Assurance Argument

Arkansas Tech University - AR

Review date: 11/9/2020

1 - Mission

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

1.A - Core Component 1.A

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

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

Argument

[ATU Abbreviations and Acronyms](#)

1.A.1: Campus-wide input from the development of the University's [2016 strategic plan](#) informed the impetus for the creation of a revised mission statement. To keep the strategic planning process from being prescriptive, the Executive Council (EC) decided to [complete the plan before adopting a new mission](#). The first action item of Goal 4 of the strategic plan calls for the University to "[i]ncrease the visibility of the University by strengthening the mission and vision statements, developing a 21st century identity, and conducting a detailed marketing analysis." The strategic plan white paper ["Working Group—University as a Public Institution"](#) clarifies that the intent of this action item was to reevaluate and/or adopt new University mission and vision statements.

Strategic planning and evaluating/developing new mission and vision statements were inclusive processes, allowing faculty, administrators, staff, students, alumni, and interested community members [opportunities to participate](#). Using the contributions of the campus community, the Board of Trustees along with the President of the University and EC, developed the initial draft of the mission and vision statements on August 19, 2016. Face-to-face public forums and e-mail solicitations gathered [feedback on the drafts from stakeholders](#). After reviewing feedback, the Board of Trustees made revisions, drafted a final statement, and adopted the ATU Mission Statement during their [October 19, 2016 board meeting](#).

1.A.2: The values in our [mission and vision statements](#) support our daily practice, resonating strongly with our culture and providing important direction for our community.

Student success, access, excellence, and intellectual development

- ATU puts students first by emphasizing teaching, followed by scholarship and service, as noted in both campuses' faculty handbooks.
- Providing student support through the Academic Advising Center (AAC), tutoring services, and library services highlights the importance of student success at ATU.
- Awards, internships and clinical experiences, and symposia (honors, undergraduate, and graduate) celebrate intellectual development.

Technological traditions

- The Russellville campus hosts a number of STEM programs including engineering, nursing, mathematics, and a variety of science majors.
- Our Ozark campus provides technical certificates, certificates of proficiency and associate degrees in programs ranging from technical trades such as automation and air conditioning refrigeration to health care programs such as occupational therapist assistant and practical nursing.
- Arkansas Tech Career Center (ATCC) provides technical training for area high school students in areas ranging from automotive repair to criminal justice to a culinary program.

Responsive campus community/civic engagement

Woven into the fabric of ATU is a spirit of volunteerism with frequent opportunities available for members of the university community.

- The Center for Community Engagement and Academic Outreach (CEAO) offers community service opportunities through interdisciplinary problem based learning courses, the Americorps Vista Program, and Campus Compact. (see 1.C.1)
- The Elevated Citizen community volunteer program offered through Campus Life facilitates active citizenship for students.
- Student-athletes earned first-place honors for community service in the Division II category two years in a row.
- The National Resource Consortium on Full Student Voter Participation and the Students Learn, Students Vote Coalition selected ATU as a codesigner campus in the Ask Every Student program. The only institution selected in Arkansas and one of only 31 universities in the nation.

Empowerment of the community/betterment of Arkansas, the nation, and the world

- The University partners with local community leaders through the Town and Gown Committee to provide opportunities and improvements within the community. (see 1.B.3)
- The Arkansas Small Business and Technology Development Center (ASBTDC) of ATU is a free resource for small businesses and entrepreneurs, helping start and grow businesses that strengthen and sustain Arkansas's economy and communities. (see 1.B.1)
- In the 2017-2018 fiscal year, ATU made a $330.5 million impact on the Arkansas River Valley, supporting 5,658 jobs, and a $526.5 million impact on the state, supporting a total of 8,574 jobs. [ATU Economic Value Fact Sheets]
- Through our alumni, we see fulfillment of the mission to better our state, nation, and world. Their stories inspire the ATU community.

1.A.3: As a public, regional, comprehensive university, Arkansas Tech University recognizes the needs of its student population (ethnic and first-time, full time student demographics). ATU's mission emphasizes student success and access to higher education, as well as civic engagement for the betterment of the state and beyond, as the following selection of activities shows:

Student success

- According to CollegeNet's Social Mobility Index, ATU has led the state in social mobility for the last six consecutive years.
- ATU Academic Affairs Division promotes student success through the APEX Tutoring Center offers free face-to-face and online tutoring for all undergraduate students in core subject areas, (see 3.D.2) and Career Services through resume consultation, internships, and career-placement.
- ATU Student Affairs Division provides a variety of services and offices that impact student success (see 3.D.1), including Disability Services, Diversity and Inclusion, International Student Services, Veterans Services, Commuter Students, and Civic Engagement.
- The AAC (see 3.D.3) advises all students with fewer than 60 hours (outside of the College of eTech). The center, which served an average of 4759 students in the fall and 2607 students in the spring semesters, empowers students to achieve their goals through the Academic Early Warning program and by providing Degree Maps designed to keep students on track to graduate in four years.

Access to higher education

- ATU identifies and creates pathways to four-year degrees for students, both within the state (e.g., partnerships with North Arkansas College and South Arkansas Community College) and across ATU campuses (e.g., stackable degrees at ATU).
- Of our 167 academic programs, 32 programs can be completed fully online, supporting the mission to be a responsive campus community by providing access to higher education for students wherever they are in the world.
- In addition, ATU maintains National Student Exchange through the Study Abroad office and global partnerships with the Mexican Consulate, and universities in Austria, Germany, and Spain, thus allowing us to provide higher education access to students around the world and expose domestic students to international education opportunities.

Civic engagement

- Curricular - The CEAO offers opportunities through interdisciplinary problem based learning courses, the Americorps Vista Program, and Campus Compact.
- Co-curricular – The Office of Civic Engagement within Student Affairs provides service programs for students to engage in the community.

1.A.4: The diversity of academic programs, the variety of student support services (e.g., Campus Life, Career Services, Health and Wellness Center, TRIO program, and Jerry Cares), the inclusivity of admissions requirements, and the enrollment profile of the institution support the mission. Across two campuses, ATU offers 40 undergraduate certificates, 29 associate degrees, 69 bachelor degrees, two graduate certificates, 26 graduate degrees, and one doctoral degree approved by the Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE).

The enrollment profile of ATU demonstrates the University's mission in terms of access to higher

education for all students, regardless of age, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. Over the past ten years, enrollment of minority students has increased 56.5%, and first generation students have remained more than 25% of the total student population. Of ATU students completing the FAFSA, an average of 62.5% each year have qualified for Pell grants. The ATU admissions policies (undergraduate, graduate, and international students) aim to include a diverse group of constituents in the region, state, and beyond. Foremost, ATU is a regional university meant to provide higher education in the state of Arkansas as indicated in the enrollment profile. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Arkansas ranks 44th in the nation for educational attainment (graduating from high school or higher). ATU works to shift that statistic by investing in our state: Arkansans (in-state students) consistently account for over 92% of the enrollment at ATU each fall (see 3.D.1). In addition, ATU provides higher education to students beyond the traditional college age. Of the Fall 2018 total student body, 22.5% were non-traditional students (age 24 or older), while 26.5% were high school concurrent students.

In 2017, ATU established a Student Success Center, centralizing key student success offices into one functional area under the auspices of the Vice President of Academic Affairs. As detailed in 3.D.1, the offices include the AAC, Career Services, APEX Tutoring Center (which offers tutoring services for over 80 courses), and TRIO grant programs (i.e., TRIO Student Support Services, Upward Bound, and Veterans Upward Bound). Additionally, in January 2019 the University received a grant from the Department of Education to assist 50 Pell Grant-eligible students with child-care costs over the next four years (Child Care Initiative Grant). Reorganizing the existing offices and shifting them under the academic division further support the essential tie between student success initiatives and academic programming.

1.A.5: ATU's mission statement is widely disseminated, easily accessible, and explicit; and it serves as the foundation of numerous institutional documents and processes.

In 2016, ATU publicized its mission statement widely. The University news website posted a news release and sent it to external media outlets. A YouTube video utilizing students, faculty, and staff to read the new mission and vision statements received more than 14,000 views on Facebook. Across campus, desks and reception areas exhibited table tents communicating the mission and vision statements; and light pole banners displayed the vision statement. The printed program at each home football game also includes the mission statement.

In addition, many university publications feature the mission statement, including course catalogs, faculty handbooks, and the ATU website. Mission boards decorate both campuses. Furthermore, new employees learn of the University's mission from the President and senior administration during the New Employee Orientation, where they receive a card expressing our mission, vision, and service-excellence statements. When we initiated our service-excellence program, we distributed these cards institution-wide. Freshmen courses (TECH1001 and CSP1013) also emphasize the mission in the first lesson of each course. The President features the mission statement in State of the University addresses to internal and external audiences.

The integration of the mission extends through all levels of administration. For example, the Board of Trustees has a Mission Moment at each board meeting during which a unit of the institution presents an act/service exemplifying the mission. In addition the mission and vision statements are included on the agenda.

We deliver on the promise of the mission by providing a Student Right to Know consumer information page through links in the primary menu at the bottom of every institution web page. This

information includes resources on a myriad of subjects.

The goals and action items of the strategic plan articulate institutional strategic priorities. Stakeholders receive annual updates on the progress of strategic plan initiatives in the President's State of the University addresses each fall and in a printed document (2018, 2019, 2020). Additional information can be found in core component 5.C.

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1.B - Core Component 1.B

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

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

Argument

ATU Abbreviations and Acronyms

1.B.1: ATU values its relationship with the people of Russellville, the Arkansas River Valley, and the global community, as demonstrated in the process by which we created the University's strategic plan, the goals outlined in the document itself, and the actions taken since adopting the plan. The language of the strategic plan also highlights ATU's connections to the City of Russellville, the surrounding region, and the global community. Goal 4 of the Strategic Plan is to "[i]ncrease ATU's presence and effective participation in our cities, region, state, and world."

Our strategic planning process had a working group focused on building community relationships, so since adopting the strategic plan, the University has led many initiatives that demonstrate its unity with the greater community and its mission to serve the public good. For example, ATU joined Campus Compact, a group of more than 1,100 colleges and universities dedicated to civic education and community development, by creating its first civic action plan, which provides a framework to coordinate community and civic engagement initiatives, both in and out of the traditional classroom, in support of student success.

The University hosts several career fairs each year that serve students, regional employers, and the public at large. The Russellville campus' Norman Career Services offered a Spring 2020 Career Fair with over 125 regional employers registered, while fall semester career fairs are being offered virtually. ATU-Ozark hosts annual career fairs with local and regional employers. In 2017, the Career Pathway Initiative (CPI) hosted the Spring 2017 Career Fair with ATU-Ozark, which included hundreds of regional businesses. CPI helps low-income parents meet educational and career-training goals that ultimately lead to high-demand, high-wage careers. Through these partnerships, ATU-Ozark provided non-credit job training to 72 companies in the past (7) years.

Additional evidence of the University's commitment to serving the community is the work of the ASBTDC. This office offers new, existing, and expanding businesses a variety of services, including free one-to-one confidential consulting, free market research, and low cost or free training. The ASBTDC regularly provides training opportunities and seminars that are open to the public. This award-winning center is an asset to the local community and larger region.

ATU has been recognized for its commitment to encourage and highlight the role of civic learning

and democratic engagement in every student's college education. The University participates in NASPA's LEAD Initiative on Civic Learning & Democratic Engagement and has been designated a Voter Friendly Campus. ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge recognized Arkansas Tech university as a bronze seal recipient campus in 2019 for its efforts to encourage its students' civic participation. (see 1.C.1)

The ATU Office of Emergency Management has mutual aid agreements with groups such as the Red Cross and ADHE to be an identified shelter location within the state of Arkansas, with the City of Russellville and Pope County to provide first responder services to ATU, and with Pope County 911 to provide dispatch services to Public Safety. The office also has multiple partnerships with the Pope County Office of Emergency Management, the Arkansas Department of Emergency Management, the Russellville Police Department, the Arkansas Higher Education Emergency Management Group, and the Homeland Security Liaison Officer Program as detailed in the Campus Security Report. The Emergency Management Office hosts multiple events every semester, such as the Civilian Response to Active Shooter Training and CPR/AED Training.

Examples of community partnerships include the following:

- White Paper: Working Group-University as Public Good
- St. Mary's Regional Medical Center and ATU Nursing Skills Fair 2018
- Community Partnership Articles (2016-2020)

We also invite members of the community to participate in free events related to our mission, as well as taking some events outside the University, thus serving the larger community as well as our institution. Members of the public living within a 50 mile radius are offered borrowing privileges and are invited to attend library special events.

As noted in its mission statement, the ATU Division of Intercollegiate Athletics focuses on community service to "enable student-athletes to pursue excellence in developing personal, academic, and athletic skills and, in so doing, supports the university in achieving its mission." ATU athletic teams have received distinction for their commitment to community service. From 2016-2019, ATU student-athletes were finalists for the NCAA Division II Award of Excellence for programs including their "Fight On Against Childhood Hunger" campaign, an initiative centered on collecting and disseminating nutrition for food insecure youth in the Arkansas River Valley, and most recently for a safe Halloween event, Tech-O-Ween, co-hosted for the community by Athletics and Residence Life. For the last two years, ATU student-athletes received first-place honors in the NCAA Team Works Helper Helper Community Service Competition. With 100% participation, student-athletes completed a total of 3,535 hours of community service in 2018-2019 and 5,706 hours of community service in 2019-2020.

1.B.2: Since its founding in 1909 through Act 100 of the 37th General Assembly, ATU has been a public institution and thus exists for the betterment of the people of Arkansas and the greater community. The University's FY 2019 Operating Budget states that ATU-Russellville allocates over $133 million of its $157.6 million annual operating budget to educational and general operating expenses (84.4%), including instruction, student services, academic support, and scholarships. The ATU-Ozark campus dedicates nearly all its annual revenue (99.2%) to its educational and general operating expenses.

As a public institution, the University is not owned by investors or a parent organization. The foundation that exists to support the University is our primary external support organization.

1.B.3: ATU engages with external constituencies through many initiatives that foster communication with the surrounding community and provide opportunities for lifelong learning and cultural enrichment. The efforts described here align with the institution's civic action plan.

ATU stakeholders and the City of Russellville created a Town and Gown Committee that meets monthly to discuss topics regarding partnerships, creation of programs, and community service/engagement opportunities. In partnership with the mayor of Russellville, the Town and Gown Committee seeks to engage students with the community and help the city with small business growth. For example, the Town and Gown Committee created an off-campus living guide in response to complaints from local citizens. In addition, the committee's creative programs engage students to boost local businesses and help students feel at home. The mayor meets with students to discuss upcoming local issues and services for students' use. A selection of these events and partnerships include

- March to Main – a pep rally to connect students from the Russellville campus to downtown and encourage students to be good neighbors.
- Bash at the Ballpark - co-hosted with the Russellville Chamber of Commerce, a baseball game and free food for students and local residents.
- Paint the Town Green and Gold - co-hosted with the Russellville Chamber of Commerce, an event held each fall during Homecoming week. Local businesses show
- their Tech spirit and pride by painting their windows and decorating with green and gold.
- Business Expo - co-hosted with the Russellville Chamber of Commerce and local businesses, a free event held each summer in the university's Tucker Coliseum.

In April 2019, the University hosted its sixth annual "Out of the Darkness" 1.5-mile walk to raise funds and awareness about suicide prevention services. In 2019, the event raised over $100,000 to support the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. The "Walk a Mile in Her Shoes March," which is part of the annual International Women's Week hosted by Russellville campus for the last eight years, raises awareness about sexual assault.

The Office of Civic Engagement administers many opportunities for students that focus on the needs of the University's external constituents, including the following

- Green and Gold Give Back
- Alternative Spring Break
- Elevated Citizen

The Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life engages with community partners of the Russellville School District and River Valley Food 4 Kids to collect needed items through the annual Greeks Give Back program. The items help support the backpack program that ensures elementary students have access to a reliable supply of food.

In early Spring 2020, the University hosted a Tech for Tech Summit at which over 70 representatives from economic development and industry communicated their current and future workforce needs to ATU educational leaders. Results of the event prompted a new degree program proposal for an Associate of Science in Manufacturing.

Annually, the College of Business reaches out to local high schools with its High School Business Challenge. Teams of 2-5 compete by presenting a business plan for a new product or service or expansion of a current business. Local business leaders judge the competition.

In addition, Ozark Campus is working with Bank OZK (a regional bank-chain) to offer stackable degree opportunities starting in high school. ATU and OZK bank leadership co-created the program to foster educational and future employment opportunities for students in this apprenticeship program.

Each year, ATU Athletics designates one football game as Military Appreciation Day. ATU recently earned a federal grant to offer Veteran's Upward Bound, which will provide student success resources to 125 veterans at ATU each year. As discussed in 3.D.1, Veterans Upward Bound's mission is to motivate and assist veterans in the development of academic and other requisite skills necessary for acceptance and success in a program of postsecondary education. Fewer than 60 universities and colleges in the United States received the grant to host a Veterans Upward Bound program for the 2017-22 cycle.

In September 2018, ATU became the new host for the annual Arkansas Governor's School, a month-long summer program for the state's gifted high school students.

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1.C - Core Component 1.C

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

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

Argument

ATU Abbreviations and Acronyms

1.C.1: Goal 4 of our institution's strategic plan is to "[i]ncrease ATU's presence and effective participation in our cities, region, state, and world." The five action items in this goal discuss improving students' career readiness through "broader career services efforts" and collaboration with business, developing economic partnerships within the community, and developing a plan for internationalization and global education.

The 184 courses listed in the 2019-20 catalog with the designation Course Type IPR (Internship/Practicum) show curriculum linked with student opportunities to engage with their community. On our Ozark Campus, several programs incorporate internships in their curriculum while others offer optional internships in place of an elective. In preparing for workplace success, Norman Career Services seeks to "ensure that all students are placed before graduation in full-time jobs, part-time jobs, internships, graduate/professional school, military services, or serving in a service program." The career services center holds many career fairs throughout the year, runs ELEVATE: The Career Advancement Academy, provides resources to help students with resumes and cover letters and to prepare for interviews, and makes use of the Handshake online program to help students search for employment opportunities. Career Services works with students on our Russellville and Ozark campuses.

In February 2018, ATU joined Campus Compact, a group of more than 1,100 colleges and universities dedicated to civic education and community development, and created its first civic action plan. ATU students give back to their communities through curricular service learning and co-curricular service initiatives. Through the Center for Community Engagement and Academic Outreach (CEAO), students can take courses "designed to create unique educational experiences while... improving the local and global communities." These are interdisciplinary, project-based courses that involve community engagement. Co-curricular service initiatives that are part of our civic action plan include Alternative Spring Break, Action Days, Green & Gold Give Back, and the $100 Solution Project.

The CEAO's mission is to create unique and innovative educational experiences for students while improving the local and global communities. For example, CEAO's AmeriCorps VISTA program aims at improving the college readiness of K-12 students in the surrounding five counties. The goal

of year one is to establish ATU's CEAO as an AmeriCorps intermediary sponsor by identifying, establishing relationships with, and conducting evaluation analysis/needs assessment of programs and nonprofits aimed at improving education. Approximately 26,229 students and 19 communities will benefit. Five VISTA members will contribute to the goals of the project by performing activities such as interviewing, surveying, creating databases, writing reports, and organizing a Community Partner Fair over the course of one year. Currently, we have four VISTA members.

The University encourages and seeks out initiatives that prepare students for workplace success and to make them informed citizens. For example, we have an active Student Government Association. We were also selected as one of ten American Association of State Colleges and Universities member institutions to pilot the Global Civic Literacy project in partnership with the Council on Foreign Relations and World 101.

Further evidence of commitment to working towards an informed citizenry is in ATU's selection as the lone institution of higher learning in Arkansas and one of 65 colleges and universities across the United States participated in the 2019-20 NASPA Lead Initiative. Events celebrating the annual U.S. Constitution Day and programs encouraging students to exercise their right to vote are examples of opportunities within the NASPA Lead Initiative. Additionally, the 2019 ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge awarded ATU a bronze seal in recognition of its efforts to encourage civic participation among students by achieving a student voter registration rate of between 20 and 29 percent.

ATU was the first institution in Arkansas certified as a Voter Friendly Campus. Created in 2016, the Voter Friendly Campus initiative is the result of a partnership between the Campus Vote Project and NASPA. NASPA announced on Feb. 27, 2019, that ATU was one of 123 campuses in 31 states that earned the Voter Friendly Campus designation for the 2018-19 cycle.

One of the University's signature co-curricular programs to prepare students to be informed citizens is the On Track program which aims to help students become well-rounded individuals outside the classroom (as detailed in 3.D.1). Two tracks include Elevated Citizen and Global Focus. Elevated Citizen facilitates active citizenship to help students understand their role in the local and global community. Global Focus exposes students to a variety of situations and topics that they may encounter or be affected by as a member of a global population, allowing students to become more culturally aware.

Other examples of the University offering opportunities for enhanced citizenship and career building include the following:

- Residence Life provides Living Learning Communities (LLC) that encourage informed citizenship. The Civic Engagement LLC is a living and learning community within residential life that is led by the Office of Civic Engagement to foster a sense of community for students interested in community action and service learning. The Leadership Minor also offers an LLC. These LLCs demonstrate a high retention rate.
- As part of our strategic plan, ATU has nurtured our study abroad programs, which offer opportunities throughout the year. In the 2018-19 school year, over 80 students studied abroad. In March 2018, we joined the National Student Exchange, a program that allows our students to spend time studying at other universities within the United States.
- As noted in 1.B.3, the Division of Intercollegiate Athletics boasts an active engagement in the community, and our athletes have been recognized for their level of service.
- Over 100 Registered Student Organizations (RSOs) include learning objectives of developing students' leadership skills, forming campus connections, and providing students with

networking opportunities. For the Fall 2019 semester, Student Affairs reported that 2,178 students were members of campus RSOs.

1.C.2: ATU values diversity and nurtures inclusiveness among all its constituents.

Office of Human Resources

In hiring employees, the University utilizes several measures to foster a climate of respect throughout the application process. The Human Resources' web page states, "[T]he Arkansas Tech University Human Resources office is committed to excellence through people by attracting, retaining and developing a talented and diverse workforce. We strive to promote a meaningful work culture that is equitable, ethical and fair while fostering the growing needs of our dynamic institution...." This chart demonstrates the improvements made by the institution's efforts from 2009 through 2018 to recruit and retain minority faculty, staff, and students. Advertisements for faculty positions appear in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and its diversity publication and HigherEd.com. The objective of using these sites is to recruit a larger, diverse pool of applicants.

The job opportunities homepage states, "Arkansas Tech is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer. It is the policy of this university not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age or disability in employment or provision of service."

