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Chapter 7: Standard V

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Chapter 1: Executive Summary

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Mercyhurst University is committed to educating students in the Mercy tradition. To that end, the North East

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Chapter 3: Standard I – Mission and Goals

The institution's mission defines its purpose within the context of higher education, the students it serves, and what it intends to accomplish. The institution's stated goals are clearly linked to its mission and specify how the institution fulfills its mission.

Overview

Mercyhurst University meets the requirements of Standard I. A full description of the ways Mercyhurst University meets the four criteria and all applicable sub-criteria of Standard I, as well as the Requirements of Affiliation 7 and 12, are presented throughout this chapter.

The university has a clearly articulated mission and core values that exhibit a vibrant presence in the life of the university, reflect clearly its Sisters of Mercy tradition and Catholic liberal arts identity, ground the actions and decisions of university leadership and governance, function as critical touchstones in planning and assessment, guide program development and implementation to enhance and ensure the student experience, and support a campus environment that embraces tolerance, diversity, community, and well-being.

Placing Mission at the Center

Explicit and unequivocal, the Mercyhurst University Mission, Vision Statement, and Core Values articulate the commitment the university makes to the student experience as central to its identity. (S1.C1: Mission, Vision, and Core Values)

Consistent with its Catholic identity and Mercy heritage, Mercyhurst University educates diverse persons in a culture where faith and reason flourish together, where the beauty and power of the liberal arts combine with an appreciation for the dignity of work and a commitment to serving others. Confident in the strength of its student-faculty bonds, the university community is inspired by the image of students whose choices, in life and work, will enable them to realize the human and spiritual values embedded in everyday realities and to exercise leadership in service toward a just world.

Mercyhurst University seeks to be a leading higher educational institution that integrates excellence in the liberal arts, professional and career-path programs, and service to regional and world communities.

Through its Core Values Statement, the university nuances the mission through an articulation of the values and viewpoints that differentiate the university as a provider of higher education in the 21st century marketplace. The university's core valuecore valu   o   t   c   c   1

beginning with self-acceptance and extending beyos/TT0 11 (e51 -1.9f266.47 Tdi 11 T6eJET)8 -612 ext

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Rounding out these larger scale mission initiatives are many simple but vital events and communication portals that support and transmit mission understanding and commitment, such as the cherished annual traditions of Mercy Week and the Mass of the Holy Spirit, the Day of Service as part of freshmen orientation, Mission cards at all meetings of the Board of Trustees, Jeans for a Cause, and

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students, fostering diversity and inclusion, and improving health, safety, and well-being across the university communities. Further, the 2021-2024 Strategic Plan, "Mission Inspired, Future Ready," approved and implemented in June 2021, presents objectives arranged around

trustees clearly establish the board as having primary oversight and governance of the university and designate university mission and purpose as the board's first responsibility. (S1.C1: Bylaws of Mercyhurst University; S1.C1: Mercyhurst University Trustee Charters). In addition, mission presence is further reinforced by the continued presence of the Sisters of Mercy on the board of trustees with the requirement that the membership of the board must include at least two members of the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of the Americas or lay individuals

respective handbooks and/or bylaws, the governance structures representing the three key university constituenc

At the structural level, the university maintains a clear focus on developing and supporting programming consonant with the values inscribed within the mission and the legacy of the Sisters of Mercy, whose commitment to education and nursing resonates with both the previous and current strategic plans. For example, as part of updating the 2018-2021 Strategic Plan the university operationalized two strategic goals, one for non-traditional students and one for community and national partnerships. With a particular focus on graduate students and veterans, this strategy was targeted toward making a Mercyhurst education accessible to students from all backgrounds, especially non-traditional students. Recognizing the need to reach students whose life circumstances might not allow for traditional on-campus matriculation, the university created the Office of Distance Learning (ODL) to focus on graduate online course development and improve accessibility through online and blended courses. (S1.C3: Office of Distance Learning Brochure) Other efforts, such as the university obtaining status as a "Purple Heart" university in 2018, further expanded accessibility to non-traditional students in line with the Mercyhurst mission. (S1.C3: Purple Heart Article) As one of two such institutions in Pennsylvania, the program, which targets outreach to wounded veterans, has expanded to support over fifty student veterans, a veteran's center on campus, and an active ROTC.

