Pennsylvania Western UNIVERSITY℠

CALIFORNIA | CLARION | EDINBORO

PENNWEST CALIFORNIA

PENNWEST CLARION

PENNWEST EDINBORO

Self-Study

SUBMITTED TO THE MIDDLE STATES COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION

SPRING 2025

SELF-STUDY

Submitted to the
**Middle States Commission
on Higher Education**

Spring 2025

By

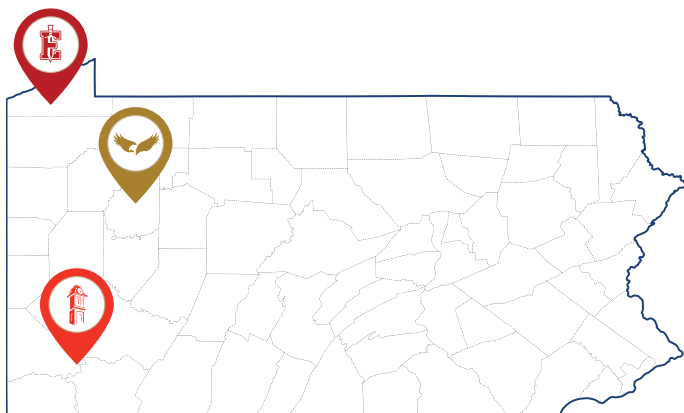**Pennsylvania Western University**

Dr. Jon Anderson
President

Dr. Susanne Fenske
Accreditation Liaison Officer

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Institutional Overview

Pennsylvania Western University (PennWest) is a new university deeply rooted in service to the people and communities of western Pennsylvania. The university was created through the integration of three state-owned institutions — California University of Pennsylvania, founded in 1852; Edinboro University, established in 1857; and Clarion University, founded in 1867. PennWest launched on July 1, 2022, as a single university with three coequal campuses, each dedicated to providing exemplary, career-relevant higher education for learners at all stages of life while supporting the region's economic and workforce needs.

PennWest is a member of Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education (PASSHE). PASSHE's mission is "to provide high-quality education at the lowest possible cost to students; to increase educational attainment in the commonwealth; to prepare students at the undergraduate and graduate levels for professional and personal success in their lives; and to contribute to the economic, social, and cultural development of Pennsylvania's communities, the commonwealth, and the nation." The universities are the most affordable four-year option in the commonwealth. This is crucial because, systemwide, 70% of traditional-age students — those who enroll in a PASSHE school within a few years after high school graduation — are from families earning at or below the median household income in Pennsylvania. For these students, in particular, higher education is a springboard to the middle class, providing pathways to jobs that offer a family-sustaining wage and opportunities for career advancement. PennWest embraces its role as the higher education option of choice for a population that includes many rural, urban, low-income, and first-generation students, including those who require substantial levels of financial, academic, and/or personal support to thrive in a university setting.

Within our innovative three-campus model, undergraduate and graduate students have opportunities to take hybrid and online courses, as well as traditional campus-based, in-person classes. Faculty members are assigned to one "home" campus; they utilize distance-learning technology to deliver course content and interact with students at other PennWest locations.

PennWest is committed to providing career-relevant education within a strong liberal arts framework that prepares students for a rapidly evolving workforce. Educational pathways include associate, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees, as well as certificate and certification programs. These programs are housed in three academic colleges, each led by a dean: the College of Education, Arts, and Humanities; College of Health Sciences and Human Services; and College of Science, Technology, and Business. Within these colleges are 14 academic departments that deliver more than 90 undergraduate and graduate degree programs, some with multiple concentrations.

PennWest is now the second-largest public university in western Pennsylvania, with more than 200,000 living alumni, nearly 127,000 of whom reside in Pennsylvania, and a "local" reach that extends from the shores of Lake Erie to the greater Pittsburgh region and beyond. PASSHE data estimates the university's overall economic impact at more than $750 million per year. Integration allowed for more efficient use of personnel, especially in back-office operations and top-level administration, yet our campuses are still among the largest employers in their respective communities.

According to the Fall 2023 census (E.1), PennWest served 8,336 undergraduate and 2,969 graduate students (2,842 in master's degree programs and 127 seeking doctorates). Of those students, about 38% of undergraduates are eligible for federal Pell Grants, 32% of degree/certificate-seeking undergraduates (who completed a FAFSA) are the first in their family to attend college, and nearly 17% are from underrepresented minorities. A high percentage of PennWest students live off campus, many returning home to meet work and/or family responsibilities. Over 28% of our students live in campus housing, while 33% — including many working adults — are enrolled in fully online programs.

During the integration process that created PennWest, a committee with representation from faculty, staff, students, alumni, and trustees of our three legacy universities developed a mission statement for the integrated university. The committee reviewed the existing mission, vision, and core values statements for California, Clarion, and Edinboro, as well as research from communications and marketing

firms working with each university. The work of identifying differentiators for the new university led to PennWest's Values. These principles guide our processes, interactions, and planning as a means of attaining and delivering excellence.

Mission

Through innovation, academic excellence, and empowering environments, Pennsylvania Western University provides accessible education that cultivates career-ready, life-long learners and leaders, who enrich and engage each other, their communities, the region, and beyond.

Vision

Pennsylvania Western University empowers students to achieve meaningful goals through a broad array of nationally accredited undergraduate and graduate programs, career-focused learning, and support systems that foster lifelong success.

Values

Learning: We are a community of educators who provide a learning environment where students thrive and achieve their educational, professional, and personal goals.

Growth: We are student-ready, guiding our students toward personal, financial, and academic success.

Inclusion: We advocate for all members of our campus communities and provide an equitable, supportive environment that builds a sense of belonging and togetherness.

Collaboration: We engage in innovative partnerships, programs, and opportunities to address the needs of our regional communities and the state.

Culture: We share a sense of purpose that unites the Pennsylvania Western University community at large and provides opportunities to learn, work, and thrive.

PennWest UNIVERSITY

FAST FACTS

Total Endowment
$130.5 Million

Total Budget (E&G + Auxiliary)
$320 Million

Total Living Alumni
200,000+

Nearly Total Living Alumni in PA
127,000

Total Economic Impact
$750 Million
(Direct and indirect spending)

1,537
Total Employees
(November 2023)

3 Academic Colleges and 14 departments

14 associate degrees

48 bachelor's degrees

13 undergraduate certificates

33 post-baccalaureate graduate certificates

7 post-master's certificates

27 master's degrees

4 doctoral degrees
(June 2024)

50
States Represented
Fall 2023 cohort

49
Countries Represented
Fall 2023 cohort

38%
Pell-eligible Students
First-time, full-time, degree-seeking students
Fall 2023

32%
First-generation Undergraduate Students
Fall 2023

11,305
Total Enrollment
Fall 2023

Second largest public university in western PA

300+
Clubs and Organizations

90+
Degree Programs

pennwest.edu

Integration

PennWest reflects on its integration process and legacy campuses within this self-study. "Legacy" refers to the institutions that formed PennWest and their specific practices and data. While this self-study focuses primarily on PennWest, legacy information may be referenced to establish foundational structures or data points.
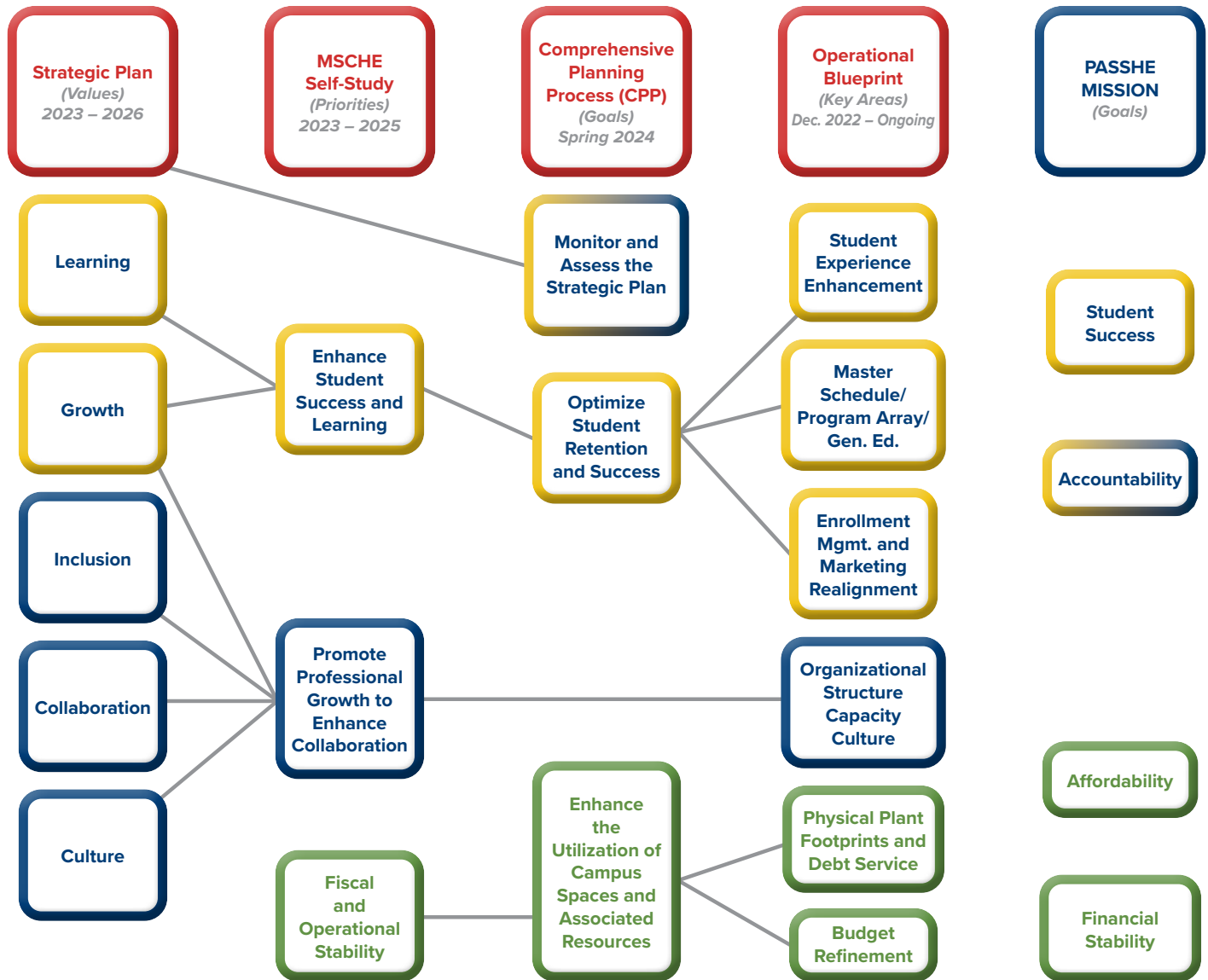
The integration process, facilitated by consulting firm Baker Tilley, was pivotal. In Phase 1 (Fall 2020-Spring 2021), working groups yielded key outcomes such as the risk log, identifying critical tasks that needed to be completed on a specific timeline or were at risk for not meeting their deadline; consultation plans, which identified key stakeholders for each of the functional areas; milestones, immediate tasks that needed to be done leading up to the legal launch of the university; and aspirational goals, or long-term goals to be met by the end of the 2025-2026 fiscal year. In Phase 2 (Summer 2021-Winter 2022) Functional Implementation Teams (FIT) were created to implement the working groups' efforts, focusing on workflows (visual representations of processes and procedures), policies, and strategic objective workbooks that guided the final stages of the integration process.

The timeline on pages 10 to 13 depicts the PennWest integration story. Additional key events include the transition of presidential leadership at PennWest, including the recent successful presidential search and subsequent steps.

After Baker Tilley's involvement concluded, PennWest continued to build on its foundation. Significant post-founding projects include the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan (E.2), academic program array (see Standard III), assessment plans (see Standards IV, V and VI), University Strategic Planning Council (see Standards I and VI), and Middle States Self-Study, all discussed throughout this report. In addition, an operational blueprint (E.3; E.4) spearheaded by interim President R. Lorraine "Laurie" Bernotsky aimed to find operational efficiencies and strengthen the university's financial position. In the spring of 2024, PennWest submitted a narrative as a part of their Comprehensive Planning Process (CPP) to PASSHE, an ongoing requirement of the State System, articulating goals and financial projections (E.5). While each of these initiatives and projects have their own focus, alignment among them ensures the institutional mission and values are being achieved collectively.

University Alignment Map

Strategic Plan
(Values)
2023 – 2026

MSCHE Self-Study
(Priorities)
2023 – 2025

Comprehensive Planning Process (CPP)
(Goals)
Spring 2024

Operational Blueprint
(Key Areas)
Dec. 2022 – Ongoing

PASSHE MISSION
(Goals)

Learning

Growth

Inclusion

Collaboration

Culture

Enhance Student Success and Learning

Promote Professional Growth to Enhance Collaboration

Fiscal and Operational Stability

Monitor and Assess the Strategic Plan

Optimize Student Retention and Success

Enhance the Utilization of Campus Spaces and Associated Resources

Student Experience Enhancement

Master Schedule/ Program Array/ Gen. Ed.

Enrollment Mgmt. and Marketing Realignment

Organizational Structure Capacity Culture

Physical Plant Footprints and Debt Service

Budget Refinement

Student Success

Accountability

Affordability

Financial Stability

With each step in the planning process and as projects and goals are set, alignment across the institution remains a focus.

A key component of integration was establishing the PennWest brand across the institution. The marketing and communications team has strategically rebranded each legacy institution under the PennWest name, prioritizing projects and developing phased initiatives to maintain fiscal responsibility. The initial phase included creating a brand manual (E.6). With this manual as a guide, all printed and electronic materials (e.g., for Admissions and alumni) were rebranded, light-post signage on each campus was updated with PennWest banners, and all bookstores created PennWest branded merchandise.

Rebranding continues with high-priority projects such as:

- **Highway directional signage:** Designs have been approved, and PASSHE's purchasing team is working with PennDOT to have signs installed. Estimated completion date is Spring 2025.

- **Admissions welcome centers:** Design work is underway, and installation on all three campuses is expected by Spring 2025.

- **Campus welcome signage**: Rebranded signs at campus entrances are expected to be installed, pending all approvals and purchases, by Winter 2025.

Enrollment Projection Model

In addition to establishing the PennWest brand, another key component of integration was developing an enrollment projection model. PennWest initially relied on the various enrollment projection models used at its legacy institutions, but quickly saw the need to produce a PennWest-centric model that would be holistic in nature. The new model reflects cross-functional work with leaders from Strategic Enrollment Management, Academics, Finance/Budget, and Institutional Research. It recognizes the importance of aligning our mission, goals, resource allocation, and educational outcomes, and it gives PennWest a foundation to do so. The enrollment projection model is discussed further in Standards III and VI.

Other Recent Highlights:

- **Operational Blueprint**: A set of prioritized strategies to increase operational efficiency and strengthen university finances. Work in six key categories resulted in 17 action items; progress in 2023 and 2024 has been reported to and tracked by the Office of the Chancellor.

- **Campus Planning Assessment**: An in-depth assessment of space utilization, deferred maintenance, and technology needs on all three campuses, including a plan to reduce the footprint of each campus and prioritize commonwealth funds to address facilities issues.

- **Retention Strategy**: A collaborative effort to improve retention rates through initiatives such as enhanced schedule-building for first-semester students, a streamlined registration experience, and a first-year experience ("Compass") course.

These highlights are identified as part of the goals in PennWest's Comprehensive Planning Process (CPP) and progress is regularly shared with the Office of the Chancellor.

Institutional Priorities

Equipped with a mission statement focused on student success and a strategic plan that puts learning at the heart of PennWest, the university identified its Institutional Priorities by reflecting on its integration path, considering its Values, and identifying achievable goals.
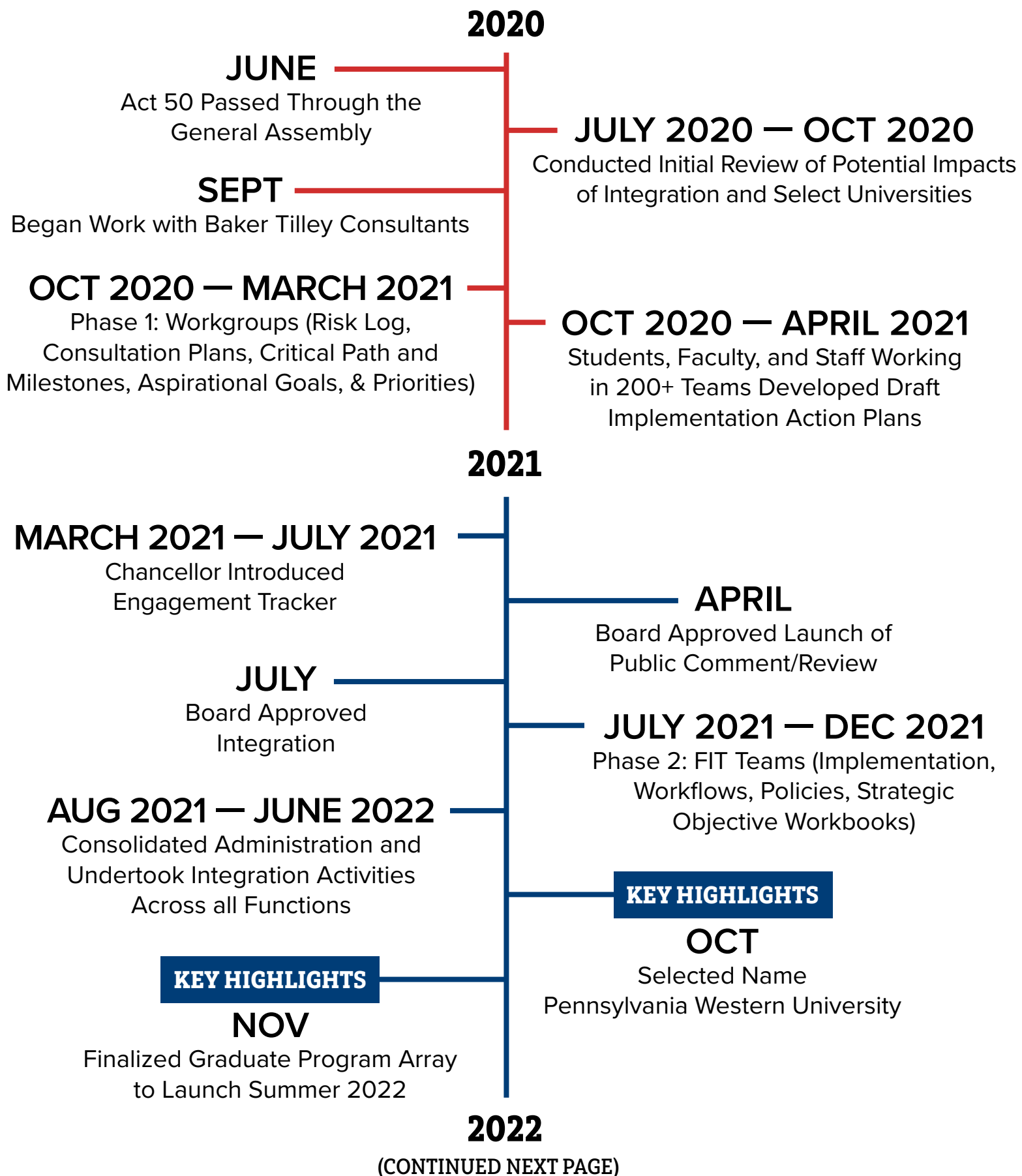
Three Institutional Priorities are addressed in the self-study:

- **Priority 1:** Enhance student success and learning through efficient registration processes and increased focus on retention and completion rates.

- **Priority 2:** Achieve fiscal stability through a sound budgeting process and increase operational strength by addressing the Middle States legacy areas of improvement.

- **Priority 3:** Promote the professional growth of faculty and staff to enhance collaboration and a sense of belonging.

The self-study allowed members of our university community to reflect critically on how our Institutional Priorities and our strategic plan align with PennWest's relatively new mission. It also enabled the university to confirm its alignment with the seven Standards for Accreditation (13th Edition), as well as the Requirements of Affiliation and Verification of Compliance with Federal Regulations. In addition, the university addressed Priority 2's notes on the Middle States legacy areas of improvement, compiling a chart from each previous MSCHE report and addressing each item throughout this self-study (E.7). While the MSCHE reports for California and Clarion were most recent (2020 and 2022, respectively), Edinboro's report was from 2014, making several items obsolete due to the timeframe and integration changes.

BROAD INTEGRATION TIMELINE

2020

JUNE
Act 50 Passed Through the General Assembly

JULY 2020 — OCT 2020
Conducted Initial Review of Potential Impacts of Integration and Select Universities

SEPT
Began Work with Baker Tilley Consultants

OCT 2020 — MARCH 2021
Phase 1: Workgroups (Risk Log, Consultation Plans, Critical Path and Milestones, Aspirational Goals, & Priorities)

OCT 2020 — APRIL 2021
Students, Faculty, and Staff Working in 200+ Teams Developed Draft Implementation Action Plans

2021

MARCH 2021 — JULY 2021
Chancellor Introduced Engagement Tracker

APRIL
Board Approved Launch of Public Comment/Review

JULY
Board Approved Integration

JULY 2021 — DEC 2021
Phase 2: FIT Teams (Implementation, Workflows, Policies, Strategic Objective Workbooks)

AUG 2021 — JUNE 2022
Consolidated Administration and Undertook Integration Activities Across all Functions

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

OCT
Selected Name Pennsylvania Western University

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

NOV
Finalized Graduate Program Array to Launch Summer 2022

2022

(CONTINUED NEXT PAGE)

2022

2022

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

JAN
Launched
myPennWest Portal

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

MARCH
Unified PennWest
Data in Banner

APRIL
Integration Approved by NCAA

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

MAY
Brand Soft Launched

JUNE
Notified by MSCHE of
2024-2025 Evaluation Visit

JULY
Integration Approved by Middle States
and Dept. of Education

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

JULY
Integrated Tableau
Dashboards

JULY
Pennsylvania Western
University Founded

LEADERSHIP

JULY
Dr. Dale-Elizabeth Pehrsson,
PennWest Founding President

AUG 2022— JULY 2023
Strategic Planning Process Began

2022
(CONTINUED NEXT PAGE)

BROAD INTEGRATION TIMELINE

2022

AUG
Brand Campaign Launched

AUG
First Class Started at PennWest

SEPT 2021 — OCT 2021
Integrated Council
of Trustees

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

SEPT
Launched People
and Culture Taskforce

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

OCT
OneSIS
Went Live

LEADERSHIP

OCT 2022 — JUNE 2023
Dr. R. Lorraine Bernotsky Joined
Cabinet as a Consultant and Launched
Operational Blueprint Plan

OCT 2022 — NOV 2023
Conducted Solution Sessions

2023

2023

KEY HIGHLIGHTS
MARCH
First Registration

AUG
Strategic Plan
2023-2026 Launched

LEADERSHIP
SEPT
Campus Leadership Teams

LEADERSHIP
JULY
Presidential Transition –
Dr. R. Lorraine Bernotsky,
Interim President

KEY HIGHLIGHTS
AUG
Launched Undergraduate
Program Array and Reorganized
Academic Colleges

KEY HIGHLIGHTS
SEPT
Launched
PennWest Assessment

2024

LEADERSHIP
JAN 2024 — JULY 2024
Began Presidential Search

KEY HIGHLIGHTS
FEB
University Strategic
Planning Council Launched

LEADERSHIP
JULY
Dr. Jon Anderson Began Presidency

2025

FEB 2024 — AUG 2025
Integrated Student Government
and Student Association

MAR 2025 — MAY 2025
MSCHE Site Visit

2026

Self-Study Process

Approach

Although we have carefully mapped our Institutional Priorities against the MSCHE Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation (E.8) and will provide an integrated discussion of both, we have opted for a standards-based approach to our self-study. This brings more stakeholders into the conversation and allows for a rigorous analysis of PennWest's adherence to each standard as we take steps to align everything we do with our university's mission, strategic plan, and Institutional Priorities. A standards-based approach creates opportunities to continue discussions begun during the integration process, keeping our key stakeholders engaged in the work of moving PennWest forward.

Organizational Structure

A Steering Committee was charged with overseeing the self-study process. It includes the 27 tri-chairs of the Middle States Self-Study process and 66 committee members for the seven standards. An open call went out for volunteers to serve on the working group committees (E.9; E.10) and communication around the process was shared with PennWest stakeholders to ensure equal access for all (E.11; E.12). After responses to the open call were received, the Steering Committee and university leadership considered potential members' professional skills and knowledge of their areas, and ensured that each working group committee included students, faculty, staff, and representation from all PennWest campuses (see Steering Committee and Working Group Members, page 97).

Within each working group, members volunteered for one of three tasks: seeking evidence of compliance with the standard's criteria, organizing that evidence into an inventory, or writing the report. A self-study workbook (E.13) was developed and supplied to each working group member to promote equity, provide consistent information, and support the group's work. The workbook contained writing guidelines, suggested evidence, standard criteria specific to each group, Requirements of Affiliation, and lines of inquiry, all in one resource. The steering committee also held trainings, informational sessions, and open office hours via Zoom to provide working groups with guidance and support throughout the process (E.14; E.15; E.16; E.17; E.18; E.19; E.20).

The Steering Committee ensured regular stakeholder communication through updates to the Council of Trustees and university leadership, as well as an accreditation page on the PennWest website that describes the self-study's progress and makes copies of campus communications available to all.

Intended Outcomes

PennWest leveraged the energy of new leadership, shared governance, a dynamic mission, and a well-considered strategic plan to advance our Institutional Priorities. The university achieved these outcomes through our self-study process:

- We demonstrated the ways PennWest meets the Middle States Standards for Accreditation, Requirements of Affiliation, and Verification of Compliance with Accreditation-Relevant Federal Regulations.

- We engaged the institutional community in an inclusive and transparent self-appraisal process that actively and deliberately sought to involve members from all constituencies and stakeholder groups.

- We measured and assessed our progress in achieving continuous improvement in implementing the institution's mission, its Institutional Priorities, and its strategic plan; in further embedding educational effectiveness and overall assessment into the university's culture; and in linking that assessment with planning and improvements in student learning and achievement.

Key Findings

Standard I: Based on legacy data and best practices, PennWest used collaborative and transparent processes to identify its mission, values, and institutional goals, and to review them for ongoing relevance as the institution evolved.

Standard II: PennWest clearly articulates policies that support freedom of expression and promote respect for all members of the university community, along with procedures for providing input/feedback and addressing employee and student concerns.

Standard III: PennWest codified its academic policies and procedures and synthesized a rigorous, career-focused program array, including a General Education program. The university provides a strong scaffold of academic support for students and clearly communicates their progress toward a degree.

Standard IV: PennWest organized a diverse and highly skilled cadre of staff to provide vital support services for students across its three campuses, including clear information and personalized guidance about financial aid and the cost of higher education. Campus Leadership Teams (CLT) provide campus-specific direct contacts for the community, along with consistent communication.

Standard V: With the rare opportunity to examine the effectiveness of legacy practices and "start fresh" in assessment, PennWest built Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) into its entire curricula and implemented a multi-tier support structure for the assessment process.

Standard VI: PennWest implemented key budgeting tools, including an enrollment projection model, to enhance fiscal and operational stability. Processes, teams, and resources are in place to assess university operations, including administrative, educational, and student support (AES) units, technology infrastructure, and facilities.

Standard VII: PennWest has a transparent and well-defined governance and administrative structure supporting its educational mission, strategic plan, and Institutional Priorities. The university demonstrates a commitment to shared governance, an inclusive presidential search process, DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) principles, and a culture of assessment.

Opportunities for Improvement

Any deeply reflective self-study will identify opportunities for improvement. This is certainly true for PennWest. As outlined above, in a brief few years, many individuals worked in teams to accomplish the necessary work of integrating three institutions so they could be Better Together. This process led to learning throughout the institution.

While this report provides a substantive argument for compliance with all standards, PennWest is well aware that the landscape of higher education is shifting, and successfully navigating the future will take conscientious effort and clear decision making. The future of PennWest will continue to be guided by the institutional priorities noted above but with refinements and additions in each area.

To focus our efforts, we've identified three overarching objectives for 24-25 academic year that align with our priorities (E.21).

Focus Area 1: Refining a clear vision and value proposition for PennWest

PennWest is effectively advancing its work guided by the strategic plan, the Middle States Accreditation Report, the PennWest Blueprint, the CPP, several enrollment models, many integration documents, and other institutional guiding documents.

PennWest is now unifying these efforts into a clear, shared vision and value proposition. This focused approach fosters camaraderie on campus and provides a sense of purpose. This vision and value proposition will emphasize increasing student enrollment and implementing financially sustainable practices that support academically rigorous degree programs.

Focus Area 2: Engaging the neural network in ongoing development of PennWest.

PennWest is fortunate to have impressive people working in all parts of the institution. Like the process through which the brain works (in which nodes naturally and fluidly relay and exchange information), a social neural network that breaks through perceived and formally established barriers can significantly enhance organizational effectiveness and improve the organization's culture. In this administrative model, the traditional hierarchy is still in place, but individuals are encouraged to proactively connect and to collectively solve problems at all levels of the organization.

As we collectively engage in the social neural network, our team will find new ways to exchange information, collaborate on shared work, and achieve transparency levels, accountability, and purpose. This approach will take significant organizational learning and a recognition of other's good intentions. But, as this organic growth occurs, PennWest will be stronger and more capable as an institution.

Focus Area 3: Stabilizing and strengthening our PennWest systems.

PennWest's organizational systems are built to produce the results we observe. Some of those systems are producing the results we hope to achieve, such as the PennWest student experience and the quality of academic learning. However, some systems have yet to produce the results we desire, including the institution's financial position and enrollment trends (over the last decade and a half). Stabilizing systems and refining practices will be the shared process through which PennWest will achieve financial stability and improved organizational health.

Remaining Chapters

The following chapters are organized by standard, following MSCHE guidelines with references to appropriate criteria and evidence. A list of abbreviations and acronyms can be found at the end of this report for your reference. The

evidence inventory is organized by standard, and citations throughout the chapter are identified by the standard, criterion, and evidence number (E.22). Each piece of evidence can be found in the Middle States portal shared with the evaluation team. Evidence that references a website may reflect our interim PennWest site. The latest version is available on the new PennWest site, which launched in the Fall of 2024 and continues to evolve.

In Conclusion: We are Building PennWest

Pennsylvania Western University has embraced the rare opportunity to transform three long-standing universities into a reimagined institution of higher education—and it has emerged from the integration stronger than ever before. As this report demonstrates, PennWest is firmly rooted in its mission and values, and unwavering in its commitment to student success. It has used collaborative processes to design and implement effective academic, operational, governance, and student resource structures, all supported by efficient and well-managed technology. It has rebranded its campuses and built name recognition throughout western Pennsylvania and beyond.

As it looks to the future, PennWest is taking bold steps to address legacy issues. Guided by a financial blueprint, a new enrollment projection model, and a thorough assessment of campus facilities, the university has made data-driven decisions to secure a strong and sustainable future for the institution and the students and communities it serves.

Over the past four years, PennWest has accomplished a herculean task: uniting three institutions as one, amid a pandemic, while honoring the unique character and rich history of each coequal campus. While focusing first and always on the student experience, PennWest has consolidated its administration, its faculty, its program array, and an extensive suite of student support services. PennWest is also building a strong identity and culture that transcends geographical boundaries.

President Jon Anderson is committed to maintaining the university's momentum as PennWest continues to evolve. This self-study provides a welcome opportunity to examine how far we have come as an institution, and where the path forward can lead.

Standard I Mission and Goals (ROA 7, 10)

CRITERION 1
CLEARLY DEFINED MISSION AND GOALS.

Mission

The mission, vision, and values (I.1.1) of Pennsylvania Western University guide the university's strategic plan (E.2), institutional effectiveness, resource allocation, goal setting, and higher-education alignment. PennWest's first working mission statement (I.1.2) was formulated in 2021 by the integration Governance and Leadership working group, composed of faculty, staff, alumni, students, and trustees. After reviewing the missions, visions, and values of the three integrating universities, as well as research gathered by the marketing/communications firms working with the legacy institutions, the group explored what PennWest could, and should, be: a university centered on the student experience, where decision-makers consider students first. With student success as its priority, the group crafted a draft mission statement designed to reflect a strong, stable institution positioned to meet PASSHE benchmarks and the region's higher education needs. The committee's draft mission statement defined PennWest's purpose, identified its primary stakeholders, and articulated its values. The working group shared the draft mission with stakeholders, including the leads of all integration working groups and the Cabinet on each of the campuses. Feedback was solicited, and the draft was edited based on that input. This draft mission statement was used as a guide during the integration process with the intention of refining it after PennWest launched.

Leaders from the campuses met regularly between January and August 2022 to work on strategic initiatives focused on differentiating PennWest and achieving sustainability. The work included a review of the Governance and Leadership working group (I.1.2), the strategic focus areas from the Operating Model, aspirational goals, and stakeholder feedback.

In summer 2022, work continued to define the institution by establishing a common understanding of how the university would function and to drive institutional and strategic planning. The PennWest Operating Model (I.1.3) opens with a mission statement that clearly reflects the seven strategic focus areas for university planning that were developed and implemented in cooperation with the Chancellor's Office:

1. Academic innovation and excellence
2. Affordability
3. Career readiness
4. Diversity, equity, and inclusion
5. Enrollment growth
6. Fiscal sustainability and efficiency
7. Student success

In Spring 2023, the Strategic Planning Committee appointed a subcommittee to review the Governance and Leadership working group draft to refine and update PennWest's Mission, Vision, and Values. This broadly representative group (I.1.4) reviewed and discussed the materials available to the Strategic Planning Committee, including the PennWest Operating Model and marketing research, as well as the Guiding Principles and Core Focus areas.

Meeting weekly (I.1.5), the group collaborated on ways to express the uniqueness of PennWest's commitment to student learning and community service at a university that spans all campuses. It brainstormed by reviewing the legacy institutions' mission and vision statements, drawing on keywords pulled from the Strategic Planning Committee documents, and considering the question, "What will success look like for PennWest?" The group formulated, revised, and edited drafts on a SharePoint site, then settled on a vision statement and a revised mission statement that were proposed to Cabinet (I.1.6). Members of Cabinet undertook further revision, then decided to take the subcommittee's proposed vision statement as the university's new mission statement, and the mission became the vision.

Mission

Through innovation, academic excellence, and empowering environments, Pennsylvania Western University provides accessible education that cultivates career-ready, life-long learners and leaders, who enrich and engage each other, their communities, the region, and beyond.

Vision

Pennsylvania Western University empowers students to achieve meaningful goals through a broad array of nationally accredited undergraduate and graduate programs, career-focused learning, and support systems that foster lifelong success.

The revised mission and vision statements were shared with the entire university community and refined again before being posted on the PennWest website. This two-year process demonstrates the significant ways individuals representing many constituencies, both internal and external, were involved in crafting and revising PennWest's mission statement. As the university came together, it continued to evolve in a thoughtful and deliberate manner; the mission statement was continually reviewed, assessed, and updated to reflect the evolving goals and priorities of the institution.

CRITERION 2
INSTITUTIONAL GOALS THAT ARE REALISTIC, APPROPRIATE TO HIGHER EDUCATION, AND CONSISTENT WITH THE MISSION.

Formed in March 2024, a cross-campus University Strategic Planning Council (USPC) was created to monitor ongoing assessment of the initiatives identified in the plan and the university's progress toward reaching its goals. The USPC distributed the Strategic Plan in a university-wide communication in May 2024 (I.1.7), recruiting volunteer students, faculty, and staff to serve on subcommittees to address each value listed in the strategic plan: learning, growth, inclusion, collaboration, and culture (I.1.8) (see Standard VI).

To realistically align PennWest's mission, vision, values, and strategic plan to the scope of PASSHE and the higher education industry at large, the university researched, analyzed, and addressed campus climate surveys (I.2.9) (see Standard II) and documents from similar institutions (I.2.10). University administrators also collaborated with representatives from PennWest's

and PASSHE's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion offices to collect data for the strategic planning subcommittee to use in developing a three-year action plan with measurable goals. Additionally, the ongoing Comprehensive Planning Process (CPP) required by PASSHE has set three strategic goals, one specific to the monitoring and assessment of the Strategic Plan (E.5). Updates on PennWest's progress are given regularly to the Office of the Chancellor.

PennWest's inaugural strategic plan covers the years 2023-2026. The work of addressing areas of improvement and compliance throughout the monitoring process connects with academic and administrative, educational, and student support (AES) unit assessment and the alignment of strategies and initiatives laid out in the strategic plan. These efforts are discussed further in Standard VI.

CRITERION 3
Goals that focus on student learning and related outcomes and on institutional improvement; are supported by administrative, educational, and student support programs and services; and are consistent with institutional mission.