Department of Diversity and Inclusion

In 2014, the President established the Department of Diversity and Inclusion (DDI), which has now expanded to include two full time staff, an Assistant Dean for Diversity and Inclusion, and a Coordinator of Multicultural Support along with a staff of graduate and undergraduate student workers. The DDI's primary role is to serve the needs of underrepresented students and increase conscious campus awareness of those needs. The creation of a University Wide Diversity Plan was part of our Strategic Plan. A committee representing different University constituents contributed to the process, which was completed in Fall 2019.

DDI also oversees the Diversity Advisory Board (DAB), a group consisting of all cultural RSOs that represent some form of diversity or marginalization on ATU's campus. The presidents and vice presidents of DAB RSOs meet monthly with the DDI staff to discuss events, ask questions, express concerns, connect with their fellow RSOs, and do partner-programming catered to the underserved students on campus. Within the DDI, several programs and events support the LGBTQ+ community. Students, faculty, and staff can participate in Safe Zone training, a three-hour module designed to educate participants on how to support and respect those within the LGBTQ+ community as well as what it means to be an ally of the LGBTQ+ community. After the training, participants can declare themselves allies by displaying the Ally placard on their office doors or windows. occurs twice each semester. Additionally, DDI offers Cultural Competency and Unconscious Bias training to support a climate of respect for students, faculty and staff. A list with descriptions of trainings and programs provided by the DDI is available here.

In support of the University's retention plan overseen by the university-wide Equity and Diversity Committee, DDI has also created a retention plan to help underrepresented students persist and complete their college degrees at ATU.

The 2019 Almanac of Higher Education recognized ATU for its position as a national leader in increasing its African-American student population. During a seven-year period, Arkansas Tech

experienced a 64 percent increase in African-American students, moving from 529 in 2010 to 870 in 2017, the 16th-greatest increase in the United States during that time frame. No other Arkansas institution ranked in the top 100 in the U.S. for gains in African-American students.

Black Faculty and Staff Organization

Arkansas Tech University alumnus Dr. Logan C. Hampton, President of Lane College in Jackson, TN, offered the first in a new series of lectures at ATU on March 12, 2019. Hampton's address initiated the ATU Diversity Talks lecture series, which is co-hosted by the ATU Black Faculty and Staff Organization and the ATU Office of Academic Affairs.

Beginning Summer 2018, the Black Faculty and Staff Organization has partnered with the Office of Student Success to facilitate an Early Arrival Program (EAP) called "Tech's Next" for incoming minority freshmen who also may be low-income and first generation to help these students have a smooth transition into college and successfully complete their first year.

International Student Services

During a week in November each year, ATU celebrates the variety of cultures represented by ATU's international students with a series of events open to the public.

Office of Veteran Services

The Office of Veteran Services, assisting veterans in the transition to student life and persistence in their educational goals, offers Green Zone training designed to educate participants on how to respect and support veterans and/or enlisted service-members of the United States Armed Forces. Faculty, graduate student assistants, and professional staff can take Green Zone Training.

Office of Disability Services

The Office of Disability Services provides accommodations to make education accessible to our differently-abled students.

Office of Career Services

ATU's Norman Career Services offers a plethora of programs and initiatives for all students but also has specific programs that cater to underrepresented students.

Student Wellness and Counseling Services

Student Wellness and Counseling Services offers custom support for diverse and marginalized groups on campus. These support groups meet periodically throughout the school year with a licensed counselor employed by ATU. Support groups include the Resident Director/Resident Assistant Support Group; the LGBTQ+ Support Group; the Parents as Students Support Group; the First Generation College Student Support Group; the Mind, Body, and Sports Support Groups for Student Athletes; and the DBT Skills Group for those in Disabilities and Testing Services who work with differently-abled students and also for the students themselves.

Office of Title IX

The University has a Title IX compliance program. The Title IX coordinator and four deputy

coordinators work with the University community to ensure a working and learning environment free of gender discrimination. The coordinator conducts training programs and events throughout the year. Information about campus resources, procedures, and reporting options is available on the Title IX website.

1.C.3: ATU fosters a climate of respect among its diverse constituents.

The standards of the University's Service Excellence initiative include being respectful, knowledgeable, helpful, and professional. The goal of this project is to create an environment that is respectful and welcoming to employees, students, and visitors. A key element for employees was the creation of "Service WOW" awards.

Insight Into Diversity magazine, the largest and oldest diversity and inclusion publication in higher education, selected Dr. Robin E. Bowen, President of ATU, as one of 27 administrators from around the United States to receive the 2016 Giving Back Award. According to the magazine, they chose recipients based on their "outstanding demonstration of social responsibility, a commitment to charitable services and involvement with students, faculty and staff to serve underrepresented populations."

The Latinx population finds the University welcoming, as demonstrated by ATU's receiving both a Latino Destination Campus designation and a University Service Award from the League of United Latin American Citizens.

The University was proud to host its first Fulbright Scholar from Nigeria in the 2018-2019 academic year. We have also hosted artists in residence from around the world. Art exhibits and speakers present a variety of viewpoints. Two from the 2019-20 academic year are the partnerships with the Mexican Consulate on the Sacal Exhibit and with the B'nai Israel Synogogue in Little Rock for the Holocaust "Rescuers"exhibit. These art opportunities allow the campus and community to engage with diverse perspectives. Other events that introduce cultural perspectives include

- Light the Night - an evening of food and culture from around the world;
- Holi Festival - an International Student Services event;
- International Research Series speakers;
- Keynote speakers during Hispanic Heritage Month and Black History Month;
- Arkansas cultural events such as dances and music.

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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

As a regional, state supported institution, Arkansas Tech University is committed to its mission to serve the citizens of Arkansas. Beyond posting the mission on the university website, the university embodies its mission through its strategic plan, budgetary priorities, as well as in all curricular, co-curricular, and support offerings. ATU is committed to the public good as demonstrated through its partnerships with community and industry and provides opportunities for students to be engaged in a diverse society.

Sources

There are no sources.

2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

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

2.A - Core Component 2.A

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

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

Argument

ATU Abbreviations and Acronyms

The Board of Trustees appoints the President of the University, who along with an Executive Council, executes board-approved policies. The Board and the administration commit to act in an ethical and transparent manner. Each Board member signs a Conflict of Interest Policy (Policy 503) upon appointment to the Board. The Board of Trustees has six meetings a year during which they review and approve policies and annual budgets. These meetings are advertised and open to the public, and the meeting minutes, are available on the Board of Trustees' web page.

2.A.1: The Board of Trustees adopted the current ATU mission statement on October 19, 2016. As detailed in Criterion 1.A.1, the process to adopt a new mission statement was triggered when the University implemented its 2016 Strategic Plan. The first action item of Goal 4 of the plan calls for Arkansas Tech University (ATU) to "[i]ncrease the visibility of the University by strengthening the mission and vision statements, developing a 21st century identity, and conducting a detailed marketing analysis."

2.A.2: The President is committed to supporting a transparent operation. In 2016, the President initiated a President's Communication Committee representing all units across both campuses. At the monthly meetings, the President shares University-wide information and each member shares information from their area. Representative members take back information they receive and disseminate it across their unit. ATU has also formed a working group to improve communications. Members of the working group devised and launched a survey of the university community in Spring 2020 to gather communication preferences as well as suggestions for improvement of efforts. Recommendations were forwarded to the President's Communication Committee as well as the Executive Council.

ATU is committed to fiscal transparency. In 2017, the President formed the Budget Advisory Committee (BAC) to provide a fiscal road map and voice for the entire campus community during the budget process. The BAC meets monthly to share budget information, review budget options, make budget recommendations, and discuss information regarding institutional finances. The BAC

provides transparency in the budgeting process through meeting minutes and involvement of stakeholders across campus on various budget subcommittees. As part of the shared governance process involving faculty and administration, the BAC's membership includes representatives from the Staff Senate, Faculty Senate, Student Government Association, deans, and various campus departments. The purpose of the BAC is to consider expenditures affecting curriculum and instruction, it identifies priorities for new funds and/or reallocation of existing funds to meet the goals of the strategic plan.

ATU endeavors to follow state and federal policies regarding fiscal functions. The Arkansas Legislative Audit conducts annual audits of Arkansas Tech University (2019, 2018, 2017) to review ATU's financial statements and ensure the University is in compliance with state and federal policies and regulations. The Arkansas Legislative Joint Auditing Committee reviews the audit findings.

The State of Arkansas requires administrators through the department head level employed at a public institution of higher education to file an annual Statement of Financial Interest by January 31st with the office of the Secretary of State.

The University observes internal budget control policies to ensure fiscal responsibility. ATU carries an A1 Bond rating with Moody's Investor Service, further proof of our commitment to a strong and ethical fiscal management.

ATU's Office of Human Resources promotes diversity and fairness by its adherence to the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972 and the Federal Civil Rights Act of 1991. Committees conduct the hiring of new employees, guided by multiple resources provided by Human Resources on the supervisor. ATU adheres to a non-discrimination policy and abides by its Affirmative Action Policy when making hiring decisions. The University conducts mandatory orientations for new employees quarterly, providing training and guidance in a variety of areas including Title IX and FERPA.

ATU strives to maintain a safe campus environment for its students, staff, and faculty. The Office of Public Safety publishes campus safety information annually in accordance with the Clery Act of 1990. The consumer information link at the bottom of every University webpage provides access to this information. Jerry Cares is a campus-wide initiative that provides safety and reporting information, training, resources, and policies to students and employees through Everfi. Mandatory training required by the state of Arkansas educates the entire campus community, including staff, faculty, and students, about a variety of safety information such as drug and alcohol awareness and preventing and reporting sexual assaults.

Both the Russellville and Ozark websites contain a complaint log form for students seeking resolutions for concerns without established complaint processes. The appropriate department receives the complaints and addresses its concerns. Here is an example of a student complaint filed and the process that is followed.

The University expects its employees to meet the highest ethical standards as outlined in the ethics policy. Students must adhere to the University's Code of Academic Integrity.

Auxiliary functions at ATU include residence life operations, dining services and the bookstore. The University contracts with Barnes and Noble to operate the bookstore and with Chartwells to operate dining services. The Office of Finance and Administration provides oversight for both areas. Auxiliary functions must operate within state guidelines regarding ethical and fair behavior.

ATU's Athletic Department operates under policies and guidelines set forth by the National Collegiate Athletic Association. The University's compliance officer monitors student-athletes, employees, boosters, and prospective athletes' activities.

The Ozark Faculty Handbook, Russellville Campus Faculty Handbook, Adjunct Faculty Guide, Concurrent Faculty Guide, and Staff Handbook include policies for faculty and staff. Staff and faculty members at both campuses must be familiar with and adhere to the policies and procedures as outlined, including those for Title IX, affirmative action, tenure, rank, and promotion. The faculty handbooks (Russellville, Ozark), Concurrent Faculty Guide, graduate catalog, the student handbooks (Russellville and Ozark) and the staff handbook outline processes and procedures, such as grievance policies, that protect faculty, staff, and students. In addition, the Faculty Welfare Committee supports the faculty grievance process and their process and procedures are outlined in the Faculty Handbook.

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2.B - Core Component 2.B

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

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

Argument

[ATU Abbreviations and Acronyms](#)

2.B.1: The ATU website gives the public a transparent view of the University, including a full schedule of undergraduate and graduate tuition, fees, room and board ([Russellville Campus Schedule of Fees](#), [Ozark Campus Schedule of Fees](#)); [financial resources](#), and [schedule of classes](#).

ATU provides a consumer information page ([Right to Know](#)) with links in the bottom section of every University web page under the heading "[Consumer Information](#)." This information includes safety and security reports, financial aid information/assistance, and student outcomes as well as information regarding equity and equality, institutional services and assistance, institutional information, and individual contact information. Also at the bottom section of every web page is an [HLC accreditation statement](#) embedded with a link, allowing viewers to access regional accreditation information at any point during their online visit. The Office of Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness website contains a full list of the University's [specialized accreditations](#) and [review schedules](#), including programs and respective accrediting bodies as well as letters of affiliation.

The University presents clear information to all stakeholders concerning admission requirements and degree programs. The undergraduate and graduate catalogs outline unconditional and conditional admission standards for [undergraduate](#), [graduate](#), and [international students](#). The [Degree Programs](#) web page lists all available programs for the Russellville and Ozark campuses, certificate through graduate degrees, and contains links to each program page. For example, see the [Master of Business Administration](#). Degree information, organized by program name, is available in undergraduate and graduate catalogs under the heading "Degree Programs." (Examples: [Undergraduate - Sociology](#), [Graduate - Fisheries and Wildlife Science](#), [Ozark Campus - Paramedic/Emergency Medical Services Program](#)).

The University makes every effort to provide students with accurate information about course instructors. The undergraduate catalog contains an [alphabetical list of faculty](#) and their respective credentials. [Departmental websites list faculty information](#), including academic credentials and courses taught.

2.B.2: In its mission, the University emphasizes a responsive approach to intellectual development. ATU demonstrates this commitment by offering resources and support to students, faculty, and staff

as they pursue various educational interests.

Stackable Degrees

Part of the mission of the University reads, "providing opportunities for progressive intellectual development," and ATU has worked to provide the pathways between degrees both within and between each campus. Goal 2.6 of the Strategic Plan to encourage a seamless progression depending on the needs of students throughout their educational career and into their working lives.

Research

The Office of Sponsored Programs and University Initiatives (OSPUI) assists with all aspects of grant administration from drafting applications, facilitating community partnerships, and securing external funding to ensuring compliance with the grant's specifications. Examples of recent awards include a $112,550 grant from Vocational Rehabilitation and the University of Arkansas to provide counseling to those with significant disabilities in the region and a $34,108 grant from UAMS to develop fluorescent probes for determination of human serum albumin. In addition, OSPUI maintains an online collaboration directory to connect faculty with specific research interests to members of the campus community who are seeking partnerships. The Undergraduate Research Grant program also provides "necessary funding that will encourage undergraduates to conduct in-depth research" within their chosen field.

Community engagement

The Office of Civic Engagement at ATU connects students with the local community to create a learning environment in which students develop as individuals and learn how to be active, engaged citizens within a community. Through intentional programming, students immerse themselves in service and leadership opportunities like the $100 Solution, Action Days, Alternative Spring Break, and Green & Gold Give Back and become an integral part of achieving the institution's mission to " [empower] members of the community to achieve their goals while striving for the betterment of Arkansas, the nation, and the world."

The University also engages with the community through other department or college sponsored activities. Events of interest to the state are regularly held on campus such as the 2020 VEX Robotics State Championship for more than 800 grade 3-12 students and the Vets4Ag Summit held on the ATU campus connected veterans with opportunities in the state's largest industry, agriculture.

The Ozark campus designs and hosts programs to connect with local communities and secondary schools. Examples of programs with local schools include the FFA practice competition, Baby Steps program, Migrant Student Workshop, Kids Campus, Manufacturing Week, and the ACT Test Prep day, all of which are annual events. ATU-Ozark also houses the Leadership Franklin County Program, a ten-month leadership program for community members across the region. The University recently opened a new satellite office at the ATU-Ozark campus of the successful Arkansas Small Business and Technology Development Center (ASBTDC) to better serve clients within their nine-county region.

The President and Ozark Campus Chancellor serve on boards of local chambers of commerce as well as the economic alliance committee. The President meets at least monthly with the mayor who also meets with a student group throughout the year. A number of town and gown initiatives have been developed including the March to Main, Green and Gold Week and Bash at the Ballpark, all

activities that encourage town-gown collaboration.

Experiential learning

The University offers experiential learning opportunities inside and outside the classroom. In their academic pursuits, students have a variety of practica/internship opportunities and field research (e.g., College of Business Internships). For example, the Department of Communication and Journalism offers experiences in radio, television, newspaper, and a scholarly journal publication. The College of Arts and Humanities offers Interdisciplinary Project-Based Learning courses through the Center for Community Engagement and Academic Outreach. In addition, students can maximize their experience with co-curricular learning (e.g., Living Learning Communities, On Track, Freshman Leadership Experience).

Economic development

A recent economic impact study shows ATU added $526.5 million in income to the state in 2017-18 as well as supported 8,574 jobs. Regionally, ATU added $330.5 million in income to the Arkansas River Valley and supported 5,658 jobs. The University's economic impact empowers and betters the region, the state, and the nation (Economic Impact Analysis Fact Sheets).

ATU invests in the success and growth of surrounding communities in many ways. To promote economic development within the state of Arkansas, Tech houses a regional office of the Arkansas Small Business and Technology Development Center (ASBTDC), which offers various training events, online resources, assistance with market research, and consulting services. The ASBTDC web page provides potential clients with a variety of testimonials from small business owners who have benefited from a partnership with the center. The ASBTDC also produces an annual At-A-Glance report outlining student engagement through experiential learning, customer satisfaction, community engagement, and economic impact.

In 2019, ATU Athletics was recognized as the national Division II leader in community service for the second consecutive year. In Fall 2019 alone, student-athletes donated over 5,000 volunteer hours with an estimated economic impact of $150,000 (Arkansas Tech News release).

The University's relationships with business provide immediate benefits for students and industry. For example, Rockline Industries began a partnership in October 2019 with the Arkansas Tech Career Center. The partnership trains high school students on expectations for entry-level operators and incorporates paid internships through the Rockline Industries facility in Russellville. Students are also eligible to apply for positions at Rockline Industries.

In February 2020, ATU hosted a Tech for Tech event partnering leaders of business and industry across the region with faculty and academic administrators across both campuses to ensure ATU's academic programs meet industry needs. Per this event, a new associate degree program in manufacturing is being developed.

The Ozark campus has many ties with industry through its Business and Community Outreach department, whose goal is to provide customized and open enrollment industry training as well as community-based educational and leadership initiatives. Ozark advances the institution's mission by sending representatives to meetings and events in communities that are looking for potential educational partners. Another example of Ozark's partnership and work in guiding leaders is its Leadership Franklin County, an organization housed on the Ozark Campus that develops current and

emerging leaders to work together to serve the good of Franklin County and the surrounding area.

Data from the Arkansas Workforce Services publication, 2018 In-Demand Occupations, provides occupational and industry employment demand data for the various workforce development regions in Arkansas, informed ATU-Ozark's application to the ADHE Regional Workforce Grant program (see p. 8 of the most recent grant application). ATU-Ozark received all three rounds of the grant award, expanded its automation technology program into Russellville and Paris, AR, and implemented a machining program in Paris, AR. The campus also used surveys of local industry partners to show the need for automation technology in the region and support the grant application (see pp. 9-19 of the most recent grant application).

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2.C - Core Component 2.C

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

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

Argument

[ATU Abbreviations and Acronyms](#)

2.C.1: The Arkansas Tech University Board of Trustees was established by the Arkansas General Assembly with the passage of A.C.A. ([§ 6-65-301](#)). Members of the Board of Trustees are appointed for five year terms by the Governor. The terms are staggered so that each January, a current board member's term expires and a new appointment is made.

In 2017-2018, Tech initiated an orientation program for new Board members that includes individual meetings with each of the members of the Board, the President, and various vice presidents. The agenda and the orientation book (containing sections for the [President](#), [Academic Affairs](#), [Administration and Finance](#), [Ozark Campus](#), [Athletics](#), [Advancement](#), [Government Relations](#), [Enrollment Management](#), and [Student Affairs](#)) for the [Spring 2019](#) and [Fall 2020](#) board orientation demonstrate the breadth of topics and development involved. Topics include higher education in Arkansas, accreditation, freedom of speech, Board insurance, and the responsibilities of Board members. *Board members are also given copies of two Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB) publications, Effective Governing Boards and The Ultimate Board Member's Book.*

The [Annual Arkansas Trustees Conference](#), an ADHE-sponsored training, covers topics important for governing bodies of public institutions of higher education, including Academic Affairs, Financial Aid, Government Relations & Special Topics, Institutional Finance, Productivity Funding, Research and Analytics, Non- Credit Workforce Resources and Regional Workforce Grants. If their schedules allow, Board members also voluntarily attend springtime conferences of the Association of Governing Boards (AGB). All board members receive the AGB journal "Trusteeship" and have also participated in webinars by other sponsors. Finally, at each board meeting, the President presents a President's report to further educate board members on issues facing the campus or on operations highlights.

The Board completes AGB Board of Trustees self-assessments every June. The Board [evaluates the](#)

President annually in March, using the AGB Presidential Evaluation Policy. In addition, the Board has begun periodic self-evaluation. An anonymous questionnaire in Question Pro collected the latest self-evaluation data in 2019.

2.C.2: The Board of Trustees focuses regularly on institutional preservation and enhancement. For example, while Williamson Hall was under renovation, the building caught fire in April 2019, and a large portion of the building was damaged. After deliberations in August and October 2019, the Board approved an architect firm to evaluate the scope and cost of repairs. In January 2020, they approved the firm's plan to restore the facility in order to maintain its historical designation and character. Minutes from those Board meetings are available here. During the October 2019 meeting, the Board also approved renovations to the Hull Hall Student Union.

Vice presidents often bring forth a items for Board action. For example, the Vice President of Academic Affairs presented a letter of intent for a new program and several procedural changes in August 2019, and new program proposal in October 2019. The Vice President of Administration and Finance discussed several maintenance projects in August 2019. Annually the Board approves the institution's operating budget.

2.C.3: The Board regularly reviews interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies. Board meetings open with a reading of the University mission and vision statements, and a unit gives a Mission Moment special presentation. For example, at the January 2020 meeting, presenters from Performance Services Incorporated discussed sustainability and energy efficiency efforts at ATU for the past two years. During the October 2018 meeting, the dean of the College of Arts and Humanities, proposed to the Board that ATU should host the Arkansas Governor's School.

In addition, the Board reviews personnel matters brought forward by the vice presidents, including new hires, interim appointments, promotions and tenures, and terminations. Topics at recent meetings (January 16, 2020; October 17, 2019; March 14, 2018) cover a diverse set of issues, illustrating the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies which include personnel, new programs or administrative units, budget, all policies or policy changes, tuition and fees.

2.C.4: Pursuant to Arkansas state law (A.C.A. § 6-65-103(f)(1)) board members are prohibited from having an interest, either direct or indirect, in contracts with the institution. In addition, in October 2010, the Board of Trustees adopted a conflict of interest policy for the university that applies to faculty, staff, and members of the Board of Trustees. In January 2020, the University created an additional requirement that Board members submit an annual conflict of interest statement.

A record of all Board votes, including recusals and the final resolutions, is available to the public (vote recusal example March 14, 2018).

2.C.5: According to Article III, Section I of the ATU Board of Trustees Bylaws, the Board delegates day-to-day management of the institution's administration to the President:

- The President shall be appointed by the board and employed subject to the terms of an employment agreement;
- The President shall be responsible for the supervision and management of the institution and for interpreting and implementing the policies of the institution and of the Board;
- The President is endowed with the ability to establish or designate other positions as officers of the institution.

