Assurance Argument

Review Date: Feb. 24, 2025

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Contents

Assurance Argument Process

In June 2021, the Office of Assessment began developing the Assurance Argument for the University of Arkansas – Fort Smith (UAFS) ten-year open-pathway comprehensive evaluation February 2025 visit.

A committee structure was formed to ensure and encourage cross-campus participation in developing this document. The Assessment Office formed six committees: one for each criterion and a review committee. Criterion committee co-chairs were assigned, and participants volunteered to assist in writing sections and gathering evidence. The review committee was responsible for providing feedback to ensure accuracy and brevity.

The following deadlines were used to ensure completion:
- April 2022: Committees formed, and co-chairs assigned
- July 2022: Affirmation of Reaccreditation Website published
- August 2022: Initial training for all co-chairs conducted
- January 2023: Co-chairs began regular meeting; Areas of greatest concern were determined
- February 2023: Initial evidence list was complied
- March 2023: Cochairs/criteria team members attended the Annual HLC conference
- April 2023: UAFS employees who are current HLC Peer Reviewers hosted a Q and A session with the co-chairs
- Summer 2023: All evidence gaps and unaddressed issues from 2019 review were identified; each criteria team submitted Assurance Argument Outlines
- August 2023: Outlines were returned to teams with feedback
- October 2023: Updated outlines were submitted
- December 2023: Feedback on updates were returned to the criteria teams
- January 2024: Draft of assurance argument with evidence cited completed
- March 2024: drafts returned with comments
- May 2024: assurance arguments drafts complete after comments
- Summer 2024: Dr. Mary Lutze edited document for clarity
- August - September 2024: Drafts sent back to add any suggestions from Dr. Lutze and to complete evidence files
- October 2024: All evidence collected
- November: Submit to campus community for comment and review; submit to contracted peer reviewer for review, review feedback from campus community and incorporate feedback
- December 2024: Complete final draft with all evidence and place into HLC assurance system
- January 2025: Final Assurance Argument Submitted to HLC and available on uafs.edu
- February 2025: Site visit

Acknowlegements

The Office of Academic Assessment thanks the following individuals for their contribution to the completion of this document:

1. Mission

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

1.A – Core Component

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

1. The mission was developed through a collaborative process suited to the context of the institution.

2. The mission and related statements are current and reference the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development, and religious or cultural purpose.

3. The mission and related statements identify the nature, scope, and intended constituents of the higher education offerings and services the institution provides.

4. The institution's academic offerings, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.

5. The institution clearly articulates its mission through public information, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans, or institutional priorities.

Argument
1.A.1. The mission was developed through a process suited to the context of the institution.

The newly revised mission of the University of Arkansas at Fort Smith states: "UAFS empowers the social mobility of its students and the economic growth of the River Valley through exceptional educational opportunities and robust community partnerships." The UAFS vision statement is "Through dynamic academic programs, innovative research opportunities, and transformational centers of intellectual and economic development, UAFS will advance its community and become an institution renowned for educating and inspiring the ambitious students who call it home."

From fall 2022 through spring 2023, the institution contracted with MGT Consulting to aid in the development of the new mission statement, vision statement, and strategic plan. MGT held meetings with the Chancellor's Cabinet; an open forum on the mission, vision, and values of the university; individual interviews and focus groups with multiple university stakeholders; and a campus visit.

The institution also formed a steering committee to spearhead the development of the strategic plan, led by the Vice Chancellor of Finance and Administration and made up of representatives from administration, faculty, staff, and students. This committee reviewed all recommendations made by MGT and provided a final mission statement, vision statement, and strategic plan to the Chancellor for review and approval. As UAFS is a school that falls under the purview of the University of Arkansas system, these statements and proposals were also subject to approval by the system board. After a thorough review, the University of Arkansas System Board of Trustees approved the mission and vision statements along with the strategic plan on May 25, 2023.

1.A.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.

The university's mission statement focuses on empowering the social mobility of its students by providing exceptional educational opportunities, support for innovative research, and transformational centers of intellectual and economic development.

- Each year, UAFS hosts a Psychology Research Symposium, Criminal Justice Research, and Undergraduate Research Symposium to give students opportunities to present their own research in a public forum; these conferencing events can lead to other opportunities.

- The university provides opportunities for faculty to further their research through annual mini-grant opportunities from the Provost (up to $10,000 in support) and Deans (up to $5,000 in support per academic college). The University recently reduced this amount from approximately $50,000 budgeted per year to $25,000 per year to reallocate some resources to the development of a Center for Teaching and Learning.

- As part of its strategic plan, the university will develop five centers of excellence including Health Sciences, Data Sciences, the Center for Economic Development, the Center for Advanced Manufacturing, and Art and Graphic Design.

For Art & Graphic Design, the Windgate Art & Design Expansion project includes 15,577 square feet of new space, with an additional 5,752 square feet of renovations aimed at repurposing existing spaces. The project will feature nine new discipline-specific teaching studios, nine new faculty studio/office spaces, two conventional faculty offices, expanded art collection storage, and several common areas including a small cafe, an outdoor classroom, renovated main entrance, and a faculty workroom.

Within Health Sciences, we will support our local healthcare partners by doubling the number of nursing educator slots available and expanding our offerings to include an associate's degree in nursing in addition to our existing bachelor's degree in nursing.

Our efforts in Advanced Manufacturing and Data Sciences will be driven by partnerships with regional employers, aligning needs in our local economy with our academic programs through robust advisory board conversations on industry needs.

UAFS empowers the economic growth of the River Valley region through robust community partnerships to advance the community through pillar three of the strategic plan, focusing on economic development, community engagement, and industry partnerships. The UAFS Center for Economic Development is located at The Bakery District in downtown Fort Smith and houses the Center for Business and Professional Development, the Jim Walcott Family Enterprise Center, and the UAFS Arkansas Small Business and Technology Development Center. This Center aids all types of businesses – from small start-ups to major corporations – and creates opportunities for collaboration. One of those collaborations is between the Center and Talk Business & Politics, a local news source, to provide The Compass Regional Economic Report which is the only independent economic analysis of Arkansas' top four metro areas.

1.A.3. The mission and related statements identify the nature, scope and intended constituents of the higher education offerings and services the institution provides.

The University of Arkansas at Fort Smith's mission statement identifies the students of the River Valley region and all who live and work in it as the intended constituents of its offerings. The River Valley region (a 50-mile radius of the Fort Smith area) consists of 494,034 people and 33,127 of those inhabitants are UAFS alumni. The Arkansas Division of Higher Education designates UAFS's role and scope of influence as serving residents seeking college degrees or continuing education, local employers, area K-12 schools, two-year college transfer students, and contributing to the region's economic development. The university is committed to serving students and the surrounding community with integrity and innovation by offering valuable education through the dynamic accredited programs discussed in section 1.A.4, innovative research opportunities discussed in section 1.A.2, and transformational economic development for individuals and businesses discussed in 1.A.2.

1.A.4. The institution's academic offerings, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.

UAFS offers 30 certificates of proficiency, 3 technical certificates, 28 minors, 9 associate degrees, 33 bachelor's degrees, and 3 master's degrees that undergo regular updates based on routine reviews by Academic Affairs, the Arkansas Department of Higher Education, and the University of Arkansas Board of Trustees. Additionally, local businesses are consulted regularly to determine when program changes are needed to meet employer demand. Examples include modifying the nursing program to produce more graduates for the region and adding the Center for Advanced Manufacturing and subsequent Bachelor of Science degree. An internal auditing measure was also established in the fall of 2023 to review all program offerings, provide input regarding major programmatic changes, and offer recommendations to eliminate costs and/or increase revenue: the Academic Program Viability Task Force.

UAFS supports over 5,000 students each year; 95% of these students are registered as Arkansas residents. Approximately 63% of the university's students are enrolled as full-time, and 83% are categorized as traditional students. Consequently, the largest age group for students at UAFS is 17-24 with 71%, and the second largest is 25-60 at 17%. Eighteen main feeder high schools contribute to the enrollment of first-time freshmen, which bolsters UAFS's percentages for traditional students; these high schools are responsible for 69% of first-time freshmen. In the fall of 2022, the university saw a 2% increase in first-time freshmen and a 30% increase in continuing freshmen. The transfer population at UAFS is academically robust, with 54% of the population coming from 8 top transfer colleges. UAFS is dedicated to inclusivity and has become increasingly diverse in terms of student demographics: as of now, the student body consists of 60% of students identifying as white, and the remaining 40% of students consist of 18% Hispanic, 5% Asian, 4% Black, 2% American Indian, and the remaining 11% are other or two or more races.

As a four-year regional public university, the student body at UAFS consists of 56.1% first-generation students and 59.2% PELL-eligible. The university prides itself in providing for all aspects of student needs, including academic support, nutritional provision, physical necessities, healthcare, childcare, career preparation, and financial support. The academic success of UAFS students depends upon a holistic balance of every aspect of wellness, so the university strives to support students in achieving comprehensive well-being. UAFS actively supports these integral necessities through various campus initiatives, primarily funded through the generosity of our campus community and local partners. UAFS student support initiatives include the

following: the Dave Steven's Lion Pride Pantry, offering free food, hygiene products, school supplies, and other necessities through donations and partnerships with Antioch Youth and Family and River Valley Food Bank; the Babb Center for Career Service's Career Clothes Closet, providing free business attire via donations for students who may need formal clothing for interviews or internships; the Powell Student Health Clinic, offering free healthcare for UAFS students; the UAFS Student Counseling Center, providing free psychiatric, behavioral, and counseling services to current students; the Dental Hygiene Clinic, offering comprehensive dental hygiene care to UAFS students and the surrounding community at drastically reduced prices; the Little Lions Child Development Center, providing childcare services that are available to the campus community and the community at large; and the UAFS Student Emergency Assistance Fund provides immediate financial support for students in need due to unexpected emergencies. Furthermore, UAFS also provides rescue scholarships, completion grants, and emergency short-term housing for students in dire financial need.

Part of the university's commitment to social mobility is demonstrated through its concurrent credit partnerships. UAFS offers local high school students college credit, in both traditional university subjects as well as more career focused technical education (commonly referred to as the WATC or Western Arkansas Technical Center program) through early college concurrent credit opportunities. More information is listed in 1.B.1.

In 2021, the university underwent a re-organization to better align student support services to include a new department focused on student success and retention. Included in this department are: The R.O.A.R. First-Year Advising Center, MANE Event New Student Orientation, College Advising Centers, the Babb Center for Career Services, the Academic Success Center, TRIO Support Services, and the Executive Director of Student Retention which provide services to all students, especially those in their first year. This department also collaborates with other student support services across campus, including the Writing Center and the Boreham Library, to foster cross-campus cooperation in support of student success.

- UAFS is home to four U.S. Department of Education TRIO programs: Upward Bound Classic, Upward Bound Math/Science, TRIO SSS, and TRIO STEM. These programs serve 384 high school and college students within the greater Fort Smith area.
- The UAFS Babb Center for Career Services helps students find employment and internship opportunities while also providing tutoring and editing support for professional portfolios, including such documents as resumes and cover letters. A robust experiential learning program, including funding so that students are paid for their work, will be implemented in 2025 in cooperation with the UAFS Foundation and community partners.

1.A.5. The institution clearly articulates its mission through public information, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans, or institutional priorities.

The university's mission statement, vision statement, and strategic plan can be accessed through the university's website and are disseminated publicly through local news stories. The mission is further communicated to all new students and employees in handbooks, academic catalogs, and orientation materials. To ensure that the mission statement remains prominent in the minds of the campus community, it has also been incorporated into the student professional development certification program, displayed via posters in all classrooms and via handouts for posting in offices, affixed on the medical supplies vending machines, and reiterated on

administrative meeting agendas. Moreover, a custom email signature with the new mission statement was developed and is available to employees who would like to add it to their email correspondence.

In the summer of 2024, the university announced the reorganization of areas on campus to orient around the pillars of the strategic plan more effectively with the Center for Economic Development reporting directly to the Chancellor and with the creation of the Director of Early College Programs position, unifying the concurrent credit opportunities under a single administrative umbrella. These changes elevate two key parts of the mission and strategic plan: economic development and social mobility.

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1.B – Core Component

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

1. The institution's actions and decisions demonstrate that its educational role is to serve the public, not solely the institution or any superordinate entity.

2. The institution's educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes, such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization, or supporting external interests.

3. The institution engages with its external constituencies and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

Argument
1.B.1. The institution's actions and decisions demonstrate that its educational role is to serve the public, not solely the institution or any superordinate entity.

UAFS's recently approved strategic plan clearly outlines the institution's priorities and commitment to the public good, as noted by a former Fort Smith City Administrator in recent media coverage following the approval of the strategic plan by the Board of Trustees: "UAFS has always taken a 'real world' approach to economic development. Fort Smith benefits greatly by UAFS, and the four pillars in the new five-year strategic plan will continue that strong tradition."

The university's commitment to those it serves is evident through its significant initiatives, including:
- The 2021 creation of the Center for Economic Development, which delivers customized personal and professional training and consulting services annually to thousands of individuals and businesses.
- Its cooperation with the Western Arkansas Technical Center, which delivers career and technical education to concurrent students in 22 school districts throughout western Arkansas on both the UAFS and Peak Innovation Center campuses. Nearly 7,000 college credits, 138 CPs, 22 TCs, and one associate degree were earned by the WATC's 310 students during the 22-23 academic year.
- Civic-minded programs and community-focused campus events, such as the UAFS Democracy Project, Blood Drives, MLK Commemorative Celebrations, Voter Registration efforts, Haunted Union/Trunk-or-Treat, Symphony on the Green, Toy Toss Game, United Way Fundraising, and more.

Beyond programming, the university functions as a major contributor to the fiscal health of the River Valley region through direct spending and economic output. A 2020 study by the Arkansas Economic Development Institute found that UAFS contributed $84.5 million in direct spending and approximately $142.7 million in output to Sebastian County during Fiscal Year 2019. This calculation includes 1,401 jobs and $55.4 million in labor income associated with the university.

The university's administration and college leadership proactively communicate with the community through its numerous campus advisory boards and participation in local and regional civic groups and governance groups, such as the Marshals Museum Advisory Board, Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, Good Samaritan Clinic Advisory Board, and Rotary Club.

1.B.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.

As an accredited regional public university and member of the UA System, UAFS is committed to delivering a quality education that is accessible, affordable, and invaluable. UAFS is governed by the University of Arkansas System (UA System) and does not generate financial returns for other entities. Please refer to Criterion 5.B for budget details demonstrating that the majority of expenditures support student education.

UAFS maintained its tuition and fee rates during the pandemic of 2019-2021 and continues to provide the lowest tuition and fee rates of any four-year campus in Arkansas. Beyond offering affordable tuition and fees, the university offers a wide array of financial support to guarantee its students an accessible and affordable

education amid and post-pandemic. To that end, 87% of UAFS undergraduates received financial aid during the 2020-21 academic year, and 92% of undergraduates received financial aid during the 2021- 2022 academic year. 97% of students receiving aid were receiving grants, and 34% were receiving aid in the form of loans.

Furthermore, the university can offer additional support to its students and employees through the University of Arkansas – Fort Smith Foundation, Inc., an independent charitable 501(c)(3) organization. The UAFS Foundation has assets that total more than $120 million. Since its creation in 1983, the UAFS Foundation has awarded more than $28 million in scholarships and disbursed approximately $81 million in total support to UAFS.

UAFS's commitment to its educational responsibilities is evident in its creation of a Division of Student Success and Retention. This unit is home to the Academic Success Center, Career Services, Student Support Services, Upward Bound, and First Year Advising.

Finally, UAFS launched a new budget council review process in 2023 to effectively tie financial resources to university strategic priorities. Chaired by the CFO, the council and its subcommittees review university revenues and requested expenditures to ensure they correlate with goals and priorities in the University Strategic plan. The process also improved budget communication by adding annual CFO budget updates to faculty and staff.

1.B.3. The institution engages with its external constituencies and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

The university actively works with its River Valley constituents to ensure it delivers programming that advances the social mobility of its students, fills the workforce needs of regional employers, and strengthens its community's quality of place. University initiatives and programs highlighting this engagement include the following:

Academic

- UAFS has Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with 25 regional community and technical colleges, which offer clear pathways for students who earn their associate degrees to move into 13 select bachelor's degree programs that align with their completed two-year degree.

- UAFS has expanded its nursing programs to include a new two-year ADN degree and increased the number of faculty within its traditional and accelerated BSN program to double nursing graduates to fill the nursing shortage within the River Valley.

- UAFS is collaborating with local manufacturing leaders to launch a bachelor's degree in Advanced Manufacturing Engineering in the Fall of 2025. The curriculum is being developed with input from regional manufacturers. An initial $1M investment in 2023 from ABB launched this initiative; when completed, it will represent UAFS's first four-year engineering degree. In the spring of 2024, the university announced its goal to integrate the existing engineering program with UA-Fayetteville, its two-year electrical engineering technology program, and the forthcoming Smart Manufacturing degree into a single department within the College of Business and Industry.

- In 2024, the university centralized its concurrent and technical programs to report to a newly created Director of UAFS Early College Programs. This position oversees the Western Arkansas Technical Center and serves as a partner with more than 20 school districts in the region to improve educational opportunities and the yield of students who choose post-secondary education.

Community

UAFS annually supports the efforts of the Fort Smith and Van Buren Chambers of Commerce through sponsorships and hosting the Fort Smith Chamber's monthly community First Friday Breakfast. As an active Chamber member, UAFS demonstrates that it is committed to playing an active role in supporting community goals.

Industry and business leaders from the region serve on over a dozen UAFS advisory boards for academic programs and student support services. Their input on workforce needs and real-time industry challenges helps guide curriculum and support service decisions. This collaborative approach helps ensure students are prepared to meet the workforce needs of the River Valley and advance their careers.

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1.C – Core Component

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

1. The institution encourages curricular or cocurricular activities that prepare students for informed citizenship and workplace success.

2. The institution's processes and activities demonstrate inclusive and equitable treatment of diverse populations.

3. The institution fosters a climate of respect among all students, faculty, staff and administrators from a range of diverse backgrounds, ideas and perspectives.

Argument
1.C.1. The institution encourages curricular or co-curricular activities that prepare students for informed citizenship and workplace success.

As noted in pillar three of UAFS's strategic plan (see 1.A.1), the university is actively implementing strategies that "develop high demand programs of study including internships, clinical experiences, and apprenticeships, expanding students' real-world experience." This practical, hands-on approach to learning is evident in curricular and co-curricular efforts throughout campus.

Examples include the following:
- The university's learning outcomes demonstrate UAFS's dedication to preparing students for a lifetime of independent learning. Multicultural proficiency is addressed explicitly within UAFS's University Learning Outcomes: "Students will appreciate and reflect upon cultural differences and their implications for interacting with people from cultures other than their own."
- According to the 2024 NSSE report, more than 69% of students surveyed indicated they held discussions with people of different races or ethnicities, economic backgrounds, and religious beliefs and more than half reported including diverse perspectives in course discussions and assignments.
- The Babb Center for Career Services partners with academic colleges and regional employers to deliver programming that supports students' career success. Career Services professionals reviewed 2,355 resumes between the 2020 and 2022 academic years, 95.5% of which came from current students.

During this same period, they hosted 843 one-on-one student appointments to support preparation for post-college success.

- In 2023, UAFS received a $1M gift from the Babb Family for paid internships and apprenticeships for UAFS students. This endowment will "match pay-per-hour made by key partner employer for student 'signature internships' and fund project-based 'micro internships' at no cost to the hiring partner" ensuring participating students are paid for their work. Funds should be available in 2026.
- UAFS's Democracy Project has hosted 27 major events on campus since 2017, including the annual State of the City address by the Fort Smith Mayor, Town Halls with elected officials and candidates, panel discussions on political topics, and Constitution Week.
- UAFS's Alumni Association offers a seven-month Mentoring Program that helps students gain real-world insights and valuable career connections. Fifty-nine alumni and 34 UAFS students participated in this program during the three years of 2020-2023.

1.C.2. The institution's processes and activities demonstrate inclusive and equitable treatment of diverse populations.

Nearly 20% of the UAFS student body now identifies as Hispanic. This figure mirrors the percentage of the Hispanic population within Fort Smith, as reported by the 2022 Census. UAFS has heightened efforts to create a welcoming environment for this population. Such efforts include adding bilingual admissions officers and a bilingual assistant financial aid director to its team in 2023. UAFS also invested in translation software for its website on August 28, 2023. The website received 2,130 translation requests in its first four months of operation, with 82.11% requesting Spanish. The UAFS Writing Center also offers bilingual tutoring

appointments in Spanish after hiring two native Spanish-speaking student tutors in the fall of 2023.

University Departments such as Anthropology, Criminal Justice, English, World Languages, History, Political Science, Media Communication, Philosophy, Social Work, and Sociology offer courses that address broader multiculturalism efforts. On October 29, 2021, UAFS received approval from the Arkansas Department of Higher Education to offer a Diversity Studies minor. In Fall of 2024, 26 students had chosen this minor. UAFS also welcomed a new student organization, Men of Excellence (MOX), which aims to assure, encourage, and motivate male students at UAFS and beyond. In 2022, UAFS announced the formation of IDEAL Women, a student organization formed with the "goal of creating a welcoming and inclusive community."

UAFS also developed affinity months, providing educational and social opportunities for students to discover diverse populations' historical, economic, and cultural impact. Topics and groups highlighted include Hispanic Heritage, Black History, Native American Heritage, Women's History, Asian and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, and LGTBQ+. Events have included "Heritage Crafts: Appreciation vs. Appropriation" with special guest Miss Cherokee by the Native American student organization, LGBTQ+ programs such as "Progress Towards LGBTQ Equality in the River Valley and the Work that Remains" with keynote speaker Patrick Boze, and a Tea Ceremony by the Japan Club.