The university continues to make significant progress in connecting resources and planning to student learning outcomes. Based on PennWest's Mission, Vision, and Values, as well as General Education outcomes that align with Middle States requirements and PASSHE policy, and incorporating National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) career-readiness competencies, PennWest has identified the following institutional outcomes:

Pennsylvania Western University graduates will:

- Seek, develop, evaluate, and use information effectively.
- Act ethically, equitably, and inclusively.
- Communicate impactfully.
- Apply broad-based knowledge, interpersonal skills, and professional expertise to identify and solve problems in a complex and ever-changing world.

These outcomes are addressed further in Standard V.

To assess the success of resource planning and address the need for fundamental changes, PennWest analyzes achievement data such as graduation, retention, transfer, and career outcomes — metrics that exemplify PennWest's mission to grow the university in terms of institutional and student success.

The university also measures workforce outcomes, graduate placements and salaries, and continuing education courses for students.

Since PennWest began the integration process, identifying and building on existing initiatives related to student success and retention has been a priority. According to 2023 census enrollment data (E.1), PennWest's Fall 2021 cohort of first-year, full-time, bachelor's degree-seeking students showed a retention rate of 69.9%. Reflecting the PennWest values of learning, growth, inclusion, and collaboration, programs to support students have been strengthened, student-retention improvement measures have been implemented, and the university continues to address needs and support student success. PennWest has since seen an increase in retention, year-over-year, to 70.4% in the 2022 cohort.

Recent approvals of changes to the General Education program, such as a faculty-developed first-year experience ("Compass") course (I.3.11) which launched in Fall 2024, supports further growth in student retention and academic success. The Compass course takes a holistic and process-based approach to supporting first-year students by emphasizing the skills and behaviors that correlate with student success and helping students begin to develop the critical, reflective mindset that is essential to academic work and successful careers. See Standard III, Criterion 5, for details.

Additional evidence demonstrating PennWest's progress in meeting its student achievement goals are the graduation and post-graduate placement data from the 2022-2023 cohort. In the most recent PASSHE workforce outcomes report (I.3.12), the median wage for recent PennWest graduates was $44,655 for students three years after graduation. Ten years after graduation, that figure grew by 35.24%, to $60,390, with significant gains for those graduates in STEM, health, and education fields. Furthermore, 69% of PennWest graduates are working in Pennsylvania three years after graduation. (Note: These figures are an aggregate of the three legacy campuses).

A "First Destination Survey" of graduate outcomes (I.3.13) conducted by PennWest's Career Center drew 1,828 respondents who graduated between August 2022 and May 2023, with 94.6% reporting they were either employed or continuing their education. In this survey, 86% of graduates said they are working in a field related to their academic program or career interests. Leveraging the qualitative and quantitative data from the destination survey allows PennWest to continue developing programs and services that support students' personal, financial, and academic success after graduation.

To assist students in becoming engaged and competent learners, PennWest employs (as of Spring 2024) seven Success Coaches (I.3.14), clerical staff, and supervisors in

the centralized Student Outreach and Success Office. Success Coaches — professionals and graduate assistants — are trained to assist new first-year students, transfer students, upperclass students, and soon-to-be graduates, and to connect them with appropriate campus resources.

In addition, each campus houses tutoring, supplemental instruction, success coaching, peer mentoring, global initiatives, study abroad, and veterans support services in one central location, addressing the PennWest value of academic success, growth, and inclusion. Students also can connect with these services through Starfish, an online system designed to increase student access to services, facilitate communication, and support student success. These shared services provide every PennWest student with the opportunity to learn, work, and thrive (see Standards III & IV).

Human Resources Data

According to PennWest's human resources data and 2023-2024 IPEDS data (I.3.15), the university employs 926 staff members and 611 full- and part-time faculty. In keeping with its mission statement and values of inclusion and culture, PennWest strives to advocate for all members of the campus community by providing an equitable, supportive environment for faculty, staff, and students of all backgrounds. Of the 611 full- and part-time faculty, 53% are female and 14.2% are Hispanic/Latino, non-U.S. resident, African American, Native, or Asian. With a mission of providing a more diverse faculty cohort, PennWest plans to increase faculty and staff diversity through national and regional searches, including local advertising venues as well as outreach to local community organizations. PennWest advocates for all members of our campus communities and provides an environment that builds a sense of belonging and togetherness.

Accessible Education

PennWest principally serves western Pennsylvania, a region with a mix of rural, suburban, and urban

demographics, where a majority of students receive some type of federal aid. Collectively, the university's undergraduate degree- and certificate-seeking students received more than $49.9 million in federal aid, with $16.5 million coming in the form of Pell grants during the 2022-2023 academic year (I.3.16). More than 58% of PennWest students received aid from federal student loans and 38% received Pell grants. The average federal student loan was $6,261; the average Pell grant was $4,769.

For the 2022-2023 cohort, 226 students at PennWest received Post-911 or GI Bill benefits totaling $1.5 million, an average of $6,637 per individual. The Department of Defense Tuition Assistance Program provided $962,876 for 262 students, an average of $3,675 per student (I.3.16).

A review of the graduation rates of full-time, first-time, degree-seeking undergraduates within 150% of normal time to completion found a transfer-out rate of 21% in 2023. Further data from that review of the cohort shows that students who received no Pell or Stafford loans had a 63% graduation rate (I.3.17).

In alignment with PASSHE's mission to provide accessible education for Pennsylvania students, tuition has remained frozen (I.3.18) at all PASSHE institutions for the last six years. PennWest's Financial Aid Office collaborates with the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) to inform prospective and current students and their families how to prepare for higher education (I.3.19). Students admitted to PennWest are guided through several processes, such as determining unusual circumstances, searching for scholarships, using a timeline to plan for higher education costs, and considering various methods of paying for college. PennWest also provides documents and support for active military service members and military-related students (I.3.20) to help increase their eligibility for scholarships and tuition discounts, receive priority scheduling, and transition from military to academic life.

CRITERION 4
Periodic assessment of mission and goals to ensure they are relevant and achievable.

PennWest's mission, vision, and values were reviewed during the strategic planning process to verify their continued relevance, and they will be reviewed again in Fall 2025 when work on the next strategic plan begins. Until then, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (IE) has developed a tracker (I.4.21) to monitor the mission, vision, and goals for each division, as well as the institutional mission, vision, and values that will be reviewed by the USPC, with recommendations provided to Cabinet for review and approval, including the dates of each review. Annually, IE prompts each vice-presidential area to revisit the documents to ensure their relevance and verify that the most up-to-date information is recorded.

Strengths

- Each PennWest campus brings legacy reports, data, and traditions to the newly formed institution, which can assist in establishing best practices for future mission/goals development.

- The university maintains a student-focused approach to strategic planning and curriculum development.

- Faculty, staff, and administrators maintain flexibility and commitment to the unified university, so collective decision-making and planning can be more effective.

- PennWest continues to be adaptable and fluid in updating and improving strategies and procedures related to its mission and strategic plan. This is evident through the levels of reviews within each audience and demographic of the three campuses.

- The university's mission, vision, and values provide the framework on which the strategic plan was built. As such, they establish the foundation from which major decisions are made at the Cabinet level. They also were featured prominently in the Presidential Search Prospectus to ensure that candidates were aware of their importance at the institution.

Opportunity

- Refine a clear vision and value proposition for PennWest. With more time and stability at the administrative level, more effective and efficient planning can take place, which can impact each level of the organizational chart.

CRITERION 1

COMMITMENT TO ACADEMIC FREEDOM, INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM, FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, AND RESPECT FOR INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS.

Members of the campus community are informed of the importance of academic freedom, intellectual freedom, freedom of expression, and respect for intellectual property rights in multiple ways, including university policies, the Student Handbook (II.1.1), student orientation programs, new-employee resources, and online training that faculty and staff must complete to comply with federal and state guidelines. Additional training and information sessions are offered for academic departments, university offices, and student organizations through the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, as well as the Office of Equity and Title IX.

The Association of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculties (APSCUF) represents faculty members and coaches employed at the commonwealth's 10 publicly owned universities. Academic and intellectual freedom is addressed in Article 2 of the collective bargaining agreement (CBA). According to Article 2 (II.1.2), faculty members are entitled to freedom of research, publication, classroom discussion of their subject, and selection of textbooks, and the right to free speech as citizens. The CBA also requires academic freedom to be accompanied by an equally demanding concept of academic responsibility, which includes service and effective teaching. PennWest's Grading Policy (II.1.3) also ensures that faculty are afforded freedom of discussion in the classroom and a limited framework for required assessment.

Student academic freedom is also protected through the Grading Policy and Course Syllabus Policy (II.1.4), both of which ensure that students have access to the information they need to understand the subjects, requirements, and assessment criteria of the courses they attend. Students are made aware of faculty members' mandatory reporting requirements under the Sexual Misconduct Policy in a manner that allows students to decide how they communicate such topics in assignments. The disclosure of reporting requirements and the academic exceptions provided to class assignments and discussions, along with additional reporting requirements for sexual violence toward a minor, ensures that students are aware of their rights to speak about these topics in an academic setting and allows for the freedom to discuss such topics.

Although PennWest is committed to the principles of free inquiry and free expression, unlawful discrimination and harassment as identified in the Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedures (II.1.5) and Non-Discrimination Policy (II.1.6) are neither legally protected expression nor the proper exercise of academic freedom. PennWest's Sexual Misconduct and Non-Discrimination policies are based on model policies developed by PASSHE in 2020 and 2021; PennWest's policies were effective upon integration in July 2022.

Students on all PennWest campuses can express themselves through various means, including social clubs and student organizations. Among these organizations are groups dedicated to supporting international students, and students from various ethnic or multicultural groups and religious backgrounds, as well as students who identify as LGBTQIA+ and their allies. The LGBTQIA+ organization, in association with the DEI Office, holds Pride Month events (II.1.7) that are open to all students, as well as Lavender Graduation ceremonies on all PennWest campuses. Student organizations also partner with academic departments to present art shows and academic discussions on campus. The fine arts and applied arts departments, for

example, regularly partner with various art clubs to present exhibitions of student-created artworks. Although PennWest California houses the performing arts department, student drama and musical organizations present performances on all campuses. These performances are student-organized and student-run, with minimal assistance from faculty advisors, giving students opportunities for free expression and inquiry into the subjects they are presenting.

PennWest supports the rights of students, staff, and faculty to engage in expressive activity individually and collectively. The Time, Place, and Manner Policy (II.1.8) establishes guidelines that ensure that expressive activities do not interfere with university operations, undermine the free speech rights of other individuals, or present harm to the university community. The Time, Place, and Manner Policy can be found on the Policies page of the PennWest website; students, faculty, staff, and community members can contact University Police, the Student Affairs Office, or the Risk Management Office with questions about this policy and its procedures.

PennWest respects intellectual property rights of faculty and students by adhering to the university's and PASSHE's policies and procedures designed to promote and protect intellectual property rights. An example is the PennWest Acceptable Use Policy (II.1.9). PennWest also addresses intellectual property rights related to data and research through PASSHE's Technology Transfer and Commercialization Services Procedure/Standard 2018-37 (II.1.10). This standard/procedure defines, "the process that legally protects new technology invented by faculty and others through research efforts and makes that technology available for public use through licensing to third parties for manufacture, production, distribution, and sales." To provide quality and objectivity in research, PASSHE's Management of Financial Conflict of Interest (FCOI) Procedure/Standard 2016-22 (II.1.11) provides a framework to ensure that an investigator's conflicting financial interests will not bias the design, conduct, or reporting of that research. The Academic Integrity Policy (II.1.12) and the Student Code of Conduct (II.1.13) also make clear that plagiarism is not tolerated at PennWest.

CRITERION 2
A CLIMATE THAT FOSTERS RESPECT AMONG STUDENTS, FACULTY, STAFF, AND ADMINISTRATION FROM A RANGE OF DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS, IDEAS, AND PERSPECTIVES.

PennWest is committed to maintaining an open and respectful campus climate. This commitment is evidenced in PennWest's 2023-2026 Strategic Plan (E.2), which calls for the university to "advocate for all members of our campus communities and provide a supportive environment that builds a sense of belonging and togetherness." Strategy S1 under Growth focuses on "create[ing] a welcoming, diverse campus culture that respects and celebrates a sense of belonging" to reduce graduation gaps, establish baselines through student focus groups, and educate students on activism. Initiative E1.4 under Culture calls for "a strategy to provide professional development on diversity, equity, and inclusion issues" for employees. To inform planning and strategies regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion, PennWest collected demographic data in 2022 (II.2.14) and 2023 (II.2.15) on its students and employees.

Demographic Data

Total headcount for Fall 2023 was 11,305 students (II.2.16), with an FTE of 9,132.3. Undergraduate headcount was 8,336, with an FTE of 7,369. Graduate student headcount was 2,969, with an FTE of 1,763. Students came from almost all counties in Pennsylvania and all 50 states, as well as Puerto Rico and Guam. Seventy-four percent of students were white, with African American/Black being the next largest ethnic/racial group, at 8%. Hispanic students made up 4% of our enrollment, while 3% of students identified as "two or more races." Asian, Pacific Islander, and Non-Resident Alien each accounted for 1%, and American Indian enrollment was 0.1%. Nine percent of students were listed as "unknown" because they did not provide racial or ethnic information. Unduplicated enrollment from July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023, was 10,564 undergraduates (headcount) with an FTE of 8,494, and 4,851 graduate students (headcount) with an FTE of 2,726. Women made up 61% of undergraduates and 74% of graduate students in the unduplicated data. The majority of undergraduate and graduate 12-month unduplicated enrollment was white, with African American Employee reports (I.3.15) showing there were 1,537 employees in November 2023, including full- and part-time permanent and temporary employees. This includes 611 instructional staff. Many employees were white (1,379) with African American/Black making up the next largest category (64), followed by Asian (37) and Hispanic (33). There were fewer than 15 employees in any other racial or ethnic category.

Total headcount for **Fall 2023** **11,305** **students** (FTE of 9,132.3)
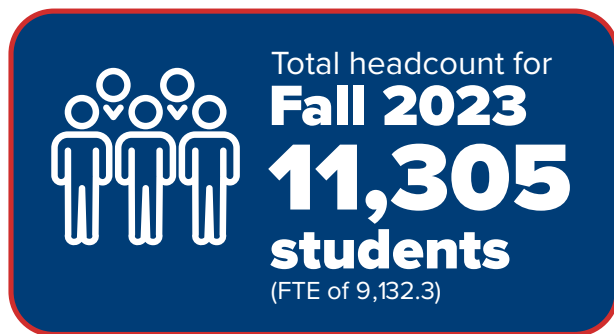
Campus Climate

Community Action Team (ICAT)

PennWest has an Inclusive Community Action Team (ICAT) (II.2.17) on each campus, led by DEI staff with members from various departments. These teams provide support and educational resources in response to disruptions within the university community, including hate speech. ICAT is separate from, but complementary to, other university processes and services that enforce or adjudicate policies. ICAT accepts reports online from any student, staff, or faculty member regarding actions motivated by hostility toward other(s) based on their identity. When it receives a report, ICAT reaches out to both complainant(s) and respondent(s), offering support and/or education. ICAT also provides opportunities for discussion and advocacy and offers resources to employees. In addition to outreach, ICAT has conducted Building Bridges programs (II.2.18) in residence halls to facilitate communication and understanding among students and other campus stakeholders of diverse racial and cultural identities. These dialogues integrate with and enhance students' academic and campus-life experiences, providing a structured forum where they can listen to and learn from one another.

Policies

PennWest maintains policies setting standards of behavior that support a respectful environment, such as the Student Code of Conduct (II.1.13); Sexual Misconduct Policy (II.1.5); Non-Discrimination Policy (II.1.6); and Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying Policy (II.2.19). These policies were developed with PASSHE, state, federal, and accreditation requirements in mind and reviewed by the university's legal counsel for compliance, and are all available on PennWest's website. Additional standards for employees are outlined in the following CBAs: AFSCME (II.2.20); APSCUF Coaches (II.2.21); APSCUF Faculty (II.2.22); SCUPA (II.2.23); OPEIU (II.2.24); and SPFPA (II.2.25).

Climate Survey

PennWest participated in a PASSHE-wide campus climate survey from January through March 2022. Town hall presentations were made to staff (II.2.26), students (II.2.27), managers (II.2.28), and faculty (II.2.29) in March 2023 to present the survey results and allow for questions. The results also informed development of the 2023-2026 PennWest Strategic Plan and initiatives being planned by the DEI Office, including the development of seminal statements (II.2.30) containing divisional values and pillars for the office.

People and Culture

An ad hoc People and Culture Taskforce (II.2.31; II.2.32) was formed in Spring 2023 and then divided into several smaller working groups that developed recommendations for improving the university's climate for employees. The taskforce was charged (II.2.33) with conducting an analysis of employees' perceptions of the university's work culture, wellness programming, and leadership development, and asked to identify and recommend best practices to attract, develop, motivate, and retain quality employees; promote a positive and healthy work environment; and invest in the learning and development of employees. Taskforce committees focused on five areas: employee onboarding, talent development, employee morale, wellness/work-life balance, and employee recognition. The taskforce's work was aligned with the strategic planning committee on employees. Taskforce and committee membership were open to any employee who wished to volunteer. Information from the taskforce was used in developing the employee goals and metrics in the strategic plan, as outlined in Strategy R1 under Collaboration (E.2).

Solution Sessions

In an effort to find ways to improve the student experience, Dr. Zebulun Davenport from West Chester University conducted a series of solution session focus groups (II.2.34) on each campus for students, managers, and employees by union, resulting in a report submitted to Cabinet in Spring 2023. Davenport's report led to changes such as the establishment of Campus Leadership Teams and Campus Leadership Councils (see Standard IV), a central integration update space in the internal myPennWest portal, improved marketing of campus-based resources, development of advisory boards for areas such as Career Center and the food pantries, implementation of the Asset Essentials work order system, creation of an Enrollment Management Operations Team, updated organizational charts, centralization of Success Coaches in Academic Affairs, and further progress toward an updated PennWest website. Implementation of additional recommendations are still in progress.

CRITERION 3

A GRIEVANCE POLICY THAT IS DOCUMENTED AND DISSEMINATED TO ADDRESS COMPLAINTS OR GRIEVANCES RAISED BY STUDENTS, FACULTY, OR STAFF. THE INSTITUTION'S POLICIES AND PROCEDURES ARE FAIR AND IMPARTIAL, AND ASSURE THAT GRIEVANCES ARE ADDRESSED PROMPTLY, APPROPRIATELY, AND EQUITABLY.

Through resources such as its Policies webpage and myPennWest internal portal, PennWest works to ensure that all students, faculty, and staff are fully aware of well-defined policies and procedures for addressing grievances. These include the Non-Discrimination Policy (II.1.6); Sexual Misconduct Policy (II.1.5); Amorous Relationships Policy (II.3.35); Student Complaint Policy (II.3.36); Clery Report (II.3.37); Student Handbook (II.1.1); PennWest Reporting Guide; Academic Integrity Policy (II.1.12); Academic Standings policies for undergraduate and graduate students; Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying Policy (II.2.19); graduate and undergraduate course catalogs; Conducting Investigations Received through PASSHE's Incident Reporting System Procedure/Standard 2013-17 (II.3.38); and New Employee Resources Card (II.3.39). It is through these policies and their grievance processes that PennWest ensures compliance with all federal, state, and PASSHE policies and regulations.

All contracts address grievance procedures: Article 5 of the APSCUF Faculty CBA (II.3.40); Article 13 of the SCUPA CBA (II.3.41); and Article 37 of AFSCME CBA (II.3.42). In 2023 there were 10 grievances filed, in 2022 there were 14, and in 2021 there were seven (II.3.43; II.3.44; II.3.45). The number of grievances filed in a particular year can vary greatly depending on circumstances such as retrenchment, special situations (e.g., COVID-19 mitigation measures), and changes in policies. Lower grievance numbers in the lead-up to integration, followed by an increase, indicates the bargaining units' willingness to work with management through the initial integration process.

Human Resources and the Equity and Title IX Office work with employees to determine the best process for addressing employee concerns on a variety of topics, including bullying, working conditions, accommodations, and other policy and non-policy issues. Many cases can be handled at the department level by chairs or supervisors. The Provost's Office works with faculty, deans, and department chairs to deal with faculty concerns that department chairs are unable to address.

Individuals seeking employment with PennWest who believe they have been discriminated against are informed through job postings (II.3.46) to contact the Equity and Title IX Office. They also may report violations of state and federal employment regulations using the PASSHE Fraud, Waste, and Abuse reporting system (II.3.47). Provision of this information and inclusion of the Office of Equity and Title IX in the hiring process help to ensure diversity, equity, and inclusion in the hiring process.

The Dean of Students Office is responsible for reviewing, maintaining, and enforcing the Student Code of Conduct (II.1.13), which is intended to "teach civic principles within the context of the academic mission." The Student Code of Conduct includes the Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities. Reports of code violations are reported to the Dean of Students Office through the Maxient reporting system. This system also assists the office in tracking code violations per semester. The Student Code of Conduct outlines the process used to address alleged violations of the behavioral expectations defined within the code. This process is designed to be fair and impartial, while complying with the requirements set forth in the Pennsylvania Code regarding student disciplinary due process. Due process for sexual misconduct allegations falls under the Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedure (II.1.5), according to federal regulations.

Students with disabilities are protected while on campus through the provisions of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). In accordance with these laws, PennWest provides reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities to ensure equal access to its programs and activities. For employees, the ADA/504 Requesting a Reasonable Accommodation Policy (II.3.48) outlines the process of requesting accommodations, and the Non-Discrimination Policy (II.1.6) outlines the grievance process should accommodations be denied, or discrimination based on differing ability be alleged. Employees file requests for accommodation through the Office of Equity and Title IX. For both employees and students, the Office of Equity and Title IX reviews, tracks, and investigates claims of discrimination based on ability.

The Residence Life and Housing Handbook (II.3.49; II.3.50; II.3.51) contains information that helps students to understand the policies, prohibited activities, and expectations for living in the residence halls on any of PennWest's three campuses. It reminds students that they are accountable for their conduct and are held to the standards presented in the Student Code of Conduct.

PennWest's Academic Integrity Policy (II.1.12) delineates the expectation that students will "understand the importance of moral responsibility, honesty, and personal integrity in the learning process." The policy defines academic dishonesty and the procedures that faculty follow when they believe a violation has occurred. This process, which begins with the class instructor, grants due process for students and rights to appeal. Faculty members may refer violations of this policy to the Dean of Students Office if they believe the violation falls under the Student Code of Conduct. Otherwise, the faculty member must hold a conference with the student to discuss the charge before assigning a sanction; if a student does not participate in such a conference, faculty may impose a sanction at their discretion. Appeals by students can be made to the academic dean of the college where the department is housed; the decision of the dean is final on appeal. Faculty also may choose to refer violations directly to the academic dean, who will hold a conference with the student in instances where a violation may be severe enough to warrant removal from a major. No student will be expelled or suspended for academic dishonesty without a hearing in compliance with the Student Code of Conduct.

For students who believe there was a calculation error or unsubstantiated academic evaluation by their instructor that led to a discrepancy in course grade, the Grade Appeal Policy (II.3.52) provides the appropriate grievance process. This process begins with the course instructor and has appeal rights through the department chair, academic dean, and provost, with the provost being the terminal appeal. If students believe they were discriminated against during a course based on a protected class, the Office of Equity and Title IX provides grievance processes according to the Non-Discrimination Policy (II.1.6) and/or Sexual Misconduct Policy (II.1.5).

CRITERION 4

THE AVOIDANCE OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST OR THE APPEARANCE OF SUCH CONFLICT IN ALL ACTIVITIES AND AMONG ALL CONSTITUENTS.

The basis for PennWest's efforts to avoid conflicts of interest lies in the Pennsylvania Public Official and Employee Ethics Act (II.4.53). This act prohibits a public official or employee from engaging in behavior that creates conflicts of interest and provides reporting options. University trustees are covered under the Ethics Act. PennWest utilizes the State Ethics Commission Statement of Financial Interests form (II.4.54) to identify possible financial conflicts of interest. These forms are distributed annually by email to employees required to complete them; returns are tracked by Human Resources (II.4.55). PASSHE Policy 2012-01: Conflict of Interest (II.4.56) establishes a process to address conflicts of interest. PASSHE's Conducting Investigations Received through PASSHE's Incident Reporting System Procedure/Standard 2013-17 (II.3.38) requires documentation and sets investigation obligations for any report received by the State System, including conflicts of interest. PASSHE's Management of Financial Conflict of Interest (FCOI) Procedure/Standard 2016-22 (II.1.11) requires the avoidance of conflicts of interest "in research, education and service activities" at all PASSHE institutions. PennWest's Amorous Relationship Policy (II.3.35) establishes guidelines to limit abuse of power and conflicts of interest in relationships between employees or between employees and students when one participant has any type of supervisory authority over the other. The Clarion Students' Association and the Student Association Inc. on the California campus both have Conflict of Interest policies for board members (II.4.57; II.4.58).

PennWest's Purchasing Policy/Expenditure of Public Funds follows PASSHE's Expenditure of Public Funds Guidelines, Standards, and Limits Procedure/Standard 2011-07 (II.4.59) in limiting expenditures of public monies to the advancement of PennWest's mission. These policies specifically state that all funds received by PennWest, including grant monies, are to be considered public funds and follow the appropriate spending requirements.

PennWest demonstrates transparency in multiple ways. All approved PennWest policies (II.4.60) are located on the PennWest website without any restrictions on access. Policies also are identified on specific pages throughout the website with links to the full policy whenever mentioned. PennWest complies with the Pennsylvania Right-to-Know Law (II.4.61), allowing interested parties access to information through a process outlined in the law. This allows interested parties to obtain information demonstrating the university's compliance with institutional, PASSHE, and state requirements regarding conflicts of interest.

CRITERION 5

FAIR AND IMPARTIAL PRACTICES IN THE HIRING, EVALUATION, PROMOTION, DISCIPLINE, AND SEPARATION OF EMPLOYEES.

The Office of Human Resources provides full-time, on-campus support for collective bargaining units and non-represented staff members. Hiring procedures for faculty are detailed in Article 11 (II.5.62) of the APSCUF CBA. The PennWest Recruitment Guide (II.5.63) provides guidelines for hiring managers to follow when seeking candidates to fill new or vacated positions; it is applicable to all bargaining units. Prior to posting a position, supervisors complete a job description form that is reviewed by Human Resources; all positions must be approved by the Cabinet and Human Resources before the position is posted. Supervisors work with Human Resources to develop screening questions for interviews; the number of interviews can vary by position, but at least one interview, whether on-campus or virtual, is required unless contractual bid rights apply. Human Resources and the Office of Equity and Title IX oversee the hiring process to ensure that all requirements under federal law, state law, and PASSHE policies are fulfilled, while ensuring that diversity, equity, and inclusion are considered during the hiring process. Additionally, Article 3 of the APSCUF Faculty CBA and APSCUF CBA for Coaches (II.5.64) states that faculty members and coaches may not discriminate against other faculty members, coaches, or candidates for employment based on protected class or other groups as determined by law.

PennWest utilizes online resources and training materials for onboarding employees. This provides information in a transparent, honest, and accurate manner so that all internal and external stakeholders are aware of it. New employees have access to the New Employee Resource Card (II.3.39) on their myPennWest webpage, an internal portal used by the PennWest community; it provides information about collective bargaining agreements, university policies, employee benefits, mandated reporting requirements, and resources that employees need to acclimate to campus. Departments are primarily responsible for onboarding new employees, and Human Resources provides supervisors with a checklist (II.5.65) and tools that help them understand what is needed to set a new employee up for success. The Provost's Office conducts new faculty orientation for full-time and part-time faculty each semester. The Center for Faculty Excellence also assists new and continuing faculty.

In accordance with Article 12 of the APSCUF CBA (II.5.66), all faculty members at PennWest are routinely evaluated under criteria outlined in the agreement. Article 32 of the SCUPA CBA (II.5.67) also requires evaluations of represented employees annually, or as conditions warrant. All other represented employee groups are evaluated as outlined in their CBAs and administered through the Human Resources Office. Non-represented university employees are evaluated based on PASSHE policy; supervisors complete annual evaluations of non-represented employees using tools provided by PASSHE (II.5.68).

See Criterion 1 for information about the grievance procedures and policies for employees. Human Resources and the HR Connect online resource provide information on separation procedures for employees. Human Resources has created a separation checklist (II.5.69) to help employees complete the process.

CRITERION 6

HONESTY AND TRUTHFULNESS IN PUBLIC RELATIONS ANNOUNCEMENTS, ADVERTISEMENTS, RECRUITING AND ADMISSIONS MATERIALS AND PRACTICES, AS WELL AS IN INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS.

PennWest engages in honest, transparent, and truthful communication with internal and external stakeholders. Policies such as the Acceptable Use (II.1.9), Social Media (II.6.70), and Email Distribution (II.6.71) policies establish guidelines and standards for communications. Standards for sharing information are set in the Availability of Employees for Information Dissemination (II.6.72) and Data Request/Confidentiality (II.6.73) policies. These policies promote respect and honesty in communications and compliance with institutional, PASSHE, legal, and accreditation requirements. The Inclusive Community Action Team (ICAT) (II.2.17) and Student Code of Conduct (II.1.13) promote respectful and ethical communication within the university community.

PennWest adheres to Article 1.A of the National Association of College Admission Counseling (NACAC): Truthfulness and Transparency Guiding Principles (II.6.74) in recruitment and admissions materials and practices. The marketing and communications departments work closely with campus stakeholders (e.g., Admissions, Financial Aid, Residence Life, and Housing) to acquire information and ensure the accuracy of completed projects aligned with the PennWest mission and brand. Campus stakeholders provide information, a team creates the project, and the campus stakeholders approve the results. As mentioned previously in the Executive Summary, the marketing and communications teams continue to implement strategic rebranding of PennWest across all campuses.

PennWest and its Council of Trustees comply with all transparency regulations and rules as promulgated under the Pennsylvania Right-to-Know Law (II.4.61) and state Ethics Act (II.4.53). Council of Trustees meetings also comply with the Pennsylvania Sunshine Act, 65 PA.C.S. §§ 701-716 (II.6.75); information about meeting schedules, agendas, and access to meeting streams and recordings can be found on the Council of Trustees website (II.6.76). In addition, PennWest provides information about employees designated as available for information dissemination, as mandated by the Department of Education requirements for information dissemination in the Availability of Employees for Information Dissemination Policy (II.6.72).

Transparency in costs is discussed in Criterion 7.

CRITERION 7

SERVICES OR PROGRAMS IN PLACE TO PROMOTE AFFORDABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY; TO ENABLE STUDENTS TO UNDERSTAND FUNDING SOURCES AND OPTIONS, VALUE RECEIVED FOR COST, AND METHODS TO MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS ABOUT INCURRING DEBT.

PASSHE's mission is to provide a high-quality education at the lowest possible cost to students and ensure accessibility regardless of one's identity. PennWest is committed to providing accessible education and works to remain affordable to a diverse student body.

The PASSHE Board of Governors sets tuition costs. In alignment with PASSHE's mission to provide accessible education for Pennsylvania students, tuition has remained frozen (I.3.18) at all PASSHE institutions for the last six years. Cost of attendance information (II.7.77; II.7.78; II.7.79) is available on webpages for each campus location so students can make informed decisions. It includes a transparent listing of tuition costs, fees, on-campus housing costs, and other general costs of attendance, along with a Net Price Calculator tool. The PennWest.edu homepage includes a link to a Consumer Information page where this information also is disclosed.

For students who need payment plans, the billing website provides clear information about the payment plan process (II.7.80), fees, and expectations. Additional information about student billing can be found in the Transact eAccounts card on the student's internal myPennWest portal. Students are eligible for a 100% refund if they drop classes before the end of the drop/add period according to the university's Refund Policy (II.7.81). If they withdraw from classes during the refund period, students are eligible for a percentage refund based on the date of their withdrawal. The Insufficient Funds Policy (II.7.82) informs students of the effect of checks provided to the university from accounts with insufficient funds and the process the university follows when this occurs. Withdrawals from course(s) and the university are discussed in the Course Withdrawal Policy (II.7.83).

Most PennWest students receive some form of financial aid, whether grants, loans, scholarships, or work-study. Merit awards are available through the university, independent of need-based scholarships; these are discussed in more detail in Standard IV. For the 2021-2022 academic year, 98% of full-time, first-time, degree- or certificate-seeking students received financial aid, with 63% receiving federal grants, 34% receiving state/local government grants or scholarships, and 72% receiving student loan aid (II.7.84). Among all undergraduate students, 86% received grant or scholarship aid and 64% received federal student loans. Federal Title IV aid is available to PennWest students. Continued receipt of federal Title IV aid is dependent on satisfactory student progress, ensuring responsible distribution of this aid. The PennWest Tuition and Aid website provides students with information on these requirements.

Respecting the need for students to make informed decisions, the Tuition and Aid webpage (II.7.85) provides
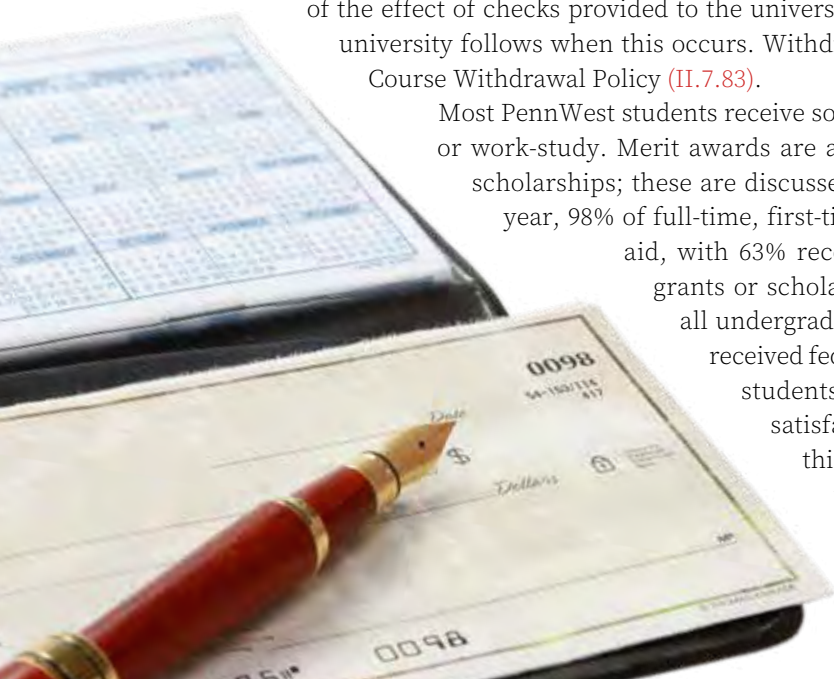
clear, transparent information on the costs of education and general costs of attendance, including tuition, fees, and additional costs such as housing, meal plans, and parking fees. This information is broken down by campus, so students are fully aware of the costs based on the campus they attend and not an average for the university. Web-based financial aid content and face-to-face counseling are available on all campuses. Information on all forms of financial aid is provided, including web-based scholarship information for each campus. In addition, counselors assist with completing the FAFSA, as needed.

CRITERION 8
COMPLIANCE WITH ALL APPLICABLE FEDERAL, STATE, AND COMMISSION REPORTING POLICIES, REGULATIONS, AND REQUIREMENTS.

PennWest is in compliance with all applicable federal, state, and MSCHE reporting policies, regulations, and requirements, including reporting the full disclosure of information on institution-wide assessments, graduation, retention, certification, and licensure (II.8.86). The institution is also in compliance with the commission's Requirements of Affiliation; substantive changes affecting institutional mission, goals, programs, operations, sites, and other material issues that must be disclosed in a timely and accurate fashion; and with MSCHE policies. PennWest has submitted the Institutional Federal Compliance Report and Annual Institutional Update to MSCHE as required. The full federal compliance report is available in the evidence inventory (II.8.87).

Conduct of Research

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is a standing committee responsible for ensuring that the rights and welfare of human research participants are protected. All members of the University community who engage in activities that are classified as research involving human participants or any organization conducting research in which members of the PennWest community are research subjects must submit their research proposals to the IRB for review and approval.

CRITERION 9
PERIODIC ASSESSMENT OF ETHICS AND INTEGRITY AS EVIDENCED IN INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES, PROCESSES, PRACTICES, AND THE MANNER IN WHICH THESE ARE IMPLEMENTED.

Ethics and integrity assessment is embedded into the structure of PennWest's policies, processes, and practices. Each policy contains requirements for regular review as determined by regulation or specific policy. PennWest's administration collaborates with the offices of Institutional Research and Institutional Effectiveness to ensure that PennWest programs and departments have accurate data, effectively assess their programs/operations for continuous improvement, and follow federal, state, and local regulations. More information about the assessment process can be found in Standards IV, V, & VI.