The current Board bylaws were presented, reviewed, and approved during the October 17, 2019 meeting.

The organizational chart, available to the public on the Office of the President's website, demonstrates the governance structure, which is detailed in the faculty handbook under Committee Structure. The organizational chart also shows the student affairs organizational chart and committee structures for determining policy.

Chapter 2.A under the Shared Governance section (p.15) of the faculty handbook states, "the faculty has primary responsibility for advice and recommendations in such fundamental areas as curriculum, research, faculty status, and aspects of student life that relate to the educational process."

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2.D - Core Component 2.D

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

Argument

[ATU Abbreviations and Acronyms](#)

ATU's commitment to and specific policies on [freedom of expression and academic freedom](#) may be found in the student handbook in the Campus Facilities section, the Russellville campus [faculty handbook in the Academic Freedom](#) and Political Activities of Faculty Members sections, and in the Academic Freedom section of the Ozark Campus Faculty Handbook. The Board of Trustees adopted the [Freedom Of Expression Policy](#) March 2009 and revised it in August 2017 and again in October 2019 following S.B. 156, which was [signed into law by Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson in February 2019](#).

In support of the policies outlined in the student and faculty handbooks, the Office of University Events has published [a scheduling policy and guidelines](#) that promote freedom of expression while creating a safe environment conducive to learning. In addition, the [University television broadcast policy](#) aligns with the standards found in the student and faculty handbooks and maintains appropriate professional standards for production, content, and operations.

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2.E - Core Component 2.E

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

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

Argument

ATU Abbreviations and Acronyms

2.E.1: ATU provides effective policies and procedures ensuring the responsible development of knowledge by its faculty, students, and staff.

ATU has instituted several policies and procedures to ensure that faculty pursue knowledge ethically and with integrity. ATU's numerous internal grant programs, including Faculty Research, Interdisciplinary Research, Professional Development Grants, and Sabbaticals, facilitate and support the innovative research, scholarship, and creative activities of the faculty. Financial Conflicts of Interest covering grants, contracts, and sponsored programs are addressed by three Code of Ethics/Conflict of Interest policies currently in effect.

One of the policies of the Office of Sponsored Programs and University Initiatives (OSPUI) is the Code of Ethics and Conflict of Interest Policy, which applies to all employees and students of ATU who are directly involved in any grant contract or sponsored program activity. Faculty submitting a grant must complete ATU's University Approval to Submit Proposal Form prior to submission. On the form, the faculty must state they have read, understand, and agree to the Code of Ethics and Conflict of Interest Policy for grants, contracts, and sponsored programs. A questionnaire must then be completed asking if a conflict, potential conflict, violation, or potential violation of the code exist for their specific proposal. If the faculty answers yes, further detail is required. An accompanying disclosure form expands on such potential conflict and requires faculty to acknowledge that they have read and agree to abide by the Code; they must disclose any circumstances that could be perceived as a conflict prior to and during the project period, assuming the award is made.

As originally approved in March 2016, any disclosure was to be reported to the Grants, Gifts, and Sponsored Research Committee; however, this committee is no longer in existence. Therefore, OSPUI is in the process of updating the Code of Ethics and Conflict of Interest Policy, as well as the accompanying Disclosure Form, in order to make these items more representative of the current reporting structure. OSPUI is currently in the process of reviewing the policy and disclosure form, and incorporating changes for review suggested by the National Council of University Research Administrators (NCURA) during a Spring 2020 program review.

The office maintains the Institutional Review Board (IRB), Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), and Institutional Bio- Safety Committee (IBC) protocols. It also develops policies and procedures to ensure agency compliance. The OSPUI website includes resources related to the use of human subjects and animals, as well as guidelines regarding ethics and conflict of interest in research.

Faculty applying for internal or external grants must address the use of human subjects, animals/animal care, radioactive materials, and other protocols on the Required Cover Page. If the project involves human subjects, animals/animal care facilities, radioactive materials, hazardous materials, biological agents or toxins, copyright or patent potential, utilization of space not currently available, or the purchase of equipment/instrumentation/software not currently available, then the investigator "must attach appropriate documentation of approval or justification for use/purchase" (i.e., IRB, IBC, IACUC, etc.). All ATU faculty, as well as staff, and students, who are conducting research using human subjects, animals, or biological agents must submit applications for review and approval to the IRB, IBC, or IACUC review boards, respectively, prior to conducting the research. These review boards comply with federal government standards to ensure ethical, responsible research. In addition, all researchers must complete and remain current regarding Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) training.

Once an award is made, financial oversight of the award is provided by the Budget Office within the division of Administration and Finance. The Budget Office follows the Uniform Guidance (2 CFR 200) in its management and oversight of such awards. Staff perform monthly reconciliations of grant budgets, oversee time/effort reporting, track all grant and cost-share expenditures, and submit financial reports and invoices to the respective granting agencies.

2.E.2: The OSPUI website includes several resources to assist faculty and staff in finding, applying for, and obtaining internal and external grants. Additionally, the OSP website contains several resources on proposal writing, a voluntary research collaboration database, and several research tools beneficial to those seeking grant funding.

OSPUI staff disseminate project opportunities to interested parties, provide training and professional development opportunities, provide both budget and proposal development, interpret solicitations, serve as liaison between faculty and granting agencies, maintain SPIN funding opportunity database (free to any faculty, staff, or student with an ATU email account), ensure grant proposals are finalized prior to submission, and submit proposals to external agencies.

In addition, Department Promotion and Tenure Committees (DPTC) perform annual formative peer reviews of teaching, scholarship, and service using guidelines created collaboratively between the department head and the DPTC and shared with faculty prior to review. The DPTC Peer Review Annual Evaluations promote ethical and responsible teaching, scholarship, and service and are included in the tenure and promotion process. The faculty handbook contains enforcement policies on faculty academic honesty and integrity. According to the handbook, "adequate cause for a dismissal will be related directly and substantially to the fitness of the faculty member in the professional capacity of a teacher or researcher."

Staff must abide by the policies and procedures found in the staff handbook. When conducting institutional research, staff are subject to laws restricting the dissemination of personnel records, including FERPA, FOIA, Right to Know, and Copyright with all policies accessible to the University from the University Counsel's webpage.

2.E.3: ATU has instituted policies and procedures that call for responsible acquisition, discovery and application of knowledge by its students. The Student Handbook and a dedicated web page contain a comprehensive student code of conduct with enforcement and appeals procedures, statements on copyright infringement, and a Code of Academic Integrity.

Some disciplines require students to obtain certification from the campus IRB for class projects. CITI training is also available to students and required for several classes. The ATU Library website contains a research help list that includes extensive resources on citations, writing, and plagiarism. The ATU Writing Lab and APEX Tutoring Services provide tutoring in proper citation and instruction in avoiding plagiarism. The ATU Writing Manual used for all Composition I and Composition II students also contains statements on documentation, collaboration, and plagiarism. ATU also has Turnitin plugged into Blackboard, and it is used widely by ATU instructors.

The University's first-year orientation courses (CSP 1013 & TECH 1001) and other discipline-specific orientation courses that mirror TECH 1001 assist entering college students in making a successful transition to the college environment, including emphasizing the importance of academic honesty. Both first-year courses cover library resources, which includes lessons on academic integrity (TECH 1001 Syllabus).

2.E.4: The development of student ethical perspectives is one of Tech's six general education goals. In 2016, the University's strategic plan goal 2.8 called for the development of both an ethics policy and revised academic integrity policy. In pursuit of this goal, in 2017 ATU created an honor code task force that included 12 faculty, 9 staff, and 10 students and was approved by the Board of Trustees in Spring 2019. While a formal honor code is still under deliberation, the taskforce created a revised Code of Academic Integrity that allows for institution-wide tracking and a standard appeals process. Faculty employ a range of academic sanctions for academic dishonesty, and the University has the option of assigning training modules from Judicial Educator.

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2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary

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

Summary

Many different components of Arkansas Tech University ensure that it conducts itself in an ethical and responsible manner. The university is transparent in its structure, offerings, costs and budgeting processes and is fair and ethical in its behavior. The governing board is autonomous and operates in the best interest of the institution. To verify the policies are followed, several processes are in place to monitor and address issues related to institutional integrity, including research compliance, conflicts of interest, and academic honesty.

Sources

There are no sources.

3 - Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources and Support

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

3.A - Core Component 3.A

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

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

Argument

ATU Abbreviations and Acronyms

3.A.1: Arkansas Tech University (ATU) ensures courses and programs are current and taught at the appropriate level through faculty-driven, ongoing program reviews, a robust curriculum approval process, and adherence to common transfer credit and credit hour policies.

Program Reviews

Faculty and departments follow a regular schedule of program reviews, as prescribed by the Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE), to monitor and guide the curriculum to meet the needs of students, the discipline, and employers. Programs that are currently accredited by specialized accrediting bodies follow their accrediting bodies' review schedules and processes. All other programs on both Russellville and Ozark campuses follow the ADHE academic program review schedule and process. The Office of Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness (OAIE) maintains program review schedules on their website. (See 4.A.1 for full discussion of program review processes.)

Curriculum Approval Policy & Procedure

The Course and Curriculum Review Policy guides curriculum changes and requires that "courses and curricula should undergo quality review, at a minimum, every three years." Faculty develop, review, and approve all additions or changes to the academic curriculum. Approval for new courses, course revisions, or program changes begins within the academic department based on disciplinary knowledge and program assessment findings. When establishing student learning outcomes, faculty have access to training materials in the use of Bloom's Taxonomy, which uses levels of performance. Examples of Bloom's use are seen here.

University forms assist in the development of curricular proposals with a series of questions on the

justification for the change and the impact of the change on staffing, other programs, or space allocation. All changes/additions outline how course assessment will occur and how it will align with the program outcomes, general education outcomes, and/or accrediting agency standards, as appropriate. Using research/assessment-based evidence, new courses and/or program change proposals demonstrate how the courses or changes fit the needs of the discipline and include a detailed assessment plan showing how student learning will be measured to demonstrate student success.

The Curricular Approval Process document outlines the review process: all program and course change proposals move from the department level to review by the dean of the applicable college, the OAIE, the Registrar, the Curriculum Committee (undergraduate level) or Graduate Council (graduate level). After approval by these bodies, the proposal moves to the Faculty Senate and finally to the Vice President of Academic Affairs (VPAA) (see 4.A.4 for detailed examples of the curricular process). An example of a course addition is found here. The Ozark campus Curriculum Committee follows a similar process for curricular changes.

Examples of curricular changes follow:

2017-2018

- ART Course Deletions
- EAM program change to ease stackable degree with Ozark
- PRHA course change in consultation with advisory board

2018-2019

- HIST course change resulting from two specific student learning problems

2019-2020

- EAM course change to add a prerequisite to senior seminar
- PRHA course addition responding to certification requirement
- MATH course additions responding to NCATE - NCTM report assessing their Math Ed program; analysis of SANKEY student-tracking diagrams for majors
- C&I program change resulting from faculty analysis of PRAXIS II test results

Transfer Credit & Credit Hour Policies

ATU subscribes to the Arkansas Course Transfer System (ACTS) to guarantee students equitable treatment for the transfer of applicable credit earned at other state institutions (demonstrates courses are current and at appropriate level of student performance). The ACTS System, maintained by the ADHE, provides a list of applicable courses and learning outcomes for courses typically used for general education and business courses. The ATU undergraduate catalog provides information on Transfer Credit and ACTS. The ATU Credit Hour Policy outlines requirements set forth by ADHE, HLC, and the U.S. Department of Education.

3.A.2: ATU articulates learning outcomes for each degree program at all levels, from certificates through doctorate, and organizes them by departments/colleges/campuses on the institution's assessment website. Each program develops an annual assessment plan with learning outcomes that reflect the level at which the courses are being taught, as illustrated in the learning outcomes for the BA and MS in Psychology, BA in Sociology, and MS in Applied Sociology programs. In the hard

sciences, the recently developed AS and BS in Cybersecurity offer examples of specific learning outcomes building upon earlier knowledge. These examples are available here.

In February 2014, the Graduate Council adopted learning outcomes in their assessment plan. Outcomes relate broadly to qualities of an ideal graduate student earning degrees at the master's, specialist, and doctoral levels.

3.A.3: ATU maintains consistent program quality and learning outcomes through our program review (detailed in 4.A.1), curriculum approval (detailed in 3.A.1), assessment (detailed in 4), faculty hiring (detailed in 3.C.3), and faculty evaluation processes (detailed in 3.C.4), which are used across all modes of delivery of courses. The University Course and Curriculum Review Policy requires that "[r]eviews of courses and the curriculum should be uploaded to Weave as evidence." Any changes from these reviews go "through the normal faculty governance institutional committees (i.e., General Education Committee and Teacher Education Council [when appropriate], Curriculum Committee, Faculty Senate, and Graduate Council)" (approved by the Faculty Senate in the May 2019 meeting).

Courses within departments that are delivered via multiple modalities maintain consistent student learning outcomes to ensure quality instruction no matter the campus or method of delivery (online, face-to-face, mixed delivery, Ozark, and concurrent). Examples of course syllabi for ENGL 1013 and BIOL 1014 from multiple modalities show faculty maintain consistency in shared student learning outcomes.

Courses delivered concurrently and online have additional procedures in place to ensure quality instruction, as described below.

Concurrent Courses

All concurrent classes, including online concurrent courses provided by Virtual Arkansas, mirror those taught on the Russellville and Ozark campuses. These courses share elements such as textbooks, learning outcomes, and final exams. Each year, all instructors attend an orientation session, this year held virtually via WebEx. Concurrent instructors have a specialized handbook and access to a Blackboard site containing training videos on grade submission, attendance accounting, etc., as well as links to forms and resources. Each department provides their own content or discipline-specific training. Furthermore, concurrent instructors, along with ATU faculty, receive a policy update correspondence so that concurrent courses and campus-based general education courses can implement course changes at the same time. The ATU Office of Concurrent Enrollment oversees consistency in policy communication. Students also evaluate concurrent courses through ATU's student course evaluations, which are administered every semester for every course section, maintained in the Admissions Office by the Associate Director for Enrollment, and provided to the appropriate ATU department head for review/action.

In conjunction with the Director of Curriculum and Instruction for Virtual Arkansas, ATU offered Quality Matters training for online courses in June 2020 to concurrent instructors based in southeast Arkansas. This training is equivalent to that offered at the Russellville campus by ATU instructional designers and provided professional training in course design.

Web Courses

In addition to the quality review all courses undergo with the program and curriculum review processes (detailed in 3.A.1), ATU maintains a web course development/redesigning process. Each

academic year the dean of eTech and ATU's department heads confer to determine which online classes will be developed or revised. Once a course is selected for development or revision for online delivery, the relevant department head assigns a faculty member, working with an instructional designer, to develop or revise the course. The College of eTech assists in the development of quality web courses in two ways. First, faculty can work with one of two full-time instructional designers to develop or redesign a web course at either the undergraduate or graduate levels. Multiple resources, including the Online Course Planning Document, the eTech Course Development Checklist, and the eTech Online Courses Design Guidelines, support this guided course development/redesign process. Additionally, ATU's Multimedia Coordinator works with faculty to produce videos (introductory and instructional) for online courses. The Multimedia Coordinator, in conjunction with the service Blackboard Ally, also manages ongoing efforts to add captions to videos to maintain Section 508 and ADA Compliance.

Training supports the development and teaching of web courses. ATU created its own online instruction/certification course to establish quality web course development and teaching. Every semester ATU's instructional designers and Multimedia Coordinator teach the eTech Certification Course, which is currently offered as a six-week hybrid class that includes three face-to- face meetings and three online meetings. Faculty participants learn about best practices for teaching and learning online. This course is also currently incentivized, with completers receiving $500 in their respective departmental budgets. Since Fall 2013, 127 completers have taken the course, including eight Ozark campus participants.

In 2017 ATU began training faculty and staff in the Quality Matters Course Design Rubric. The Quality Matters program provides national standards for course development of online courses to maintain standards for high quality and best practice. As of the end of the 2019-20 academic year, the College of eTech and the OAIE have paid for 37 faculty to complete the Applying the Quality Matters Rubric Course. Additionally, 13 faculty/staff have completed the Quality Matters Rubric Peer Reviewer course, and six faculty/staff have become Quality Matters Master Peer Reviewers. The OAIE maintains a listing of the QM trained educators.

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3.B - Core Component 3.B

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

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

Argument

[ATU Abbreviations and Acronyms](#)

3.B.1: ATU's general education program is rooted in the [University's mission](#) of "progressive intellectual development and civic engagement" through the following [general education goals](#):

- Communicate effectively;
- Think critically;
- Develop ethical perspectives;
- Apply scientific and quantitative reasoning;
- Apply the value of the arts and humanities; and
- Practice civic engagement.

To accomplish the above general education goals, ATU requires all students seeking the bachelor's degree or associate's degree to complete a [General Education Curriculum](#), designed to give students a solid foundation of broad intellectual knowledge for well-rounded citizenry and to form the basis for advanced academic study. The [General Education Committee](#), consisting of elected and appointed faculty members from every college, reviews general education curriculum proposals and forwards recommended curricular changes to the institution's Curriculum Committee as documented in the [Curricular Approval Process](#) (see 4.A.4). Current general education courses are reviewed every five years on a rotating basis in conjunction with internal program reviews. Recent reviews have resulted in the deletion of a general education goal on wellness concepts after [AR Act 1014 of 2005](#) reduced total degree hours to 120, and the [addition of civic engagement](#) to align with the revised University mission.

The University applies a range of assessment measures to determine student learning and maintain program quality. Criterion 4.B outlines general education program assessment methods, and 4.B.2

provides examples of use of outcomes for program improvement.

Every five years, the general education committee leads a focused review of the general education goals. The committee's minutes reflect its ongoing work, including recent changes to the committee structure, a new General Education Course Proposal Form, a general education program outreach initiative, and the adoption of an updated philosophy, as documented in the minutes and available to all faculty and departments on the general education website. In order to continually improve, during AY 2019-2020 the ATU general education program completed a program review under ADHE guidelines. The general education committee revised its "develop ethical perspectives" goal as one result of this program review.

3.B.2: The ATU general education program espouses a philosophy of "College, Career, Community" that aligns with the main components of the University mission. The courses that comprise ATU's General Education Curriculum also constitute the Arkansas State Minimum Core, established in accordance with Arkansas' Act 98 of 1989, which requires colleges and universities to identify "a minimum core of courses which shall apply toward the general education core curriculum requirements for baccalaureate degrees at state supported institutions of higher education and which shall be fully transferable between state institutions."

3.B.3: The Strategic Plan for Inclusive Excellence consists of two phases that will be implemented over the next five years and focus on the needs of faculty, staff, and students. Goal 2.2 of this plan specifically focuses on curriculum that will "[e]ncourage diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice content." Goal 2.3 follows with an assessment plan focused on diversity education. As a first step in moving towards a more inclusive curriculum, an institution-wide outcome will be added to all academic assessment plans in the next year to gather baseline data. Additional training on inclusive curriculum will follow in the coming year based on needs identified through assessment.

Courses & Fields of Study

All courses under the Social Sciences, Fine Arts/Humanities heading in the general education curriculum meet the goals of thinking critically and developing ethical perspectives. In addition, specific courses within the general education humanities and social sciences curriculum emphasize diverse populations, histories, and experiences, including Cultural Anthropology, World Literature, American Studies, and World History courses. Along with general education courses and courses offered in world languages (French, German, Japanese, and Spanish), there are courses across disciplines that recognize human and cultural diversity and provide students with growth opportunities and the skills needed to live and work in a multicultural world, including Introduction to LGBTQ+ Studies, Diversity and Inclusion, Sociology of Gender, Music of the World's Peoples, Teaching People of Other Cultures, Communication and Gender, Spanish-American Civilization and Culture, Organizational Globalization and Diversity, and Employment Law.

3.B.4: The University encourages and supports undergraduate, graduate, and faculty research, as reflected in Goal 1:9 and 1:10 of the strategic plan and Strategic Plan Year Three Goal 1.

Students' Creative Work

The following academic programs require undergraduates, graduates, and faculty to produce and show/perform original creative work on a regular basis. Within these programs, a variety of individual courses require creative work as well:

- [Department of Art](#);
- [Department of English and World Languages](#);
- [Department of Music](#); and
- [Department of Communication and Journalism](#).

Students' Scholarly Work

All programs emphasize students' academic contributions, as evidenced by these examples:

- [Community Engagement](#) (IPBL Projects);
- [Integrative Behavioral Neural Science Laboratory](#);
- [Senior Honors and Student Research Symposium](#);
- [Graduate Theses](#); and
- [Graduate Student Research Symposium](#).

Faculty Research

Faculty are evaluated annually on their teaching, service, and scholarship. For tenured and tenure-track faculty, the evaluation includes scholarly productivity. The [faculty handbook states that](#) tenured and tenure-track faculty will dedicate no less than 10% and no more than 30% of their workload to scholarship unless contracted to a special assignment.

The following sources provide evidence of ATU faculty research:

- [Academic Affairs Newsletter](#);
- [Professional Development Grant Reports](#);
- [Faculty Research Grant Reports](#);
- [Academic Accomplishments](#);
- [Online Research Commons](#); and
- [Awards History from the Office of Sponsored Programs and University Initiatives](#) (OSPUI).

During AY 2019, the Academic Accomplishments Report shows faculty presenting at 235 professional conferences, publishing 112 journal articles, book chapters and books, and exhibiting, performing, or producing 50 creative/artistic works. The University provides dedicated resources in support of faculty scholarship and research, as detailed in 3.C.5.

The [Interdisciplinary Research Series](#) (IRS) is a faculty-driven monthly forum for the sharing of original scholarship in all disciplines. Presentations for the past two years are [available here](#). In 2019, the IRS launched the Interdisciplinary Research Series Scholarly Writing Program, which meets monthly "to promote and facilitate research around campus. . . [and] provide mutual support and encouragement for completing scholarly writing projects."

To facilitate research projects, the [OSPUI](#) maintains an ATU faculty [research collaborative database](#) and supports faculty in locating, applying for, and securing external grants. ATU has received awards from several agencies (federal, state and private), including the U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Institutes of Health (through Arkansas IDeA Network of Biomedical Research Excellence), Arkansas Department of Education, Arkansas Department of Career Education, Division of Children and Family Services, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, Arkansas Department of Transportation, the Robotics Education and Competition Foundation, and Entergy,

among many others. Since its formation in Fall 2016, the OSPUI has worked with numerous ATU faculty and staff to facilitate the awarding of $18,646,544 to the University.

