

University of Wyoming - WY

HLC ID 1726

OPEN PATHWAY: Open Pathway Year 4 Assurance Review

Review Date: 6/24/2024

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Context and Nature of Review

Review Date

6/24/2024

Review Type:

Open Pathway Year 4 Assurance Review

Scope of Review

- Assurance Review

There are no forms assigned.

Institutional Context

The University of Wyoming (UW) was established as the State's Morrill Act land-grant university in 1886 and serves as Wyoming's only public university. Over the years, the university's investment in research infrastructure has positioned it to advance from the Carnegie Classification of "Higher Research Activity" when the revised definitions are implemented in 2025, to become the state's only R1 institution.

At the time of the last Comprehensive Evaluation, UW had a fall 2018 enrollment of 12,450 students from all 50 states and 88 countries around the world. In Fall 2023, the official headcount had declined to 10,913, and UW continued to welcome students from all 50 US states and from around the world. Today, UW students can choose from 150 majors that may be combined, as appropriate, with a range of baccalaureate degrees (BA, BS, BM, BS-Business, BS-Nursing, Bac. Applied Studies). UW offers 26-29 certificate programs and 148 graduate programs, of which 38 are PhDs and 3 EdD. UW continues to provide access to courses in various off-campus sites, and offers several full programs that can be completed at a distance.

As observed in the 2019 Comprehensive Review, UW enjoys the attention and support of an engaged State Legislature and Board of Trustees. Thanks to evidence provided in the assurance argument where public comments and engagement were shared, the team believes it is also likely to be true that citizens of Wyoming continue to feel invested in and engaged with the University. Assurance team members agreed that the outstanding financial support provided by the State of Wyoming has allowed the University to maintain its role of being both affordable and accessible, and the State continues to invest in institutional infrastructure.

The five-member team of HLC peer reviewers were provided with the Assurance Argument developed specifically for the four-year assurance review (versus an annotated/updated document), reflecting the evolution of the institution as it has engaged in and embraced looking forward as an essential feature of its latest strategic plan. In cases where the 2020 Assurance Argument continued to serve well, a pdf was provided as an attachment to the Evidence file. As noted below, team members requested additional documentation, often to gain more insight into "works in progress" or final stages of implementation or outcomes of new processes or policies. Team members were also able to supplement this evidence with information available from the university website, occasionally diving more deeply into archives and reports. The team's ability to do so offers the additional benefit of demonstrating the university's commitment to transparently communicating with its constituents.

Overall, the Assurance Review Team had resources needed to make a fair assessment of the institution's operations relative to, and compliance with, the standards of accreditation.

Interactions with Constituencies

The Assurance Team Chair reached out to the President and Accreditation Liaison Officer in May, 2024, to provide an overview of the process; that communication was acknowledged. After the initial team meeting, the Team Chair contacted the Accreditation Liaison Officer to request a selection of materials to be submitted as an addendum to the Assurance Argument. Following team discussion and provisional recommendations, members determined that some of their questions needed clarification. The Team Chair again contacted the Accreditation Liaison Officer concerning these requests, which were addressed in a complete and timely fashion.

Throughout this process team members found the assurance argument to be quite - although not completely - comprehensive, and the institution to be quite responsive to requests for additional materials, and in particular, requests for follow-up information or outcomes of relatively new policies and procedures.

Additional Documents

In addition to the materials requested for the addendum (noted below), the team reviewed additional materials available online, to supplement statements provided in the argument. In general, these additional materials offered detailed examples and direct evidence of processes, projects, or outcomes that were discussed more generally in the Assurance Argument. In some cases, websites consulted contained more current information, or offered the opportunity for searching and interacting with data, which the team found useful.

Brown & Gold Report - <https://www.uwyo.edu/oia/browngoldreport/index.html> (interactive, searchable data digest; static document provided in argument evidence file)

Common Data Sets - <https://www.uwyo.edu/oia/cds.html> (interactive, searchable site; static list of data categories available provided in argument evidence file)

UW Regulations and Standard Administrative Policies and Procedures - <https://www.uwyo.edu/regs-policies/index.html> (full policies and procedures available online; specific policies discussed in argument were provided in appropriate context)

Summary Minutes of the Trustees, Public Session, January 25-27, 2023 - https://www.uwyo.edu/trustees/_files/docs/2023-board-meetings/01-2023/approved-public-session-minutes-jan-25-27-2023.pdf

ASUW Student Issues Survey, Fall 2023 - <https://www.uwyo.edu/asuw/student-resources-and-services/asuw-student-surveys/index.html>

Student Fee Book, FY 2025 - https://www.uwyo.edu/fsbo/_files/docs/sfs/2025-fee-book.pdf

Scholarship & Financial Aid Consumer Information - <https://www.uwyo.edu/sfa/consumer-information.html> (interactive website offering connection to additional information; static information provided in context within argument)

University of Wyoming Specialized Accreditation - <https://www.uwyo.edu/accreditation/info/other->

accreditation.html

Addendum Requests:

1. Team questions and requests:
 1. (Criterion 2a and 2c) Documented "Acceptance" by Board of Trustee concerning the 2023 Forward for Wyoming Strategic Plan
 2. (Criterion 2, 5) Examples of outcomes/changes made as a result of revised internal audit policy and procedures. "What the team seeks is a 'connect the dots' explanation that illustrates how the audit is used to inform change, even if some aspects are works in progress." Provided: UW Board of Trustees Committee on Fiscal and Legal Affairs public session materials, Internal Audit Follow-up report that monitors and ensures management actions are effectively implemented.
 3. (Criterion 4) Illustration/example of policy on instructor credentials, particularly where exceptions are made. Provided: Credential information for two instructors, including faculty recommendation for hire.
2. Concerning Criterion Five
 1. Provided: Standard and Poor Ratings 2023 rating, and unduplicated employee and non-benefit headcounts 2021-2024.
 2. Request: UW Foundation balance for June 30, 2023 or June 30, 2024 if available (last reported balance in Assurance Argument was 2021). Provided: UW estimated 2024 Foundation endowment, and 2022 and 2023 data
 3. Brief narrative explaining significant decline in Composite Financial Indicators for 2023. Team noted that the previous 10 years CFIs ranged from a high of 7.1 in 2011 to a low of 4.81 in 2020 (presumably a COVID related impact but propped up with HEERF revenue). The reported CFI for FY 2022 is 6.79 with the reported CFI for FY2023 being 1.78. Provided: explanation and additional data.
 4. Brief narrative explaining significant increase in overall budget for FY2024 (roughly \$100M over FY2023) with specific focus on year over year difference in salary and the significant underbudgeting of Int., Claims, Other Exp. Subcontracts, Depr. & Amort. In 2023. Provided: Explanation of methodology for calculations and accounting issue that has been rectified for FY2024.

Responses to these requests were provided via the addendum, and these additional materials amply addressed the team's requests.

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.