Strengths

- The CBAs of the bargaining units clearly delineate and define grievance processes and procedures for fair selection and evaluation of staff and faculty, as well as academic freedom, intellectual freedom, freedom of expression, and respect for intellectual property rights.
- PennWest's general commitment to freedom of expression is defined in policy and its Student Code of Conduct.
- The policies that define grievance procedures and protections based on federal and state laws and regulations are clearly written and transparent in their language to promote an appropriate educational environment. These policies are easily accessible on the university website, and employees are trained on these policies.

- PennWest works to ensure equitable and inclusive support for its students through a variety of outreach programs (e.g., the Behavioral Intervention Team, discussed in Standard IV) to ensure that students encountering difficulties can have their concerns addressed. Additionally, these outreach programs clearly communicate grievance processes and procedures as defined in the university's policies.
- PennWest worked to be fluid throughout the integration process, adjusting policies, procedures, and responsibilities to adapt to evolving circumstances as three legacy institutions consolidated to form one university.

Opportunity

- Stabilize and strengthen our PennWest systems by continuing to refine and develop PennWest policies and procedures consistent with updated collective bargaining agreements.

Standard III Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience (ROA 8, 9, 10, 15)

CRITERION 1

CERTIFICATE, UNDERGRADUATE, GRADUATE, AND/OR PROFESSIONAL PROGRAMS LEADING TO A DEGREE OR OTHER RECOGNIZED HIGHER EDUCATION CREDENTIALS: ARRAY AND QUALITY OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMS.

Programs of Study

PennWest promotes quality through an academic array offered across all campuses, three academic colleges, and 14 departments. The synthesized PennWest curricula launched initially with graduate programs in Fall 2022 and undergraduate programs in Fall 2023. As of June 2024, PennWest's 2023-2024 academic catalog lists 14 associate degrees, 48 bachelor's degrees, 13 undergraduate certificates, 33 post-baccalaureate graduate certificates, seven post-master's certificates, 27 master's degrees, and four doctoral degrees (III.3.1).

All guidelines for certificate and degree programs are documented within the academic catalog and in alignment with PASSHE policy on credit-hour requirements, with required minimums of 60 credits for associate degree programs, 120 credits that fulfill General Education requirements and one major course of study for bachelor's degree programs, and 30 credits for master's-level programs (III.1.2). Certificate programs require a minimum of 9 credits, while doctoral programs are designed to align with professional standards of practice; the number of credits varies. If an academic program exceeds the maximum credit requirement, the program must be reviewed at the institutional level and then approved by the PASSHE chancellor.

Online undergraduate and graduate programs offer a diverse range of academic options for students. Undergraduate programs in various fields provide flexible and comprehensive educational options. Graduate programs extend this diversity, offering advanced degrees and certificates in numerous disciplines.

Structures are in place to ensure a high-quality educational experience. The curriculum is overseen and approved by the University Curriculum Committee (UCC), which reports through the Provost's Office. As of Fall 2023, the UCC was composed of up to 17 members (III.1.3), including faculty and administrators, ensuring diversity of college, academic department, and inclusion of non-teaching faculty. The general workflow of the curricular process (III.1.4) was developed during integration through a collaboration with external consultants. The workflows have been formalized into the UCC Bylaws and Policies (III.1.5; III.1.6), which are available to faculty via a SharePoint site.

Program and Course Approval Process

All proposals for new courses and programs of study are initiated by the academic structure that oversees the relevant area (typically an academic department). The department forwards proposed curricular changes to the UCC, which solicits review and feedback from stakeholders. At the close of the feedback window, the UCC considers the proposal and votes on a recommendation, which is forwarded to the provost. The provost or president or designee (typically the provost) then decides to accept or deny the proposal (III.1.4).

Any decision to add a new academic plan of study (i.e., undergraduate or graduate program) requires approval from the Council of Trustees and, ultimately, PASSHE. Proposed programs must provide data focusing on program viability, regional needs, enrollment projections, alignment with the university mission, and the ability of the institution to support the program within the existing infrastructure (III.1.7). The program approval process ensures that new programs are high-quality, will attract students, and will be financially sustainable.

Each course in an undergraduate or graduate program, whether face-to-face or online, is reviewed by the UCC and sent to the provost (president's designee) with a recommendation for action (III.1.8). This helps to ensure that online courses meet the same high standards of quality and academic rigor as their on-campus counterparts.

Courses offered in both online and face-to-face formats maintain the same learning objectives and course outcomes. This consistency guarantees that all students, regardless of the mode of instruction they choose, receive the same level of education and are assessed on the same criteria. These courses are designed to cater to the evolving educational and professional needs of students. The university website provides detailed information on specific programs, courses, and admission requirements.

Coherent Student Learning Experience

A coherent student learning experience involves the seamless integration of curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment methods. PennWest programs are designed to provide students with a structured and logical progression of knowledge and skills in a learning environment that encourages active engagement, critical thinking, and the application of knowledge. The General Education (Gen Ed) program (III.5.9) is instrumental in crafting that learning environment.

The Gen Ed program creates a common learning experience and a common set of skills for all undergraduate students across every campus. Gen Ed courses strengthen students' foundational skills, encourage exploration beyond their primary academic focus, and demonstrate upper-level skills in writing and higher-order thinking. For more about Gen Ed, see Criterion 5.

Adding courses to the General Education program follows the established course approval process (III.1.8); structural changes to the program are initiated by the Faculty Senate. The Senate has a standing Gen Ed Committee (III.1.10) comprising the chair, two members from each legacy campus, the provost or their designee, and a non-voting administrative member appointed by the president. The committee's charge is to oversee the review and assessment of the Gen Ed curriculum, make recommendations for programmatic changes, and provide updates to the campus community.

Synthesis of Learning

PennWest promotes synthesis of learning, which emphasizes the development of higher-order thinking skills. Programs should not only deliver content knowledge but also facilitate the integration of knowledge across disciplines and the application of learning in real-world contexts. This requires a thoughtful and intentional approach to curriculum design, including opportunities for research, experiential learning, and collaborative projects.

As outlined in the General Education requirements (III.5.11), critical thinking and synthesis of student learning are accomplished largely through the capstone Keystone Experience requirement.
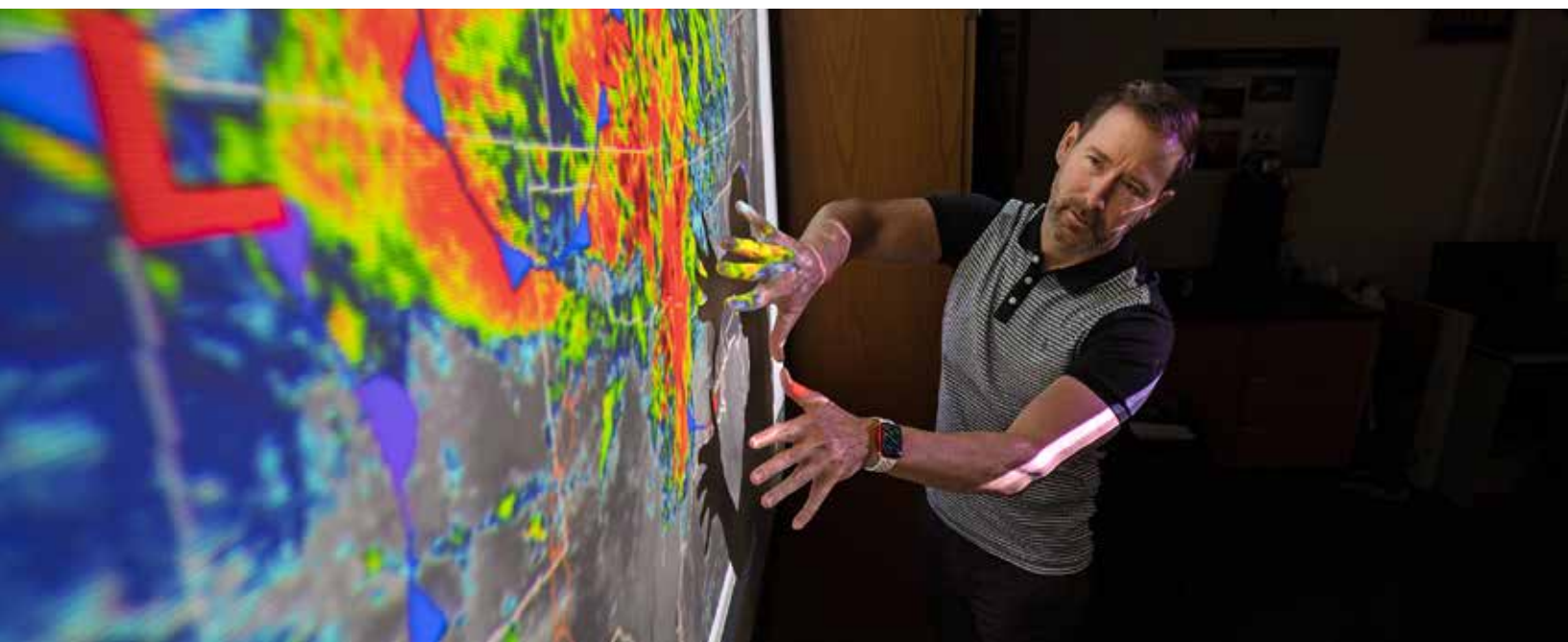
CRITERION 2

STUDENT LEARNING EXPERIENCES MUST BE DESIGNED, DELIVERED, AND ASSESSED BY FACULTY (FULL-TIME OR PART-TIME) AND/OR OTHER APPROPRIATE PROFESSIONALS.

A. Rigorous and effective teaching, assessment of student learning, scholarly inquiry, and service, as appropriate to the institution's mission, goals, and policies.

PennWest emphasizes rigorous and effective teaching and assessment of student learning through its mission to provide "innovation, academic excellence, and empowering environments" and by valuing the university as "a community of educators providing a learning environment where students thrive and achieve their educational, professional, and personal goals" (I.1.1). Embedded in PennWest's academic policies are guidelines for course and program reviews, syllabi standards, faculty evaluation and review, academic integrity, class attendance, faculty office hours, faculty training for online instruction, grading, grade appeals, and proctoring distance education courses. In addition, policies regarding faculty evaluations, tenure, and promotion reflect the university's values of rigorous and effective teaching (II.4.60).

The emphasis on rigorous and effective scholarly inquiry and service embedded in academic policies regarding faculty evaluations, tenure, and promotion supports the university's mission to provide "accessible education that cultivates career-ready, life-long learners and leaders" (I.1.1). Valuing growth, inclusion, collaboration, and a shared sense of purpose unites the PennWest community and provides opportunities for students and employees to learn, work, and thrive. In addition, through the financial support of faculty professional development, the Office of Grants and Special Programs, and engagement with the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Research Institute, PennWest provides faculty with tangible opportunities to pursue scholarly inquiries that ultimately enhance students' learning opportunities (III.2.12; III.2.13; III.2.14).

In keeping with its mission to provide academic excellence, PennWest assesses and continuously improves opportunities for student learning. For example, the UCC Bylaws (III.1.6) include a mechanism to analyze and review the Gen Ed program through the General Education Committee within the Faculty Senate (III.1.10). As mentioned above, the committee is charged with developing and implementing its own processes for data collection and review to ensure that Gen Ed courses and the overall program are continuously assessed. As an interim measure while the committee develops a comprehensive PennWest Gen Ed assessment plan, programmatic assessment of Gen Ed included administering Territorium's E-Proficiency Profile to 95 seniors in AY 2023-2024. (See Standard V).

Academic programmatic student learning outcomes assessment (SLOA) is faculty-driven within the framework developed by the director of Assessment, in consultation with faculty and the Provost's Office. SLOA at PennWest is annual, ongoing, self-assessing, and supported by the director and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, faculty program assessment coordinators, senior-level faculty assessment liaisons (with release time), an associate provost, and committees within the Faculty Senate. (See Criterion 8 and Standard V).

B. Faculty are qualified for the positions they hold and the work they do.

Regular and temporary faculty are appointed in accordance with the faculty Association of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculties (APSCUF) collective bargaining agreement (CBA), Article 11 (II.5.62). Under this article, a potential candidate must receive a majority vote of department faculty and undergo an independent review by the department chair before their name is submitted to the the provost and then president (or designee). The provost or president may accept or reject the recommendation. No candidate can be hired into a tenured or tenure-track position without the recommendation of the department's faculty.

Hiring of part-time faculty is limited to 25% of the full-time equivalent (FTE) of all faculty members employed at the university. The university must remain in compliance with the 25% limit, or the president must develop a plan to come into compliance that is submitted to the chancellor and the state Meet and Discuss committee for review. Temporary faculty who have worked full time for five full, consecutive academic years can, by vote of the department faculty, be recommended for tenure-track status.

The PASSHE terminal degree standard (III.2.15) lays out the definition of "terminal degree" for purposes of reporting. Terminal degrees are degrees generally recognized by the discipline as the highest awarded within that discipline. Most of the degrees so defined are doctorates, but several master's degrees, such as the M.F.A. and the M.L.S./M.L.I.S., are considered terminal. The policy states that these terminal degrees must be earned in the areas aligned with the faculty member's primary responsibilities and apply only to instructional faculty. The 2023 Common Data Set indicates that 74% of PennWest's instructional faculty have earned terminal degrees (III.2.16); among tenured and tenure-track faculty that figure is 97% (I.3.15).

PennWest recognizes four levels of academic rank: instructor, assistant professor, associate professor, and full professor. Specific promotion and tenure policies are being developed for PennWest; the legacy policies from each campus are in effect until that process is complete.

Given the increased importance of online course delivery, PennWest requires training for all faculty who teach online (III.2.17), as it did at its legacy campuses. PennWest's instructional design team developed a Teaching Online Master Class (TOMC) (III.2.18) based on Quality Matters and other best practices for faculty who teach online courses. Faculty are required to have completed the TOMC or equivalent training before teaching online. Since the TOMC was developed in 2021-2022, some 129 PennWest faculty have completed the training, which supports the university's focus on academic excellence. After the most recent TOMC (June 10-24, 2024), all 13 participants who completed the end-of-course survey "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that it will help them implement topics covered in their teaching, they are likely to use what they learned in the immediate future, the resources provided were useful, the technology was easy to use, and instructions were clear. Most participants (54%-85%) "strongly agreed" with those statements. A further 84% either "agreed" (38%) or "strongly agreed" (46%) that they know significantly more about the topics presented after completing the class (III.2.19).

C. Faculty sufficient in number with a core of faculty (full- or part-time) and/or other appropriate professionals with sufficient responsibility to the institution to assure the continuity and coherence of the institution's educational programs.

The standard workload for PennWest faculty is governed by the APSCUF CBA, Article 23 (III.2.20). The workload for all academic faculty shall not exceed 24 workload hours, with 12 workload hours standard for a term. If more than 15 workload hours (or 12 graduate workload hours) are assigned in an academic term, overload payment is provided. Faculty who teach a full-time graduate course load will not exceed nine workload hours in a term, or 12 workload hours in a term for any combination of graduate and undergraduate courses. Provisions are also in place governing workload for supervision of student teachers, thesis and dissertation projects, and internships. For the standard workload, no more than three preparations per academic term can be assigned unless additional preparations are compensated.

Full-time teaching faculty also are required to hold a minimum of five office hours per week, over no fewer than three different days, at times and locations that accommodate the needs of students. Part-time teaching faculty may prorate their number of office hours per week. Faculty who teach only graduate-level courses have a standard workload of nine hours. Faculty who teach a mixed load of graduate and undergraduate courses with fewer than nine hours in graduate courses have a standard workload of 12 hours. Faculty supervision of internships and student teaching workload is directed by contract and university policy (III.2.21).

In Fall 2023, PennWest had an FTE student-to-FTE faculty ratio estimated at 15.8, with the FTE student-to-nonfaculty ratio estimated at 12.5 (VI.3.16).

D. Faculty are provided with and utilize sufficient opportunities, resources, and support for professional growth and innovation.

To ensure that faculty can create an innovative and empowering environment of academic excellence, PennWest provides multiple opportunities for professional growth, broadly defined, through the Center for Faculty Excellence (CFE) (III.2.12). The CFE's mission (III.2.13) is to provide "opportunities for growth across all career stages to support their pursuit of excellence in teaching, scholarship, and service."

The CFE facilitates mentorship by expanding the legacy Edinboro Informal Mentoring Program to all faculty across PennWest. Areas of informal mentoring include advising, pedagogy, and scholarship. The CFE coordinates with department chairs to ensure that mentors are assigned to new tenure-track and part-time hires. Directors of the CFE also serve as non-departmental mentors for faculty.

The CFE provides professional development for academic advising through a variety of programmatic efforts. The CFE Book Club read books and held discussions on best practices for academic advising. A self-

paced module, Developing an Advising Syllabus, has been made available to faculty on D2L.

The CFE performs the important role of distributing PennWest Faculty Professional Development (FPD) funds in support of faculty research. In AY 2022-2023, the FPD program supported 81 faculty proposals, for a total of $107,839, and coordinated the Edinboro Foundation Scholarly Activities Grants. The CFE further supported faculty research by sponsoring workshops introducing the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Research Institute and the new PennWest Institutional Review Board.

The CFE contributes to strengthening the faculty's teaching skills. During AY 2022-2023 (III.2.22), it held a workshop on the impact of artificial intelligence and ChatGPT in the classroom, hosted an introduction to the instructional design team, and coordinated a cohort of faculty taking Cornell University's online course Teaching and Learning in the Diverse Classroom. Multiple Video Teaching Technology Shorts were developed to support enhanced technology use in the classroom, including the use of Outlook, D2L, and GradeMark. The CFE communicates weekly with faculty through "Watchlist" (III.2.23) an email newsletter.

Faculty who desire personalized training can schedule consultations with instructional designers (III.2.24) who can help them prepare online course materials. More ad hoc training is available from Learning Technology Services.

The Title III Transforming Obstacles into Opportunities grant (III.2.14) began at the California campus prior to integration and is continuing under PennWest. The Title III SIP Grant project includes five core activities: faculty professional development for Appreciative Advising, implementation of Supplemental Instruction in courses with a high D/F/W rate, faculty professional development for engaging student learning, alignment of Academic Success Center services with campus initiatives, and work-based learning experiences.

- Appreciative Advising relies on an Academic Advising Committee that implements professional development opportunities for faculty who serve as academic advisors.

- Instructional Coaching provides professional development in a one-to-one environment that focuses on specific instructional techniques for engaging student learning. It gives faculty the opportunity to learn about, experiment with, and implement new professional strategies and practices with the assistance of a trained faculty mentor.

PennWest and the Title III coordinator are working to expand Supplemental Instruction, Instructional Coaching, work-based learning experiences, and Appreciative Advising to the Clarion and Edinboro campuses.

Faculty have opportunities to complete the Association of College and University Educators (ACUE) Effective College Instruction program. Based on the CBA (III.2.25) and university policy, they also may apply for sabbatical leave (III.2.26). The process includes a faculty committee's review and ranking of the application's merits (III.2.27) in terms of its contribution to the applicant's field of study, to the university, and to "pedagogy, disciplinary knowledge, fulfillment of professional responsibilities, or professional advancement." In Fall 2023, 18 PennWest faculty were on sabbatical leave. Others have completed the ACUE Effective College Instruction program.

Additional expense analysis data related to core expenditures for instruction, research, public service, and instructional expense per student FTE can be found in the 2023 IPEDS information (III.2.39).

Faculty Qualifications for Online Teaching

As noted in Section B, faculty who teach online course(s) must undertake some form of training in online pedagogy (III.2.17). This requirement aligns with the university's commitment to providing ongoing training and professional development, and it ensures that faculty are well-equipped to handle the challenges and unique dynamics of online

teaching. PennWest's Teaching Online Master Class (TOMC) (III.2.18) covers a wide range of topics, from incorporating interactive elements into online courses to communicating with students in a virtual environment. To stay current, faculty can retake the TOMC, which is regularly updated with the latest best practices.

Many faculty who teach online completed the required training before integration, but several have now taken the TOMC as well. Any new faculty who will teach online must first complete the PennWest TOMC or document equivalent training. This ensures that faculty members are familiar with best practices in online education, including course design, student engagement, and the use of digital tools.

E. Faculty are reviewed regularly and equitably based on written, disseminated, clear, and fair criteria, expectations, policies, and procedures.

The review of faculty is governed by the APSCUF collective bargaining agreement. The criteria, expectations, policies, and procedures for faculty evaluations (II.5.66; III.2.28), the tenure process (III.2.29; III.2.30), and promotion (III.2.31; III.2.32) are spelled out in the CBA and associated side letters. These are readily available to all faculty through both the PennWest and union websites. Both the University-wide Promotions and University-wide Tenure committees are elected by the faculty and hold open forums each semester.

Performance evaluations emphasize teaching — the university's primary focus — as well as professional responsibilities reflective of scholarly growth and service. Article 12 of the CBA ensures that faculty and the administration have clarity about expectations and department or discipline-specific norms for scholarly growth and service. A side-letter allows the established tenure and evaluation procedures from legacy policies to be used for faculty hired before integration. Another side-letter establishes that the promotion process from each legacy institution will be used until a PennWest promotions policy has been finalized and approved by both the administration and the faculty union, to begin in Fall 2025. Work on unified Tenure, Evaluation, and Promotion policies is ongoing. Tenure-track and temporary faculty are evaluated annually, regular part-time faculty are evaluated every three years, and tenured faculty are evaluated every five years as established in Article 12 (II.5.66).

Student evaluations of faculty are conducted based on Article 12 of the CBA, which outlines when in a faculty member's academic career such evaluations are mandatory and provides for a voluntary option when they are not required. PennWest established a committee of faculty, administrators, staff, and students to develop a new student evaluation instrument (III.2.33). The group started with the legacy campus instruments and integrated research on best practices to create a PennWest Student Evaluation (III.2.34; III.2.35). This was reviewed by the DEI Office and Meet and Discuss, and then piloted in a few courses before its university-wide debut in Fall 2022. Students complete the evaluation in the learning management system and can choose to opt out. On average, PennWest's student evaluation completion rate is around 85% (III.2.36).

Tenured, tenure-track, regular part-time, and temporary faculty are evaluated according to the categories outlined in Article 12 of the CBA (III.2.29). The procedure for a faculty member's evaluation (II.5.66; III.2.28) begins with the departmental Evaluation Committee, which reviews student evaluations from all classes taught the preceding semester, written classroom observations by a minimum of two peers and one department chair, an updated copy of the faculty member's CV, and any other pertinent data the member wishes to submit. The departmental committee submits a detailed written evaluation and recommendation to the dean and the department chair, who writes an independent evaluation based on the evidence listed above and the department committee's evaluation. After the faculty member has been given an opportunity to respond to both evaluations, they are submitted in writing to the dean. The dean reviews all the submitted data and letters, and then produces a written performance review, which the faculty member can discuss. Finally, the dean's performance review and all associated materials are forwarded to the university president.

Each stage of the faculty evaluation process has a specific due date based on the semester of the faculty member's appointment. These dates are available in Article 12 of the CBA, published on the APSCUF chapters' website, and posted in departmental offices. Temporary faculty are evaluated once per academic year.

Tenure, governed by Article 15 of the CBA (III.2.29; III.2.30), is another opportunity to review and evaluate faculty. The tenure process begins when the president notifies

all fifth-year probationary faculty that they may apply. These faculty may submit a request for tenure, which includes a statement of why they believe it should be granted. Each request is reviewed initially by a department committee of other tenured faculty and the department chair, who writes an independent recommendation in response to the request. These recommendations, along with faculty members' applications, are forwarded to the dean, who reviews the applications and departmental recommendations and forms their own recommendations. Each application, along with the three recommendations, is then forwarded to the University-wide Tenure Committee (UTC), which reviews all tenure applications and recommendations. The UTC submits its recommendations, along with all the associated data and faculty applications, to the president for deliberation.

Promotion, governed by Article 16 of the CBA (III.2.31; III.2.32), is the third mechanism by which faculty are reviewed according to clear and equitable criteria. A faculty member who meets the required minimum qualification submits a written application based on the approved and published Statement of Promotion Policies and Procedures. Both the department committee and the department chair evaluate the application and write their recommendations. The recommendations and application are forwarded to the University-wide Promotion Committee, which reviews all applications and forwards its recommendation for each applicant to the president for deliberation and a decision on promotion.

Affiliations with National Associations

PennWest maintains an inventory (III.2.37) of academic programs and their affiliations with recognized accrediting bodies. This inventory lists each program, the date of its most recent review, and the date of its next review. Deans review this tracker annually and update it as program reviews are completed. The Provost's Office maintains records of reports received by specialized accrediting bodies for each program. Programs that do not fall under a specialized accrediting association conduct program review according to guidelines established by PASSHE (III.2.38).

CRITERION 3
ACADEMIC PROGRAMS OF STUDY THAT ARE CLEARLY AND ACCURATELY DESCRIBED IN OFFICIAL PUBLICATIONS OF THE INSTITUTION IN A WAY THAT STUDENTS ARE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND AND FOLLOW DEGREE AND PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTED TIME TO COMPLETION.

To help fulfill PennWest's mission of providing accessible education, all academic program and degree requirements are available online through the digital academic catalog on PennWest's website and incorporated into its experience portal, branded as myPennWest. Each degree has a program summary that includes components such as a course description and learning objectives. In addition, each program has developed an advising sheet (III.3.40) that provides a semester-by-semester sequence of courses leading toward graduation.

Digital Academic Catalog

The integration that created PennWest meant that academic departments had to design new curricula for each program. In collaboration with the Integrated Curriculum Committee (ICC, now known as the University Curriculum Committee, or UCC), the new programs were approved and are reflected in the current academic catalog.

Guidelines and processes (III.1.5; III.1.6) were put in place to ensure there was one source for degree program content, eliminating the possibility of inconsistencies. During AY 2021-2022, all graduate programs and courses were submitted and reviewed by the ICC; next, the ICC/UCC reviewed all undergraduate programs, certificates, and minors, in addition to courses. The process was carried out in a digital format that was regularly shared (III.3.41), so all PennWest faculty were able to review and provide feedback to the ICC/UCC.

All PennWest graduate and undergraduate degrees, minors, and certificate programs are listed in the digital academic catalog, which uses the Acalog™ Academic Catalog Management System™ (III.3.1). The catalog is divided into undergraduate and graduate sections; information is organized based on the academic college where each program is housed: the College of Education, Arts, and Humanities; College of Health Sciences and Human Services; or College of Science, Technology, and Business.

Students can locate clearly organized information on degree, minor, and certificate program on the PennWest website and within the academic catalog itself.

The undergraduate catalog provides the degree requirements for all associate, bachelor's, certificate, and minor programs. For each associate and bachelor's degree programs, as well as minors, users can see a program description, student learning objectives, admission requirements, curriculum requirements (Gen Ed, competencies, required related courses for major, electives), and total program credits. Certificate programs are shown similarly, including applicable prerequisite courses and admission requirements. To highlight the digital catalog's accessibility and accuracy, examples of three undergraduate degree programs, one minor, and one undergraduate certificate program are provided in the evidence (III.3.42; III.3.43; III.3.44; III.3.45; III.3.46). Lists of all the academic programs in the PennWest graduate and undergraduate catalogs are also provided (III.3.1).

myPennWest Experience Portal

The internal online portal myPennWest serves as a hub for the PennWest community and provides the information necessary for students to plan and complete their educational experience. The portal was officially launched for the 2022-2023 academic year and is routinely updated. Through myPennWest, students can view the academic catalog, browse course offerings, register for courses, monitor their progress toward degree completion, view their grades, access unofficial transcripts, order official transcripts, and access services such as financial aid, billing information, and housing.

DegreeWorks

Integrated within myPennWest is DegreeWorks, a comprehensive degree audit tool that allows students and advisors to navigate curriculum requirements and track progress toward a degree. DegreeWorks also allows students and advisors to model alternate degrees, see how credits would transfer, or see which courses the student will need in the future. The software makes course information such as course descriptions, credit hours, and prerequisites readily available for academic planning. Students are given instructions for using DegreeWorks and finding degree/program and General Education requirements at New Student Orientation (II.1.1; III.4.47; III.3.48). They can refer to those instructions and find answers to Frequently Asked Questions about the tool on the PennWest website.

Requirement Sheets

As part of the ICC/UCC approval process, undergraduate major programs must prepare a requirement sheet (III.3.40) based on a standardized format. These sheets include a list of the General Education requirements with program-specific courses identified and a list of course requirements for the major. In addition, each major program has prepared (or is in the process of preparing) a four-year suggested course sequence to help guide students in their course selection. The requirement sheets also serve as the foundation for the online DegreeWorks degree audits that help to keep students up to date on their academic progress and access the suggested four-year course sequence..

Information Maintenance

The Registrar's Office is responsible for maintaining the academic catalogs and DegreeWorks. All approved program changes or new programs approved by the UCC and administration are sent to the Registrar's Office for inclusion in the next academic year's catalog. Any modifications to the DegreeWorks system are also managed there.

In summary, courses, curriculum, and catalogs are configured in the Student Information System after being reviewed and approved by the UCC and the provost. Requirement sheets and DegreeWorks audit configuration complete the approval process. The approved programs, minors, or concentrations are then labeled "pending" and made available in the subsequent academic year's catalog, unless an exception is granted for an earlier start in the spring semester (III.3.49). For new major programs, additional forms must be submitted to PASSHE and approved by the vice chancellor (III.3.50) before configuring them in DegreeWorks. Department chairs or administrators can email graduation@pennwest.edu to amend information, providing examples of the discrepancy and UCC-approved documents for comparison. In such cases, the Registrar's Office will review and make necessary changes, then notify the requesting individual to verify the accuracy of the corrections and access the suggested four-year course sequence.

CRITERION 4
SUFFICIENT LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND RESOURCES ARE IMPORTANT FOR BOTH ACADEMIC PROGRAMS AND STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PROGRESS.

Educational programs such as courses, workshops, and resources, well-equipped libraries, advanced labs, and digital learning platforms are important for both academic programs and students' academic progress. These components work together to improve students' academic experiences, accommodate a variety of learning styles, and prepare students for future challenges. This environment prioritizes not just academic success but also personal growth, flexibility, and lifelong learning, ensuring that students are well prepared to navigate the constantly evolving world.

Advising or Degree Program Sheets

Each program builds on its UCC-approved requirement sheet to construct four-year advising sheets (III.3.40) that are to be made available on the university's website as soon as they are complete. These sheets provide students with a clear guide to their degree programs, including any required or recommended General Education courses for the major. These advising sheets also are integrated into DegreeWorks, accessible through the myPennWest portal, so students can easily view their completed and remaining requirements. This makes it easier for students to plan their courses and stay on track toward graduation.

Syllabus Structure

The Course Syllabus Policy (II.1.4) requires all undergraduate and graduate courses to have a syllabus that meets defined content requirements. These include elements such as course name and number, description, credit hours, prerequisites, meeting days and times, instructor information, required materials, learning objectives, evaluation criteria, and policies on exams, assignments, and attendance. Syllabi also should include information on how students registered with the Office for Students with Disabilities can request accommodations. These standards ensure that each course syllabus provides a clear and structured framework for students, guiding their learning process and setting clear expectations for their academic journey. Refer to sample syllabi (III.4.51).

The Syllabus Policy is reinforced by an annual email (III.4.52) from the Provost's Office that includes a copy of the policy. Each semester, departments collect course syllabi, which are forwarded to the dean's office to ensure adherence to these standards.

Library Services

PennWest's libraries have undergone a significant transformation as library catalogs from three legacy institutions were integrated into a single, unified system. Now users can seamlessly search and request materials across all PennWest library locations without incurring additional costs. To facilitate access to restricted library resources, PennWest has implemented the OpenAthens authentication platform. This allows access to various university resources, including the library system, via other university services such as email and D2L.

Implementation of the ILLiad platform has unified interlibrary loan services, offering an accessible web-based experience (III.4.53) for all of PennWest. Standardizing Library Help Guides ("LibGuides") (III.4.54) under a single platform and adopting a uniform look and feel based on best practices and usability principles further contributes to a cohesive user experience.

The university has merged its reference services into a single functional unit to provide research support and academic assistance (III.4.55). The "Ask Us" service (III.4.56) embedded in each D2L course shell and available on the library website enables library users to find help through multiple channels, including online chat and Zoom, and through an online ticketing system. The laptop borrowing program across all campus libraries facilitates both in-house and extended use of computers, ensuring students and staff have the technological resources they need.

To assess and continuously improve these services, the university regularly administers the Association of Research Libraries' LibQual survey. The legacy institutions ran LibQual on a three-year cycle as part of a Keystone Library Network initiative. Based on feedback from the legacy LibQual surveys, the PennWest library has implemented the Reference Effort Assessment Data (READ) Scale. These tools help in refining the "Ask Us" service to better serve library users. In-depth usability studies of the library website have led to the refinement, redesign, and rebranding of webpage elements, aligning them more closely with user behaviors and expectations. The LibInsight analytics package has been adopted to track database and subscription use, informing decision-making for renewals.

To promote information literacy and support education, the libraries have established a Departmental/Program Librarian structure (III.4.57) that assigns a dedicated librarian to each academic program for bibliographic instruction and general queries. The "Ask Us" service has been enhanced to include one-on-one appointments with library faculty, providing personalized assistance for in-depth research needs. The Embedded Librarian program positions librarians in spaces students use every day for context-sensitive information support (III.4.58). Online Library Help Guides ("LibGuides") have been streamlined into categories such as Research Starters, Course Guides, and Subject Guides.

PennWest is a member of consortia including the Keystone Library Network, the Partnership for Academic Library Collaboration, Lyrasis, and the OCLC consortium. These memberships provide access to shared resources, technical support, preferential pricing, and professional development, significantly enhancing the library's resource base and service capacity.

The libraries' commitment to continuous improvement and comprehensive information access is evident in its array of services and resources (III.4.59). Across the three PennWest campuses, holdings include 656,464 physical book titles, 681,480 electronic book titles, 8,770 physical serial titles, 115,925 electronic serial titles, 5,522 physical media titles, and 81,743 electronic media titles (III.4.60).

Honors Program

Focusing on three key values – community, creation, and professionalism – the Honors Program provides ambitious, success-centered PennWest students with a high-quality, accessible, and challenging array of academic, social, and professional opportunities (III.4.61). Students from all majors enjoy small class sizes, interdisciplinary and experiential learning, living-learning residences, scholarships, travel and research support, extracurricular opportunities, and a supportive community of like-minded peers and faculty. In 2023-2024, 1,550 students participated in the Honors Program across PennWest (III.4.62). The Honors Program prepares PennWest's highest-achieving undergraduates to be campus and community leaders and enables them to succeed in a wide range of careers, graduate, and professional schools.

Verification of Student Identity in Distance Education

The Verification of Student Identity in Distance Education Policy (III.4.63) outlines how PennWest verifies student identity for distance education courses. The university uses secure logins and passcodes for each student. This system is important for accessing the university's D2L learning management system and academic records. New students receive university email addresses and set up secure passwords following Information Technology Services guidelines (II.1.1). Personally identifiable information collected by the university also may be used for identity verification. PennWest has policies pertaining to proctoring assignments in online and multi-modal classes (III.4.64; III.4.65).

Information Technology and Digital Resources

PennWest provides extensive information technology and digital resources, ensuring a rich educational experience for both faculty and students. The university utilizes D2L, a versatile learning management system, for delivering courses, managing content, and facilitating assessments. Complementing this is Mediasite, which allows for creation, management, and integration of video content into course materials, enhancing the learning experience. Mediasite has features that faculty can use to embed quiz questions in videos, view analytics on students' viewing, and directly upload recorded Zoom sessions to the D2L course shell.

The university's library resources are integrated into D2L, allowing students and faculty to access a wide range of academic materials directly within the learning platform, promoting a more efficient and cohesive learning experience.

Learning Technology Services (LTS) is a unit within Information Technology Services (ITS) dedicated to supporting technology in the learning environment. LTS has a manager and nine staff distributed across the campuses. PennWest also employs instructional designers who focus on online learning, in addition to face-to-face and blended courses (III.2.24). LTS staff oversee D2L and other university-wide learning platforms, such as TurnItIn. Staff are available to all faculty, offering regular office hours and training on how to use D2L, Zoom, and other learning technologies (III.4.66; III.4.67; III.4.68).

Starfish plays a critical role in enhancing student success. This tool can track academic progress and provide insights for both students and faculty, enabling early intervention and personalized support where needed. In addition, online students have access to PennWest tutoring and writing centers through the Starfish interface.

PennWest uses Microsoft Office Suite and Zoom for communication and collaboration. These central tools provide reliable and resourceful platforms for virtual meetings, presentations, and document sharing, which is crucial for both synchronous and asynchronous interactions. ITS provides technical support for both Zoom and Microsoft Office Suite for faculty and students. All PennWest students have free access to the Microsoft Office 365 suite, which can be accessed online or downloaded to their local device. Students also have a Zoom account, authenticated through PennWest, to use for university interactions.