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3.C - Core Component 3.C

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

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

Argument

[ATU Abbreviations and Acronyms](#)

3.C.1: ATU is an equal opportunity employer with an active affirmative action plan that "contains a set of specific and result-oriented procedures to apply every good faith effort to achieve prompt and full utilization of minorities, women, those with disabilities or veterans at all levels and all segments of its workforce where deficiencies exist. Additionally, ATU will continually monitor and evaluate its employment practices to ensure that they are free of bias or discrimination based upon race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, disability, genetic information, or veteran status" ([staff handbook, 2019, p.9](#)).

According to the Russellville campus [faculty handbook](#), the University is a "multi-purpose, state-supported institution of higher education whose primary objective is to provide strong undergraduate and graduate programs and activities, especially for the students and communities in the northwest quadrant of Arkansas, which will enable its graduates to make significant contributions to the economic, social, political, and cultural development of the region, state, nation, and world…" Arkansans (in-state residents) [consistently account for over 92%](#) of total enrollment at ATU each fall.

The 2019 Almanac of Higher Education [recognized ATU for its position](#) as a national leader in increasing its African-American student population. ATU experienced a 64 percent increase in African-American students, moving from 529 in 2010 to 870 in 2017. That was the 16th-greatest increase in the United States during that time frame. No other Arkansas institution ranked inside the top 100 in the U.S. for gains in African-American students.

Recent ethnic demographic data show the following percentages:

- 79% of ATU students and 87% of faculty are Caucasian; 83% county and 72% state residents are Caucasian.
- 6% of ATU students and 4% of faculty are African-American; 3% county and 16% state residents are African-American.
- 8% of students and 2% of faculty are Hispanic/Latino; 10% of county and 8% of state residents are Hispanic/Latino.
- 2% of students and 9% of faculty are of Asian/Pacific Islander ethnicity; 1% of county and 2% of state residents are Asian/Pacific Islander.

ATU has seen an increase in minority faculty over a five-year period (Fall 2014-Fall 2018):

- African-American faculty increased by 175% (from 4 to 11).
- Hispanic/Latino faculty increased by 25% (from 4 to 5).
- Asian/Pacific Islander faculty increased by 100% (from 13 to 26).

To increase the diversity of faculty, Goals 1.4 and 2.1 of the University's 2019 Strategic Plan for Inclusive Excellence specifically address faculty representation: "Increase targeted recruitment of diverse faculty and staff members by advertising and promoting positions with well-known groups and publications that focus on marginalized groups (i.e., Black Doctoral Network, American College, Personnel Association for LGBT Awareness, etc.)" and "Create minority faculty-to-student mentorships to provide an inclusive climate and support mechanism for incoming and existing minority students." In pursuit of these goals, in Fall 2019 the University required that all academic faculty and staff search committees "should include a minimum of three individuals with one person from a diverse or underrepresented background" and contain a "gender balance within reason."

3.C.2: In 2018, student enrollment was 12,101 as compared to 8,814 students in 2008. In 2008, ATU campuses (Russellville and Ozark) had 288 full-time faculty, 130 part-time/adjunct faculty, and 435 full-time administration and staff. As of Fall of 2018, those numbers have grown to 371/234 (combined campuses) and 560 respectively, reflecting growth rates of 29% in full-time faculty, 80% in adjunct faculty, and 29% in staff/administration (see Faculty Demographics chart). Full-time faculty are instructors of record in the majority of classes on both campuses. The student-to-teacher ratio increased from 17.2: 1 in 2008 to 17.8 :1 in 2018, supporting the assertion that we engage sufficient faculty to instruct our course offerings. ATU prides itself on small class sizes with low student/faculty ratios.

ATU has a firm commitment to teaching, and the faculty teach a 4:4 load unless dictated otherwise by program accreditation or special assignments (for a list of these special assignments, see here). The AY 2019-2020 faculty course release data for committee leadership (85 course credit hours) and program directorships/coordinators (442 course credit hours) illustrate the faculty administrative workload.

A knowledgeable and committed faculty and staff are also critical to effective operations. The guidelines in the ATU Faculty Handbook direct faculty hiring, both full-time and per-course faculty, who teach face-to-face, hybridized, online, or dual credit courses. The handbook provides qualifications for rank, hiring, promotion, and tenure, in keeping with HLC assumed practices.

Faculty oversee the curriculum in their programs and determine the rigor of the courses. Departmental faculty initiate all curriculum changes or additions, which then move forward for

approval by the University Curriculum committees and consideration by the Faculty Senate prior to transmittal to the VPAA (curriculum review process is detailed in 3.A.1). New programs undergo a similar process, with final approval from the ATU Board of Trustees.

Faculty also participate in the assessment of student learning in their programs and work together to create program learning outcomes and to discuss improvements to their curriculum based on annual assessment results. Faculty determine the program and course-level student learning outcomes, collect and review the assessment data, and report their findings and any changes to their department curriculum committee and OAIE through the Weave assessment system. Course syllabi contain the student learning objectives. The Office of Institutional Research distributes student course evaluations online, and faculty can view results via Evaluation Kit links in the campus internal portal, OneTech. Faculty further assess student learning by serving as the primary major advisors to students after they complete 60 hours of coursework.

Standing Committees for all aspects of teaching and learning include faculty from every college, as reflected in our standing committee membership list. Faculty also serve on search committees for new faculty and administrators and participate in the annual review of faculty and in the decision process for promotion and tenure. Sixty-six faculty members also serve as program directors and area coordinators, thus carrying significant duties in the administration of academic programs.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, faculty and administrators helped students develop skills to be adaptable to a rapidly changing environment through a number of initiatives such as providing temporary flexibility in grading policies that are student-centered and moving to all online spring and summer classes, as well as emergency funding, food banks, and wellness checks for students, which the President discussed in her State of the University communique on April 16, 2020.

3.C.3: The dean, department head, and VPAA review all faculty qualifications prior to any new faculty being hired. The Faculty Minimum Qualifications Policy and Verification Form details this process, ensuring minimum qualifications are met or alternative credentials are acceptable. Instructors teaching in concurrent programs must meet the same qualifications as ATU faculty: "No less than a master's degree that includes at least eighteen graduate hours of completed course work in the subject area of the endorsed concurrent enrollment course."

To earn graduate faculty status, departmental faculty apply via this form, along with a curriculum vitae to the Graduate Council for review and approval. If approved, faculty must reapply every five years to maintain graduate faculty status.

The Credentials section of the Weave Assessment System maintains faculty and staff credentials. For the faculty, this list allows the monitoring of course assignments to ensure that appropriately credentialed and trained faculty are matched to courses they are qualified to teach (credentials available upon request).

3.C.4: Students, peers, and direct supervisors evaluate instructors annually as detailed in the faculty handbook and mandated by 2010 Arkansas code (ADA 6-63-104).

Students evaluate each course every semester using an evaluation inventory developed by faculty and adopted by the Faculty Senate (Faculty Senate Minutes April 11, 2017). Faculty have electronic access to the results of the course evaluations and include them in their annual portfolio.

Full-time faculty develop and maintain a portfolio which includes documentation of productivity in

teaching, scholarship, and service. The current guidelines (Faculty Portfolio Guidelines-Faculty Handbook excerpt) for development of the portfolio were adopted by the Faculty Senate at the May 1, 2019 meeting.

The Departmental Promotion and Tenure Committee (DPTC) and department head evaluate the portfolio as outlined in the faculty handbook. The DPTC comprises all tenured faculty members in the department. Each tenured, tenure-track, and instructor-track faculty member's portfolio is peer reviewed annually by the DPTC and evaluated by the department head. In collaboration with the department head, the DPTC creates written departmental guidelines for job performance for annual evaluation of teaching, scholarship, and service. Examples of University DPTC guidelines from across disciplines are available here.

Both the DPTC and the department head provide written evaluation of teaching, scholarship, and service for all full-time faculty members, regardless of rank, tenure, or status. All tenure-track faculty and instructor-track faculty seeking promotion to senior instructor benefit from an additional third-year performance review.

The department head or program coordinator evaluates adjunct instructors annually; these evaluations include required annual classroom observations. The relevant department head or a designated full-time faculty member in the department evaluates concurrent instructors once per year per course, as required by the ADHE. The department head evaluates online instructors using the guidelines established by the Online Committee.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, after the transition to remote learning mid-semester, the Faculty Senate voted Spring 2020 student evaluations of faculty be optional for inclusion in annual reviews and toward tenure and promotion, based on the faculty member's decision.

3.C.5: Faculty at ATU have a variety of resources available to remain current in their disciplines and adept in their teaching roles.

Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) has a robust year-round schedule of events "to encourage, support, and enhance teaching effectiveness" for all faculty including concurrent and adjunct faculty. CETL offers faculty professional development days at the beginning of the Fall and Spring semesters, and webinars, invited speakers, and faculty-led trainings throughout the semester. For example, faculty had access to 19 events during the Fall 2019 semester and 44 events during the Spring 2020 semester.

To handle the abrupt move to all-online classes in the middle of Spring 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, Academic Affairs, in conjunction with the Office of Information Systems (OIS) and CETL, held a series of trainings and provided tech support to help faculty make a smooth transition to the online environment while supporting their students. Additionally, CETL, eTech staff, and OIS established a Blackboard-based "ATU Faculty Community," which is a resource site for online teaching, best practices, and discussions that provides access to instructional designers, instructional technologists, and subject matter experts.

CETL provides a week-long New Faculty Orientation and a year-long New Faculty Academy program for full-time faculty, while new adjunct faculty have access to a Blackboard orientation course and a "Meet and Greet" session. An Adjunct Support Committee includes full-time faculty

who work with adjunct faculty in preparation and support of their new teaching role. The committee reports to the Faculty Senate through a senator from the adjunct ranks. Teaching assistants also receive training through CETL.

Faculty Professional Development Funds

College-level professional development funds, supplies, and services are based on the number of faculty in each college. During FY 2019, the colleges funded $92,237.06 in conference travel grants. FY 2020 funds (Operating Budget, pp. 20-21) were set at a total of $82,063 for the six colleges on the Russellville campus.

Department-level funds vary per department based on each dean's determination with funds averaging $250 per full-time faculty member per academic year. During FY 2019, departments funded $127,276.23 in conference travel grants supplemented by foundation funds, as documented here. The Ozark campus designated $40,950 in travel funds for their faculty in FY2019 (2019-2020 Operating Budget, p. 36-37).

In addition to funds made available for research through the supplies and services budgets of the various colleges and departments, ATU provides the following dedicated resources in support of faculty scholarship:

Professional Development Grants

The Professional Development Grant Committee, who oversees the application process and distribution of the Professional Development Grant funds, require grant awardees to submit a written report at the end of their grant period. Grant awardees and their reports are available on the University research web page. For FY 2020, the University allocated $92,596 for Professional Development Grants. For FY 2019, 37 grants were awarded.

Faculty Research Grants

ATU supports scholarship by providing Faculty Research Grants, as described on page 57 of the Faculty Handbook. Each year the University allocates funds to stimulate activity in research through mini-grants for small or pilot research projects. For FY 2020, the University allocated $46,694 for Faculty Research Grants, with the maximum amount per project at $2,000. Applications must describe the project in detail, identifying the problem and purpose of the study and specifying separately the amounts requested for equipment, travel, materials, clerical or laboratory assistance, and when applicable, reduction of teaching load, with an explanation of each item of the expenditure.

External Grants

The Office of Sponsored Programs and University Initiatives (OSPUI) supports ATU faculty and staff in securing external funding for research and collaboration projects. OSPUI aims to offer expertise in grant administration and provide a clear avenue for the submission process. The award history and recent awards pages illustrate the research productivity of the faculty, resulting in awarding of $18,646,544 to the University since OSPUI's formation in 2016 (as detailed in 3.B.5). To facilitate research projects, OSPUI maintains an ATU faculty research collaborative database.

Interdisciplinary Research Center Grants

The Interdisciplinary Research Center grant program was established to enhance faculty and departmental efforts for professional growth and development through funded research projects. These grants support interdisciplinary faculty initiatives in all academic disciplines, with a priority given to pilot projects designed to collect preliminary results.

Sabbatical Leave

Tenured faculty with six or more years of employment with the University may apply for a sabbatical assignment for the purpose of enriching their ability in research, scholarship, or artistic or creative pursuits. After a merit-based, rigorous application process, Academic Affairs may award sabbatical leave for a period of a semester up to one academic year. Upon return to their position, the faculty member will submit a full report of their activities to their department head and the VPAA. The University routinely supports three to four faculty sabbaticals at a cost up to $70,000 a year.

3.C.6: Faculty make themselves available to students by maintaining scheduled office hours and being responsive to online students via e-mail. The faculty handbook provides guidance to faculty on scheduling offices hours in the office hours policy. Each faculty member is expected to schedule six office hours per week reserved specifically for consultation with students. (Office Hours - Faculty Handbook excerpt). Faculty maintained their accessibility to their students during the March 2020 transition to remote learning according to ATU survey results.

The faculty handbook also guides faculty on developing effective syllabi. Guidelines include an expectation that instructors will provide their names, contact information (phone and e-mail), and office information. Since syllabi are provided to students in Blackboard and as handouts in face-to-face classes within the first week of the semester, students can easily reference this information when they need to contact their instructor.

The eTech checklist, used to review all eTech online courses (see 3.A.3), instructs faculty to provide contact information and the timeframe in which they will respond to emails and post grades.

3.C.7: Every position at ATU has an official job description with credential requirements. The Department of Human Resources collects the certifications, degrees, licenses, and resumes for each employee and matches them to the specific position that the employee holds. Banner, the University information system, catalogues this information, and Weave, our accreditation system, verifies credentialing of all employees, as detailed in 3.C.3.

Each department's needs determine staff development. Departments host their own training and work with staff members to seek professional development related to their functional area. Recent professional development travel for ATU staff can be found here and here.

The Office of Financial Aid training schedule and credentials can be found here. Financial Aid conducts inter-office training for any new regulations and trains new hires on completing the FASFA specific to each aid-year to allow them to learn the specifics of each FASFA question. Each Fall and Spring, entry-level professionals attend Arkansas Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators training to ensure knowledge of the financial aid system across the state of Arkansas and then communicate this information to the rest of the department. Senior leaders in the department attend the Southwest Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators Conference to learn the federal updates to regulations and bring back and disseminate this information.

The APEX Center student tutors who provide tutoring services for the undergraduate population receive training in the responsibilities of their position and must demonstrate competency in the subject area while maintaining a GPA above a 3.0. Tutoring training materials are available here. Additionally, the graduate assistants who supervise student tutors receive training for certification as academic coaches. Graduate students in English, who are trained by a Writing Center Coordinator and a Supervisor of Graduate Teaching Assistants, staff the writing center and online writing center, which are housed in the Department of English and World Languages. This Fall ATU is launching a pilot 2020 academic coaching program to serve entering freshmen with an ACT composite of 17. Invitations have been sent to all faculty interested in seeking academic coaching training through the APEX (tutoring) Center.

The Academic Advising staff regularly attend conferences, including the Arkansas Academic Advising Network and the National Academic Advising Association conferences. Each academic advisor has an academic program expertise area, and through on-the-job training, staff rotate training responsibilities on the degree requirements for their expertise area.

The Division of Student Affairs has created a professional development plan that each department uses to identify every staff member's professional competency for development based upon the NASPA/ACPA Professional Competency Rubrics.

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3.D - Core Component 3.D

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

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

Argument

[ATU Abbreviations and Acronyms](#)

3.D.1: ATU offers a wide range of student support services to help [our students](#) adapt to university life, complete a degree, and transition into the workforce or graduate school.

The Division of Student Affairs provides for the needs of specific populations of ATU students while also providing typical [campus life and support activities.](#) Their services enhance the experience of international, underrepresented, commuter, veteran, and differently-abled students while providing wellness, safety, [recreation and intramural activities](#), as well as opportunities for connection with like-minded peers through roughly 120 [registered student organizations](#) (RSOs), [university supported organizations](#) (USOs), [civic engagement, community service, and volunteerism](#). As a [residential campus](#), the Russellville campus also provides opportunities for [Living Learning Communities](#) (LLCs) for students with common interests.

International and Multicultural Student Services contains two departments: [International Student Services](#) and [Diversity and Inclusion](#) (DDI). International Student Services (ISS) serves international students specifically and provides programs and activities to aid in cross-cultural interaction, knowledge of immigration regulations and requirements to maintain legal status, and awareness of campus resources. DDI aids students within underrepresented populations and marginalized groups throughout their college experience. DDI also provides training and cultural celebrations to create an inclusive and supportive environment that embraces multiculturalism (as detailed in 1.C and 3.B).

[Commuter Student Services](#) (CSS), located in the Department of Campus Life, focuses on the needs of adult and off-campus students to foster a connection to the ATU community. In addition to providing a commuter student lounge where students can gather and form connections, CSS hosts a schedule of events each semester. [Veteran Services](#), another office of the Department of Campus Life, aids veterans, guardsmen, reservists, and their dependents in accessing all educational benefits to which they are entitled and providing support through resources and programming so they may fulfill their educational goals. ATU's commitment to serving our military and former military students is illustrated by our being awarded the [Military Friendly Schools designation](#), which is awarded to institutions of higher learning that both embrace military students and dedicate resources to ensure

their success in the classroom and after graduation.

The Division of Student Affairs and its departments respond to students' needs by administering assessments and then adapting services to meet those needs. For example, Counseling Services in the Department of Health and Student Wellness identified program improvement strategies based upon assessment results and needs from students from their annual client survey. Based on student need, the department offered a counseling group for student-athletes the following year, developed a well-being scale to provide more feedback about student overall progress in functioning, programming for diverse populations, and created a biofeedback lab to assist students with stress management. In March 2020, the Health and Wellness Center began offering tele-heath appointments and provided links to resources for coping with stress in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent transition to remote instruction.

Disability Services, another office in the Department of Health and Student Wellness, helps students who have a documented limitation acquire accommodations that will facilitate their learning in the classroom and their life on campus. University Testing assists students by administering entrance exams as well as providing accommodations for students who may need more time taking an exam. In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, Campus Recreation updated their website with "Things To Do At Home", a list of resources and tips for healthy lifestyle, exercise, nutrition, and mental health.

Additionally, there are several student success programs of particular interest to the first-generation students operated out of the Division of Academic Affairs and the Division of Enrollment Management.

> Norman Career Services (NCS) offers a variety of programs and services to aid students in acquiring the skills needed for their employment goals. Programs and services include career fairs, workshops with employers, on-campus job interviews, self-assessments, online job searching platform, and interview resources. NCS also employs a team of students as peer career advisors to aid students in developing resumes as well as exploring majors and careers.

> Financial Aid provides assistance to students by administering financial aid packages in accordance with University, state, and federal regulations. This department also offers Tech$ense, a site that outlines different areas of financial literacy. After the student completes each section, they are able to take a quiz and apply for a scholarship.

3.D.2: ATU provides learning support services in many ways. The assistance begins before student enrollment and continues beyond student graduation. The Academic Advising Center (AAC) offers support to the most at-risk students by providing assistance to those on probation to help them improve their class standing from new student orientation through their first 60-credit hours.

New Student Orientation

Phase 1 of the orientation process is TECHAdvise, a half-day advising and registration program for incoming first-year students. Students and their parents and families come to campus to learn more about academic expectations for their college experience, register for fall term classes, and meet with various campus offices such as Financial Aid, Residence Life, and Student Accounts. To make the advising and registration process early and easy, TECHAdvise Sessions occur March through June. Students who cannot attend a TECHAdvise session participate in an individual advising appointment from June through August. (See 3.D.3)

ATU offers an additional orientation program, TECHConnect, to help students transition to college successfully. TECHConnect is Phase 2 of the orientation process: a three-day experience for first-year and transfer students once they are on campus to learn about campus resources, prepare for academic expectations, and make connections with peers. The Fall 2019 TECHConnect schedule is available here.

International and graduate students have their own specific orientation processes. International Student Services offers orientation sessions focusing on acclimation to a new country as well as the incoming student experience, to welcome international students. Since most of our graduate programs are online, graduate students participate in an online orientation using NearPod presentations. In addition to resources, the graduate student orientation includes modules with assessments on the graduate handbook and policies.

Additional resources are available to orient online students. A student resource module, developed by experienced online instructors, appears in every course via Blackboard, our course management system. This module includes relevant information that students will need to successfully complete an online course.

Financial Aid and the AAC assist students with financial advising as well as creating a tentative schedule and enrolling the students in the upcoming semester. Immediately before their first semester, new students attend an orientation course entitled "New Student Orientation." Once the semester begins, students receive continuing support by participating in a TECH 1001 course or a departmental orientation course.

In addition to TECHAdvise and TECHConnect and our supplemental orientation programs, since 2008 all undergraduate students must take an orientation course during their first semester of enrollment (Fall or Spring). Students will take CSP 1013: Principles of Collegiate Success or TECH 1001: Orientation to the University, OZRK 1001, or a discipline-specific orientation course that is aligned with the goals of the college success courses. All orientation courses share a common core of topics intended to prepare students for the successful transition to the college environment, including managing time, setting academic goals, studying and note taking, test preparation, and choosing majors and careers.

The Admissions, Academic Standards, and Student Honors Committee, whose minutes can be found here, determines the method for placing students into their required math and English courses. For unconditional admission, students must earn a composition ACT score of 19 or above, composite ACT score of 990 or above on the RSAT scale of 1600, and a minimum grade point average of 2.0. Entering students who are between an ACT of 15 and 18 or a composite SAT of 830 and above, or a composition Next Generation ACCUPLACER score of 229 and a GPA of 2.0 can be conditionally admitted. Beginning Fall 2020, math and English remediation was streamlined into one-semester courses similar to the regular for-credit sections, thus shortening the path to graduation and improving retention rates. Students who score below a 19 on the English section of the ACT, below a 510 on the writing section of the RSAT, or below a 246 on the Next Generation ACCUPLACER must enroll in the co-requisite English remediation course. Students who score below a 19 on the math section of the ACT, below 500 on the RSAT, and below 250 on the Arithmetic section of the ACCUPLACER must enroll in the co-requisite college mathematics course. The admissions section of the undergraduate catalog lists all other math placement score levels. Since not all entering students are freshmen, transferring students can view online information that is pertinent to them through links on the Registrar's Office website. These same students can also view transfer credit from other colleges and universities in Arkansas.

