation in legislative activities; regular attendance at national conferences such as the HLC's annual meeting, Achieving the Dream, the

Alliance for Innovation and Transformation (AFIT) Summer Institute, WisCore (WTCS), Legal Issues Conference (WTCS), the Association for Institutional Research (AIR) and the Association for Institutional Research in the Upper Midwest (AIRUM) annual conferences, CASE's Federal Funding Task Force, and WTCS state-called meetings.

Western conducts its own environmental scanning process (**1.A.2, 5.A.1, 5.C.3**) and is intentional about the approach and the engagement of researchers and authors across the College. The results of environmental scanning are shared through town halls, annual planning retreats, and district board meetings. The College is well aware of the demographic cliff and how it manifests itself throughout the region, the trend towards micro-credentialing, the shortage of healthcare and manufacturing workers across the district (and nation), the growing competition for students as a result of 4-year institutions recognizing the relevance and importance of 2-year degrees that deliver skilled graduates more rapidly, the emergence of 3rd party providers that recognize and attempt to address workforce shortages due to out-of-balance ratios of graduates to job openings, and the impact of legislation on higher education and the College's ability to deliver on its mission.

Environmental scanning evidence:

- [2018 full report](#)
- [2021 executive summary](#)
- [2021 full report](#)
- [2023 \(presentation\)](#)
- [2023 themes](#)

5.C.6. The institution implements its plans to systematically improve its operations and student outcomes.

Western's [Experience 2025 strategic plan](#) is a robust roadmap with student success at the center. The College is systematic in the implementation of its plan as evidenced through the progress made across the plan and movement on measures such as the [Key Results and Strategic Goals](#). The plan is structured with four Strategic Directions defined through Foundation Statements and Fundamental Beliefs. Each Strategic Direction has an executive sponsor who is part of the SLT. In addition, each strategy has a set of strategy leads who report periodically to the executive sponsors, SLT, and district board. The [Annual Planning and Budgeting timeline](#) illustrates accountability to the district board with periodic presentations for each strategic direction. The strategic plan is cascaded to unit, division, department, program, and service plans and the budgeting process resulting in resource allocation designed to improve operations and student outcomes.

Sources

- 3.D. Strengths Seminar Course Outcomes Summary and Rubric
- 5.A. 2023 Planning Cycle Human Services Associate
- 5.A. Annual Planning Process and the Budget Formation Process
- 5.A. Comprehensive Program Evaluation Model Guide_2020
- 5.A. Data Summit 2023 PowerPoint
- 5.A. Service Evaluation Launch Presentation
- 5.B. 2022_2023 Key Focus Areas
- 5.B. Checklist for Good Plans 2023 Final

- 5.B. Example of Complete Plan Health Information Technology
- 5.B. Experience 2025 Strategic Plan
- 5.B. Strategic Direction Foundation Statements
- 5.B. Strategic Plan Overview 2023-2024
- 5.C. 2023 Planning Cycle Physical Therapist Assistant
- 5.C. AGRBS 10-006-2 Agribusiness and Science Technology WTCS TSA Scoring Guide
- 5.C. AIRUM Presentation on Strategic Planning 10242022 PC
- 5.C. ATD Experience 2025 FINAL 021220
- 5.C. Business Management TSA Scoring Guide
- 5.C. Comprehensive Curriculum Map Examples
- 5.C. Course Modifications Changes
- 5.C. Course modifications details screenshot
- 5.C. Course Outcome Summaries
- 5.C. District Board Agenda April 16 2024
- 5.C. District Board Environmental Scan Report 2021
- 5.C. Early Childhood Education TSA Scoring Guide
- 5.C. ECE 2023 Continuous Improvement and Annual Plan
- 5.C. Environmental Scan 2023 Higher Education Landscape Themes Outline
- 5.C. Environmental Scan Executive Summary
- 5.C. Graphic Design Program Plan 2023-24
- 5.C. Higher Education Landscape District Board Presentation
- 5.C. Paramedic Technician TSA Scoring Guide
- 5.C. Perkins Grant Software for Business Applications 2023
- 5.C. Western 2021 Environmental Scan
- 5.C. Western Environmental Scan

5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary

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

Summary

Several structures enable Western to fulfill its mission, improve its offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. Western has a 9 member board that in consultation with college staff and stakeholders is responsible for the policy development process and long-range direction of the College. The management of the College is delegated to Western's leadership team and is to be carried out consistently with the established policies and strategic directions. Standing committees, focused forums, listening sessions, ad-hoc steering teams, and regular unit, division, department, and program team meetings engage stakeholders in collaborative decision-making. The strategic and annual planning and budgeting approach is grounded in a "Scan," Plan, Do, Check, Adjust continuous improvement model with data playing an important role in the scanning and checking phases. In-depth environmental scanning happens regularly. Programs are evaluated every 3-5 years. A service evaluation process is in early phases of implementation. On an annual basis, Western's data summit kicks off the strategic plan refresh and annual planning and budgeting process. Despite declining enrollments and funding model changes in recent years, Western has been able to balance its budget through a reallocation process and the use of reserve funds. A variety of data is used to drive decision-making including student retention, graduation, job placement, transfer, satisfaction, and engagement data. The Gallup Q12 and the Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool are used to collect data to improve coworker engagement and institutional effectiveness approaches.

Sources

There are no sources.