In terms of mission ties to curricula, nearly half of the general education course requirements for degree completion are directly linked to university mission: two dedicated courses in REACH and four dedicated courses

Recognizing the mission imperative to establish a campus environment that fosters human dignity and provides care and support for both individuals and the community, the university is committed to continuous improvement in administrative support resources and support. Examples of institutional initiatives that allow for an explicitly mission-centered operation include:

significant investment in technology updates across administration offices with particular focus on the

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majors, minors, developmental programs and physical development" as well as academic assessment. (S2.C1: Faculty Handbook p.X) The Core Curriculum Advisory Committee (CCAC) "assists the Office of Academic Affairs (OAA) in developing, implementing, and evaluating the core curriculum, including for example, review and recommendations with regard to the REACH curriculum, iMU, Beyond the Gates, and the senior ethics capstone." (S2.C1: Faculty Handbook p.X) Second, direct faculty influence on the curriculum is further ensured by the university's processes, which originate at the academic departmental level, for proposing new programs and courses, as well as revisions to existing programs and courses. Within these processes, such as New Program Approval Application and the New Course Approval Form, faculty assume the primary role in curriculum, initiating curricular proposals grounded in the mission and university strategic planning, as well as other critical factors, such as curricular consistency, program assessment and curriculum mapping, needs analysis, and revenue projections. Conducted largely online, curricular development and changes progress from faculty to approval through the department chair to the college dean to the office of institutional effectiveness to the vice president for academic affairs. (S2:C1: New Program Application; S2.C1: New Course Approval Form)

One example of the university's commitment to strong fac   r &   estoogog
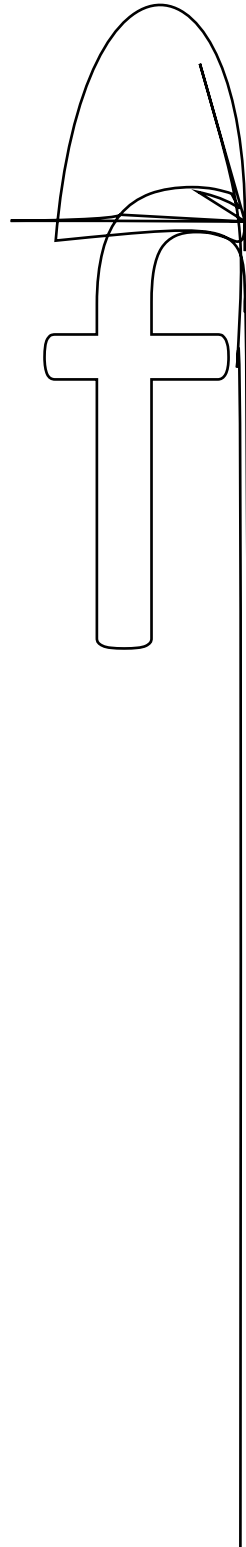
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gathering), how they were discovered (routine testing of student-athletes), and what it meant for the community, for example, the need for contact tracing and extra precautions and the transition to remote learning. Throughout, the university strove for honesty, clarity, and transparency in communications with both the campus and regional communities.

which are updated and disclosed in a timely manner, are prepared in a comprehensive and collaborative approach engaging the Offices of Academic Affairs, Enrollment Management, Assessment and Planning Department-Institutional Research, Student Financial Services, and Admissions, among others.

In addition to meeting the external compliance requirements, Mercyhurst remains committed to meeting the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) Requirements of Affiliation, standards, and policies. As highlighted throughout this self-study report, the university maintains compliance with all
. Examples of how the institution demonstrates compliance with MSCHE processes and policies include:

- timely submission of routine reporting requirements such as the Annual Institutional Update and participation in the Mid-Point Peer Review process, coordinated through the Office for Institutional Effectiveness (OIE);
- ongoing monitoring of proposed and accepted updates to MSCHE Policies to ensure ongoing compliance at all levels, coordinated by the ALO;
- submission of the Substantive Change for Closure of the North East Branch Campus in Fall 2019 as well as the extension request necessitated by the consolidation timeline. (S2.C8: Substantive Change for the Closure of the North East Campus)

The university also conducts Compliance Workshops to ensure departments across the university are aware of their vast compliance obligations, and to provide a venue to discuss recent changes in legislation or practicedin7C197Iahe , a

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Chapter 5:

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Table 3 University-wide

The liberal arts core of the REACH curriculum is comprised of a ten-course requirement that students undertake
in different disciplTf0 23.97 Td.TQq0 0 612 792 reW*hBT0 g/TT0 11 Tf0 Tr 106.3 6553.97 Td(di)-ETQq0 0 612 792 reW*hBT0 g/