TRiO Programs

The University also has four TRiO programs, assisting at-risk and first-generation students. Two Upward Bound programs serve eight nearby high schools in predominantly low-income areas. These programs offer college prep, tutoring, advising, and a summer bridge program to help 120 students. A separate Veteran's Upward Bound program seeks out 125 veterans from the River Valley not currently enrolled in college. The program provides support, opportunities, skills, and study habits in academic areas such as math, foreign language, composition, laboratory sciences, and literature. The Student Support Services program serves as a natural bridge between Upward Bound and college, as similar assistance is provided to 140 low-income, first-generation, and/or differently-abled students. The program's mission is to assist students and increase retention. Most recently, ATU was awarded a Child Care Access Means Parenting and School (CCampis) grant, which allows 50 Pell-eligible students who have children to receive funding for childcare at nearby daycare facilities. The U. S. Department of Education funds the Child Care grant and the TRiO programs. These programs, in total, help 435 at-risk students find support and funding to achieve academic goals.

Tutoring

Once students have matriculated, the APEX Center provides academic coaching and tutoring services for students in two locations on the Russellville campus. Students serve as tutors for a variety of courses six days a week. In addition, APEX offers academic coaching with certified coaches trained through the National Tutoring Association as well as group study sessions and test preparation. Online tutoring is available through Blackboard Collaborate. Tutoring is also available in specific labs across campus in the following subjects: accounting, math, the sciences, music theory and ear training, statistics, world languages, and writing.

Outside of APEX, additional writing tutoring is available through The writing lab and online writing lab, both of which are staffed by graduate students in the Department of English and World Languages. Students who are taking classes in world languages can seek tutoring from graduate students in the world languages lab. Students who are non-native English speakers may receive additional help and training through the ATU English Language Institute.

Our online students have access to the online writing center via Blackboard. To further support our online students, the College of eTech provides digital resources and faculty support. The Ross Pendergraft Library and Technology Center has access to full-text digital libraries and databases for online students. Technical support for online students is detailed in 3.D.4.

3.D.3: AAC enrolls all first-time entering freshmen, transfer students, and newly admitted returning students who have earned fewer than 60 hours. All incoming freshmen complete their first academic advising appointment and register for classes in the AAC. Undeclared, general education associates, and all bachelor's degree seeking students, (excluding the College of eTech and all other associate degrees) continue to be advised by the AAC's professional staff until they have earned approximately 60 credit hours, after which a faculty member in the student's major serves as academic advisor for the student until they graduate. All graduate students are assigned an advisor from the full-time faculty teaching in the discipline of the student's major. The advisor provides the initial and continuing academic and career advising for the graduate student.

For entering students, the AAC coordinates the TECHAdvise sessions referenced in 3.D.2 to familiarize students with the campus and register for classes. The agenda for TECHAdvise 2019 Schedule included a welcome session, a college or departmental meeting, a session on involvement

presented by Campus Life, and group advising during which students enrolled in their Fall term classes. In the afternoon, students toured residence halls and finished any campus business such as completing financial aid paperwork or getting their student ID. Meanwhile, their parents or guardians attended concurrent sessions.

Since the focus of the TECHAdvise sessions is enrolling students in classes, the group advising sessions play a major role in the program. During the college-specific TECHAdvise sessions, students are grouped by ACT score and assigned to an advisor. For all the general TECHAdvise sessions, students are divided by college and major and assigned to an advisor. Advisors begin communicating directly with their assigned students about a week and a half before each session, reminding them to complete their Pre-Advising Questionnaire (PAQ) and clarifying any information they need to build a course schedule, such as a change in major, AP/IB credit, and concurrent credit from another institution.

Each advisor-led advising session begins with an introduction and an explanation of the advisor's role and the purpose of advising. The advisor provides a review of academic vocabulary (prerequisite, credit hour, degree plan, etc.) to ensure all students have the basic knowledge necessary to understand their course schedule. The advisor also hands out individualized packets containing math placement guidelines and the student's ACT score, an 8-semester contract, conditional forms (if necessary), the Fall course schedule, and a degree map for the student's specific degree plan. An academic notes page with important information from the student's PAQ (such as previous credit and specific schedule requests, like only wanting classes on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday) completes the packet.

In 2020, due to the COVID-19 crisis, all advising sessions were virtual through a combination of email and Blackboard. Each student received an individualized email with their attached Fall schedule and steps to complete their advising process. Blackboard information included videos on how to understand their schedule, academic vocabulary and other important campus community information. Each student had seven days to confirm their schedule via an assessment module in Blackboard. The PAQ was incorporated as part of the sign-up process through Self-Service. Students could not move on to pick a session until they submitted the PAQ.

Each semester after the 11th class day, the AAC aids current students who will earn approximately 60 hours by the end of the semester in the transition to a faculty advisor. The department of a student's major field of study will normally assign the student to a faculty member who will act as the student's academic advisor. The head of each department serves as the secondary advisor for all students housed within that department. The student reports for academic advising and subsequent enrollment in courses at the time and place designated for registration.

It is the responsibility of the University, through the deans of the colleges, department heads, and the AAC, to provide academic advisors actively interested in the guidance of students and adequately informed in University requirements and advising procedures.

The CETL oversees training of faculty advisors, including a Blackboard-based faculty advising learning module and a May 2020 Professional Development Workshop (postponed to Spring 2021 due to COVID-19) on developing departmental advising philosophies and objectives. A University-wide Advising Handbook for Faculty, developed in AY 2018-2019 by an ad-hoc committee of faculty and staff, was being tested during AY 2019-2020 for full implementation in Fall 2021. Faculty advisor resources are available online through the Office of Academic Affairs. Professional advisors are fully trained and accredited. (See 3.C.5)

ATU's student record system, Banner, provides resources to facilitate an effective advising process. All students must have an advising code to register for the upcoming semester, and the advisor should only provide the code after conducting the advising session. Furthermore, students and advisors have access to a realtime degree audit system in Banner called DegreeWorks that maps each student's curriculum, GPA, standing, holds, and courses left until graduation.

3.D.4: The University has a robust infrastructure to support student learning and faculty teaching, from technical and library support to facilities, labs, and studios.

The OIS provides 24/7 support and help for both students and faculty. On the Russellville campus, the 41 computer labs contain over 1108 computer work stations. OIS/Support services evaluates all campus computer labs annually to provide the maximum benefit for learning purposes. The labs contain a core of commonly used software, and additional software is provided at faculty request. The 24/7 Campus Support Center provides assistance with connectivity issues, Blackboard needs (discussed below), and other technical issues. They can provide assistance through hands-on service, online support, email, telephone, and/or remote access. OIS also serves as the support for our online eTech courses.

The University provides course shells for all online and face-to-face classes in our online course management system, Blackboard. OIS automatically populates these shells with enrolled students, updates enrollment nightly, and integrates the system with appropriate learning management tools from academic publishers. ATU uses the lecture-capture system Kaltura for its online teaching platforms and trains instructors in Kaltura's use.

Ross Pendergraft Library and Technology Center (RPL) serves as a library with labs, meeting rooms, study rooms, and open study spaces in addition to book collections, interlibrary loans, and many online databases and LibGuides. Their services provide both on-site and off-campus assistance to students and instructors to facilitate learning. The library has a staff of seven full-time librarians, one unclassified staff member, eight support staff, and three part-time extra labor employees. The library's budget (divided between operating expenses and holdings) falls under ATU's Educational & General Expenses budget, which is funded primarily through tuition and secondarily through state funds. The library also draws funds from a modest $25,000 endowment that provides about $900 annually toward the purchase of print resources. To ensure good stewardship of the funding, the Arkansas State Library provides access to several research databases and e-book collections through its Traveler Library Consortium. ATU also participates in two regional multi-type library consortia: Lyrasis and Amigos, both of which provide user discounts for institutional subscriptions to research databases. The ATU library is a member of ArkLINK, a statewide library consortium that facilitates the sharing of research resources through interlibrary loan. Additionally, the library is shrewd in its selection of vendors when purchasing journal subscriptions, database access, and print resources. Our acquisitions department compares several potential sources for research materials in order to find the best price.

RPL provides strong support for effective teaching and learning. ATU librarians actively engage in liaison duties with the teaching faculty and provide in-class research instruction to students at all stages of their academic careers. Last year, ATU librarians participated in 109 course/ specific research presentations in which students learned research skills specific to their field of study. Additionally, librarians have created more than 100 research guides tailored to the needs of student researchers across all disciplines. The library offers a variety of student study spaces, including 10 group study rooms and the 900 sq. ft. multi-function Tech Learning Center. The library also boasts a state-of-the-art media lab for video editing and production as well as the ATU audio lab, which offers

a sound-recording studio accessible to all students. The library's Curriculum Materials Center offers education students access to over 9,000 children's and young adult books and multimedia resources to develop curricula for student teaching. The library assists distance learning students with resources that are on par with services available to on campus students and provides access to university and college libraries closer to in-state students through ARKLink.

Further, ATU faculty librarians serve alongside teaching faculty in University governance. For example, librarians serve in regular appointments on the University's Curriculum Committee and on the Graduate Council. Librarians have also taken on regular classroom teaching assignments for the College of Education, the Department of Music, the Department of English and Modern Languages, and interdisciplinary courses like TECH 1001.

As described in 3.C.5, CETL offers a year-round schedule of events "to encourage, support, and enhance teaching effectiveness." This resource hosts weekly webinars, faculty discussion forums and professional development workshops, and a thorough new-faculty development program for both full-time and part-time faculty.

In addition to the computer labs referenced above, the Russellville campus features 53 teaching and research labs and studios, including 15 science labs (e.g., chemistry, science education, anatomy, microbiology, geology, physics, fisheries science, and wildlife labs) as well as clinical skills and simulation lab areas for Nursing. Mechanical Engineering and Electrical Engineering have five labs each. In addition, the College of Education houses a teaching simulator lab, English and World Languages houses a languages lab, and the Hospitality Administration Program has a full teaching kitchen. The Department of Health & Physical Education oversees four racquetball courts, two gyms, a fitness studio, a dance studio, a fitness center, and a human performance room.

The Department of Music contains two large and two small group rehearsal spaces, a performance auditorium, 16 practice rooms, a digital recording studio, and two piano studios. In 2019, ATU remodeled Witherspoon Hall, the performance space for the Department of Music, with a $365,000 upgrade. From Fall 2017 to Spring 2020, the Department of Music held 174 recitals and concerts in Witherspoon Auditorium.

The Techionary Theater hosts an auditorium that seats 144 audience members and has classroom space, a makeup studio, a costume-building shop, and a set shop. From Fall 2017 to Spring 2020, the theatre program produced 12 stage productions in the Techionary theater.

The Department of Art boasts a state-of-the-art building, Norman Hall, with a painting studio, graphics lab, art education studio, ceramics studio, and game and interactive media design lab. In addition, the Art Department has a 3D & Game Design Building, the Rock House, for additional lab space that ATU plans develop within the next year. The Norman Art Gallery has exhibited 23 student and professional shows and four virtual exhibits since 2017.

Our Department of Nursing maintains 46 clinical sites, as well as an on-campus skills lab, a hi-fidelity simulation lab, and a health assessment lab.

The agriculture department operates the Outdoor Learning Laboratory that provides effective learning opportunities and hands-on experience. The facility and demonstration laboratories include a 300-acre farm, beef operations, swine operations, a horticulture center with five teaching greenhouses, and a farm classroom facility. Agriculture students benefit from the support of industry partners, including Farm Credit of Western Arkansas, Farm Bureau of Arkansas, JBS, and

Tyson.

In Fall 2019, ATU opened a new cybersecurity lab funded by a one-time gift from the State of Arkansas and housed within the Department of Computer and Information Science. The lab is built in pods that enable team-based activities such as hack-a-thons and programming contests.

Along with the theater, our Techionary building houses the Tech Museum, where viewers have the opportunity to view rotating artistic and historical exhibits. Additionally, the museum provides museum classes, a quiet reading room in the research library, and a vast array of materials related to the development and maintenance of museums to teach students. Also included in the holdings are a significant selection of Native American, archeological, anthropological, and Arkansas-related items. A list of the Tech Museum's exhibits from 2017-2020 is available here.

The Ozark campus has a variety of labs and industry-level workspaces for their associate degree and certificate programs. As a provider of two-year career degrees and in service to the University's mission, the Ozark campus provides specialized lab spaces that are reflective of the career degrees offered. These include certificates of proficiencies, technical certificates, and associates of applied science degrees in Air Conditioning / Refrigeration, Automation, Cosmetology, Computer Information Technology, Business Technology, Banking Operations, Logistics, Welding Technology, Collision Technology, Automotive Technology, Practical Nursing, Registered Nursing, Paramedic, Nursing Assistant, Occupational Therapy Assistant, Medical Assisting, Physical Therapist Assistant, and Cardio Sonography.

Under the umbrella of Arkansas Tech University–Ozark campus, Arkansas Tech Career Center (ATCC), a secondary provider of stackable industry credentials and concurrent credit offerings, provides specialized lab spaces in automotive technology, welding, construction trades, culinary arts, computer science, machining operations, automation, and allied health programming.

Industry advisory boards evaluate Ozark campus and ATCC programming and lab facilities/equipment annually, considering aspects such as equipment and appropriateness of the lab space. Based on these evaluations, the Ozark campus establishes recommendations and priorities for equipment purchases and suggestions for environmental safety. In addition, each career degree program undergoes evaluation of lab space/equipment periodically as required by specialized accreditations, state agency, or the program review process.

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3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary

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

Summary

Teaching and learning are at the core identity of Arkansas Tech University while scholarship and service are viewed as valuable and critical elements to support that mission. Arkansas Tech University ensures that courses and programs are current through effective and thorough curriculum and program review processes. Undergraduate, graduate, and certificate programs have clear and differentiated student learning goals that are consistent across the institution and across all modes of delivery.

The general education program is appropriate for the university's mission, offering broad intellectual content that is assessed with direct and indirect measures.

Faculty and staff are subject to review through annual processes that are clearly documented to ensure appropriate quality and level of qualifications. Faculty and staff have opportunities for professional development, recognition and professional advancement.

A variety of support services are provided to suit the needs of the student population. Process, resources, and services assure that students are served at a high level. Infrastructures are in place that support effective teaching, learning, and guidance for research and creative endeavors. ATU offers many co-curricular activities and experiences for its students and is committed to supporting students' academic endeavors inside and outside of the classroom.

Sources

There are no sources.

4 - Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

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

4.A - Core Component 4.A

The institution ensures the quality of its educational offerings.

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

Argument

[ATU Abbreviations and Acronyms](#)

4.A.1: Arkansas Tech University (ATU) maintains a regular schedule of program reviews for all degree and certificate programs (as detailed in 3.A.). In keeping with the institution's mission to provide progressive intellectual development, all programs undergo an in-depth review every six to ten years. The review processes provide periodic evaluation of every academic department/college's effectiveness in contributing to ATU's [Mission](#) and [Strategic Plan](#). The 2016-21 [Strategic Plan Goal 2, Item 5](#) specifically directs development of strategies to review and modify all academic and co-curricular programs and general education curricula by examining program standards, relevance, and currency.

Program Review

The Vice President of Academic Affairs (VPAA) [delegated oversight of the process](#) of academic program review to the Office of Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness (OAIE) in the Spring of 2017. Two primary types of program review occur at ATU: specialized accreditation and Arkansas

Department of Higher Education (ADHE) reviews. The OAIE website maintains a schedule showing specific dates for each academic program review (specialized, ADHE). Additionally, we are currently piloting an internal departmental program review process to provide an additional review at the mid-point between external reviews which can sometimes be ten years apart. Faculty can access all forms used in the ADHE and departmental program review processes through the OAIE website. For the year, the assessment management system of each review stores self-study documents, external reviewer reports, and institutional responses to reviewer reports; departmental faculty and academic affairs administration have access to all documentation.

Both specialized accreditor and ADHE reviews involve external peer reviewers who complete final reports (samples offered above) that they submit to the institution. The University, typically through the department and/or the college, responds to the reviewers' findings and submits all external reports and institutional responses to ADHE. For ongoing program improvement, department faculty, department heads, and deans consult the external peer review reports, detailed in the institutional response report written after each external program review.

Specialized Accreditation Reviews

Programs that are eligible for specialized accreditation maintain the schedule approved by their accrediting body. Re-accreditation visits occur every five to ten years and involve external reviewers or teams assigned by the accrediting body. Processes vary by discipline but typically examine all curricular offerings, faculty credentials, facilities, and other resources pertinent to appropriate degree delivery. Examples of specialized accreditation review reports follow:

- AACSB - College of Business Continuous Review Report (all degrees) - 2019-20;
- CAEME - BS Emergency Administration and Management - 2018-19;
- CAHIIM - BS Health Informatics - 2019-20; and
- NASAD - Art Department Programs - (all degrees) 2018-19.

Departments respond to findings from external reviews and incorporate them into the work of the department through an institutional response report that is forwarded to ADHE with the external reviewers' reports. An example of actions taken as a result of external accrediting reviews is the effort of Emergency Management faculty, responding to a recommendation to "define on-line direction," to improve their online delivery through Quality Matters training. Several faculty have taken the training, and they report improved online and face-to-face course development.

Similarly, the Art Department responded to feedback from their accreditation visit regarding NASAD health and safety standards by installing eye-washing stations and accessible kill-switches for power equipment in several rooms, and the BS in Health Informatics has begun discussions to separate the budgets for the BS and MS degrees in order to distinguish monies allocated specifically to each program as recommended by their accrediting body.

ADHE Reviews

Academic programs not specially accredited by an external accreditor perform a state-mandated ADHE program review involving external reviewers. Programs complete a self-study guided by a template that examines all aspects of the program. ADHE requirements specify that program reviews occur every seven to ten years. Programs completing the ADHE program review must engage two external reviewers: one reviewer comes to the campus to review and meet with faculty, students, and administrators, and the second reviewer completes an online review and

coordinates with the on-site reviewer to have any questions addressed. Representative reports to ADHE from external reviewers follow:

- AAS Business Technology 2019-20 (Ozk);
- AA General Studies 2019-20;
- BS Chemistry 2019-20;
- BA Sociology 2018-19;
- BS Agriculture Business 2018-19; and
- MA English 2018-19.

Findings from program reviews of non-specialty accredited programs have resulted in proposed changes such as amending the data collection of general education outcomes; instead of individual instructors scoring assessments, the General Education Committee will supervise a pool of faculty from across the University who will score assessments according to standard rubrics. This change will help the General Education Committee examine common outcomes across disciplines.

The MA in History received review feedback that the curriculum needed a course on sources and methods. The department responded by proposing a catalog change to combine HIST 6003 "Historical Methods" and HIST 6053 "Historiography" into a single required course. Additionally, they used the program review to discuss how to encourage more students to take the thesis option rather than the comprehensive exam. The BS in Chemistry's reviewers cited that the program lacked a systematic assessment program, so the department has increased its efforts to revamp learning outcomes, map the curriculum, and identify the assignments/measures that will allow authentic assessment of student learning.

Departmental Mid-point Reviews

Many recent specialty and ADHE program reviews cited a need for more robust outcomes-based assessment processes, thus prompting the development of the departmental mid-point review process. In 2018, the OAIE began a pilot departmental mid-point review process that will become a part of the regular cycle of program review in 2020-21. This review will occur at the midpoint (or fifth year) of the external (specialized or ADHE) review and is designed to aid program quality and currency of each degree's academic offerings, learning outcomes, and resources. Programs that are reviewed by an external accreditor on less than a six-year cycle or required to file yearly reports with a specialized accreditor are exempt from the departmental program review process. Administration of this new system is delegated to the Student Learning Assessment Committee and is being phased into the schedule as programs approach the midpoint from a previous external program review. The departmental mid-point review follows a self study process similar to that of regular academic program review, aided by a template and other resources. Here are sample reviews from the MA TESOL and the BS Geology programs.

Programs completing this abbreviated review will submit their materials to the OAIE, which assigns a subcommittee of the Student Learning Assessment Committee to act as program reviewers. The subcommittee applies a rubric to evaluate the degree's contribution to the University mission, student learning outcomes, curricular currency, assessment results, and faculty quality and sufficiency. The OAIE sends reports generated by the internal review for use in program improvement prior to the ADHE or specialized accrediting body review and annual assessment plans to the department head and dean. Although response to the feedback is optional, the University encourages departments to use it to improve processes, curriculum, and resources in preparation for their next formal program review.

Ozark Campus

The Ozark Office of Academic Affairs coordinates program review on the Ozark campus, which follows a process similar to that on the Russellville campus. Communication about changing requirements and regulations occurs through regular meetings between OAIE, the Russellville Office of Academic Affairs, and the Ozark Office of Academic Affairs.

4.A.2: The course catalog and the University website describe University policies regarding academic credit awarded for College Level Examination Program (CLEP), Advanced Placement (AP), and International Baccalaureate (IB) programs. New students must submit an application for admission, college entrance exam scores, a record documenting completion of secondary requirements, and proof of immunization documenting 2 MMR. Students with concurrent college credit must also submit an official transcript from the institution that granted credit. For AP, CLEP, or IB credit, students must submit original score reports or a certified copy from their high school prior to credit being awarded.

Transfer Students

ATU subscribes to the Arkansas Course Transfer System (ACTS), a state-wide articulation agreement that assists students from the high school level through the adult workforce in planning their academic progress. ACTS informs students of the transferability of courses within Arkansas public colleges and universities; it also guarantees the transfer of applicable credits and equitable treatment in the application of credits for admissions and degree requirements. Students may complete specified general education courses anywhere in the public system as well as many courses in the degree/major that have been pre-identified for transfer. ACTS does not guarantee course transferability for courses listed as "No Comparable Course." Transferability of courses taken prior to January 1, 2007, is at the discretion of the receiving institution. ACTS abides by Arkansas Act 747 of 2011, which established a statewide common course numbering system for postsecondary courses.

The Office of Admissions provides a variety of tools and resources to assist students who transfer to ATU, including a dedicated transfer counselor. ATU offers the Tech Transfer Tracker, a free online transfer-evaluation system, to give prospective students an estimate of credit they could receive for previously taken courses and examinations. Transfer students admitted for study at ATU must provide official transcripts from accredited institutions to the Office of the Registrar, which evaluates the credits and determines the articulation of courses to satisfy general education courses.

International Students

ATU requires international students who have previously attended college either in the U.S. or abroad to submit official transcripts from all institutions they have attended. Students seeking transfer credit must contract with a credential evaluation company authorized by ATU (list provided) and submit catalog or course descriptions from the transferring institution. Students with fewer than 24 semester hours will also submit a high school transcript or its equivalent as well as scores from an entrance exam (ACT, SAT, or ACCUPLACER). The Office of International Admissions provides assistance in transferring credit for international students.