Rating

Met

Rationale

UW conveys clearly a well-understood mission and purpose, and engagement in activities consistent with both. Its work is founded on planning processes that engage stakeholders and achieve their support.

- The official UW mission is clearly and publicly presented throughout the institution's website and in a variety of publications, noting the institution's focus on its responsibility to provide "accessible and affordable higher education of the highest quality; rigorous scholarship; the communication and application of knowledge; economic and community development; and responsible stewardship of our cultural, historical and natural resources." These goals resonate in much of the evidence presented in the assurance argument and notably, are expressed in the more succinct statement found in the "Forward for Wyoming: Honoring our Heritage & Creating Our Future 2023+" strategic plan. The updated statement is consistent, clear, and presented with a compelling focus on the potential to "unlock the extraordinary in every person through education, research, innovation, engagement, and service."
- The UW has engaged in several generations of strategic planning, with the most recent plan released in January 2023. These plans have successively built upon each other, with the latest plan thoroughly underscoring this public university's responsibility to serve the state's constituents from three perspectives: land-grant, flagship, and research institution. In reading

the 2023+ document in the context of these prior plans, it is clear that there is a consistent through-line of attention to a mission that ensures access, strives for excellence, and demonstrates leadership in issues important to the citizens of the state and world. Today's strategic goals intend to serve students, the community, and state; pursue excellence; and to do so in ways intended to be financially stable and sufficiently diverse to be sustainable. By these means the university is maintaining its commitments to mission-informed planning that is well aligned with the purposes defined by statute - in a manner that will lead the institution into the future.

- Consistent with the findings of the 2019 HLC Comprehensive Review, the process for developing the new strategic plan was consultative and iterative, demonstrating the university's commitment to engaging the university community. The work was led by a committee that included the perspectives of a diverse array of students, faculty, and staff; content and planning experts; as well as individuals representing stakeholder groups and key organizational areas. Materials provided to the committee illustrated the ways in which idea sessions, dialogs, and calls for feedback (including discussion with state-wide stakeholders) were planned to inform the work, which culminated in the plan approved by the Board of Trustees in January 2023.
- The university offers a broad array of degree programs consistent with many offered at other institutions that combine the responsibilities of flagship and land-grant institutions, providing students access not only to foundational baccalaureate education in general areas of study in the arts, humanities, social and natural sciences, but also to areas of specialized and practical study that are important to the state (e.g., Ranch Management and Agricultural Leadership). At the graduate level, opportunities are extended even further by a number of online programs that increase the reach of student access and, in particular, facilitate advanced studies for teachers in the state. In support of the university's research identity, leadership anticipates that when new criteria for ACE designation of "Very High" research institutions are implemented, the University of Wyoming will join that group. Finally, committee members note the considerable documentation provided in support of the university's successful application for the Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement that was provided as its most recent evidence of engagement with stakeholders and doing work that matters to them. These offerings and activities comport with the responsibilities articulated in the university's mission, and should contribute to the goals articulated in the strategic plan.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

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.

Rating

Met

Rationale

The UW's commitment to the public good is stated simply as a key component of its vision, "to make the world a better place."

- UW's strong identity as a "land-grant" institution and many its efforts are designed to return results to the state, in the form of economic partnership, research, educational opportunities (in both credit and non-credit forms). An abundance of evidence has been provided, not only drawing on generations of planning that center this identity as a core driver of the mission, but also citing more recent developments. The university's successful application to be considered a Carnegie Community Engaged university cites activities ranging from the ways in which the College of Health Science and the Schools of Pharmacy and Nursing provided education and services, and the College of Agriculture provided research support for surveillance testing during the pandemic that arose shortly after the last HLC review. The application notes the emphasis the university places on policy, instructional design, and remote delivery of instruction that today supports many online degree programs (Baccalaureate through Doctoral), as well as non-credit online learning opportunities, that are clearly intended to reach students in the far corners of the state. Extension services are found in 23 counties as well as on the Wind River Indian Reservation, where the Business Resources Network also maintains a site. These examples indicate that UW contributes to economic innovation and research that reaches well beyond the scope of the original "land-grant" mission: the university is growing and adapting as the needs of its community and of the state evolve.
- As an institution that seeks to welcome all students, team members note that although such work as improving the course numbering system may seem mundane on the surface, it signals UW's effort to reduce burdens on transfer students. This project was achieved through multi-institution consultation and identification of transfer pathways; it will facilitate smoother transitions to the UW for students who may begin their studies in more remote areas of the state.
- Team members note that UW has "leaned in to" conversations about challenging issues,

including their effort to clearly define and articulate core principles regarding freedom of expression, intellectual freedom, academic freedom, and constructive dialogue as it should ideally exist at UW. Recommendations offered by the UW Freedom of Expression Working Group took ownership of this work, going beyond merely stating what these principles should be, but also offered recommendations to ensure that they are supported with policy, procedure, and people who will steward this activity to achieve the aspiration that these principles are put into practice. Along the way, UW sought and managed extensive feedback, including a range of responses from glowing to critical. In Fall 2023, the principles were endorsed by student government, faculty and staff senates, the councils of deans and directors. This support will help the university communicate about them and achieve shared understanding within the UW community and with its stakeholders, laying a foundation in lived practice of “The Wyoming Way” and everyday experience for free expression and civil dialogue when disagreements arise.

Such ideas are not alien to institutions of higher education, of course, but the Working Group’s recommendations offer actionable advice that will help to ensure that unspoken assumptions held dear by the academy are carried into meaningful dialogue and lay a groundwork for trust and exploration. This work is already underway, with policies under review and activities planned for Fall 2024.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

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.

Rating

Met

Rationale

As an important component of UW's aspiration to "unlock the extraordinary in every person," the institution takes seriously the concepts of "every person" as well as the domains in which they may achieve.

- UW offers students opportunities to engage in thoughtful consideration of career opportunities, beyond offering access simply to job fairs or noting connections between majors and potential employment. Materials on the Advising Career Exploratory website reveal a rich array of student-centered tools for identifying interests (career counseling) and engaging in a successful job hunt (career services). Further, because career advising may vary by area, students in different colleges may access different service centers and participate in events that align best with their interests. This work appears (from the distance of the Assurance Review) to be well coordinated, consistent with practices at other institutions, and useful.
- UW offers students the ability to participate in many co-curricular activities, many of which organize activities into programs of study recognized with non-credit badges (micro-credentials). The co-curricular transcript complements the academic transcript, and its presence illustrates UW's awareness that student learning extends beyond the classroom in meaningful ways.
- The assurance argument notes a wealth of affinity/interest organizations designed to serve groups who may be underrepresented in higher education in general and at this university in particular. These organizations (discussed in greater detail in Core components 3.b. and 3.c) serve students from a range of groups where research indicates that there are improved outcomes for students who have access to participate in groups where they are welcomed and supported. As discussed in Core Component 4.d, UW monitors the impact of this work by articulating and tracking persistence and retention. By these means, UW has sought to "bring out the extraordinary" in all of its students.