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data are collected at each point in the timeline, allowing for a longitudinal mapping of student learning across the four-year matriculation. These data are collected through written responses to reflection prompts as part of the requirements in each course. All reflections are submitted to the university's electronic portfolio system and are then assessed by outREACH staff and instructors using a consistent rubric. The rubric allows for evaluation of student responses on a maturational scale with achievement levels, such as   ,   ,   , and   . The maturational continuum that drives this developmental assessment is grounded in the expectation that, across the four-year matriculation, the majority of student ratings would move from little or no understanding to a more mature or nuanced understanding of mission and Mercy. In academic year 2020-2021, the outREACH initiative reached a critical milestone: the office of global programs presented to the vice president for academic affairs the first full 4-year cohort of longitudinal data on the assessment of student learning outcomes relative to mission integration. (S3.C5: outREACH Longitudinal Data, S3.C8: outREACH Longitudinal Data)
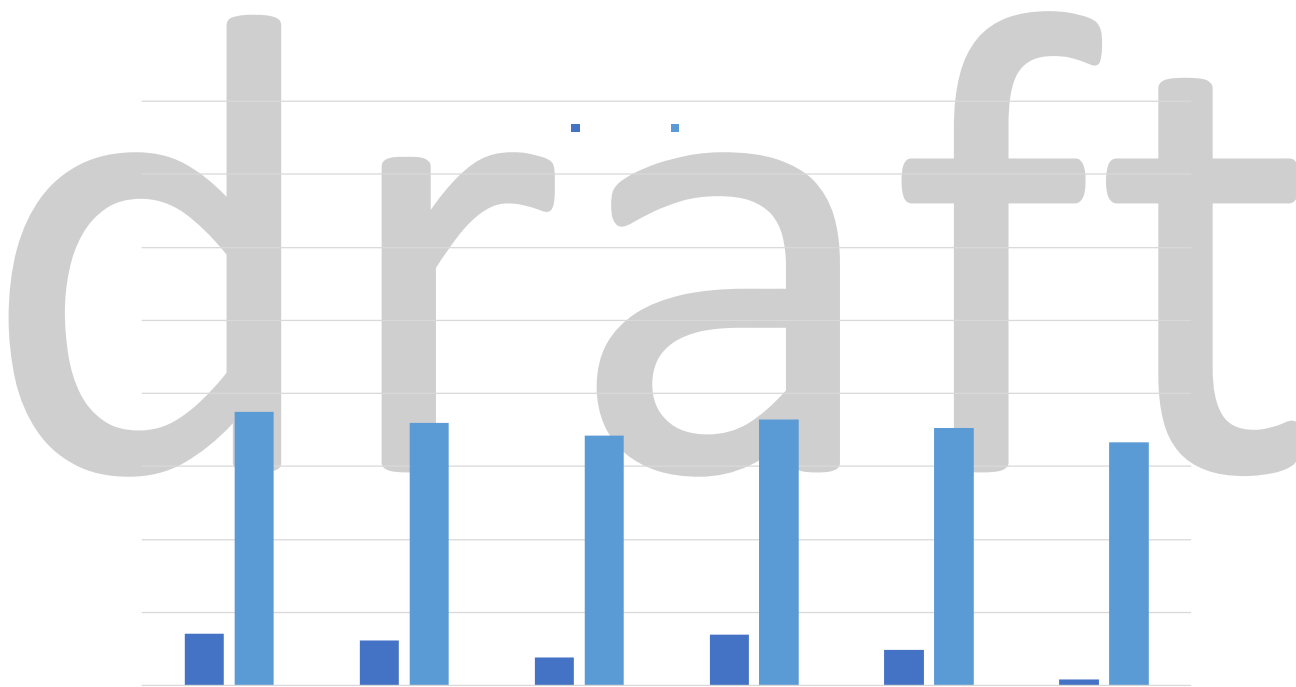