Prior Learning Assessment

The Russellville campus offers a Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) process that awards up to 12 hours of upper-division credit for relevant work experience, professional development, or military

training. Every student requesting credit for prior learning must enroll in PS 3001 and work with a faculty advisor to complete a portfolio demonstrating the college-level learning that has resulted from experiences outside a formal academic framework. The portfolio documents experiential knowledge that is equivalent to upper-division college-level credit. Credit for PS 3001 applies only to the Bachelor of Professional Studies degree and cannot be applied toward any other program. Using a rubric, two instructors certified by the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning evaluate the contents of the student created portfolio. The University awards credit only after completion of the class, compilation of the portfolio, and evaluation by the certified instructors, the dean of the college, and the registrar.

The Ozark campus also provides PLA credit for students accepted into its certificate and degree programs. Detailed guidelines of how to apply for this credit, as well as a list of approved PLA items, are available to students through an Application for PLA Credit. Students can use a variety of certifications, CLEP exams, or licenses to apply for PLA credit.

4.A.3: The registrar administers the policies and practices detailed in the course catalog to evaluate all transfer credit. Transfer students must submit official transcripts from all previously attended institutions for use in the evaluation of transfer credit.

ATU follows all ADHE guidance on accepting transfer credit. The Office of the Registrar maintains close control of the process and policies for evaluating the quality of transfer credit. ACTS provides common course numbering and transfer of credits for students seeking to transfer within the state, particularly for general education courses. The registrar works closely with department heads and faculty to evaluate credit for courses taken out of state and courses not covered by ACTS. The registrar uses the College Source Transfer Evaluation System that allows department heads and deans to evaluate individual courses for acceptance of transfer credit. Department faculty and department heads vet transfer articulation agreements to ensure quality and rigor of credit accepted towards an ATU degree. The University also subscribes to several services for the evaluation of credit, particularly those from international universities (See 4.A.2).

4.A.4: Faculty maintain oversight of courses, including rigor and expectations for student learning, and regularly review them as part of the program review process, departmental meetings, and peer evaluation.

Curricular Oversight & Expectations for Student Learning

Each department is responsible for setting the pre- and co-requisites appropriate to the curriculum in their discipline. The course catalog identifies prerequisites for each course, which are also noted within degree maps and Degree Works software. Department, college, and University curriculum committees review and approve prerequisites, rigor, and student learning outcomes for all new and substantially revised courses. When assessment and best practice warrant changes to curriculum, departments follow the process for curricular change. A faculty Curriculum Committee oversees the processes for program proposal, course additions and deletions, and minor cosmetic changes. Forms for each of these processes are available to the faculty and departments on the registrar's website and require a chain of approvals and documentation, from the department head to the OAIE, to the dean, registrar, and VPAA as well as ADHE (if a new program/proposal) before the change is included in the course catalog as part of the curriculum. The registrar also maintains a public archive of all curricular changes going back several decades.

The course catalog and academic advisors, both faculty and professional, guide students in selecting

and registering for their courses. ATU monitors satisfactory academic progress (as defined by federal requirements and minimum GPA requirements to remain in good academic standing and identified in the undergraduate and graduate catalogs) and enforces expectations for overall levels of student achievement.

To maintain rigor in individual courses, faculty follow guidelines in the faculty handbook for several standard elements required in the syllabus, such as learning objectives, course justification, and assessment methods, all of which are designed to provide awareness of the level of rigor expected within each course. For consistency, both face-to-face and digital syllabi include specific required items such as course number, title, name of instructor with office hours and contact information, catalog description, required texts and bibliographies, course objectives and assessment methods, academic policies, and course content. Finally, if approved for general education, the course must include a description of how it meets general education objectives.

All syllabi for a departmental curriculum are part of ongoing program review and are examined at a minimum every five years prior to/in conjunction with both departmental and external academic program review as a means of assuring academic program quality, coherence, and currency. The Departmental Promotion and Tenure Committee and the department head examine the syllabi of individual faculty as part of the annual review of teaching.

Access to Learning Resources

The institution maintains authority over access to learning resources by assigning a unique identifier to all students, faculty, and staff. The unique identifier ensures that those who access campus and learning resources are active members of the University and receive access appropriate to their role. These resources include the Ross Pendergraft Library, Student Health and Wellness Center, and the course management system Blackboard Learn.

Dual Credit Courses

All concurrent students (dual credit) enroll in courses that provide an approved collegiate education. Students may take courses at their high school; online with a credentialed, ATU-approved instructor through Virtual Arkansas; or on either ATU campus. Dual credit courses require the same student learning outcomes as other ATU courses (see Criterion 3.A.2) and are assessed equivalently. The department head or a designated faculty member supervises concurrent faculty, conducting periodic inspections or observations and reviewing course syllabi to maintain consistency between modes of delivery.

Faculty Qualifications

A policy established by the Faculty Senate and Graduate Council and hiring processes managed by the Human Resources Department through their CornerStone software system ensure faculty qualifications. The policy is in alignment with 2016 HLC guidelines for qualified faculty. The University has established a minimum qualifications policy that qualifies faculty by academic credentials in accordance with HLC standards or qualifies a faculty member through alternative qualifications (i.e., relevant experience directly related to the course/discipline). Faculty teaching graduate coursework are approved to teach in one of three categories: doctoral graduate faculty, regular graduate faculty, and non-regular graduate faculty.

According to the Concurrent Enrollment Faculty Guide, an instructor for ATU-approved dual credit

courses is a person "who meets or exceeds the qualifications required under the Higher Learning Commission and the Arkansas Department of Higher Education" and is qualified for appointment to the full-time faculty of the institution proposing to award credit. Concurrent faculty are also subject to the faculty minimum qualifications policy.

4.A.5: ATU maintains external accreditations with nineteen separate accrediting bodies for 51 academic degrees and three licensure programs across both campuses, including specialized accreditations for electrical and mechanical engineering (EAC of ABET), all degrees in the College of Business (AACSB), Nursing (ACEN), and the Occupational Therapy Assistant (ACOTE). All programs are in good standing with their representative bodies. The OAIE website maintains a full listing of externally accredited programs. The University encourages any academic program that can obtain external accreditation to seek that mark of distinction as a measure of the quality of our academic offerings.

4.A.6: Various academic departments incorporate professional exams, certifications, or licensures in their curriculum for use as indicators of student success. The BS in Health Information Management reports student success data annually to its accreditor, Commission on Accreditation for Health Informatics and Information Management Education using a pass rate of 75% of graduates taking the RHIA exam as a success indicator. They also list employment in the field of 75% of graduates as a further indicator of success. The College of Business was commended during its recent Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business review for requiring that students in its Business Ethics course earn an ethical leadership certificate through the National Association of State Boards of Accountancy Center for Public Trust. The Department of Nursing maintains success indicators on their website for Graduation and Retention rates, NCLEX Pass rates, and job placement. The BS in Chemistry has long used the American Chemical Society Diagnostic of Undergraduate Chemical Knowledge as a senior level exam to gauge both student learning and curricular effectiveness. Various programs in the College of Education employ Praxis II subject area and Praxis II pedagogical assessments (Principles of Teaching and Learning [PLT]} as part of their curriculum and as a measure of student success and curriculum review.

Several programs on the Ozark campus, such as the Paramedic/EMS program, regularly incorporate professional exams, certifications, and licensures in their curriculum. At the end of the paramedic course in December, the students sit for the National Registry of EMTs' paramedic exam to become licensed paramedics. They also complete a skills exam which includes six testing stations. The Associates of Applied Science in Cardiac Sonography program uses Cardiovascular Credentialing International. Students must take the Registered Cardiac Sonographer exam prior to graduation, usually a few weeks into their last semester. Student fees pay for the exam, which is used as a mastery final exam for Echocardiography Concepts and Physics Concepts. Finally, the Associate of Applied Science in Human Services utilizes the Human Services Board Certified Practitioner exam as an exit exam. This is the national standard, which is used in associate through doctorate programs. As part of the yearly assessment reporting plans, degree programs will be required to include pass rates as an institutional outcome. ATU encourages all degree programs to follow the example of the Department of Education, Nursing, and other programs that regularly report this information and to include this information on their public-facing web pages.

In addition to efforts by individual academic departments, Norman Career Services tracks student success via Handshake's First Destination Survey, which students take when they pick up their regalia. Data obtained through the survey includes employment status after graduation, job title and location, and graduate school application/attendance. Norman Career Services shares the First

Destination Survey data with deans and department heads and sends detailed reports for individual majors to each department head to use in ongoing planning and assessment of curriculum. The First Destination Survey contains representative data, offered in aggregate as well as at the college and department level.

Data obtained via Handshake for the last six semesters offer the following response overview. Student response to the survey is growing, and academic departments are using this information as well as developing other means to maintain contact with and identify the success of their graduates. Several departments partner with the Alumni Office or have created LinkedIn alumni groups to keep in contact with their graduates.

Handshake End of Semester Survey Response (Fall 2017 - Spring 2020)

# of students invited to respond	response rate *(n)*	% still looking *(n)*	% not seeking *(n)*	% working *(n)* (includes working, continuing education, military, and volunteering)
Spring 2020				
981	32.4%	33.6%	1.3%	65.1%
Fall 2019				
674	78.3% (528)	34.5% (182)	1.5% (8)	64% (338)
Spring 2019				
1081	85.7% (926)	32.9% (305)	0.9% (8)	66.2% (613)
Fall 2018				
664	76.7% (509)	30.1% (153)	1.8% (9)	68.2% (347)
Spring 2018				
908	80.8% (734)	37.5% (274)	1.8% (10)	60.8% (446)
Fall 2017				
647	78.4% (507)	33.3% (169)	1.6% (8)	65.1% (330)

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4.B - Core Component 4.B

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

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

Argument

ATU Abbreviations and Acronyms

4.B.1: OAIE oversees all assessment-related activities for both the Russellville and Ozark campuses' academic programs, general education, co-curricular programs, and administrative institutional effectiveness efforts. The OAIE manages assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals as well as institutional effectiveness processes to support the University Mission of providing student success, access, and excellence.

The OAIE serves the University by providing guidance, resources, and advocacy for the individual programs of the University. A full-time assessment officer, who is also a faculty member, manages the office, which is also guided by both a Student Learning Assessment Committee and the Institutional Effectiveness Assessment Committee which both meet regularly. Minutes from these assessment committees demonstrate work in the assessment of student learning as well as institutional best practice. The office administers an Assessment Grant program; assists academic degrees with specialized accreditation, ADHE reviews, and internal program reviews; maintains accreditation and review cycles and documentation; and provides assessment tools and resources for assessment practices, including an assessment academy in conjunction with the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning.

Assessment grants are open to all members of the ATU community and are worth up to $5000. Typical projects over the past three years have included the development of new assessment practices, pilots of new assessment tools, and travel to assessment-related conferences. Each project requires a summary with plans to incorporate project presentations in the end-of-year professional development day. The OAIE website also offers many tools and resources for the assessment of student learning at ATU. Under the heading of Degree Program Assessment, there are links to each degree program's student learning outcomes.

The University assesses student learning goal outcomes in three areas. The first is assessment of the general education curriculum (See 3.B.1). The general education program provides a foundation of knowledge common to educated people and develops an individual's capacity to expand that knowledge over their lifetime. The respective departments measure general education outcomes for individual classes with guidance from the OAIE and the General Education Committee. The department overseeing each course in the general education curriculum develops measures for a

specific set of Course, Program, and General Education (CPGE) criteria.

The University applies multiple measures to assess the general education goals each semester. A master assessment plan for the general education goals is available here. First, we use direct and indirect measures to assess general education courses across general education goals and report results through the CPGE assessment database. A report of the CPGE data on the general education goals from 2008-2019 is available here. Second, we do a sampling assessment each semester using rubrics to gather direct measures of general education program learning outcomes. Third, the General Education Committee conducts surveys and focus groups of current general education students to understand their perceptions, knowledge, and expectations of the program. Fourth, we conduct exit surveys with all students at the end of the general education program for indirect measurement of learning outcomes and perceptions. We report all data to the OAIE, department heads, program coordinators, and the General Education Committee to prompt adjustments in teaching effectiveness, programming, and curriculum.

Faculty members teaching each general education course report student achievement on pre-determined measures by the end of the semester of instruction. At the end of each semester, OAIE creates reports on student achievement in the approved general education courses for the General Education Committee as well as pertinent departments. The results of several course assessments of general education goals follow:

- Applying Scientific Reasoning (GEOL 1004 & GEOL 1014);
- Thinking Critically (HIST 1903, 2003, 2013, 2023, 2043);
- Communicating Effectively (ENGL 1013 & ENGL 1023); and
- Ethical Perspectives (COMM 1003, 2003, 2173).

The recent (2019-2020) program review of the AA General Studies degree, which is made up largely of general education courses, pointed out a need to change the manner in which general education is assessed. Already aware of this need, the General Education Committee has created a two-year assessment plan for general education to help the institution shift the discussion away from individual faculty members' interpretation of outcomes and assessments and toward common understanding of how to measure those outcomes as programmatic goals.

The second area of assessment for student learning outcomes deals with program goals. Annual program assessment follows a regular cycle of Fall assessment plan review and updating, data collection, and data analysis. An assessment cycle calendar for all programs is available on the OAIE website. For unaccredited programs, faculty design assessments in consultation with the OAIE. Accredited programs submit program goals in accordance with their accreditor requirements. The Weave software platform houses the results of these assessments regardless of accreditation status. In the assessment software, programs align their departmental mission with that of the institution and use the mission to remind them of the focus of their curriculum. Using the Weave platform, faculty and staff of each program can define and access program outcome goals for each year (or semester). Programs then input an action plan, the measure to be used for each goal, and supporting documentation. Assessment outcomes and supporting documentation are stored indefinitely. Following are examples of the full annual reports, additional examples are available upon request:

- BSBA All programs
- MS Strength and Conditioning Studies;
- BS Biology;
- BA English; and

- AAS Law Enforcement.

Student learning assessment also forms the basis for curriculum changes. Using research or assessment-based evidence, new courses and/or program change proposals are required to demonstrate how the courses or changes support student learning. The following forms demonstrate use of data to support curricular change:

- HIST course change resulting from two specific student learning problems aided students in preparation in research skills;
- EAM course addition to add a necessary skill prompted by industry needs;
- PRHA course addition responding to certification requirement of an accrediting body;
- MATH course additions responding to NCATE - NCTM report assessing their Math Ed program; analysis of SANKEY student-tracking diagrams for majors; and
- C&I program change resulting from faculty analysis of PRAXIS II test results to better meet the competency needs of Elementary Education majors.

The third area of assessment is academic program review (see 4.A.1). ADHE requires non-accredited academic programs to be reviewed internally and by two outside reviewers every seven to ten years. These reviews include but are not limited to program need/demand, curriculum, faculty, resources, course delivery methods, student outcomes, and recent/planned program improvements. The OAIE assists departments by offering an overview of the process and maintains a calendar showing which programs are up for review each year. Both the OAIE and the ADHE maintain records of these reviews. Accredited programs typically follow mandated program reviews and also house their records with OAIE and ADHE.

Opportunities for co-curricular learning occur throughout the Division of Academic Affairs. Discipline-specific student organizations, honorary societies, theatre productions, concerts, and art shows are just a few of the activities that allow students to gain leadership, teamwork, collaboration, and event planning skills to strengthen and complement their in-class learning. Work on assessing these activities is in early stages and is being configured to contribute data and to complement the general education program. Outcomes aligned to the same facets being assessed through general education classes will contribute a complementary co-curricular, applied aspect to the student learning picture.

Currently, theatre productions receive informal feedback and assessment after productions and once a year they host a scholar from the American College Theater Festival (ACTF) who critiques every aspect of the production and recommends one or more parts to go on to the ACTF Festival. The Department of Art curates an Annual Juried Student Competitive using an outside juror and competition awards. Numerous music competitions result in student assessment/ranking during auditions by outside evaluators. The assessment of co-curricular activities thus far has not yielded data that has been in a format to allow improvement in student learning. However, the OAIE staff are working with faculty to develop a plan and instruments that will allow measurement and improvement for the academic co-curricular activities.

Since 2017, almost 200 ATU students have studied abroad on either long or short-term opportunities to a variety of countries. The Study Abroad office assesses the development of skills that parallel general education goals. Effective communication, critical thought, development of ethical perspectives, and application of the value of arts and humanities are all areas of growth through this life-changing experience. A survey with questions directly linked to the assessment goals for participants in long-term study abroad were created. Due to the inconsistent number of students

taking the pre- and post- surveys we are not able to use the data to make any improvements in student learning at this time. However, we hope to be better able to see growth and make enhancements in the future.

Student Affairs designs and administers its own co-curricular assessment. These assessments include service program evaluations, attendance/participation statistics (e.g., On Track), attitudinal/satisfaction surveys, and assessment program guidelines. Each department within the Division of Student Affairs submits an annual assessment plan, identifying at least two service and program evaluation goals and at least two student learning outcomes goals in its co-curricular offerings to be assessed during the academic year. The Dean of Student Engagement, the Assistant to the Vice President for Student Affairs, and the Division of Student Affairs Assessment Committee review these assessment plans and provide feedback. The departments upload their plans to the Weave system to give staff workspace to update assessment findings throughout the academic year. In addition, the Dean of Student Engagement and the Assistant to the Vice President for Student Affairs host quarterly open labs for all staff within the division to update assessment findings. Examples of these assessment plans include those from the Department of Residence Life, Counseling Services within the Department of Student Wellness, and Title IX within the Department of Student Conduct. The Department of Student Conduct regularly tracks student recidivism and sanctions in order to identify trends for use in ethics and civic engagement programming or interventions by other Student Affairs departments. As the fiscal year comes to a close, the division requires departments to submit year-end efforts regarding their co-curricular assessment work and plans for the next fiscal year. The Dean of Student Engagement works with the departments to align their work with the University's general education learning outcomes.

The Division of Student Affairs Assessment Committee includes representation from division staff members, including graduate assistants, new professionals, midlevel professionals, and senior-level professionals. A faculty member of the Department of Student Affairs Administration (formerly College Student Personnel) serves on this committee.

4.B.2: The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning. Department heads and program assessment committees review the assessment data annually and take internal steps to adjust and improve curricular offerings. Several university-wide assessments provide data (e.g., NSSE) for improving the learning experience at the University, college, and departmental levels.

An example of changes made based on assessment processes is an overhaul of the first-year composition curriculum in response to CPGE assessment data suggesting students often had problems "supporting an argument with appropriate research" or "integrating source materials fluently and ethically." Therefore, instead of organizing instruction around rhetorical modes, such as definition or classification, composition courses now organize teaching around genres, types of documents students may be asked to compose during their college career and beyond, such as arguing for a position or proposing a solution, and the research component of the course is spread over the course of the semester rather than limited to the last month. Additional motivation for the change in method included a desire to promote community engagement and active citizenship through service-learning research projects in conjunction with the general education goal to "practice civic engagement." Another example of changes based on this process is the redesign of Introduction to Biology in response to assessment data based on the general education goal to "apply scientific and quantitative reasoning."

Each department maintains some form of curriculum and/or assessment committee to analyze the

previous year's data and implement curricular changes. Departments use the data collected the previous year to make changes when warranted and to discuss the areas in which curriculum needs improvement. Most departments do not keep minutes of these meetings but do document planned improvements within the Weave assessment system. The Student Learning Assessment Committee, whose members come from each of the seven colleges, reviews the annual assessment reports of individual colleges, marking items of note such as gaps in data or incomplete reports. The committee provides feedback to department heads to share with their faculty and deans.

Several academic departments have revamped their assessment processes, thus gathering data for further improvements of their curriculum. They have developed a program-wide set of rubrics to standardize their assessment and identify strengths and weaknesses. A sampling of Weave assessment reports shows the work that is being done to ensure a quality curriculum. The Biological Sciences degree has identified gaps in field techniques and the need for a more accurate assessment method for evaluating microscopy tools. In the Department of Art, a recent assessment grant for incorporating iPads into the assessment of student artwork and gallery feedback has assisted a refocus on specific outcomes. The College of Business, an AACSB-accredited program, uses faculty-developed, college-wide rubrics to assess student achievement. Through use of their Professionalism rubric, they were able to add several activities to support student learning about professional dress and speech.

ATU has participated yearly since 2017 in the Beginning College Student Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE). Every two years, ATU administers the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) to monitor student trends and progress on achieving institutional goals of increased participation in high impact practices, civic engagement, and increased student-faculty interaction in educational pursuits. Both instruments allow comparison of changing student perceptions from those gathered on the BCSSE during orientation to those from their lived experience in the Spring semester of their first year.

Results from the BCSSE 2018-NSSE 2019 Combined Report of precollege standing compared to standing in the Spring of the first college year show that for supportive environment, ATU exceeds students' high school experience. For learning strategies, collaborative learning, and discussions with diverse others, the ATU experience is consistent with that of high school. Quantitative reasoning and student-faculty interaction need improvement to exceed the precollege levels. The Center for Community Engagement and Academic Outreach has used results from both their program assessment and the NSSE data to demonstrate student growth in both the Interdisciplinary problem-based learning courses and the co-curricular area of civic engagement.

The Division of Student Affairs uses assessment data to make changes in their programs and improve student learning through use of both program review and annual assessment. The Department of Residence Life held 981 academic progress conversations with first- and second-year students living in the residence halls during the Spring 2019 semester, using these conversations to gather details about students' academic experiences and provide academic success resources. Residence Life also developed new lesson plans for residential community meetings that responded to the themes of the Spring academic progress conversations and implemented the plans during the Fall 2019 semester. Additionally, the Department of Student Wellness used information from a Spring 2018 survey of 336 students living in the residence halls to make several changes and improve student learning related to health-related topics.

4.B.3: The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the widespread participation of faculty and relevant staff members. The OAIE regularly

sponsors and provides professional development opportunities on assessment topics. Faculty and staff from both campuses are sponsored to participate in workshops offered by the Arkansas Association for the Assessment of Collegiate Learning and the HLC annual conference as well as specialized training on general education through the Association of General and Liberal Studies. While the OAIE advises and guides assessment at many levels, the departments, staff, and faculty that offer specific programs design and drive the processes and methodologies of the programs, as the following paragraphs demonstrate.

An approved roster of courses that meet state and institutional requirements makes up the general education program. The General Education Committee, consisting of faculty representatives from the colleges teaching general education courses, manages the program. Each department that offers general education courses designs and implements CPGE assessments of general education goals for their courses. Currently, the faculty elect a majority of the General Education Committee members; three other members appointed by the VPAA are also required to be faculty members. In Fall of 2019 the Faculty Senate approved a proposal from the General Education Committee to increase committee membership, along with a longer tenure in the chair-ship of this committee in order to better administer multi-year improvement initiatives.

The VPAA appoints representatives of each college via delegation to the college deans and Chancellor of Ozark, most of whom are faculty with assessment experience, to the Student Learning Assessment Committee. The Director of the OAIE, who maintains a faculty appointment, chairs the nine-member faculty committee, which oversees the continuous improvement of all academic programs and monitors student learning outcomes through program review and annual assessment of degree programs.