PennWest understands the importance of IT support, especially for online learners, and offers robust assistance by email and phone, with contact information prominently posted on the myPennWest and D2L landing pages. This support is crucial for resolving issues related to the university's network and learning management system. Contact information for library support is also prominently located on the myPennWest landing page, listed in D2L resources, and further integrated into many D2L course shells. The library provides faculty with information about library resources for online instruction each semester. Faculty are encouraged to incorporate directions for accessing ITS, library, and Student Success resources into their course shells. In D2L, a virtual chat assistant is accessible from all pages; it can help students and faculty in real time and will escalate issues that cannot be resolved.

Faculty training, particularly through the TOMC program, emphasizes the inclusion of IT support information within course shells. This ensures that students are always aware of where to find help, contributing to a more supportive

and responsive online learning environment. Whether they teach online or in person, faculty also have easy access to ITS and digital resources support via the myPennWest and D2L landing pages.

Faculty members who teach in all instructional modalities are encouraged to consider using universal design practices in creating materials. The TOMC discusses the importance of accessible materials and provides strategies for creating them; in addition, the Center for Faculty Excellence (III.2.22) has promoted events related to universal design accessibility. To enhance accessibility, Mediasite provides automatic captioning of video recordings and Zoom provides real-time captioning.

This comprehensive approach to ITS and digital resource provision illustrates PennWest's commitment to creating a technologically advanced, supportive, and accessible educational environment. By continuously updating and refining these resources, the university remains at the forefront of educational technology, catering effectively to the diverse needs of its academic community.

Support for Student Success

Students' academic success is central to the PennWest mission. Each student is assigned one faculty advisor, and all new PennWest students receive a campus-specific student orientation that explains how to access student success, technology, and health and wellness services. In addition, PennWest Online students receive a comprehensive "Getting Started" orientation module (III.4.47; III.3.48) that covers D2L resources, safe computing practices, and student identity verification. There is a significant emphasis on faculty-student interaction in the online learning environment, and all PennWest students, on-campus or online, have access to the same academic support services.

Student consultation hours, primarily governed by the CBA and university policy (III.2.20; III.2.21), are an important component of the academic support structure. The CBA, in Article 23.A.1.c, provides standard minimum requirements for office hours (III.2.20). These requirements ensure that students have ample opportunity to connect with their instructors outside of scheduled class times. PennWest policy also states that "virtual office hours must be offered in a synchronous, electronic format to support live interaction between the faculty member and student. In addition, the faculty member may offer asynchronous (virtual or nonvirtual) communication options to students during office hours" (III.2.21). This flexibility in delivery modes makes it easier for off-campus students to seek academic assistance and engage in real-time discussions, offering a more personalized and engaging experience.

Each campus at PennWest hosts an Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD), which provides accommodation and accessibility services across PennWest (III.4.69; III.4.70; III.4.71). OSD services are available to any enrolled PennWest student with a documented disability (see Standard IV).

Consistent with the university's commitment to "providing a learning environment where students thrive and achieve their educational, professional, and personal goals," PennWest has emphasized tracking student academic progress. Faculty are required to post midterm grades and, in addition, are prompted to complete progress reports in the fourth and 10th weeks of the 15-week semester (III.4.72; III.4.73). These additional progress reports allow advisors and Success Coaches to better support students. This emphasis is outlined in PennWest Policy AC019: Grading (II.1.3). The online Starfish platform allows students to track their progress, lets faculty flag potential academic issues, and facilitates a communication flow between students and those who can provide support. The use of Starfish to track academic progress reports has been embedded in the semester curricular process.

All PennWest students have face-to-face and virtual access to academic success resources, including campus-based peer tutoring (III.4.74) and writing centers (III.4.75). Students can either drop in or schedule in-person or virtual tutoring or writing center sessions via Starfish. Students also have access to virtual tutoring support such as Tutor.com, which provides on-demand service 24/7 in multiple subject areas. Students can access tutoring services in Starfish under "Courses," as well as through D2L under "University Resources."
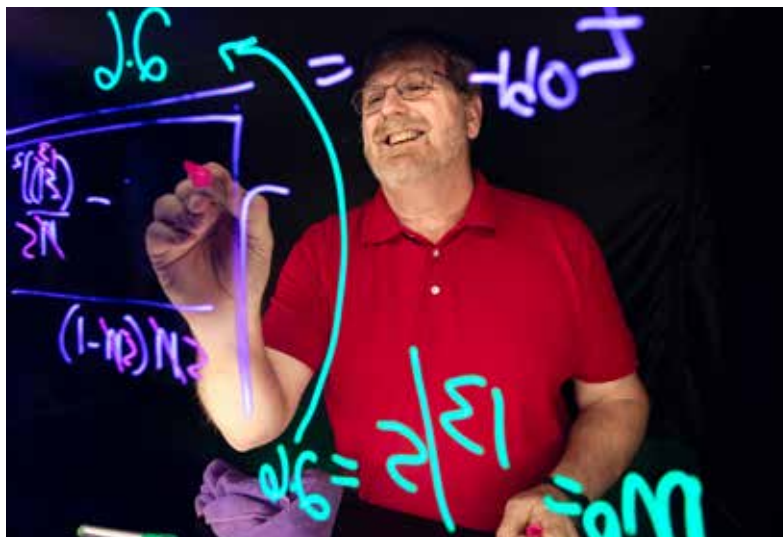
A U.S. Department of Education Title III grant, initially awarded to California University in 2020, has been scaled up to provide Supplemental Instruction (SI) across PennWest. SI is a form of peer-assisted academic support introduced in courses with high failure rates. Student SI leaders work collaboratively with faculty, attending class sessions to model good academic habits and provide additional learning experiences for their peers.

All students have access to the Career Center, where they receive support with both short-term planning (on-campus employment and internships), and long-term career goals. (See Standard IV, Criterion 1).

The Office of Student Outreach and Success (III.4.76) assists students with academic policies and requirements, resources for academic support, and building academic skills such as goal setting, time management, studying, and test-taking. Success Coaches are staff members; graduate assistants also provide support. Success coaching is available virtually by appointment and on a walk-in basis on all three PennWest campuses.

The Student Success Concierge program (III.4.77) helps students who are having trouble finding answers related to tutoring, Supplemental Instruction, success coaching, peer mentoring, global initiatives and study abroad, and veterans support services. A concierge assigned to each campus works directly with students, in person or via Zoom, to address academically related issues from start to finish. In Fall 2023, the program assisted more than 80 students.

Students also can use Starfish (III.4.78) to ask for help. The platform features a "Raise Your Hand" function (III.4.79) designed to empower students by offering them a choice of nearly 20 support options, from financial aid to career coaching.

More information on how PennWest supports its students can be found in Standard IV.

Assessment

The UCC approval process ensures that each course includes measurable outcomes and forms of assessment, establishing a clear and consistent standard for academic quality and student evaluation. The university upholds academic integrity through clear policies (II.1.12) that are further strengthened by effective online course proctoring to maintain fairness in assessments. Faculty are well-equipped for online teaching, thanks to comprehensive training and certification. This preparation ensures they are adept at delivering high-quality education in a virtual format.

The ITS department logs all support requests and solicits feedback when the request has been addressed. These data (III.4.80) are used to review and enhance ITS support. The LTS instructional designers maintain logs of support requests (III.4.81) for D2L, TurnItIn.com, and Mediasite through the IT Help Desk ticketing system, and they ask for feedback at the conclusion of the request. They also provide training and support for D2L course shell development that is accessible from the D2L faculty landing page. In addition, Academic Affairs is organizing a campus-wide committee of faculty, staff, and administrators to provide ITS and LTS with guidance in identifying new technologies, enhancing current services, and identifying problems.

Students benefit from these detailed orientation and support services. A broader discussion of student support experiences is provided in Standard IV.

CRITERION 5
AN INSTITUTION THAT OFFERS UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION, A GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM, FREE-STANDING OR INTEGRATED INTO ACADEMIC DISCIPLINES THAT:

A. **Offers a sufficient scope to draw students into new areas of intellectual experience, expanding their cultural and global awareness and cultural sensitivity, and preparing them to make well-reasoned judgments outside as well as within their academic field;**

B. **Offers a curriculum designed so that students acquire and demonstrate essential skills including at least oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, technological competency, and information literacy. Consistent with mission, the general education program also includes the study of values, ethics, and diverse perspectives; and**

C. **In non-U.S. institutions that do not include general education, provides evidence that students can demonstrate general education skills.**

An essential element of undergraduate preparation, the General Education program (III.5.11) provides opportunities for students to expand their worldview and make well-reasoned judgments outside their academic discipline. The program complies with PASSHE's General Education Policy (III.5.82) and was informed by the Career Readiness Competencies developed by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) (III.5.83). The Gen Ed program (III.5.9) aligns with the university's mission to cultivate career-ready students with career-focused learning.

Features and Requirements

Bachelor's degree-seeking students follow an approved General Education curriculum with 42 credits and three primary components — Foundations, Discoveries, and Competencies. Associate degree-seeking students follow an approved Gen Ed curriculum with 21, 24, or 30 required credits and three primary components, depending on their specific course of study in an A.A., A.S., or Applied or Specialized program. The Gen Ed program has students build foundational skills (Foundations); discover and explore the arts, humanities, and the social and natural worlds (Discoveries); and develop and strengthen competencies key to a fulfilling career and engaged citizenship (Competencies).

Courses satisfying each requirement are recommended by departments, vetted by the UCC for alignment with requirement-specific student learning outcomes, and approved through the curricular process. Course objectives are category-specific learning activities that students complete within the course; course outcomes are transferrable skills, and program outcomes are higher-order skill sets that students gradually build throughout their Gen Ed programs. Program outcomes feature competencies informed by NACE-recommended skills (III.5.83) for career readiness, including critical thinking and problem-solving, technological literacy, intercultural fluency, and career management and professionalism.

Near the end of the Fall 2023 semester, the Faculty Senate's General Education Committee explored possible ways to streamline the current Gen Ed program, looking specifically at the Competencies element (III.5.84) once the academic array had been solidified and programs approved with directed Gen Ed courses. After a thorough review, the committee developed a revised Gen Ed program with streamlined competency requirements. This proposed revision dropped the required Competencies from eight to six. Under the proposal, programs would build four "core competencies" into their program requirements, including a writing-intensive course, a keystone experience, and two of the following three: quantitative applications, ethical reasoning, or information literacy. Each program also would include two additional competencies: a course in equity and inclusion and an additional writing-intensive course. This revision puts the onus of responsibility on departments to plan competency requirements rather than requiring students to identify all Competencies independently. Under the revision, students are responsible for finding two Competencies on their own, either within their major program, in a minor program, or elsewhere within their degree requirements.

The proposed revision also created consistency within the Gen Ed requirements for associate degree programs. Under the proposal, all associate programs feature core Foundations and flex Foundations categories, flex Discoveries categories, and core Competencies and additional competency requirements. The A.A. and A.S. Gen Ed programs also include core Discoveries categories. This proposed change allows for more consistency in Gen Ed requirements across both levels of undergraduate programs.

The Faculty Senate General Education Committee received feedback from the UCC in Spring 2024. It is working to refine the proposal to address that feedback and better reflect the needs of students and degree programs.

Foundations

Students develop foundational skills — oral communication, written communication, quantitative reasoning, and technological literacy — by completing four courses during the beginning of their academic career. Programs of study may require specific Foundations courses, or students may be able to choose from the complete list of possibilities.

Every student must complete ENGL 1200 College Composition to begin developing sound writing and overall communication skills. Students may choose to take a preparatory course, ENGL 1100, before taking ENGL 1200. To help them make that decision, students complete a directed self-placement (DSP) program (III.5.85) that helps them review their writing history and overall comfort with academic writing, so they can begin their written communication journey where they feel most comfortable. Students who choose to begin with ENGL 1100 Introduction to College Composition may use those credits as a free elective that counts toward graduation.

There are several options for meeting the oral communication Foundations requirement, including courses in public speaking, civil discourse, and Socratic dialogue.

Students complete a foundational quantitative reasoning course that typically aligns with their major. For programs that do not require specific quantitative reasoning skills, students choose among various courses that broadly prepare them for consuming and understanding quantitative information. A placement exam assesses students' current quantitative skills, gives them a chance to refresh those skills to improve their placement, and ultimately is used to recommend their first quantitative course at the university.

Foundational courses in technological literacy include discipline-specific and discipline-agnostic choices, from courses that build basic skills for modern office applications to introductory programming classes. Regardless of the course, students gain career-focused technology skills that typically will be foundational in other areas of General Education and in their degree program.

To ensure broad exposure to different disciplines, students cannot complete more than two courses (of three or four credits each) in a specific or similar course prefix to meet their Foundations requirements. Foundations courses cannot satisfy Competency requirements, since Competency courses are designed to build higher-order skills.

Discoveries

For bachelor's degree students, the Discoveries component of General Education comprises 30 credits of coursework in the broad categories of arts and humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences and technology. Students may use three credits to complete programming in health and wellness or to complete an additional course from any other Gen Ed area. To ensure that students are exposed to different fields, bachelor's degree students may complete no more than two courses in a category from a single discipline. Those in associate degree programs have fewer specific Discoveries requirements, instead using "flex credits" from any of the categories, although they will enroll in courses within this primary component.

Courses may be approved to fulfill Gen Ed requirements for both Foundations and Discoveries; however, a student may use a particular course to satisfy only one (Foundations or Discoveries) requirement. Degree programs may prescribe that majors take up to three specific Discoveries courses (or up to three courses among a menu of Discoveries courses). Programs, however, cannot prescribe more than two courses within a given Discoveries area. Discoveries courses also may be designated as meeting one or two Competencies requirements. These restrictions balance the need for students to achieve degree-program competencies while exposing them to a broader array of disciplines and points of view.

Competencies

The Competencies component requires students to demonstrate a variety of skills that are critical to a fulfilling career and engaged citizenship in a dynamic world:

- Quantitative Applications (1 course)
- Applied Methodologies (1 course)
- Intercultural Fluency (1 course)
- Ethical Reasoning (1 course)
- Information Literacy (1 course)
- Writing Intensive (2 courses)
- Keystone Experience (1 course)

For each of the Competencies except Writing Intensive and Keystone Experience, a degree program may require that students take a specific course (or a course within a specified menu of options) or may allow them to take any course (major, Discoveries, or free elective) designated as meeting the competency. Courses from all disciplines and course levels may be designated as developing one or two (but no more than two) Competencies.

Students complete two Writing Intensive courses, which build on the foundational writing experience. To encourage discipline-specific writing, one of the required courses must be taken within a student's major. It is recommended that students take one Writing Intensive course within their first two years in the degree program and one in the last two years — an approach that encourages continuous improvement as writers. Writing Intensive courses require students to produce at least 20 pages of formal writing, with the expectation of meaningful instructor feedback, revision, and resubmission.

The Gen Ed program requires students to complete a Keystone Experience within their major. Students apply advanced knowledge from within their discipline, synthesize ideas and information across the major and General Education coursework, and demonstrate critical analysis skills.

PennWest had a rare opportunity to intentionally build in key student skills as it developed its General Education program. The Gen Ed program was completed before any bachelor's degrees were synthesized and approved. The timing allowed PennWest to build degree programs that aligned with Gen Ed and to leverage areas, such as the Competencies, to satisfy programmatic requirements.

Assessment

Continuous improvement of the Gen Ed program aligns with PennWest's unwavering commitment to student success. The program established clear student learning outcomes for every requirement, and courses proposed for inclusion had to identify appropriate outcomes and be reviewed and recommended by the UCC.

The Gen Ed assessment plan will continue to focus on student learning. The Faculty Senate, as called for in the UCC Policies and Procedures (III.1.5), established a committee to review and assess the Gen Ed program. That committee, which includes members from each campus, was charged with developing an assessment plan for the Gen Ed program. Preliminary plans call for embedding surveys in Gen Ed courses at all levels to provide indirect assessment of student learning outcomes, plus direct assessments submitted by the instructor of record for each class assessed within a given cycle. A rubric will be developed to assess the individual components of the program, which will be regularly reviewed. Faculty feedback will be collected annually to give the faculty at large a voice in recommending changes to the Gen Ed program. An initial review of the General Education curriculum in 2023-2024 led to proposals to update the Gen Ed framework and add a first-year experience ("Compass") course (I.3.11; III.5.86). This course was piloted in Fall 2024, with the other changes under review by the Faculty Senate and UCC.

See Standard V for a more thorough discussion of General Education assessment.

CRITERION 6

IN INSTITUTIONS THAT OFFER GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION, OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF RESEARCH, SCHOLARSHIP, AND INDEPENDENT THINKING PROVIDED BY FACULTY AND/OR OTHER PROFESSIONALS WITH CREDENTIALS APPROPRIATE TO GRADUATE-LEVEL CURRICULA.

PennWest offers 27 master's degrees, 33 post-baccalaureate graduate certificates, seven post-master's certificates and four doctoral programs (III.3.1). The overwhelming majority of PennWest graduate programs are nationally accredited, including large programs in education, business, and nursing (III.2.37). Total graduate enrollment sits at 1,763 FTE students as of Fall 2023.

Development

The current graduate programming at PennWest was developed in Spring 2022, just ahead of the university's official debut that summer. Through negotiation with the faculty union, and via collaboration through Meet and Discuss, guidelines were developed for the creation, submission, and approval of graduate programming that launched in Fall 2022.

Each program was required to design assessable learning outcomes tied to the university mission and align new coursework to existing programming. Programs could choose either to write new courses or to utilize existing courses from the legacy institutions. Research experiences were embedded within individual programs: For example, the M.Ed. in Advanced Study in Education requires an introductory Education Research course and has concentrations such as Technology Education and STEM Education that require specific capstone, research-based coursework; the MBA program's capstone requirement includes standardized exams and simulated business experiences; and every track within the M.S. in Counseling requires at least one research course. Some concentrations require a sequence of research courses, others a field experience, and still others offer a traditional thesis as an option. PennWest has intentionally developed master's-level programming that has students achieve research outcomes through discipline-appropriate experiences.

The university's doctoral programs also have a range of research opportunities for students. For example, the doctorate in Health Science and Exercise Leadership requires a traditional thesis, while criminal justice students complete a Doctoral Research Portfolio in CRJ 9000. The doctorate in Education Administration and Leadership contains a four-course, research-focused capstone experience for all students, while the Doctor of Nursing Practice requires a series of internships that inform a culminating project. This approach allows doctoral students to gain in-depth research experience appropriate to their discipline.

Faculty Qualifications

Most graduate teaching faculty have a doctorate or other terminal degree in their field (I.3.15; III.2.16; III.2.15). Faculty are assigned to graduate courses based on an assessment of their qualifications for teaching at an advanced level; department chairs make recommendations to their dean. Faculty who do not hold terminal degrees but have appropriate credentials in their field may serve as field experience coordinators or clinical instructors. Such faculty typically hold a master's degree and have relevant experience in the field. Many faculty remain current within their field by maintaining active practice (for example, as mental health counselors, accountants, or nurse practitioners).

CRITERION 7

ADEQUATE AND APPROPRIATE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF ANY STUDENT LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES DESIGNED, DELIVERED, OR ASSESSED BY THIRD-PARTY PROVIDERS.

PennWest does not contract with third parties to provide more than 25% of credit content or oversight of a program. All course content is administered and evaluated by the faculty member, as driven by the UCC-approved course outline (syllabus) and the CBA. In the internship/student teaching/service-learning environments, PennWest may have agreements for student experience opportunities with third parties; however, students' experiences are directed, supervised, and evaluated by PennWest faculty, and these credit experiences are approved through the UCC via the course approval process (III.1.4) and faculty roles defined in the CBA (III.2.20). Individual sites for placement of students for internship/student teaching/service-learning must be approved through Academic Affairs, and these affiliation agreements are reviewed annually (III.7.87; III.7.88). PennWest third-party provider policy, procedures, and an inventory tracker are also discussed in Standards IV and V (III.7.89; III.7.90; III.7.91).

CRITERION 8

PERIODIC ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PROGRAMS PROVIDING STUDENT LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES.

Assessment of student learning has been built into the very core of PennWest and embedded in all academic programs from their inception. Academic programs and courses are approved through the UCC; the template for new program proposals requires student learning outcomes (SLOs) aligned to the university mission (III.8.92).

Academic program-level student learning outcomes assessment (SLOA) is a continuous process conducted by all undergraduate and graduate programs, including majors, concentrations, and certificate programs. SLOA is conducted annually, with programs generally following an academic assessment cycle that mirrors the academic year: planning in the fall semester and reporting results in the spring semester. Each step of the process emphasizes continuous improvement and closing the loop. A standardized institutional assessment rubric (III.8.93) ensures quality and consistency. The director of Assessment tracks participation and progress with an academic assessment monitoring tool (III.8.94) and makes available periodic executive summaries to various stakeholders (III.8.95; III.8.96; III.8.97; III.8.98). The Faculty Senate's Committee on General Education oversees assessment of the Gen Ed program, and the curricular process itself is under continuous review by the UCC.

Areas related to academics, such as University Libraries, also continuously assess their work. In addition to the initiatives discussed in Criterion 4, University Libraries recently launched a three-year strategic plan (III.8.99) that will consolidate its planning initiatives. Academic program assessment, including SLOA and assessment of the Gen Ed program, is discussed further in Standard V.

Strengths

- Academic policies and procedures were thoughtfully and collaboratively developed through the integration process. Few institutions review all policies and procedures at the same time, but PennWest was able to create a set of policies with a singular vision that aligns with our mission.
- Similarly, the entire program array was synthesized through a deliberative and collaborative process that built in assessable student learning outcomes and programmatic assessment plans. Student success mechanisms (progress reporting, Student Success Coaches, Career Center, etc.) also were built into the academic structure from its inception.
- All programs and courses, including those provided online, are held to the same standard, ensuring high-quality online and face-to-face programs.
- A General Education curriculum built on the strengths of the three legacy curricula has been designed and revised through a thoughtful and collaborative process focused on students' academic and professional success.
- Academic departments have expanded the breadth of their core faculty by uniting the expertise of the three legacy institutions. PennWest also has implemented programs and practices to facilitate faculty professional development and promote engagement across the university.

Opportunity

- Engage the neural network in the ongoing development of PennWest, creating a consolidated database of faculty who have completed training in online teaching.

Standard IV Support of the Student Experience (ROA 8, 10)

CRITERION 1

CLEARLY STATED ETHICAL POLICIES AND PROCESSES TO ADMIT, RETAIN, AND FACILITATE THE SUCCESS OF STUDENTS WHOSE INTERESTS, ABILITIES, EXPERIENCES, AND GOALS PROVIDE A REASONABLE EXPECTATION FOR SUCCESS AND ARE COMPATIBLE WITH INSTITUTIONAL MISSION.

PennWest has clearly stated ethical policies designed to admit, retain, and facilitate the success of all students. The university complies with the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) policies and procedures (IV.1.1). PennWest also complies with federal and state laws to admit students without regard to race, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, age, disability, or status as a veteran or disabled veteran.

Admission Policies and Processes

The institution actively recruits and admits students whose interests, abilities, experiences, and goals align with PennWest's mission and the university's educational offerings, which include diverse settings, educational levels, and instructional modalities.

When recruiting, the institution focuses on:

- Ensuring enrollment stability by creating sustainable pathways and partnerships;
- Enhancing PennWest's brand position within the region and beyond;
- Promoting a united PennWest while maintaining its longstanding campus identities;
- Providing access to an affordable education through strategic and efficient use of institutional funds; and
- Promoting a culture of lifelong learning.

Prospective undergraduate first-year students seeking admission to PennWest must have a cumulative high school grade-point average (GPA) greater than 2.0 on a 4-point scale (weighted or unweighted) or a GED diploma and official score report showing a total score greater than or equal to 450 (IV.1.2). Applicants with a cumulative high school GPA of 2.0-2.49 or a GED total score less than 450 may be conditionally admitted under the PennWest Success Tools and Resource Training (START) program. Applicants admitted conditionally will be required to meet with the Student Success team to improve their potential for success and retention. Transfer applicants must submit an official college transcript(s) from a regionally accredited institution(s) indicating a cumulative (all colleges) transfer GPA greater than 2.0. Graduate applicants must meet the admission criteria determined by each academic graduate program (IV.1.3).

Prospective graduate students and those newly admitted to graduate research programs can access admission requirements, information on fee structure, financial aid, and program-specific support services directly on each individual graduate program's page (IV.1.4). A centralized online application, customized to meet the specific needs of various programs, is used for all graduate applications.

The table below provides the undergraduate first-year and transfer student admission funnels for the 2022-2023 recruitment year (students starting in Fall 2023). Using these data, as well as other key performance indicators, along with historical trends data, the Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) unit, along with Institutional Research, worked diligently to develop a robust enrollment projection model that begins with the fall 2024 admission term, but also looks at future terms through 2028. This model includes clear parameters and assumptions on which projections are based, enabling PennWest to have more precise term-by-term enrollment projections that, in turn, help inform net tuition revenue projections. The enrollment projection model is further described in Standard VI.

Admissions Profile Using Multiple Data Points

Fall 23 FYR (First Year)	# Applications	# Gross Admits	# Net Admits	# Gross Deposits	# Net Deposits	# Registered/ Enrolled	Yield Rates (App to Enrolled)
California	2,762	2,470	2,385	714	652	567	20.5%
Clarion	1,769	1,490	1,419	475	417	419	23.7%
Edinboro	1,928	1,748	1,703	649	615	555	28.8%
Online	241	154	106	98	52	76	31.3%
PennWest Total	6,700	5,862	5,613	1,936	1,736	1,617	20.3%

Fall 23 TRF (Transfer)	# Applications	# Admits	# Deposits	# Registered/ Enrolled	Yield Rates (App to Enrolled)
California	385	240	160	135	35.0%
Clarion	292	204	166	117	40.0%
Edinboro	318	220	132	113	35.5%
Online	412	268	208	167	40.5%
PennWest Total	1,407	932	666	532	37.8%

Applications, Admits, Deposits data compiled from Slate CRM; Registered/Enrolled data provided by IR Registration Progression Dashboard, reflects IR Census Data for Fall 2023

Financial Aid

Understanding Financial Aid Options

PennWest recognizes the financial barriers faced by many of its students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. In fall 2022, PennWest had the second highest number of Pell Grant recipients, second highest total Pell Grant dollars awarded, and fourth highest percentage of Pell Grant recipients of all degree/certificate-seeking undergraduate students at PASSHE universities (IV.1.5). In keeping with our mission and our commitment to accessibility and equity, PennWest makes it a priority to provide accurate and comprehensive financial aid information (IV.1.6), empowering students to pursue their academic goals without undue financial strain.

Sources of Financial Aid

PennWest offers an array of financial aid options (IV.1.7) drawing from three primary sources:

1. **Federal aid:** Through initiatives such as the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), students can access federal grants, loans, and work-study opportunities.

2. **State aid:** Programs administered by the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) and other state-based loan initiatives provide additional avenues for financial support.

3. **Institutional funds:** Merit- and non-merit-based scholarships, along with need-based grants, offer further assistance to qualifying students. Eligible first-year students are automatically awarded merit-based scholarships during the admissions process.

Guidance and Counseling

Navigating the complex landscape of financial aid can be daunting. PennWest provides extensive resources and personalized support to guide students through the process. The institution's financial aid team offers one-on-one counseling sessions, where students receive detailed information about available aid options and assistance with application procedures. These sessions may be private meetings within the Financial Aid Office, virtual meetings between the student/family and a financial aid counselor, a personal phone call, or an individual appointment during an Admissions or New Student Orientation (NSO) event. Collaborative efforts between student support services and the Financial Aid Office facilitate swift resolution of financial and enrollment issues, underscoring our commitment to fostering student persistence and success.

Information on tuition and fees, refund policies, financial aid, grants, loans, and scholarships is available through easily accessible links in the sidebar of the online 2023-2024 undergraduate and graduate Academic Catalogs (IV.1.8), as well as directly on the PennWest website under Tuition and Aid (II.7.85). PennWest's Consumer Information webpage (II.8.86) also complies with the Higher Education Opportunity Act by helping students make informed decisions about their education and finances.

Tailored Aid Packages

PennWest is committed to tailoring aid packages to meet the diverse needs of its students. The Financial Aid Office employs a thorough approach to evaluating students' eligibility for financial aid awards, ensuring fairness and transparency in the distribution process. Merit scholarships (based on academic performance) and need-based grants (determined through FAFSA evaluations) are among the avenues through which PennWest extends financial assistance.

Comprehensive Cost Breakdown

Maintaining transparency in financial matters is a top priority at PennWest. The institution outlines all costs associated with each academic year (IV.1.9; IV.1.10; IV.1.11; IV.1.12; IV.1.13; IV.1.14; IV.1.15; IV.1.16) on the university's public-facing website. This commitment to clarity extends beyond surface-level information. The institution provides a comprehensive, campus-based breakdown of tuition costs, per-credit and per-semester rates, student fees, and costs associated with housing, dining, and transportation for undergraduate and graduate programs. The university recognizes the importance of providing this information to enable students to make well-informed financial decisions aligned with their academic pursuits.

Detailed and Personalized Financial Projections

PennWest also recognizes that each student's financial situation is unique. Through the Net Price Calculator (IV.1.17) and one-on-one sessions with a financial aid counselor during admissions and orientation events, students receive detailed insights into their projected expenses and potential financial aid options. The

institution aims to give students a clear understanding of the costs associated with their education, so they can make informed decisions and navigate the financial landscape with confidence. Whether students are assessing program options, reviewing financial aid packages (IV.1.7), or planning for future expenses, this transparent approach to financial information equips them with the knowledge they need to navigate their academic journey with confidence and clarity.

These tools empower students to make informed decisions about higher education:

- The interactive Net Price Calculator calculates the net cost of a chosen degree program with precision. By factoring in individual circumstances such as dependents or active military status, the calculator provides personalized financial projections.

- "Verify My FAFSA" simplifies the online completion of aid tasks, providing students with clear metrics to track their progress.

- Early financial aid offers, disseminated through Campus Communicator, furnish comprehensive insights into direct and indirect costs, enabling applicants to make informed decisions from the outset.

- The Tuition and Aid webpage (II.7.85) also provides information related to payments and refunds.

Most PennWest students receive some form of financial aid. In the Fall 2022 term, 37.5% of undergraduate degree/certificate-seeking students received a Pell grant, with an estimated average annual award of $5,219 (IV.1.5). Among students who graduated with a bachelor's degree between July 1, 2022, and June 30, 2023, and who were considered first-time students at PennWest or any of the three legacy schools (not transfer students), 79% borrowed from federal, state, institutional, and/or private loan programs (excluding Parent Loans), with an average student loan indebtedness of $33,001 per student upon graduation (III.2.16). Students may also receive financial aid through merit scholarships (based on academic performance) and need-based grants (determined through FAFSA evaluations). PennWest awards

financial aid on a rolling basis beginning early in the spring semester of each year to students who have been accepted to the university and have a valid FAFSA on file.

The Financial Aid Office also provides comprehensive counseling on various financial matters, including guidance on federal loan entrance and exit, verification processes (IV.1.18), credit, and compliance with regulatory obligations. Students are informed about alternative options, such as state grant and special programs (IV.1.19; IV.1.20) and external aid opportunities (IV.1.21), ensuring alignment with federal, state, and institutional regulations.

Supporting Underprepared Students

Commitment to Underserved Communities

PennWest is dedicated to delivering the highest quality education to students residing in underserved rural areas. Acknowledging that its current and prospective student body originates in large measure from financially disadvantaged communities and includes many first-generation college students (I.3.16), the university is committed to ensuring that all students, regardless of their academic background, have the opportunity to excel in higher education.

In pursuit of this goal, PennWest offers pre-college assistance and enrichment through federally funded TRIO programs — outreach and student services programs designed to identify and provide services for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds. TRIO includes eight programs targeted to low-income individuals, first-generation college students, and individuals with disabilities, helping them to progress through the academic pipeline from middle school to postbaccalaureate programs.

PennWest administers several TRIO programs across its campuses, including Student Support Services and Upward Bound at the California and Clarion campuses, and Talent Search at the Clarion campus. Additionally, the Clarion campus operates a state-funded ACT 101 program that aligns with TRIO initiatives. Title III initiatives are implemented at the California campus, which also boasts the National Science Foundation's S-STEM program to support incoming engineering students.

Quantitative assessments of these programs (IV.1.22) reveal their effectiveness. For example:

- TRIO Student Support Services at the California campus served 175 eligible participants during the 2022-2023 cycle. Among them, 91% attained "good academic standing," and an overall persistence rate of 89%. At the Clarion campus, TRIO Student Support Services served 207 eligible participants during the same cycle, with similar success rates: 92% achieved "good academic standing," and a persistence rate of 91%.

- The TRIO Education Talent Search program at the Clarion campus served 835 eligible students, boasting a 96% secondary school persistence rate and a 91% secondary school diploma completion rate within the regular timeframe; 67% of participants enrolled in postsecondary education, with a postsecondary education attainment rate of 77%.

- TRIO Upward Bound at the California campus served 164 eligible students across two cohorts in 2022-2023, with postsecondary completion rates of 67% and 61%, respectively, for the Monongahela and Fayette projects. During the 2022-2023 cycle, the Upward Bound program at the Clarion campus served 97 students, achieving a 96% student retention and graduation rate. About 46% of those students successfully enrolled in and completed post-secondary education, and 90% maintained or exceeded the required GPA.

Office for Students with Disabilities

The Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD), located on each campus, provides services for students with a diagnosed disability who can, with assistance, overcome barriers to learning. OSD complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

OSD ensures that students with documented disabilities receive the appropriate reasonable accommodations to help them be successful, based on their identified needs. OSD directors meet regularly with students to determine the effectiveness of the accommodation and to evaluate the need for any further services. Annually, OSD provides accommodations for approximately 350-430 students on each campus (IV.1.23). The top three diagnoses that accommodations are provided for are emotional/psychological, learning, and medical/health disabilities.

In addition, the Edinboro campus's OSD offers fee-based services to students with documented disabilities:

- The Boro Autism Support Initiative for Success (BASIS) (IV.1.24) is an individualized program that provides support in academics, communication, daily living skills, employment readiness, and social skills for students on the autism spectrum. Since integration, BASIS has seen a 42% increase (Fall 2022 to Fall 2023) in its enrollment. With the increase in individuals diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder nationwide, numbers for BASIS are expected to grow.

- The Boro Opportunities for Organization and Student Techniques (BOOST) provides academic coaching and study skills support for students with specific learning disorders, including students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). The program has three levels to accommodate students' educational needs. Seven students were enrolled in BOOST in Fall 2022, nine in Spring 2023, 11 in Fall 2023, and 11 in Spring 2024. Since Spring 2022, three students enrolled in BOOST have graduated from the university.

- The early move-in BRIDGE program gives new students registered with OSD a positive start to their university experience through academic, social, and team-building activities. This three-day experience provides information on college success strategies and skills, campus technology, and knowledge about campus and OSD resources. Fifteen students enrolled in BRIDGE for each of the fall 2022 and 2023 semesters.

Academic Support Programs

The Center for Student Outreach and Success (III.4.76) offers programs to help new students make a strong start academically, and to assist students who need to improve their GPA and overall academic standing. All undergraduate students are linked with a success coach based on their major. The success coaching process is discussed in more detail further in this criterion.

The center also offers programs such as START (Success Tools and Resource Training), which provides vital assistance to students with low high school GPAs who are conditionally admitted to the university. The program supported 123 students in Fall 2022 and 149 in Fall 2023, a 21% increase. START (III.3.48) students are matched with Success Coaches who conduct weekly sessions to assist with the transition to college-level coursework and facilitate access to support services such as tutors and peer mentors. Through regular progress evaluations, particularly in the first year, students are guided to maintain a GPA of 2.0 or higher and are provided with academic alternatives if they encounter difficulties within their chosen major. Initial analysis of data from the first three cohorts (Fall 2022-Fall 2023) indicates that about 40% of START students achieved "good academic standing," (IV.1.25) meeting or exceeding the university's GPA requirement of 2.0 after their first semester. Staff are evaluating the data and strategies for improving these results.

Assessment and Support for Students

The institution oversees students' academic advancement and offers prompt intervention as necessary. The Academic Grading Policy (II.1.3) encourages faculty to "administer a sufficient number and variety of evaluative measures throughout the semester to arrive at a just and accurate appraisal of student performance." Grades are provided directly to the student; coupled with a Progress Survey in Week 4 and a mid-term grade submission before the end of the withdrawal period, they serve as touch points for Success Coaches and other support staff to reach out to students and connect them with resources.

A subpar GPA may result in an academic warning, probation, suspension, or dismissal, as outlined in PennWest's Policy AC006 for undergraduates (IV.1.26) and Policy AC007 for graduate students (IV.1.27). Individuals deemed at risk of suspension or dismissal may appeal to a committee and/or the dean, depending on the number of suspensions. Students on academic warning and probation work with an assigned Success Coach and the rest of their support network (faculty advisor, athletic coach when applicable, career coach, OSD representative, and others); together they explore various options, including course withdrawal, readmission, or access to academic support services.