Figure 1 Growth through outREACH experiences

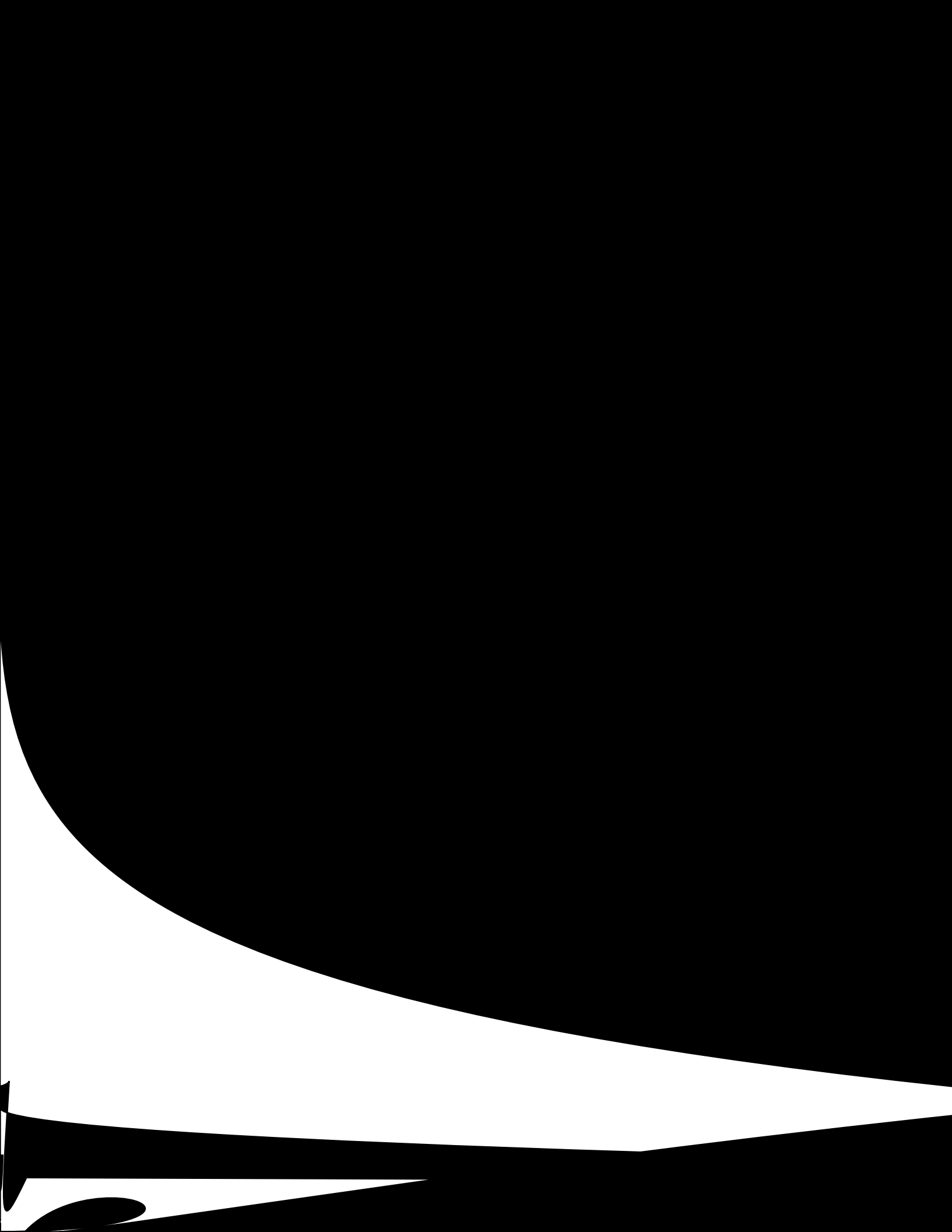## Engaging with the Discipline: Academic Programs

Mercyhurst University offers a wide array of certificate, associate, baccalaureate, and graduate programs leading to a degree or recognized higher education credential. (S3.C1: Undergraduate Catalog – Degrees & Certificates; S3.C1: Graduate Catalog – Degrees & Certificates) All academic programs at Mercyhurst University have an Academic Plan, coordinated by OIE but owned and maintained by the department. Developed by faculty within the respective departments, the Academic Plan includes the program mission, student learning outcomes (SLOs), curriculum map, and assessment mechanisms.

Samples) As detailed in Chapter

opportunities, and national exam preparation. Many graduate programs offer a research methods course relevant to the discipline and assessed as part of departmental assessment plans. Additionally, students in graduate and undergraduate programs have access to Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) modules. Data are collected on the usage of the training, the types of training modules completed, and the overall successful completion rates. Faculty who teach research methods courses as well as members of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) use these data to ensure that students pursuing IRB approval understand the ethic 0 612-6 (ha)4 (940he us)4Td(3W000301B53bTd[y w)83 (io)7ie(w)10 (ell)3 (as)3 (io)7rch metruum (e6TJETQ(ud)5 ubTd[(

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Ireland courses are university courses within the students' regular enrollment, students pay only for costs

counselors work together to provide students with the resources they need to be successful. (S3.C4: Advising Day Brochure)

Academic Services and Support is also essential in providing the information, resources, and referrals critical to academic success. Within this functional area, students have access at no additional charge to support resources such as the Writing Center, the Testing Center, and Tutoring. For example, staffed with peer tutors, the Writing Center offers guidance and support to students seeking assistance with course-related writing assignments. Through the Tutoring Center, students have access to assistance with a peer tutor to review course content or prepare for an exam or presentation. The Testing Center offers testing services for all students requiring alternative testing arrangements, such as extended time on exams, a reduced distraction environment, or needing to complete a make-up exam. In addition, the Office of Career and Professional Development encourages students to engage in major exploration and career planning beginning with their first year with

In addition to the formal academic support discussed above, the university demonstrates its commitment to student academic success through a consistent process of improving functions, processes, and resources. For example, the university invests significantly in support for and training in Blackboard, the university-wide learning management system used by faculty to support student academic progress. Through Blackboard, students have direct access to both the course instructor and course content, as well as assignments, supplemental course materials, and grading. Similarly, the university provides all employees and students access to the Microsoft 365 suite, Zoom, and Screencast-o-Matic to support document sharing, organization, the creation of video content, and online/web meetings. (S3.C4: 2020-2021 IT Training Schedule)

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associate, undergraduate, and graduate degree applications. (S4.C1: Admissions Website) Each financial aid

families are provided with information on a variety of

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each of these departments is individually charged with enacting a set of policies and procedures designed to support the student experience, those policies and procedures are set and periodically reviewed by OAA.