Departmental faculty design and measure program assessment, including student outcomes. All new curriculum and course proposals from an academic department require an assessment strategy (e.g., CP in Psychology, Program Proposal-BS Applied Statistics, Program Change-BS Mathematics). The departmental faculty, usually in collaboration with the OAIE, design and approve the proposal and the embedded assessment. Program reviews are departmentally driven and written by faculty; the department identifies and recruits outside program reviewers (see 4.A.1). The department controls all assessment measurements, monitoring them via the Weave assessment system, and adjustments to program goals and measures.

The Division of Student Affairs uses a framework, developed through a review of promising practices through the Student Affairs Assessment Leaders professional association, as well as the Council on the Advancement of Standards (CAS) Self-Assessment Guides. This co-curricular assessment process involves the Division of Student Affairs Assessment Committee, assessment leaders within the individual departments, and the Dean of Student Engagement. The Division of Student Affairs Committee includes faculty representation through the Student Affairs Administration Department (formerly Department of College Student Personnel).

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4.C - Core Component 4.C

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

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

Argument

ATU Abbreviations and Acronyms

4.C.1: Consistent with its mission, ATU has defined goals for student retention, persistence, and completion. To create appropriate goals, the strategic plan mapped out a five-year blueprint for growth and improvement. Using the national graduation rate average as the benchmark, ATU's objective is to increase the graduation rate by a minimum of one percentage point per year; this has been achieved each year for the three-year and four-year graduation rates, and is trending upward for the six-year rate despite a slight dip from 2018 to 2019. The University aims for a first-time, full-time first-year to second-year retention rate of 77% on the Russellville campus (it was 69.31% from fall 2018 to fall 2019). The goal for student completion at the four-year mark is 32% (it was 43.73% in 2019), and the six-year mark is 46% (it was 41.44% in 2019). On the Ozark campus the goal for retention for first-time, full-time first year retention is 60% (in 2019 it was 56.73%), and for the three-year graduation rate the goal is 40% (it was 44.66% in 2019).

4.C.2: In an effort to improve retention, persistence, and completion rates, in 2014 ATU applied for and was accepted into the HLC Persistence and Completion Academy (P & C). The HLC also accepted the work of this academy as ATU's Quality Initiative Project. Initially, the P & C Committee focused on consolidating efforts and data surrounding student success. An early accomplishment was to influence the addition of student success-focused goals in the strategic plan. The primary goals of the P & C Committee were to identify and remove obstacles for student success. One of the first things that became clear was that the University had many data silos. A lot of information was being collected but was not being shared and used in a comprehensive manner. Some of the P & C Committee's more impactful accomplishments include creating the Student Success Center (SSC), removing irrelevant fees for online students, facilitating closer collaboration between academic and administrative units on student success initiatives (stackable degrees, financial aid/academic advising), and facilitating the decision to award students with associate degrees upon completion of

program requirements. Recognition of the P & C Academy legacy by our HLC academy mentor includes the Every Student Counts Retention Plan that is jointly implemented by the Divisions of Academic and Student Affairs.

As a result of P & C efforts to include student success initiatives in Goal 2.2 of the Strategic Plan, the University created the SSC led by an Assistant Vice President for Student Success, that coordinates the work of several support services in the Division of Academic Affairs. The work of the SSC spurred the development of more targeted analysis of data collected. For example, the SSC developed Sankey diagrams to track the persistence and completion of students entering under a particular declared major, following their path once matriculated. Another academic support office reporting to the SSC has analyzed course evaluations to determine how this information might enhance persistence and completion. In general, student reports of satisfaction and final grade expectation have been very high and inconsistent with data showing that students do not engage in behaviors that they feel will "actually" help them. The SSC has distributed findings to academic deans so they are aware of data and they can begin bringing expectations and behaviors into alignment.

The TRiO-supported Student Support Services office regularly highlights its interactions with its 140 students. The 6-year graduation rate of SSS students increased from 50% in 2016-17 to 70% in 2017-18 to 77% in 2018-19. Likewise, the persistence rate increased from 94% to 97% in 2016-17 and 2018-19, respectively. Given the success of the SSS grant, the university was granted additional new grants 1)Teacher Prep SSS grant for students who are underrepresented, first-generation or have a disability (physical or learning) pursuing a student education degree on the Russellville campus and 2) a SSS grant for the Ozark campus to assist with providing support to students seeking an associate's degree.

ATU's Office of Institutional Research (IR) regularly collects and provides information on retention, graduation, and transfer out rates (Russellville Undergrad, Graduate, and Ozark). The IR also maintains dashboards through their website of interactive statistics (i.e., enrollment, student semester credit hours, etc.) for use by the public and campus constituents. Results of this data collection for the Russellville campus date back to 1996, whereas results for the Ozark campus date back to 2003. In addition to providing separate reports for the Russellville campus and the Ozark campus, IR provides reports of both campuses combined, which they report to ADHE. IR also offers detailed reports available by the following criteria: gender, foundational (remedial) class, ethnicity, earned hours, college residency, attempted hours, ACT score, major/program, and academic standing. Further, each academic year IR supplies the University with the Integrated Post-secondary Education Data System "(IPEDS) Data Feedback Report," which provides data from a group of 40 peer institutions to which ATU is compared. ATU uses the graduation rate data from the IPEDS report as a benchmark for self-comparisons.

4.C.3: Student success is vital to the University mission and is one of its highest priorities, so ATU follows data and evidence-based practices to increase retention and graduation rates. For example, ATU has gathered data from the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) and visits to other universities, such as the University of Northern Iowa, which boasts a retention rate between first- and second-year students of 86%. Data utilized from WWC include information on dual enrollment programs, summer bridge programs, first-year experience courses, and residential learning communities. Data on ATU's Bridge to Excellence Freshmen Mentoring Program, which assigned a volunteer faculty or staff mentor for one-on-one coaching to assist in a smooth transition from high school to university life, led ATU to pause the program when data showed decreased effectiveness.

ATU develops programs designed to increase retention and graduation rates. Resources such as CSP 1013 and TECH 1001 (the campus's first-year experience courses that have been in place for two decades) and the Ozark campus mentoring program for first-time students. Evidence demonstrating the benefit of the first-year experience courses led to the requirement of the 3-credit-hour CSP1013, 1-credit TECH 1001, or a discipline-specific course modeled on the CSP 1013 for all incoming freshmen. Other programs (such as those in the Center for Community Engagement and Academic Outreach, CCAMPIS, the APEX Center, and the Office of Distinguished Scholarships) have been designed to target needs identified by the strategic plan.

The AAC oversees the Academic Early Warning Program (AEW). AEW is a student success and retention program enabling instructors to report any academic concerns that appear to be interfering with a student's success in a class. Academic advisors contact students by phone, email and text to connect students with campus resources, and to assist with identifying strategies for improvement. The advisor then notifies the faculty member of the results of efforts to contact the student as well as the student's response and intentions. Interventions by academic advisors resulting in positive impact to those contacted (defined as A, B, or C) has averaged 30% over the semesters from Fall 2017 - Fall 2019.

In the Spring of 2017, ATU established the SSC, comprised of the AAC, the Career Center, Student Support Services, as well as several specialty offices. Creation of an SSC was one of the P & C Committee's three primary foci, so they passed information on to the Student Support Working Group of the Strategic Planning Committee's proposed solutions. The purpose of the SSC is to partner with various stakeholders on both campuses to coordinate retention and completion work. For example, the SSC developed an Office of Distinguished Scholarships. The addition of a faculty member dedicated to increasing numbers of students applying for Fulbright, Boren, and Gilman Scholarships has already resulted in a significant increase as well as the first award.

As part of the legacy of the P & C Committee and the work of the SSC, ATU created the Every Student Counts Retention Committee with broad faculty, staff, and student participation. One of the tasks of the ESC committee is to review data for various student segments to discern if there are differences in persistence and completion rates and to discuss ways to address retention of students; updates and receives reports on the achievement of tasks identified in the Every Student Counts Retention Plan.

Subsequently, the VPAA shared this data was shared with Deans and P&C Academy members and the decision was made to move forward with a summer bridge program for students with low ACT scores because those students did not persist after the freshman year. While the pandemic delayed implementation of the summer bridge program to June 2021 (funds were allocated in FY21 for this program), planning for this program is ongoing under the leadership of the Assistant Vice President for Student Success. In reviewing this same dataset it was clear that conditionally admitted (ACT less than 19) students were persisting at lower rates than other students and a pilot 'academic coaching' program was created and implemented for fall 2020 by APEX Center Director.

The Department of Mathematics implemented the FOCUS model in 2016 to improve student success and overall retention of students in remedial and general education mathematics. After examining data on student outcomes in College Algebra and College Math and surveying students, the department determined that students would benefit from two initiatives: co-requisite courses and courses with built-in lab time. Data shows promise, particularly in the co-requisite courses that include multiple strategies to support students (just-in-time review, group work, real world application, and "required tutoring"). The MATH 1003/0803 College Math co-requisite courses show

an increased success rate from fall 2016 to fall 2019 of 36% to 75.16%.

The Black Faculty and Staff Organization (BFSO) has launched its own focused retention programming, administered by the Division of Academic Affairs. Because of lower levels of persistence by students of color, the BFSO initiated a number of programs to provide support and resources. The Early Arrival Program, started in 2018, seeks to increase retention and graduation rate as well as career readiness among African-American students. The program was showing promise by retaining 12 of 14 participants from the summer of 2019, but due to the pandemic, the program was placed on hold for the summer of 2020. Further analysis of persistence data is forthcoming.

In addition, a study by AACRAO consultants concluded that ATU's freshman first-semester scholarship renewal policy was too stringent compared to those of peer institutions. Based on this information, the University initiated a pilot program called Soft-Check (aka First-Semester Freshman Academic Intervention), to ensure that first-time students would not immediately lose their academic scholarships if their first 15 hours resulted in a GPA below 3.0. Instead, students who maintained a minimum of 12 hours with a 2.00-2.99 GPA would keep their scholarship. Subsequently, the University broadened Soft-Check's scope to include sophomores and juniors. While the change in variables over the past couple of years has made accurate data difficult to assess, initial success indicated that the freshman class scholarship cohort attrition rate was reduced from 34.4% to 16.2%.

Further, the University strengthened its viable stackable degree opportunities on both the Russellville and Ozark campuses. New certificates that received approval from ADHE include a Technical Certificate in Health Professions and Certificate of Proficiency in Pharm Tech, Dispatcher, Medical Billing, and four other areas.

With the development of a "One University" ethos between the Ozark and Russellville campuses and the full implementation of Degree Works software on both, ATU advisors, students, faculty, and other student support staff can more quickly and easily determine a student's program progress as well as consider "What if?" scenarios. This development is especially pertinent to Ozark campus students who consider furthering their education in a specific area, such as going from an AAS at Ozark to a BS at Russellville. The software also aids in the movement towards stackable degrees that provide pathways from certificates through higher level degrees. Data collected during the First Destination Survey of graduates conducted by the Career Center from Summer 2017-Fall 2019 shows that 10% of graduates plan to continue to the next higher degree, and 55% of those 489 students plan to continue their education at ATU.

4.C.4: The IR provides reporting and decision-making data to both internal and external constituents to support efforts to improve the quality and functioning of the programs and services of the University. Exhibiting good practice, IR has used IPEDS data over the years to assure consistency and soundness.

Regarding student retention, persistence, and completion, IR uses IPEDS definitions for six-year retention rates, six-year graduation rates, six-year transfer-out rates, six-year retention and graduation rates, and six-year retention, graduation, and transfer-out rates for both the Russellville and Ozark campuses. Concerning completion, IR uses the IPEDS Web-based Collection System's Graduation Rate Survey to collect IPEDS data detailing ATU's graduation rates; the complete instructions are available on the IPEDS website at IPEDS 2019-2020 Data Collection Systems.

In addition, IR annually reports ATU's retention, persistence, and completion rates to ADHE (using

their formula) and update the strategic plan Goal 1.1, as well as provides data to other pertinent internal departments and programs.

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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

Arkansas Tech University demonstrates responsibility for quality educational programs and has robust processes in place to ensure regular program review and oversight of all aspects of quality educational programs. The institution has established practices for assessment and improvement of student learning in the discipline, general education, and co-curricular areas.

Commitment to students' educational achievement are confirmed and maintained through an effective and efficient assessment process. Student learning outcomes are clearly communicated with alignment from course outcomes to institutional outcomes. All programs are actively involved in the process resulting in curricular and programmatic decisions to further enhance the quality of learning.

Transfer credit policies and processes, as well as articulation agreements and transfer guides, assist students in transitioning to ATU from other institutions. Assessment is an integral component of its operations and improvements result not just from academic programs, but also external reviews, and the student complaint process. ATU uses data from both internal and external measures, including metrics such as persistence and completion rates, to make informed decisions and changes in policies and practices.

Sources

There are no sources.

5 - Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning

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

5.A - Core Component 5.A

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

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

Argument

[ATU Abbreviations and Acronyms](#)

5.A.1: The University's organizational structure facilitates the involvement of the Board of Trustees, the administration, faculty, staff, and students in providing input into the processes, procedures, and planning that ensure ATU is able to fulfill its mission both today and in the future. A [five-member board](#) governs the University and approves all institutional policies after they have passed through various institutional governing bodies. The President reports to the Board while the Ozark campus Chancellor reports to the President. A [11-member Executive Council](#), (EC) composed of the Ozark Chancellor, the vice presidents on the Russellville campus, the director of governmental relations, the athletic director, and the university counsel, meets weekly with the President to discuss current campus issues and to update the President and one another on significant events occurring in their respective areas. The [ATU organizational chart](#) shows the reporting structure of the University as a whole as well as the [committee structure for policy determination](#). Additionally, ATU has a large set of [standing committees](#) from which to gather input and share information across all facets of its structure. These committees include representatives from administration, faculty, staff, and students, as appropriate. The VPAA is the EC liaison to the Faculty Senate, the VPAF to the Staff Senate and the VPSA to the Student Senate.

An example of university-wide shared governance was the development of the strategic plan ([a faculty-led process](#) but with broad representation from the staff, students, administration, and a board member representative). At times, members of the Russellville community also served on the strategic planning committees. The [Budget Advisory Council](#) (BAC) has representation from faculty senate, staff senate, students, and administers, and whenever an ad-hoc committee must be developed, representatives from affected constituencies are included. Other examples of the inclusion

of university-wide voices include the campus master plan, the development of the new university brand, building plans for the proposed student union/recreation center. The COVID-19 Taskforce, the Communication Committee and the Insurance Committee all have representation from faculty, staff, and administration.

The university's current statement on shared governance is on page 15 of the faculty handbook. ATU's strategic plan also specifically addresses shared governance in Goal 2.1. Since 2010, the institution experienced significant growth in the practice of shared governance. Examples of this growth may be found specifically in the increased participation of faculty in standing committees, especially newly created university-wide standing committees. The Faculty Senate role expanded through major revisions to the Faculty Handbook. These revisions have included defining Guiding Principles with statements on shared governance and academic freedom; revising the section on academic appointments; adding a definition of roles section to clarify duties, responsibilities and review processes; restructuring and revising the annual review, promotion, and tenure processes; and clarifying and adding information regarding criteria for promotion and portfolio evaluation processes. Work on the Faculty Handbook is ongoing but many of the changes put in place with the aforementioned revisions have created a structure of greater faculty participation in processes central to the experiences of faculty.

As part of a larger effort and consistent with the strategic plan Goal 2.1, ATU has sponsored several speakers and trainings on shared governance. Examples of these efforts include sponsoring four faculty members to attend the 2016 AAUP Shared Governance Conference and Workshops; ATU Faculty Senate sponsorship of a Skype Q&A session with Hans-Jorge Tiede, Senior Program Officer of AAUP and editor of the "Redbook" to discuss how to implement and support/expand shared governance at ATU; and in January 2017, the ATU Faculty Senate, Administration, and AAUP chapter co-sponsored a professional development day on topics ranging from faculty participation in budget decisions to faculty participation in promotion and tenure processes. In addition, a guest speaker, Dr. Larry Gerber, author of *The Rise and Decline of Faculty Governance*: *Professionalization and the Modern American University* (2014) spoke as part of Professional Development Day. Most recently, in fall 2019, a University-Level Shared Governance Committee was established to work toward identification of additional shared governance issues and greater collaboration across levels and constituencies at ATU. In spring 2020, the committee hosted Dr. Irene Mulvey, now National Chair of AAUP during Professional Development Day in January and sponsored a survey and a series of forums to gain feedback from faculty on what they identify as the most important shared governance issues on campus. The committee's efforts to expand shared governance will continue during 2020-21.

The Faculty Senates on both the Russellville and Ozark campuses meet monthly during the academic year and post their minutes on ATU's website. These groups function as advisory bodies to the faculty on academic policies and to the administration and faculty on matters pertaining to changes to the faculty handbook and other matters of concern to the University. A major update to the faculty handbook occurred in 2017-2018 when changes were made to the promotion and tenure policy.

The Staff Senate, formed in 2014 as a distributive leadership measure, meets monthly on the Russellville and Ozark campuses and also post their minutes to the ATU website. Extracts from the Staff Senate minutes show work done by the group to update the Staff Handbook, give feedback on the tuition waiver and internal hiring policies as well as other items. Members serve on operational committees (such as the BAC and the Insurance Committee), and act as an advisory body to the administration on proposed changes to the staff handbook and other policies.

A Student Government Association (SGA) exists on both campuses. The Russellville campus also has a Graduate Student Council. These groups serve as the voice of the student body and a link to administration. Both SGAs post meeting minutes and resolutions on the University website. SGA members also serve on various University standing committees to communicate student needs. For example, SGA representatives serve on the BAC, the Student Affairs Committee, the Equity and Diversity Committee, and administrator search committees such as the search for the vice president for academic affairs (VPAA). Graduate students serve on the Graduate Council and the Teacher Education Committee.

5.A.2: The administration at all levels of ATU relies heavily on data in its decision-making. The Office of Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness (OAIE) manages the information from both academic program reviews and nonacademic operating performance reviews either on its website or within Weave. Access to assessment data, both academic and non-academic, is available to all levels of decision-makers from department heads to deans, vice-presidents and the president. The Office of Institutional Research & Effectiveness (IR) provides data regarding students, enrollment, budgeting, assessment, retention and graduation rates, financial aid, and other information and is evidence that units are requesting data to inform decisions.

For example, in July 2020, the EC reviewed recommendations from the Communications Committee regarding the development of enhanced communication efforts across the institution. These recommendations were based on survey data.

Additionally, survey data from future and/or current students and potential employers must support all curriculum proposals for new programs or the reconfiguration of existing programs. The following proposals received approval from the respective campus' Curriculum Committees, Faculty Senates, the VPAA, the President, the Board of Trustees, and the Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE).

- The Curriculum Committee approved a proposal for a new statistics degree in September 2019. Pages 11 - 20 of the larger proposal demonstrate support from both employers and students.
- The Curriculum Committee approved a proposal to reconfigure the management/marketing degree into a management degree with three tracks (general, human resources, and entrepreneurship) and a separate marketing degree with two tracks (digital and strategic) in November 2017 (see pages 18 - 20 of the larger report for employer data a summary of student survey data).
- In 2016 the Ozark and Russellville campuses collaborated to survey both industry and students to gauge interest in a potential Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS) degree. It would create a seamless transition for students to pursue a four-year degree on the Russellville campus after obtaining an Associate of Applied Science degree on the Ozark Campus. The survey data provided support for this proposal.

The University regularly monitors and updates its strategic plan to incorporate current year data and ensure progress towards plan goals. For example, the University's Campus Master Plan was a comprehensive look at institutional data on students and facilities; the recommendations resulting from that analysis guide ATU's future maintenance and building plans. ATU also conducted an energy audit of historical electricity usage that resulted in energy savings measures such as the installation of LED lights and motion-activated lights.

To assess institutional effectiveness and satisfaction, many non-academic areas analyze data focused on students and on services provided to other offices within ATU. For example, the Office of

Information Services (OIS) utilized call data collected from June 2014 to June 2017 to reallocate technical support availability. The data showed that only 1% of all calls were received between the hours of midnight and 7:00 am. Based on this information, the OIS eliminated that shift and increased staff during peak call times. Similarly, Counseling Services, a department within Student Affairs, administers a survey to all clients annually. The department utilizes the data to inform outreach programs and group services. The workday agendas/notes from the last two years show that the counselors have reviewed the survey, the policies and procedures, and the programs in planning for the upcoming year. In order to maintain confidentiality, survey data is not included.

5.A.3: The curriculum process on both campuses begins at the departmental level. Departmental faculty propose all course and program additions, changes, and deletions and forward the proposals for approval to departmental/college curriculum committees, department chairs, deans, and the ATU Curriculum Committee on the appropriate campus (Russellville or Ozark). The ATU Curriculum Committees monitor the entire undergraduate curriculum, all proposed course changes, and program change proposals. The committee forwards its recommendations to the Faculty Senate for consideration and approval prior to transmittal to the VPAA in Russellville or the Chief Academic Officer in Ozark. The Curriculum Committees on both campuses include both tenured and untenured faculty, and the registrar. On the Russellville campus a staff member from the library, the Director of Assessment, and two students from the SGA serve as ex-officio members.

The Graduate Council, composed of faculty teaching in graduate programs as well as two graduate student ex officio members, determines policy and establishes standards, criteria, regulations, and procedures for graduate study at the University. It monitors all proposed course changes and graduate program changes and includes graduate student representation. The Graduate Council forwards its recommendations to the VPAA. The VPAA then takes it to Faculty Senate, and subsequently to the Board for approval.

Changes to other types of academic policy generally originate in the Faculty Senate. Either the Faculty Senate will directly address an issue or it will appoint a subcommittee which includes members of the Faculty Senate, other faculty members, and members of the SGA (or other selected students) to research the issue, draft a proposal, seek feedback from all affected parties, and return a final proposal to the Faculty Senate. For example, the Faculty Senate called an emergency session to discuss grading options for the Spring 2020 semester (a one-semester policy called the "Pass/No Credit" option) due to the quick transition of all classes to an online format during the COVID-19 pandemic. The VPAA addressed the Student Government Association during their meeting in April 2020 about temporary modification, answering student questions and soliciting their input. The Faculty Senate and the Graduate Council approved the final draft of the policy. In other cases, ATU legal counsel, or another university entity, submits it to the appropriate committees and the Faculty Senate for approval. Once the Faculty Senate approves a policy, it is forwarded to the VPAA, who then informs EC. If Board approval is required, the policy would then be considered at the next Board meeting.