Peer Mentoring

PennWest's Peer Mentoring program addresses the challenges faced by many first-year and new transfer students. Organized through the Center for Academic and Student Success, the expanded program is available to all face-to-face undergraduates who choose to participate. Peer Mentoring pairs the incoming student with an experienced volunteer student mentor who can offer guidance on academic and campus-life resources. The program helps first-year students navigate the complexities of college life and fosters a sense of belonging. In the 2023-2024 academic year, 238 students requested a peer mentor and 227 students served as volunteer mentors. In a 2023-2024 satisfaction survey, 77% of respondents said their mentor helped them transition to PennWest (IV.1.28). Assessment data from the California campus in Fall 2022 indicate that, since 2000, the average Fall retention rate for mentored freshman cohort students has been 14.06% higher than for non-mentored students (IV.1.29).

International Students

The Global Education Office provides services for PennWest's international students (IV.1.30). The office assists accepted students with the paperwork required to obtain a visa, meets new students at the airport and helps them settle in on campus, and holds a New International Student Orientation at the start of each semester. The office advises enrolled students on credit requirements to maintain their F-1 visa, guides them toward campus resources, and assists with practical matters such as obtaining a driver's license, Social Security card, internship, employment, or post-graduate externship. In Spring 2024, a total of 121 international students were enrolled in PennWest degree programs (IV.1.31).

Campus Leadership Teams

Assisting students (or faculty/staff) who are not sure whom to ask for assistance, Campus Leadership Teams (CLT) (IV.1.32) were developed on each campus to provide an immediate point of contact for the community. Each CLT is composed of the academic dean, the campus administrator, an enrollment lead, and the student affairs lead, based on the individual campus. The CLTs meet weekly to stay apprised of campus events, planning, and issues, and hold regular meetings with managers of other campus units; the CLTs also meet weekly with the president and Cabinet to ensure consistent communication. Roles, responsibilities, and organizational interconnectedness is summarized on the PennWest website and available to the public.

New Student Onboarding

PennWest provides a holistic support system for newly enrolled students, including first-generation college students, who can benefit from step-by-step guidance as they become accustomed to university life.

New Student Orientation

Upon admission to PennWest, newly deposited students are directed to Next Steps events and activities (IV.1.33) aimed at preparing them for their first semester. As part of this initiative, students and their families are invited to New Student Orientation (NSO) (IV.1.34), a full-day event designed to:

- Help students and their parents/supporters learn about the university and its services (e.g., campus safety, FERPA, counseling and disability support services, the bookstore, etc.).

- Give students and their parents/supporters time to meet with staff in various offices/departments to finalize details and ensure their questions are answered.

- Help students and parents/supporters feel more connected to PennWest and their chosen campus by facilitating connections with other incoming students and families, faculty, and staff.

During NSO, students receive step-by-step guidance and training on various aspects of their college journey, such as completing the FAFSA (IV.1.35), setting up university email and myPennWest accounts, and finalizing housing and meal plan choices. In an academic session, students receive detailed instructions on official requirements such as transcript submissions and credit transfers, placement testing requirements, and success coaching. They also can arrange

billing and payment options, review financial aid offers, and complete medical history forms, all with staff guidance. Parents/supporters have their own NSO sessions where they learn about the PennWest Parent Portal, financial resources, FERPA, and campus safety and security. For those unable to attend NSO in person, online resources are accessible via a special D2L course shell (III.4.47) and the university website. These resources offer comprehensive step-by-step instructions, along with links to all necessary documents and forms, plus contact information for staff members.

Welcome Weekend

The Welcome Weekend program (IV.1.36), which kicks off with New Student Move-In, gives incoming students a chance to meet their peers and upperclassmen, familiarize themselves with the campus and surrounding community, learn about expectations for members of the campus community, and explore on- and off-campus resources.

Commuter students are invited to participate in all Welcome Weekend sessions, including special commuter acclimation sessions with students and Student Affairs staff. During academic sessions, students can meet the dean of their college, follow their class schedule to find their classrooms, and participate in New Student Convocation.

Wellness Services

The mission of Wellness Services (IV.1.37) is to enhance holistic well-being by optimizing individual experiences within empowering environments for PennWest campuses and communities. In summer of 2024, PennWest implemented an electronic medical records system across all campuses for consistency.

Counseling Services

Counseling Services offers enrolled students free, professional, and confidential counseling with faculty who are licensed mental health professionals. Short-term individual, relationship, and group counseling services are available in the fall and spring semesters when classes are in session. Counselors utilize their contact areas of expertise to serve the needs of students across the campuses, providing counseling in person on campus and/or via a confidential telehealth format.

Counseling Services has three essential roles:

1. Provide clinical services that help students achieve their academic and personal goals.
2. Educate the campus community about the emotional and developmental needs of students through community-level interventions, including outreach, programming, and consultation.
3. Respond to the psychological effects of crises that impact individual students and the campus community.

Wellness Services also has case management staff for all university students seeking resources. Case management staff work to identify, support, and refer students who may be experiencing complex personal difficulty such as a mental health-related crisis or distress that may impact their academic, personal, and/or social ability. Through a comprehensive and collaborative approach, case management staff reach out to students to communicate care and concern about their health and well-being and to offer resources and support that may be helpful to them. Students who complete the intake form are referred to campus and community resources to address identified needs posing a barrier to their academic success. In 2023-2024, 816 out of 914 students successfully followed through with the referrals.

Alcohol and Other Drug Education

PennWest utilizes an evidence-based approach for Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) educational programming and support services. BASICS (Brief Alcohol Screening and Intervention for College Students) and CASICS (Cannabis Screening and Intervention for College Students) are the nationally recognized alcohol and marijuana education programs utilized on each PennWest campus. These programs form a comprehensive strategy to improve well-being; reduce underage/dangerous drinking and other drug abuse among students; and promote the ideals of safety and wellness to all students. Services are offered in-person and virtually for students across all campuses. In 2023-2024, 72 students were referred across PennWest for the BASICS/CASICS program (IV.1.38). Grant funding supplants the operating budget for this area. In July 2024, PennWest received a $46,000 award from the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board (IV.1.39) for alcohol prevention strategies.

Health Services

Health Services provides high-quality episodic patient care, paying special attention to the needs of college students. It provides quality health care for students and first aid for all members of the campus community. Healthcare professionals can direct students to other healthcare providers, work with special populations to address their specific needs, and develop and deliver health and wellness education programs. Walk-ins are welcome, and telehealth or face-to-face visits are available by appointment. Health Services also support and enhance education and increase retention by modifying or removing health-related barriers to learning and by promoting optimal wellness.

Behavioral Intervention Teams

The Behavioral Intervention Teams (BIT) conduct assessments and early interventions with students exhibiting concerning behaviors, support students with concerns, and assist faculty/staff with managing concerning behaviors. The teams are dedicated to the university community's wellness and safety, providing an atmosphere where individuals are free to work and learn in a secure and supportive environment. PennWest has a total of four BIT teams, one on each physical campus, in addition to a team dedicated to online students. Students can be referred to BIT through an online form (IV.1.40) accessible to anyone on or off campus.

BITs use a standardized approach, uniform training and referral practices, shared resources and services, and a uniform post-vention team. Promoted strategies used when encountering students in distress include Mental Health First Aid and Question, Persuade, Refer (MHFA/QPR). PennWest uses a case management model supplemented by walk-in crisis services that increases access to support and decreases delays and waitlisting. Students who require long-term or intensive treatment are referred to off-campus providers. PennWest had 256 BIT referrals during 2022-2023, and 362 BIT referrals during 2023-2024 (IV.1.41).

PennWest Pantry

Food insecurity is a growing problem on college campuses and can be a barrier to student success. Recognizing a need to support the health and well-being of students with food insecurities across all campuses, PennWest earned a certificate of recognition as
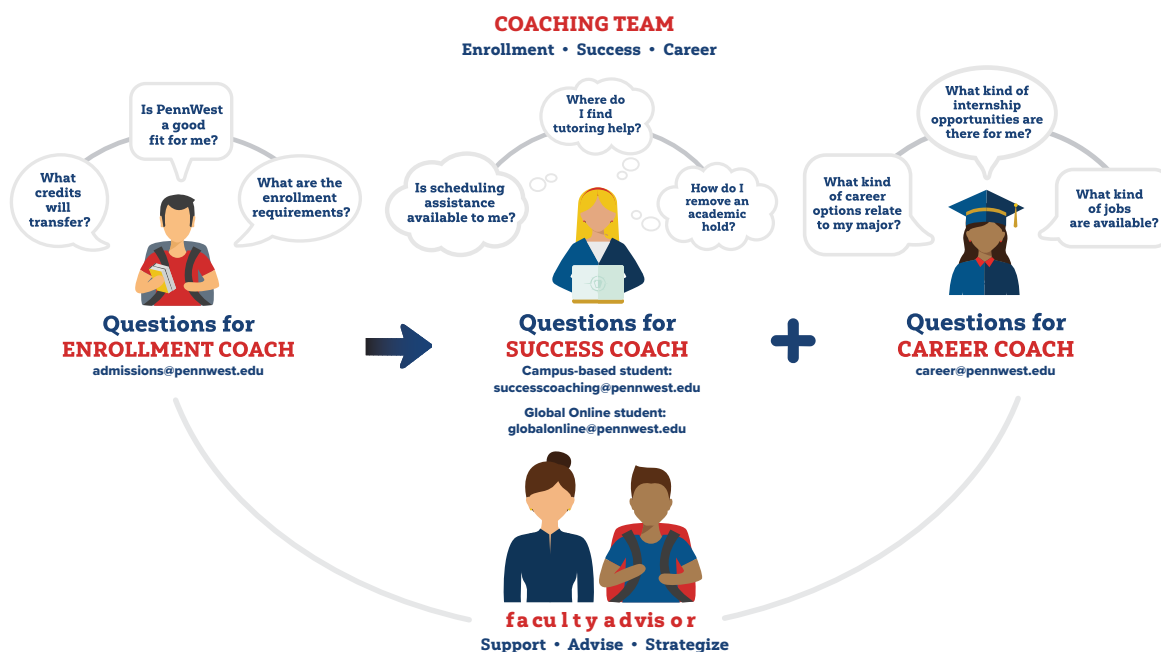

307 PennWest students received 16,555 items from the pantry

a Hunger-Free Campus, along with a $60,000 grant from the Department of Education to support the PennWest Pantry. With this grant funding and donor support, the pantry helps struggling students meet their basic needs with compassion and discretion by providing food, academic supplies, and personal hygiene items through an online request process. During AY 2022-2023, a total of 307 PennWest students collectively received 16,555 items from the pantry (IV.1.42).

Student Outreach and Success

The Office of Student Outreach and Success supports students at every stage of their academic journey. With physical locations on each campus, this office offers a wide range of resources, from tutoring and supplemental instruction to success coaching, peer mentoring, global initiatives, study abroad programs, and veteran support services (III.4.76).

PennWest University
has a dedicated coaching and academic advising staff

COACHING TEAM
Enrollment • Success • Career

Questions for ENROLLMENT COACH
admissions@pennwest.edu

What credits will transfer?
Is PennWest a good fit for me?
What are the enrollment requirements?

Questions for SUCCESS COACH
Campus-based student:
successcoaching@pennwest.edu
Global Online student:
globalonline@pennwest.edu

Where do I find tutoring help?
Is scheduling assistance available to me?
How do I remove an academic hold?

Questions for CAREER COACH
career@pennwest.edu

What kind of internship opportunities are there for me?
What kind of career options relate to my major?
What kind of jobs are available?

faculty advisor
Support • Advise • Strategize

Success Coaching

One key service is Success Coaching, designed to help students become engaged and proficient learners. Success Coaches are extensively trained to assist students in identifying and accessing campus resources tailored to their specific needs. Students can consult with a Success Coach to develop essential academic skills, set meaningful goals, and achieve academic success.

Students can meet with a Success Coach by appointment or as an in-person or virtual in-person or virtual walk-in. They also can use the "Raise Your Hand" feature in Starfish to ask questions at any time of day or night (III.4.79); questions are answered during traditional business hours, and students are connected directly with the resources they need. Success Coaches also work closely with students in Academic Recovery programs.

Career Center

The Career Center provides comprehensive support to all students, through individualized and group Career Coaching in addition to resources available 24/7 on their website. With a mission focused on exploration, preparation, and application of skills and experiences, the center is a hub dedicated to educating and empowering students to achieve their career and life goals (IV.1.43).

For example, from July 1, 2022, through Feb. 12, 2024, a total of 974 unique PennWest students utilized the Focus 2 career exploration software 2,404 times, with 470 students using the system once, 210 twice, and 294 three or more times. During AY 2022-2023, students who met with Career Center staff by appointment to discuss their Focus 2 results were retained at an 85% rate (53/62).

Persistence rates are a crucial metric for measuring the impact of engagement with the Career Center on student success. From May 8, 2022, through May 6, 2023, the center engaged with 29% of the PennWest student population (4,138/14,080) through appointments, programs, events, or other services. An analysis (IV.1.43) found:

The Career Center engaged with **4,138 students** *from May 2022 to May 2023.*

- Students who engaged with the Career Center persisted, on average, at a 5% higher rate than those who did not.

- Career-related events (96%) and appointments (91%) provided the greatest positive impact on student persistence.

- Among bachelor's degree-seeking students who engaged with the Career Center, those who identified as white persisted at an 87% rate (3% over the university average) and those who identified as black, indigenous, and other people of color persisted at a 78% rate (+5%).

- In terms of class status of bachelor's degree-seeking students, the Career Center positively impacted the persistence of freshmen by 7% (76% vs. 69%), of sophomores by 5% (88% vs. 83%), of juniors by 4% (92% vs. 88%), and of seniors by 5% (95% vs. 90%).

The Career Center also assesses how effective appointments were in increasing students' knowledge of the appointment topic. One hundred percent of student respondents "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that after meeting with a Career Center staff member, their knowledge of the topic increased.

As shown in 2023-2024 IPEDS data (I.3.17), PennWest University's overall graduation rate stood at 51%. This rate is calculated based on the total number of students in the adjusted cohort, or 2,624 individuals. Of this cohort, 1,339 students successfully completed their programs within 150% of the normal time frame, contributing to the overall graduation rate.

The university's transfer-out rate for this period was 21%. Again, this rate is determined from the adjusted cohort of 2,624 students, among whom 556 individuals transferred out within 150% of the normal time period.

Focusing specifically on students pursuing bachelor's degrees, the graduation rate for this cohort was slightly higher, at 53%. Among the 2,286 students in the adjusted cohort pursuing bachelor's degrees, 1,205 students successfully completed their programs within 150% of the normal time frame.

These metrics provide insights into the institution's academic outcomes, indicating both areas of success and potential areas for improvement.

Career Outcomes

The Career Center coordinates the First Destination Survey three times a year, in May, August, and December, to gather data regarding the career outcomes of graduates up to six months after graduation. Annual reports are made available through our Tableau website via a dynamic, filterable dashboard for internal and external stakeholder review and consumption.

Results from the Class of 2023 include:

- 96% of PennWest graduates were employed or continued their education within six months after graduation.
  - 74.6% were working full time.
  - 21% were continuing their education.
- 88% were working in a job related to their career interests.

These statistics underscore the positive impact (IV.1.43) that PennWest's academic and student support services, like the Career Center, have on facilitating a student's career readiness and successful transition from college to career.

Certificate and Degree Completion Services

The Office of the Registrar is committed to helping students to overcome any administrative obstacles they might encounter while completing their degrees and certifications. The office offers support with academic calendar inquiries, program and course registration, and graduation application and commencement assistance, among other topics.

DegreeWorks

The Registrar's Office provides and maintains DegreeWorks, an online tool designed to facilitate academic advising and assist students in understanding degree requirements and their path to graduation. A web-based platform, DegreeWorks enables students and advisors to monitor progress toward degree completion, make informed course selections, and plan for timely graduation.

DegreeWorks audit sheets are accessible to students 24/7 via the university website. Audit sheets offer a detailed overview of a student's past and current coursework, outlining completed and outstanding requirements for degree completion. Audit sheets are based on the Curriculum Sheet program; they give students a practical tool to plan and monitor their progress toward a degree.

DegreeWorks (IV.1.44) also includes:

- A Graduation Estimator that assists students in determining the grades needed to achieve their desired GPA upon graduation.
- An Advice Estimator that calculates the number of credits required to reach a specific grade-point average.

These tools empower students to make informed decisions regarding their academic goals and performance.

The "What If" function in DegreeWorks lets students explore alternative majors based on their completed coursework and available credits, so they can collaborate with their academic advisors to develop alternate academic plans. This feature facilitates efficient transfer of coursework and ensures students remain on track toward their educational objectives.

MyHub

The Registrar's Office uses MyHub, a secure and portable online application provided by the National Student Clearinghouse. This platform gives students convenient access to their verified educational records from all participating colleges and universities, enhancing transparency and accessibility. By centralizing access to educational records, this platform streamlines the process of obtaining essential documentation related to degrees and certifications.

The Registrar's Office uploads education records onto the platform promptly, with all degrees and certifications typically available within a few weeks of their conferral date. MyHub has a user-friendly interface, allowing students to access their education records anytime, anywhere, without

the need for physical copies or visits to the Registrar's Office. With MyHub, students can trust the accuracy and authenticity of their education records; the platform provides verified information directly from participating institutions. MyHub also lets students securely share their education records with employers, other educational institutions, or relevant parties as needed.

Transfer to Other Institutions

PennWest has worked to simplify and streamline the transfer process, providing comprehensive support and resources to ensure that students who wish to transfer out can transition smoothly to their next educational endeavor. Students are required to make all necessary arrangements with their future institution; PennWest helps them obtain their transcripts through convenient online services or by sending transcripts directly to their new institution. This allows students to focus on their academic goals while the university supports their transfer process.

In Fall 2023, PennWest joined other PASSHE institutions in introducing Reverse Transfer. The Reverse Transfer service (IV.1.45) involves an evaluation of PennWest courses by the former institution, providing students with an additional pathway to academic credential attainment. This initiative enables students who have transferred to PennWest from a Pennsylvania community college to utilize their PennWest credits to qualify for a community college credential.

CRITERION 2
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES REGARDING EVALUATION AND ACCEPTANCE OF TRANSFER CREDITS, AND CREDITS AWARDED THROUGH EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING, PRIOR NON-ACADEMIC LEARNING, COMPETENCY-BASED ASSESSMENT, AND OTHER ALTERNATIVE LEARNING APPROACHES.

Transfer Credit

Because PennWest recognizes the various pathways through which students can accrue college-level credits — traditional coursework, examinations, military service, or prior life experiences — the university has developed transfer credit policies grounded in a student-centered approach.

The clear and comprehensive transfer credit policies outlined in policy document AC034 (IV.2.46) and Board of Governors Policy 1999-01-A (IV.2.47) empower students to leverage their earned credits, regardless of when or how they were obtained, to optimize their educational achievements and expedite their progress toward a degree. These policies explicitly define and describe all matters related to the evaluation and transfer of credits, including the appeal process. The Registrar's Office tracks all institutions with which PennWest has articulation agreements (IV.2.48) and the information is made publicly available via the PennWest website (IV.2.49).

Course Credits by Examination

The university offers specific programs to evaluate student requests for undergraduate credit obtained through non-traditional means, as outlined in Policy AC015: Earning Course Credit by Examination or Evaluation (IV.2.50). These options include the College-Level Examination Program (CLEP), Credit by Exam, DSST/DANTES through the U.S. military, and Life Experience Credit–Prior Learning Assessment. Students pursuing a degree or certification at PennWest may utilize these evaluations, and credits thus earned may be applied toward degree completion.

Credits Over 10 Years Old

Policy AC039 (IV.2.51) outlines procedures for evaluating and applying credits earned 10 or more years prior to enrollment in a PennWest degree program. The evaluation process is integrated into the regular admissions process for transfer students and the reinstatement of former PennWest students. It involves initial evaluation by the Registrar's and Transfer offices, recommendations by department chairs through the appropriate deans' offices, and notification to students by the Registrar's Office based on the evaluation outcome.

CRITERION 3

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR THE SAFE AND SECURE MAINTENANCE AND APPROPRIATE RELEASE OF STUDENT INFORMATION AND RECORDS.

Protection of data integrity and confidentiality of student records are essential to maintaining a secure and trusted academic environment. The university recognizes the diverse and evolving nature of data threats and acknowledges the critical importance of safeguarding sensitive information. With a steadfast commitment to compliance with relevant regulations and industry best practices, PennWest has implemented robust policies and procedures to ensure the confidentiality of student records and the security of its information technology infrastructure, including Policy AC053 (IV.3.52), Policy AC044 (III.4.63), and Policy IT025 (IV.3.53).

Data Confidentiality and Student Records

PennWest prioritizes the safety and security of all university data and student records. Under Policy AC053 (IV.3.52), confidentiality and the release of student records adhere strictly to the guidelines set forth in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974. Official records are maintained in respective administrative offices to fulfill educational requirements, with a strong commitment to safeguarding these records in compliance with FERPA regulations. No student information is released without the student's permission or as dictated by FERPA guidelines.

Information Technology Security Program

PennWest recognizes the critical importance of safeguarding its information technology (IT) assets amid evolving security threats. Policy IT025 (IV.3.53) outlines the university's comprehensive IT security program, which is founded on industry best practices such as CIS Critical Security Controls (IV.3.54) and the Code of Practice for Information Security Management published by ISO/IEC 27002 (IV.3.55). This program is tailored to the specific needs of the university environment and incorporates security requirements from relevant regulations, including FERPA, GLBA, PCI Data Security Standard, Red Flags Rule, GDPR, and HIPAA. The university relies on professional organizations such as NIST (IV.3.56) to stay updated on emerging security practices and regulations.

In the event of a data breach or security incident, the university has well-defined procedures in place (IV.3.57), including immediate notification to Information Technology Services (ITS), assessment by PASSHE legal counsel, and compliance with the Pennsylvania Breach of Personal Information Notification Act (IV.3.58), if necessary.

CRITERION 4

IF OFFERED, ATHLETICS, STUDENT LIFE, AND OTHER EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES ARE REGULATED BY THE SAME ACADEMIC, FISCAL, AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRINCIPLES AND PROCEDURES THAT GOVERN ALL OTHER PROGRAMS.

PennWest is committed to the success of its students in and out of the classroom, individually and holistically, from matriculation through graduation. After students are enrolled, there is a variety of programs and interventions in place to support the student experience at PennWest, including, but not limited to the following areas:

Student Life

The mission of Student Affairs is to "... provide student-centered experiences to enhance students' personal and professional development through holistic programs, services, and facilities. Echoed by our core values, the division fosters engagement through inclusive co-curricular and experiential learning opportunities within our campuses and regional communities." The division works collaboratively within the university and each campus's surrounding communities. Integration has given students opportunities to experience shared services across all campuses, while maintaining local campus identities and traditions.

With over 300 recognized student organizations across the campuses, students have ample opportunities to engage in leadership development, service, cultural activities, Greek life, intramural athletics, and more. During AY 2022-2023, the first year that data is available for the integrated institution (IV.4.59), 2,214 students were members of at least one student club or organization.

Each campus currently has a legacy Student Government Association (SGA) that oversees recognition and operations of student organizations (IV.4.60), serves as the voice of the student body in the institution's shared governance, and works with its respective legacy Student Association to provide campus-based Student Activity Fee funding to the clubs and organizations. Leaders of the current SGAs and Student Associations have begun working to integrate their operations (IV.4.61). By Fall 2025, they expect to form a PennWest SGA that will include campus-based Student Congresses (IV.4.62) to attend to student organizations and funding, and a unified PennWest Student Association (IV.4.63; IV.4.64) to set and administer an institutional Student Activity Fee.

To help PennWest better assess the impact of its programs, departments, or initiatives in relation to student success, an Impact Analysis tool was created by the Office of Institutional Research. This tool compares the success rate of students served against that of other populations, most often the university population as a whole. In addition, the tool can analyze student data by pre-defined subcategories (e.g., Pell recipient, race/ethnicity, first-generation, etc.) to determine the initiative's impact.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

The Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) has formed a DEI Student Leadership Council, consisting of student leaders from all PennWest campuses, to discuss organizational and campus issues, identify ways to collaborate, and enhance members' leadership skills. The DEI Office also offers the Building Bridges program (II.2.18) to facilitate communication and understanding among students and other campus stakeholders of diverse racial and cultural identities. These dialogues enhance students' academic and campus-life experiences by providing a structured forum where they can listen and learn from one another. During AY 2023-2024, the DEI Office offered 27 Building Bridges sessions for 704 student and staff participants (IV.4.65).

Across all campuses, 23 student clubs and organizations (IV.4.66) encourage students to celebrate their heritage and identity. Each campus has a chapter of the Black Student Union and an organization for Hispanic/Spanish/Latino students. Other organizations include the Rainbow Alliance, International Club, and Women in Science on the California campus; Asian Students Integrated Association, Allies, and Hip-Hop Dance Team at Clarion; and the African Student Association, Asia Club, and Center for DEI Identity at Edinboro.

PennWest Leadership Academy

The PennWest Leadership Academy gives key student leaders the opportunity to grow their leadership skills in a way that not only benefits our campuses, but also supports their personal growth. Student members of groups such as Student Government, non-majority/minority student organizations, the Student Athlete Advisory Council, Greek letter organizations, and many others are invited to be part of this year-long program. These students attend sessions presented by faculty, staff, and administrators on important topics such as diversity, equity, and inclusion; civility and communication; energy and time management; developing mentors; and conflict resolution. The academy trained a total of 73 students in AY 2021-2022, 75 students in AY 2022-2023, and 80 students in AY 2023-2024 across all campuses and in all cohorts (IV.4.67).

Community Service and Philanthropy

As part of their personal growth and development, PennWest students are encouraged to contribute to their communities through service and philanthropic endeavors. During AY 2023-2024, students involved in clubs and organizations reported over 7,968 hours of community service (IV.4.68) in support of local agencies and national charities. Projects ranged from the Think Pink 5K to raise awareness and funds for breast cancer education (IV.4.69), to the Random Acts of Kindness Everyday (RAKE) initiative (IV.4.70), where students clean up yards for elderly people and individuals with disabilities, to the Big Event (IV.4.71), which saw over 200 students perform a variety of services for 37 local agencies, businesses, and homeowners.

Programming Boards

Each PennWest location has its own Programming Board composed of students tasked with bringing cultural, entertainment, and educational programs to campus. During AY 2022-2023 and AY 2023-2024, the programming boards offered a combined 425 events and activities (IV.4.72) to engage and entertain PennWest students. These ranged from open mic nights and stuff-a-plush activities to lectures and concerts.

PROGRAMMING BOARD EVENTS				
	2022-2023		2023-2024	
	Number of Events	Total Attendance*	Number of Events	Total Attendance*
Student Activities Board - California	36	1,383	53	1,721
University Activities Board - Clarion	138	4,941	84	2,149
University Programming Board - Edinboro	66	2,934	48	3,901

Not unique attendees

Fraternity and Sorority Life

Greek letter organizations have a long and rich history on the PennWest campuses. There are currently nine fraternities and sororities on the California campus, five on the Clarion campus, and seven on the Edinboro campus. Membership totaled 343 in all and accounted for approximately 5% of the total full-time student body. A recent impact analysis (IV.4.73) by the Office of Institutional Research showed that members of fraternities and sororities had a 92% success rate for AY 2022-2023, compared to an 81.7% success rate for PennWest students overall.

Residence Life and Housing

Programming is one of the key components of student success in Residence Life and Housing. Out-of-classroom experiences allow students to grow as individuals and develop meaningful connections with peers and the community. Ultimately, programs and activities are designed to help students feel a sense of belonging where they live by creating a safe, equitable, and healthy learning environment. Programs include social, community-building, and themed events; participation is summarized in the table below.

Community Assistants (CAs) are required to conduct Buzz chats twice a semester. These are guided conversations with each resident to check in on their experience. CAs also ask pointed questions about registration and whether residents are planning to return for the next academic year. These conversations help CAs to gauge whether individual students need additional resources.

RESIDENCE LIFE AND HOUSING EVENTS				
	2022-2023		2023-2024	
	Number of Events	Total Attendance*	Number of Events	Total Attendance*
PennWest California	614	7,149	818	5,914
PennWest Clarion	445	4,578	320	4,260
PennWest Edinboro	473	2,327	686	8,154

Not unique attendees

Campus Recreation

Current students who pay the campus recreation fee can use their student ID card to access the fitness center, where amenities include weight rooms, cardio areas, climbing walls, group fitness studios, indoor walking/running tracks, and gym space. More than 1,000 students participate in intramural sports, with men's, women's, open, and co-ed teams in 34 leagues competing in basketball, soccer, softball, volleyball, flag football and other sports.

Each campus offers outdoor recreation for students, such as high and low ropes courses, disc golf courses, and yard games. Excursions (complete with equipment rentals) let students experience adventure sports such as whitewater rafting, skydiving, mountain biking, hiking, canoeing, paintball, cross-country skiing, rock climbing, and more.

Sports clubs operated for and by students, often with a faculty advisor or coach, compete against other colleges and universities in local, regional, and national conferences and leagues. Currently PennWest offers 26 sports clubs with about 500 student members.

Athletics

Each PennWest campus operates an independent intercollegiate athletics program. All three Athletics departments are affiliated with the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference (PSAC), and Mid-American Conference (MAC) and are guided by their missions, principles, and policies. Student-athletes at the California, Clarion, and Edinboro campuses compete at the Division II level; wrestling is the only Division I program. Each athletics program has its own Student-Athlete Handbook (IV.4.74; IV.4.75; IV.4.76), which outlines rules and regulations. Campus-specific policy and procedure manuals with details about academics, financial aid, student-athlete substance abuse policies, code of conduct, and sportsmanship are posted on the PennWest website and shared in each campus manual (IV.4.77; IV.4.78; IV.4.79).

PennWest awards scholarships to student-athletes as part of the model approved by the NCAA for the integrated university. The Financial Aid Office collaborates with each campus's Athletics Department to ensure compliance with NCAA regulations, continually assessing student financial needs and incorporating scholarship support alongside other financial resources.
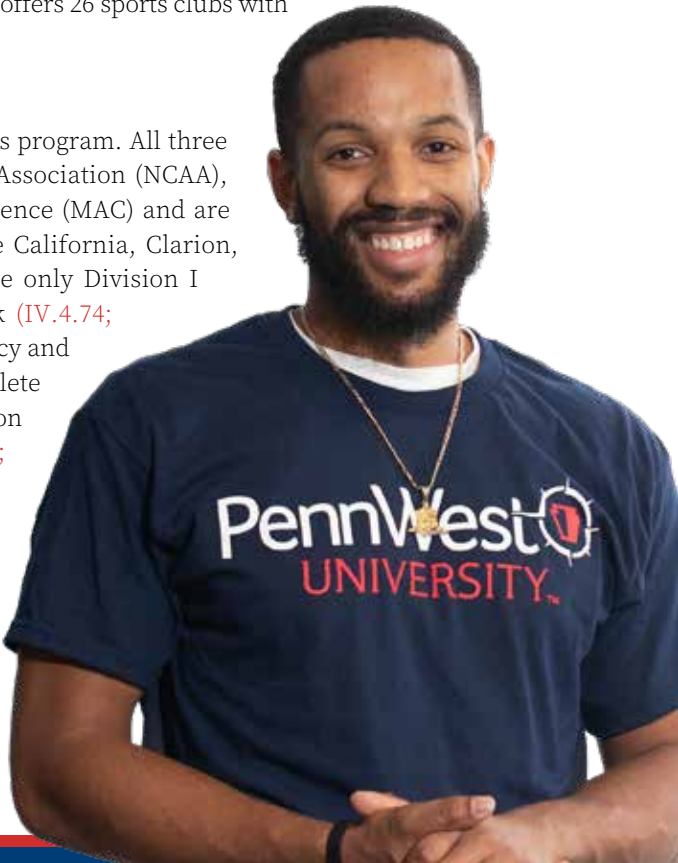
A breakdown of headcount and average GPA by sport by campus is shown in in the table below and is available in each campus's 2023 NCAA report (IV.4.80; IV.4.81; IV.4.82).

Headcount and GPA by PennWest Athletic Sport

| | CALIFORNIA (VULCANS) | | | | CLARION (EAGLES) | | | | EDINBORO (FIGHTING SCOTS) | | | |
| | Men | | Women | | Men | | Women | | Men | | Women | |
	Head Count	GPA	Head Count	GPA	Head Count	GPA	Head Count	GPA	Head Count	GPA	Head Count	GPA
Baseball	45	3.26			38	3.15						
Basketball	17	2.94	14	3.07	16	3.06	17	3.58	13	2.81	15	3.42
Cross Country	12	3.25	8	3.53			12	3.64	6	3.34	8	3.34
Football	105	2.90			105	2.86			99	2.66		
Golf	18	3.27	6	3.59	10	3.45	8	3.80				
Lacrosse											20	3.24
Soccer	30	3.40	26	3.42			32	3.62			42	3.48
Softball			18	3.40			22	3.38			24	3.15
Swimming			13	3.33	23	3.19	31	3.59	14	2.98	16	3.45
Tennis			9	3.68			7	3.53	14	3.26	10	3.43
Track & Field Indoor	40	3.21	38	3.46			24	3.61	18	3.14	24	3.67
Track & Field Outdoor	40	3.21	38	3.46			24	3.61			23	3.46
Volleyball			19	3.55			21	3.44			18	3.43
Wrestling					42	3.10			31	2.83		

CRITERION 5

IF APPLICABLE, ADEQUATE AND APPROPRIATE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES DESIGNED, DELIVERED, OR ASSESSED BY THIRD-PARTY PROVIDERS.

In compliance with MSCHE's Third-Party Policy and Procedures, revised in 2024, PennWest has implemented a third-party policy (III.7.89) and procedure (III.7.90), as well as updating an inventory list (III.7.91) to include all entities MSCHE defines as providers.

CRITERION 6

PERIODIC ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PROGRAMS SUPPORTING THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE.

Improved Registration

PennWest has implemented strategic initiatives to streamline and enhance the course registration process. Since integration, substantial improvements have been realized across all campuses, and each successive registration period has seen a marked decrease in challenges faced by students.

In 2023, approximately 7,999 registration permits were requested by students looking to enroll in desired courses. Through targeted efforts, this number was reduced by nearly 50%, to just under 4,833 registration permits, in 2024 (IV.6.83). A key factor was the creation of dedicated online course sections, clearly identifiable to students, which minimized requests for seats reserved for specific student populations.

The university has adopted a continuous improvement approach, evaluating registration errors each term and implementing corrective measures. In 2023, more than 3,100 prerequisite issues arose during the registration process. By working closely with academic departments to resolve configuration errors, eliminate unnecessary prerequisites, and remove duplicate course requirements, prerequisite issues dropped by almost 45%, to 1,813 instances in 2024 (IV.6.83).

PennWest also refined its waitlist procedures (IV.6.84). Academic departments now review existing waitlists more frequently and prioritize graduating students; this facilitates timely degree completion, particularly for students in legacy programs that are being phased out.

To support student retention efforts, the Registrar's Office has a proactive outreach strategy. For example, as the withdrawal deadline approaches, two messages are sent: a general reminder about the impending deadline, and a communication targeted to students with deficit grades that provides guidance on making an informed decision about whether to withdraw from the course. Through these multi-faceted initiatives, PennWest demonstrates its commitment to continuously improving the registration experience and supporting student success.

Annual AES Assessment

Assessment of administrative, educational, and student support (AES) units occurs on both an annual and a periodic (program review) basis. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness (IE) provides assessment procedures, timelines, and resources. Personnel involved in the annual process include the Executive Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Director of Assessment and Planning for Administrative and Support Services, and 59 assessment leads, representing each of the AES units.

IE serves as the communication conduit for the assessment process to campus and non-campus stakeholders. Avenues of communication include university-wide email announcements, academic and administrative assessment monitoring tools, and executive assessment status reports.

AES units are required to establish annual outcomes to demonstrate the effectiveness of their programs and/or support services. Assessment leads participate in this two-step process. First, a comprehensive AES Assessment Plan (IV.6.85) is developed by the assessment lead and submitted to IE in August. In June of the following year, an AES Results Report (IV.6.86) is submitted to IE that includes an analysis of the completed outcomes.

As part of the annual process, each unit identifies one outcome aligned to either the university's strategic plan, MSCHE standards, or MSCHE Essential Skills (addressed comprehensively in Standard V). To ensure process transparency and accountability, IE created detailed workflow documents (IV.6.87; IV.6.88) that clearly illustrate roles, responsibilities, and required activities. The results are entered into the Nuventive™ Solutions Improvement Platform (Nuventive) to ensure accurate recordkeeping and facilitate analysis. A separate workflow (IV.6.89) describes the role

this software plays. The Results Report also asks assessment leads if they have sufficient resources to implement the action plan, and if not, to identify specific areas of need to improve assessment outcomes. The process for linking assessment results to institutional planning and budget is being further developed with the implementation of the Budget Review Committee as discussed in Standard VI.