The Registrar's Office, as the primary policy management unit for academics, is a critical student services area. In

As its name implies, the Office of Academic Services and Support (OAS) is essential to supporting the student academic experience. Emphasizing the critical connection between student support and academic success, the associate vice president for academic support reports to the vice president for academic affairs and works closely with the college deans on the Academic Affairs Council. The services associated with OAS afford support for students at all levels of preparedness, including appropriate identification and delivery of remediation opportunities, ensuring ongoing student success, and providing services to further enhance the education of excellent students across campus.

A joint initiative between OAS and OIE, the Freshman Registration process ensures that incoming students are placed in first-semester courses that meet programmatic needs, while enabling students to explore areas of interest. Three pieces of information are used to build the freshmen schedules: a department-created list of required major courses for students during their first semester, a preferences survey that identifies areas of interest for incoming students, and data from the student's application including high school transcripts and submitted SAT/ACT scores. Importantly, the latter piece of information helps to ensure that students are enrolled in the appropriate first semester college writing course. Taken as a whole, the Freshman Registration initiative allows for the creation of more appropriate schedules that help students transition to college coursework and meet academic goals. (S4.C1: Freshman Course Placement Requirements, S4.C1: Freshman Preferences Survey, C4.C1: Freshman Major Requirements) Similarly, OAS provides targeted support to students unsure of which major to declare through Exploratory Student programming, which includes personal counseling as well as numerous events, including career fairs, major/minor fairs, and job shadowing. (S4.C1: Exploratory Student Programming)

The Learning Differences program is a multifaceted service that provides learning support for all students while operationalizing the university's commitment to providing a focused support network for students facing additional challenges. The Learning Differences program works cooperatively with the university's Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) staff to ensure that students with documented diagnoses have access to appropriate accommodations in their academic courses. The Learning Differences and ADA processes are managed through a dedicated software system designed specifically for this purpose. The AIM, LLC. Software allows students to submit an application for accommodation and include supporting documentation. The application can then be seamlessly reviewed, and the accommodations determined, documented, and implemented through the system. Features of the AIM LLC. system include a means for students to indicate accommodation disclosure preferences, automatic e-mailings for all facets of the process, and the organized and secure sharing of digitized textbooks. (S4.C1: Learning Differences Brochure, S4.C1: ADA Accommodations Application, S4.C1: Accommodation Notification Sample) In addition to ADA compliance, the Academic Support and Learning Differences staff works closely with students who self-identify as needing additional support. For example, the university offers a fee-based program to students and families, the Academic Advantage Program, that provides a variety of services and support throughout the academic year. In this program, students meet twice weekly with an Academic Support counselor to review current class progress, assess deficiencies, and plan for future

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university's electronic academic monitoring system, is an initiative designed to ensure that undergraduate students meet the requirements for Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) and are on track toward achieving the required number of credits to graduate on time. (S4.C1: Self-Service Screen Samples, S4.C1: #15toFinish Poster)

Another example of how academic support staff monitor student progress and provide timely outreach is the early alert system. All instructors are required to use the midterm grading and early alert system, available through Self Service, at least one time by the semester midpoint. When an alert indicates that a student is not meeting minimum expectations, academic counselors reach out to students directly. (S4.C1: Early Alert Process, S4.C1: Student Alert Email Sample) These electronic early alert processes are linked to an academic probation process designed to provide the support students need while ensuring satisfactory academic progress. For example, recognizing that some first year students struggle with the transition to the demands of college coursework, student support utilizes an academic warning status for freshman who earn between a 1.75 and a 2.0 GPA in the fall semester. Academic support staff provide counseling and connection to resources, including tutoring, the writing center, and, if appropriate, referrals to other offices, such as counseling or student financial services. While most students return to good academic standing within one semester, students who continue to struggle are moved to Academic Probation status. At the end of each semester when grades are certified, students are notified of their probationary status via a letter sent to the home address and by email to the student's campus account. (S4.C1: Academic Probation Overview)

Mercyhurst University recognizes that not all students fit the definition of a traditional student and is committed to providing a range of support options. Support for non-traditional students, such as veterans and associate degree students, is another example of the university's high level of commitment to student success.

For example, in 2020, when the university moved most of the associate degree programs to the Erie campus, the university retained the majority of Mercyhurst North East's academic support staff and relocated them to the Erie campus, ensuring that employees with the experience and particular skillsets for supporting the lower

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anonymous referral system used to provide wrap-around support for students who may be struggling socially, emotionally, and/or academically. This committee is charged with ensuring that at-risk students receive outreach and access to whatever support they may require6e9lv12.68 -273 ( )tr4 (g)a32 -1.36 8: (h3e9lv12l75 (hey may r(r)(r)

s wit (, an)-5 (f)8 (a)4 (li)-16De (r(ec(0f)8erui)-15 (r)8 (-8lB a demo)6BT/P E5 (t)i]a4ue5 (o)4may5 (c)-8 (o)4nr (s)5h82vai(0(2ui]

programming and pastoral presence as an essential support for students who might otherwise feel marginalized on campus;

the LGBTQIA Allies program to promote acceptance of all students across the range of sexuality and gender diversities;

opportunities to engage deeply with the outside community through service;

support for those struggling financially through the Mercy Market.