UAFS's support for multiculturalism is evident in the vibrancy of its culturally focused Registered Student organizations (RSOs). Since 2017, these RSOs have hosted 507 events. Recognized registered student organizations include the Baha'i Club, Baptist Collegiate Ministry, Black Student Alliance, Filipino Club, First Generational Students, Hmong Student Association, Japan Club, Latino Student Association, Non-Traditional Student Organization, Pentecostal Lions, PRIDE at UAFS, Student Veterans Association, Spanish Club and Vietnamese Student Association.

The Gender and Intersectional Feminism Brown Bag series, launched in 2017, offers faculty and staff programming designed to create an open forum dedicated to discourse on gender and intersectionality-related issues on and around the UAFS campus. Programming provides an open and safe forum for students to become informed and discuss diverse populations.

1.C.3. The institution fosters a climate of respect among all students, faculty, staff, and administrators from a range of diverse backgrounds, ideas, and perspectives.

The university's Affirmative Action plan was updated in April of 2022 to ensure it meets current requirements. The Department of Human Resources provides training materials to hiring managers and job search committee members, ensuring compliance with EEO/AA requirements. Furthermore, all employees must complete online training materials through the Workday Platform that address the need for Building Supportive Communities: Clery Act and Title IX, Duty to Prevent Violence, Data Security & Privacy, and Child Abuse: Mandatory Reporting. Completion is recorded within Workday. Such training initiatives are a necessary step in ensuring not only legislative compliance within the university but also in supporting institutional inclusivity in hiring processes. From 2017 to 2022, UAFS strategically hired an increasing number of diverse faculty and staff, actualizing a 2% increase of employees identifying as Hispanic/Latino, Asian, and Native American/Alaska Native.

In addition to employee training, all UAFS students are required to complete online Title IX training as part of

the university's orientation programming. Students who do not complete Title IX training have their course registration for the subsequent semester frozen to ensure compliance. Students are strongly encouraged to annually complete the 45-minute Sexual Assault Training module (Title IX) through their Blackboard Learning Management System and the 45-minute Mental Well-Being for Student Training module and over 1400 students did so.

Additional initiatives and available activities that demonstrate institutional dedication to fostering an ethos of diversity, equity, and welcome include:

- Hosting the two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning author, Colson Whitehead, author of *The Nickel Boys* through the university's "Read This" program. The subject matter of Whitehead's novel addressed systemic racism, and thus the topic of his craft talk and public lecture on February 7, 2023, included a focus on nondiscrimination and historical transparency.

- Federal Outreach and student services programs (TRIO) at UAFS serve over 380 high school and college students, assisting low-income individuals, first-generation students, and individuals with disabilities. Services include individualized graduation planning, assistance with course selection, personal and academic workshops, and one-on-one tutoring.

- Working with qualified students, through the UAFS Office of ADA Services, to develop personalized service plans, including testing, instruction, and housing accommodations.

- Supporting and assisting international students and integrating international education, global perspectives, and cross-cultural knowledge into the university's academic programs through the Office of International Relations.

- Connecting student-veterans with advisors who specialize in veteran services through the Office of Veterans Services. Veterans receive priority registration and access to a full-time VA vocational rehabilitation counselor and the UAFS Veterans Resource Center.

- Educating faculty and staff through the UAFS Lion Leadership Program (LLP), launched in 2022, by providing insider knowledge of UAFS operations, thus empowering them to build relationships and develop more inclusive perspectives. The UAFS LLP has graduated 24 full-time faculty and staff since its inception.

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1.S – Criterion 1 - Summary

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

Summary

UAFS empowers student success and regional growth through education, innovation, and community collaboration. With a mission refined via stakeholder engagement, UAFS emphasizes social mobility, research opportunities, and economic development. Strategic initiatives include five Centers of Excellence, expanded programs, and comprehensive student support services.

The institution demonstrates its commitment to the public good through education, workforce development, and civic engagement. Key initiatives include expanded nursing programs, advanced manufacturing degrees, and technical education partnerships. With accessible tuition, community events, and advisory boards, UAFS drives social mobility, regional development, and industry alignment.

Finally, UAFS fosters civic engagement through diverse initiatives. Programs include internships, multicultural curricula, bilingual services, and inclusive student organizations. Efforts like Heritage Month and Affinity Month celebrations and the Democracy Project promote equity, while Title IX training and veterans support further its mission of creating a respectful, inclusive campus.

Sources

There are no sources.

Criterion 2. Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

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

2.A – Core Component

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

1. The institution develops and the governing board adopts the mission.

2. The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, human resources and auxiliary functions.

Argument
2.A.1 The institution develops and the governing board adopts the mission.

As described in greater detail in 1.A.1, UAFS undertook a comprehensive Strategic Planning process in 2022 that included the creation of a new mission and vision in addition to a new Strategic Plan. An external consultant, MGT, conducted surveys and hosted conversations with internal and external stakeholders. A UAFS team then fleshed out the plan by identifying key strategies for each of the four identified pillars. The University of Arkansas (System) Board of Trustees (BOT), which serves as the governing board for UAFS, approved the new mission and vision in May 2023.

Mission

UAFS empowers the social mobility of its students and the economic growth of the River Valley through exceptional educational opportunities and robust community partnerships.

Vision

Through dynamic academic programs, innovative research opportunities, and transformational centers of intellectual and economic development, UAFS will advance its community and become an institution renowned for educating and inspiring the ambitious students who call it home.

2.A.2 The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, human resources, and auxiliary functions.

Per Criterion 1, the University's Commitments emphasize integrity as a driving force in its operations. This aspiration is pursued through a web of behavioral codes; guidance from National Associations; specialized accreditations, structures, and checks provided by the UA System and the State of Arkansas; and attention to Federal Compliance. Compliance with ethical standards on the institutional level is evidenced by UAFS's adherence to the standards of specialized accrediting bodies, among which are the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) and the Association of Technology, Management and Applied Engineering (ATMAE).

In the financial arena, UAFS undergoes annual audits as part of the UA system and each year legislative audit has additional items they review annually as determined by the state. To that end, a legislative audit was conducted in 2021, with attention given to Title IV compliance. The on-ground staff was from the UA System Internal Audit office. This March 2021 audit examined internal control of student financial aid; compliance with the BOT, UAFS, state policies, and federal law and regulations; and accuracy of reporting.

UAFS had already begun complying with recommendations when the report was released through the assistance of Business Office staff, who are trained in ethical practices via the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO) Code of Ethics. As such, the University established a Budget Council in 2021 to help transparently coordinate budgetary decisions and align them with the emerging Strategic Plan. Furthermore, to maintain transparency among constituent groups, the Chancellor and senior leadership hosted open forums to address major concerns and suggestions. The topics addressed in these open forums routinely included financial, academic, human resources, and auxiliary functions such as the appointment of an Academic Program Viability Taskforce, which presented recommendations to the Chancellor. Additionally, in response to state law, the UA system created a website that presents unaudited expenditure data for all member institutions.

The university maintains this standard of integrity in its academics. Particular attention is given to the maintenance and distribution of academic catalogs to ensure transparency in expectations. The undergraduate and graduate catalogs outline all requirements and many academic policies; catalogs are updated annually. Each section is assigned to qualified individuals so that the changes made are accurate and adherent to university policies; after revisions are made, the catalogs are reviewed in totum by the Registrar.

Faculty are expected to display integrity on campus, for example by instructional policies that govern their syllabi, modes of delivery, final exams, and grading records. To ensure that the university presents a unified front regarding instructional ethics, a section of the Faculty and Staff Handbook, section F.2 labeled "Instructional Policies," addresses these requirements.

In research, oversight of ethical practice, as well as training, comes primarily from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). In addition to the IRB, the university maintains its own Academic Integrity Committee through the Faculty Senate. Academic honesty is also addressed in the Student Handbook and via the Academic Integrity Committee. Finally, both the catalog and Faculty and Staff Handbook affirm academic freedom, an element of institutional integrity, as expressed in the 1940 AAUP Statement. All members of the campus community are thus expected to maintain an ethos of integrity.

The Human Resources function follows both state and federal rules for ethical conduct, as well as a field-specific Code. HR maintains a Faculty and Staff Handbook that contains staff, faculty, and general personnel policies. The Faculty and Staff Handbook also addresses general issues of integrity, such as employment conduct, fraud, financial conduct on Grants and other Federally Funded Programs, textbook inducements, and faculty accessibility to students. Furthermore, the Faculty and Staff Handbook addresses subjects that ensure fairness in grievances, including equal opportunity material, whistleblower protection, various anti-harassment policies, and protocols. Furthermore, to avoid unfair bias in hiring and compensation, the UA System BOT has a nepotism policy that governs all UA institutions. All areas in the institution strive to maintain transparent integrity. For instance, in academic support, Admissions and Financial Aid both review the codes of conduct associated with their respective national associations, National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) and the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA). In the Office of Admissions, official protocols govern conduct at recruiting fairs and are incorporated into recruiters' training.

Human Resources also manages a set of required online training through Vector, as mandated by the UA System. These address ethics and integrity and include technical safety, child maltreatment reporting, Clery

and Title IX, Data Security, and FERPA.

In auxiliary units, UAFS uses institutional liaisons (e.g., Bookstore-Follett) and committees to ensure ethical and transparent practice on the part of contracted vendors. In November 2023, the Dining Committee requested more consistent labeling of prices in the food court to ensure transparency. Other institutional units also maintain their ethical standards. Housing subscribes to the ethical standards of the Association of College & University Housing Officers-International (ACUHO-I) Standard and Athletics to the NCAA's "16 Principles." In 2023, Athletics also built a department plan based on a model NCAA document. Student Affairs is moving into a five-year plan to conduct a self-review for each unit, using the Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) as an example.

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2.B – Core Component

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

1. The institution ensures the accuracy of any representations it makes regarding academic offerings, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, governance structure and accreditation relationships.

2. The institution ensures evidence is available to support any claims it makes regarding its contributions to the educational experience through research, community engagement, experiential learning, religious or spiritual purpose and economic development.

Argument
2.B.1. 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.

The University presents itself to internal and external constituencies, all of whom deserve openness and transparency. The external starts with the outward-facing University webpage and content.

Accuracy in digitally circulated materials is ensured as follows:

- The Registrar edits and annually publishes the undergraduate and graduate catalogs. Curricular changes in both are updated only from proposals approved by the University Curriculum Committee and the Provost. Amendments to policies in both are made only after approval by the appropriate governing unit (Chancellor, Provost, Faculty Senate, Finance Office, etc.). Changes outside of these two areas (such as college descriptions or academic support areas) are made only after approval by the Dean/Director of that area. The Graduate Council approves curriculum action on all graduate programs, followed by a review at the Provost level. All changes are then sent to the UA System and ADHE for final approval.

- The University governance and administration website displays information on senior leadership, deans, and membership in various University committees. Required federal Consumer Information is all available on a single website that is updated routinely.

- Degree plans are posted in the academic catalog and on the webpage, which also contains degree forms that are signed by both the student and advisor. To ensure that the degree plans on both the academic catalog and the webpage match the approved degree plan in curriculum proposals, both are drafted using the wording in the proposal before being cross-referenced against each other. The final draft is then sent to the respective college/department for final review and approval before being published on the webpage.

- Tuition and fees, along with housing costs and other charges, are posted online by the Finance Office after approval by the UA System Trustees, with the effective academic year noted. Approval typically occurs in May, and changes to these fees are announced by upper administration via email as well as posted publicly online. Handbooks are updated only by the office responsible for the content (for example, Human Resources is responsible for the Faculty and Staff Handbook, while program faculty are responsible for updating program-specific handbooks).

Finally, UAFS presents accurate information about its HLC accreditation and program-specific accreditations on its website: "UAFS Accreditation" and "About." The information in the latter is substantial and addressed in 4A.

2.B.2. The institution ensures evidence is available to support any claims it makes regarding its contributions to the educational experience; this evidence is dispensed through research, community engagement, experiential learning, religious or spiritual purpose, and economic development.

The University makes a concerted effort to interact with the community. This takes the form of internships, research that engages the constituencies of the University, and health clinics. UAFS also measures its contributions to the economic well-being of the Fort Smith area.

Internships are organized primarily through individual academic departments. A monetary gift to the university, given in 2023, will enhance internships for UAFS students. Refer to Criteria 1 for a discussion of the Babb Family Gift.

Research conducted by faculty and staff often benefits UAFS students through intellectual and practical gains, but also experientially because students can be personally involved in these opportunities. Students can engage in faculty-sponsored research projects and then present that guided research in the Annual Research Symposium.

Faculty mentors help students select a topic, prepare an abstract, submit a proposal for IRB approval, and present their findings to faculty, staff, and students. All three colleges and numerous departments are typically represented through the students presenting in this research symposium. Over 100 students are involved in some years. Other events that support claims about research opportunities are the annual Psychology Symposium, the Criminal Justice Symposium, and the Graphic Design portfolio exhibition, all of which feature original and scholarly work by students.

UAFS students and faculty also engage and serve the community through health clinics in the College of Health, Education, and Human Sciences. The College trains future practitioners and, in doing so, provides service to the community by bolstering the workforce in these vital industries.

Clinic Event	Vaccines Administered
2023 Fall Faculty, Staff, and Student Flu/COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic	27
2023 Student-Only Flu Clinic (Free)	29
2024 Student-Only Flu Clinic (Free)	29

Even while enrolled at UAFS, students are contributing meaningfully to the wellness of the surrounding region. For instance, the Student Nursing Association and the School of Nursing itself are routinely involved with clinics and volunteer work in the Fort Smith area. A recent example was a spring 2024 clinic for flu and COVID boosters that was offered as part of an AR Department of Health grant to UAFS. UAFS also operates a Dental Hygiene Clinic that receives patients, frequently children, from the community.

One of the demonstrable contributions UAFS makes in the River Valley is through its claimed economic impact. These claims are substantiated by various studies, such as one produced by the Arkansas Economic Development Institute, this analysis completed by the UAFS College of Business that showed an annual impact in the surrounding community of over $300 million, as of 2017.

Though workforce and personal training at UAFS furthers the holistic wellness of the region by providing it with professional experts in health and education, this educational training also benefits the economic development of the River Valley. Moreover, creating jobs through specialized education and training programs is one of many ways that the University furthers the economic vitality of the community. Another means is through the UAFS Center for Economic Development (CED), which is one of only 73 national University Center Programs recognized by the U.S. Economic Development Commission Administration, and one of only two in Arkansas. The CED has multiple components. One is the Family Enterprise Center, which seeks to meet the distinctive needs of family-owned businesses in the region. Others focus on customized training for business and small business development. A newer development at the CED is the Lion's Lair, a competition for student entrepreneurs that resembles Shark Tank; during the competition, participants create a business plan and compete for a $1,000 prize and a chance to present at a state-level showcase. Community involvement is invited through the participation of selected judges, who are local business leaders.

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2.C – Core Component

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

1. The governing board is trained and knowledgeable so that it makes informed decisions with respect to the institution's financial and academic policies and practices; the board meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.

2. The governing board's deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.

3. The governing board reviews the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations.

4. The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests or other external parties.

5. The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the institution's administration and expects the institution's faculty to oversee academic matters.

Argument

UAFS, as part of the University of Arkansas System, has the UASYS Board of Trustees (BOT) as its governing body. UAFS also maintains an advisory Board of Visitors, appointed from the regional community. UA System BOT Policy 100.3 and 100.1, referencing numerous Acts of the legislature from 1887 to 1943, set the number of BOT members at 10, one per judicial district and three at large. One member generally rotates off the board each year, as terms are 10 years each. The Governor was granted authority to appoint Trustees, with the consent of the State Senate, except for special appointments addressed in Amendment 33.

In addition to the Board of Trustees, UAFS also has a Board of Visitors (BOV). The BOT that oversaw what was formerly Westark College became the Board of Visitors for the University of Arkansas – Fort Smith after the institution joined the UA System in 2002. Upon this designation, UAFS came under the authority of the UA System BOT. The BOV advises Chancellor Riley, provides a sounding board for ideas, and is involved in making the university's programs and initiatives known in the larger community. The BOV meets quarterly, and though it functions solely as an advisory body, it has operating policies and bylaws.

2.C.1. The governing board is trained and knowledgeable so that it makes informed decisions concerning the institution's financial and academic policies and practices; furthermore, the board meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.

The UA BOT is knowledgeable and regularly trained to make informed decisions. Each year, a special retreat is held for members of the board to provide training and preparation. A review of retreat agendas reveals that legal and fiduciary responsibilities are among the emphases covered in training, as are academic and financial matters. Those specific aspects of BOT work are covered in some capacity in most years. Retreat agendas from 2016 to 2024 recorded training on, among other things:

- Board Leadership:
    - Discussion of an Association of Governing Boards (AGB) report (2018 Board Retreat);
    - An in-person presentation of leadership during change by an AGB consultant;
    - Review of Carnegie Classifications;

- Identification of professional resources for Board members, such as the AGB, AASCU, or ACE;
- Finances:
  - An update on financial challenges from the system's CFO;
  - An update on accreditation;
  - A training session on Bonding authority and capital projects;
  - An overview on how public higher education is funded;
- Understanding Higher Education:
  - Student retention and completion issues;
  - Faculty roles and related issues, such as tenure and promotion;
- Legal Matters:
  - Briefings from the UA General Counsel's team and the Attorney General on FOIA issues, athletics, and other matters with legal ramifications.

In March 2024, the BOT met in Little Rock and received training in legal issues related to Boards, Student Loans in the state of Arkansas, the Productivity Funding model, and credentials related to Workforce Development.

2.C.2. The governing board's deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.

BOT minutes (available publicly online) consistently show that recurring topics strongly reflect a commitment to issues both germane to the core mission of the system and to individual institutions. These include institutional missions, visions, and values; audit reports; hiring of chancellors and senior administrators; approving plans for new athletic teams or conferences; property purchases and sales; new building projects; refunding or re-financing Bonds; revisions to BOT policies; internal and external audit reports; awarding of degrees; deletion and addition of programs; strategic plans; institutional budgets, including tuition and fee changes; and facility leases. Thus, academic, as well as financial, policies and practices are at the heart of the BOT's business.

Budgetarily, the UA System BOT receives institutional proposed budgets in March-April for the subsequent fiscal year, which affords Board members ample time to study the documents. In May, the BOT reviews the institutional proposed budgets and determines tuition and fee levels. The system works closely with the system CFO during the review period and may receive requests for additional information or clarification.

2.C.3. The governing board reviews the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations.

The UA BOT routinely hears from multiple consistencies before making its decisions. These constituent parties include institutional leaders – such as Chancellors, CFOs, VCAAs, and occasionally students – as well as external constituents – such as representatives from K-12 schools and private companies. Examples of this process occurred when the BOT deliberated the acquisition of a distance education university or a P3 agreement with private developers. Members of the public may directly contact BOT members to voice opinions or concerns as members of the Board are listed on the website, along with their contact information.

A review of minutes from BOT meetings from 2021-2023 shows that UAFS regularly has its interests addressed. The list below reflects agenda items specific to UAFS:

- Allowing time for representatives from UAFS to address the BOT, ranging from the Chancellor to the CFO
- Confirming the emeriti status of retirees
- Naming the UAFS Family Enterprise Center for an influential community member
- Disbanding a degree program (B.A.) in Rhetoric and Writing while creating a B.A. in English
- Re-naming the Bachelor of Applied Science degree to BAS – Logistics Operations and adding certificates in Construction and Logistics
- Approving the dual concentrations in the BBA
- Creating the three-part Center for Economic Development
- Inviting Chancellor Riley to address the Board concerning major campus re-organization

To further actualize the BOT's attention and dedication to the concerns of each individual institution within the UA system, board meetings are regularly rotated so that they take place at different campuses. UAFS most recently hosted the Board in November 2023; the hosting Chancellor can make a detailed report during their hosted session.

2.C.4. The governing board preserves its independence to avoid any undue influence by donors, elected officials, ownership interests, or other external parties.

UA BOT members are appointed by the Governor, with the consent of the Senate; however, Board terms are for 10 years, which extend beyond the term of any given Governor. This helps BOT members make decisions independently of political influence. Independence is also maintained by the application of BOT Policy 100.9, which covers standards of conduct.

The following criteria are listed among prohibited activities:

a trustee shall not use or attempt to use his or her position to secure for the trustee or others special or unwarranted privileges or exemptions not available to the trustee or others. "Special or unwarranted privileges or exemptions" mean benefits or advantages unfairly extended to a person beyond the common advantages of others or the unjustified release of a person from a duty or obligation required of others.

The 2018 BOT training retreat featured a presentation by an AGB consultant that prioritized this issue of external relations. In 2019, P3s (Public-Private Partnerships) were discussed, which are another area of potential board conflict. A recent example of the integrity within the BOT occurred when a BOT member recused herself from a vote due to her spouse's role as an officer in a company affected by the vote. In January 2023, trustee Dickey also likewise recused himself during a vote.

2.C.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.

The UA BOT, through the System President, appoints campus chancellors and holds them accountable for exercising "complete executive authority thereon, subject to the policies established by the Board of Trustees and the President." This charge is broad and encompassing: "The Chancellor shall be the leader of and the official spokesperson for the campus and shall promote the educational excellence and general development and welfare of the campus. The Chancellor shall define the authority of administrative committees and officers of that campus." The UAFS Chancellor, in setting up campus governance bodies as defined in the UAFS Constitution is in adherence with the UA system mandates.

BOT Policy 100.4, Rules and Regs, specifies as follows: "The campus governance structure shall be authorized to develop and recommend educational and academic policies and programs on that campus, including and related to such matters as admissions requirements, degrees and requirements for degrees, curriculum, the academic calendar, academic honors, and student academic affairs.

The campus governance structure shall be authorized to make recommendations and provide input to the Chancellor on any matter of general faculty, campuswide, or systemwide concern, including such matters as appointment, promotion, tenure, dismissal, annual review, and non-reappointment of faculty." (UAFS is not a tenure-granting institution, instead utilizing contracts for its faculty as will be seen in 2D.)