Once Assessment Plan Reports or Assessment Results Reports are submitted, an AES assessment monitoring tool (IV.6.90) is used to track all administrative units/areas and shared with unit managers and area vice presidents. Progress is categorized in one of three "stop light" levels of readiness, as shown below. As of May 2024, 100% of AES units submitted Assessment Plan Reports for the 2023-2024 assessment cycle.

Assessment Levels of Readiness (Plan and Results Reports)

STATUS	DESCRIPTION
Green	On track with clear mitigation plans for any issues.
Yellow	On track with known issues and defining mitigation plans.
Red	Off track with no known mitigation.

Assessment 360 Model and Periodic CAS Program Reviews

The AES periodic program review process began with the 2024-2025 assessment cycle, with a holistic "Assessment 360" model (IV.6.91) for AES units. All annual outcomes over a five-year reporting cycle will serve as inputs for the five-year periodic program review process. Units also will employ the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) evaluation criteria.

Strengths

- The quality of the PennWest administrators and staff who facilitate and support the student experience is exceptional. Since California, Clarion, and Edinboro previously operated their own distinct programs and services, PennWest now benefits from a team of skilled employees with diverse experiences. The administrators and staff have worked extensively to streamline resources and develop policies, procedures, and programs to provide vital support services to enhance the student experience.

- An Impact Analysis tool was designed to automate data analysis, allowing users to compare the success rate of students they have served with the success rates of other populations; this will help to establish a baseline for deeper analytic studies.

- TRIO Student Support Services achieved high levels of student retention, "good academic standing," and graduation rates. For instance, the California campus served 175 eligible participants in the 2022-2023 cycle, with 91% attaining "good academic standing" and 83% completing their bachelor's degrees.

- Members of fraternities and sororities had a 92% success rate in 2022-2023 compared to an 81.7% success rate for PennWest students overall.

- PennWest was designated a Hunger-Free Campus, with the PennWest Pantry receiving $60,000 in grants, and 307 students collectively receiving 16,555 items from the pantry.

- Students utilized the Career Center Focus 2 career exploration software 2,404 times, with hundreds of students using it multiple times. Students who met with Career Center staff by appointment to discuss their Focus 2 results during AY 2022-2023 were retained at an 85% rate (53/62).

Opportunity

- Engage the neural network by continuing to coordinate retention efforts within and among Academic Affairs, Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM), and Student Affairs; implement a new first-year experience "Compass" course and assess current best practices aimed at increasing retention rates.

Standard V Educational Effectiveness Assessment (ROA 8, 9, 10)

Special Note

Due to this chapter's integrated nature, it is not organized by criteria presented strictly in sequential order. Criterion citations **[C]** are included alongside headings and within the narrative when they fulfill criteria different from those indicated by the heading.

A New Process Built on Legacy Foundations [C2, C5]

PennWest University had the rare opportunity to develop a brand-new programmatic assessment process supported by the strong foundation of its legacy university assessment programs. PennWest's approach began with assessing the effectiveness of those existing processes. As part of integration, an Assessment Subcommittee of the Accreditation Working Group (V.5.1) was formed to establish best practices for the new institution (V.5.2). This subcommittee, composed of key individuals in each institution's assessment processes — including PennWest's director of Assessment and both faculty assessment liaisons — reviewed legacy assessment efforts to identify their strengths and weaknesses (V.5.3; V.5.4).

Work in this subcommittee ultimately steered the collaborative development of PennWest's academic programmatic Student Learning Outcomes Assessment (SLOA) process by incorporating best practices, avoiding known weaknesses within previous processes, and including the unique aspects that come with integrating three universities into one. (See Standard III for details on establishing the program array and General Education program).

Sustainability and alignment with broader university goals **[C1]** lie at the heart of this process. SLOA at PennWest is simple enough to be efficient across programs and meaningful enough to drive continuous improvement. The process standardizes expectations across programs to ensure consistent quality while incorporating intentional flexibility so programs can tailor SLOA to their individual needs. It includes annual assessments of academic programs, analyses of those assessments, proposed action items to improve results, and implementation of the proposed action items, leading to continuous programmatic improvement. Programs ensure improvement by closing the assessment loop, regularly reassessing their student learning outcomes (SLOs) to measure the impact of the action plans and adjusting their assessment approaches accordingly (V.2.5) **[C3]**.

Mission, Goals and Continuous Improvement [C1]

To be meaningful, programmatic assessment must align with the university's mission and university-level student learning outcomes (USLOs). Academic Affairs has clearly stated educational learning outcomes for all academic levels; the president's Cabinet and the Faculty Senate have reviewed and approved these university-level SLOs:

Upon graduation, PennWest students will be able to:

- Seek, develop, evaluate, and use information effectively.

- Act ethically, equitably, and inclusively.

- Communicate impactfully.

- Apply broad-based knowledge, interpersonal skills, and professional expertise to identify and solve problems in a complex and ever-changing world.

Prior to integration, each legacy university had developed alignment mapping (V.1.6; V.1.7; V.1.8) to demonstrate that student learning outcomes at all levels interrelate with one another, with relevant educational experiences, and with the institution's mission. Alignment with the university's mission and values persists at PennWest: Undergraduate programmatic learning outcomes support the General Education learning outcomes assessment.

The PennWest University SLO Alignment Map (below) (V.1.9) developed by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness shows the relationships between PennWest Values, USLOs, General Education SLOs, and essential skills identified by Middle States within Standard III. In Spring 2024, programs at PennWest began developing Master Assessment Plans (MAPs) that lay out exactly how they will assess which programmatic SLOs in which academic year moving forward **[C2]**. Each MAP includes the PennWest University Alignment Map in the appendix, so all program assessment coordinators can see these relationships.

The MAP template (V.2.10) requires programs to identify how each of its programmatic SLOs align with those broader university goals (PennWest Values, USLOs, Gen Ed SLOs, and MSCHE Essential Skills). These alignments allow PennWest to determine whether and to what extent the broader goals are supported within its academic programming; further, success of those broader goals can be indirectly measured by tracking assessment results of the aligned SLOs. Partial data for this assessment will first be available for analysis upon the close of the 2023-2024 assessment cycle.

PennWest University SLO Alignment Map

PennWest VALUES	University SLOs	General Education SLOs	MSCHE Essential Skills
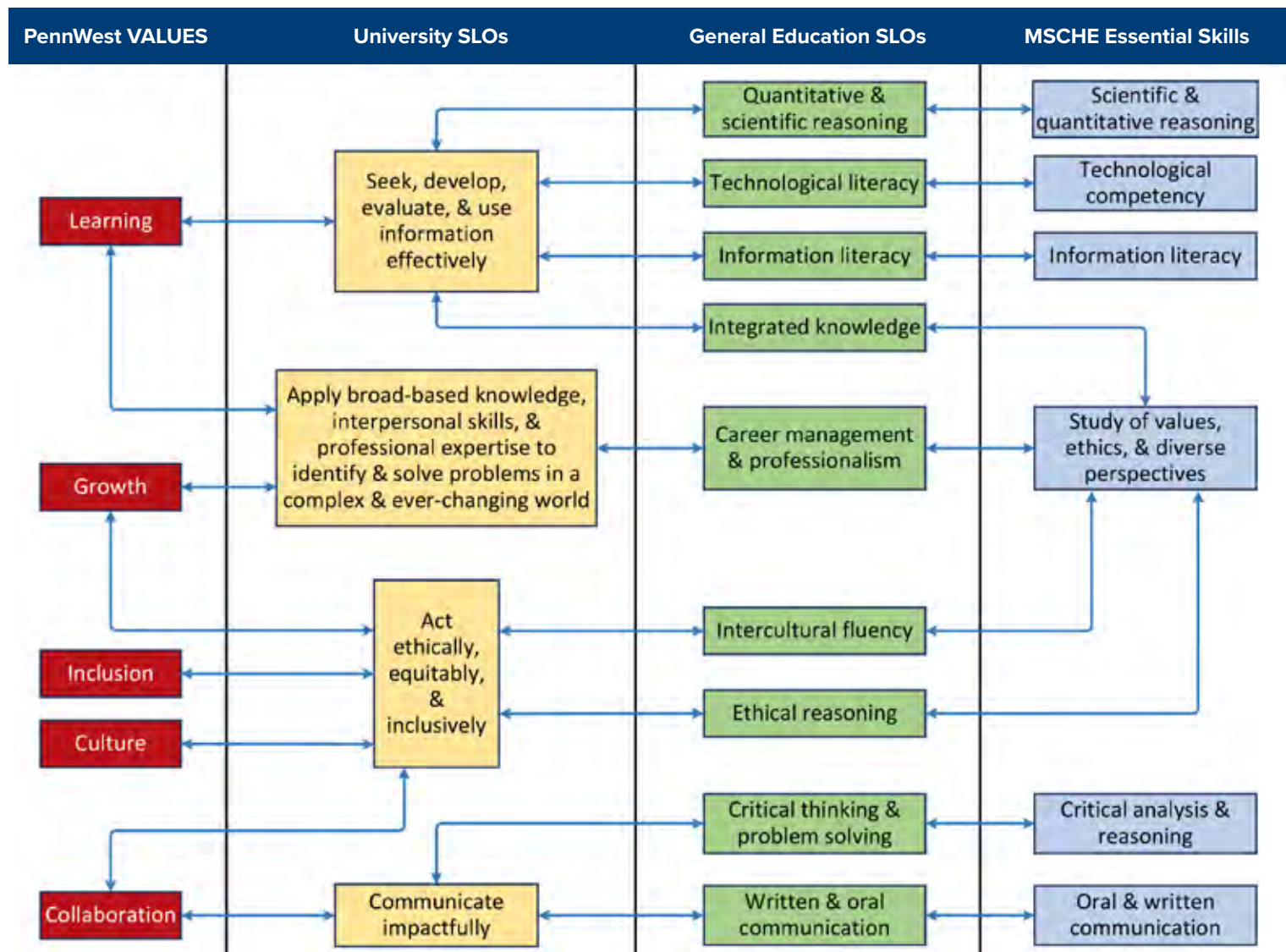
Master Assessment Plans also require an SLO curriculum map that lays out the relationship of each course in a program to the relevant programmatic SLOs. Many externally accredited programs also map their SLOs to external accrediting agency criteria (V.1.11). These curriculum mappings are essential for assessment because they ensure alignment between expected SLOs and what is actually being taught. They also allow tracking of learning throughout a program and make it possible to pinpoint weaknesses and identify strengths by examining the assessment data **[C3]**.

Alignment further extends equally from the university's mission to foster career-ready students and lifelong learners. To prepare students for careers, the General Education program drew from the key workplace competencies defined by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) when developing its outcomes. (See General Education Assessment, below, and Standard III for further details). **[C2b]**

Assessment Process [C2]

PennWest's integration process actively embedded assessment. All proposed programs submitted to the Interim Curriculum Committee included student learning outcomes as core components of the program synthesis proposal (III.8.92) **[C1]**. (See Standard III). In consolidating its programs, PennWest identified meaningful curricular goals with defensible standards for evaluating whether students are achieving those goals **[C2a]**, and program faculty articulated how they prepare students in a manner consistent with the university's mission to equip students for successful careers, meaningful lives and, where appropriate, further education **[C2b]**.

To ensure continuity of programmatic assessment and continuous improvement between the legacy and PennWest programs, each program developed Linkage Tables (V.3.12). Faculty listed their new program SLOs, described any connection to SLOs in the legacy programs, summarized recent related legacy assessment results, and described current action improvement plans borne from those results **[C2b]**. Then they considered how the legacy results could be carried forward to inform the synthesized PennWest program (V.3.13) **[C3]**. This process has ensured that data from legacy programs align closely with that from PennWest programs, making the datasets comparable. As this comparability allows actions based on previous legacy assessments to be as relevant as those based on PennWest assessments, faculty also established legacy-based action plans for their new programs **[C3]**. With Linkage Tables bridging legacy programs to their PennWest counterparts, in place, legacy assessment data informed PennWest assessment, faculty assessed their assessment by reflecting on what SLOs were most important to their synthesized programs, and PennWest closed the loop on legacy program assessment **[C3, C5]**.

All academic programs — accredited and unaccredited undergraduate and graduate programs, concentrations, and certificates — participate in annual program-level assessment of SLOs (V.2.5). Programs generally follow an annual academic assessment cycle that mirrors the academic year, with planning in the fall semester and results reporting in the spring semester. Some programs adjust this timeline to suit their programmatic or specialized accreditation needs. Most PennWest graduate programs were introduced in Fall 2022 and undergraduate programs in Fall 2023, so by Spring 2024, most graduate programs will have conducted two cycles of programmatic assessment as PennWest, and undergraduate programs will have completed one (V.2.14).

The 2022-2023 academic year was the first for PennWest as a unified institution — a period of significant transition across all university operations, including programmatic assessment. Amid uncertainty about the continuation of assessment of legacy programs and a still-developing undergraduate PennWest program array, faculty were asked to assess all programs, both PennWest and legacy. To alleviate the burden on an overstretched faculty, they were tasked with assessing just one SLO using familiar legacy processes and templates. The scope of programs assessed was also limited to PennWest programs and legacy programs not identified for moratorium.

Over the summer leading up to the 2023-2024 academic year, the new PennWest SLOA was finalized and put into motion: training sessions were provided for assistant department chairs with assessment included in their duties, and a roadmap for the next year's assessment was presented to Academic Affairs administrators (V.3.15; V.3.16; V.3.17; V.3.18) **[C3d, f]**.

With the launch of the full PennWest array in AY 2023-2024, assessment for all programs started fresh under the new PennWest SLOA process (V.2.5). For assessment that year, PennWest faculty developed "mini" assessment plans (V.2.19) to lay out what SLO(s) they would assess and what tools they would use to assess them. The Mini Plans were intended to facilitate assessment that year while allowing ample time for faculty to prepare their first Master Assessment Plans (MAPs) (V.2.10) for implementation beginning in Fall 2024. The MAP — a comprehensive roadmap for assessment developed by each program ahead of a new SLO rotation — includes program information; the program's mission statement; SLOs, measures, and criteria; SLO curriculum map; SLO rotation schedule; and alignment mapping with the
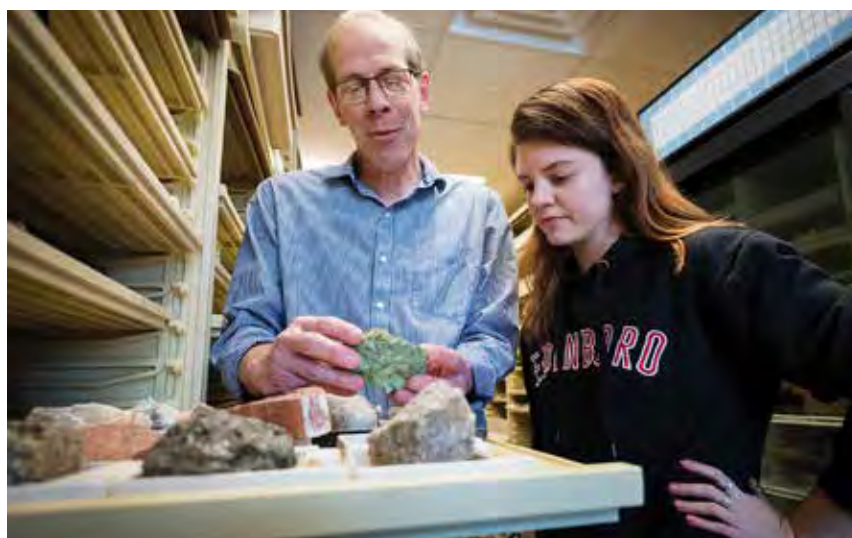
university's broader goals and mission **[C1, C2a, b]**. Programs also create their own rotation schedule for assessment of each SLO within a four-year assessment cycle or as required by an accrediting body.

Upcoming assessment cycles will include an Annual Assessment Improvement Plan in fall and an Assessment Results Report in spring, although the cycle may be adjusted for individual programs to meet accreditor guidelines or better align with cohorts (V.2.20; V.2.10; V.3.21; V.3.22).

The fall Annual Assessment Improvement Plan (V.3.21) is brief and intended to jumpstart the year's assessment and provide follow-up on action plans from the previous assessment cycle, focusing efforts on continuous improvement **[C3]**. This process reacquaints faculty with the year's planned assessments, reviews improvement actions under implementation, and describes how they will close the loop that year. The assessment coordinator for each program also meets with the faculty liaison to review assessment plans for the academic year based on their MAP.

The spring Assessment Results Report (ARR) (V.3.22) provides information about the assessments conducted, emphasizing results that drive programmatic improvements. In the ARR, faculty summarize and reflect on that year's findings, devise action plans for programmatic improvement, determine how they will communicate their results to stakeholders, and follow up on previously implemented action plans **[C2c, C3]**. Key to this process is the push for continuous program improvement, not just for development, but also for programmatic success. All data is entered into the Nuventive Solutions Improvement Platform (Nuventive) assessment management system (AMS) **[C2b]**. Faculty assessment liaisons communicate with the assessment coordinator for each program to provide advice, reminders about reporting deadlines and, most essentially, initial feedback on how to improve each report shortly after programs submit them **[C2c]**. Programs then have an opportunity to respond to this feedback and revise their assessment reports accordingly **[C3]**.

The director of Assessment is tasked with developing the programmatic assessment framework and materials, reviewing and monitoring assessment progress over time, and conducting analyses, facilitated in part by Nuventive (IV.6.87). The director and the faculty liaisons review the assessment reports to track assessment quality and progress on improvement efforts over time; they also identify and convey to faculty issues of concern in both the reports and the programs **[C5]**. An opportunity for improvement in future years includes a broader peer review process to provide feedback and guidance to programs.

University Support for Assessment [C2c]

In addition to support from Institutional Effectiveness (see Standard VI), the university's support for assessment includes oversight by an associate provost, one full-time director of Assessment in the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, two senior-level faculty assessment liaisons (with release time) who have expertise and experience in assessment, and individual faculty tasked with coordinating the assessment of one or more programs. Two Faculty Senate standing committees also support assessment: The Committee on General Education designs and implements assessments for that program; the Committee on Assessment communicates with faculty about assessment practices and facilitates the broader culture of assessment.

Academic, non-academic, and university assessments are all supported by the Nuventive AMS. It provides a centralized system for inputting, organizing, and analyzing data; enabling tracking of SLOs and their results; mapping alignments and streamlining assessment across multiple levels; and providing interactive data, analytics dashboards, and reports **[C2b]**. In these ways, it supports continuous improvement based on data-informed insights, facilitating better decision-making and promoting overall institutional effectiveness **[C3. C5]**.

Assessing the Assessment [C5]

PennWest recognizes that it is important to assess the assessment process regularly. Institutional Effectiveness developed a table of current and planned ways for assessing the assessment at various levels, monitored in a tracker (V.5.23). At the program level, a rubric (III.8.93) has been designed to guide peer reviewers as they assess the quality of assessment efforts as evidenced in reports and provide final feedback. Program assessment coordinators are given the rubric in both the MAP and ARR templates to clarify expectations of content and quality and encourage programs to reflect on their own assessments.

During the summer and fall of 2024, the SLOA leadership team reviewed the MAPs using the institutional rubric. In fall 2024, they met with program assessment coordinators to provide feedback and refine the MAPs. The team also conducted initial review of the ARRs, with the goal of expanding review through a broader faculty peer review process.

That same semester, the Faculty Senate Assessment Subcommittee and director of Assessment collaborated to develop the faculty peer review process. The subcommittee received training on the institutional rubric and launched their review of select ARRs during winter 2024. This ongoing process, continuing through spring 2025, aims to provide actionable feedback to programs while further fostering faculty engagement in the assessment process.

Assessment Cycle [C2, C3]

Most programs follow an assessment cycle mirroring the academic year. In the fall semester, programs on that timeline have three (or sometimes four) tasks: 1. identify what SLOs are being assessed in the academic year **[C2a]**, 2. work toward implementing previous assessments' proposed action items **[C3]**, 3. join group meetings to talk about assessment in general (e.g., how to assess ethics or critical thinking) and individual meetings to talk about assessment in their programs **[C2b, c]**, and 4. begin collecting assessment data **[C2b]**. Assessment Results Reports on the year's assessment are generally due in late spring.

Programs submit assessment reports via reporting templates available as Word documents and as a framework in Nuventive (V.2.10; V.3.21; V.3.22; IV.6.85). The faculty liaisons provide initial feedback on these reports so program coordinators can

improve them as needed **[C5]**. For example, reports sometimes show evidence of confusion about the difference between direct and indirect measures. The liaisons can clarify these distinctions and program coordinators can make the necessary corrections. For the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 academic years, Institutional Effectiveness transferred information from these templates to Nuventive. Beginning in AY 2025-2026, training will be provided so program personnel can upload materials and run their own analytic reports **[C3d]**.

Programmatic assessment should be organized, systematic, sustainable, and efficient to facilitate consistent efforts across the institution. However, assessment is also unique to each department and can only succeed in an assessment culture that embraces a variety of approaches. Programmatic assessment must be tailored by departments to suit their specific needs, ensuring that the assessment is appropriate and meaningful for each program.

Undergraduate Programs [C2]

Some undergraduate programs, such as nursing and education, are externally accredited; others, such as history, psychology, and biology, are not. Both types of programs are held to the same standards for PennWest assessment, with the understanding that accredited programs may need to tailor those standards to suit accreditor requirements. The SLOA process is designed to ensure that the institution's expectations for assessment quality are maintained, while not creating additional work for externally accredited programs.

Programs not externally accredited assess one or two SLOs per year, assessing all outcomes within one SLO rotation of up to four years. Programs use two measures to assess each SLO with students who are about to complete the program. At least one measure must be direct, and programs are encouraged to use an indirect measure for the second. Programs propose and implement action items to address shortfalls revealed by these assessments. The legacy universities' assessments followed this improvement process; its benefits led PennWest to incorporate these improvements into its new programs (V.3.13) **[C3, C3a-c, e, h]**.

Graduate Programs [C2]

Because they serve a different student population, graduate programs often must take different approaches to SLOA while maintaining standards set by the university and, frequently, program accreditors (V.2.24). PennWest's flexible SLOA strategy allows graduate programs to tailor their assessment needs while creating minimal additional overhead for assessment coordinators. For example, because many graduate students are working full time, some may not pursue degrees as full-time students who follow a particular sequence of courses; therefore, curricula may be designed to accommodate a less sequential course of study.

Graduate programmatic assessment at PennWest ensures standard reporting of implemented program improvements while supporting flexibility in terms of how each program assesses its SLOs. For example, the M.S. in Speech-Language Pathology's accrediting body requires the program to submit annual reports that outline processes for formative and summative assessment, remediation policies, pass rates on comprehensive exams, graduation rates (including statistics on attrition and lengthened plans of study), and pass rates on the national Praxis examination in Speech-Language Pathology **[C3a-c, e-h]**. In contrast, the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) requires the Master's plus Educational Specialist in School Psychology program to conduct a minimum of five assessments per year (V.2.25) **[C3b, c, f-h]**. The M.A. in Corporate Communication, a program that is not externally accredited, uses evaluations of student research, student perception surveys, examinations, written assignments, and communication audits of businesses (V.2.26) to ascertain where the program's strengths and weaknesses might lie.

Stakeholders [C2c, C3f]

Faculty and/or appropriate professionals conduct organized and systematic assessments evaluating the extent of student achievement for institutional and degree/program goals **[C2c]**. Data revealing the extent to which PennWest programs are meeting these goals are described in annual Assessment Results Reports and housed in Nuventive **[C2b]**. The director of Assessment tracks the progress of the university's programs (III.8.94) in providing these reports and makes available monthly updates to stakeholders (III.8.95; III.8.96; III.8.97; III.8.98) **[C5]**.

These assessment efforts show support for, and demonstrate actual progress toward, sustained assessment of student achievement. The results of these assessments have been communicated to stakeholders: advisory committees (V.2.27; V.2.28), departments (V.2.29; V.2.30), and management (V.2.14; III.8.95; III.8.96; III.8.97; III.8.98).

In their Assessment Results Reports (V.3.22), PennWest programs describe how, when, and with whom their assessment results and progress were discussed and will be communicated to stakeholders. Each externally accredited program regularly provides accreditation reports, including programmatic assessment reports, to its accrediting agency. For example, in the self-study for its external accrediting agency (V.2.31) **[C3b, c]**, the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET), the B.S. in Computer Information Systems (CIS) program describes its SLOs, assessment plans and rubrics, and alignments with the university's mission and Values **[C1]**. CIS also reports that its SLO assessments led to fundamental modifications in the curriculum. In the self-study of PennWest programs in visual arts (V.2.32), the art programs provided their external accrediting agency, the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD), with an evidence repository of programmatic assessments for all degree programs — B.F.A., B.Des., B.S.Ed. (Art Education), M.A., and M.F.A. — demonstrating their efforts to establish portfolio review and professional proficiency development.

General Education [C1, C2]

See Standard III for a description of the General Education (Gen Ed) program. As of AY 2023-2024, student learning outcomes for the Gen Ed program are:

Graduates of PennWest will possess knowledge and proficiency in the following:

- **Integrated knowledge.** Graduates possess a "broad knowledge of the wider world" across the areas of arts and humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences, as well as depth of knowledge in a specific discipline, and the "ability to apply knowledge and skills in real world settings." (PASSHE Policy 1993-01, quoting from AAC&U LEAP)

- **Critical thinking and problem solving.** Graduates "identify and respond to needs based upon an understanding of situational context and logical analysis of relevant information." (NACE, 2021)

- **Written and oral communication.** Graduates can communicate clearly and effectively in oral and written forms to multiple professional and non-professional audiences.

- **Information literacy.** Graduates can effectively evaluate the quality and credibility of information sources and use information ethically and legally.

- **Technological literacy.** Graduates "understand and leverage technologies ethically to enhance efficiencies, complete tasks, and accomplish goals." (NACE, 2021)

- **Quantitative and scientific reasoning.** Graduates can effectively apply quantitative and scientific methods to evaluate information and draw conclusions to answer empirical questions.

- **Ethical reasoning.** Graduates can effectively apply ethical principles in professional settings as individuals and as members of their communities.

- **Intercultural fluency.** Graduates "[v]alue, respect, and learn from diverse cultures, races, ages, genders, sexual orientations, and religions. The individual demonstrates openness, inclusiveness, sensitivity, and the ability to interact respectfully with all people and understand individuals' differences." (NACE, 2017)

- **Career management and professionalism.** Graduates, "knowing work environments differ greatly, understand and demonstrate effective work habits, and act in the interest of the larger community and workplace." (NACE, 2021)

The university-level SLOs (USLOs) align with the SLOs of the General Education program (V.1.9) and are published online alongside PennWest's mission, vision, and values (I.1.1) [C1]:

- **USLO 1.** Seek, develop, evaluate, and use information effectively:
  - Quantitative and scientific reasoning
  - Technological literacy
  - Information literacy
  - Integrated knowledge
  - Critical thinking and problem solving

- **USLO 2.** Act ethically, equitably, and inclusively:
  - Intercultural fluency
  - Ethical reasoning

- **USLO 3.** Communicate impactfully:
  - Written and oral communications
  - Oral communications foundation

- **USLO 4.** Apply broad-based knowledge, interpersonal skills, and professional expertise to identify and solve problems in a complex and ever-changing world:
  - Career management and professionalism
  - Critical thinking and problem solving

General Education Assessment [C2a, c]

As with programmatic assessment, the legacy universities had established assessments of their Gen Ed programs (V.2.33; V.3.34; V.3.35; V.3.36). Building on these, PennWest is working to develop sustainable and meaningful Gen Ed assessment (V.2.37; V.2.38; V.2.39; V.2.40; V.2.41).

The Faculty Senate has charged a committee to review and modify the PennWest Gen Ed program and to develop and implement a comprehensive assessment plan **[C2a-c]**. In the interim, to give the committee time to develop a comprehensive assessment plan, PennWest conducted programmatic assessment of General Education by administering Territorium's E-Proficiency Profile to 95 seniors in the business, psychology, social work, education, and exercise science programs. Results show that PennWest students, on all measures, are within a standard deviation of the mean of students from other universities who took this exam last year **[C2b]**.

Despite this achievement, students show a need for improvement in the category of Critical Thinking (V.2.37; V.2.38; V.2.39; V.2.40; V.2.41). These results, along with forthcoming data from a further 169 seniors who were given the exam in Fall 2024, will be aggregated with those from the final cohort in Spring 2025 to present a fuller picture of PennWest undergraduate students' abilities. Following analysis, the assessment director and faculty liaisons will present these results to the General Education committee. Together with faculty and academic affairs leadership, supported by Institutional Effectiveness, the committee will then develop plans for boosting critical thinking skills in PennWest's undergraduate population **[C3c, f, g]**.

Culture of Assessment **[C2c, C3]**

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness (IE) has taken strategic steps to cultivate a robust culture of assessment, emphasizing collaboration, transparency, and continuous improvement. Key initiatives included collaboration with dedicated faculty liaisons, partnerships with Faculty Senate to effectively communicate assessment updates, designing an efficient and simple SLOA process, maintaining consistent assessment expectations across all programs with flexibility for accrediting needs, and emphasizing open channels of communication.

IE also implemented a survey to address the current state of the institution's assessment culture. In Spring 2024, PennWest surveyed faculty to examine their perceptions of the assessment process (V.5.42; V.5.43) **[C5]**. Of the university's 611 faculty (teaching and non-teaching, permanent and temporary), 353 responded to the survey (51.2% return). Of those, 274 (77.62%) were permanent faculty, 59 (16.71%) were temporary faculty, and 20 (5.67%) were non-teaching faculty.

Among the faculty respondents, 77.49% said their program engages in program-level student learning outcomes assessment. Most respondents said they are aware of their program's assessment (80.66%); they feel comfortable with the terms used in assessment, such as "SLOs" and "closing the loop" (72.7%); their program has a practical assessment plan (75.65%); their program's learning outcomes are measurable (80.26%); and they discuss their assessment results at department meetings (58.28%). Most respondents also said they feel it is critical that faculty assess their program outcomes (84.8%), that assessment results should drive instructional and curricular improvements (83.11%), that assessment results are considered when they change their programs (63.17%), and they know whom to ask if they need help with assessment (74.15%).

These results are weaker when faculty consider the degree to which assessment results drive budget and planning decisions (36.95%) or whether the university's administration understands the importance of assessment (43.34%) or communicates about its importance (40.27%). These results show that a majority of faculty know about programmatic assessment and participate in it. Particularly encouraging is the strong sense of the value of assessment and its importance in curriculum development and modification. The survey points to an opportunity to strengthen the link between assessment and the budget and planning process; this area already is being addressed by leadership with implementation of the Budget Review Committee.

Closing the Loop **[C3, C5]**

While its impact will only become evident after several assessment cycles, PennWest's SLOA process is diligently and proactively tackling the common challenge of closing the loop by implementing several key strategies:

- Programs assess all SLOs within a maximum of four years, ensuring timely reassessment while allowing time to implement action items.

- The fall Annual Assessment Improvement Plan follows up on proposed action items and requires programs to provide status updates.
- When working with program assessment coordinators, faculty liaisons emphasize the significant benefits the university's programs can gain by implementing improvements identified through assessments.

PennWest's first assessment cycle is just wrapping up at the time of this writing, but the renewed emphasis on using results for continuous improvement is already apparent **[C3a-c, i, h]**. As evidenced in the Academic Program Assessment Linkage Tables, programs used relevant legacy program results to inform changes to existing course materials, assessment tools, and curricula, which they have carried forward in synthesizing their PennWest programs (V.3.13) **[C3a-c, e, h]**. Many programs also closed the assessment loop in their reassessment of SLOs. The B.S. in Biology program is offered in evidence as an example (V.3.44; V.3.45; V.3.46; V.3.47).

Even during the transition year of AY 2022-2023, programs continued assessment (V.2.48), implemented existing action plans, and identified new action plans to drive improvement. In their AY 2023-2024 Assessment Mini Plans, faculty described action plans under implementation (V.3.49). Finally, in their first PennWest Assessment Results Reports, faculty are returning meaningful and useful results, analyzing areas for improvement, describing the impact of prior action plans, and thoughtfully planning further improvement (V.3.50; V.3.51; V.3.52).

Third-party Providers [C4]

In compliance with MSCHE's Third-Party Policy and Procedures, revised in 2024, PennWest tracks an inventory list to include all entities MSCHE defines as providers. This list is reviewed and updated annually by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (III.7.91). In addition, PennWest has consulted with other accreditation liaison officers in PASSHE to develop a policy (III.7.89) and procedure (III.7.90) specific to PennWest and consistent with all PASSHE institutions that will establish a process for review and approval of arrangements with third-party providers.

Strengths

- PennWest has the rare opportunity to "start fresh" in assessment, free from preconceived notions or engrained practices. Identifying assessment strengths and weaknesses at our legacy universities allowed PennWest, from the start, to build in best practices and address areas needing improvement.
- Assessment was built directly into new curricula during the integration process, as all program proposals included SLOs. Each program also developed a Linkage Table to demonstrate how it leveraged meaningful legacy results when synthesizing PennWest programs.
- Working collaboratively, PennWest has designed SLOA processes that are simple and efficient while remaining useful and meaningful, making it easier for faculty to engage in the assessment process and make programmatic improvements.
- A multi-tiered support structure is in place, ranging from faculty-level support to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and the Provost's Office. The SLOA process also benefits from multi-campus representation through faculty assessment liaisons, program assessment coordinators, and the Faculty Senate, ensuring diverse perspectives and wide-reaching stakeholder support.
- PennWest's assessment process has built in opportunities for improvement and modification to ensure that each programmatic assessment is organized, systematic, and efficient. PennWest ensures standard reporting of implemented program improvements while supporting flexibility in terms of how each program assesses its student learning outcomes.

Opportunity

- Engage the neural network by continuing to build and strengthen a collective culture of assessment. Establish a peer review system for assessment reports as part of efforts to promote data-informed decision-making and strengthen existing relationships within the university.

Standard VI Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement (ROA 8, 10, 11)

CRITERION 1

INSTITUTIONAL OBJECTIVES, BOTH INSTITUTION-WIDE AND FOR INDIVIDUAL UNITS, THAT ARE CLEARLY STATED, ASSESSED APPROPRIATELY, LINKED TO MISSION AND GOAL ACHIEVEMENT, REFLECT CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM ASSESSMENT RESULTS, AND ARE USED FOR PLANNING AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION.

Institutional planning is conducted on several levels that center on the goals and objectives outlined in the university's 2023-2026 Strategic Plan (E.2). PennWest's strategic planning process was modeled on in-depth integration planning (Fall 2020-Summer 2022) that involved more than 600 students, faculty, staff, trustees, and community members and laid the groundwork for the official launch of Pennsylvania Western University in July 2022 (VI.1.1; VI.1.2; VI.1.3).

Institution-wide objectives are summarized in the strategic plan. The ideas were generated through a collaborative integration process (see Standard I) and are designed to align with Institutional Priorities. The plan describes five core institutional Values and outlines strategies and initiatives that help the campus community embody them.

PennWest launched the University Strategic Planning Council (USPC) on March 14, 2024. Per the council's charter (VI.1.4), the USPC is responsible for monitoring the implementation and assessment of the university's strategic plan and ensuring that all major strategies and initiatives are aligned with the institution's mission and objectives. The USPC further is tasked with monitoring measurable goals, objectives, and indicators of institutional effectiveness and implementing a regimen of continuous improvement. In keeping with its charter, the USPC is composed of a wide range of stakeholders to ensure that all university voices are heard (VI.1.5).

Dedicated subcommittees are aligned with the university's Values as articulated in the strategic plan. Individual subcommittees are dedicated to enhancing collaboration, culture, growth, and learning; inclusion, the fifth Value, is embedded in all subcommittees as a global value. The USPC Tracker (VI.1.6) is an Excel database used to organize committee membership, track workflow progress, and ensure alignment between academic and administrative, educational, and student support (AES) outcomes and the strategic plan.

The USPC provides regular updates on the Strategic Plan progress to Cabinet and the Council of Trustees. In addition, progress is also reported to PASSHE's Office of the Chancellor as a part of the Comprehensive Planning Process (CPP) (E.5).

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness (IE) facilitates and oversees unit-level assessment objectives and initiatives through multiple processes that target academic programs (see Standard V) and all AES units (e.g., Academic Affairs, Finance and Administration, Advancement, DEI, Student Affairs, Strategic Enrollment Management, Student Outreach and Success, and University Affairs).

AES assessment at PennWest is focused on continuous improvement and allows the university to demonstrate institutional effectiveness to its internal and external stakeholders (VI.1.7, VI.1.8). Annual assessment plans are aligned with the university's

mission and strategic plan and are intended to assist the units in defining strategies (goals) and outcomes (student support and learning) to be measured. As noted in Standard IV, the AES evaluation cycle includes developing an assessment plan (IV.6.83) and producing an assessment results report (IV.6.84) that allows units to reflect on performance and document improvements in support of the unit's strategies (goals).