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5.B - Core Component 5.B

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

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

Argument

[ATU Abbreviations and Acronyms](#)

5.B.1: ATU strives to hire the most qualified staff. (See 3.C for faculty hiring processes and minimum qualifications.) The Human Resources office oversees hiring policies and guidelines for all staff position openings.

Any [advertisements](#) reflect the required education, skills, and experience for the position. All [searches involve](#) a search committee composed of a variety of ATU employees with diverse backgrounds and may include an external member with appropriate knowledge of the skills needed for the position being filled. All staff must meet a [minimum qualification standard](#) that is either set forth by ATU and/or ADHE. Current resumes for all operational staff at the director level and above are available in Weave (upon request).

Upon hire all administrative [employees attend an orientation](#) that covers not only benefits and pre-employment information but also reviews the mission, vision, and strategic plan as well as presentations on the Clery Act, procurement and travel, data security, and University information systems. ATU encourages staff members to continue their education through a [free tuition program](#) and to seek out additional training and certification necessary to succeed in their field. Additionally, all faculty and staff can apply for [Leadership Tech](#), a two-year program designed to develop and enhance the leadership knowledge, skills, and abilities of all individuals as well as the collective leadership capacity of the University to achieve unparalleled excellence.

Individual divisions use different approaches to ensure staff attend seminars or other ongoing training. For example, the Division of Student Affairs provides its staff with a [listing of all relevant workshops/seminars/webinars](#) each semester. A number of staff in Student Affairs must hold certain credentials such as [Advanced Title IX Investigator or Section 504 Coordinator](#). These individuals attend training as needed to maintain their credentials. The registrar's office sends several staff members to the Arkansas Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (ARKACRAO) conference each year. Annually, the support staff attend a one-day ARKACRAO workshop. Additionally, everyone takes online, on-demand training as they change roles or as software upgrades occur for various Ellucian products (such as Degree Works or Banner) used at ATU. All training documentation is uploaded to Weave. In the Administration and Finance division,

the Controller, Assistant Controller, Payroll Manager, Budget Director, Assistant Budget Director, and the Ozark Chief Fiscal Officer attend various Arkansas Association of College and University Business Officers workshops and continuing education classes each year. These classes provide legislative updates on changes affecting higher education, GASB updates for accounting standards changes, technology updates for required financial reporting, etc.

Infrastructure support for University operations includes a well-staffed facilities management department (FAMA), reporting to the Vice President of Administration and Finance, that maintains grounds and buildings, but also follows the Campus Master Plan for improvements to existing facilities as well as future projects. FAMA staff routinely examine conditions and utilization of buildings, noting findings in the master plan (See Section 2 - pages 25-37). For example, the University proposes to reconfigure the Brown Building fourth floor, providing additional teaching space to expand the use of academic classrooms in newer buildings.

In tandem with facilities planning, the OIS supports operations of the University through ongoing administration of a wide array of technology resources. OIS provides each faculty member with a computer equipped with all necessary software to teach face-to-face or online. All buildings on both campuses incorporate wireless technology to handle the needs of students, faculty, and staff. Campus Support offers technical assistance via an online support ticket system 24/7 and in person help Monday through Thursday from 8am - 5pm and 7am - 4pm on Friday and Saturday. OIS also sponsors various technology sessions to train faculty/staff on new technology.

Teaching and learning are also supported by the Ross Pendergraft Library (RPL), staffed by a director, six librarians, and nine other full-time staff. The library is available to students from 7am - 12pm Monday through Thursday with reduced hours on Friday through Sunday. The RPL houses a physical book collection of over 155,000 volumes, along with reference books, journals and magazines, maps, DVDs/CDs/LPs, and microfilm/microfiche. It also maintains an electronic collection including access to over 97,000 journals through e-databases, 300 journals available directly from the publishers, and access to over 500,000 ebooks, statistics databases, and reviews.

5.B.2: Key elements of the ATU mission are student success, access, and excellence as a responsive campus community providing opportunities for progressive intellectual development and civic engagement. The University observes internal budget control policies to ensure fiscal responsibility. ATU carries an A1 Bond rating with Moody's Investor Service, further proof of our commitment to a strong and ethical fiscal management. As evidenced by ATU's audited financial statements for 2019, 2018, and 2017 and its continuously strong financial position over the past ten years, the institution's resource base supports its current educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future. ATU has the fiscal and human resources (see 5.B.1 above) and physical and technological infrastructure to support its operations.

ATU implemented a strategic plan in 2016 and has documented its progress towards completing its goals.The plan is reviewed on an annual basis to monitor progress on action items. ATU responds to opportunities to grow and expand to meet the needs of its students. For example, we are trying to be more accessible to students through the development of advising degree maps. The degree maps clearly identify the courses a student needs to take at a two-year institution to transfer to ATU and complete a bachelor's degree with the fewest number of credit hours (ideally 60) necessary.

5.B.3: ATU has a structure for budgeting and for monitoring expenses and allocating resources in alignment with its mission and priorities. ATU operates financially with an annual budget that runs on a fiscal year basis beginning July 1 and ending June 30. The Budget Office publishes an annual

budget calendar on its web page, highlighting key budget development dates and participants.

In Spring 2017 the President formed the Budget Advisory Committee (BAC) to engage and promote transparency in the University budgeting process in support of the University mission, vision statement, and strategic plan. The Vice President for Administration and Finance, the Director of Budget, the Chief Fiscal Officer on the Ozark campus, the EC, and the BAC lead the annual budget cycle. Through these groups, which represent all areas of the University, the institution ensures inclusion in the budgeting process. ATU obtains information about projected state appropriations from ADHE; ATU's appropriations per FTE have varied from a high of $4,448 in 2011 to a low of $3,707 in 2015 and then rebounded to $3,933 in 2017. State of Arkansas law does not allow deficit spending.

The BAC coordinates ATU's budget priorities within the scope of the institution's educational programs and objectives. The assessment and budget development cycles have been aligned to allow departments to use assessment evidence when requesting budget changes. After the departments establish budget priorities through administrative channels, the BAC meets monthly to review key budgetary components and provide recommendations relating to revenue streams, cost containment initiatives, and other issues as assigned (minutes are available on the BAC website).

The EC ensures that the operating budget for the next fiscal year focuses on the priority goals set within the limits of resources available and also provides for contingencies. The President and EC members inform the BAC of any ADHE and/or legislative actions being discussed or pending that are pertinent to the operation of ATU. The strategic plan serves as the primary guiding document, with the administration, various departments, the faculty, the BAC, and ultimately the Board of Trustees sharing the responsibility for guiding funds to operations that best support the priority of ATU's stated mission and educational purposes.

The Budget Office prepares the operating budget for final review by the Vice President of Administration and Finance, who then presents the budget to the President and then for approval at the May Board meeting. Board approval is the authorization for executing the funding and expenditures for the next fiscal year as outlined in the fiscal year operating budget document. Once the Board has approved the budget, the Budget Office enters the budget into Banner for all educational, operational, and support services. Note that for fiscal year 2020-21, the budget was revised to reflect decreasing enrollment, revenues, and state funding so the budget preparation timeline was extended. The BAC reviewed the final 2020-21 budget at its May (online) meeting and the Board approved it at its June 18, 2020 meeting (delayed due to COVID-19).

The ATU Budget Office and the Ozark Chief Fiscal Officer work with all offices across both campuses to monitor departmental budgets and actual expenditures on an ongoing basis. This process oversees grant funds and restricted funds. Construction funds are managed in coordination with the controller's office under oversight by the VPAF. Departmental budget managers have access to ATU's Banner system to monitor and allocate expenses appropriately, according to ATU's account code system. They can contact the Budget Office to transfer budgets and to discuss any perceived discrepancies relating to revenues or expenses. The Budget Office monitors overall institutional expenses and proactively works with budget managers on issues such as insufficient funds or incorrectly allocated expenses. Additionally, the Budget Office and EC monitor and verify all salary and benefits expenses to ensure effective management and allocation of the institutional budget. The Ozark Chief Fiscal Officer prepares a monthly budget status report that compares budget to actual and shows the remaining available balance. The Chief Fiscal Officer submits the report to the Ozark Chancellor, who shares it with the Ozark chief officers for academics, operations, and student affairs.

The appropriate officer will investigate any unusual activity.

Prior to each Board meeting, every Board member receives a Board packet, which includes the financial statement analysis, an operating income statement, and balance sheet. They have ample time to review the items before the Board meeting, to ask questions relating to financial issues, and meet with the President to share any questions or obtain additional data.

5.B.4: All University operations align with its educational purposes in order to fulfill its stated mission. The strategic plan serves as the primary guiding document, with the administration, various departments, the faculty, the BAC, and ultimately the Board of Trustees sharing the responsibility of guiding funds to operations that best support the priority of the stated mission and ATU's educational purposes. (See 5.C.1 for details of how all budget requests are evaluated.) In addition, ATU's long history of tight financial controls, evidenced by unqualified independent audits in 2017, 2018, and 2019, (2020 audited financial statement not available until mid-November) confirms the integrity of Tech's financial commitments to its educational purposes.

The following table details funds for instructional and related expenditures, and may vary from what was budgeted.

Actual operating and restricted expenditures for years ending June 30,	**2020**	**2019**	**2018**	**2017**
Instructional expenditures in millions (and percentage of total budget)	$44.6 (26%)	$48.1 (27%)	$46.3 (27%)	$50.1 (29%)
Other academic expenses related indirectly to instruction in millions (i.e., library, museum, galleries)	$9.8	$10.4	$10.5	$9.5
Combined operating and restricted expenditures on scholarship expenditures (unrestricted expenditures include all scholarships, including GA waivers)	$50.6	$45.8	$46.8	$46.9

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5.C - Core Component 5.C

The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning and improvement.

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

Argument

[ATU Abbreviations and Acronyms](#)

5.C.1: The institution allocates resources in support of the mission as it relates to student access with $5.2 million of the AA budget restricted for concurrent instruction. Relative to student success, in FY21, $332,826 was budgeted for student success initiatives (University Honors, Study Abroad, High Impact Practices, Academic Community Engagement, Summer Bridge, and Financial Literacy).

ATU is comprised of two campuses, a career center (ATCC), with several satellite locations, and five additional locations. Arkansas Tech Career Center (ATCC) and its satellites in: Clarksville, Danville, Paris, and Ozark receive funding through the Office of Skills Development under the Arkansas Department of Commerce. The Center is funded through a tiered FTE dollar supporting instruction, supplies, equipment, and operational costs. The Director of ATCC manages the center and satellites under the direction of the Ozark Campus academic and fiscal operations. All operational costs are funded by the state. In addition, the [Regional Workforce Grant](#) has been used to support equipment in automation.

In January 2017, ATU utilized Polk Stanley Wilcox architects and Perkins + Will campus planners to lead an intensive master planning process. The planners conducted workshops, open forums, and surveys to gather input from the entire campus community and created six task force groups to provide topic-based input into the planning process. The Board approved the resulting [final master plan](#) on [October 19, 2017](#). Priority projects on the master plan include a new campus entrance and a student recreation center. Other items completed include the demolition of Roush Hall and the Stroupe Building in Spring 2018 and the purchase of the 716 North El Paso Public Works Building. [Some projects](#) on the action items in the master plan are continuing during the pandemic, while others will be on hold until the budget situation improves. ATU will complete projects for which fees have already been assessed, and those that have bearing on student access or are grant-funded.

In Fall 2016, ATU established the Office of Sponsored Programs and University Initiatives, in accordance with the strategic plan's Goal 1 (action item 10), to assist in securing funds for student success initiatives, high-impact learning experiences, professional development and community engagement opportunities, and scholarly activities. This office, much like the already established Office of Advancement, provides an additional source of revenue for a University largely underfunded by state appropriations as compared to other academic institutions in the state of Arkansas. Since its formation, the Office of Sponsored Programs (working with faculty and staff at both campuses) has facilitated over $15.2 million in external funding to the University.

5.C.2: All constituencies participate in the planning processes for the University system and engage in planning for each location as appropriate. The University strives to align the planning, assessment, and financial allocation process. Assessment findings and reports are scheduled to coincide with budget development at multiple points in the cycle to allow assessment data to support budget requests. Feedback from the budget development process allows academic units to use the preliminary budget to plan the next year's instructional and assessment activities and provide for ongoing improvements. In support, the OAIE monitors assessment for the institution and works with all academic programs to strengthen student outcomes and identify weaknesses in student learning, and with non-academic programs to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of their services (e.g., Student Accounts, Campus Security). One of the committees under the OAIE umbrella, the Student Learning Assessment Committee, is charged with the continuous improvement and examination of student learning through review of assessment activities. ATU's Institutional Effectiveness Assessment Committee examines program effectiveness for administrative functions. Annual assessment activity is timed to occur concurrently with the University budget development. Departmental budgetary requests must include assessment-supported evidence and justification.

In July 2016, ATU implemented the five-year strategic plan, which is the primary tool to guide ATU's future. Unit, division, and school plans all parallel the strategic plan. During the budgeting process, all budget requests must identify how the expenditure will allow ATU to fulfill the plan. Once a division chair has received all requests, the requests are categorized by Plan goal (1. Human Core; 2. Academic Coherence; 3. Operations Excellence; and 4. Citizens of the Region, State & World) and then assigned a priority rating of A, B, or C. Any request designated as an "A" priority is funded during the next budget cycle while a "B" request is funded in the current period only if funds become available.

ATU strives to provide the appropriate physical and technological infrastructure for student success. As a part of the evaluation of operations, Russellville's Facilities Maintenance and the OIS and Ozark's Physical Plant and Computer Services monitor routine and critical maintenance and plan for facilities upgrades on an ongoing basis. Facilities Maintenance utilizes a work order system to track and prioritize physical needs for the Russellville campus; the Ozark campus maintains a separate work order process for its facilities. Critical maintenance planning for Russellville and Ozark occurs in conjunction with the facilities audit program coordinated through the State of Arkansas. Infrastructure reserves set aside during the budgeting process provide funding for ongoing facilities maintenance for both campuses. Following results from an energy audit, in 2017 ATU contracted with Performance Services Inc. to implement phase I of an energy savings project to increase environmental sustainability and efficiency of operations on both campuses. Performance Services identified over $25 million in potential projects savings.

The OIS participates in the University's assessment planning and review processes as well

as administering its own technology strategic plan. OIS works with information systems team members both campuses and uses the following assessment tools:

- Satisfaction surveys for our help desk as well as independent surveys on wireless access, classroom functionality, and support services;
- Survey tools from Educause and EAB to compare ATU to other schools;
- OIS surveys embedded into other University surveys such as housing and student affairs;
- External surveys and reviews administered during campus master planning and strategic planning Initiatives to help address future capacity requirements and assess technology infrastructure.

The University funds OIS in a variety of ways. For example, budgets for new buildings include an amount for OIS infrastructure (e.g., internet lines, wifi, telephone lines), while the annual operating budget includes resources from both tuition and fees that are designated for information technology. OIS uses these funds for software such as Blackboard and Kaltura Video Capture as well as for hardware in classrooms and offices. Unexpended technology funds can be transferred from a current operating budget to reserve accounts annually, prior to the year-end closing to provide for departmental large capital items.

5.C.3: The University's planning process includes internal and external groups. Internal constituents commonly engage in planning processes at the institution. In Fall 2015 and Spring 2016, the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) met weekly to discuss key topics to be included in the strategic plan. Faculty led the SPC and its working groups with full participation by administrators, staff, students, and community members, as evidenced by the faculty/staff led steering committee and the make-up of the individual working groups. The SPC encouraged public engagement in the development of the strategic plan through multiple open forums that were held on campus and made available live online. The SPC also invited dialogue with the community through the strategic planning website, where anyone could submit comments and feedback. After the SPC completed its work in the spring of 2016, the ATU Board of Trustees adopted the strategic plan on May 19, 2016.

Another example of internal and external collaboration is the proposed new campus entrance, tentatively scheduled for 2021. This project required representatives from the university to work with the mayor and city council and the Arkansas Department of Transportation. The proposal includes a round-about and widening of the road at the new entrance along Arkansas Avenue (a state road) funded by the ArDOT, a new drainage project funded by the city (though the university provided the easement along its property) and the entrance road and renovated parking on the campus site funded by the university. This project has been in process since the 1970's and as of 2020, all three parties agreed on a solution.

5.C.4: Enrollment Management's plan for future recruitment addresses expected demographic fluctuations and campus capacity limitations (as detailed in 1.A.3). A thorough understanding of demographic and generational data forms the basis for future year projections and enrollment management goals. Based on enrollment declines to FY21 and future enrollment declines due to the pandemic, revised enrollment projections were used in developing a 5-year budget with conservative tuition increases.

One example of the university's adjustment to income fluctuation was quite recent. On Monday, March 23, 2020, ADHE sent an email to all public institutions regarding the state's revised budget forecast for FY20 budgets. Because of the COVID19 pandemic, ATU's state appropriation for the last quarter of FY20 was reduced by $1,534,944 (4.92%). The institution addressed this rescission with

approximately $1 million in salary savings with the remainder amassed from operational budgets. Each and every division of the university with the input of students, faculty and staff into their respective units and the Budget advisory committee met to re-balance the current year budget and re-develop the upcoming budget based on the priorities of the mission and strategic plan. Additionally, Budget Advisory Committee members participated in an exercise that led to idea generation concerning reduced costs and enhanced revenue which are reflected in the BAC meeting minutes from April 9, 2020. For other examples of how the university addressed COVID-19 related budgetary concerns, see the Covid-19 response form.

After the initial rush to transition to remote work that the university made in March of 2020, the university began to adjust its planning to address the new circumstances. The president sent out frequent "State of the Union" emails to the campus community, many of them transparently relaying the budget and enrollment plans for the coming year. The emails starting from May 1, 2020 particularly detailed the planning that occurred in response the fluctuations in the institution's sources of revenue and enrollment.

5.C.5: In all its planning, ATU considers developments in external areas such as technology, demographics, and the economy. For instance, OIS maintains an evolving technology plan to adopt new technology for both instruction and research. Anticipating growing needs for cybersecurity in business and government, ATU created a new major in cybersecurity and received $500,000 in state grant funds (August 16, 2018, board minutes) to build a cybersecurity lab.

When the University foresaw the needs of students who cannot physically attend on-campus classes, it established the online College of eTech, which offers nine master's degrees, seven bachelor's degrees, four associate's degrees, and nine certificates. Similarly, articulation agreements with Arkansas community colleges allow students to obtain bachelor degrees without traveling to the Russellville campus.

Anticipating an increasingly globalized world, the University has also expanded its international focus by adding more study abroad opportunities and developing MOUs or agreements with foreign institutions such as the University of Leon in Spain, the University of Technology in Matamoros, Mexico, and the University of Applied Sciences in Giessen, Germany.

As part of its planning process, the ATU-Ozark campus considers developing needs in local industries. After gleaning suggestions from various advisory boards, the Business and Community Outreach Department began offering non-credit training to employers across the state and hosting events for the community and local industries. Since 2013, ATU-Ozark has set up over 70 customized training sessions on topics ranging from highly technical skills, such as precision maintenance and hydraulic troubleshooting, to soft skills and professional development in supervisory leadership and Microsoft Excel. ATU-Ozark offers open-enrollment electrical and mechanical training through a training facility in partnership with Green Bay Packaging in Morrilton, AR. Through this public-private partnership, the facility has trained over 800 employees from 48 different companies over the last 10 years.

The university is also preparing for the upcoming demographic changes in the student population as evidenced by its plans to adjust budgets for FY22 and beyond. The President shared the projected demographic changes in her addresses in **2018, 2019,** and 2020, as well as in presentations to the Board on January 16, 2020. Revised five-year budget projections have been prepared and budget adjustments are being projected accordingly.

5.C.6: ATU uses its strategic plan as a roadmap to guide implementation and continuous improvement of operations throughout the year. Every year an updated, evidence-based report is created to demonstrate progress. Currently, the University is in Year Five. While initially envisioned as a five year plan, given the pandemic and the information we will garner from our HLC visit the university plans to incorporate a stretch year through FY22 for completion of the current plan and the development of the next plan. The strategic plan provides for accountability and responsibility of action items and keeps the focus on the University mission to provide student access, success, and excellence.

Several additional planning documents and planning committees have been created as a result of our strategic plan. For example, the BAC and the informed and inclusive budgeting process now adopted by the University were a result of the systematic improvement. Communication and transparency of the budget process have improved with the development of this committee. Approximately three years of committee minutes, a clear budgeting cycle calendar, the Open Checkbook (for tracking University expenditures), and the budget advisory suggestion box are all online and publicly available. Additionally, tying budgeting to strategic plan goals and student learning assessment has also improved and streamlined budgeting requests and priorities.

Additional planning documents that guide the work of various departments and initiatives include the following:

Campus Master Plan

The Campus Master Plan details items to improve facilities and make other improvements to the University over the next 20 years. Concurrent with this master plan was an Energy Audit for environmental sustainability initiatives (see page 28 of the strategic plan's year three update) that has already resulted in several improvements, including the hiring of an energy manager to oversee sustainability efforts, the adoption of a University energy policy, and the move to LED lighting throughout the institution. The recent COVID-19 pandemic has required some delays as noted in 5.C.1.

Technology Capital Plan

Created by OIS to align with both the strategic plan 2016-2021 and the Campus Master Plan, the second page of the ATU IT strategic plan demonstrates both 2018-19 accomplishments and 2019-2020 goals.

Every Student Counts Retention Plan

This plan contains seven overarching goals jointly addressed by the divisions of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs. The Weave Assessment Management System tracks updates and progress.

Strategic Plan for Inclusive Excellence and Diversity and Inclusion Retention Plan

As part of Goal 1.8 of the strategic plan, the University created a Strategic Plan for Inclusive Excellence with two phases. Phase I set for completion in 2019-20 included the development and implementation of a student-focused Diversity and Inclusion Retention Plan that examines and addresses issues related to the retention of underrepresented populations. Goal accomplishments for 2019-2020 include multiple outreach activities to increase visibility of the

Department of Diversity and Inclusion and to encourage underrepresented students to participate in Career Services and other campus programs.

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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

Arkansas Tech University's resources, structures, processes, policies, and planning are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. Through its administrative structures and collaborative processes, ATU demonstrates that it fulfills its mission effectively.

Arkansas Tech University supports its educational programs with available resources and has mechanisms in place to maintain and strengthen its educational offerings in support of its mission. ATU has a stable resource base as evidenced by its audits and budgeting processes. ATU has governance processes that include multiple constituencies and depend on collaborative efforts for successful operations. Strategic planning and budgeting, as well as assessment, are all interrelated to one another to ensure that funds are spent on the highest institutional priorities. ATU works continuously to improve its performance, documents the effectiveness of its operations, and makes appropriate changes based on sound data.

Sources

There are no sources.