Team members note that at the time of this review, legislation had been passed that sought

eliminated state funding for programming that supports diversity, equity, and inclusion, and other programs designed to meet the needs of underserved populations; UW has issued public statements expressing its commitment to maintaining services to all students.

Finally, having previously discussed the report of the Working Group Report on Academic Freedom & Free Expression, this committee would be remiss if it did not note the importance of academic freedom and free expression on the capacity for individuals to learn effectively and thrive in spaces where diverse ideas may clash. The give and take required to articulate problems and concerns, explore ideas and debate solutions, and to do so in forms that respect for human difference and common humanity is never lost, is essential to achieving a mission that promotes extraordinary individuals engaged in excellent endeavors.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary

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

Rationale

UW has reaffirmed its mission, which informs its activities and serves as a foundation for a new strategic plan that is intended to ensure ongoing excellence and service to its constituents in a sustainable way. The execution strategies articulated in the plan are well aligned with the plan's goals and values, and this guidance can be expected to steer future activities at multiple levels of the institution. Importantly, the mission serves as a touchstone by which UW activities are undertaken and evaluated.

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.

Rating

Met

Rationale

The team found that the institution has established policies, and procedures that are consistent with fair and ethical conduct of an institution of higher education. These policies and procedures are codified and readily available for review on the University Regulations webpage. The regulations provide the detailed policies and procedures for administering the university, and all documents are provided on the University of Wyoming website.

- A 12-member Board of Trustees, appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the state senate, considers recommendations, reviews and approves all changes in policies of the university. The Board of Trustees operates under authority of the state legislature through a set of established bylaws. The bylaws are publicly available on the Trustee website. The agendas, actions, and minutes of board meetings are also publicly available on the website. Board of Trustees meetings are open to the public and available on livestream, and are recorded for the public for later viewing.
- The university created and adopted a new strategic plan through a university wide process. Through that process, a new mission statement was created. This new mission and the associated strategic plan were presented to the board of trustees and approved in the January 2023 meeting, as documented in the minutes of that meeting provided (see addendum) document.
- The mission and strategic plan are available to the public on the university website. This site also articulates the values and goals behind the strategic plan, adopting an accessible "plain language" model for communicating UW's values, goals, and plans.
- The team found that the university regulations provide clear and ethical policies regarding financial, academic, human resources and auxiliary functions. These policies are operationalized by the university president and the executive officers, and the policies have oversight from the dedicated committees of the board of trustee. The university has a specific

policy on shared governance that engages members of the university community in discussion of existing and new regulations (UW Regulation 1-4).

- The Addendum document provides clear evidence of internal audits, actions of recommendations and follow up by the administration. This demonstrates the implementation of the UW Regulations, as well as transparency in the consideration of suggested changes.
- Financial ethics and integrity are facilitated through their transparency provided by the budget office User Guide provided on WyoCloud, and the consolidated budget published by the Budget Office. The budgetary process trains financial employees each January and allows Divisions/Colleges about 2 months to prepare budget requests. These requests are presented to the administration before the President presents a budget to the board of trustees. This timeline is presented on the Budget office webpage.
- The Internal Audit Department is an autonomous and critical asset to the University, in part due to its broad oversight of the university's governance, risk management, and overall operations to improve effectiveness and add value to the operations. This department was set up to assist in providing the highest quality education and services. The site indicates a variety of audits which the unit provides including misuse and performance audits of university resources, legal compliance audits, fraud audits, and other special requests from administration or the Board of Regents. The internal audit department has a site to report concerns from students, staff or the public on topics such as research ethics, discrimination, safety, conflicts of interest and fraud/waste.
- The university has detailed processes for academic operations and ethical conduct covered in the UW University Regulations. Oversight and execution of these regulations is assigned to the Provost by UW University Regulation 1-1.
- Regarding Human Resources, the university has extensive training for those that make hiring decisions as well as those that supervise employees, which include equal opportunity, bias, bias reducing systems that highlight competencies, harassment, and performance evaluations. The Equal Opportunity Report and Response unit has a dedicated staff coordinator to help UW addresses Title IX, Discrimination and violence in the workplace issues. The university has standards and guidelines on the credentials of instructional appointments and faculty, as well as graduate teaching assistants.
- Student conduct and the campus climate for fair and ethical behavior related to inclusivity and respect is receiving appropriate attention from both student organizations and the administration. Climate surveys inform students and administration about issues, and both are engaged in the improvement of safety and respectful conduct of campus community. The student government publishes an annual student issues survey, and the university campus climate information related to sexual misconduct is also available. Publication of these reports signals transparency, and provides a foundation for UW to analyze, reflect, and act on the information.

In summary, the university operates with integrity in all financial and academic functions of the university, including the interactions with personnel and the handling of auxiliary functions.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

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.

Rating

Met

Rationale

The team found that the university presents itself clearly and completely to the public, and prospective students.

- The website is the dominant source by which the university presents this information, and supplemented by additional public materials (brochures, recruiting information) The consumer materials presented as evidence led cost of attendance information, including the tuition and fees, and the fee book. The university has block tuition model that covers full time students between 12 and 18 credit hours per semester. In addition to tuition, the cost of attendance includes program fees that apply to almost all undergraduate courses in all colleges.
- Academically, the on-line catalog system provides clear course descriptions and the prerequisite courses needs to enroll in the courses.
- As reviewed by the team, UW makes its admissions standards, and other expectations, clearly available on their web pages. The student outcomes and many opportunities for cultural and professional experiences are presented clearly throughout the university web site. The web site also has the required consumer information, which includes a dedicated site for tuition and fees and financial information for students.
- The admissions website contains a link on requirements for admission and preparatory courses. The university requires 4 years of HS math, English and science and provides test optional assured admission with a HS GPA of 3.00 or higher. The admission page also provides detailed information for freshman, transfer, graduate, and international admissions. The admissions and financial aid web sites also provide links to available financial resources and specific areas of concern to students and parents.
- The university maintains specialized accreditation in several programs, such as nursing, business, engineering, education, music, etc. These are clearly presented in the Institutional Accreditation Website. Links available through this website to the accrediting organizations enables the public to determine the specific accreditation agency and the nature of the accreditation process. The review team reviewed the accreditation of programs for accuracy.

In summary, UW presents itself in an open and transparent manner so that prospective students,

parents, and the general public can understand programs and their standards and requirements.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

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.

Rating

Met

Rationale

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.