At UAFS, curricular matters and other academic issues are addressed primarily via the faculty senate and the Dean's Council. These bodies make recommendations to the Provost on academic matters. The Provost in turn takes recommendations to consider for approval or for referral to the Chancellor as appropriate. This fits well within the BOT delegation of campus governance to the Chancellor, with appropriate deliberative bodies. In turn, the bylaws for Faculty Governance of the UAFS Faculty Senate establish a Curriculum Committee, comprised only of faculty for voting purposes, which evaluates and makes recommendations directly to the Provost on academic course and program matters. The BOT further defines and guides processes on matters largely applicable to faculty, such as appointments, promotion, tenure, non-reappointment, and dismissal. Promotion, for example, is described as a process typically initiated by faculty governance structures, thus assuming and directing the presence of such faculty-led processes on campuses.

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2.D – Core Component

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

Argument

UAFS is firmly committed to academic freedom for all instructors, including professional library staff, who have academic rank. Section U.6 of the Faculty and Staff Handbook affirms academic freedom, using the language adopted by the AAUP in 1940. Additionally, in section U.7.5.1, the Faculty Senate is given the authority to represent faculty with a representative voice on issues related to academic freedom. Faculty contracts, available in Human Resources, refer to the Faculty and Staff Handbook Academic Freedom Statement: "UAFS administration and faculty are committed to the tenets of academic freedom and shared governance, as reflected in University and UA Board Policies, and recognize these as essential to the University's core mission." UAFS faculty initiated a new AAUP Chapter in 2015.

The Faculty and Staff Handbook addresses employee rights to political activity. For example, employees, in their role as citizens, have the right to engage in political activity. However, employees may not use the institution's name, symbols, property, or supplies as part of the employee's political activity.

In addition to the academic freedom granted to UAFS librarians, the UAFS Library supports Free Speech and Academic Freedom. To that end, the Library regularly provides programming for Constitution Week, Free Speech Week, and Banned Book Week. Examples include Censorship by the Numbers in September 2021, during Free Speech Week; programming for Banned Books Week in September 2016, 2017, and 2021; and the display of the Library Bill of Rights in National Library Week displays. The Library Bill of Rights speaks directly to the abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas, as well to the importance of access to multiple perspectives on current and historical issues.

For students at UAFS, there is a robust Freedom of Speech statement and policy in the Student Handbook and Academic Catalog. The Student Handbook also specifically articulates student rights in select areas: Freedom of Association, Freedom of the Press, Freedom of Speech, and Assembly.

In Fall 2023, following some free speech controversies at the university, the UAFS Democracy Project and Student Affairs co-sponsored a panel discussion on the topic of the Constitution on Campus, with a focus on public campuses. Panelists included a member of the UA System General Counsel staff, a student leader, a faculty member who focuses on constitutional issues, and a librarian active in related scholarship. The UAFS Democracy Project also sponsors activities during Constitution Week and throughout the year, such as candidate discussions and talks by state political leaders. The Office of Student Affairs annually sponsors a Constitution Quiz Bowl exhibition, featuring student leaders and staff members.

UAFS follows not only national guidance on the First Amendment, but a State Law last amended in 2023: the FORUM Act. The FORUM Act requires that virtually all the outdoor areas on college campuses be accessible for free speech and that indoor areas meeting certain specifications be available as well. For the campus community and members of the public, online registration for free speech events is available via the Free Speech policy.

Recent examples of formal free speech activities at UAFS include itinerant preachers (most recently in fall 2024); a 2019 campus protest involving campus and non-campus personnel following a controversial post by an incoming student; an external group protesting at a Chamber of Commerce meeting hosted at UAFS in 2018; regular reservations from groups distributing religious literature (e.g., Gideons and Jehovah's Witnesses); a small protest during a scheduled Student Organization event in fall 2023; and a primarily student-attended protest in spring 2024 following the announcement of no new students being admitted into the theater program.

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2.E – Core Component

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

1. Institutions supporting basic and applied research maintain professional standards and provide oversight ensuring regulatory compliance, ethical behavior and fiscal accountability.

2. The institution provides effective support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff and students.

3. The institution provides students guidance in the ethics of research and use of information resources.

4. The institution enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.

Argument
2.E.1 Institutions supporting basic and applied research maintain professional standards and provide oversight ensuring regulatory compliance, ethical behavior and fiscal accountability.

At UAFS, operating within the ethical standards of research and scholarly work is a part of the institutional commitment to integrity. The IRB's policies and practices are central. Composed of administrators, faculty, and staff, the IRB follows federal guidelines in overseeing all research carried out within the university that involves human subjects. These policies align with 45 CFR 46, Protection of Human Subjects, Subparts A through D. The IRB serves students by offering free training in research protocols for student investigators. This training must be certified before research can begin.

The IRB also vets all research proposals, including surveys, at varying levels of scrutiny based upon risk factors. The IRB work is complemented by the UAFS Grant Development Handbook, which emphasizes the importance of transparency and integrity in grant writing. It mandates disclosure of any potential conflicts of interest or financial interests that could influence certain project's business decisions. This policy helps maintain an ethically sound research environment.

UAFS also funds a grants position to assist with advice, oversight, and compliance with ethical principles and regulations. A Fall 2024 search led to the hiring of a new Director of Research and Sponsored Programs. Reflecting UAFS' intent to strengthen oversight and training in research and grantsmanship ethics, the candidates' presentation prompt was "How would you help develop a culture of ethical research & grantsmanship on the campus?"

Additional sets of standards that govern knowledge acquisition and creation are the ethical codes and standards of specialized accrediting bodies, addressed more fully in Criterion 4. AACSB, for example, provides oversight for research that exerts a societal impact. CSWE accredits such programs as Social Work and requires universities, according to Competency 4, to "Engage in Practice-Informed Research and Research-Informed Practice."

2.E.2. The institution provides effective support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff, and students.

UAFS, while not a research-intensive university, nurtures an environment that fosters high-quality, ethical research and scholarly activities. Support is provided by the UAFS Mini-Grant program, the IRB, and the Grants Accounting office, which assists grant recipients in complying with all stipulations, including those related to the research enterprise. More than half of UAFS faculty report working with students on research endeavors.

The Boreham Library announced in December 2023 that it would open a repository for faculty research. Staff also offered two workshops in the spring semester of 2024, one on how to help students prepare for the Undergraduate Research Symposium and another in March 2024 focused on "Thinking Through Information Literacy in Your Discipline."

The UAFS Student Research Symposium, especially in its faculty mentorship capacity, is also a significant component in the scholarly support infrastructure. This annual event offers a platform for students to prepare, present, and discuss ethically conducted research. The Symposium invites students, faculty, and staff to build shared learning experiences and reinforce the culture of research integrity within the UAFS community. The following table shows the number of presentations that have occurred at this Symposium in the past decade:

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Oral Presentations	49	58	40	42	54	52	50	58	30	31
Poster Presentations	17	22	10	20	46	32	65	15	20	18

Faculty promotion policies further reflect our commitment to the integrity of research and scholarly practice. To progress within our ranks, faculty members must present evidence of, among other things, scholarly activities to be reviewed by the College Promotions Committee (CPC), the department chair, the dean of the college and the provost. This process encourages promotions reflective of the individual's contribution to scholarly contributions within their field. The following table illustrates the number of successful promotions in the past decade:

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Senior Instructor					4	2	4	2	7	2
Assistant Professor			4	4	3		1		2	
Associate Professor	4	9	7	9	2	3	1	6	4	7
Professor	4	2	3	2	4	5	6	2	5	3
Assistant Master Technical			1							

The UAFS Sabbatical Leave policy provides another avenue for our faculty members to deepen their engagement with research and scholarly pursuits. Our policy, which compensates faculty members fully for one semester or at a 50% rate for two semesters, supports our faculty's continual growth and the scholarly output of the university. Upon completing their sabbatical, faculty members must report their findings to the Dean and the Provost.

Lastly, formal recognitions incentivize and reinforce the values of academic excellence and research integrity. By acknowledging the significant contributions of our full-time and adjunct faculty through various awards – Excellence in Teaching, Service, and Scholarly Activity, and the Luella M. Krehbiel Adjunct Teaching Excellence Award – the institution expresses its appreciation for hard work and emphasizes the standards UAFS aspires to uphold.

UAFS strives to foster an environment conducive to ethical, high-quality research and scholarly endeavors, but it also must consider the reality that most faculty assume a heavy teaching load (typically 4 + 4).

2.E.3 The institution provides students with guidance in the ethics of research and the use of information resources.

Teaching the ethics of research and the proper use of information resources is part of the University's core educational obligation. Equipping UAFS students with an understanding of academic integrity and ethical decision-making is vital to their intellectual development and future professional endeavors.

Students are taught research and information ethics through specific material in syllabi and course materials; by the Boreham Library staff; through the IRB student course; and from direct mentorship preparatory to various research, Psychology and Criminal Justice Symposia, as well as capstone experiences in Honors and Studio Art. Even Summer Upward Bound students received tutelage in basic research from a UAFS faculty member.

An emerging issue in terms of information ethics is Artificial Intelligence. In addition to workshops, a growing number of departments, especially in CHEHS, have developed AI policies to help guide students in appropriate usage, and work is beginning to create an AI task force. In addition to these opportunities, UAFS offers in-class and co-curricular instruction, and resources dedicated to promoting ethical research conduct.

In nearly every course on campus, faculty members introduce students to scholarly sources and citation formats. Integral to course syllabi is a clear outline of rules against cheating and plagiarism, customized to both the course and the program requirements. Courses in such diverse fields as Social Work, Communication, and Psychology offer illustrative examples of these guidelines. In terms of scholarship for students, the syllabus for RHET 3203 reflects a tight focus on textual research, evaluating and documenting resources, and handling archived materials.

The Library also created a Student Success Librarian in 2018. The position, among other things, is obligated to create programs and services focused on information literacy for students.

UAFS University Learning Outcomes (ULOs) also address the ethics of information. One ULO states that "Students will model ethical decision-making processes." This ULO is explicitly taught, evaluated, and

documented by our faculty in the Ethical Decision-Making Assessment Report, which demonstrated that for all objectives in the Ethical Decision-Making rubric, the surveyed students scored proficient or above. Each academic program assesses this ULO in its discipline at least once each five-year assessment cycle.

Library and Writing Center staff are crucial in cultivating ethical information usage by students. Public service librarians and Writing Center faculty and staff frequently visit classes and present on proper information usage and citation practices. The library also includes a Citation Guide on its UAFS Library webpage (LibGuide). Furthermore, in spring 2023, the Boreham Library and Writing Center cosponsored a series of three workshops on appropriate citation and formatting in three different formatting styles.

The UAFS library maintains an extensive citations webpage, which provides instructions for using citation manuals and the citation-manager software—Zotero. The Boreham Library, in September 2023, offered multiple on-line trainings in Zotero. Furthermore, Boreham Library staff also developed Topic Guides and Research Guides to assist students. Subject matter includes research posters, the research process, how to cite sources, copyright, fair use, and other topics related to ethical research practices. Several college-specific directories, such as the Nursing Student Handbook and the Teacher Candidate Manual, provide detailed guidance on ethical information use in specific professional contexts.

To ensure academic integrity in online learning environments, UAFS offers proctored exams for online courses. The usage of the Respondus Lock-Down browser during these exams prevents internet access or the use of unauthorized resources. The Acceptable Use of Technology Resources Policy (AUP) provides students, faculty, and staff with complete information concerning what is acceptable and unacceptable when using technology resources. All University-owned computers display an AUP message on the login screen. Through these diverse measures, UAFS ensures that our students are well-versed in the ethics of research and information use.

2.E.4. The institution enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.

UAFS's policy on Academic Integrity is included within the Student Handbook, the Academic Catalog, and in many section syllabi. Similar policies exist for both undergraduate and graduate students.

The UAFS policy strictly prohibits academic dishonesty in all its forms, including using unauthorized materials or aids during academic exercises, plagiarism, forgery, falsification of records, unauthorized possession of exams, and aiding others in such dishonest acts.

Faculty members must act according to the UAFS policy when academic dishonesty is suspected. The policy outlines the expectations and the penalties for academic dishonesty. It also provides the process of appealing findings of academic dishonesty to the Academic Integrity Committee (AIC) of the Faculty Council. The bylaws and procedures for the AIC were revised in 2023. Most cases under the Academic Dishonesty policy are handled by faculty members, with only a few appeals to the AIC, which in 2022-2023 heard four cases, and in 2023-2024, one student appeal. This process reinforces our commitment to academic integrity while ensuring that our students' rights to a fair process are respected. Students can appeal the academic dishonesty finding or the imposed penalty to the AIC, following the guidelines outlined in the student handbook.

Faculty Senate, in 2023, passed a resolution that updated the AIC bylaws and called for all cases to be reported through the chain of command in each college. As of fall 2024, the university was refining the full implementation of this resolution. Multiple serious infractions of academic dishonesty can result in an FX notation on the transcript. An "F" in the course or suspension from the course are other options.

UAFS also leverages technological tools such as SafeAssign. Embedded in the LMS, BlackBoard, SafeAssign is an electronic evaluator of assignments, comparing student submissions against a vast database of web content, academic articles, and student papers. SafeAssign offers students a proactive mechanism to independently monitor their work and uphold standards of academic integrity.

Overall, UAFS seeks to equip its students with the knowledge and skills to act with integrity in handling information and conducting research and to avoid violations of the Academic Dishonesty Policy.

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2.S. – Criterion 2 Summary

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

Summary

UAFS emphasizes ethical practices and integrity in governance, finances, academics, and operations. Policies ensure fairness, transparency, and compliance through faculty handbooks, audits, and training.

The institution ensures transparency in academic offerings, costs, and governance through rigorous processes, accurate publications, and publicly accessible information. Claims about educational impact are substantiated by internships, research opportunities, health clinics, and significant economic contributions to the River Valley region.

The University of Arkansas System Board of Trustees (BOT) emphasizes informed decisions through training, deliberates to preserve institutional priorities, and considers diverse stakeholder interests. Independence is maintained through clear conflict-of-interest policies, while day-to-day management and academic oversight are delegated to campus administration and faculty.

UAFS upholds academic freedom and freedom of expression through robust policies, activities, and programming. Faculty and students are empowered to explore ideas freely, supported by academic freedom, library initiatives, and the Faculty and Staff Handbook.

Finally, ethical research and knowledge application is ensured through a combination of policies, oversight, and support. The Institutional Review Board and grants and research offices provide guidance. Students learn research ethics via coursework, library resources, and symposia participation. Academic integrity is upheld through policies at the university, college, and course level as well as technology tools.

Sources
There are no sources.

Criterion 3. Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources and Support

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

3.A – Core Component

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 consortia arrangements, or any other modality).

Argument

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

UAFS offers certificates of proficiency, technical certificates, associate's degrees, bachelor's, and master's degrees. The university website provides links to degree plans for undergraduate and graduate programs. Degree programs offered and their respective enrollments can be seen here, with data from 2020 to the most current count in Fall of 2024. The five largest programs by enrollment are Business, Nursing, Biology, Computer Science, and Psychology.

The Undergraduate Course Catalog also shows the degree plans, the courses required, and the grade points needed in each certificate, associate, and bachelor's discipline. Requirements for master's programs are listed in the graduate catalog. Archived catalogs are also available on the website.

Courses and programs receive initial approval at the University level, UA System level, and the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board to ensure that they are current, appropriate, and rigorous. All curriculum proposals – whether to introduce, delete, or modify programs or introduce, modify, or delete courses – originate with faculty, department heads, or directors in departments and colleges before progressing to the Dean's Council and University's curriculum committee for successive approval. Needs assessments are differentiated by the credential sought to be added, for example, certificate or bachelor level, such as the one recently completed in regard to the newly-added associate's degree in nursing. These assessments are required for all new programs to demonstrate their relevance to the field of study and the potential employability of graduates before gaining approval. Recent developments in the UAFS programs of business, education, and music all exemplify this approval process.

In 2020 and again in 2022, Business added courses in Business Analytics and Business Information Systems as well as various certificates of proficiency, such as Supply Chain Management, to align with the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) standards for content that "cultivate[s] agility with current and emerging technologies." In spring 2022, a Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Education was proposed to meet anticipated needs in the Division of Childcare and Early Childhood Education and in response to the Arkansas Early Childhood Association's "Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (TEACH)" scholarship

program for early childhood educators. In the spring of 2024, Music introduced Orchestra courses to satisfy National Association of Schools of Music accreditation standards, which require large ensemble experiences for degree-seeking music majors.

After receiving approval at the University level, proposals to add, delete, suspend, or otherwise significantly modify academic programs must be reviewed and approved at the level of the UA System Board of Trustees, according to UA Board Policy 620.1. Once proposed modifications pass this stage, the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board is responsible for reviewing and approving curriculum and degree modification proposals and maintaining a list of approved degree programs for all Arkansas colleges and universities.

Following initial approval, courses and programs are further reviewed both internally and externally to ensure quality. Program Learning Outcomes are assessed and reviewed annually by the Committee for Assessment of Learning Outcomes (CALO). Programs adjust courses and programs to ensure high quality and to achieve desired student learning outcomes. Examples include modifying the IDS 3001 Career Readiness course that is required for the Bachelor of General Studies so that it can be used to assess program learning outcomes via the use of e-Portfolios, a modification made in partial response to the HLC mid-cycle review; the modification of program offerings in Criminal Justice in response to the 5-year program review; and updates to the program learning outcomes for Media Communication following the 2021 program review. More detail on CALO and the assessment process can be found in Criterion 4.

To ensure the curriculum is current, relevant, and appropriate, the Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE) requires programs without specialized accreditation to undergo review every 7-10 years.

Reviews of programs that have specialized accreditation follow the schedule of the accrediting agency. Further, the UA System Board requires, "Each campus shall be responsible for reviewing all established academic programs to evaluate whether any changes in the program are warranted. Two types of review are required for all established academic programs: (1) a review of the annual report of low-productivity programs originating in the office of the chief academic officer of the campus, and (2) a periodic substantive evaluation of each academic program on a rotating schedule not to exceed 10 years."

With this guidance as a reference, UAFS maintains a stricter program review cycle, requiring program review every five years for those programs without programmatic accreditors. For those programs with programmatic accreditors, UAFS accepts the programmatic accreditor's review timeline, so long as it occurs every ten years or sooner. The UAFS program review policy outlines data reporting requirements and the process for selecting outside reviewers. It also references the current listing of specialized programmatic accreditations and the program review timeline. As of fall 2024, 25 UAFS programs held specialized programmatic accreditation. As noted above, program review is more fully covered in 4A.

The Arkansas Course Transfer System (ACTS), overseen by ADHE, contains information about the transferability of courses within Arkansas public colleges and universities. Students are guaranteed the transfer of applicable credits and equitable treatment in applying for credits for admissions and degree requirements. UAFS students may complete specified General Education courses anywhere in the public system as well as transfer many pre-identified courses in the chosen degree program. ADHE requires a review of all ACTS-eligible degree programs over a 7-year cycle.

For courses that are not part of ACTS, equivalence is determined by academic leadership, as shown in this example. The registrar's support staff sends information about the transferring institution, course title, level, and description to the academic department so that an equivalence review can be conducted. The department then decides whether the course has a UAFS equivalent, whether it may be counted for elective credit within the discipline or at the university level, or if the course should not be counted for university credit.

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

UAFS faculty and academic leadership collaborate to ensure the highest quality of academic programs at all levels. Student learning outcomes for each program are listed on the UAFS webpage dedicated to that program. Learning goals for programs and courses are well articulated and appropriately differentiated to correspond to student levels. For example, the learning goals for programs in education (for such degrees as the A.A.S. Early Childhood Education, the B.S. Early Childhood Education, and the M. Ed.) provide an exemplar of how program learning outcomes become progressively more advanced based on degree and student level.

Within degree programs, UAFS course numbers correspond to a student's academic level, as stated in the course catalog. Technical certificate programs and associate degrees consist of only 1000- and 2000-level courses. The U of A system is currently undergoing an initiative to align the University of Arkansas System institutions under a common course numbering schema and index to support Arkansas students in transfer, remove barriers to higher education, and ease the administrative overhead of determining course equivalency in the processing of transcripts. In this process, Registrars were asked to match existing course equivalences, giving another comprehensive review of the schemes.

A preliminary policy has been drafted concerning the dual listing of undergraduate and graduate classes. This policy does not allow undergraduate courses to count toward graduate credit requirements. Rather, it addresses the allowance for graduate and undergraduate classes to be co-listed with common meeting arrangements and to allow overlap of content coverage; however, course outcomes and rigor will necessarily shift, depending on whether students are seeking undergraduate or graduate credit completion.

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

The progressive review process described in Criterion 3.A.1 and the programmatic learning goals documented in 3.A.2 pertain to all modes of course delivery (face-to-face, web-enhanced, hybrid, full online, and synchronous) in all locations offering UAFS credit completion. Regardless of delivery mode or location, per instructional policy, all UAFS courses must use the approved general syllabi that are found on the webpage. This means that the same course, regardless of section, location or modality, will follow a common set of student learning outcomes. This example from Management 3523, Operations Management, shows both the section syllabus and the general syllabus. Departmental leaders are responsible for monitoring section syllabi and/or the delivery of courses to ensure that student learning outcomes, as stated in the approved general syllabi, are followed.

Additionally, the teaching of full-time faculty is evaluated by supervisors each year, and the teaching of adjunct faculty is observed each semester as communicated by the dean of each college. All faculty are required to demonstrate evidence of course-level assessment.

Lead faculty for concurrent courses work with instructors to ensure that concurrent enrollment courses are held to the same standards of achievement as students in other courses. Lead faculty review section syllabi for concurrent courses to verify that they contain all elements found in general syllabi; then, a copy of the concurrent syllabus is maintained. The lead faculty member also conducts a course observation during the semester, evaluating the delivery of instruction using the concurrent instructor evaluation form. Lastly, lead faculty work with concurrent faculty to ensure that equivalent course-level assessment practices are followed. Evidence of assessment, including student work, is collected as documentation. The collaborative process, wherein lead faculty work with concurrent faculty to ensure equivalence in the delivery of concurrent courses, is outlined in the Concurrent Enrollment Faculty Guide.