In the spirit of the Mercy Mission, all services are offered in a way that maintains the dignity of the individual and recognizes that students cannot achieve their educational goals without first having basic needs fulfilled.

The university recognizes that with nearly xx% of the undergraduate students identifying as student-athletes, the need for quality student support for studentsent

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assess and document the university's progress in achieving its short and long term strategic goals and effectively communicate accomplishments to its various constituencies;

meet the data reporting requirements of outside entities;

support efforts to ensure that the university complies with all applicable rules, regulations and laws;

maintain information systems that enable the university's academic and administrative leadership to effectively monitor assessment results.

The OIE coordinates regularly with departments to ensure that assessment processes are both effective and efficient. Specific examples of OIE support for efforts to improve educational effectiveness through professional development activities related to assessment include the Assessment Handbook, the Assessment and Accreditation Hub page, and the Assessment Institute. The Assessment Handbook provides comprehensive information on academic assessment processes at the university, including planning, development, and implementation of assessment processes, such as annual assessment reports, action plans, and five-year self-studies, as well as timelines and schedules. (S5.C3: Assessment Handbook) The Assessment Handbook is made available to stakeholders through the Assessment and Accreditation Hub Page, which also features a robust slate of assessment support resources, including links to forms and documents, links to additional resources, and assessment FAQs, as well as separate resource pages for both accreditation and institutional research. (S5.C3: Assessment Hub site) Similarly, The Loop, a bi-monthly newsletter introduced in early 2021, offers resources, highlights examples of good assessment practice on campus, and updates faculty and staff on any changes to assessment policies or processes. (S5.C3: Assessment Newsletter Samples) In addition, targeted assessment support is provided to academic departments during OIE's annual Assessment Institute, a day-long event held just before the start of the Fall semester. The Assessment Institute includes an informational presentation from the Assessment Coordinator and breakout sessions in which faculty work collaboratively to develop a deliverable as assigned by OIE. In previous years, faculty have worked together in breakout sessions to generate reports outlining their senior capstone experiences, identify essential course-level Global Learning Objectives (GLOs) as described in IDEA Course Evaluations, and update assessment plans and curriculum maps. (S5.C3: Assessment Institute Overview) In addition to online resources and the Assessment Institute, the OIE, through its designated assessment coordinator, sponsors individual meetings with department chairs to review assessment plans and brainstorm solutions to any assessment challenges reported by faculty.

As demonstrated below, Mercyhurst University can evidence significant progress both in providing the necessary support and resources required to ensure quality assessment information and in creating pathways to ensure that assessment information is used to inform decision-making.

Framing Curricular Goals

Mercyhurst University provides succinct educational goals at both the institutional and departmental/programmatic levels that are intertwined within the university mission and core values. These educational goals are arranged from broad, comprehensive goals, such as those found within the university mission, vision, and core values, to more granular goals found within course syllabi.

The primacy of the mission, vision statement, and core values in all aspects of university operations is explicit in the university's clear commitment to a consistent set of educational goals that are reflected within and reinforced by the educational experience. For example, the vision statement states that "Mercyhurst University

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in this program demonstrate strong pedagogical skills, leadership and service to others throughout the program," which correlates with the university mission's "appreciation for the dignity of work and a commitment to serving others." (S5.C1: Program Outcome Statement Samples)

Finally, mission, values, and institutional objectives are connected to the educational goals that drive student learning at the course level, as evidenced through course syllabi, which are available for review in the Syllabus Repository located on the Hub. The clear link between institutional and department educational goals and the processes of program assessment, including annual assessment reports and curriculum mapping, are articulated to students through course syllabi and communicated to the larger community through the syllabus repository. For example, a syllabus for a course in the department of criminal justice, within the Ridge College, makes explicit the wider department educational goals by stating, in addition to the course description and the specific course objectives, the student learning outcomes for the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice Program (Kirchner, CRJS 205-01FTE, Spring 2021). In an accounting course offered within the Walker College of

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In addition to annual assessment reports, each academic program unit is required to complete a five-year self-study. As detailed in the Assessment Handbook, self-studies consist of seven sections that provide an analysis of a department's overall functioning. (S5.C2: Assessment Handbook) Included in the self-study are the department's mission statement, financial and material resources, current trends and issues within their disciplines, and

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term enrollment projections. To ensure communication and an information-rich environment in academic program development, review, and revision, academic program additions or substantive changes at the department level must receive approval from the college dean, OIE, and the Faculty Senate's Academic Planning and Assessment Committee (APAC). The vice president for academic affairs makes the final approval decision. (S5.C3: New Program Application) Similarly, changes to academic programs require formal review, including the evidence used to substantiate the change. (S5.C3: Program Change Form)

In addition to departmental-level evaluation of programs and curricula, academic departments are able to draw on outcomes from the assessment of individual courses to improve educational effectiveness. Course-level evaluation happens through a number of mechanisms, including student ratings of instruction, faculty review of course learning outcomes, and university-wide processes for evaluating teaching effectiveness.