- The University is governed by a 12-member Board of Trustees, which are appointed by the governor and confirmed by the state senate. There is a limit of 75% from any one political affiliation. The board membership must have members of all 7 geographic districts of the state with no more than 2 from any one district. There are no professional requirements or constraints of the board. These statutory requirements are stated in State of Wyoming Constitution Chapter 17, Article 2 UW Board of Trustees. The board operates in an open meetings environment, with the exception of executive sessions for sensitive discussions. It does not vote on any actions in executive session. The agendas of the meetings are restricted to standing requirements of the board, items proposed by a Trustee and items proposed by the university administration.
- New and continuing board members have been trained in the breadth and depth of board responsibilities including the following:
 - Current status of the university, statistics of student outcomes, university administrative organizational structure and roles of faculty senates, and the student government.
 - Future schedule of significant events and operational decisions
 - Progress on current strategic plan
 - Annual budgeting process
 - Details of university financial journals and major expenditure categories
 - Legislative affairs and statutory responsibilities
 - Major ongoing initiatives of the university is academic changes, research initiatives, and

- outreach programs
- Future and ongoing Capital projects and debt service
- Training of the Board of Trustees is evidenced by the complete set of training materials provided in the evidence file. The review team found evidence in Board minutes (in the supporting documentation) that the governing board's deliberations include:
 - Discussion and approval of the university mission and strategic plan.
 - Board reviews and governs its deliberations by its established Bylaws. These bylaws are posted on the board website.
 - The board discussed and approved the annual budgets.
 - The Board distanced itself and created greater authority for the president on day to day operational issues of the university. This included increased responsibility for the president on hiring other leadership roles at the university and the approval of UW Regulation 1-103 which requires the president to establish and maintain Standard Administrative Policies and Procedures for the university governance and structure related matters. This includes overseeing the faculty responsibility to oversee academic matters.
- The board requires each member to review and declare any actual, and potential conflicts of interest with the business of the university. Clear evidence was provided to demonstrate this for all Trustees.

In summary, the Board of Trustees is independent and works diligently to support the interests of the university. The board spends time and effort to appropriately support the system interests and those interests of each of the separate university campuses of the system. The review team found that the UW administration was responsible for day-to-day management.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

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.

Rating

Met

Rationale

The team found that UW is committed to academic freedom and freedom of expression in teaching and in learning.

- University Regulation 2-15 codifies these values consistent with the AAUP 1940 state of academic freedoms and beyond. This university policy clearly states that academic freedom applies to teaching activities, extension and outreach activities; research and other scholarly work; creative activities; academic service; professional service; and shared governance. Furthermore, it allows faculty and staff to express controversial opinions outside the university setting as private citizens.
- The university president empowered “Freedom of Expression, Intellectual Freedom and Constructive Dialogue” Working Group to enhance opportunities for the campus community to strengthen the university’s commitment to respectful discourse and freedoms of expression. This provided a well defined process and open discussion on a key topic in American higher education. The December 2023 recommendations from this working group are being implemented. In addition, student surveys indicate that students have broad opportunities to participate in open discussions on controversial topics.
- The student handbook was also updated in 2022 to encourage students “to participate in relevant and civil discussions, inquiry, and expression activities in their academic endeavors” while acknowledging that “students have the responsibility to respect the instructor’s freedom to teach and the right of other students to learn.” Similar language was also added to the employee handbook to encourage faculty and staff to participate in civil discussions and inquiry while respecting the rights of others to disagree and maintain institutional neutrality necessary for a public institution. Evidence was provided to show that this have been put into action with speakers and activities around campus.

In summary, it was apparent that the university supports and operationalizes freedom of expression in the teaching, learning and scholarship.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

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.

Rating

Met

Rationale

The team found that the university demonstrates institutional support for basic and applied research and training to execute effective research and scholarly efforts. The university provides web training and web resources to assist investigators in executing responsible research with integrity.

- UW has support services for research and contract management as well as a well-established Institutional Review Board (IRB) to review human factors, research methodologies and safety and welfare issues, including procedures for biosafety, radiation management and animal welfare. The university has transitioned to Cayuse to streamline research services and recently installed ROAMWYO within the platform to assist human factors based research. Both systems assist the investigators and IRB in compliance aspects of basic and applied research. The university requires researcher to annually attest to any conflicts of interest and provide an approved COI plan to avoid any influence of conflicts with the reporting of results or potential financial benefits.
- All undergraduate students are required to complete communications courses that have ethics-based outcomes among the general education learning outcomes. The university is now working on data literacy requirements that will help students understand how to analyze the next generation of information. These ethical behaviors are reinforced by programs in the library and in individual majors through the other accreditation reviews.
- The university has a clear process to enforce academic misconduct or breaches of integrity in research, academic writing, and courses. The syllabi of each course contains statements of academic integrity and the expectations of honesty in student learning. Any integrity issues are enforced by instructors or processed through a defined academic integrity process. UW Regulation 2-114 provides for fair adjudication of these issues. There is a dedicated process to identify and report integrity issues in research as well and a process for reviewing these issues. These processes are defined in the "UW Standards of Policy and Procedure: Responding to Allegations of Research Misconduct."

In summary, it is apparent that the university has policies and procedures that call for responsible acquisition, discovery and application of knowledge by its faculty, staff and students.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary

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

Rationale

The University of Wyoming has reaffirmed its commitment to act with integrity and to conduct itself in an ethical and responsible manner. It has demonstrated that it has established processes and implementation mechanisms to ensure fair and ethical behavior and decision making. It presents itself honestly and with transparency to students as well as the public it serves. The institution demonstrates a commitment to academic freedom and freedom of expression while protecting individuals from bias or retaliatory actions. Its strategic plan and directly engage the entire community in open and ethical pathways.

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).

Rating

Met

Rationale

UW's academic offerings meet the standards appropriate for higher education, with courses and programs that are up-to-date and demand suitable levels of student performance for the respective credentials.

- The institution seeks to assure that courses and programs are relevant and current. New programs are required to be submitted in alignment with a New Degree and Certificate Proposal Process (as governed by UW Regulation 2-119). Minutes of the University Course Review Committee provide evidence of oversight of processes to monitor quality. Existing programs undergo Academic Program Review. Information about a very comprehensive program review policy and process was provided--these reviews take place in 7-year increments, although there has been a temporary adjustments to an 8-year cycle in response to the COVID-19 global pandemic—with examples of recent program reviews from a range of units that were conducted preceding 2 academic years. The materials included comprehensive self-studies and external committee reports; however, there could have been inclusion of additional evidence and discussion of follow-up or steps taken in response to the reviews. Additionally, external disciplinary accreditors help to ensure quality and currency of programs; this was supported by evidence of a maintained accreditation schedule at the university, college, and academic program level.
- The institution clearly defines and distinguishes learning goals for its undergraduate, graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate, and certificate programs. Learning outcomes are clearly stated and differentiated goals across undergraduate, graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate, and certificate programs; there is a policy across the institution for information

required on course syllabi (e.g., instructor information, description, requirements and expectations, learning outcomes). Courses at each level must address their respective learning outcomes. Additionally, academic units are required to post student learning outcomes on websites. A spot-check review of these sites, indicated this is taking place in many—but not all—instances. The institution also provided a description of a process to create and collect curriculum maps across undergraduate programs. This includes an Assessment Matrix—designed by the Ellbogen Center for Teaching & Learning Assessment Team in collaboration with a faculty member from the College of Engineering & Physical Sciences—to aid in curriculum mapping and assessment tracking of outcomes. UW also pointed to the ongoing process to revise their general education program, indicating the results of the process will likely initiate further revision of undergraduate curricula, inclusive of program requirements and associated learning goals.