Institutional Effectiveness also recognizes the need to assess the assessment process. To this end, IE developed an Assessing the Assessment tracker (V.5.23) and an AES assessment monitoring tool (IV.6.88) to track how the various assessment activities are assessed. The Assessing the Assessment tracker's development is ongoing, with additional work planned for Summer 2025.

IE has developed an additional continuous improvement process for comprehensive, long-term (five-year) assessment of AES units. A description of the planned reporting cycle is included in an infographic (IV.6.89). The five-year process involves yearly reports, including Needs Assessment, Benchmarking Assessment, and National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) analysis, culminating in a self-study and program review in year five. All AES units will adopt CAS (Council for the Advancement of Standards) or another nationally recognized benchmarking tool when developing and executing the five-year reviews. PennWest has aligned their program review process with PASSHE's program review policies and procedures.

CRITERION 2
CLEARLY DOCUMENTED AND COMMUNICATED PLANNING AND IMPROVEMENT PROCESSES THAT PROVIDE FOR CONSTITUENT PARTICIPATION AND INCORPORATE THE USE OF ASSESSMENT RESULTS.

PennWest's mission, vision, and values demonstrate a commitment to creating an inclusive and collaborative environment. This is achieved through advocacy for all members, equity and support to create a sense of belonging and togetherness, and a shared sense of purpose. The university believes that mutually supportive and respectful dialogue is important, especially when making decisions that affect constituents. University leaders must have mechanisms to inform potentially affected constituencies about potential changes and provide sufficient opportunities for dialogue before decisions are finalized. The shared governance model

at PennWest gives a voice to all stakeholders who may be affected by a decision. Several university-wide committees are embedded within organizational tiers to provide senior administrators, faculty, staff, and students an opportunity to communicate directly with one another to share information.

One example of a planning process that solicited and incorporated constituent feedback is the Spring 2023 reorganization of the academic colleges. Based on enrollment trends and feedback from listening sessions with faculty, staff, and students, the university embarked on a substantial reorganization. Leadership utilized data including student

credit hours generated, number of permanent and temporary faculty, and enrollment in graduate and undergraduate programs to develop a proposal to reorganize college and department structures. This proposal was presented to the university community and faculty leadership groups for feedback. Leadership conducted listening sessions and collected feedback via surveys, resulting in multiple revisions to the proposed structure. The fourth version of the proposed structure was implemented in May 2023 (VI.2.9). This version reorganized academic units into colleges and 14 departments, a new structure that promotes collegiality, collaboration, and an improved academic experience for students on each of the campuses. It placed a dean on each campus as part of a leadership team that gives faculty and students local points of contact to address campus-based issues promptly. The final Academic Affairs organizational chart details the structure that emerged from this collaboration (VI.2.10).

University leadership teams and shared governance groups include:

- **Cabinet:** The President's Cabinet consists of the president, interim provost and vice president for Academic Affairs, VP for Finance and Administration, interim VP for Strategic Enrollment Management, VP for Institutional Effectiveness and Student Affairs, VP for Advancement, VP for University Affairs and Advocacy, and senior associate VP for Human Resources.

- **Campus Leadership Teams (CLT):** Each CLT (IV.1.32) is made up of the academic dean, the campus administrator, an enrollment lead, and the student affairs lead, based on the individual campus. Each campus-based team provides an immediate point of contact when students (or faculty/staff) are not sure whom to ask for assistance. Each CLT meets weekly to stay apprised of campus events, planning, and issues, and holds regular meetings with managers of other campus units; the CLTs also meet weekly with the president and Cabinet to ensure consistent communication. Roles, responsibilities, and organizational interconnectedness is summarized on the PennWest website and available to the public.

- **Campus Leadership Council:** Each campus has a Leadership Council led by the CLT, with additional representation across campus divisions (VI.2.11; VI.2.12). Members include associate deans, Cabinet liaison, faculty chair, and representatives from Communications, Conference Services, Facilities, University Police, Registrar, Strategic Enrollment Management, Student Success, and University Affairs. This group meets monthly to share campus-related information and identify items appropriate for Cabinet-level review. Recent examples include planning for a solar eclipse watch party on each campus, as well as commencement planning. The Leadership Council facilitates the flow of information from local teams to the CLT/Cabinet level and provides a venue for balancing consistency across campuses with local campus needs.

- **Bargaining Unit Meet and Discuss:** Bargaining units representing PennWest employees include the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME); Association of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculties (APSCUF); State College and University Professional Association (SCUPA); Security, Police and Fire Professionals of America (SPFPA); PASSHE Officer's Association (POA); and Office of Professional Employees International Union Healthcare Pennsylvania (OPEIU). Each operates under a collective bargaining agreement that is publicly available on the PASSHE website. Bargaining unit leadership hold regular Meet and Discuss meetings with local management.

- **Faculty Senate:** Faculty Senate provides advice and recommendations relating to academic matters and the university's educational policies. The Council of Trustees has approved a new constitution for the Faculty Senate, and bylaws have been created (VI.2.13). (The Senate's Executive Committee presented a proposal to the Senate for ratification, followed by APSCUF ratification via Meet and Discuss and final approval by the Council of Trustees). Voting members are the Executive Committee and elected faculty members; non-voting members are the university president, provost, APSCUF designees, and student government representatives. Standing committees and subcommittees focus on Academic Standards, Assessment, Budget, Faculty Forum, Faculty Affairs, General Education, Institutional Resources, Shared Governance, and Student Affairs.

- **University Strategic Planning Council (USPC):** The USPC is responsible for implementing and assessing the strategic plan (VI.1.4). The council debuted in March 2024 with its inaugural chair and membership (VI.1.5), which includes senior staff, faculty, students, and staff from all campuses.

- **University Technology Committee (UTC):** The UTC is composed of four subgroups: Academic Technology Committee, Enterprise Applications and Data Governance Committee, Tech Fee Subcommittee, and topic-specific working groups. The committee's purpose is to review technology initiatives, advise the chief information officer (CIO) and Cabinet on budget priorities, review the three-year strategic technology plan (VI.2.14), and discuss and evaluate technology products.

- **Student Government Associations (SGA):** SGA is a group of students working together to raise student concerns, improve campus life, and increase student engagement on each campus. Students who are not SGA senators are encouraged to attend meetings and voice their concerns and/or highlight positives. SGA has a role in allocating funds for student clubs and organizations.

Leaders of the campus-based SGAs and Student Associations have begun working to integrate their operations to form a PennWest SGA that will include campus-based Student Congresses (IV.4.62) to attend to student organizations and funding, and a PennWest Student Association to set and administer an institutional Student Activity Fee (IV.4.63; IV.4.64).

Students will be an integral part of the planning process as PennWest moves forward. SGA presidents in 2023 recommended students for participation in these sample areas:

- Student Experience
    - Faculty Senate – A representative from each campus SGA sits on Faculty Senate.
    - DEI – Student leaders assist with student sessions during interviews. Student leaders representing DEI-related student organizations meet with administrators twice a month.
    - Communications/Marketing – Communications/marketing staff regularly call on SGA leaders to provide input based on student perspectives.

- Academic Affairs
    - Student Affairs Advisory Council – Student leaders meet with Student Affairs leadership once a month to discuss topics such as student services, health services, academic support, and student organizations.
    - University-wide committees – Student members contribute to committees in areas such as advising, excellence in teaching, academic programming, and student success.

CRITERION 3

A FINANCIAL PLANNING AND BUDGETING PROCESS THAT IS ALIGNED WITH THE INSTITUTION'S MISSION AND GOALS, EVIDENCE-BASED, AND CLEARLY LINKED TO THE INSTITUTION'S AND UNITS' STRATEGIC PLANS/OBJECTIVES.

Fiscal and operational stability is the pillar of PennWest's three institutional priorities as outlined in the Comprehensive Planning Process (CPP) provided to PASSHE (E.5). Only through sound budgeting and fiscal practices can the university's mission and strategic objectives be brought to fruition. The three universities that now comprise PennWest suffered from legacy debt and declining enrollments and revenue. The PASSHE Board of Governors' plan to integrate California, Clarion, and Edinboro was designed to strengthen the financial positions of these universities, enabling them to serve their students well into the future.

Given the financial constraints the legacy campuses faced, integration provided a way to unite financial, human, and educational resources like never before. PennWest provides students inside and outside the commonwealth with greater opportunities through educational resource sharing, optimized faculty mix, and access to new programs. PennWest is committed to addressing its structural imbalance; consequently, the university has taken many steps since its formal integration on July 1, 2022, to improve its financial position:

- PennWest aligned the program array (VI.3.15) across its campuses so that all students are learning the same curriculum. Programmatic optimization offers the opportunity to access resources on all campuses by leveraging various distance education methods. Sharing across campuses enhances efficient use of human and physical resources. In-demand workforce programs and certificates are offered to more students.

- The university streamlined expenses to position itself for debt relief through bond defeasance, addressing about $9 million of the projected budget deficits. Additional debt relief of $21 million is anticipated to address annual budget deficits for FY 2024-2025 and FY 2025-2026 (VI.3.16).

- PennWest engaged loaned executives from within PASSHE to help transition from three smaller institutions to one large university by analyzing its organization capacity, strengthening enrollment and marketing management strategies, reorganizing Academic Affairs to gain efficiencies, and offering strategic course scheduling to provide students with the greatest flexibility. For example:

  - PennWest exceeded its enrollment projection goal for Spring 2024, based on a new enrollment model (VI.3.17). Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) has been working tirelessly over the last year to review practices and processes, implement technical solutions to improve overall service to students, and deploy best-practice recruitment and yield strategies.

  - Graduate and Undergraduate Admissions leveraged the Slate customer relationship management (CRM) system to completely revamp and enhance multi-channel communications to prospective students at all stages of the admissions funnel, focusing on re-engaging with feeder/key markets in western Pennsylvania through expanded programming and travel, and collaboration with key partners such as Ruffalo Noel Levitz (RNL) and EAB consulting to solidify student search parameters for consistency and continuity.

  - SEM also worked closely with Financial Aid and the Finance Office to employ a fiscally responsible merit- and need-based aid program that has improved yield rates and promoted overall student persistence. This has coincided with a strengthened governance structure that seeks input from other key departments and divisions (e.g., Academic Affairs, Student Success, Student Affairs, Institutional Research, Finance, etc.) that rely on the work of SEM (and vice versa) to help execute operational programming and support overall enrollment goals.

- PennWest is on track to meet milestones set during integration, according to planned timelines (VI.3.18). Key integration milestone achievement timelines are provided as examples (VI.3.19; VI.3.20).

- PennWest's budget and planning processes are guided by the university's mission and strategic plan, as mentioned above, and fiscal responsibility underpins the goals related to creating lifelong learners and serving the community. In its inaugural year (July 1, 2022–June 30, 2023), PennWest based its budget on historical expenditure trends and enrollment-based revenue projection models of the legacy universities according to established workflows (VI.3.21; VI.3.22; VI.3.23; VI.3.24; VI.3.25; VI.3.26; VI.3.27; VI.3.28). As the university emerges from the immense work of integration, in-depth analyses of contracts, operating expenditures, debt restructuring, and workforce alignment are front and center (VI.3.29; VI.3.30; VI.3.31; VI.3.32; VI.3.33; VI.3.34).

For the FY 2024 budget, Finance and Administration transitioned enrollment-based revenue projections to a singular PennWest enrollment projection model (VI.3.17). SEM partnered with both Institutional Research (IR) and Finance and Administration to create and implement this comprehensive enrollment projection model, which supports the institution's budget model. These models are highly correlated, allowing the university to align budget allocations and plan for necessary investments. To aid in this process, PennWest standardized the Education and General (E&G) fees across its campuses.

The new model involves cross-functional work with leadership from SEM, Academics, Finance/Budget, and IR.

It combines the science of quantitative measurements and mathematical predictions with the art of leadership expertise from the various departments to arrive at figures looking five years ahead.

A major benefit of the new model is that it allows for easy creation of enrollment scenarios, giving leadership the ability to debate which ones ought to be utilized for planning purposes. Each scenario contains data-informed variables based on access to early retention indicators, new-student pipeline updates, and external influences. With this new model, PennWest has gained both a nimbleness that was not found with prior models and greater insight into what drives the forecasted figures.

Not only has the input methodology and overall predictive power of the enrollment projection model been improved, but the outputs have made themselves integral to the planning process at PennWest. Enrollment projections feed directly into the new revenue projection model, of course; however, they also are used directly by Academic Affairs to plan expected course offerings for future terms and by other constituents to project campus-based enrollments for meal plans and other auxiliary services. Additionally, the projections are built into aggregated key performance indicator (KPI) targets and displayed to the entire PennWest community through Tableau dashboards to convey expectations of our goals and allow for transparent tracking and progress measurement.

Budget Processes

To project budget expenditures for FY 2024, the Office of Financial Planning and Analysis (OFPA) provided spreadsheets to each department containing current-year expenditure data, with columns to project the next fiscal year's needs and any one-time or new expenditures. Departments were required

to indicate, via checkboxes, how any one-time or new expenditure aligned with the strategic plan, selecting specific strategies and/or initiatives. This step of the budgeting process (VI.3.35) continues to reinforce the importance of connecting the budget to the strategic plan (VI.3.36; VI.3.37). OFPA then met with each vice president to discuss departmental needs in their division. All vice presidents presented their budgets to the president and Cabinet for approval. The process concludes when the president finalizes the university budget for review and approval by the Council of Trustees.

OFPA continues to refine PennWest's business processes by reconvening a new version of the legacy universities' budget committees. The University Budget Review Committee (UBRC) has an understanding of the annual budget as it relates to the University Mission, Vision, and Strategic Plan and helps promote transparency related to the development of the University budget. The UBRC members are responsible for regularly reviewing the University's annual budget and resource requests tied to continuous improvement, providing feedback where appropriate. The UBRC will evaluate critical-needs requests for each division and make recommendations to the president.

To promote transparency in the budgeting process, UBRC members are responsible for regularly reviewing the university's annual budget and resource requests tied to continuous improvement, providing feedback where appropriate, and sharing their knowledge of the budgetary process and obligatory outcomes with their respective constituencies.

To further educate constituents and encourage involvement in the process, OFPA initiated a series of "Budget 101" sessions (VI.3.38) for the campus community. Three modules were delivered by the end of the Spring 2024 semester. These sessions aimed to provide transparent information about how the budget is developed, explain the sources of financial figures related to the enrollment projection model, and foster a culture of shared knowledge.

CRITERION 4

FISCAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES, AS WELL AS THE PHYSICAL AND TECHNICAL INFRASTRUCTURE ADEQUATE TO SUPPORT ITS OPERATIONS WHEREVER AND HOWEVER PROGRAMS ARE DELIVERED.

The shared and single-minded goal in creating PennWest was to capture economies of scale and leverage our individual and collective strengths while increasing educational access and measures of success for all students. In working toward this goal, an estimated 243 integration milestones (VI.4.39) were implemented successfully under the Finance and Administration umbrella, which covers Human Resources (HR), Information Technology Services (ITS), and Facilities.

For HR, a critical milestone structured the staff across campuses to report to a single leadership position. To optimize the university's personnel complement, PennWest looked at the new organizational structure, current employee job descriptions, and opportunities to find efficiencies across departments and campuses. For instance, in the Academic Affairs reorganization, budget liaison roles were created with the deans' administrative assistants to assist in finding economies of scale and ensure accurate personnel rosters. Shared service centers have been implemented across the campuses in the Accounts Payable and Student

Accounts areas. All Accounts Payable functions have been centralized to the California campus to gain processing efficiencies; for Student Accounts, all collection processes have been centralized to the Clarion campus, billing processes to the Edinboro campus, and refunding to the California campus — all while still offering face-to-face student access at all campuses.

Technology planning for PennWest relied heavily on the Functional Implementation Teams (FITs). Each FIT focused on a functional area (Registrar, Admissions, Financial Aid, etc.), detailing its organizational structure, processes and procedures, and technology needs. Most FITs included ITS personnel who helped to define those technology needs. Subsequent technology projects were an output of the planning process, compiled and prioritized to form milestones in the FIT tracker (VI.3.18).

As evidenced in the milestones tracker, technology and information systems were a priority in unifying the campuses and essential to the integration's success. Consolidating the technologies of the three legacy institutions and their satellite campuses began in early 2021 — and it presented many significant challenges. The IT Strategic Plan (VI.2.14) provides more information on key processes and initiatives. For instance, a new SAP business area and accounting structure (VI.3.20) was formed, all campuses implemented Banner as their student information system, and Slate was implemented (VI.3.19) as PennWest's customer relationship management (CRM) solution.

- PennWest's unified but distributed operations depend significantly on technology, so ITS and its services had to be redesigned and re-established. All technology needs and initiatives identified by the FIT teams were segmented by technology team focus: security, infrastructure, enterprise applications, or technology support. Timelines were established and internal and external resources were assigned. Projects were prioritized with university leadership and key stakeholders; many projects were executed in parallel, with multiple project managers.

- Projects were not considered complete until they were evaluated/validated by the functional "owners" who requested the solution. Ongoing evaluation of ITS delivery is performed via Help Desk ticket surveys and regular student satisfaction surveys that contain questions on technology services.

- Once the technology needed for PennWest's initial operations was in place, standard operating procedures were implemented to maintain existing operations and evaluate new projects. Committees formed to govern technology for PennWest are:

  - **University Technology Committee:** Aligns technology initiatives to the strategic plan and provides governance for large-scale technology initiatives.

  - **Enterprise Applications and Data Governance Committee:** Provides governance, planning, and oversight for new applications/data projects and monitors ongoing operations.

  - **Academic Technology Committee:** Being formed by deans and the provost to govern academic technology initiatives.

CRITERION 5

WELL-DEFINED DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES AND CLEAR ASSIGNMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY.

To ensure clarity of purpose, responsibility, and accountability in decision-making, PennWest has delegated authority and developed organizational charts (VI.5.40; VI.5.41) that are available internally. In March 2024, the university officially delegated contracting and fiscal authority to various administrators (VI.5.42). These artifacts provide a clear picture of the hierarchy and accountability for decision-making within and across divisions. The university website elaborates on the roles and responsibilities of administrators (VI.5.43). To foster responsiveness within its three-campus structure, PennWest developed Campus Leadership Teams (IV.1.32), as discussed in Criterion 2; their organizational structure is summarized in a publicly accessible infographic.

Key decision-making processes are prescribed by policy for consistency, clarity, and organization. Policies are developed and approved per established workflows (VI.5.44; VI.5.45). The PennWest website houses dozens of internal policies organized by subject (II.4.60). Policies are periodically updated to ensure clarity and accountability. Fiscal decision workflows (referenced above) provide detailed descriptions of decision-making processes and clearly indicate responsibilities and accountable parties. One of the most recent policies, outlining IT administrative rights (VI.5.46), is submitted as an example of a successful approval resulting from these workflows.

CRITERION 6

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING FOR FACILITIES, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND TECHNOLOGY THAT INCLUDES CONSIDERATION OF SUSTAINABILITY AND DEFERRED MAINTENANCE AND IS LINKED TO THE INSTITUTION'S STRATEGIC AND FINANCIAL PLANNING PROCESS.

Since integration, PennWest has centered its facilities/infrastructure/technology planning on assessing the current state of infrastructure and resource utilization across its campuses. This is the first step toward living PennWest's Values of Learning and Collaboration. Interim President Bernotsky enlisted Joe Santivasci Sr., associate vice president of Financial Aid and Campuses at West Chester University, to conduct an initial Campus Planning Assessment and an in-depth analysis of how classroom and computer lab spaces are used. Preliminary findings are summarized in the Campus Planning Report (VI.6.47). A series of Gordian (Sightlines) analytical reports, one for each legacy campus individually (VI.6.48; VI.6.49; VI.6.50) and one for PennWest (VI.6.51), provides valuable research and insights. Tied to the annual inspection report, the Sightlines reports focus on deferred maintenance, space utilization, infrastructure, and needs for facilities.

At a high level, the Campus Planning Assessment will support a PennWest campus space plan through examination of each campus's space utilization, building conditions, student activity epicenters, and overall programmatic needs. Specific areas of emphasis are:

- **Deferred maintenance/building conditions:** In partnership with campus-based facilities operations, analyze and assess building conditions and deferred maintenance in support of a strategic campus space plan.

- **Classroom utilization and demand:** Review and assess classroom utilization and demand in support of the new program array. The in-depth analysis (VI.6.52) will be used in allocating technology resources to the labs in highest demand.

- **Campus technology:** Review and assess campus technology (VI.6.53) in support of faculty, students, and staff. The Living-Learning Community Survey (VI.6.54) provides feedback on student housing and internet services.

- **Student spaces:** In coordination with the overall campus plan, review and assess student spaces and opportunities to create epicenters of engagement.

- **Athletics facilities:** Review and assess athletics facilities in support of the overall campus plan.

- **Outsourcing of services:** See Criterion 3 for contracts related to outsourcing of landscaping, snow removal, and similar services.

At a more granular level, all campuses (and the former Venango campus) were assessed in coordination with Facilities staff, ITS, and the campus leads. Each campus has its own set of challenges that need to be viewed individually and within the broader context of PennWest. Each campus has a director of facilities to manage campus operations; the executive director of Planning and Construction (hired in Summer 2023) and associate vice president for Facilities (hired in Spring 2024) provide strategic oversight and planning for the university's entire portfolio of space.

Since integration, PennWest has prioritized plans to tackle deferred maintenance on each campus and reduce the overall university footprint (VI.6.55). The Campus Planning Assessment identified the Venango campus as a high-cost location that served fewer than 100 students. This campus had deferred maintenance and general facilities costs in excess of $6 million. University leadership immediately engaged in conversations around closing the campus, moving the remaining program to PennWest Clarion, and removing the property from the facilities portfolio. After Middle States approval, PennWest transferred this property to the nonprofit Oil Region Alliance. This removed 82,000 square feet from PennWest's space inventory.

Additionally, PennWest has plans to remove 143,400 square feet from the California campus (8% reduction in square footage); 119,340 square feet from the Clarion campus (8% reduction); and 567,021 square feet from the Edinboro campus (25% reduction). By the end of Summer 2024, Edinboro demolished 380,184 square feet, removing over $35 million in deferred maintenance costs.

For AY 2023-2204, state Keystone Recreation, Park, and Conservation (Key '93) funds were used to tackle deferred maintenance and general maintenance projects on each campus; additional spending is planned for AY 2024-2025. Projects were prioritized based on facilities assessments and safety concerns.

The Facilities team continues to collaborate with various departments to support academic and student programming. For example, in February the team engaged with Academic Affairs to walk the three campuses and review maintenance and programming needs, along with opportunities to consolidate areas to better support the educational experience.

An assessment of the Fall 2023 course schedule shows that the general-purpose classroom inventory on all three campuses can be reduced: Each campus had classrooms that were not scheduled for courses that semester, the average seat utilization was under 50% for all three campuses, and 15 of the 55 teaching computer labs were not used for classes. The classroom and computer lab use data were shared with appropriate constituents for planning (VI.6.52).

Section 2009-A (8) of Act 188 (VII.1.1) requires the Council of Trustees "to conduct an annual physical inspection of facilities and make recommendations regarding maintenance and construction to the board (Board of Governors)." The annual Inspection of Facilities Report (VI.6.56) — an internal report previously completed for California only and now being compiled for all three campuses — provides insight into the condition of the university's buildings and infrastructure for AY 2023-2024. The report details what repairs are needed and identifies the best use of capital. Every building on each campus is accounted for and each need is categorized by urgency; detailed cost estimates also are provided.

CRITERION 7

AN ANNUAL INDEPENDENT AUDIT CONFIRMING FINANCIAL VIABILITY WITH EVIDENCE OF FOLLOW-UP ON ANY CONCERNS CITED IN THE AUDIT'S ACCOMPANYING MANAGEMENT LETTER.

In alignment with Institutional Priority number two, an independent audit of the university's finances and processes is conducted by an external audit firm for each fiscal year (VI.7.57). The firm is selected through a request for proposal (RFP) process controlled by PASSHE. Once the bid is accepted, the external firm assigns the university a team of auditors.

PennWest's inaugural year of operation ended on June 30, 2023. The PASSHE-appointed auditing firm Clifton Larson Allen, LLP conducted the financial audits for the preceding fiscal year. PennWest received an Unmodified Opinion on its Financial Statements (VI.7.58). The final opinion of the auditors is excerpted below:

"Financial Statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the business type activities and aggregate discretely presented component units of the University as of June 30, 2023."

Financial statements and audit reports are also provided for the fundraising entities that remain associated with the legacy universities — the Foundation for California University (VI.7.59), Clarion University Foundation, Inc. (VI.7.60), and Edinboro University Foundation (VI.7.61) and Alumni Association (VI.7.62) — as well as the student associations (VI.7.63; VI.7.64; VI.7.65).

CRITERION 8
STRATEGIES TO MEASURE AND ASSESS THE ADEQUACY AND EFFICIENT UTILIZATION OF INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES REQUIRED TO SUPPORT THE INSTITUTION'S MISSION AND GOALS.

PennWest uses a variety of metrics and data sources to assess the adequacy and utilization of resources in support of institutional goals. Data is collected at the State System level by PASSHE and at the university level by the Offices of Institutional Effectiveness and Institutional Research. PennWest also makes use of numerous surveys to gather stakeholder input and drive continuous improvement.

PASSHE collects common data from all schools to generate metrics viewable on a publicly accessible data dashboard. These metrics are used as key performance indicators to gauge student success, university success, and financial sustainability across all schools. From 2011 to 2016, the State System evaluated the performance of each university by analyzing 10 indicators, with performance-based funds allocated accordingly. Starting in 2016-2017, minor adjustments were initiated as part of a transitional plan. In 2018 PASSHE stopped using these metrics to distribute funding to member schools, and in 2022 it implemented a new version of the allocation formula (VI.8.66), which is still in use. The current allocation formula considers core operations, two-year average base FTE enrollment, under-represented minority (URM) populations, Pell grant recipients, student progress toward degree, and student program level.

To maximize its allocation based on the PASSHE formula, PennWest closely monitors several metrics related to enrollment and retention for each campus (E.1; I.3.17). Specific measures include student diversity, retention rate, degrees awarded per 100 FTE, achievement gaps for first-time freshmen who are Pell grant recipients, and self-selected measures assessing various aspects of the student experience and institutional operations collected primarily via surveys.

PennWest makes extensive use of survey data to inform continuous improvement. Among the most important are:

1. **Continuing Student Services and Preference Survey** (VI.8.67), conducted by contractor Hanover to evaluate why continuing students choose to enroll in their original institutions, determine features that students view as important, identify strengths and weaknesses, understand what factors impact persistence, and identify strategic priorities. Results were presented to Cabinet, Campus Leadership Teams, and students (VI.8.68). Actions taken as a result of this research and analysis include redoubling efforts to emphasize academic advising by working with the Faculty Senate and APSCUF, analyzing financial aid and scholarships to find ways to increase student resources, entering a new dining contract to address concerns about campus food options, and shaping the work of upcoming retention initiatives.

2. **First Destination Survey** (I.3.13), to gauge career outcomes. Class of 2023 data indicate that 94.6% of graduates secured employment or pursued further education within six months after graduation, and 86% found employment in positions related to their career interests.

3. **Student Experience Survey** (VI.8.69), completed in Spring 2023 to gauge students' satisfaction across dimensions including student organizations, health management resources, DEI, academic and student services, and overall experience. During the strategic planning process, these findings helped to shape planning components directly related to students by informing subcommittees focused on students, DEI, academic advising, academics, the region, and employees. Subcommittees used a Strategy-Initiative Worksheet (VI.8.70) to develop initiatives based on the survey.

4. **Commencement Survey** (VI.8.71), conducted after each semester to assess graduates' experience with the ceremony and related activities. Cabinet reviews the results and recommends improvements. This survey contributes to Institutional Priority number three: Students are able to leave feedback about staff and faculty who made a difference for them during their time at PennWest; the feedback is shared with those faculty/staff, boosting morale and enhancing their sense of purpose.

5. **Living-Learning Community Survey** (VI.6.54), to gather feedback on residence halls and internet service. Student Affairs reviewed residents' responses and created theme options at each campus to meet residents' interests. Themes available are 24-hour quiet living, multicultural/DEI, and gender identity and allies. The survey also provided feedback on new academic Living-Learning Communities; this will be reviewed with the provost and deans to plan academic partnerships for these communities beginning in Fall 2025.

6. **National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)**, to be administered at PennWest for the first time as an integrated institution in Spring 2025.

Other surveys are conducted on behalf of specific units for accreditation, program evaluation, and research. Institutional Research aids in planning, designing, previewing, launching, and analyzing these surveys. Results are provided to the requesting unit for data-informed decision making for continuous improvement.

CRITERION 9
PERIODIC ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PLANNING, RESOURCE ALLOCATION, INSTITUTIONAL RENEWAL PROCESSES, AND AVAILABILITY OF RESOURCES.

The means by which PennWest assesses the effectiveness of planning and resource allocation are described throughout Standard VI. Criterion 1 reviews these processes in detail. To summarize assessment activities:

- All AES units create assessment plans, analyze and submit data, and identify resource needs and areas for continuous improvement. The assessment process was developed and is managed by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (see Criterion 1).

- Institutional Effectiveness recognizes the need to assess the assessment process. To this end, the office developed an assessment tracker and an assessment monitoring tool (see Criterion 1).

- The university's strategic plan is assessed and monitored by the University Strategic Planning Committee (see Criterion 1).

- Strategic Enrollment Management monitors key performance metrics and implements strategies to drive enrollment and inform resource allocation decisions.
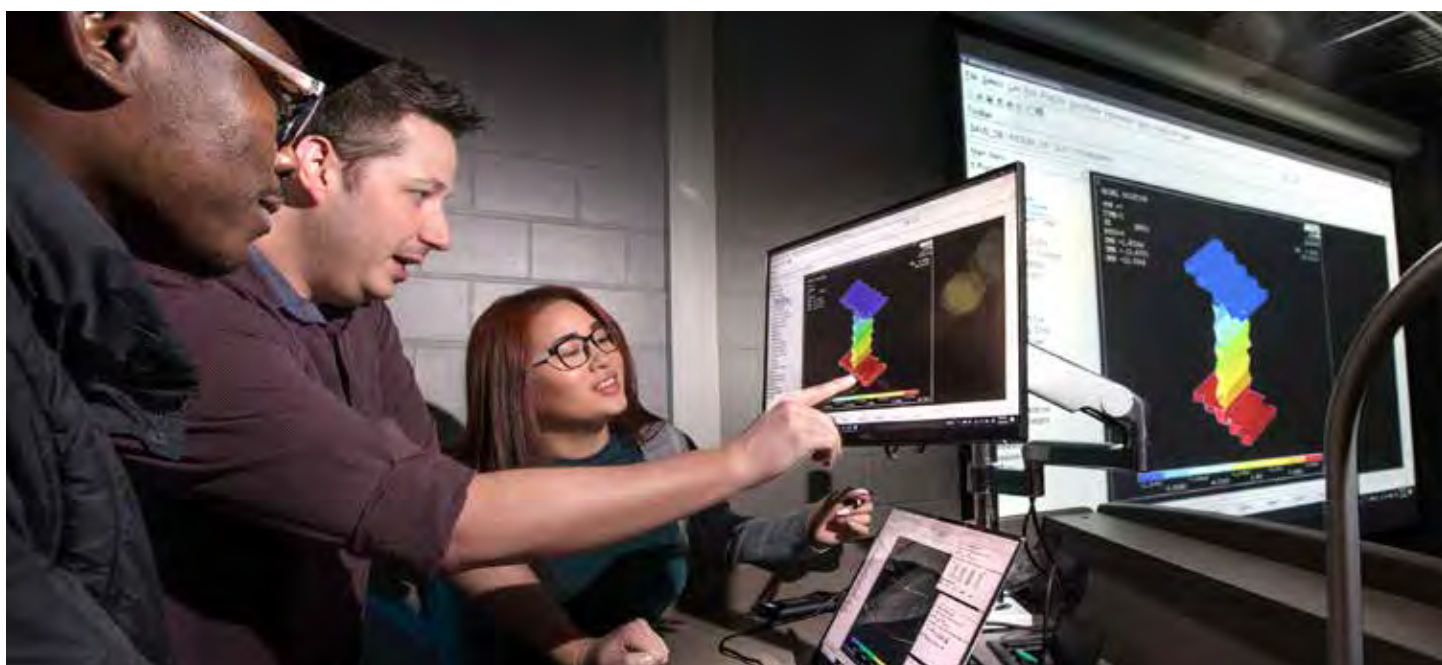
Strengths

- Finance and Administration has developed and implemented key budgeting tools to enhance fiscal and operational sustainability:
  - Enrollment projections now feed directly into budget projections in a systematic way to help match expenses with revenue.
  - Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) and Finance collaborated to develop a data-driven planning process. Leveraging an updated enrollment model, PennWest exceeded its enrollment projection goal for Spring 2024.

- PennWest is on track to meet integration milestones to receive substantial debt relief from the state by meeting criteria related to costs and FTE targets.

- With the help of the broader campus community, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness is building a culture of assessment. Its initiatives have streamlined, standardized, and institutionalized a rigorous assessment process across units AES and academic departments.

- After comprehensive analyses of human and physical resources, PennWest has identified and implemented university-wide efficiencies that result in significant cost savings. Examples include the Touchnet commerce solution; EMS reservations process for Conference and Events Services; HR Connect shared services; and membership savings within the Institutional Effectiveness and Student Affairs division.

- Visible, student-centered Campus Leadership Teams populated by representatives from administration, faculty, staff, and students from all three campuses have enhanced university-wide communication.

- Information Technology Services has developed a mature, uniform technology environment across all three campuses, including Banner, D2L, DegreeWorks, and Adirondack, among others. Most student- and faculty-facing technology solutions are cloud-based and accessible anywhere on many devices.

- PennWest has adopted best practices in cybersecurity, with successful cybersecurity audits and penetration tests.

- Legacy technology departments and services have been merged into one PennWest Information Technology Services (ITS) department, with a single Help Desk system providing issue resolution, knowledge base, and reporting.

- PennWest has thoroughly researched and assessed the state of the infrastructure on each campus and is well-positioned to leverage this research to drive efficiency and cost savings in the physical plant.

Opportunities

- Engage the neural network in the ongoing development of PennWest by identifying opportunities to improve shared governance with an emphasis on streamlining the current system while continuing to give all campus constituencies a voice.

- Stabilize and strengthen our PennWest systems by continuing the following:
  - Implementing the Budget Review Committee and sound budgeting processes
  - Finding efficiencies of scale by standardizing operations (e.g., bookstores, transportation, technologies)

CRITERION 1
TRANSPARENT GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE.

PennWest's leaders have committed to refining and enhancing the university's organizational frameworks, expanding opportunities for shared governance, and improving the efficiency and openness of the budgetary process to address financial challenges. In these efforts, there is a renewed commitment to the value and importance of shared governance that extends beyond contractual obligations.

State System

PennWest is one of 10 schools in the State System. The roles of the PASSHE Board of Governors (BOG), the chancellor, university Councils of Trustees (COT), and university presidents are outlined in Act 188 (VII.1.1) and Act 50 (VII.1.2). PASSHE's mission is "to provide high-quality education at the lowest possible cost to the students; to increase educational attainment in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; to prepare students at the undergraduate and graduate levels for professional and personal success in their lives; and to contribute to the economic, social, and cultural development of Pennsylvania's communities, the commonwealth, and the nation."

PASSHE's 20-member BOG is responsible for planning, development, and operation of the State System (VII.1.1). The BOG establishes educational, fiscal, and personnel policies, appoints the chancellor and university presidents, approves new academic programs, sets tuition, and coordinates and approves the annual PASSHE operating budget.

Act 50 (VII.1.2), enacted in 2020, gives the BOG the authority to restructure the State System's institutions (VII.1.3). This legislation allows the BOG to create, expand, or consolidate a university, except those with a Fall 2019 headcount greater than 10,000 students. Act 50 was foundational in the creation of PennWest University, a single institution formed by the integration of three PASSHE universities.

PennWest is governed by a COT whose duties, responsibilities, and powers are set by law in Act 188. In July 2022, House Bill 1642 (VII.2.4) made specific provisions for the PennWest COT to consist of 15 members who, except for three student members, are nominated and appointed by the governor with the advice and consent of the State Senate. At least three members of the council must be alumni, one from each legacy institution. Three members of the council, one from each campus, must be full-time undergraduate students in good academic standing, other than freshmen, and enrolled for at least 12 credit-hours. The chancellor is an ex-officio member of the COT. The COT meets on a quarterly basis, rotating through each of PennWest's three campuses. Additional meetings may be called by the president, the council chair, or upon request of three COT members. COT meetings are subject to the Pennsylvania Public Agency Open Meeting Law.