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3.B – Core Component

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Arkansas Division of Higher Education (ADHE) requires the completion of a state minimum core of general education courses for baccalaureate, associate of arts, associate of science, associate of applied science, and associate of general studies programs. This model is based on communication, mathematics, natural and physical science, fine arts, humanities, and social sciences. Advisors encourage students to complete the general education core early in their studies. As shown above, UAFS has identified the specified courses in the required academic areas to meet the requirements set forth by ADHE and has incorporated those into the degree plans.

The general education curriculum provides a foundation in the liberal arts and sciences as would be expected of a comprehensive university. This foundation informs the four University Learning Outcome (ULOs), each with specific objectives: global and cultural perspectives, ethical decision-making, communication skills, and analytical thinking. Each course at UAFS identifies at least one ULO in the general syllabus. This curriculum map shows the intersection of the general education core with the ULOs.

Oversight of the general education program is a matter of shared governance through the Curriculum Committee, a subcommittee of the Faculty Senate, that approves any new course offerings or syllabi. The general education program is evaluated through the University Learning Outcome (ULO) assessment process. The ULO assessment process allows each program to address the shared ULOs in the context of their discipline. To this end, the faculty has established rubrics to assess ULOs for all students in Analytical Skills (critical thinking and quantitative reasoning), Communication Skills, Ethical Decision Making, and Global and Cultural Perspectives. Rubrics to guide all assessment activities are the same across all disciplines and articulate the requisite learning outcomes for each ULO.

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

The ULOs reflect the knowledge, skills, and perspectives graduates will attain through their academic programs. For example, the objectives note that students will be able to "identify ethical dilemmas and affected parties" as well as "apply ethical frameworks to resolve a variety of dilemmas" in terms of the Ethical Decision Making ULO. Just as the faculty continually reviews the general education program, the ULOs are also reviewed every five years by CALO, the Committee for Assessment of Learning Outcomes. The UAFS institutional assessment cycle runs on a five-year cycle, with four years of data collection and one year of summary. Currently, UAFS is in the second cycle with the same ULOs, after the faculty determined the ULOs should not change. ULOs will be reevaluated during the last summary year in the assessment cycle – Academic Year 2027-28.

3.B.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.

UAFS recognizes human and cultural diversity in the world where students live and work. The value of human and cultural diversity is addressed in Pillar 2: Teaching and Learning within the UAFS Strategic Plan, which articulates the university's commitment to "promoting equity within our community, understanding that diversity is a strength that prepares our students for continued success and empowers our faculty and staff in their work."

Numerous courses include learning objectives that recognize the human and cultural diversity of the world. Evidence of this is found in the University Learning Outcomes (ULO) objectives for Global and Cultural Perspectives, which are taught and assessed in numerous courses across the curricula as evidenced by this sampling of General Syllabi from each college.

This is also evident in the activities and programs sponsored by the Office of International Relations, which

develops and manages international initiatives, programs, support services, and partnerships. Part of the mission of the Office of International Relations is to "integrate international education, global perspectives, and cross-cultural knowledge into the university's academic programs and the community at large; connect the campus to the world, enabling UAFS students to graduate as globally competent citizens; and provide support and assistance to international students from application to arrival and beyond."

Some of the activities and programs they sponsor include exchange programs in which students pay their regular tuition at UAFS but enroll directly in classes, share housing with local students, and become members of the host university community. In addition, Maymester courses, which last from one to three weeks, are offered in various locations around the world. Maymester experiences have included regional literature surveys in Scotland; global awareness sessions in Bulgaria; and business overviews in China. In total, the Office of International Relations provides students with study-abroad experiences in six of the seven inhabited continents.

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

As stated in the Evaluation and Promotion document, faculty membership in the academic profession "carries with it responsibilities for the advancement or application of knowledge and pedagogy, the intellectual growth of students, and the improvement of society." To this end, there is a nexus of such engagement in scholarly and creative activities by both faculty and students at UAFS.

The 17th Annual Student Research Symposium was held on April 5, 2024. At the event, over 80 students presented 45 oral and poster research projects representing the following programs: accounting, biology, chemistry, computer science, dental hygiene, electronics, engineering, English, geology, geoscience, history, Latino Studies, literature, music, nursing, political science, psychology, public transportation, and theatre.

In addition to the UAFS Student Research Symposium, other academic units on campus sponsor events that showcase student research and other scholarly work. These additional opportunities for students to share their research experience with other students, faculty, and the community, include the Psychology Research Symposium and Criminal Justice Symposium.

The World Languages Department produces the Spanish literary magazine *Azahares*. *Azahares* is the only Spanish literary magazine in the region, with contributors from the UAFS student body and community, as well as from across the United States, Spain, and Central and South America. The primary purpose of *Azahares* is to provide an "arena for creative expression in the Spanish language, as well as a literary space for writing that presents the themes of the Latino experience."

Applause is another literary journal housed at the University of Arkansas – Fort Smith. *Applause* has been publishing poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, art, and photography since 1980. In AY 2020-21 *Applause* became a national literary journal devoted to the advancement of undergraduate work on the national stage. *Applause* continues to honor its local legacy while affording undergraduate writers from across the United States with an opportunity to submit their work for possible publication. Students participate as part of a class, and the class historically hosts between 5 to 10 students. Submissions are nationwide.

Faculty engagement in scholarship and creative activities is also highlighted in the academic affairs section of the Campus Updates program for the UAFS Annual Fall Staff Meeting. Faculty and staff members also have an opportunity to engage in dialogue, exchange ideas, and share best practices and research findings in the Annual Spring Mini-Conference. The most recent Mini-Conference held on March 8, 2024, focused on Student Success: Bridging the Gap. The most outstanding accomplishments in faculty research are celebrated each year at the faculty awards event with recognition of Excellence in Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activities.

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3.C – Core Component

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 consortia 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 co-curricular activities, are appropriately qualified, trained and supported in their professional development.

Argument

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

UAFS is an equal opportunity, affirmative action institution dedicated to attracting and supporting diverse student, faculty, and staff populations. UAFS's goal of recruiting and retaining a diverse composition of faculty and staff is consistent with its mission to empower the social mobility of students and the economic growth of the region. This university goal furthermore aligns with its commitment to provide a supportive and inclusive learning environment that propels students to achieve success in their personal and professional lives. To guide the hiring process, UAFS follows criteria specifying that screening committees be assembled to represent the interests of all constituencies. In spring 2024, the International Faculty and Staff Association (IFSA) was launched to support and advocate for international faculty and staff and to meaningfully connect with Fort Smith communities and beyond. IFSA aims to inspire success and facilitate integration and retention among international students, faculty, and staff. According to 2023 demographic data for faculty, staff, and students, the human diversity of faculty and staff is proportional to the diversity among students, apart from Hispanic/Latino-identifying populations.

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

UAFS has an established workload policy in the Faculty and Staff Handbook that recognizes the uniqueness of the various types of academic programs offered in the colleges. The policies address differences in

expectations across the academic units (for example how to account for lab and clinical hours compared to time in private music instruction) while providing a learning-centered enterprise for students and a system of fair compensation for faculty members. Academic leaders work to ensure the sufficiency and continuity of faculty members to carry out classroom and non-classroom roles. Class sizes vary based on a variety of factors: if a class is in lecture or lab format; if students are in internships; or if there is an experiential component, such as clinical or performance requirements. The average class size across all sections in fall 2022 was 17. To meet these needs, UAFS employed 202 full-time and 105 part-time faculty in 2022. In 2023, UAFS reported an average class size of 18 to IPEDS, and the number of instructional faculty increased to 205 full-time and 134 part-time faculty members.

The Division of Academic Affairs, in conjunction with academic leadership, collects information on faculty workload on a semester basis to ensure contract workload and release time requirements are met and that section sizes follow minimum enrollment guidelines. The UAFS faculty workload and compensation policy found in the Faculty and Staff Handbook specifies release time for academic department leaders who provide oversight of the curriculum, set expectations for student performance, oversee assessment of student learning, and establish credentials for instructional staff. The policy also provides release time for the co-chairs of the Committee for Assurance of Learning Outcomes. Faculty may receive release time from instruction to perform other duties related to instruction, research/creative activities, or service. Releases are scheduled in cooperation with academic leaders and must be approved by the Provost.

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

Department chairs and/or program directors, in consultation with the college deans, are responsible for ensuring that appropriately qualified instructors are assigned to all course offerings. The UAFS Faculty Evaluation and Promotion System indicates the appropriate minimum degree for each department and/or degree granted by the institution. The minimum degree requirement changes by rank: for some programs, instructor qualifications align with programmatic accreditation standards. As an example, Business maintains a faculty qualifications policy that aligns with AACSB programmatic accreditation. However, in most cases, newly hired faculty must have earned a Master's degree or Ph.D. in a business discipline.

Depending on faculty qualification, faculty must maintain either active professional engagement or have an active publishing record which is defined in the policy. In certain cases – most notably in technical courses supporting certificates – tested experience may qualify for faculty appointment for teaching. In new hire situations, whereby a combination of education, training, or experience is recommended to qualify an instructor, the hiring manager must submit a faculty credentialing form to the Dean and Provost for approval. The credentials of concurrent faculty are reviewed the same way as new faculty hires and they must meet the same standards.

If the faculty member teaching the concurrent class is employed full-time by an outside entity, then their résumé or CV and transcript is submitted to the Associate Provost who coordinates a review of faculty qualifications with academic departments. Assuming the prospective faculty member has the necessary credentials, they are added to the Human Resource Management (HRM) System as a contingent worker. The policy is set forth in the Concurrent Enrollment Faculty Guide.

Degrees earned by all UAFS faculty are databased in the HRM System, and the Division of Academic Affairs (Provost's office) periodically reviews terminal degrees of instructors and coordinates with departments and colleges to ensure that information is updated as needed. The Arkansas Department of Higher Education requires annual reporting of concurrent faculty credentials; this reporting is completed by the Division of Academic Affairs with the support of the academic departments.

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

UAFS instructors are evaluated annually per the Faculty Evaluation and Promotion System. Some departments, such as Business, have developed more specific metrics to guide the scoring system contained therein. For example, Business uses a model that incorporates self, peer, student, and supervisor evaluation. Most annual faculty evaluations, however, are based on three areas: teaching/learning, scholarly/creative/professional development activities, and service. Adjunct faculty are evaluated each semester by supervisors based on their teaching and classroom management. (The adjunct faculty orientation helps adjunct faculty understand the evaluation process.)

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

As discussed in 3.C.4, faculty are evaluated annually.

For online teaching, the Technological Support of Instruction Committee has developed a best-practice checklist that supervisors may use to ensure that course shells are easy to navigate, accessible, and up to date.   University Day meetings are held two days before the start of the fall semester and the day before the start of the spring semester each academic year to provide time for faculty development. Orientations for newly hired full-time faculty as well as all adjunct and concurrent faculty are facilitated in the week before the start of the fall semester. These orientations connect faculty to key resources for their own development and in support of the success of their students, as well as an introduction to institutional processes. For all faculty, UAFS provides training and assistance for online teaching.

Instructional Support provides year-round course design support and Blackboard training. The Boreham Library also supports the teaching mission through library guides, instruction, and tutorials as well as course reserves and databasing of course syllabi. Other services on campus such as the Babb Center for Career Services, the Academic Success Center, and the Writing Center provide professionalization opportunities and workshops for faculty as well as classroom and instructional support.

Each department is responsible for defining minimum expectations in Scholarly/Creative/Professional Development activities such that faculty remain current in their disciplines and adept in their teaching roles while department leaders provide annual feedback on faculty work in this area through the evaluation process. For departments guided by programmatic accreditation, policies may be very specific and defined in the respective faculty qualification policies.   To assist faculty in the pursuit of scholarly, creative, and professional endeavors, UAFS recognizes the importance of providing opportunities for growth and change at both individual and organizational levels.

Professional development funds are available to support full-time faculty development as well as travel for scholarly and research activities. Over the last four years funds have been to the colleges in the following manner:

- FY25 $20,850
- FY24   20,850
- FY23   40,000
- FY22   50,000

Colleges and departments have their own internal procedures for allocating funds, which are contingent on the availability of budget for the academic year. Evidencing the support available for scholarship, creative, and professional endeavors are the numerous peer-reviewed publications, monographs, published books, book reviews, presentations, funded grants, podcasts, professional development activities, and other creative activities, exhibits, and performances found in the 2022-23 Institutional Effectiveness Reports.

In addition to departmental and college support, UAFS faculty may apply for mini-research grants at the Dean, Provost, or Chancellor levels. Faculty may also apply for self-guided travel, international study, curriculum development, and research funds through the Lucille Speakman Legacy Endowment fund. Examples of Legacy Endowment supported projects are as follows:

- 2024 - Dr. James Benjamin: travel to Budapest, Hungary, to attend the Society for the Improvement of Psychological Science conference in 2025.
- 2023 - Dr. Ragupathy Kannan: expand his "significant and growing published collection of bird call audio recordings from all over the world" with a trip to Gambia, West Africa, sometime during the upcoming 2023-2024 academic year.
- 2021- Elizabeth Momand: fund travel and related expenses to visit the British Library in London, England, to research the women composer Alicia Adelaide Needham.
- 2020 -Mohammad Halim: Halim and research students will attend the ASMS conference in Houston, TX.

Several departments sponsor research lunches, professional development sessions, and/or research symposiums throughout the academic year to promote opportunities for colleagues to share research and gain feedback. For instance, Criminal Justice and Psychology both host annual research symposiums. Furthermore, UAFS hosts an annual student research symposium to further student-faculty research.

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

As per the UAFS Faculty and Staff Handbook, faculty determine the number and type of office hours and must include an availability policy in their syllabi. The policy must state the times that faculty will be available to students outside of class hours and how faculty will be available during those times. Means of availability may include but are not limited to, face-to-face or traditional office hours, virtual "office hours," and email.

Many departments encourage faculty to respond promptly and to post office hours (in person or virtual) in Navigate. When faculty hours are posted in Navigate, students can use the system to easily schedule appointments with faculty. The Technology Support of Instruction committee drafted a policy on Regular and substantial interaction that provides specific recommendations to ensure faculty teaching online courses engage with students and make themselves available for student questions and class discussions.

Beyond teaching office hours, many instructors also mentor student research, provide academic and career advising, and/or serve as faculty advisors of Registered Student Organizations.

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

Like faculty, the credentials of all UAFS staff are housed in the Human Resource Management system (Workday). Department directors coordinate with the Dean of Students and Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs to ensure that enough appropriately qualified staff are available to support UAFS students in the areas of financial aid, advising, and co-curricular activities. One responsibility of the Assistant Provost of Student Success is ensuring that there are sufficient staff resources in tutoring and academic advising. Beyond this, most entry-level staff positions require a bachelor's degree for initial hire with a Master's degree preferred for director positions.

The Divisions of Student Affairs and Academic Affairs work jointly to support the professional development of staff in their areas. A key resource developed by the campus is the previously discussed Student Success Mini-Conference. Staff Senate and Human Resources also provide numerous sessions and events that celebrate staff or provide professional development, with covered topics like "Navigating Conflict" and "Leading Without Authority." Staff can also apply for the Lion's Leadership program, a campus leadership development program designed for full-time employees to build relationships across campus, develop a more holistic view of the university, and become more effective champions for the university. Each department also has access to a discretionary budget to fund travel for outside professional development.

All staff are evaluated annually by their supervisors through Workday. Staff complete an initial self-evaluation of job responsibilities, major accomplishments, and barriers to performance. Staff also reflect on progress toward previously set goals and set new goals for the year ahead. Supervisors then rate their subordinates' performance and evaluate their stated goals. Reviews are submitted to Human Resources for approval before the supervisor meets with the staff member and acknowledges the completion of the annual performance review process.

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3.D – Core Component

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

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

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

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

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

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

One of the core Commitments of the UAFS Strategic Plan is to "provide a supportive and inclusive learning environment that propels students to achieve success in their personal and professional lives." To this end, UAFS provides students with an array of support services that are designed to help them achieve their academic goals.

The Office of ADA Services seeks to provide reasonable accommodations and services to students who have physical, emotional, and/or learning disabilities. TRIO Student Support Services (SSS) provides academic advising, tutoring, mentoring, and other forms of support to help disadvantaged and low-income students succeed academically.

Among the Military and Veterans Services and Resources made available to veterans at UAFS are priority registration, access to a full-time VA vocational rehabilitation counselor, and access to the UAFS Veteran Resource Center. UAFS is designated as a Military Friendly School (MFS) by Victory Media.

The University Police (UPD) practices a philosophy of educational outreach through participation. UPD officers partner with organizations on event planning and execution. Examples include Haunted Union, Cub Camp, and RA programs in residence halls. UPD also employs students to assist as Community Service Officers, with parking enforcement being the focus. UPD also hosts public forums for students both in person and online.

UAFS offers services for students experiencing financial or basic care crises. The Dave Stevens Lion Pride Pantry provides food, school supplies, household, and personal care items. Students with an emergent or unexpected non-school-related expense may apply to the Student Emergency Assistance Program. Funds are made available through the UAFS Foundation, and funding may be used for emergencies such as car repairs, vehicle fuel assistance, rent assistance, utility bill assistance, and other applicable costs in times of dire need. Additional funding for students with outstanding balances and inadequate financial support to continue is available through the Rescue Scholarship and Completion Grant. A Career Clothes Closet is available through the Babb Center for Career Services Career and provides free attire for job and internship interviews, classroom presentations, or other occasions.

UAFS is committed to providing students access to wellness services, including counseling services, through the UAFS Student Counseling Center. UAFS students who are currently enrolled in credit courses, including UAF Engineering and ROTC programs, can receive up to eight free counseling sessions each year.

Regardless of their financial circumstances or dental hygiene needs, students also have access to the Dental Hygiene Clinic, which provides comprehensive dental hygiene care at a modest price of only $25 for current students. The Powell Student Health Clinic provides free walk-in sick visits, prescription refills, and health screenings.

Faculty, staff, and students also have access to a daycare center on campus through the Little Lions Child Development Center (LLCDC). The LLCDC provides year-round childcare for children in ages that range from 6 weeks to 48 months.

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

UAFS plans and offers several First-Year Student Programs and Events, both academic and co-curricular. First-year programs and events such as Mane Event, Cub Camp, Online Orientation, and Lion Launch are planned and facilitated by the Office of New Student and Family Programs, which also serves as a campus resource for new students and their families.

In 2024:
- Online Orientation: A total of 1,492 participants successfully completed the orientation, passing the assessment at the end with a minimum score of 83%.
- Mane Event: Across all three event dates, we had 693 attendees.
- Lion Launch: 139 students attended the sessions.
- Cub Camp: 296 students participated.

The Lion Scholars program provides additional support and resources for at-risk students. Students receive one-on-one academic coaching, advising, career coaching, and financial aid assistance. The Gordon Kelley Academic Success Center (ASC) provides support services to address the academic needs (academic coaching, peer tutoring, workshops, test preparation, and test proctoring) of all students on campus.

The university measures student preparedness for placement through combinations of test scores (ACT, SAT, Accuplacer) and or high school GPA. (Link course placement document emailed) and has moved to a co-remediation model in supporting students in Mathematics and Composition courses.

The Mathematics Department offers a MATH Up Program for entering students who would like to increase their mathematics placement before taking their initial math course. Faculty facilitate an initial assessment and then give them access to a self-paced program. Once they have completed the modules, a final assessment is administered, and the scores are entered into the SIS. This program has been very successful in helping students move beyond prerequisite courses that are not required for a student's declared major.

The Health Learning Resource Center provides hands-on opportunities for students and faculty to actively engage in learning and skills practice, enhancing their academic and professional development. The Center is available for student remediation, skills refresher and faculty training. These rooms are outfitted with medium fidelity simulators, bedside computers, hospital beds and various other equipment to support the simulation cases.

The UAFS Writing Center provides one-on-one writing tutoring for all members of the UAFS community (currently enrolled/employed students, faculty, & staff). They assist with any type of writing project, at any stage of writing (pre-writing, drafting, revision, editing), and assist with writing projects across the curriculum. They also provide speech and English conversation practice for non-native English speakers. Since opening in 2021, the Writing Center has recorded over 22,092 individual entries by students into the WC for the purpose of tutoring, studying, class, and the like.

The Summer Bridge in English Program is integrated into the programming and support services offered through the UAFS Writing Center and utilizes highly trained Writing Center tutors as peer mentors. They provide extra support and guidance throughout the participants' first year of college. Additionally, the program, which is offered at no charge, introduces students to all the resources available to them at UAFS. The Summer Bridge Program is funded by the Title III SIP Grant and offers an accelerated pathway to college readiness in academic literacy and writing, allowing students to complete their first Composition class, ENGL 1203 (with a co-requisite 0201 course), before they begin (for most) their inaugural fall semester. This program is designed to improve academically underprepared students' chances of success, retention, and completion.

Finally, UAFS also makes available to students three Living Learning Communities (LLCs) in the Lion's Den

Residence Hall. Each LLC has a floor reserved for the respective community. LLCs are for first-year students who live on campus. Students accepted into an LLC will receive a $1,000 scholarship ($500 per semester) while funds are available, limit of 20 per cohort. The three LLCs are The Myles Friedman Honors Program, Leadership, and Business and Entrepreneurship. The programming in Leadership is submitted as an example.

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

The academic advising model at the University of Arkansas – Fort Smith is comprehensive in design and tailored to meet the needs of students in all academic programs across campus, from matriculation through graduation. As part of the advising model at UAFS, the advising is provided by faculty advisors, advising coordinators, and professional advisors.