Students provide feedback on their learning experiences through student course evaluations. Prior to 2018, the university required all faculty to conduct course evaluation using the   platform. Since 2018, the university has employed the IDEA diagnostic instrument and requires that all courses be evaluated. Through these course evaluations, faculty are provided with both quantitative and qualitative feedback about student learning and overall satisfaction with the course content and delivery. IDEA evaluations of individual faculty members and courses are shared with the respective department chairs, associate deans, and deans, who monitor data relating to department designated and ranked student learning outcomes. (S5.C3: SIRII Instrument, S5.C3: IDEA Diagnostic Instrument, S5.C3: Sample IDEA Results)

In addition, as a part of meaningful evaluation of student learning, faculty members engage in ongoing assessment of learning outcomes within individual courses. Such engagement with assessment at the course level enables faculty to improve both individual course structures and larger program-level curricula. The Applied Forensic Sciences department, for example, discovered through indirect assessments that students were not being provided an opportunity to reflect upon and synthesize their learning over their entire program. To correct this issue, the department began requiring all students to complete a comprehensive capstone course (S3.C5: Applied Forensic Sciences Example of Use). Ongoing assessment at the cour

Assessment information also plays an important role in evaluating academic support services. For example, the Hammermill Library collects data on library services and space occupancy for planning and potential enhancement of the academic library through targeted data gathering tools, such as the Library Log Report, created using the LibWizard product by Springshare, which permits the library to conduct an intentional hourly count through the library building which can be entered into the reporting system. Over time, this data is gathered to assess the occupancy of the building during days, weeks, and hours to develop predictability of peak usage and to inform decision-making as to staff coverage requirements. (S5.C3: Library Overview)

Using Assessment to Inform DecisTO1 Tf711 TfhnBTg-72 reW*92i9Tre6MTdJ0I7 (an)480V*nBwTW*nBTT2 13

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and trends. For example, the most recent Five-Year Self-Study for the Organizational Leadership Department provided a data-based analysis indicating that the number of courses needing to be offered was placing strain on existing faculty and recommending the hiring of additional faculty. However, the data also indicated that enrollment in individual courses was decreasing in the in-person sections but not in the online sections. From that study, the college dean, working with the OAA and the chair of the department proposed the transition of the program to fully online, which was implemented in 2019, as well as the revision of the program core

concerns expressed by students during focus group sessions and corroborated by national trends indicating that students are likely to need enhanced supports in the coming years. The Strategic Planning process establishes specific outcomes and progress benchmarks along a range of institutional priorities that are

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Securing Effective Budget and Resource Allocation Processes

Mercyhurst University has processes for planning and resource allocation that are aligned with the mission and goals of the institution, grounded in evidenced-based decision-making, and that serve to advance the university's goals and objectives.

To support the process of linking funding to strategic priorities more closely, in 2018, the university engaged a consultant to review and evaluate the then-existing budgeting process in support of goal 3 of the plan, "Renew the university's resources, processes and infrastructure." The report indicated that budget planning information

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contingency is available and whether there are any pending requests for the use of the contingency. A review of the 2020 budgeting process reveals that, while levels of completion are not consistent, the forms are in use. While most submitted forms contained adequate explanations for the expense justifications, explanations for the tie to mission and the strategic plan were not clearly stated in all cases. Of the requests approved for full funding, several were required by regulatory agencies (utility increases and taxes, for example), or by contractual requirement.

Once the president and cabinet have reviewed and approved budget requests, the budget team works to finalize the annual operating budget. The annual operating budget is forwarded to the Budget and Finance subcommittee of the board of trustees for its review and approval, after which the budget is forwarded to the board of trustees for final approval. The annual operating budget for FY 2022, for example, was approved by the Board of Trustees at its May 2021 meeting

An annual audit and resulting financial statements are required by a variety of federal, state, and local governmental and regulatory agencies, bondholders, granting agencies, banks and investment firms, donors, the university's board of trustees, and other constituencies. The Audit subcommittee of the board of trustees is responsible for the appointment, compensation, retention, oversight, and approval of services provided by an independent accounting firm. (S6.C7: Mercyhurst University Trustee Charters) Among those services is the conduct of an annual financial statement audit. At its spring meeting, the Audit subcommittee reviews the independent auditor's plan for the annual financial audit and required report deliverables. During its fall meeting, the committee reviews the results of the annual financial audit of the university's Financial Statements and any other attestations for

potential lack of provider choice for employees. After consideration and discussion by board of trustees and administration, decision was made to shop the insurance to try to balance cost and employee choice. Because both UPMC and Highmark were unable to confirm that university employees would be able to use either hospital in town (UPMC Hamot/UPMC Insurance and St. Vincent's/Allegheny Health Network/Highmark), and because anticipated claims cost came in at a competitive number, the university selected AETNA to be its insurance carrier for FY 2019/2020. (SEE Insurance Comparison Matrix which was presented to the BOT – this document contains confidential information that should be redacted if we are going to share with MSCHE). There was no change or increase in employee premiums with this change and the projected claims figures proved competitive based upon assessment at the close of FY 2019/2020. Most importantly, the selection of AETNA allowed the university to retain employee choice of health care providers. (S6.C4: Insurance Summary 2019-20, S6.C4: Change of Insurance Overview)