- The quality of programs and the learning goals remain consistent regardless of the mode of delivery or location, including the main campus, additional locations, distance learning, dual credit, and through contractual or consortial arrangements. The approval process for new programs covers all modes of delivery, inherently embedding the expectation that there is consistent quality regardless of delivery. The aforementioned syllabus requirements are also consistent across format and medium of delivery. Ellbogen Center for Teaching & Learning provides faculty development and support across modes of delivery. Support for consistent design of online courses is provided by Office of Online and Continuing Education. Rubrics and other materials from Quality Matters have helped UW evaluate online course and program design. UW also notes that course- and program-level articulation with state community colleges is managed by the Office of Transfer Relations and articulation of lower-level coursework occurs annual. Participation in the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) and National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) also helps ensure consistency in course delivery approaches with regional institutions.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

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.

Rating

Met

Rationale

UW provides academic programs that engage students with inquiry intended to prepare them for dynamic environments.

- The general education program is designed to align with the institution's mission, academic offerings, and degree levels. Although the associated first year experience has been paused due to staffing issues, that action is an indication that the university is attentive to the relationship between personnel and the ability to deliver quality educational offerings. Additional support indicates that since 2020, UW has been engaged in a process to revise their general education program. The process is guided by AAC&U Essential Learning Outcomes, NACE Career Competencies, and data about comparator institution programs. Additionally, the process has included opportunities for feedback to ensure the new program aligns with the university mission. Concurrently, the university has an undergraduate transfer policy intended to minimize duplicated or lost credits for those who transfer in.
- The institution outlines the purposes, content, and expected learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements. The current general education program (University Studies 2015) is intended to help students “develop knowledge of human cultures, the physical and natural world, and the U.S. and Wyoming constitutions; acquire a core set of intellectual and practical skills; and develop personal and social responsibility.” Although draft language for the new general education program was not provided, the argument indicates intent to foster comprehensive knowledge, frameworks, and essential skills that the university

aims to instill in its undergraduate students. This is reinforced by UW Regulation 2-105, which indicates the baseline education “education is expected to produce citizens able to function in a complex and changing society.”

- The education provided by the institution acknowledges human and cultural diversity, equipping students with opportunities for growth and lifelong skills to navigate and succeed in a multicultural world. The institution provided evidence of multiple opportunities for students to get exposure to a dynamic multicultural world—both domestically and abroad. Examples include degrees in International Studies and Native American and Indigenous Studies, and minors and concentrations that enhance multicultural understand. There are also cultural centers on campus that provide support and educational opportunities for students and faculty. These opportunities are augmented by cocurricular student organizations. There are also opportunities for international exploration, including the Cheney Study Abroad Scholarship Endowment, which provides study abroad grants and supports a fellowship for students with exceptional academic records who are pursuing research opportunities or internships abroad.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

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.

Rating

Met

Rationale

The institution is committed to ensuring its faculty and staff diversity aligns with its mission and serves its community appropriately.

- The university Fact Book reports on demographics of students and faculty including gender, residency, and race/ethnicity of students, and race/ethnicity and tenure status of employees. The UW faculty is slightly more diverse than the student body (75% White). UW's racial make-up is more diverse than the state of Wyoming's, where over 92% of residents identify as White. Argument indicated the number of Native American students enrolled at UW during the past year was 69 of 10,913 students, or 0.6%. This is compared to 3.48% of the state population. The institution also shared goals of increasing recruitment and retention of employees, informed by a climate survey administered in 2019.
- In recent years, UW has demonstrated attention to the number of faculty and their ability to effectively manage and perform faculty duties, as evidenced by a capacity study and increased consistency in the program review process (as acknowledged previously), with particular focus on low-enrollment and -completion programs. As indicated in 5.A., UW has a policy (2-13) Low Enrollment Course procedures that guides management, course cancellation, and teach-out plans for discontinued programs.

- The university has increased the number of endowed deanships, chairs, professorships, and professorships by roughly 70% in the past 7 years.
- Instructors at the university, including those in dual credit, contractual, and consortial programs, meet necessary qualifications, and the institution points out these are informed by HLC guidelines. University policy (UW Regulation 2-1) outlines degree requirements for academic staff, stating that professors should typically hold terminal qualifications in their field. Per UW's Guidelines and FAQ's for Instructional Appointment Credentials, "instructors not holding a relevant degree can be deemed qualified by tested experience by their department faculty with approval by the school/college and the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs." This is guided by HLC's definition of tested experience equivalent to an academic degree. Academic Affairs and Human Resources collaborate to verify and maintain records of faculty credentials, ensuring compliance through transcript reviews using the WyoVita system. Instructors are regularly evaluated and adhere to process outlines in policies for appointment, review, tenure, promotion, and reappointment, in alignment with the standard categories of teaching, research, and service; evaluation may also consider advising, administrative work, and other efforts. UW points to Regulation 2-9 as an example of setting and enforcing workloads consistent with the overall mission of the academic unit, college, and university, as a means of ensuring teaching effectiveness.
- The institution noted regulation 2-4, which requires non-tenure-track lecturers exhibit a commitment to continued professional development, but no information was provided regarding how this monitored, nor by whom. However, the institution appears to provide adequate professional development through department funding, the UW Libraries and the Ellbogen Center for Teaching and Learning (inclusive of multiple programs), and a mentoring program focused on active learning, in addition to disciplinary-based initiatives. For staff members providing student support, there are opportunities for ongoing development through UW's HR training and development function, as well as access to professional organization learning opportunities. The institution pointed to aligning job expectations and requirements with national organization standards, but provided no evidence to support this. Additional resources are available via the university's membership with the National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity.
- The course syllabus policy indicates instructors should offer a minimum of 3 hours spread over 2 days of the week of out-of-class availability to students each week. The institution points to recent NSSE data to support that students' connection with faculty is on par with national and neighboring peers.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

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).

Rating

Met

Rationale

UW provides student support services tailored to the needs of its diverse student populations.