UAFS students are required to be advised every semester until they graduate. Advisors are available to assist students with goal setting, career exploration, selection of a major, and course requirements, and to assist students in connecting with appropriate resources. Entering freshmen are advised in the ROAR First Year Advising Center for the first 24 hours post-high school graduation. Lifelong Learners and non-degree-seeking students are also advised in this center. All students progress from the ROAR First Year Advising Center into the college of their major where they are advised by a professional and/or faculty advisors; additionally, incoming transfers and readmitted students are advised in their respective colleges.

The ROAR First Year Advising Center and other advising offices on the UAFS campus refer students to support services available on our campus. Support and referrals to these programs can occur during an advising meeting or through a notification system that provides advisors with feedback on how students are doing in their classes. Students are referred to the Academic Success Center and the Writing Center daily depending upon the needs of the students. Advisors can schedule appointments for students while they are in-office or advisors can teach them to schedule the appointment themselves.

The College of Business and Industry has an advising center staffed by two professional advisors. As students matriculate to the college from either the ROAR or admissions (as transfer or returning students), they are assigned to either a faculty or professional advisor based on their progression to degree. Professional advisors provide service to business majors not yet admitted to the business program as well as certain populations including athletes, international, and at-risk students (those on probation/suspension or on a teach-out plan for a sunsetting degree program). The Center also advises all Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, and Business Administration Online majors. CBI advisors are knowledgeable in business and career opportunities and actively engage with faculty and staff in the college through training, development workshops, and social events.

The College of Arts & Sciences (CAS) advising structure is composed of full-time professional advising staff and faculty advisors. CAS faculty advisors and CAS Advising Center (CASAC) staff work with sophomores, juniors, and seniors. Department chairs advise students in their unit when faculty advisors are unavailable, for example, during winter and summer breaks. The staff in CASAC advise "at-risk" students such as students who are on academic probation or suspension, transfer students, or readmitted students.

The College of Health, Education, and Human Sciences (CHEHS) advising structure is composed of full-time

professional advisors (one academic advisor, two advising coordinators, and one admissions coordinator), as well as faculty advisors. After students with majors in the CHEHS transition from the ROAR First Year Advising Center, they are advised by professional advisors, which include academic advisors and advising coordinators, until they are formally accepted into their respective programs. Once students are formally accepted into a health science, education, or social work degree program, they are assigned a faculty advisor. The faculty advisor does the primary advising, but the academic advisor/advising coordinator serves as a secondary support. Due to the ratio of students majoring in psychology to advisors, students may be assigned to a professional advisor or faculty advisor. Graduate students are advised by a faculty advisor.

Advisors in all academic colleges work collaboratively with the Office of Admissions, the ROAR First Year Advising Center, the Center for Student Success and Retention, Career Services, and the UAFS Academic Advising Council to ensure that students have a comprehensive, professional, and personalized advising experience. Advisors also work with academic support services across campus that assist students in developing time management skills, writing and reading skills, and other skills-based attributes. The Academic Advising Council (AAC) promotes communication, training, and the assessment of advising to foster quality student service experiences across campus. AAC members review and discuss policies and procedures to develop resolutions to increase student success, retention, and graduation.

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

UAFS is comprised of 77 buildings and facilities located on 170 acres, as well as five additional locations beyond the main campus. Students who opt to live on campus may do so in one of two residence hall complexes: the Lion's Den Residence Hall and the Sebastian Commons Apartment complex. The Lion's Den Residence Hall is available for first-year students and is complete with a full-service dining center. Upperclassmen, non-traditional, and married students may elect to live in the on-campus Sebastian Commons Apartment complex.

The UAFS Office of Housing and Residential Life is committed to providing student residents with a supportive and engaging environment in the residence halls and student apartments. All Residential Life staff members have been carefully selected and trained to work with students to create and support living environments that are conducive to academic, personal, and social endeavors.

UAFS has several performance spaces on campus. One of these performance spaces is the Breedlove building, which is comprised of 9,967 square feet. The Breedlove building houses the 451-seat Breedlove Auditorium, a control booth, two large dressing rooms, a scene shop, a lighting shop, a costume shop, a computer lab, faculty offices, and storage spaces.

The Windgate Art and Design building encompasses 57,000 square feet and is home to the Book Arts, Studio Art, and Graphic Design programs. It houses spaces for photography, painting, sculpture, art history, computer labs, a wood shop, a letterpress and bookmaking operation, a photography studio, critique spaces, a 120-seat theatre, and the UAFS Gallery of Art and Design.

The 67,500-square-foot Boreham Library provides resources, services, and facilities to assist students and the University community. The Boreham Library's collections include over 70,000 print books, 3,100 CDs, and 3,390 DVDs and videos, as well as access to over 90 databases (inclusive of over 67,000 journal titles and 81,000 streaming videos). In addition, the Boreham Library provides computer workstations for its users and has seating for 270 students plus lounge seating for 80. There are eight group study rooms and two outdoor reading areas. The library proper is open 83 hours per week during fall and spring semesters and includes a 24-hour study zone with computers that does not close except for holidays and vacation periods.

Circulation Data

FY 21	1,702
FY 22	2,944
FY 23	3,530
FY 24	4,063
FY 25 (to Jan)	2,169

The librarians and other staff members in the Boreham Library are available to help students in the acquisition of research skills and to offer direct assistance with research questions. Each librarian also has assigned responsibility as a liaison librarian for specific subject areas. In this capacity, that librarian is highly qualified to provide guidance and additional help for subject and disciplinary questions.

The Pebley Center is housed in the Boreham Library and provides a collection of historical resources relative to the history of Sebastian, Franklin, Polk, Crawford, Logan, and Scott counties in Arkansas and of LeFlore County and Sequoyah County in Oklahoma. The Pebley Center collection includes manuscripts, books, family collections, dissertations, microfilm, government documents, journals of local historical societies, and photographs. The Pebley Center collection is non-circulating and may be used by the public as well as the University community.

Pebley Usage Data

FY 21	1,964
FY 22	1,212
FY 23	1,359
FY 24	722
FY 25 (to Jan)	363

In 2005, UAFS acquired a historic home and 26 acres, overlooking the Arkansas River, in nearby Van Buren, Arkansas. The Drennen-Scott Historic Site is operated by the University as both a public historic site and as a laboratory serving resources interpretation students. The Drennen-Scott historic site is a "teaching and learning laboratory" for UAFS students, who serve as interns at the site, greeting visitors and conducting tours. They also take classes on-site that include artifact preservation and restoration and the development of exhibits. The University uses the site for special events and dinners and allows individuals and groups in the community to schedule events at the site as well.

UAFS provides technological infrastructure, resources, and instructional support professionals to support effective teaching and learning. UAFS is a member of ARE-ON, the Arkansas Research and Education Optical Network, which provides unlimited bandwidth up to the limit of the site connection, which for UAFS is 10gb. ARE-ON provides low latency access to national research and science networks such as Internet2, along with

low latency access to cloud vendors like Microsoft. Apple, and Amazon. There are both active and redundant network connections from the campus to ARE-ON. IT has 100 laptops and 58 hot spots for students (and employees) to check out. There are over 1000+ desktops for student use in campus labs and open areas along with 250+ laptops are that stored in mobile carts and are used in classrooms.

Technology Services consists of 24 full-time staff, 2 part-time staff, and 4 student workers. The IT Service Desk provides support for faculty, staff, and students Monday through Friday, 7:30 am to 7:00 pm. There is a 24x7 on-call manager to take any emergency calls that are outside the normal support window. The Technological Infrastructure Report provides additional detailed information about all aspects of Technology Services at UAFS.

UAFS also employs an Instructional Support Director and Instructional Designer to assist faculty with the integration of technology into teaching and learning. These individuals facilitate group or individual training in the use of educational technology including the use of online video streaming services to incorporate video content into the course curriculum. The Technology Support for Instruction (TSI) Committee is comprised of faculty, administrators, and instructional staff who discuss and recommend how technology can be used within the classroom, some components of which are used to assess student learning.

Welding majors are provided opportunities to practice their skills using current welding equipment in the Baldor Technology Center. Additionally, UAFS has recently updated the Electronics Technology labs with state-of-the-art electronics equipment. Upgraded welding equipment totaling over $500,00 was purchased and installed in the Welding labs. The Electronics upgrades including a new AC/DC Learning System, totaled over $70,000. Invoices are included in the evidence files.

The clinical practice sites for College of Health, Education, and Human Sciences (CHEHS) programs align with the accreditation requirements of the respective programs and meet standards of practice, course, clinical, and program outcomes. CHEHS has agreements with over 100 clinical sites in a variety of settings in which hundreds of students are placed each academic year.

Clinical practice sites used for the Carolyn McKelvey Moore School of Nursing (SON) clinical experiences range from acute care facilities in hospitals to outpatient care experiences and community-based experiences. Students in the SON also use a variety of large, medium, and small practice sites of varying types and approximately 160 SON students rotate through these clinical facilities each academic year.
The dental hygiene program has contracts with the Community Dental Clinic in Fort Smith and the Healthy Connections Clinic in Mena, Arkansas. The Community Dental Clinic is a program of the Crawford-Sebastian Community Development Council, Inc., and it serves the needs of low-income persons in Crawford and Sebastian counties. The dental hygiene students (16) rotate under the supervision of the program's attending dentist to the Community Dental Clinic during their last semester in the program providing cleanings to the patients. Healthy Connections, Inc. provides medical, dental, and social services to residents of all ages in Arkansas regardless of ability to pay. In February of every year, Healthy Connections collaborates with the Dental Hygiene Program to provide sealants to 2nd and 6th-grade students from all area schools.

Students in radiography gain experience in a hospital setting, as well as orthopedic and outpatient clinics, providing them with experience in a variety of imaging procedures, different equipment operations, and all possible clinical settings while in the Imaging Sciences program. Through a combination of hands-on learning

experiences with inpatients and outpatients in clinical education, students attain an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the principles and practices in their chosen specialty.

Surgical technology students rotate through varied healthcare clinical sites and receive a wide array of surgical experience at these sites. Student clinical experiences are conducted at facilities that are accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Hospitals, a sponsor of the National Patient Safety Goals, or other accrediting agency. For example, the Johnson Dermatology Clinical practice site gives students an experience in the following areas:

1. Mohs skin cancer surgery and subsequent repairs

2. Dermatology Clinic patient observation and the role of the surgical tech

3. Cosmetic procedures including chemical peels, Sclerotherapy, Injection therapies.

4. Laser treatments

5. Photodynamic therapy

6. Histological processing of skin tissue.

Field education is the signature pedagogy of the UAFS Bachelor of Social Work Program. Through field education, social work students apply the knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive and affective processes learned in the classroom provided by entry-level social services in human service agencies that work with micro, mezzo, and macro populations. These generalist practice experiences allow the student to participate and become familiar with the many components of the professional social work role. There are two field placements at the undergraduate level. The two BSW field placements, usually in different agencies or programs, total 400 hours of direct field experience throughout a student's senior year. The BSW program has established partnerships with 21 agencies, each capable of accommodating a cohort ranging from 33 to 35 students per semester.

The Allied Health EMT program rotates through various Emergency Medical Services and Emergency facilities within acute care hospitals. Each academic year approximately 30 students rotate through emergency medical service sites receiving a wide array of emergency response experiences. Participating in these clinical sites allows an opportunity for networking opportunities as well, potentially leading to job opportunities. Overall, the EMS clinical sites provide a valuable opportunity for EMT students to gain practical experience, enhance their skills, and prepare for a successful career in emergency medical services.

Clinical practice sites for the Western Arkansas Technical Center (WATC) CNA program are limited to long-term care facilities and are required to be approved by the Arkansas Department of Health Office of Long-Term Care. Approximately 24 CNA students rotate through these clinical facilities every academic year. Clinical sites offer a diverse range of services, including skilled nursing care, rehabilitation therapy, and memory care. This exposure allows students to gain experience in different healthcare settings and develop a well-rounded skill set.

Approximately 30 dual enrolled high school students in the WATC Practical Nursing (PN) rotate through the WATC Practical Nursing (PN) clinical practice sites. These range from long-term care facilities and acute care facilities in hospitals to outpatient care experiences and community-based experiences. Students in the WATC PN program use a variety of practice sites such as large, medium, and small practice sites of varying types

that enable students to receive diverse learning experiences. Clinical sites provide PN students with hands-on experience working with patients under the supervision of experienced healthcare professionals. These sites also provide practical nurse students with the opportunity to network with healthcare professionals, including nurses, doctors, and other allied health professionals. This can help students build professional connections and potentially lead to job opportunities after graduation.

The School of Education partners with school districts in Arkansas and Oklahoma to provide placement sites for students to earn clinical hours in their field of study. The schools in the districts vary in size, number, region, and diversity, which ensures students meet the requirements of the Arkansas and Oklahoma Departments of Education. UAFS is fortunate to have fifteen public school districts and one private school who provided sites for education students this past academic year. Cooperating schools are accredited by the states' accreditation association, and many have received distinguished awards from other agencies. Partnerships with these districts help prepare our students to be "Day One Ready" for the classroom.

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3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary

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

Summary

The University's general education program supports intellectual and cultural diversity and embraces the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning and skills as integral to all its educational programs. At the undergraduate level, UAFS's general education requirements are delivered via a general education curriculum consistently administered across all degree programs and assessed through the ULO assessment process.

UAFS provides significant and sustained support for student learning and an array of resources for effective teaching. The support and resources, as well as preparatory instruction, serve to fully address the academic needs of students. One of the pillars of this support is the comprehensive academic advising organizational structure, which serves to meet the needs of students in programs across campus. UAFS also provides both students and faculty with the requisite infrastructure and academic resources needed to support effective teaching and learning.

Sources

There are no sources.

Criterion 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

The institution ensures the quality of its educational offerings.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Argument

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

Program Reviews at UAFS are conducted regularly as shown in the Program Review Calendar and are overseen by the office of the provost. These reviews are guided by the requirements identified in the Program Review Policy and Procedures document. UAFS conducts program reviews in two ways:

- First, academic programs without specialized accreditation – such as Criminal Justice, Geoscience, and Political Science – must submit a self-study every five years using guidelines identified in the Program Review Policy and Procedures. External reviewers are selected by the department head or dean of the college. At least one reviewer is required to conduct an onsite visit. Both will review program requirements and data and submit one report using guidelines identified in Appendix A, pages 15 and 16 of the policy.

- Alternatively, Academic programs with specialized accreditation – such as Business Administration, Nursing, the School of Education's TPI-US, and the College of Business and Industry's technical programs – use the accreditation process and timeframe prescribed by third-party accreditors.

The Office of Academic Affairs maintains the recently updated (2023) Program Review Calendar for accreditation and state reviews. Each year, College Deans are responsible for requesting funds in the budget to cover the costs of the scheduled program reviews. Regardless of the type of review performed, the program review process incorporates a comprehensive self-study and includes the following kinds of data analyses:

- Program Goals

- Curriculum

- Faculty Qualifications

- Program Resources

- Majors and Declared Students

- Program Assessment

Program review findings from accrediting agencies and/or external reviewers are addressed by the college and program administration, with progress reported in the subsequent review cycle. Examples of changes made according to the program review include the following:

- Business faculty approved the adoption of a journal quality policy and a process to incorporate targeted learning outcomes in response to the recommendations of AACSB's peer review team (PRT) as shown on pages 9 and 10 of the Business Administration AACSB (Advanced Collegiate Schools of Business) Continuous Improvement Review report of 2018. Furthermore, they now track journal quality and citations by faculty via Google Scholar accounts. Faculty must provide evidence of journal quality when submitting intellectual contributions as part of their annual evaluation packet.

- Industry faculty made changes to address the peer review team from ATMAE's concerns regarding compliance with the accreditation standards for several of its programs. This was the second progress report submitted in response to concerns raised after a 2019 comprehensive site visit.

  - The second progress report discusses the discontinuation of multiple programs – such as the Bachelor of Applied Science (page 14), the Bachelor of Animation Technology (page 49), the Associate of Applied Science in Office Management Technology (page 152), as well as the streamlining of the Associate of Applied Science in Computer Graphics Technology (page 94).

  - The report further details classroom and laboratory improvements implemented in support of the Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering Technology as well as Associate of Applied Science in Electronics Technology, Automotive, and Welding Technology programs (pages 35, 103, 121, and 139). Finally, the report provides updates to student learning outcomes, short-term program goals, long-term program learning goals, and complete summaries of employer and student surveys conducted.

- The Criminal Justice Department developed a three-year plan to address the findings of the criminal justice program review. The department has completed modifications to the criminal justice degree requirements, reinstated the CJ Advisory Board, and implemented tracking of graduated students and alumni networking to better modify curricula. The program review process is assessed periodically for ease of use, efficiency, and usefulness as a platform for decision-making. Modifications to the program review process are made because of evaluative comments from the faculty, staff, ADHE, and the Provost. As indicated on the first page of the Program Review Policy and Procedures, the policy was last reviewed and modified in 2024 to reflect current practice and requirements of ADHE.

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

Outside of earning credit in coursework at the University of Arkansas – Fort Smith, credit is awarded in four categories: test credit awarded via external testing agencies, such as Advanced Placement (AP), College-

Level Examination Program (CLEP), or other recognized agencies; credit for learning obtained outside the traditional classroom; credit by departmental challenge examinations; and transfer credit (see section 4.A.3). These policies are available to students in the academic catalog.

Students may receive credit for non-traditional education through the Advanced Placement Program (AP), the College-Level Examination Program (CLEP), challenge exams, and military service training. UAFS participates in the Advanced Placement (AP) program of the College Entrance Examination Board and has authorized credit and placement for students who present qualifying scores as outlined in the undergraduate catalog. Students who complete the subject area examinations of the College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) with satisfactory scores outlined in the catalog may also be granted credit toward a degree at UAFS.

In courses for which no CLEP examination is available, UAFS may grant credit based on challenge examinations administered by the department. A challenge exam can be taken only by admitted UAFS students and with department approval. Furthermore, active-duty personnel and veterans can receive credit for military training. The recommendation of the American Council on Education, "A Guide to the Evaluation of Education Experiences in the Armed Services," is used in evaluating military service school training. Military credit is also evaluated by the individual college to gauge progress toward degree program requirements.

UAFS acknowledges that learning can take place outside the traditional classroom setting; as such, the University awards college credit for non-traditional education experiences. For example, the award-winning Adult Degree Completion Program was honored for its innovative and robust portfolio assessment and granting of credit for prior learning. The process for this assessment requires all ADCP students to take PLA 3003: Prior Learning Practices. The course examines prior learning assessment models and effective documentation practices for prior learning gained from workplace experiences, training programs, military training, and certification programs. ADCP students are guided through preparing and compiling all components of a professional portfolio, which becomes a petition for academic credit for non-traditional experience. These portfolios are then reviewed by a committee composed of faculty and representatives from the Registrar's Office. If the committee approves the portfolio, the director completes a portfolio approval form for the Registrar's office, requesting credit.

The evaluation of transfer credit at UAFS is a comprehensive two-stage process, the details of which are published in the admissions section in the Undergraduate Catalog and the Registrar's Office website.

First, the Registrar's Office completes an initial evaluation of transfer credit for the institution using the Arkansas Course Transfer System. This system is a valuable tool as it provides a clear framework for determining the transferability of courses in public education, ensuring transparency and fairness in the process. Students are guaranteed the transfer of credit for courses listed in ACTS. Courses listed as "No Comparable Courses" are not guaranteed transfer. In the second stage, the departmental leadership and/or individual faculty who are responsible for maintaining the high academic standards of their programs review the course descriptions and approve the transfer of courses that align with the program's existing requirements. The Registrar's Office maintains a record of all approved courses electronically and applies those approvals to future transfers as part of their initial review of incoming transcripts. The UAFS Transfer Credit Guide provides a listing of courses previously reviewed for transfer and is available through the Registrar's website. The guide is continually updated as new courses are reviewed and allows students to see which courses may transfer from other institutions to UAFS. It is intended to provide students with an evaluation tool to review potential

credit transfers; however, it does not denote an official credit transfer. The Registrar's website also contains a section on accepting military credit and foreign transcript credit., as stated above.

In addition to the Arkansas Transfer System, The Roger Phillips Transfer Policy Act of 2009 provides for the seamless transfer of lower-level credits for those students who have completed an Associate of Arts (A.A.), Associate of Arts in Teaching (A.A.T.), or Associate of Science (A.S.) at an Arkansas public institution of higher education and wish to transfer to a baccalaureate degree program at a four-year institution. Accordingly, UAFS will accept any student into "junior" standing if that student has completed an A.A., A.A.T., or A.S.

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

Policies assuring the quality of credit that UAFS accepts in transfer are accessible online through the Registrar's Office website and undergraduate catalog. The "Admissions" section in the Undergraduate Catalog, for example, outlines the policy for assuring the quality of transfer credit from incoming transfer student transcripts using the Arkansas Course Transfer System (ACTS) and departmental (or College) review as described in the previous section of this document. Transfer courses located in the ACTS database are evaluated for quality by a Transfer Committee of faculty representing universities throughout Arkansas. The committee meets at least annually to determine the inclusion of additional courses for the Arkansas Course Transfer System (ACTS). Additional courses to be included in ACTS are governed by the same process detailed in Act 672 of 2005. This act specifies that all freshman and sophomore general education courses must be accepted for full transfer credit in the appropriate subject area and that the criteria for course transferability would be determined by faculty teams grouped by discipline. Twenty-two faculty teams composed of college and University faculty met by disciplines in March 2006 to determine course transferability criteria for 88 courses. These faculty review teams determined appropriate course index numbers and index names as well as established course descriptions and learning outcomes for courses in their disciplines. All faculty who served on review teams were nominated by their institutions and appointed by the Executive Council of Presidents and Chancellors of the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

ADHE identifies sets of ACTS course syllabi to be reviewed periodically, and institutions must submit the required syllabi to determine if they still reflect the state-wide learning objectives and outcomes. Any questions that arise during these periodic reviews are sent back to the University and routed to the appropriate department for response. For example, in July of 2023, ADHE had questions regarding the American Literature I and World Literature I course syllabi. They cited a potential mismatch in learning objectives and ACTS course outcomes. The University was able to provide a more in-depth analysis of course topics to assure ADHE that coverage was consistent with the requirements of the ACTS course.