President's Cabinet
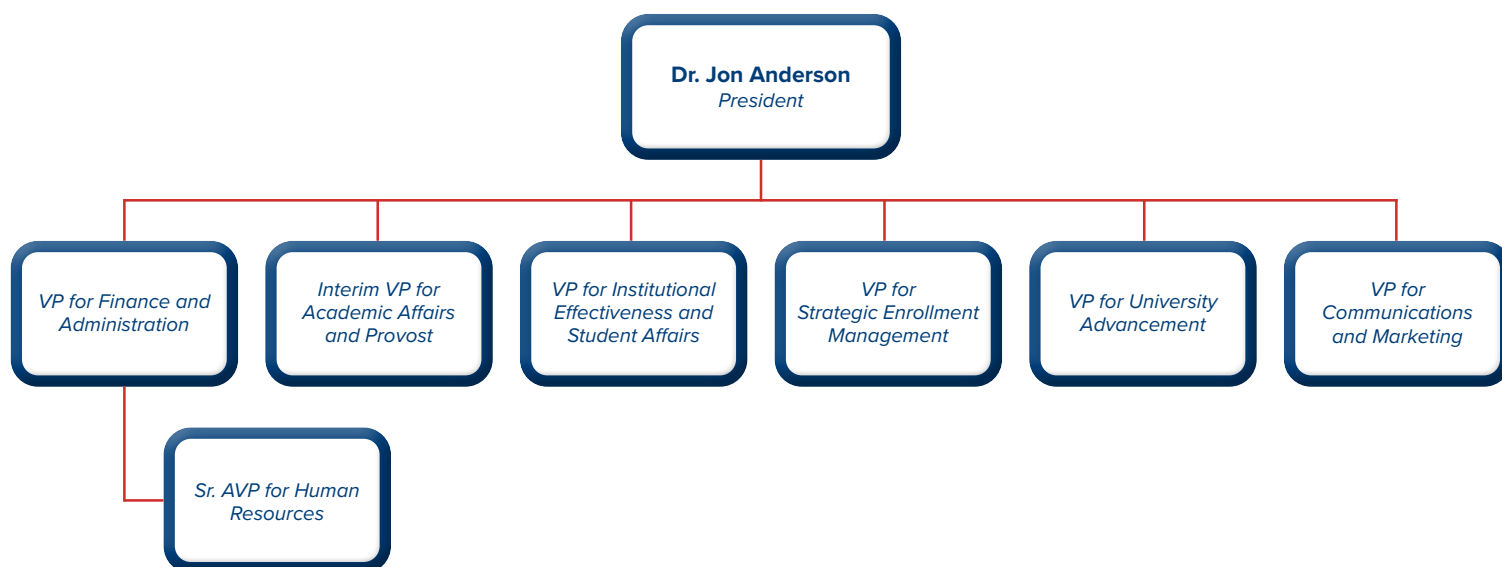
Chief Executive Officer

As PennWest's chief executive officer (CEO), the president is responsible for ensuring that the university remains focused on its mission, vision, and strategic plan. The president's authority is outlined in Act 188 (VII.1.1); as CEO, the president is responsible for establishing policies and procedures for the administration of the institution regarding students, employees, budgets, and academic programs and standards.

Dr. Dale-Elizabeth Pehrsson served as the university's first CEO. She had joined PASSHE as president of Clarion University in 2018; in anticipation of the universities' integration, she was appointed interim president of Edinboro University in 2020 (VII.1.5) and interim president of California University in 2021 (VII.1.6). Between 2020 and 2022, Pehrsson was the presidential lead for the Western Integration Project that united the three universities under a single president and administrative team.

In February 2023, Pehrsson announced her departure from PennWest and Dr. R. Lorraine "Laurie" Bernotsky was named acting president. In April 2023, at the chancellor's recommendation, the BOG selected Bernotsky to serve as interim president of PennWest, starting July 1, 2023 (VII.1.7). Bernotsky had previously served as executive vice president and provost at West Chester University. Her term as PennWest's interim president ended June 30, 2024, when she returned to West Chester as its president.

In November 2023, the chancellor authorized PennWest's COT to initiate a search for a new president. According to the State System's governing law (VII.3.8), the council has the responsibility to "make recommendations to the Chancellor for the appointment of the president following input by students, faculty, staff and alumni who reflect the diversity of the institution."

The COT named a broadly representative, 24-member presidential search committee (VII.1.9) and engaged consultants Greenwood Asher & Associates to assist with a nationwide search. The consultants held more than a dozen in-person and virtual "listening sessions" to receive input from university stakeholders, then developed and distributed a prospectus (VII.1.10) seeking qualified candidates. The search committee reviewed 35 applications and held 11 interviews, 40% of them with candidates from under-represented minorities. Three candidates were selected for on-campus interviews; each candidate visited all three PennWest campuses, where they met with students, staff, faculty, administrators, and trustees, and held a forum (in-person and virtual) open to alumni and community members, as well as the campus community.

In keeping with PASSHE policy, the search committee recommended two candidates to the chancellor and the Board of Governors. On May 22, the BOG named Dr. Jon Anderson as PennWest's next president, effective July 1, 2024. The search process was transparent, with regular email updates to all students, faculty, staff, alumni, and trustees, and ongoing updates to the Presidential Search website (VII.1.11), where Anderson's biography, CV, and cover letter, along with news releases, a timeline, the prospectus, and other documents related to the presidential search, are available.

The president's performance is reviewed based on the PASSHE Board of Governors Policy 2002-03-A: Evaluating Presidents (VII.2.12). An annual evaluation is conducted by the COT, which includes an assessment of the president's performance; an assessment of the achievement or progress toward goals and objectives agreed upon by the chancellor, COT, and the president at the beginning of the evaluation period; and a review of the university's performance results.

Administrative Governance Structure

At the executive level of operations, PennWest's overall commitment to shared governance is established by the President's Cabinet (see org chart, above). The Cabinet also included a Special Assistant to the Interim President during Bernotsky's term.

The Cabinet provides advice and counsel to the president on matters regarding policies, budgets, processes, and strategic planning; discusses mission, vision, allocation of university resources, major events, and university goals; guides implementation of the president's priorities through members' areas of leadership; and is held accountable for quantitative and qualitative results. The Cabinet is responsible for final approval of policies and assures their alignment with both PennWest and PASSHE policies and priorities. The Cabinet also monitors the university's progress and identifies future needs, and it ensures that the institution's priorities align with the university's strategic plan.

As part of the integration of California, Clarion, and Edinboro, the president reorganized PennWest's administrative units in alignment with the university mission and the talents of employees from across the three campuses. The administrative units are Academic Affairs, Finance and Administration, Institutional Effectiveness and Student Affairs, Strategic Enrollment Management, Advancement, and Communications and Marketing. The university's organizational chart depicts the divisional responsibilities among units, colleges, departments, and other areas (VI.5.40).

Each unit is organized with a clear leadership structure and a streamlined distribution of responsibilities, enabling swift decision making at the level closest to the impact. The commitment to shared governance is evident across the university's policies and procedures that outline the responsibilities of multiple constituent bodies in support of PennWest's oversight of academic and student-success matters.

Shared Governance

Shared governance arrangements are guided by the collective bargaining agreements entered into by PennWest and PASSHE. Specifically, the collective bargaining agreement (CBA) between PASSHE and the Association of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculties (APSCUF) provides the foundation for both adversarial (grievance procedures) and non-adversarial (Meet and Discuss) communications between faculty/coaches and management; it also establishes a curriculum committee (VII.1.13). Shared governance at PennWest goes beyond the confines of the CBA and fosters concord between the administration and APSCUF, Faculty Senate, and numerous committees composed of management, faculty, staff, and students. PennWest's governance structure, as shown in the organizational charts and detailed in Standard VI, supports transparent communication on matters of policy and operations.

Shared governance bodies include:

- Cabinet
- Campus Leadership Teams
- Campus Leadership Council
- Bargaining Units' Meet and Discuss
- Faculty Senate
- University Strategic Planning Council
- University Technology Council
- Master Planning Council
- Student Government

In addition, various university-wide committees offer feedback on curricular, co-curricular, budget, and operational practices and policies.

Academic/Curricular

The Faculty Senate plays a key role in shared governance (VI.2.13). Elected, voting membership consists of one or more faculty members per department, depending on its size, plus the nine members of the Executive Committee, with equal representation for each campus. In AY 2023-2024, the Senate had more than 30 voting members (VII.1.14; VI.2.13). Non-voting members include the university president, provost, APSCUF designee from each campus, student government chairs, and an annually appointed parliamentarian. Management regularly invites Faculty Senate representation on both search and standing committees, and it provides an opportunity for Senate leaders to give a report at the public Council of Trustees meetings, surpassing any contractual obligations.

The CBA mandates that each university have a faculty-led curriculum committee (VII.1.13) responsible for revision and approval of all curricula, with bylaws negotiated between APSCUF and management. One of the fundamental tasks of integration was establishing a new program array and course catalog for the consolidated university. An Interim Curriculum Committee (ICC) was established to oversee the initial development of academic programs and courses. After the Spring 2023 semester, the ICC was reconstituted as the permanent University Curriculum Committee (UCC). Both the procedures (III.1.5) and bylaws (III.1.6) of the ICC/UCC ensure transparency in the curricular proposal process. Due to PennWest's unique geography, the UCC consists of 13 voting faculty members, up to two additional non-voting members, and up to three non-voting members designated by the university president (III.1.3; III.1.6). To ensure balanced representation by campus and department, UCC bylaws require that no two voting members be from the same department; there must be at least one faculty representative from each PennWest college, one at-large non-teaching faculty representative, and at least two faculty representatives from each PennWest campus. Non-voting faculty may be appointed to represent APSCUF and the Faculty Senate, and the president may appoint up to three non-voting representatives.

To ensure PennWest's graduate programs maintain high standards, the Graduate Council (VII.2.15) reviews
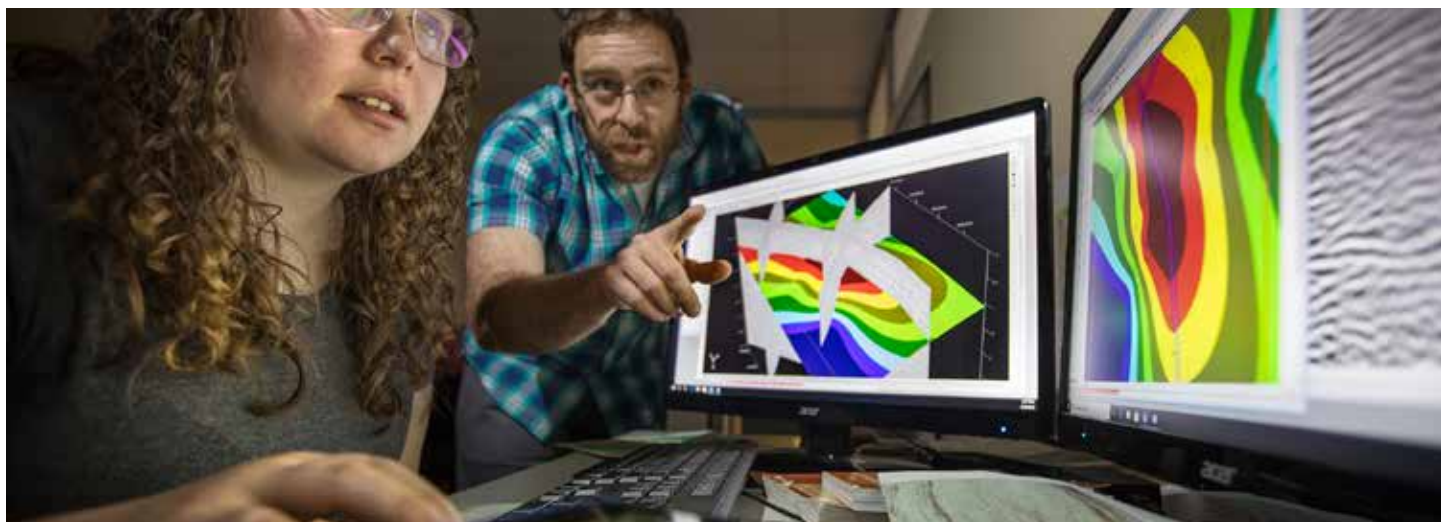
curricula, policies, and procedures that affect graduate programs, and makes recommendations for change. The council consists of about 20 graduate program directors, appointed by their department, and is led by an associate provost and graduate dean, appointed by the provost as the administrative facilitator for the council. The Graduate Council meets monthly to ensure smooth, consistent communication.

Meet and Discuss

PennWest has a Faculty-Management Committee, referred to as Meet and Discuss, as a cornerstone of shared governance. This contractually mandated body convenes representatives from APSCUF (II.2.21; II.2.22) and management to engage in dialogue concerning matters impacting the university. Similar meetings are held for the other bargaining units: American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) (II.2.20); State College and University Professional Association (SCUPA) (II.2.23); Security, Police and Fire Professionals of America (SPFPA) (II.2.25); and Office of Professional Employees International Union Healthcare Pennsylvania (OPEIU) (II.2.24). The details of these and other administration-employee relations are outlined in Standard II.

Co-curricular/Student Life

Each PennWest campus has a self-governing body to represent its students. At California, the Student Government Association (SGA) (VII.1.16) is composed of the Student Senate and House of Representatives. Officers are a president, vice president, financial secretary, recording secretary, and corresponding secretary. At Clarion, the Student Senate (VII.1.17) consists of student senators; officers include a president, vice president, treasurer, vice president of rules and regulations, and secretary. At Edinboro, the Student Government Association (VII.1.18) is composed of representatives from recognized SGA clubs and organizations, as well as independent students. Officers include a president, vice president, parliamentarian, director of finance, director of public relations, and secretary (VII.1.19).

Funds collected from the Student Activity Fee are currently managed differently on each campus. On the California campus, the Student Association, Inc. (SAI) (VII.1.20) board of directors oversees the setting of student activity fees, the policies governing them, and allocations to student organizations. At Clarion, those roles are handled by the board of the Clarion Students' Association (VII.1.21), and at Edinboro by the SGA Executive Board (VII.1.18). All three affiliated entities employ an executive officer who works with the students and board to manage the corporations' operations. SAI is currently working to align collection of student activity fees; target date for implementation is July 1, 2025.

As alignment continues, PennWest plans to have a representative Student Congress, each with a House and Senate, on each campus by July 1, 2025. The executive committees of the three senates will come together as the PennWest Student Government Association (IV.4.62). Committees also are designing the structure for a singular PennWest Student Association. That entity would set the policies by which student activity fees can be allocated but would defer funding decisions to the three campus senates.

Members of the student governing bodies appoint student representatives to other campus-wide committees, such as the Faculty Senate and Presidential Search Committee. Others include:

- **Student Experience:** DEI, Student Services/Health Services, Academic Support, Student Organizations, Commencement Committee, Communications/Marketing
- **Academic Affairs:** Advising, Excellence in Teaching, Academic Programming, Student Success in Academics

Budget

PennWest continues to establish a Budget Review Committee (VII.1.22) to engage and promote transparency in the university budget process, as discussed in Standard VI.

CRITERION 2
LEGAL GOVERNING BODY.

The Council of Trustees (COT) is the legal governing body for PennWest (VII.1.1). Prior to integration, the COTs for California, Clarion, and Edinboro universities each had 11 members appointed by the governor and approved by the state Senate. In July 2022, House Bill 1642 (VII.2.4) made specific provisions for PennWest, giving the governor power to appoint a 12-member transitional council with four members selected from each integrating institution. The transitional COTs (VII.2.23) included three student trustees, who previously had served on the legacy institutions' governing bodies. House Bill 1642 included a provision that the governor would submit to the state Senate the names of individuals to nominate and appoint to serve as the initial members of the integrated PennWest council. The bill stated that initial members would be selected from trustees with active terms from each of the integrating institutions.

In September 2022, the governor appointed, and the State Senate approved, a 12-member body to serve as PennWest's

inaugural Council of Trustees (VII.4.24). In accordance with PASSHE BOG Policy 1983-26A: Student Trustees Selection (VII.2.25), three students also were appointed to the inaugural COT, each of whom had previously served on the COT at their legacy university.

PennWest's 15 COT members possess the expertise, skills, and experience necessary to effectively guide a university. Ten of the current trustees are alumni and bring pride and historic context from the three campuses. Members of the council also have substantial leadership experience in sectors including business, industry, government, and nonprofit organizations. They bring a wealth of knowledge in policymaking, fiduciary responsibility, and strategic thinking to the council.

The COT helps to govern the university as delineated in Act 188, Section 2009-A (VII.1.1). The council is charged with recommending the appointment, retention, and dismissal of the president, as well as assisting in developing relations with the public and reviewing certain policies and procedures. Additional duties include the review and approval of annual operating and capital budgets, and charges for tuition, room and board, and other student fees and contracts. The COT is not involved in the daily operations of the university. *The Role of Trustee in Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education* (VII.2.26; VII.2.27), written by the Pennsylvania Association of Council of Trustees (PACT), states that "in principle, trustees should not be involved in the day-to-day administration of their institutions. Act 188 clearly delegates the management function to the president. However, oversight by a local council can make an invaluable contribution to institutional integrity, vitality and engagement."

As outlined in PASSHE Procedure/Standard No. 2021-50: Process for Recommending Presidential Appointment (VII.2.28), the COT appointed a search committee to lead the search for the university president.

Evaluation of the CEO

The university president, who serves as the chief executive officer (CEO), is appointed by the Board of Governors upon the recommendation of the chancellor. Act 188 (VII.1.1) gives the COT the authority to consult with students, faculty, and alumni and make recommendations to the chancellor for appointment, retention, or dismissal of the president. PASSHE BOG Policy 2002-03-A: Evaluating Presidents (VII.2.12) specifies the evaluation process and states: "The purpose of evaluating a President is to assess leadership and administrative performance in the context of the University's and the System's mission, vision, and strategic goals."

Annual and comprehensive triannual evaluations of the president are conducted by a committee of at least three COT members appointed by the council chair. The comprehensive triannual evaluation is conducted with guidance from a consultant with expertise in presidential and university leadership. Evaluations include an assessment of the president's performance; achievement or progress toward goals and objectives agreed upon by the chancellor, the COT, and the president at the beginning of the evaluation period; and a review of the university's performance results, based largely on the institution's strategic plan.

Principles of Good Practice

Members of the COT uphold principles of effective board governance, fulfilling the oversight role delineated by the Pennsylvania Association of Councils of Trustees (VII.2.26). As noted in Standard II, the COT must abide by several state policies designed to prevent conflicts of interest: the Pennsylvania Public Official and Public Employee State Ethics Act (II.4.53); Executive Order 2015-01 (VII.2.29); Governors' Code of Conduct 1980-18 Amended (VII.2.30); State Adverse Interest Act (VII.2.31); and Right-to-Know Law (II.4.61). The COT also must abide by PASSHE BOG Policy 2012-01: Conflict of Interest (II.4.56). Policies such as these support the impartiality of the university's governing board.

The council aids the university president in upholding the institution's autonomy as outlined in Act 188 and other BOG policies. Certain BOG policies grant individual institutions greater autonomy in their operations.

CRITERION 3
PRESIDENT AUTONOMY AND SUPPORT.

PennWest's president is appointed and evaluated by the chancellor and the Council of Trustees (VII.1.1). As detailed in Criterion 1, the university recently completed a nationwide presidential search that culminated in the announcement that Dr. Jon Anderson will serve as president of PennWest, effective July 1, 2024.

PASSHE BOG Policy 1983-13-A (VII.3.8) and Procedure/Standard 2021-50 (VII.2.28) describe the process for selecting a president. PennWest received a special waiver from the chancellor (VII.3.32) to amend the policy and allow the COT to form a larger search committee that ensured equal representation from each of the university's three campuses. The search committee included faculty, staff, students, and alumni, as well as three COT members and a current PASSHE president. Members of the search committee were appointed by APSCUF, Faculty Senate, AFSCME, SCUPA, SGA, alumni associations, and the COT. The inclusive composition of this search committee reflects the extensive and diverse reach of PennWest's three campuses and embodies its commitment to shared governance. Committee members were selected by their peers or by the appointing authority and possessed the expertise and capabilities necessary to represent the entire university as it sought to identify its next president.

The president of PennWest holds the authority and autonomy to fulfill the duties outlined in Act 188: establishing and executing policies and procedures concerning instructional programs, academic standards, institutional administration, admissions, enrollment, facility usage, student activity fees, and operating and capital budgets. Although the COT also has oversight in these areas, Act 188 primarily authorizes trustees to "review and approve such matters." It is the president who independently executes these responsibilities.

President Jon Anderson succeeds interim President R. Lorraine "Laurie" Bernotsky, who served as a consultant from West Chester University, the largest PASSHE institution, where she had been provost and executive vice president since 2017. During her tenure at PennWest, Bernotsky focused on operational excellence, strategic enrollment management, and long-term plans for financial sustainability.

Anderson (VII.3.33) came to PennWest after serving as provost and vice president for Academic Affairs at Southern Utah University (SUU), a regional institution with more than 15,000 students. At SUU he oversaw a budget of $85 million in a division with nearly 550 full-time faculty/staff and more than 400 adjunct instructors, and he led development of the university's most recent strategic plan. During Anderson's tenure, SUU increased its headcount, reorganized its college/school structure, launched its first doctoral program, and added in-person and online degrees and majors aligned with industry needs. Prior to joining SUU, Anderson was provost and vice president for Academic Affairs at Middle Georgia State University, which had five physical campuses and an online division. He also held administrative positions at the University of West Georgia, where he was deputy provost and associate vice president, and at the University of Kentucky.

Anderson earned a Ph.D. in Business Administration: Management from the University of Kentucky; an M.Ed. in Business Education from the (State) University of West Georgia; a B.S. in Sociology from Utah State University; and an A.A.S. in General Studies: Health and Education from Ricks College (Idaho), where he was a student-athlete.

Since integration, the division of Academic Affairs has made organizational adjustments to serve faculty and students as effectively as possible. Two associate provosts, an associate provost/graduate dean, and an associate vice president/university registrar now serve the division.

Campus Leadership Teams (IV.1.32) now are in place on each campus, where they can address student questions or concerns quickly. In addition, a Campus Leadership Council has been appointed for each campus.

PennWest has reorganized its inclusion and equity initiatives, notably appointing a chief diversity, equity and inclusion officer (CDIO). The CDIO has begun several initiatives to enhance the student experience and facilitate student engagement, including a national search for two campus-based assistant DEI directors (VII.3.34). The CDIO is an advisor to the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Student Leadership Council, which develops intercultural programming and collaborative educational opportunities among student organizations across PennWest. In addition, the DEI Office has developed seminal statements articulating divisional values and pillars (II.2.30). (See Standard II).

PennWest conducted a comprehensive organizational and operational review of its Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) division, which included the appointment of an interim vice president. The university now has more accurate and available enrollment data, a more fiscally responsible financial aid model, and significant cost savings stemming from operational efficiencies. The review also resulted in redirection of branding efforts, a revised New Student Orientation and programming, expansion of

peer mentorship across all campuses, and development of a comprehensive enrollment projection model.

PennWest created the strategic role of senior associate vice president for Human Resources (SAVP HR) to oversee both the Human Resources and Labor Relations units. The SAVP HR is PennWest's chief human resources officer, providing direction and strategy on employee recruitment and retention, onboarding, employee and labor relations, benefits and compensation, and performance standards and assessments. The SAVP HR also ensures that all HR plans, programs, communications, and activities are aligned to the mission, strategic objectives, and brand identity of PennWest.

President Anderson's executive leadership team is composed of well-qualified administrators, whose curricula vitae demonstrate appropriate degrees and work experience. (See Criterion 4).

CRITERION 4
ADMINISTRATION AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE. (CRITERION 4 A-D)

PennWest's administrative structure and reporting lines are clearly documented in the appendices (VI.5.40). The credentials and professional experience of the executive cabinet can be discerned through a review of their curricula vitae (VII.4.35; VII.4.36; VII.4.37; VII.4.38; VII.4.39; VII.4.40; VII.4.41).

Human Resources oversees the employee search process (VII.4.42) to ensure that appointed individuals have the necessary functional knowledge and skills to carry out their responsibilities. For each vacancy, the hiring manager reviews and revises the job description, including skills and core competencies, to align with current and future requirements of the role and department. HR further evaluates and approves updated job descriptions to ensure compliance and relevance to the university's evolving needs. These job descriptions are the foundation for accurate job announcements, advertisements, HR-approved applicant screening criteria, and interview tools aimed at evaluating skills and experience for success in the role. Additionally, many positions require multiple professional references.

Engagement with Faculty and Students (4e)

As interim president, Bernotsky focused on building a transparent culture of trust, collaboration, and problem solving that emphasized financial stainability, shared governance, and enhancing the student experience. She held "Budget 101" workshops, which were published in advance, to help educate faculty, staff, and students on how enrollment, program array and FTE, student success, and budget are linked.

President Anderson built on that base by appointing a Presidential Transition Committee (VII.4.43) to gather insights, identify opportunities, and address challenges within PennWest's unique campus community and its diverse range of stakeholders.

The president and his administration engage regularly with students, faculty, and staff. Formal engagement with faculty occurs in regularly scheduled Meet and Discuss sessions and Faculty Senate meetings. The Campus Leadership Team meets weekly and serves as an on-campus resource for students. The campus deans also attend SGA meetings and student events to engage with students and hear feedback and concerns. Campus Councils meet monthly and serve as a communications clearinghouse on each campus.

Evaluation of Administrative Units **(4f)**

PennWest launched its inaugural strategic plan, "Pathways to Student Success" (E.2) in Fall 2023. It is the blueprint for an annual planning process that documents individual and unit goals aligned with the university's goals, outcomes, and initiatives. Replace with: Individual administrative units align their assessment efforts with the work of the strategic plan. The process for evaluating administrative units (AES) is discussed in detail in Standard VI. The AES evaluation cycle includes developing an assessment plan and producing an assessment results report that allows units to reflect on performance and document improvements in support of the unit's strategies (goals).

CRITERION 5

PERIODIC ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP, AND ADMINISTRATION.

The university does not have the authority to assess the effectiveness of the governance of PASSHE, the Board of Governors, or its Council of Trustees.

Local committees serve as important shared governance units on matters of policy and operations; their purpose, structure, and deliverables are reviewed by the administration and committee leadership. Where appropriate, updates are made to maximize each committee's value-added contributions to the university and its leadership. For example, during integration a committee was charged with recommending a commission structure for PennWest. A committee subgroup examined core functions of commissions and reviewed the existing commission structures and bylaws at California, Clarion, and Edinboro (VII.5.44). The subgroup recommended restructuring the existing individual campus commissions to create consolidated commissions that support the university's mission and goals in the areas of the Status of Women (VII.5.45), LGBTQIA+ (VII.5.46), and Veterans and Military Affairs (VII.5.47).

The president has the authority to review the effectiveness of his "at will" leadership team and take appropriate action using goal setting and the evaluation process (VII.5.48).

Strengths

- PennWest demonstrated a commitment to an inclusive presidential search process, as evidenced by the waiver granted by the chancellor to ensure equal representation from each of the university's three campuses. The inclusive composition of the search committee reflected the diversity of PennWest's three campuses. Committee members (selected by their peers or by the appointing authority) possessed the expertise necessary to represent the entire university in its presidential search. As he settles into his new role, President Anderson has appointed a Presidential Transition Committee to gather insights, identify opportunities, and address challenges affecting the university and its stakeholders.

- PennWest's commitment to student success and financial sustainability are evidenced through the reorganization of the Academic Affairs and Strategic Enrollment Management divisions, the appointment of a chief diversity, equity and inclusion officer, educational workshops held by the previous university president and her leadership team, and President Anderson's immediate and ongoing efforts to embed himself in the life of PennWest's three campuses, address critical issues, and engage with students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community members.

- PennWest is equipped with a blueprint for the upcoming three years that aligns with its strategic plan. Institutional Effectiveness has established a formal body (USPC) that meets to assess and monitor the plan's progress across all levels of the institution.

Opportunity

- Refine a clear vision and value proposition for PennWest. With new leadership in place, PennWest should build on the progress it has made since integration, guided by its mission, vision, values, and institutional goals.
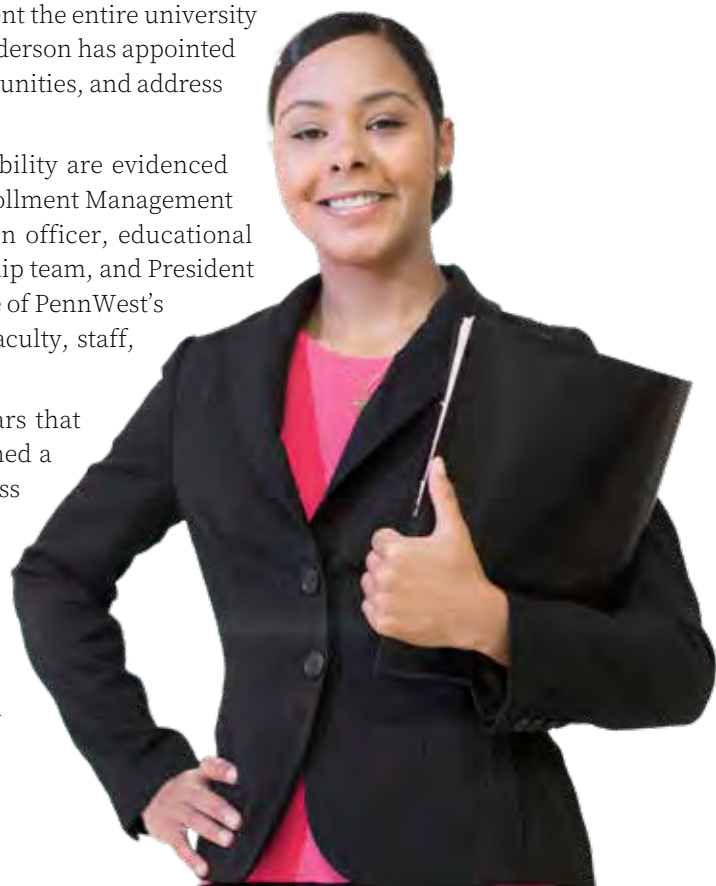
ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AAC&U
American Association of Colleges and Universities (of AAC&U LEAP)

ABET
Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology

ACUE
Association of College and University Educators

ADA
Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

AES
Administrative, Educational, and Student Support (Units)

AFSCME
American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees

AMS
Assessment Management System (of Nuventive AMS)

AOD
Alcohol and Other Drug (Educational Programming and Support Services)

APSCUF
Association of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculties (Faculty and Coaches)

ARR
Assessment Results Report (Academic Programs)

BASICS
Brief Alcohol Screening and Intervention for College Students

BASIS
Boro Autism Support Initiative for Success

BIPOC
Black, Indigenous, and Other People of Color

BIT
Behavioral Intervention Teams

BOG
PASSHE Board of Governors

BOOST
Boro Opportunities for Organization and Student Techniques

BRC
Budget Review Committee

CA
Community Assistant

CAS
Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education

CASICS
Cannabis Screening and Intervention for College Students

CBA
Collective Bargaining Agreement

CDIO
Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer

CFE
Center for Faculty Excellence

CIO
Chief Information Officer

CLEP
College-Level Examination Program

CLT
Campus Leadership Teams

COT
Council of Trustees

CPP
Comprehensive Planning Process

CRM
Customer Relationship Management (of Slate CRM)

CV
Curriculum Vitae

DANTES
Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support

DSP
Directed Self-Placement

DSST
DANTES Subject Standardized Tests

EAB
EAB (Consulting Firm)

E&G
Education and General (Fees OR Fund)

EMS
Event Management Software

FAFSA
Free Application for Federal Student Aid

FCOI
PASSHE's Management of Financial Conflict of Interest

FERPA
Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

FIT
Functional Implementation Teams

FPD
Faculty Professional Development

FTE
Full-Time Equivalent OR Full-Time Equivalency

GDPR
General Data Protection Regulation

GED
General Educational Development Tests

GLBA
Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act

HIPAA
Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act

HR
Office of Human Resources OR Human Resources

ICAT
Inclusive Community Action Team

ICC
Interim Curriculum Committee (Now Known as the University Curriculum Committee, or UCC)

IE
Office of Institutional Effectiveness

IPEDS
Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System

IR
Office of Institutional Research

IT
Information technology

ITS
Information Technology Services

KPI
Key Performance Indicator

LEAP
Liberal Education and America's Promise (of AAC&U LEAP)

"LibGuides"
Library Help Guides

LTS
Learning Technology Services

MAC
Mid-American Conference

MAP
Master Assessment Plan (academic programs)

MHFA/QPR
Mental Health First Aid and Question, Persuade, Refer

NACAC
National Association of College Admission Counseling

NACE
National Association of Colleges and Employers

NASAD
National Association of Schools of Art and Design

NASP
National Association of School Psychologists

NCAA
National Collegiate Athletic Association

NIST
National Institute of Standards and Technology

NSO
New Student Orientation

NSSE
National Survey of Student Engagement

OFPA
Office of Financial Planning and Analysis

OPEIU
Office of Professional Employees International Union Healthcare Pennsylvania

OSD
Office for Students with Disabilities

PACT
Pennsylvania Association of Council of Trustees

PASSHE
Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education (also State System)

PennWest
Pennsylvania Western University

PHEAA
Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency

POA
PASSHE Officer's Association

PSAC
Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference

RAKE
Random Acts of Kindness Everyday Initiative

READ
Reference Effort Assessment Data

RFP
Request for Proposal Process

RNL
Ruffalo Noel Levitz

ROA
MSCHE Requirements of Affiliation

SAI
Student Association, Inc.

SAVP HR
Senior Associate Vice President for Human Resources

SCUPA
State College and University Professional Association

SEM
Strategic Enrollment Management

SGA
Student Government Association

SI
Supplemental Instruction

SIP
Strengthening Institutions Program (Grant)

SLOA
Student Learning Outcomes assessment

SLO
Student Learning Outcome

SPFPA
Security, Police and Fire Professionals of America

START
Success Tools and Resource Training

State System
Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education (also PASSHE)

SUU
Southern Utah University

TOMC
Teaching Online Master Class

UCC
University Curriculum Committee (previously ICC)

URM
Under-Represented Minority

USLO
University-Level Student Learning Outcome

USPC
University Strategic Planning Council

UTC
University-Wide Tenure Committee

WORKING GROUP MEMBERS

PennWest appreciates the time and expertise of the working group members who contributed to this self-study. The tri-chairs of each working group are identified with an asterisk (*).

STANDARD	TRI-CHAIRS *(Name, Title; Constituency Represented)*
Steering Committee Leadership	Susanne Fenske, *Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness & Student Affairs* Becky McMillen, *Executive Director of Institutional Effectiveness* Bob Mehalik, *Associate Provost and Graduate Dean*
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II. Ethics and Integrity	Eric Guiser, *Senior Associate Vice President for Human Resources* Erik Bentsen, *Assistant Professor of Special Education and former chair, Institutional Review Board* Matt Shaffer, *Dean of Students; Student Affairs*
III. Design and Delivery of the Student Experience	James Fisher, *Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs* Ron Craig, *Professor of Psychology and Director, Center for Faculty Excellence; Academic Affairs* Adam Roberts, *Professor and Chair, Department of Mathematics; Academic Affairs*
IV. Support of the Student Experience	Sarah Freed, *Interim Vice President for Strategic Enrollment Management* Shawn Hoke, *Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs* Ambreena Siddiq, *Associate Professor of Chemistry; Academic Affairs*
V. Educational Effectiveness Assessment	Elisabeth Joyce, *Professor, Department of English, Academic Affairs* Justin Hackett, *Professor of Psychology; Academic Affairs* Alice Jenkins, *Director of Assessment; Institutional Effectiveness*
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VIII. Verification of Compliance	Sue Bloom, *Executive Director of Financial Aid* Shayne Gervais, *University Registrar* Steven Zidek, *Chief Data Strategist*

Steering Committee Leadership

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Dr. Becky McMillen, *Executive Director of Institutional Effectiveness*

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Standard I

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Christopher LaFuria, *Digital Communications Director*

Anthony McMullen, *University Library Director*

Mary Paniccia-Carden, *Dean, College of Education, Arts, and Humanities**

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Andrew Matt, *Associate Director of Equity and Title IX*

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James Fisher, *Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs**

Lacey Fulton, *Associate Professor, Business, Economics, and Communication*

Susan Gehr, *Student*

Adam Glass, *Assistant Director, Office for Students with Disabilities*

Lisa Glasser, *Director of Student Retention Solutions*

Rebecca Maddas, *Associate Professor, Education*

Bob Mehalik, *Associate Provost and Graduate Dean*

Michael Perrotti, *Associate Professor, Education*

Adam Roberts, *Professor and Chair, Chemistry, Mathematics, and Physics**

Standard IV

Sarah Freed, *Interim Vice President for Strategic Enrollment Management**

Garrett Hannah, *Student*

Shawn Hoke, *Assistant Vice President, Student Affairs, and Edinboro SA Campus Lead**

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Xiaofeng Li, *Assistant Professor, Library and Information Science*

Jill Loop, *Executive Director, Student Outreach and Success*

Devon Markish, *Deputy Director, Graduate Admissions*

Jodie Mount, *Associate Director, Financial Aid*

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