Through the Personnel Action Form (PAF), the HR department works with area vice presidents to ensure that enough competent faculty and staff are available to meet student or other institutional needs. Available on the HR Hub site, the PAF form is used for all requests and changes to employment, such as hiring new employees, stipend requests, salary changes, employee change in status, changes to general ledger accounts from which employees are paid, as well as employee terminations. As the trigger for employment actions and system updates for employee position and status changes, the PAF drives the approvals that are entered into the Colleague system for position or wage changes to an employee record. If a position is vacated and the intention to fill that opening is indicated, the position and salary level must be submitted on a Personnel Requisition Form (PRF) before posted as an open position and available for hiring. (S6.C4: Hiring Process)

The Human Resources department conducts Exit Interviews of all employees leaving the university to collect and assess reasons for departure, ensure collection of university property and equipment, and address any benefits transition issues. Occasionally, the information gleaned in the exit interview may lead the HR Director to contact the vice president, supervisor, or department representatives about concerns raised in the exit interview, for example, salary concerns, staffing issues, or environmental/personal issues. (SEE Exit interview question docs and spreadsheet in Merry's Folder).

Effective stewardship of resources and sustainable planning is also grounded in the coordination between the Information Technology (IT) department and other university units. The IT department offers extensive flexibility and supports many platforms required for effective administration and teaching at the university. (S6.C4: List of IT-supported Platforms) To serve its constituents, the IT Department offers The IT Roadshow, which enables departments or individual employees to request a consultation with IT staff on IT on any number of technology issues, such as solving technical problems or focused training. For example, the HR department scheduled a session in the Fall of 2019 to learn how to increase efficiencies through technology, such as synching individual calendars and creating an interactive department calendar. The HR team also used this time to visualize how the new department OneDrive would be accessible. (S6.C4: IT Roadshow Example) As another example, in support of the campus-wide transition to remote learning in March of 2020, IT staff focused on the shift to virtual learning for students, synchronous instruction for faculty, as well as

completed in August 2021 after being delayed because of the pandemic. (S6.C4: Laker for Life Campaign Summary)

A similar system harnessing technology is in place to maintain the physical plant of the university. The Maintenance Ticket System is also located as a quick link on the main Employee and Student Hub pages. This system was implemented to request any maintenance related work: Electrical, Heating/Cooling, Plumbing, and Building maintenance, such as door repairs, ceiling tiles, or lights. Requests for custodial services and notifications about landscape or grounds can also be processed through this system. Ticketing begins with the employee or student submitting contact information, along with a description of the requested work. A confirmation email is sent, and a staff member from the appropriate maintenance team reaches out for further details, at which point a date and time is established for performing the requested work. (S6.C4: Maintenance Ticket System Overview)

The goal of renewing university resources, processes, and infrastructure has been addressed in a number of areas. For example, the goal calls for the development of a deferred and preventative maintenance plan. In a

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Key Findings

Grounding planning processes in clearly articulated mission links, university administration acts as stewards of the finite resources. Since 2018, in fulfillment of the university strategic plan, the administration has significantly increased the allocation of resources to enhance mission-resonant academic and co-curricular student experience, especially in technology.

With mission so prominently featured in the two most recent strategic plans, the university has made significant progress in determining what of the many possibilities will become capital projects. Similarly, the university's planning with regard to deferred maintenance and debt service shows progress toward bringing all aspects of university finances to bear in supporting mission and core values.

Opportunities for Innovation and Improvement

1. It is recommended that the university continue to develop explicit and transparent means for linking the

Chapter 9: Standard VII – Governance, Leadership, and Administration

The institution is governed and administered in a manner that allows it to realize its stated mission and goals in a way that e ectively benefits the institution, its students, and the other constituencies it serves. Even when supported by or a liated with governmental, corporate, religious, educational system, or other unaccredited organizations, the institution has education as its primary purpose, and it operates as an academic institution with appropriate autonomy.

Overview

Mercyhurst University meets the requirements of Standard VII. A full description of the ways Mercyhurst University meets the five criterd02itce fcE 0st (er)6 (2a-2 (t)-5 (5.2 Td( )TjETEMC QBT/Ht)-5 (6 (2a-2 0 11 QBTl2(6 (2a 1760358

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