The Registrar's Office website also outlines the process for evaluating and accepting transfer credit, as provided in Criterion 4.A.2. Included in detail are descriptions of credits that do not transfer: courses in which a grade of C or higher has not been earned; some remedial coursework where placement testing may be required; credit waived by an institution because of test scores, or credit earned by institutional exam; and credit earned at an institution that is not regionally accredited. National accreditation alone is generally not accepted. Additionally, international college and university transcripts must be evaluated by an NACES-accredited evaluation service before courses can be articulated as transfer work.

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

As discussed in Criterion 3A, curriculum proposals and modifications originate with the faculty, department heads, or directors in departments and colleges, who are considered content experts in their disciplines. Proposals undergo an extensive review process on and off campus before receiving approval. These processes are designed to ensure a thorough review of the course, the level of rigor, and the desired learning outcomes.

Once the curriculum is in place, the assessment of student learning is designed to determine if the stated learning goals are being met or if changes are needed to improve learning. These assessment processes are more fully described in Criterion 4B.

To help ensure our dual credit courses are equivalent, the same qualification standards are used when evaluating faculty to teach on our campus and those teaching in our dual enrollment programs as discussed in 3C. Primary responsibility for faculty qualifications rests with the department and college leadership; however, the Provost retains final authority over the determination of qualifications.

Department Heads, Department Chairs, and program directors, in consultation with the College Deans, are responsible for ensuring that appropriately qualified instructors are assigned to all course offerings. Appendix V of the UAFS Faculty Evaluation and Promotion System outlines minimum degree requirements by discipline and rank. In some cases, tested experience may qualify faculty for teaching. When experience is used in place of educational requirements, a credentialing form is used to evaluate whether assigning a teaching load is appropriate.

Hiring managers for each position are responsible for reviewing applicants' qualifications to ensure compliance with credentialing policies. Once this initial review occurs, the Dean of each College must verify qualifications before approving any hires. Human Resources requires a transcript for each hire to substantiate the claimed degrees. In addition, the Graduate Council reviews faculty qualifications for faculty who teach graduate courses using guidelines provided by the programs regarding qualifications and scholarly expectations.

Concurrent and Dual Credit Courses

UAFS is authorized by ADHE to provide concurrent enrollment programs in our service area. In addition, we are in the early stages of seeking accreditation from the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP) for our concurrent enrollment and college-provided faculty programs. This accreditation, once achieved, will signify that our programs meet the highest standards of quality and rigor in concurrent enrollment. UAFS is currently aligning its practices with those of NACEP to assure a smooth transition under their accreditation.

Concurrent or dual credit courses meet the same rigorous requirements as any other UAFS courses as explained in the sample Statements of Equivalence. Course delivery methods vary but include classes taught on campus, at high school sites in the Fort Smith area, and at the Arkansas School of Mathematics, Sciences, and the Arts.

Classes are either taught by UAFS faculty or by qualified high school faculty. Currently, UAFS syllabi and related course material are provided to high school faculty teaching in concurrent programs to ensure the same level of rigor and course coverage is maintained. These faculty can use the syllabi directly or modify them if the required elements and learning outcomes are included. All syllabi are collected and reviewed at the beginning of the semester to ensure this desired alignment is maintained.

The University assigns a college faculty member to work closely with any high school faculty teaching a concurrent or dual credit course. This partnership is crucial in ensuring the exchange of information and the understanding of discipline-specific expectations with the delivery of the courses. When concurrent courses are taught by UAFS faculty, this process is a bit easier but no less meaningful. For example, when adjuncts teach concurrent course sections, department leadership will provide direction to those part-time departmental faculty as they would with the high school faculty. In keeping with the ADHE and NACEP requirements, UAFS provides a handbook for all concurrent faculty outlining the responsibilities of the faculty, key University policies and procedures, and the expectations for compliance with all relevant policies.

After each academic year, UAFS reviews data for submission to ADHE regarding the grade distributions of all concurrent courses relative to the distribution of grades in those same courses taught on our campus. While grades are not necessarily an absolute measure of learning, a comparison of grade distribution provides some insight into the relative success rates of students on campus versus those in concurrent programs. A review of a recent report reveals strong student performance in most concurrent sections relative to campus sections.

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

Over 15 UAFS academic programs with specialized accreditation are listed on the UAFS Accreditation website. These specialized accreditations, in addition to program reviews, play a crucial role in ensuring the quality of our academic programs, curricula, assessment, and student outcomes. They are not just a formality, but a testament to an institutional commitment to UAFS's mission to deliver "exceptional educational opportunities" that aid in "the social mobility of our students." These external accreditations are a clear signal to potential employers and students that UAFS maintains a level of quality deemed necessary for accreditation by an external third party, providing reassurance about the excellence of the University's academic programs.

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

UAFS evaluates the success of its graduates by tracking employment and admissions to advanced degree programs. These indicators are appropriate measures of the social mobility of UAFS graduates, as outlined in our mission. Each semester, the Babb Center for Career Services office, using the NACE First Designation Survey, provides a comprehensive view of career outcomes for graduates. The survey results report career outcome rates by full- and part-time employment, enrollment in a program of continuing education, service in the armed forces, and participation in a program of voluntary service. The results of this survey are crucial for our program evaluation. Once determined, the rates are reported at university, college, and program levels. Annual reports are posted on the University's website and disseminated to the Dean's Council, as well

as analyzed for program reviews and specialized accreditation reports.

In 2022-23, over 90% of all graduates reported successful career outcomes six months after graduation. The percentage was higher for students earning associate degrees (98%) compared to those earning bachelor's degrees (82%), and there was variability in rates by college and major. However, overall rates indicate that the majority of UAFS graduates experience positive career outcomes, which strongly correlates with program quality.

Individual colleges and programs take a unique approach to track the success of their graduates. For instance, the Carolyn McKelvey-Moore School of Nursing, per the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education analyzes the employment of their graduates. The results are then posted on the University Website. As another example, the Department of Criminal Justice, working with the Director of Alumni Engagement, conducts an annual survey of its graduates on their current contact information and employment status. This personalized approach ensures that each individual graduate's journey is tracked in detail.

Some programs, like Dental Hygiene, Nursing, and Surgical Technology, validate the quality of the University's preparation for employment by tracking licensure examination pass rates. This ensures that the credentials earned by our graduates are a true representation of their readiness for the job market. For 2023, an astounding 100% of graduates passed the National Board Exam in Dental Hygiene, and an impressive 87% of graduates passed the NCLEX, the national licensure exam for Nursing.

Many UAFS programs have formed program advisory boards to assist in the evaluation and validation of the necessary skills and abilities needed to be successful in the field. Different units have sought out advisory council members in discussions of curriculum modification as well as in planning for new programs. Advisory council members represent significant employers in the region in the fields for which they serve in an advisory capacity. For example, the College of Business and Industry utilizes advisory groups in all of their accredited programs, and these groups are active participants in discussions of curriculum and strategic initiatives for the programs. In 2017, the College of Business (before the reorganization into the College of Business and Industry) engaged with its advisory group to discuss curricular changes that would move away from traditional majors in preference of concentrations, focused on specific skills and abilities, to increase program flexibility and improve retention and completion rates.

In the 2023-2024 academic year, the College of Business and Industry is engaging community stakeholders in discussion of the development of a Bachelor of Science in Smart Manufacturing Engineering, as is also mentioned in 5C. Many of these stakeholders are potential employers of such graduates and may become members of a programmatic advisory group when and if the degree is proposed and approved. By consulting with the business community before proposing the program, UAFS can be more assured of designing an effective program to meet the needs of area employers in this important sector of our local economy.

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4.B – Core Component

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

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

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

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

Argument
4.B.1. The institution has effective processes for the assessment of student learning and for the achievement of learning goals in academic and co-curricular offerings.

UAFS engages in the assessment of student learning through CALO, which has two subcommittees: CALO-A for academic assessment and CALO-C for co-curricular assessment. CALO-A is in the second year (academic year 2024-25) of its fourth five-year assessment cycle. CALO-C is in the second year (academic year 2024-25) of its first five-year assessment cycle.

As CALO-C grew out of the established processes of CALO-A, the two committees have similarities. The terms "plan" and "report" are terms of art in both CALO-A and CALO-C. All academic programs are expected to submit yearly plans and reports on the assessment of half of their Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) and the one University Learning Outcome (ULO) that is common across campus each year. All co-curricular programs are expected to submit yearly plans and reports on the assessment of half of their student learning outcomes each year.

The plan is submitted in the fall and identifies stakeholders (such as faculty, staff, administration, or community members) who will be engaged in the assessment process throughout the year. CALO-A and CALO-C assist

programs that do not meet the milestones in having a timely plan in place. Plans are also given feedback by CALO-A or CALO-C to allow for revisions before implementing the assessment plan for the year.

The report, which contains the results of the assessment activity, is submitted in the spring semester. The report should identify an Action Plan for continuous improvement. The report documents how results from implementing the plan will be used to affect change and how the results will be shared with faculty in the department or staff in the unit, as well as college leadership. Specific feedback from CALO to the programs is also given on the report. The general feedback from CALO-A as to all programs is captured and shared with the Provost and Deans Council.

This cycle of Fall plans and Spring reports continues for four years and then includes a "summary year" that allows reflection on the individual assessment practices of each program as well as reflection on the process itself, allowing time to implement and communicate any changes to the process.

CALO-A

CALO-A is in its fourth cycle since its inception, commonly referred to as "CALO 4.0." The assessment cycle under CALO-A is a five-year cycle: the first four years are data gathering with embedded reflection and proposed changes, with a fifth summary year for overall reflection and planning. CALO-A is the academic assessment resource on campus, helping individual programs use direct and indirect assessment measures to evaluate PLOs and ULOs.

CALO-A, with faculty feedback, was instrumental in shaping the four ULOs that reflect whole-learner development and ensure that UAFS alumni are productive members of society. These four outcomes – Analytical Skills, Communication Skills, Ethical Decision Making, and Global/Cultural Perspectives – are embedded in all UAFS programs, and faculty members identify specific ULOs addressed in each of their courses. The ULOs addressed in any course are part of the general syllabus for that course, and each modality of the course, whether online, seated, concurrent, or another modality, shares the same general syllabus, as demonstrated in the instructional policies section of the Faculty Handbook.

CALO-A meets monthly during the academic year, and representatives from each college act as liaisons from CALO to their college. The co-chairs of CALO-A are the Director of Assessment and a faculty member. Demonstrating the commitment to assessment at UAFS and the alignment with budgetary priorities, the faculty co-chair of CALO is specifically given three hours of courseload release time as codified under the Faculty Workload and Compensation section of the Faculty and Staff Handbook, as a standing University-approved reassignment. This release allows appropriate time to be given to the administration of CALO-A.
At the beginning of each assessment cycle, CALO-A determines which ULO is to be evaluated each year and sets due dates for Assessment Plans and Reports. In addition, members use a rubric to provide feedback to programs on their plans and reports. CALO-A offers monthly assessment workshops and "Get it Done" sessions where plans and reports are completed with the aid of co-chairs and liaisons.

CALO-C

Prior to 2022 and the implementation of CALO-C, UAFS student support programs engaged in internal evaluations of their programs to determine strengths and weaknesses within their units. An example of this can be seen in the assessments used by Cub Camp, part of New Student and Family Programs. Cub Camp is an opportunity for full-time, first-time freshmen to become oriented to the university.

Like the Cub Camp example, these evaluations included information that was appropriate to each unit, but the university had not yet defined expectations for such inquiry.

Under the direction of the new University administration and the Director of Assessment, CALO-C was launched in the 2022-2023 academic year to standardize co-curricular assessment and to streamline the process for the staff/faculty involved. The academic year 2022-23 was the planning year in which the CALO-A co-chairs worked with university staff members to identify areas where co-curricular assessment would be appropriate.

To begin implementing CALO-C, the Director of Assessment and members of senior staff developed a definition of co-curricular assessment that would guide the identification of appropriate programs to include in institutional assessment activities. As discussed above, CALO-C currently follows a similar model for co-curricular offerings as CALO-A does for academic programs, and CALO-C initiated its first plan and report assessment cycle in the Academic year 2023-2024. CALO-C developed a procedural handbook that aligned with academic programming expectations. Plans, Reports, and Action Plans follow a similar model to CALO-A, and plans were submitted in fall 2023 for the first year of the assessment cycle. Follow-up and reporting requirements also imitate that of the CALO-A process.

CALO-C also meets monthly with representatives from the units on campus engaged in cocurricular learning. The co-chairs of CALO-C are the Director of Assessment and a staff member. The staff member also receives the staff equivalent of the faculty course load release, described above, for the same reasons.

Members of CALO-C use a rubric to provide feedback to units and departments on their assessment plans for the year and on their reports. CALO-C also offers monthly assessment workshops and similar "Get it Done" sessions to those held by CALO-A.

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

Academic and co-curricular assessment begins at the course/activity level, with instructors/staff identifying learning outcomes to be evaluated, assessing the outcomes through various direct and indirect measures, and then analyzing results to determine the effectiveness of instruction and student outcome achievement levels in that course. Course-level assessment is part of the Faculty promotion framework and must be included in promotion portfolios. Program assessment develops from faculty-identified program outcomes.

These outcomes are used to gauge student learning as students progress through their chosen degree plans and to determine proficiency with program-level knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions.

Program-level data is gathered through the CALO processes already described, and reports require reflection, identifying strengths and weaknesses, and an action plan for improving unachieved measures. This reflection by the programs leads to improvements in student learning.

For example, when assessing PLOs in the School of Education's Elementary Degree program, faculty found gaps in knowledge and referenced action steps that would include counseling faculty in expectations of content delivery, as well as meeting with individual students. The results in assessing students in a Parent

Family Community project showed challenges for students to engage families and community at the appropriate level of proficiency. As a result of this finding, the School of Education initiated a system that required individualized counseling with students who struggled in this area. Moreover, the faculty provided support to the graduated students for three years after graduation to facilitate support for those graduates in this area.

In 2019 as part of UAFS's Year Four review, HLC identified a concern regarding assessment for the Bachelor of General Studies (BGS) degree. The University performed an internal review of this degree, and a faculty member was asked to teach the identified course that houses the key assessments and to plan and implement assessment measures as part of the CALO-A processes. Through this programmatic intervention, this degree should be able to demonstrate that students have met the existing program learning outcomes. Moreover, the assessment of these outcomes has led to a broader discussion in the faculty regarding the future of the program and perhaps a refinement of the objectives for this credential.

Sometimes the assessment report demonstrated a flaw in the assessment methodology itself. For example, in History, the Academic Year 2024-25 assessment of Program Learning Outcomes demonstrated weaknesses in the assessment process. Assessments were being made in classes that had both history majors and non-majors. The assessment instrument was a research topic with multiple drafts and rubrics used for each stage of the creation process. Reflection on the assessments revealed that the department had been viewing the performance of all students in the class, regardless of major. This error could be skewing the results and not allowing an accurate measure of learning as the high percentage of non-history majors in the class may not have had adequate preparation in the skills of identifying and applying primary and secondary sources. While those skills are taught throughout the history curriculum, there were a high number of science majors in the course who may not have had the same development. The History department then developed an action plan that included determining specific courses to assess over the assessment cycle to have more accurate data and evaluating submissions of history majors only. While the solution to the flawed methodology was simple, the resulting ability of the History program to use meaningful assessment results to gauge student learning appropriately will lead to improved student learning.

The use of assessment results to improve learning is also evident in co-curricular assessment. For example, the Office of International Relations assessed whether international students would be able to recognize and explain the most important rules and regulations about their immigration status and understand the procedures for accessing employment and other benefits of their immigration status. Through the assessment process, OIR learned that emergency interventions were often necessary in regard to student understanding of their tax responsibility. Accordingly, tax-specific resources and education will be added to future orientation materials.

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

To ensure transparency of process and successful transmission of assessment information across the University, the makeup of CALO-A and CALO-C includes faculty from each college and other staff members engaged in student learning. For CALO-A, there are 2-3 liaisons representing each college in addition to

a representative from the faculty senate, library, and a representative from the curriculum committee. CALO-C members include faculty and staff who implement the various co-curricular programs/activities.

CALO tracks the participation of programs in the institutional assessment process. For example, in the current academic year, 60% of programs submitted PLO plans, and 54% submitted ULO Plans. If a program does not have its plans or reports complete by the milestone, liaisons work with the faculty leadership of the program. A month after the milestone deadline, Deans are made aware of any programs that are still missing a plan or report. New to this assessment cycle is requiring all credentials to have unique program learning outcomes and to submit assessment plans and reports. CALO-A has asked all programs to engage in the required processes to meet this deadline throughout this assessment cycle and have a plan ready to submit by the beginning of the next assessment cycle. For example, in the participation evidence above, you will notice that some programs are "exempt" as they continue to work toward this goal.

CALO-A and C liaisons are responsible for monitoring the programs in their colleges/units to ensure successful planning and submission of assessment artifacts. Liaisons report program submissions to the co-chairs of CALO-A and CALO-C, who then work through the chain of command to ensure the assessment process is completed. In the colleges, department chairs are responsible for facilitating assessment talks in departmental meetings. Deans are responsible for selecting appropriate CALO liaisons from their college, keeping departments on task, and promoting a culture of assessment and professional development. The University Provost oversees the assessment process and facilitates a culture of assessment. Within CALO-C, the student affairs personnel have similar responsibilities as the Deans and lead faculty in the CALO-A procedures.

As part of the summary year built into UAFS's assessment cycle, CALO-A engages in assessment and reflection of the assessment process. This reflection is demonstrated in the adopted goals for the assessment cycle that are part of the CALO-A handbook. One example is that in 2023 with the newest five-year review cycle starting, CALO-A changed the platform used to collect departmental assessment plans and reports. The switch from Live-Text to Blackboard was made to address faculty concerns with Live-Text. Many faculty found Live-Text difficult to use and the liaisons felt this was a barrier to engagement with the assessment process.

However, as concerns persisted with Blackboard, CALO-A then decided, upon reflection and decision by the liaisons after one year of using Blackboard, to pivot to TEAMS as the collection platform for academic year 24-25, and hopefully beyond. This decision was influenced by CALO-C's success with TEAMS as a platform for plan and report submission, feedback, and general assessment information. CALO-C has used TEAMS from the beginning because while many staff members were familiar with TEAMS and used it in their daily work, they were new to Blackboard and would require additional training to use the platform.

In making this change, CALO-A hopes that faculty will more fully engage with both the process and the data contained therein. Additionally, moving to TEAMS allows the assessment process to be transparent as access is less restrictive than Blackboard. Moreover, future assessors will be able to easily review and utilize archived assessment data. This will help CALO-A meet one of its articulated goals for this assessment cycle, that of moving "to a platform that is more accessible for end-users."

The University's culture of assessment is reflected in the support and guidance provided by the CALO groups. Training is provided monthly for both CALO-A and CALO-C, with each workshop having a specific focus. Evidence of the workshops and topics is found in 4.B.1. These workshops are listed on the CALO agendas, and the liaisons are tasked with sending workshop information out to their colleges in monthly emails, as is evident from this sample of agendas from CALO-A and CALO-C.

The Director of Academic Assessment and Accountability is an active participant in the culture of assessment. Each meeting agenda includes a list of professional development options for CALO-A and CALO-C liaisons. For example, participation of CALO-C in the Student Affairs Assessment Leader's Online Open Campus course on student affairs assessment was encouraged. Last spring, attendance was encouraged from both CALO-A and CALO-C members at the Arkansas Association for the Assessment of Collegiate Learning (AAACL) spring webinar where the topic was the changes to the HLC Criteria for Accreditation and hosted keynote speakers from HLC.

For CALO-A, the Director developed a faculty survey to gauge perceptions of the University assessment process. The survey was disseminated last spring and will be delivered annually and will be used to guide workshop and professional development opportunities, as well as the overall assessment process.

Last academic year, the survey showed that an overwhelming majority of faculty members are engaged in assessment at the course level, at 78% agreeing or strongly agreeing. This finding was consistent with expectations as the faculty use course-level assessment as part of their promotion portfolio as stated above. The survey also revealed that most (92%) of the faculty surveyed understand the purpose of assessment. However, only 37% agreed or strongly agreed they were involved with university-level assessment, and only 47% could agree or strongly agree that they understood the institutional-level assessment process. Acting on this finding, CALO offered workshops specifically focused on university-level outcomes and how to assess them, as well as the CALO process. This included developing a ULO Charette that was open to the faculty.

Other large takeaways from the assessment survey were that most faculty had some level of agreement that they use assessment results to make changes in teaching (86%) and that assessment helps them identify areas of improvement in their programs (77%). Overall, the survey demonstrated an engagement and appropriate use of assessment to improve teaching and learning, while also indicating a need for more resources, engagement, and education on the institutional-level assessment process.

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4.C. – Core Component

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

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

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

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

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

Argument
4.C.1. Goals for Student Retention, Persistence and Completion

UAFS has made significant strides and invested substantial time and effort in student success initiatives since the spring 2017 semester, when the Provost's Office commissioned the development of the first Retention Plan, setting a goal of increasing retention by 1% each year for five years. With this stated goal, the University focused on persistence and completion; in 2020, amid the COVID-19 pandemic and declining enrollment averages, a 2020-2025 Strategic Enrollment Management Plan (SEM) was developed and implemented. Much of the plan focused on attracting and enrolling students; however, a significant section of the document addressed key targets and strategies to help retain students once on campus.

The updated plan set new retention targets for first-time, full-time students pursuing baccalaureate and associate degrees for 2022:
- Increase fall-to-spring retention to an average of 86% over three years.