- The populations served by the university include (among others) students who are first-generation, non-traditional, academically under-prepared, online, and international. Examples includes programs for first-year students admitted with conditions (UW Bridge Program); programs for students from low-income, first-generation, minoritized, and military veteran backgrounds (e.g., Upward Bound, McNair Scholars); and the First Generation Scholars program and the Native American Education, Research, and Cultural Center. There are also services to support students who have transferred to the UW. The university monitors the efficacy of these services through an annual student opinion survey.
- UW offers learning support and preparatory instruction to meet the academic needs of its students through such initiatives as New Student Days, a summer webinar, and the Saddle Up first week program. UW uses CLEP and Math Placement exams to help students determine which course they are prepared to register for. There are also peer tutoring programs to aid students with writing, math, and communication. The institution also mentioned academic recovery and probation support for students, but provided no evidence or additional details.
- UW has centralized advising, as well as advising centers in colleges and schools, coupled with college- and program-specific services for students. The university points to the recent adoption of an advising tool that provided analytics and feedback on students who may not be adequately progressing through their degree path. The institution also noted their central advising office offers exploratory modules--through the Focus2Career platform--that allow students to explore potential majors by aligned with their interests. The Navigate platform also helps maintain and share information for advising staff.
- UW continues to focus on infrastructure to support teaching and learning, including large investments for new building (Science) and renovation (Law), coupled with smaller updates to

other areas. There are physical and digital informational and cultural resources available to faculty and students, including sites for clinical work and performance. UW also noted its attention to information technology support, including using CARES Act funding to update and enhance technology to support teaching and learning.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary

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

Rationale

Throughout the argument, UW shows a commitment to providing quality education across various modes of delivery, ensuring its programs and courses meet the standards appropriate for higher education. This commitment is demonstrated through rigorous processes for creating and reviewing programs, such as the New Degree and Certificate Proposal Process and the Academic Program Review, which include comprehensive self-studies and external committee reports. Learning goals are clearly defined and differentiated for different educational levels, with outcomes and syllabus requirements consistently applied across all delivery formats. UW supports faculty development through the Center for Teaching & Learning and provides resources for online course design through the Office of Online and Continuing Education. Additionally, the engagement in initiatives like the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) and the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) further ensures the consistency and quality of the institution's educational offerings. This thorough approach ensures that students receive a quality education that prepares them for dynamic environments, regardless of where or how they engage with the UW's programs.

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.

Rating

Met

Rationale

UW engages in a broad series of practices designed to contribute to the institution's understanding of, and ability to improve, educational quality.

UW regularly practices program review, facilitated by its Standard Administrative Policy and Procedure. New procedures were instituted before the last comprehensive visit and these appear to be effective. Team members reviewed materials from the review of the Criminal Justice and Sociology program review, which show a clear example of policy and procedures in action. Team members note, however, that several other programs were reviewed that year, (Psychology, Kinesiology and Health, and Vet Science), and suggest that providing more examples of a range of programs evaluated would provide a more comprehensive insight into the process and its effect on program improvement.

UW evaluates all the credit it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning. UW evaluates all credits using procedures outlined by Academic Affairs. Faculty are involved in articulating the learning outcomes associated with experiential learning (as illustrated by the example of the MPA). Thanks to efforts undertaken to make transfer between institutions easier, transfer credits can be easily assessed, especially if credits are earned within Wyoming. The institution uses a Transfer Catalog as well as has an Office of Transfer Relations to assist with varying types of transfer credit.

UW has policies that also ensure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer, which is governed by the SAPP for Undergraduate Transfer Policy. In addition, UW engages in a number of activities to ensure that students with previous course credit can have it reviewed and transcribed. In particular, the articulation agreement with the state community colleges stands out as particularly effective, as does UW's participation in the WICHE. These policies and procedures are rendered more durable through structures and events that align with their goals; notably, the Office of Transfer Relations and the Articulation Summit keep this work at the foreground to serve students who need these services.

UW maintains and exercises authority over the quality of the learning experience by providing appropriate oversight over 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 with several different regulations and standards. UW has Acalog, which identifies courses and prerequisites; this work is regulated in a rigorous and transparent policy environment (notably, policies 2-100 and 2-108, as well as Regulations 6-7). The institution has an Attendance Policy as well as a Code of Conduct to govern student expectations. It is also worth noting that UW maintained student access to resources during COVID-19, via digital resources.

UW maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes. The institution recently included the National Association of School of Art and Design and switched from CAEP to AAQEP in the School of Education. To the best of the team's ability to confirm, UW is in good standing with all programs that maintain specialized program accreditation.

UW 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 deemed appropriate to its mission. Definitions outlined by IPEDS provide a structure for data reporting and provides data for NESSE and the NCAA. The institution is also able to track student outcomes via a First Destination Survey and participation in the Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System. This array of information and data helps UW develop an understanding of who their students are that extends beyond graduation. At a more granular level, individual programs may delve deeper: the Law program has data about what its graduates do as well as results of licensure exams (per fields) and has signed an MOU to work with the Census. These data points provide a substantial snapshot of UW graduates, and their subsequent contributions.

Team members also note that, in addition to demographic and other data, UW is engaged in understanding its students and alumni as part of the story as the institution move forward. The "Steamboat Stories" project promises to provide a different (and perhaps more nuanced) layer of qualitative data about the impact of UW.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

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.

Rating

Met

Rationale

UW has effective processes for the assessment of student learning and for the achievement of learning goals in academic and cocurricular offerings. Since the 2019 Comprehensive Evaluation, the institution has renovated its approach to assessment, moving Institutional Effectiveness under the Elbogen Center for Teaching and Learning. This move reinforces the connection between assessment and effective teaching, and how these improve learning. There is an assessment plan in place that units can access and follow. That plan is monitored with different deliverables at different points in time, and curriculum mapping contributes to the structure of the program. This work intersects with different, but related, data points (NESSE/FSSE, SOAR, and program review). In addition, UW has a comprehensive strategic plan for Student Affairs outlining co-curricular activities and assessment of their impact on important components of student life. UW has demonstrated campus-wide conversations about the assessment plan as it is a part of the Faculty Learning Communities conversations and the Assessment Academies. By all of these means, UW has fostered an environment of curiosity about student learning and growth, and about the effectiveness of their efforts.

Arising from this environment of curiosity, UW uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning. As noted above, one strategic move they have taken to assist in improvement is moving the Institutional Effectiveness unit under the Elbogen Center for Teaching and Learning. This change arose from a recommendation of an internal study conducted in 2021, which linked the structural change/administrative improvement to the potential to elevate attention to effective teaching and better learning. UW demonstrated how they improve student learning with Curriculum Maps and the Assessment Academies (2023, 2024), as well as integration of attention to learning in key university processes: Program reviews demonstrate how they use data to inform change in student learning, and post-tenure seems to be connected to teaching effectiveness. Although the impact of some of these changes is difficult to assess at this time, this team anticipates that the next Comprehensive Review may see more/other areas/data points where the inclusion of student learning data is regularly contributing in meaningful ways to important processes (such as

program and post-tenure review).

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 in these processes. In addition, UW has sought out multiple resources to learn about and improve practice, including the HLC Academy, Sam Houston Survey, and other sources: an assessment consultant, the National Institute for Learning Outcomes, and Barbara Walvoord's book on assessment. Based on those best practices, UW created the 2021 Assessment Survey which now guides their work. The reorganization of assessment to teaching and learning as well the learning communities that have focused on assessment and created the space for assessment to live and flourish. In recent scans, UW indicates that many programs scored in the Tier 1 category, which reflects that evidence that assessment is an integral part of the unit.