- Raise fall-to-fall retention to an average of 72% over three years.

- Achieve a six-year graduation rate average of 40%, a five-year rate of 35%, and a four-year rate of 25%

UAFS First-Time, Full-Time, Baccalaureate and Associate Seeking Retention Rates

Year	Fall-to-Spring	Fall-to-Fall
Fall 2023	86%	67%
Fall 2022	85%	71%
Fall 2021	86%	71%
Fall 2020	81%	65%
Fall 2019	86%	70%

UAFS First-Time, Full-Time, Baccalaureate and Associate Graduation Rates

Year	Six-year Graduation Rate
Fall 2018	38%
Fall 2017	40%
Fall 2016	42%
Fall 2015	36%
Fall 2014	35%

Several strategies were developed with plans for implementation within three to five years. These strategies were enumerated by student type (first-time, full-time, transfer, or adult students, for example); because of this focus, the strategies reflected the unique needs of each of the identified subgroups and were directed at removing unnecessary barriers to student success and retention.

Some notable actions taken as a result of these early planning efforts include the following:

- In 2020, the University initiated a campus-wide restructuring, and several student support units were placed into a division of Student Success and Retention. Led by an Assistant Provost for Student Success and Retention, this division has centralized success initiatives and support, demonstrating UAFS's dedication to improving student retention, persistence, and completion.

- UAFS continued to use the Navigate student success platform in addition to extensive care networks for students, such as faculty and professional advisors, academic coaches, TRIO advisors, and more. The platform allows us to assign various support personnel across the campus to individual students, thereby providing a point person within several key support services across campus. For example, students all have an assigned advisor within their major or college and in addition may have an assigned academic coach, a financial aid counselor, and/or an advisor from the TRIO program if relevant. Those assigned to students can more easily track their performance within the platform and can reach out directly to them with support services. Students can also know who to contact within these support offices if they need assistance.

- The University opted to make improvements in instructional technology in many classrooms across campus, using one-time money from the federal government during the pandemic. This included upgrades in monitors and projectors in classroom, lecture, and lab spaces.

- The administration conducted an analysis focused on the transfer student population to understand barriers to their retention and completion at UAFS; following this analysis, a report was submitted to senior staff with recommendations for consideration. The proposal included creating a central point of contact for prospective transfer students, creating a transfer website that also feeds requests for information to a key central point of contact for a response, directing all traffic from department or program webpages to the central point of contact, and being available to evaluate a prospective student's transfer credit, regardless of admissions status.

- The University of Arkansas – Fort Smith (UAFS) embarked on a transformative Quality Initiative Project aimed at enhancing student persistence and retention among three key student populations: Lion Scholars (conditionally admitted students), first-year students, and those on academic probation or suspension. This initiative led to significant advancements, including:

  - tailored support programs - such as revising SAS 0201, the Bridge to Student success course that was required of all students in poor academic standing;

- a study regarding the implementation of a first-year experience framework, which will spawn more specific work in taskforces and committees in the 2024-25 Academic Year;

- and the overhaul of academic standing policies to emphasize early intervention and student-specific support - including asking faculty for early alerts based upon the student's success markers, rather than by course and a completely reimagined academic standing policy.

One statement in the University's mission is "to empower the social mobility of its students and the economic growth of the River Valley through exceptional educational opportunities and robust community partnerships." Furthermore, our first commitment is to our students, providing them with "a supportive and inclusive learning environment" that will propel them "to achieve success in their personal and professional lives." Student retention, persistence, and completion goals align directly with this aspect of UAFS's mission, relating directly to the first pillar of the 2023-2028 Five-Year Strategic Plan for Student Access, Engagement, and Success.

The strategic plan prioritizes student success with several defined strategies designed to "empower our students to grow, lead, and achieve their full potential. We are resolute in our pursuit of student success, offering comprehensive support services that cater to their individual needs." The strategies identified in the current strategic plan are consistent with the goals and efforts first expressed in prior documents, such as the Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) plan. The strategic plan is available on the University website and defines the institutional commitment to UAFS students and their success. Progress toward these goals is tracked by the senior administration through a series of Institutional Effectiveness Plans, prepared in the fall by each Vice Chancellor, and shared with the campus, summarizing advances made the prior academic year.

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

The Office of Institutional Research and Strategic Planning and Information Technology Services work together to collect enrollment information from our student information system. The University community uses a web-based data reporting tool to generate data on student success, including persistence, retention, and graduation trends. The Office of Institutional Research and Planning provides the Provost and Chancellor with retention and graduation rates every semester so that executive leadership always has the most current numbers at their disposal. This data includes fall-to-fall retention rates as well as graduation rates for first-time, full-time degree-seeking undergraduates; first-time, full-time bachelor-seeking students; and first-time undergraduate students. Retention rates are included in the Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) plan updates as well. The SEM plan shows retention rates (both fall-to-spring and fall-to-fall) for several target student populations.

Retention and Graduation data are reported to the Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE) based on a reporting calendar. This information is reported and publicized in annual ADHE Student Retention and Graduation reports Retention and Graduation data are also reported to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) using IPEDS definitions, which often differ from ADHE definitions for similar information. ARGOS retention, persistence, and completion data are analyzed regularly by the University community. (ARGOS is a reporting tool that provides comprehensive views of key metrics and is accessible by both faculty and staff to create meaningful and individualized reports.) For example, the Division of Student Success and Retention analyzes this information regularly to inform and improve ongoing student success initiatives, such as the UAFS Lions Scholar initiative.

To improve persistence and retention, UAFS keeps track of student registrations to identify students who have yet to sign up for classes in a subsequent semester. Reports are given to departmental and college personnel who send reminders to students who need to register, and identify cases whereby holds can be waived or addressed in other ways. As one example, in the Spring of 2025, an advisor in the College of Arts and Sciences had thirty students identified as having not registered. Personal contact was attempted for each student.

The University launched EAB's Navigate Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tool in 2018, with a primary focus on advising. Since then, the University has reaped the benefits of this tool, particularly through the implementation of progress reporting. Progress reports for at-risk students are now collected from faculty through Navigate during weeks 3, 8, and 11 of each semester. Subsequently, students and UAFS student success professionals receive targeted communication from Navigate triggering a proactive course of action to assist those in need. Analysis of data from progress reports, which are analyzed regularly, suggest significant improvements to persistence and retention and notable recommendations for improvement. The approach to these progress reports has evolved to be driven by the characteristics of the student as opposed to the level of the course. This change focuses time and energy on those students likely to need more support and thereby represents a more efficient and effective use of time. This has been a key effort in raising our retention rates from pre-2018 levels to current levels.

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

UAFS's retention efforts began in 2017 with a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) conducted in various units across campus. This analysis revealed the individual effort expended toward promoting retention but also revealed that there was no campus-wide effort to address the issue. The findings inspired the University's first retention plan to include goals such as raising retention rates by one percent each year until it reached an average of 52% in 2022.

The University then developed a more complete Strategic Enrollment Plan in 2019 amidst enrollment declines setting revised retention targets for our entering cohorts. This plan was the result of a collaborative effort, based on a similar SWOC (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Challenges) analysis, an in-depth examination of internal and external data, and extensive discussions with a subcommittee, a steering committee, and focused groups.

Each of these guiding documents and the first pillar of the 2023-2028 strategic plan (see 4.C.2) was meticulously crafted from data, ensuring that our strategies are grounded in evidence and best practices. This approach, coupled with our focus on student success and improving retention, persistence, and completion rates, has led to implementing several effective policies and processes, as outlined in the retention timeline. Data-driven improvements to these programs occur regularly.

In addition to university-wide data collection, individual Colleges and Departments also request and track program retention, persistence, and completion trends as part of the requirements of the five-year program reviews, as evidenced by this example from Geosciences. This data is then used to make improvements in program requirements or pedagogy. As another example, the program review for the Department of Criminal Justice has been instrumental in identifying strategies to improve retention. These strategies – which include ensuring a quality and relevant educational experience, offering opportunities for faculty development focused

on retention, and implementing targeted retention strategies – are crucial for retention in the program. Due to such findings, the department made significant curriculum changes that eliminated the foreign language requirement and added 17 elective credit hours. This change was designed to improve the program's quality in several ways:

- Modernizing the curriculum in response to emerging trends in Criminal Justice degree plans at other universities in Arkansas.

- Providing more flexibility and empowering majors to choose coursework aligned with their interests and career goals. This student-centric approach puts students at the heart of educational decisions and ensures they are fully engaged and motivated in their learning journey.

- Increasing flexibility for students who transfer from other programs or other institutions. The more earned credits a student brings in, the more this flexibility aids in the completion of degree requirements.

With these new strategies implemented for the Academic Year 2024-25, the Criminal Justice Department will be focused on monitoring outcomes to determine if any refinements of their retention plan is required.

The College of Business and Industry (and the previously designated College of Business) has a Student Success Committee that examines student performance data. This committee's primary purpose is to analyze issues surrounding student success. Using a data-driven approach, the committee identifies factors surrounding retention that are within the College's control. Then the committee analyzes and prepares reports on performance measures such as graduation rates, time to graduation, pass rates for business courses, retention rates, gateway course grade distributions, standardized test scores, and external certification measures. The chair of the committee utilizes these data to propose potential changes to improve retention rates.

The CBI has also taken a proactive step by using Navigate (Student Success Collaborative – SSC) to monitor, track, and manage students' progression in business programs. System protocols have been utilized to identify bottleneck courses in which students have abnormal levels of failing grades. These courses - primarily in Accounting, Economics, and Finance - represent blockage points in students' progression toward graduation. Active analysis of content and pedagogy in these courses is underway to diagnose reasons for deficiencies in student learning and close the loop with recommended changes. The CBI first-year retention rates for 2022 and 2023 have exceeded those of UAFS.

Emergency Resources and Supports

The initial and subsequent retention plans have consistently identified financial challenges as significant barriers to student success. Many students were ending a semester with a business office hold, which meant they could not return for the following semester. To address this, the University implemented several financial emergency resources and support. For example, Dave Steven's Lions Pride Pantry provides food and necessities to students in need. The Student Emergency Assistance Fund offers financial aid for unexpected expenses. The Rescue Scholarships and Finish Grants are designed to help students who are close to completing their degrees but are facing financial difficulties. These funds have been instrumental in meeting students' financial needs and helping them complete their degrees. For example, of the 32 students awarded the Chancellors Rescue Scholarship during AY 2023-2024, 81 percent persisted to the next year or graduated. Similarly, of the 80 students awarded the Finish Scholarship from 2020 to 2024, 93 percent either persisted to the next year or graduated. The University also changed the payment deadline to require students to "Plan it Forward" by ensuring they had payment or aid on their account before a term began, thus reducing the financial barriers of continuing to the following term.

ROAR First Year Advising Center

The University established a goal to advance its advising model, and one step in that initiative was the development of the ROAR First Year Advising Center. The ROAR opened in 2019 to serve all entering students, ensuring that students coming into the University have a consistent, holistic advising experience. Since the launch of the centralized ROAR Advising Center, student retention rates have increased 5-7%, but the launch of this advising center was just one of many changes implemented in that same timeframe.

Lion Scholars

In the Spring 2020 semester, the University changed its admission criteria for students who would be admitted for Fall 2021. As an institution, UAFS identified a population of students who were most at risk, based on admissions criteria, recognizing that these students would need additional support and resources to be successful. The new admissions criteria created three populations of students: "automatically admitted," "automatically denied," and a third population of "conditionally admitted" students. These conditionally admitted students make up the population that are now known as Lion Scholars.

Lion Scholars consists of newly admitted students who meet the following criteria:
- Composite ACT score of 15-18, with a developmental minimum in each section (13 Math, 15 Reading, 15 Writing) or ACCUPLACER equivalent; and
- Cumulative high school GPA of 2.25 to 3.0.

Lion Scholars' initiatives are evaluated regularly by a committee and used to guide improvements in their approach to supporting these students. The program has made modifications over the past six semesters, including increased communication, the creation of student success teams for each student with intentional outreach, and reserving course sections for Lion Scholars to create a more supportive learning environment. As the table below indicates, these strategies have helped to improve first semester and first-year retention rates:

Lion Scholars Data

Term	Headcount	Average First-Semester GPA	First-Semester Retention		First-Year Retention		Second-Year Retention		Third-Year Retention	
			N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Fall 2019	92	1.89	67	73%	46	50%	20	22%	17	18%
Spring 2020	17	2.45	9	53%	7	41%	8	47%	4	24%
Fall 2020	70	2.00	50	71%	32	46%	21	30%	0	0%
Spring 2021	13	1.77	7	54%	3	23%	1	8%	0	0%
Fall 2021	72	2.09	50	69%	36	50%	24	33%		
Spring 2022	25	2.61	16	64%	13	52%				
Fall 2022	122	2.07	86	70%	67	55%				
Spring 2023	24	2.98	20	83%						
Fall 2023	187		91	77%						

The Academic Success Center

The mission of the Academic Success Center is to enhance academic development as students pursue degrees and move toward graduation and beyond. The center offers academic coaching, tutoring, and test proctoring. Academic Coaching is a free service designed to increase student self-efficacy in coursework and confidence in their academic ability. Peer Tutoring allows students to gain insight from a successful student while modeling effective learning strategies. Exam proctoring allows students a convenient opportunity to securely complete a variety of placement, credit, and course exams. During AY 24, the center serviced 1,019 academic coaching appointments, 1,074 peer tutoring appointments, and 1,978 testing appointments. Faculty can refer students to tutoring through the Navigate (described in 4C.1), and create a case, as is seen here in the tutoring referral cases from 2022-2024. Students who use the ASC are asked to complete a survey and the most recent results reflect a high rate of satisfaction with the ASC and increased confidence in their ability to succeed. Moreover, students reported improvements in fundamental, and transferable, academic skills, such as taking notes, studying, time management, and reading comprehension.

TRIO at UAFS

The TRIO Programs are Federal Outreach and student service programs designed to identify and provide services for students with disadvantaged backgrounds. TRIO programs are targeted to serve and assist low-income individuals, first-generation college students, and individuals with disabilities to progress through the academic pipeline from middle school to post-baccalaureate programs. The University has two TRIO programs, funded through the Department of Education: Student Support Services and Student Support Services – STEM (awarded in 2021). TRIO at UAFS provides a comprehensive array of support to eligible students, ensuring that they have all the resources they need to succeed, including:

- Free tutoring and test prep for program-required exams;

- Supplemental academic advising;

- One-on-one coaching in the areas of financial aid, career development, and graduate and professional school admission;

- Academic and professional development workshops and activities;

- Campus and community cultural enrichment activities; and

- Peer mentoring.

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

UAFS uses multiple processes for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence, and completion; these processes reflect good practice. The Executive Director of Institutional Research and members of the Information Technology team routinely provide data as requested by campus partners, and in so doing, they refer to census data only to assure the internal consistency of data used for various purposes. They are responsible for reporting the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) data that tracks retention, persistence, and graduation rates and for providing consistent data for internal and peer

comparisons. However, as indicated in 4.C.3, they also provide a variety of retention and completion data using different student populations, consistent with the needs of the unit that is requesting data and/or the focus of the inquiry.

Using the centralized source to fulfill informal and official data requests helps to assure data integrity and best practices in the collecting and analyzing of data. Online dashboards were created by the Office of Institutional Research and Strategic Planning that allow campus constituents to look at persistence and completion metrics utilizing several student characteristics. These dashboards make it easy for campus members to engage with official data in ways that are meaningful to them. ARGOS, a data reporting tool for Banner schools, is also used to pull information from the institutional student information system, allowing departments to identify stop-out students, to track retention rates in their programs and at the institution, and identify high DFW courses. Some of those reports are pulled by the Division of Student Success and Retention and shared with academic leadership according to a defined schedule. Some of the ARGOS reports are based on the official census day numbers, and some are based on real-time data based on the needs of the uses of each of the reports. When creating reports, IT and IR are always clear to identify what type of data is needed based on the question being asked.

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4.S - Criterion 4 - Summary

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

Summary

UAFS demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs and support services through a consistent program review process, tailored assessment processes, and specialized accreditations. It evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

Assessment of student learning is completed through structured processes led by CALO-A (academic) and CALO-C (co-curricular). Programs develop and refine learning outcomes, gather data, and implement improvements based on findings. Faculty and staff actively participate in workshops, feedback sessions, and continuous reflection, enhancing teaching and co-curricular offerings. CALO supports the faculty with a plan of regular feedback, engaging the faculty and staff in continuous improvement.

The Office of Institutional Research and Strategic Planning regularly analyzes trends in retention, persistence, and completion to inform decisions. These insights have driven curriculum updates, such as refining the Criminal Justice program and improving gateway courses in the College of Business and Industry. Resources like the Academic Success Center and TRIO programs provide tutoring, academic coaching, and tailored support to ensure student success.

Sources

There are no sources.

Criterion 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

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

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

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

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

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

Governance at UAFS is framed within the broader context of the University of Aransas System and its governing Board of Trustees. UA System Board Policy 100.4 outlines the UA System's and Trustees' roles and scope in campus governance as well as their legal, fiscal, and audit oversight responsibilities. The administration of the University of Arkansas, under the authority of the Board of Trustees, is unified in the office of the President. "The Board of Trustees shall appoint the Chancellor of any campus upon recommendation of the President. The Chancellor of a campus shall exercise complete executive authority thereon, subject to the policies established by the Board of Trustees and the President." "The constituency of each principal campus shall develop a system of campus government to establish policies and procedures for campus governance." For UAFS, this system of campus governance is described in the campus constitution. This governance structure ensures transparency, oversight, and accountability at all levels of administration and governance.

The Chancellor's Cabinet includes the Chancellor, Vice Chancellors, Chief of Staff, and Associate/Assistant Vice Chancellors. Similarly, the Dean's Council consists of the Provost, Associate/Assistant Provosts, and the Director of the Library. Each group holds meetings, which are crucial platforms for high-level decision-making and strategy development. These meetings involve discussions of critical issues, policy formulation, and review of university-wide initiatives. The Cabinet maintains a history of decisions made such as this example in changes made to the Case Management Team.

University Committees at UAFS are central to the institution's campus governance structure. These committees encompass a wide range of areas, including academic affairs, student services, and administrative operations. The Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, and Student Government Association produce documentation, such as resolutions, agendas, and presentations, which testify to their active participation in university governance, as shown in this example of an agenda and resolution from the Faculty Senate.

The Faculty, Staff, and Student Handbooks serve as critical resources, providing guidelines and procedures that govern various aspects of university life and operations. For Faculty, this includes policies on workload, instruction, and evaluation while for staff information on work schedules, evaluation, and development. The Student Handbook includes information on student rights and responsibilities, the code of conduct, as well as the programs and services available at the university. Moreover, the University and Academic Affairs Organizational Charts offer a clear representation of the institutional structure, delineating the roles and relationships between different administrative units and offices.

Open Forums for Faculty and Staff at UAFS are instrumental in fostering a culture of open dialogue, transparency, and participation. These forums, which include faculty, staff, and students, serve as avenues for discussing university policies, strategic initiatives, and other matters of importance.

The Strategic Plan was developed in the process described here, in concert with the mission as described in 1.A.1. This process took a comprehensive approach, incorporating survey feedback and the active participation of various internal committee members and external constituents.

From fall 2022 through spring 2023, the institution contracted with MGT Consulting to aid in the development of the new mission statement, vision statement, and strategic plan. MGT held meetings with the Chancellor's Cabinet; an open forum on the mission, vision, and values of the university; individual interviews and focus groups with multiple university stakeholders; and a campus visit.

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

At the UAFS, the administration's decision-making process is deeply rooted in data analysis. This ensures that choices are made that align with UAFS's educational mission and the goals outlined in its strategic plan. The Office of Institutional Research plays a pivotal role in providing data to administrators through mechanisms such as monthly meetings with the Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (VCAA) and the buildout of a publicly available Tableau site.

The foundation of UAFS's strategic planning process is a comprehensive analysis of data gathered through surveys and meetings. These data-driven insights have led to significant changes, including the modification of the institution's mission statement to better align with evolving educational needs and societal demands. This process ensures that UAFS's strategic directions are responsive and relevant to its community.

The Institutional Effectiveness Plan (IEP) at UAFS serves as a critical tool in advancing the university's progress toward achieving its strategic plan and evaluating and enhancing the university's operations. These plans collect and review diverse data sets in comparison with the strategic goals of the university, ensuring that institutional goals are not only ambitious but also achievable and aligned with the university's resources and capabilities. The IEP captures annual implementation of the strategic plan, as well as progress toward goals. Each Vice Chancellor shares their IEP with the campus community on an annual basis in the written reports, linked above, and in campus-wide presentations, the slide decks from three of those presentations is available here, as a representative sample.

Data analysis played a pivotal role in the Academic Program Viability Task Force process, especially in the

adaptation and development of academic programs. The data sets used in the fall 2023 process were extensive and are a testament to UAFS's commitment to using data to reach informed if difficult decisions. From this process, recommendations to eliminate programs Spanish, Political Science, Theater, CAD, and General Technology Automotive were based on the ADHE Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE) standard of producing sufficient graduates to be deemed viable and eligible for funding by the state.

The Faculty Salary Equity Task Force is a crucial example of the administration's commitment to data-informed practices within the university. This task force played a critical role in highlighting salary disparities among faculty members and produced recommendations that have informed future budgetary requests. A salary equity study was also conducted for all staff members.

The budgeting process at UAFS is deeply intertwined with data analysis. Each budget manager engages with the budget process, reviewing previous years expenses and projects those of the coming year based around data available. These are reviewed and revised up through the individual levels of the organization including the Deans and Vice Chancellors. These projections along with additional requests made through the IEP process thus enables the institution to allocate resources effectively and efficiently. This is then reviewed by the Budget Council before recommendations are made to the chancellor. Recorded meetings, minutes from the Budget Council, and sessions with Vice Chancellors and Deans all contribute to a transparent and data-driven financial management system.

Campus presentations about the university budget, and our alignment with guidelines and requirements set by the ADHE, further underscore UAFS's commitment to data-informed financial stewardship. In addition to these presentations by UAFS staff, we have also brought ADHE leadership to campus to provide the campus community with detailed information on how the productivity formula is constructed and UAFS performance within it.

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

At UAFS, the shared governance model is operationalized through various structures, including the faculty senate, staff senate, and the Student Government Association (SGA), mentioned in 5.A.1 and as described in the UAFS Constitution. Members of these governing bodies are selected through an inclusive process and are structured to be representative of the holistic campus community. These groups are instrumental in discussing and formulating new program proposals, curriculum changes, and other academic or university policies. Within the framework of university governance, committees are organized into two main categories: academic shared governance and institutional shared governance.

Academic shared governance committees primarily focus on matters related to academic programs, policies, and procedures designed to serve the interests of faculty, students, and staff. On the other hand, institutional shared governance committees concern themselves with broader issues that impact the entire university community, offering avenues for faculty, staff, and students to actively engage in decision-making processes concerning various aspects of the institution's operations such as selecting who will oversee the campus bookstore. These committees are pivotal in promoting transparency, fostering collaboration, and ensuring inclusivity across the university landscape.

The Academic Program Viability Task Force, mentioned in 5.A.2, was a significant initiative demonstrating UAFS's commitment to continuously assessing and enhancing its academic offerings. This task force was entrusted with evaluating the viability and relevance of academic programs; ensuring those programs aligned with the university's strategic goals, the expectations from the ADHE to maintain productive degree offerings, and the evolving needs of students and the job market; and making recommendations for future program dissolution or maintenance.

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5.B – Core Component

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

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

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

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

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

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

A core component of UAFS's operational excellence is its staff, whose expertise is a critical element of the institution's educational offerings. UAFS adheres to stringent policies for staff onboarding and training through the UA System's Vector program, ensuring that each member of the team is not only qualified but also well-equipped to contribute to the university's mission.

In line with this, UAFS offers numerous institutional professional development opportunities. Human Resources and Student Affairs spearhead a key component of these initiatives, providing a spectrum of development sessions that cater to the diverse needs and roles of university personnel while Academic Affairs offers a wide range of opportunities to support learning. For example, this past summer paid training was offered in Blackboard Ultra and in other various topics, including assessment. Additionally, professional development training that serves as an avenue for continuous learning and growth is available through platforms like Workday, membership in various professional organizations, and opportunities such as the Staff Senate Mini-Conference hosted on campus.

Examples of conferences attended and professional memberships are as follows:
- Family Business Alliance Directors conference, annually

- Nexus Global Summit

- The International Economic Development Council

- Arkansas Economic Support Organization Conference, Annually

- Society for Human Resource Managers, periodically

- Western Arkansas Human Resources Association, monthly

- National Council for Workforce Education

- University Economic Development Administration

- (ACUHO-I) Association of College and University Housing Administrators-International

- (SCI) Student Conduct Institute (Title IX and Student Conduct) SUNY based.

- (NASFAA) National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators

- (NCAA) National Collegiate Athletic Association

- The Assessment Institute

- (CASE) Council for Advancement and Support of Education

- (AMA) American Marketing Association

- (AFP) Association of Fundraising Professionals

- (AGB) Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges

UAFS employees also have university-paid opportunities to pursue professional development through organizations and meetings, workshops, and seminars as funds are available. The Office of Student Success and Retention frequently invests in professional development travel, and numerous members of the UAFS team have traveled to multiple HLC conferences.

Financial stewardship of resources at UAFS is showcased through its independently audited financial statements and the analysis of Composite Financial Index (CFI) patterns over multiple years. These documents reflect the university's commitment to fiscal responsibility and strategic financial planning, which are crucial for supporting and advancing its mission. While deferred maintenance challenges exist on campuses across the country, and UAFS is no different, the institutional reserves position provides an element of confidence in being able to address these concerns as they arise.

UAFS's investment in its physical and technological infrastructure is a testament to its dedication to providing

a conducive learning and research environment. This includes significant projects, such as the construction, demolition, or renovation of campus spaces. For instance, the construction of the Recreation and Wellness Center (RAWC) served as an investment in the well-being of the campus community. The RAWC is a 46,000-square-foot facility that includes multi-purpose gymnasiums, a climbing zone, cardiovascular and strength areas, studio spaces for group classes and personal use, a walking/jogging track. All UAFS students and full-time UAFS employees have access to the RAWC. Memberships are available to purchase for UAFS part-time and contingent employees, UAFS Alumni, and UAFS retirees, as well as employee and retiree adult household memberships. In 2024, 2,517 unique members accessed the RAWC a total of 46,039 times.

Additionally, the Windgate Art & Design Expansion project includes 15,577 square feet of new space, with an additional 5,752 square feet of renovations aimed at repurposing existing spaces. The project will feature new discipline-specific teaching studios and faculty studio/office spaces, an expanded art collection storage space, and several new common areas.

Moreover, the demolition of the Holt building and the renovation of the Pendergraft Health Sciences Laboratory with advanced simulation labs for health students serve as demonstrations of the university's commitment to both resource stewardship and the modernization of its educational spaces. In addition to these spaces, the investments in the Baldor Technology Center for Advanced Manufacturing upgrades have improved laboratories and robotics facilities, keeping pace with industry standards and educational needs. UAFS facilitated the full equipping of the E-Sports room, which supports a competitive team, as well and utilized HEERF funding to enable crucial upgrades to classroom technology that would enhance digital engagement and learning experiences.

To improve the cybersecurity of the campus, UAFS transitioned its student email system from Gmail to Outlook. This transition was part of a broader strategy to modernize the university's information technology infrastructure as well as enhance communication, collaboration, and educational delivery. UAFS's focus on sustainability and efficient resource utilization is further exemplified in the Investment Grade Audit, which aims to optimize energy use and reduce environmental impact. UAFS regularly conducts other campus-level audits, such as IT, to ensure the efficient and sustainable operation of its resources. These audits provide crucial insights and continuous improvement initiatives across the campus.

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

In the context of goal setting, the University of Arkansas – Fort Smith aligns its mission and strategic plan with a clear view of what is realistic, considering its organization, resources, and opportunities.

This approach is informed by a thorough understanding of UAFS's current resource base, shared through a public annual budget presentation, and a forward-looking perspective on potential avenues for investment and reallocation driven by its annual budgeting process that reviews existing expenditures and the use of Institutional Effectiveness Plans (both described in 5.A.2) where future resource requests are directly aligned resources strategic goals.

This process sees the university's goals developed not in isolation but through a comprehensive dialogue

involving a diverse array of stakeholders. These stakeholders, representing all areas of the university community, contribute to a strategic plan implementation process that balances aspiration with practicability. Such strategic alignment is critical in ensuring that resources are channeled effectively and efficiently, maximizing the impact on institutional goals. The university's strategic plan put into place key performance indicators (KPIs) for each of its four pillars including institutional sustainability, serving as tangible benchmarks, enabling the institution to measure its progress accurately.

The UAFS Foundation and University Advancement activities are vital in support of the university's strategic aims. By building relationships and securing pivotal resources for supporting UAFS's strategic initiatives, the foundation acts as a conduit, channeling philanthropic efforts and community support into tangible outcomes that resonate with the university's mission. Fundraising efforts are particularly significant in underpinning UAFS's strategic goals. The university's ability to attract and manage external funding is a testament to its standing in the community and the compelling nature of its vision and objectives. The documentation of these fundraising efforts provides not only a record of financial successes but also serves as an indicator of the broader community's belief in the institution's direction.

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

The University of Arkansas – Fort Smith employs a well-developed and comprehensive budgeting process, as referenced in 5.A.2; furthermore, the administration carefully monitors institutional finances via quarterly presentations from the Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration (VCFA). This process is integral to ensuring the strategic allocation of financial resources, aligning them with the university's goals and priorities. Moreover, UAFS's commitment to effective financial management underpins the institution's long-term stability and operational efficiency, as was demonstrated in the Chancellor's address at University Days at the beginning of the semester. She demonstrated comparisons of UAFS to other U of A system schools in terms of cost and state revenue, including UAFS's maintenance as a low tuition leader.

UAFS follows an efficient budgeting model that covers all aspects of its institutional operations. This model relies on accurate tuition and fee revenue projections, which involve projections based on enrollment trends provided by Institutional Research to the Vice Chancellor for Financial Affairs and is designed to strategically distribute financial resources, ensuring alignment with the university's overarching goals and priorities. For example, this headcount generation allows decision-makers to grasp of the current enrollment picture and this data set shows high school graduates for the two largest counties from which UAFS draws students, informing future projections.

The university's budgeting process, referenced in 5.A.2, involves meticulous planning and detailed analysis, ensuring that every financial decision is made with the institution's best interests in mind. This annual process includes every relevant budget manager on campus in projecting expenses and where appropriate, revenue.

UAFS maintains rigorous practices for monitoring expenses, ensuring that financial resources are used in accordance with the expectations used in building the budget. This process involves regular reviews and adjustments to ensure financial activities align with the institution's strategic objectives. The university has a structured approach to handling budget requests through its month's long budget process and delineating the decision-making flow. This coordinated approach allows for transparent and accountable financial

management, fostering a culture of fiscal responsibility across the institution.

Project budgets and pro forma statements are integral to UAFS's financial planning. These documents provide an understanding of the financial implications of various projects, enabling the university to make informed decisions about resource allocation.

The management of the UAFS Foundation's endowment investment and spending policies is crucial to the university's financial health. The approach found in the drawdown and spend policy ensures that endowment funds are utilized effectively, supporting the university's mission while also maintaining the long-term viability of the endowment, as is shown by the spend rate for endowed funds. Success of the Foundation's efforts is shown by the Foundation's portfolio of resources from 2019-2024.

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

UAFS's fiscal allocations are designed to directly support its educational objectives. The budget allocation process at UAFS is structured to ensure that funds are directed toward critical areas such as instruction, instructional support, and scholarships. This process includes a focus on basic operational needs, ensuring that faculty and staff have the resources they need to deliver high-quality education.

There is a clear and documented linkage between resource allocation and educational programs at UAFS, for example, the Vice Chancellor for Financial Affairs regularly meets with deans. During these meetings, in addition to reviewing ongoing operational costs, course and programmatic fees are reviewed to ensure that fees collected are sufficient for the needs of each academic program. The result of this contact is demonstrated in prioritized budgeting, such as here with the Little Lions Daycare Center. This connection ensures that the institution's financial planning is closely tied to its educational goals and the needs of its students.

Furthermore, the duration and amount of grants the institution receives play a critical role in supplementing the budget and enhancing educational programs. In the Academic Year 2024-25, UAFS on-boarded a new hire into the role of Director of Grants and Sponsored programs. This role will assist faculty and staff in obtaining grant funding for various projects and initiatives and the Director has already developed an ambitious slate of goals. Before this position was established, grant assistance was given through a contract with Hannover Research.

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5.C – Core Component

The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning and improvement.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Argument
5.C.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.

The strategic plan and associated Institutional Effectiveness Plan (IEP) process to request new investments at UAFS are carefully crafted and documented, reflecting a deep commitment to aligning resources with strategic objectives. These IEP documents demonstrate how each investment contributes to the university's overarching strategic goals. A specific example of this can be seen in the institution's decision to reallocate an unfilled position in IT to a new lead faculty member in Advancement Manufacturing. This along with the repurposing of previously unfilled endowed chair positions has aligned university resources directly with the strategic objective to develop a Center of Excellence in Advanced Manufacturing.

The Budget Council at UAFS, referenced in 5.A.2., includes diverse university stakeholders and is instrumental in ensuring mission-aligned resource allocation. Through rigorous review and advisory processes, the council ensures fiscal decisions are reflective of UAFS's strategic priorities, thereby enhancing institutional effectiveness. This can be seen in the institution's decision to implement a new fee for Academic Service units, which aligns with the first pillar of the strategic plan: Student Access, Engagement, and Success.

The creation of the RSSP/grants position at UAFS marks a significant step in enhancing the university's research capabilities. This role is central to acquiring and managing grants, aligning financial resources with research ambitions and academic excellence, and the decision aligns with the strategic plan pillar to support teaching and learning. Furthermore, encouraging faculty and staff in the pursuit of acquiring grants assists in offsetting the costs associated with programming and allows more flexibility in the allocation of institutional funds.

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

UAFS demonstrates a holistic approach in its processes by integrating its assessment of student learning with operational evaluation, strategic planning, and fiscal allocation. This interconnected framework ensures that academic and financial planning are inextricably linked, optimizing resource utilization, and enhancing academic quality. As some examples of the tie between student learning and budgeting, planning, and operations:

In Nursing, our assessment and accreditation processes indicated a need for a Simulation Coordinator to

support operations and student learning and this position was brought into the budget in Fall 2019.

In Business, the AACSB Continuous Improvement Report highlighted the need to support student learning in accounting and entrepreneurship, leading the university to support these investments.

In GeoScience, the importance of sedimentation motivated the pursuit of an INBRE grant to purchase a Raman Microscope.

Another example of the linkage between budgeting and planning is that each line item in positional and non-positional budgets must be connected to a component of institutional future strategy and planning. As the budget is built, the academic deans bring forth their budget requests with justifications that can include an assessment of student learning and an evaluation of operations along with ties to the strategic plan.

The strategic planning process and the Institutional Effectiveness Plans at UAFS is tightly interwoven with ensuring the desired student learning outcomes. An example of the tie between this assessment, budgeting, and planning is shown in the VCAA's short-term budget request to allocate resources dedicated to CALO-C to support the integration of cocurricular assessment fully into the university's operations.

To ensure the input of the assessment of student learning (both in academic assessment and co-curricular assessment) throughout the process, the Director of Assessment is a member of the Budget Council that evaluates all budget proposals before they are submitted to the chancellor.

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

At the University of Arkansas – Fort Smith, the strategic planning process is a comprehensive endeavor that engages the entire institution and incorporates the perspectives of both internal and external constituent groups.

This inclusive approach ensures that the strategic vision that is developed reflects the diverse needs and aspirations of the university community, creating a synergy between the university's mission and the goals of its stakeholders. UAFS conducts thorough environmental scans as part of its strategic planning and marketing rebranding initiatives. These scans encompass a wide range of factors, from demographic shifts to industry demands, providing a solid foundation for informed decision-making.

The Board of Visitors and various advisory boards play a significant role in shaping the university's strategic direction. By actively participating in these meetings and contributing to the discussions, these boards ensure that the planning process is enriched with diverse insights and expertise.

UAFS gives special attention to emerging academic areas, such as Advanced Manufacturing. The institution's commitment to these fields is evident in its initiatives, ensuring its academic portfolio remains relevant and innovative. This initiative was built via visits and conversations with the regional manufacturing community, and the most highly engaged individuals within this community were invited to participate in an initial advisory council.

Through resolutions, meeting agendas, and minutes from the faculty senate, staff senate, and the Student Government Association (SGA), UAFS demonstrates a strong commitment to shared governance. This approach fosters a culture of collaboration and ensures that the voices of all campus members are heard in the planning process. Open forums for both faculty and staff also take place each semester, further proving that the university wants constituent bodies at every level to have agency in the comprehensive strategy process.

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

UAFS navigates fluctuations in revenue sources and enrollment dynamics, anchoring its strategic planning initiatives in practicality in accordance with its existing capacity. This awareness fortifies the institution's financial resilience and empowers it to proactively align resources, programs, and initiatives with the ever-evolving needs of its academic community.

In response to fluctuations in revenue sources, such as changes in sales tax revenue, annual changes in state funding allocations, and changes in enrollment and the associated tuition and fees, UAFS has developed and implemented strategic financial strategies to maintain its financial health and adapt to changing fiscal landscapes. This can be seen in the decision to merge five colleges into a three-college model along with additional strategies to better consolidate administrative and support costs with approximately $1.2 million in savings.

The university's budgets and plans around its understanding of current and projected enrollment trends. This planning is crucial for aligning the university's resources with its enrollment capacity, ensuring that UAFS can effectively meet the needs of its student body.

The UAFS campus master plan is an anticipatory document that guides the university's physical development. It incorporates considerations for current capacity and forecasts future growth and changes, ensuring that the campus evolves to support the university's mission and strategic goals.

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

At UAFS, the institution's strategic planning process adeptly anticipates and adapts to various external factors, such as the impacts of technological advancements on its offerings through its academic program advisory boards, demographic shifts analyzed through enrollment planning, economic changes as it monitors the performance of its financial portfolio and potential shifts in state support. This foresight ensures that UAFS not only remains relevant but also thrives in an ever-evolving higher education landscape.

UAFS recognizes the rapid pace of technological change and has developed comprehensive facilities plans and works to integrate cutting-edge tools and resources into its educational and operational frameworks. This plan guides investments in technology and the university's infrastructure, supporting current and future academic and research needs.

Understanding the importance of demographic shifts, UAFS actively engages in strategies to become a

Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI). This initiative is informed by community demographic data, and shifts in student demographics, and aims to enhance diversity and inclusivity on campus. This strategy will be supported by activities such as the decision to repurpose personnel from a BA in Spanish program into a campus-wide support mechanism for the Hispanic population. The Writing Center also has bilingual tutoring services and ESL support that allows non-native English speakers to have English conversation practice appointments.

In the face of changing economic conditions, UAFS has explored strategies to develop new funding sources. This adaptability increases financial stability and aligns with the goals of the university's strategic plan. One example of this planning is the pursuit of public-private partnerships (P3s), and space currently owned by the university has been identified in the campus master plan for this potential use. This process began in the fall with several administrators attending a P3 Conference for Higher Education in Denver in the Fall of 2024. Since that time, we have discussed the potential for an OPM partnership with Risepoint and P3 housing strategies with representatives with JLL.

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

UAFS's approach to implementing its strategic plan is characterized by a systematic, data-informed process that focuses on enhancing operations and improving student outcomes. Through annual institutional effectiveness plans, each unit annually reports on progress made in the previous year, work in progress in the current year, along with resource requests to further the plan's implementation in the coming year.

This approach is foundational in ensuring that the university's strategic objectives translate into tangible improvements across the institution. In alignment with the strategic plan and as a response to the community needs, UAFS has created a plan to establish five Centers of Excellence. Those centers include Art and Design, Advanced Manufacturing, The Center for Economic Development, Data Science & Analytics, and Health Science. These centers will be focused on successful student employment outcomes, the needs of regional employers, and areas of expertise contained within the campus. The long-term goal for each of these centers is that they receive priority access to resources and marketing spend and that students who matriculate through these areas have added exposure to professional experts in their respective fields.

The university closely monitors and analyzes retention and completion data, using these insights to inform its strategic decisions and initiatives to improve student success rates. The Office of Student Success and Retention, among others, deploys strategies to address key indicators from this data. The decision to engage a third party, Anthology, in a re-enrollment campaign demonstrates one such strategy. Support units on campus also use this data to drive changes, such as creating the Lion's Scholars program.

UAFS regularly assesses its facilities, libraries, technology, and other services to ensure they effectively meet the needs of students and staff. Examples include regular surveys such as the Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI), the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), and the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE), as well as institutional surveys and open forums dedicated to these topics. Feedback from these assessments informs ongoing improvements and investments. UAFS has also created a Facilities Committee to ensure adequate attention is given to unoccupied or vacant space utilization requests. The charge of this committee is to examine each request through a lens of the strategic plan and mission of the institution and its students.

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- IEP Advancement_VCUA_01-23-2024
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- Lion Scholars Website_Academic Affairs_09.30.2024
- Marketing Brand_Marketing_9-20-2020
- New Fee_Budget Council_3-23-2024
- Notes from 2023-09-11 meeting of Facilities Committee
- NursingSelfStudy_CHEHS_2021
- NursingSelfStudy_CHEHS_2021 (page number 22)
- Position Change_Provost_7-1-2024
- PPP Conference_VCFA_9-18-2024
- Questions submitted to Faculty Forum Sept 21 2022_Finance and Administration_9-21-2022
- Questions submitted to Staff Forum Nov 13 2023_Staff Senate_11-13-2023
- Research Director_Provost Office_07-1-2023
- risepoint
- Sales Tax_VCFA_12-09-2020

- Spanish Repurpose_Provost_9-25-2024
- SSCH Analysis_Budget Council_3-31-2024
- SSI 2023 Overview
- Staff Senate and Chancellor Meeting Agenda_Staff Senate_12-19-2023
- summer paid pd - not BB
- summer pd
- UAFS 2023_24 CIR Report Final
- UAFS 2023_24 CIR Report Final (page number 20)
- UAFS Advisory Boards Website_Chancellors Office_09.04.2024
- UAFS Facility Master Plan_Finance and Administration_11-6-23
- UAFS Foundation portfolio - 2019 - 2024
- Updated UAFS Workplan_7.29.22
- Updated UAFS Workplan_7.29.22 (page number 3)
- Upgrades made to Instructional Spaces Using Pandemic Funding (1)

5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary

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

Summary

UAFS engages the Board of Trustees, administration, faculty, staff, and students in the shared governance of shaping policies and strategies aligned with its mission. Leadership teams, including the Chancellor's Cabinet and Deans Council, guide decision-making, while open forums foster campus-wide inclusivity and transparency.

UAFS supports its educational mission through a strong resource base, strategic planning, and fiscal responsibility. The university invests in staff professional development, modernized facilities, and technological advancements, such as the Recreation and Wellness Center and classroom upgrades, to enhance learning and engagement. Financial stewardship is evident through comprehensive budgeting, regular audits, and resource allocation tied to strategic goals through the use of Institutional Effectiveness Plans.

UAFS emphasizes systematic planning, aligning resources with strategic goals, and integrating student learning assessments with operational and budget planning. It highlights inclusive engagement with internal and external stakeholders, proactive adaptation to demographic and economic shifts, and sustained efforts to improve student outcomes, operations, and institutional resilience.

Sources

There are no sources.