As observed above, work surrounding assessment of student learning and its connection to excellence in teaching and learning - as explicitly discussed, studied, nurtured, and widely understood values - continues to evolve at UW. These features are essential to the cultural shift under way, and their impact may be evident in the next stage of review.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

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.)

Rating

Met

Rationale

Throughout this argument, UW's Forward for Wyoming 2023 strategic plan has strongly resonated. In it, UW provides evidence of the President's goals for student retention, persistence and completion: these are ambitious, attainable and appropriate to its mission, student populations and educational offerings, as indicated in the Strategic Implementation Plan provided for Criterion 5.

UW collects and analyzes vast amounts of information on student retention, persistence, and completion of its programs. This is noted in several reports and websites: Gold and Brown Report, Common Data Set, and statewide longitudinal data. This information is publicly available, searchable, and informative.

Team members observed that the wealth of data can and should be connected to initiatives and actions based on analysis of the information, to convey more clearly the extent to which data is used to inform improvements, as is clear from actions undertaken to improve transfer student progress, address low-enrollment programs, intervene to support first time, full time students enrolled in high-risk courses, and to create, support, and promote programs to support students with particular academic needs. This may extend to other key areas - for example, team members asked if data could inform the deliberations of data governance committee (what do they do with data?), enrollment management committee (how are they using data to make decisions), and leadership/staffing decisions (how does that connect to using the data?)

UW's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence, and program completion reflect good practice. They use IPEDs definitions which make

for a clear connection between different reporting mechanisms. They also used Student Achievement Measurements (SAM) and the Statewide Longitudinal Data. Also, UW is a part of a regional APLU group sharing data through Publics. These methodologies of data collection fuel their assessment system, giving them rich data to be able to describe their student body.

By these means, it is clear that UW gathers and analyzes data to understand and improve student retention, persistence, and completion of its programs, setting goals that may be aspirational, but which can be realistic thanks to analysis and intervention.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

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.

Rationale

UW has demonstrated the ability to offer quality educational programs with clear learning outcomes and support services through continuous improvement. The institution has provided evidence of policies that govern the assessment process with clear evidence of how the process is implemented. They have a good amount of process and student data. The argument could be strengthened by providing evidence of more program reviews (to illustrate exactly how programs are using data for improvement) and how UW is using student data to improve learning outcomes. It appears that UW has taken great steps to create a culture of assessment linked to teaching and learning. This is evidenced in a majority of the programs being in Tier 1. The team notes that one feature of the accreditation process is that the act of documenting these activities also serves to chronicle exemplary practice. In this Assurance Review, UW has laid a good foundation for the next evaluation.

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.

Rating

Met

Rationale

UW's administrative structures, collaborative processes, and guidance of leadership demonstrate that the university is able to fulfill its mission.

- The university has numerous policies, procedures and practices in place which demonstrate the process whereby shared governance is implemented. University UW Regulation 1-4 (not cited in the argument but included on the Governance and Structure Website) affirms the university's commitment to Shared Governance.
- Policies and procedures are in place that define the respective roles of students (Associated Students University of Wyoming Constitution and Bylaws), staff (UW Regulation 1-3), faculty (UW Regulation 2-300), and the faculty senate (UW Regulation 2-301) and the manner in which each constituent group is engaged in support of fulfillment of the university's mission.
- Minutes from the January 2024 Board of Trustees Meeting demonstrate how board decisions are informed by input from various institutional constituents who helped shape issues and agenda items brought before the board.
- The university has structures in place to ensure that institutional decisions are informed by data. Examples offered highlighting the manner in which the Office of Institutional Analysis provides support to inform decisions include: financial aid decisions; recruiting, admission and transfer decisions; high failure rate course identification/analysis; low completion programs; recommendations for course deletion; and staffing decisions.

- The argument would be strengthened by inclusion of examples in this section which clearly delineate the progression of action items beginning with a constituent group and transitioning to the president for consideration and ultimately being acted upon at the board level. In Criterion 2, the formation of the “Artificial Intelligence Chatbots Working Group” is chronicled with evidence that resources are being allocated to implement some of the recommendations of the working group.
- The university also utilizes external consultants to inform decision making. Examples include: Huron Consulting and its work with an internal task-force to develop an Enrollment Management Plan; Deloitte LLP, development of the Staff Classification & Compensation Study; Huron Consulting, an analysis of Institutional Capacity; and, Ellbogen Center for Teaching and Learning evaluation of the university's pandemic response plan.
- The UW 2-13 Low Enrollment Course procedures and March 2024 low enrollment program recommendations document provides an excellent example of the inclusive process which is followed to eliminate low enrollment courses and/or programs (see UW Board of Trustees Committee on Academic and Student Affairs Agenda-March 20, 2024.)
- The Argument provides exceptional evidence of the policies and procedures and the role and scope of constituents involved in decision making across the university. This section would be strengthened by inclusion of minutes reflecting discussions, recommendations and action items and decisions of the president and board of trustees.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

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.

Rating

Met

Rationale

The University of Wyoming demonstrates a resource base sufficient to support its educational offerings and its plans for transitioning to a Carnegie R1 in 2025.

- UW has taken a renewed focus on its operational staff; acknowledging low morale and job satisfaction across many operational staff. Inclusion of specific examples of how improvements to "major gaps" have been made in the registrar's office, human resources, distance education, admissions and financial aid would strengthen this argument.
- Hiring processes have been updated in the past 5 years and very detailed job qualifications and descriptions have been developed for operational staff in many key student service areas to ensure well-trained individuals fill these positions. The university has committed financial resources to LinkedIn Learning and other training opportunities to ensure operational staff have access to continued professional development.
- Deloitte Consulting was engaged in 2022 to lead a staff class and comp study. Employees responded to surveys, participated in interviews and focus groups. These efforts led to an organization change effort toward a shared services model to be implemented during the coming year; however, team members learned that implementation has been suspended.
- An updated Campus Master Plan in 2020 resulted in several new infrastructural investments in recent years to include a new parking structure, renovations to the Law School, a satellite energy plant and renovations to the stadium. A new \$210+M housing and dining hall with a goal of enhancing first-year students to campus life is currently under construction.
- UW is pursuing a systematic approach to accomplishing the goals outlined in its strategic plan as well as those identified as the Presidential Goals. As the only public university in Wyoming, the university has enjoyed exceptional state support and supplemental funding throughout its

existence. Anticipating the negative financial impact of the “enrollment cliff” and the state’s declining revenues from oil and gas royalties, the university adopted Cultivate Financial Stability/Diversification as one of its 5 ongoing objectives.

- The university has well-established policies and procedures that guide the budgeting process. The budget is approved by the Board of Trustees and the President provides quarterly written reports to the Budget Committee of the Board of Trustees regarding unbudgeted transfers between units, divisions, expense classifications, etc...
- The operating budget for FY 2024 was approximately \$630M which was approximately \$100M more than budgeted FY 2023. Salary and wages account for almost \$35M of the difference year over year. FY2023 appears to have been significantly underbudgeted in Int. Claims, Other Exp., Subcontracts, Depr. & Amort. UW provided additional information in the attached addendum which points to a \$46M increase in state appropriations as well as a change in methodology for budgeting Sponsored Projects (\$43M impact) which contributed to the apparent "underbudgeting" noted above. The university reports it has corrected this matter in FY2024. As of June 30, 2021 the UW Foundation Endowment stood at \$794.7M. At the team's request, additional updated balances were provided to include an estimated yearend balance for FY2024 of \$822.8M.
- The most recent Standard and Poor's report gives a strong rating for the UW risk profile and a very strong opinion regarding UW's financial risk profile. The S&P report lauded the management and governance of the university and notes favorable impressions of recent management and governance changes.
- A review of the Composite Financial Index (CFI) included in the most recent Institutional Updated found a significant drop in the CFI for FY22 (HLC year 2023) to 1.78 in comparison to FY2021 which was 6.78. Previous institutional updates include a decade of robust CFIs ranging from 7.1 in 2011 to 4.81 in 2020. UW provided explanation for the significant change which included the issuance of \$250M in housing bonds in FY2022 and the swing in investment income from a \$91M gain in 2021 to a \$37M loss in FY22. The initial estimate of the FY2023 CFI provided in the addendum is 3.13 which includes a return to positive investment income (\$27M) for the fiscal year.

These activities, processes, and systems indicate that UW not only has the resources to support its operations, but it also has ability to manage, monitor, and deploy those resources appropriately.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

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.

Rating

Met

Rationale

Throughout this evaluation, the Assurance team was presented with substantial evidence of UW's commitment to systematic planning to support implementation of those plans, and improvement of its operations and impact.

- Endowments have increased since 2017, as supported by the second paragraph in 5.c.1 references (Bylaw Section 7-9) to the UW Foundation 2021 Endowment Annual report. (Note that the reports are on a two year delay so this does not reflect the current amount stated, but gives an idea of the endowment increase since 2017).
- UW engages in on-going and systematic strategic planning. The planning process is guided by an understanding of its responsibility to serve the state as a land-grant, flagship, research institution. The strategic implementation plan informs budget development and resource allocation decisions. Fifty percent of indirect cost distribution is allocated to fund operational cost of the Office of Research and Economic Development and to high-priority research initiatives as designated in the board approved budget.
- The institution has a well-developed infrastructure to support assessment of student learning and operations and planning structures created to allow strategic and budgetary planning to be informed by the assessment outcomes. The construction of the new resident halls is one recent and ongoing example of the linkage between resource allocation, facilities, and student learning objectives. Other tools, policies and procedures cited to demonstrate the assessment feedback loop include the development and use of the Institutional Assessment Plan (2023); academic program policy/procedure, external program review, the Huron Consulting Group institutional capacity report, and the campus master plan.

- Evidence of both internal and external participation in institutional planning is demonstrated by the diverse body of faculty, staff, students, administrators, and board members who served on committees that developed the strategic plan and the master plan. The shared-governance structure of the university is well represented by faculty and staff senates, and student and administrative bodies.
- The assurance argument provides significant evidence of environmental scanning and internal analysis as well as providing evidence of the use of these findings to guide the institution in its decision making.

Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.

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.

Rationale

The University of Wyoming has policies, procedures and regulations in place to assure it continues to fulfill its mission. Evidence was provided to demonstrate the role and importance of the shared governance process. The university utilizes external consultants, state reports and internal governance processes to assess environmental factors and demographic changes and to develop strategies to ensure it continues to fulfill its mission. As the lone public university in the state, UW enjoys exceptionally strong financial support from the state of Wyoming.

Review Dashboard

Number	Title	Rating
1	Mission	
1.A	Core Component 1.A	Met
1.B	Core Component 1.B	Met
1.C	Core Component 1.C	Met
1.S	Criterion 1 - Summary	
2	Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct	
2.A	Core Component 2.A	Met
2.B	Core Component 2.B	Met
2.C	Core Component 2.C	Met
2.D	Core Component 2.D	Met
2.E	Core Component 2.E	Met
2.S	Criterion 2 - Summary	
3	Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources and Support	
3.A	Core Component 3.A	Met
3.B	Core Component 3.B	Met
3.C	Core Component 3.C	Met
3.D	Core Component 3.D	Met
3.S	Criterion 3 - Summary	
4	Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement	
4.A	Core Component 4.A	Met
4.B	Core Component 4.B	Met
4.C	Core Component 4.C	Met
4.S	Criterion 4 - Summary	
5	Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning	
5.A	Core Component 5.A	Met
5.B	Core Component 5.B	Met
5.C	Core Component 5.C	Met
5.S	Criterion 5 - Summary	

Review Summary

Conclusion

The Assurance Review Team found the University of Wyoming to have provided a well-written and well-documented Assurance Argument. The team's review of the Assurance Argument, documentation, and additional materials provided or discovered in the course of this review, supports the Team's finding that the University of Wyoming remains in compliance with the HLC Criteria for Accreditation. As documented in the array of comments in the team's rationale, the institution fulfills the expectations set forth by the HLC for additional campuses.

As noted in the previous Comprehensive Evaluation, the University of Wyoming is a mission-driven institution: it continues to uphold its mission with the confidence a profound understanding of the scope and attendant responsibility affords it. The team is pleased to note that UW enjoys the financial support from the State that allows it to remain accessible and affordable so it can serve its diverse constituencies and meet the wide array of obligations expected of an *accessible* Flagship, Land-Grant, Extensive Research Institution. UW continues to have the support of a Board that is a strong advocate for the institution, and the team has been impressed by the ways in which both the Board and University Senior Leadership have worked to improve shared governance and strengthen the role of faculty in overseeing academic quality.

The previous review noted the need for areas for improvement with respect to the assessment of student learning, and the means by which assessment can inform continued improvement. The Assurance Team noted the myriad influences by which data derived from the student experience has informed substantive change, and we trust that many other changes are under way as a renewed structure for assessing student learning, supporting teaching improvement, studying program effectiveness, and implementation of integrated planning to support the holistic university mission continue to take root and set the direction for the university's future.

Finally, the team cannot refrain from observing that this university (like many others) is facing challenges concerning its approach to achieving a core component of its mission and identity: the aspiration that it will support the ability of all of its members to achieve the extraordinary. The team commends the university and its members for the commitment to ensuring that all of those members have the opportunity to achieve extraordinary things - and that it invites, welcomes, and encourages wide and inclusive membership in its community, and cultivates a spirit of "belonging" for all of its members, to foster their capacity to achieve the extraordinary.

Overall Recommendations

Criteria For Accreditation

Met

Sanctions Recommendation

No Sanction

Pathways Recommendation

Not Applicable to This Review

No Interim Monitoring Recommended.